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Manuscript and editorial correspondence should be sent to:

Alaska Journal of Anthropology (AJA)

Attn: Editor

P.O. Box 241686

Anchorage, AK 99524

Telephone: (907) 336-0092

Fax: (907) 336-0093

Email: [geoarch85@gmail.com](mailto:geoarch85@gmail.com)

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# INTRODUCTION TO DISPLACED PEOPLES OF ALASKA AND THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

Rachel Mason and Becky M. Saleeby

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; rachel\_mason@nps.gov

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. 5th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; becky\_saleeby@nps.gov

This volume grew out of two symposia with very similar themes held at the 2009 Alaska Anthropological Association conference in Juneau. We chaired one of the symposia, “Displaced Peoples of Alaska,” while Patrick Plattet and Peter Schweitzer chaired “Spirited Away: Intersecting Perspectives on Relocation and Religion in the Circumpolar North.” After the conference we asked each of the participants if they would be interested in contributing a paper to a proposed *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* issue on the Displaced Peoples of Alaska and the Russian Far East, and to our delight, many of them agreed. We were also able to recruit Elizabeth Mikow and Cornelia Jessen, who did not participate in the Juneau symposia, to join us in this publication. Altogether there are nine papers, organized into four sections, assembled in the issue. Fig. 1 depicts the geographic area and specific places discussed in these papers.

The first three sections are grouped by time period and region. Section 1, dealing with historic displacements in Alaska, includes papers by Don Dumond and Rachel Mason. The second section, introduced by Peter Schweitzer, pertains to the relocation and resettlement of communities and peoples in the circumpolar North and features papers by Elizabeth Mikow and Elena Rockhill. Section 3, focusing on contemporary displacement in Alaska, contains papers by Hannah Voorhees, Marie Lowe, Becky Saleeby, and Cornelia Jessen. The last paper is an epilogue, written from an Alaska Native perspective by our late colleague Herbert Anungazuk.

Although the topic of displacement is not new to the anthropological literature, it has received considerably

more attention in recent years because of the publicity surrounding natural disasters, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, or 2005’s Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi. Man-made disasters, such as the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986, which forced thousands of Ukrainians to migrate out of the contaminated zone, are yet another cause of displacement. Other forced migrations have been caused by war and unstable political regimes in eastern Europe and Africa. Displacement can also be induced by economic development, as in Brazil where the construction of highways and hydroelectric projects has brought about deforestation and flooding, resulting in the widespread displacement of the indigenous people of the Amazon. Not all displacements are physically forced, however; some are caused by an inability to find necessary services, such as education or medical attention, or a way to make a living, in the original home. As used here, displacement simply means a person or people’s removal from a place on either a voluntary or involuntary basis. Conversely, the concept of emplacement means coming to a place, often in hopes of creating a new home there. Emplacement, too, can be voluntary or involuntary.

Displacement has been a significant factor for people around the globe in all time periods. While it may not affect an individual during his or her own lifetime, it is likely to have played a role in the lives of parents, grandparents, or earlier ancestors forced to migrate to new territories, new countries, or from rural to urban areas. The study of contemporary displacement is a topic of great interest to



*Figure 1: Area discussed in this issue*

applied anthropologists who work with refugees, natural disaster victims, and other displaced peoples. Regardless of the cause, people who experience uprooting and relocation must cope with privation, loss of home and jobs, and the breakup of families and communities. In their new communities, they must mobilize to reestablish their social groups and restore adequate levels of material resources for their families (Oliver-Smith 2006).

One of the first gatherings of anthropologists interested in the study of displaced peoples was at the 1981 American Anthropological Association conference, where researchers with expertise in various regions of the world came together to discuss the commonalities of involuntary migration and resettlement on a global level. The following year, an edited volume on the subject was published (Hansen and Oliver-Smith 1982), and it became a seminal study on what is now considered to be a major research area in anthropology. Not only do anthropologists study displaced peoples, but they have advocated for them through the creation of agencies that give a voice to the displaced,

such as the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford. According to one anthropologist, “Displacement is now seen as an endemic phenomenon that affects those uprooted, the communities that feel the impact of their arrival, governments, and the international agencies which increasingly play a major role in dealing with displacement” (Colson 2003). Members of the Society for Applied Anthropology have been instrumental in the creation of a network of scholars and policy-makers, called the International Network on Displacement and Resettlement (INDR), with a commitment to assisting those who have suffered from involuntary resettlement (Kedia 2001).

Displacement is also of interest to archaeologists, particularly historical archaeologists who have the advantage of documentary evidence about significant forced migrations in human history. For example, one area of specialty is the archaeology of the African diaspora, including the study of African-American slave sites in the eastern United States (Franklin and McKee 2004). Prehistoric archaeologists, however, must rely primarily on tangible remains

found in the archaeological record, such as abrupt changes in material culture, hiatuses in site occupation, or weapons associated with warfare, in order to make a case for forced or voluntary migrations. Their interpretations are frequently bolstered by biological or geomorphological evidence of climate change, drought, cyclical resources, or widespread pestilence, which could have triggered the decision of past human groups to relocate to more favorable areas.

In Alaska, there is considerable archaeological evidence for changes in material cultural throughout the millennia of human occupation of the land. Beginning with the earliest traditions dating more than 10,000 years ago and continuing to more recent traditions that emerged in northwest Alaska in the last two millennia, archaeologists have studied these shifts in technology and debated whether they have been the result of voluntary or involuntary displacement of one group as another moved into their territory, bringing with them new tool types, or whether the changes resulted from technological innovation on the part of the resident population.

Recent archaeological research offers some insights relating to the Thule migration from the greater Bering Strait region of Alaska to eastern Canada. Radiocarbon dates from two western Canadian Thule sites indicate that the migration may have occurred two centuries later than originally assumed, placing it during the thirteenth century AD. T. Max Friesen and Charles Arnold (2008), who report on the new data, remind us that the rapid and widespread Thule migration has previously been explained as a response to the extension in range of bowhead whales during the Medieval Warm Period. These later dates indicate that environmental change may not be the primary cause for the migration. The social milieu of the Bering Strait Region region during this time period was a complex melting pot of peoples with diverse identities. Political and social struggles and demographic stress, they state, may have also been factors in tempting or forcing some to leave (Friesen and Arnold 2008:534). Owen Mason (2009), one of the participants in the Displaced Peoples of Alaska symposium at the 2009 Juneau meetings, addressed this same issue in his discussion of possible displacements in northwest Alaska occurring between A.D. 800 and 1200 when the Old Bering Sea and Ipiutak polities were being replaced by Punuk, Birnirk, and Thule polities.

The ethnographic literature in Alaska is replete with examples of displacements because of natural disasters such as volcanoes or storms, changes in resource availability (such as changes in migration patterns of caribou

or sea mammals), or because of warfare or pressure from outside groups. Some groups were seminomadic, moving in small bands to follow the animals they hunted; others migrated seasonally between summer fish camps and larger winter settlements. Others lived in permanent villages throughout the year.

European contact added a new dimension to the displacement of communities. In some cases, previously mobile people were forced to settle in villages; in others, the seasonal patterns of settlement changed as indigenous people were pressed into labor or drawn into trading relationships. In Russia's Alaska colony, beginning in the eighteenth century, Russian-American Company (RAC) officials decided to rearrange indigenous populations in order to maximize labor and resource exploitation for commercial sales. For example, RAC managers moved people from the Unalaska Island area and Atka to settle the previously unpopulated Pribilof Islands, in order to provide labor for a newly established fur seal industry. The Russians also established management hubs at Unalaska and Kodiak, which operated as centers of trade, education and religion. The colonial administration consolidated communities after each of several devastating epidemics that wiped out or greatly reduced the population in smaller villages. Papers by Dumond and R. Mason in this issue both address changes in communities in the Russian colonial sphere of influence in Southwest Alaska. Interestingly, Rockhill's contribution to this volume deals with Russian displacement from another era, the Soviet years, when thousands of people were sent to forced labor camps in the Russian Far East.

After the United States bought Alaska from the Russians in 1867, the American territorial government continued the same patterns of colonial management. As fish processing and other industries began, indigenous people were pulled into settlements for trade and labor. Native populations gravitated toward commercial centers. Seminomadic people were forced to settle down in permanent villages so their children could attend school. Again, smaller communities were left behind if most of their inhabitants fell to epidemic diseases. Deaths from disease or other causes displaced orphans, widows, and small groups of survivors. Teenagers were sent to boarding schools for high school education; some moved at a younger age to live with relatives in hub communities to attend school.

During the American period, Alaska Native people also decided to move their villages because of natural disasters or changes in resource availability, as they had in



the pre-contact era. In addition to displacements that remove people from their lands or settlements, another kind of displacement is one of transforming a familiar landscape into a foreign one by commandeering the landscape for new purposes. Since the earliest days of the Russian colony, when sea mammal hunting and fishing for subsistence were disrupted in favor of harvests for sale, Alaska Natives' subsistence use areas were taken over by Euro-Americans for commercial endeavors.

The patterns of dislocation continued into the twentieth century. Some examples of Alaska Native village displacement since the early 1900s include settlements affected by the 1912 volcanic eruptions on the Alaska Peninsula; survivors of the 1918 flu pandemic consolidated into larger villages; the evacuations and relocation of Unangan in World War II; villages such as King Island, Chernofski, or Belkovsky gradually or quickly left behind because their populations had dwindled; and ongoing debates over moving Shishmaref and other villages because of the ravages caused by climate change. In many cases natural disasters are the precipitating factor in moves, but political and economic factors form a large part of the decision to relocate. To move or to stay in a community often depends upon finding assistance from government agencies. Voorhees's and Lowe's papers discuss the continuing process of displacement of Alaska Native communities and individuals. Voorhees reflects on some of the incongruities of popular imagination about Alaska Natives' displacement from rural villages and emplacement in urban areas. Lowe's paper deals specifically with moves to Anchorage as reflected in the records of the Anchorage School District and from the results of a questionnaire administered to the parents of children who moved.

Another kind of displacement characterizing modern Alaska is the in-migration of non-Native people to the state. Since the days of the Russian colony, Alaska has been a promising destination for people eager to make a fortune through pursuit of furs, gold, fish, timber, oil, or gas. The emplacement of large groups of profit-seekers has played a large part in displacing Native people from their traditional homes and territories in Alaska.

The military, in both peace and wartime, has also contributed to displacements and emplacements in Alaska. The U.S. and Japanese military occupation of the Aleutians caused the Unangan displacements that R. Mason describes in her paper. Mikow's paper shows that the construction of Cold War-era intelligence-gathering technology near Kaktovik was a major factor in multiple moves

of the village to a new locations. The prolonged presence of military and civilian workers on the project also impacted Kaktovik.

Mikow's paper shows that the experience of past displacements continues to inform Alaska Native villagers' anticipation of future village moves, for example those caused by erosion due to climate change. Lowe and Voorhees reflect contemporary migration, by both Alaska Natives and non-Natives, between rural and urban centers in Alaska. Jessen and Saleeby address a newer migration population, the international refugees who have arrived in Anchorage over the last decade. The papers in this issue show only a few examples of the many displacements occurring throughout the prehistory and history of Alaska and the North.

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# SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

## HISTORICAL DISPLACEMENT OF ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGES

Rachel Mason

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; rachel\_mason@nps.gov

The displaced Alaska Native communities described in the two papers in this section are a very small representation of the many settlements abandoned, created, or consolidated as a result of Euro-American control of Alaska lands. Both Dumond's and my paper report on a process that began with Russian colonization in southern Alaska, and continued under the American territorial government and commercial endeavors. However, leaving a settlement behind, or coming to a new settlement, was not unusual prior to European contact. Alaska Native groups frequently moved to new locations because of natural disasters or changes in resource availability.

Dumond's paper describes the villages of the Alaska Peninsula that were moved as a result of the 1912 Novarupta volcanic event. The 1912 eruption occurred after local people were already thoroughly entrenched in the Western economy. While natural disaster precipitated the moves, commercial pursuits also played a large part in the continued viability of new communities.

My paper is about several Unangan villages in the Unalaska Island area left behind in the evacuations and relocations of World War II, and never permanently resettled. Like the Alaska Peninsula villages at the turn of the twentieth century, by the Second World War the Aleutian Islands had long been part of the cash economy.

Residents made money by selling fox furs and baskets, as well as from seasonal labor harvesting seals in the Pribilof Islands.

Another similarity between the two regions of Russia's former colony is the importance of the Russian Orthodox Church. For both the Alutiiq communities on the Alaska Peninsula and the Unangan settlements in the Aleutian Islands, the church was a symbol of permanence for a village. If a village had a church, it had a better chance to persist as a village. When a village was left behind, a leader or the last resident marked the end of the village by closing down the church.

While both papers deal with moves occurring in the early twentieth century, these displacements anticipate the contemporary process of Alaska Native migration to urban centers such as Anchorage, or to places outside of Alaska. The same processes that pulled Kashega and Biorka residents toward Unalaska, as my paper reports, or away from Savonoski to cannery or trading centers, as in Dumond's paper, continue today to pull Alaska Natives to hub or urban areas, in order to make a living or enable family members to attend school. Today, education or commercial opportunities are usually more important than preserving a local church, but religion is still a factor in decisions to move.

# ALASKA PENINSULA COMMUNITIES DISPLACED BY VOLCANISM IN 1912

Don E. Dumond

Department of Anthropology, 1218 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1218; ddumond@uoregon.edu

## ABSTRACT

By 1912, northern Alaska Peninsula people had more than a half-century's experience with industrial economy—first Russian, then American. When the eruption in the vicinity of Mt. Katmai forced evacuation, Pacific coast settlements relocated 400 km southwest, to Perryville, while across the mountains, upriver people fled 100 km toward the Bering Sea, founding the settlement of (New) Savonoski, 10 km inland. Settlers from both moved out seasonally for customary employment, but thereafter histories differ. Isolated Perryville achieved a school in the 1920s, recognized Native village status in 1950 and again after 1971, and presently retains its identity. People of less-isolated Savonoski were more quickly attracted to opportunities near canneries and schools; the resultant shrunken population was responsible for a failure of remnant Savonoski to achieve status either as a Native village or as a recognized Native group under ANCSA. The Savonoski location was essentially abandoned in the late 1970s.

**KEYWORDS:** Novarupta Volcano, Katmai eruption, Perryville, Savonoski, community relocation

## INTRODUCTION

At the time when Russian fur hunters found themselves in control of both coasts of the northern Alaska Peninsula—by 1820—Native speakers of the Yup'ik language Sugpiaq, or Alutiiq, occupied settlements from coast to coast except for settlements on the shore of Bristol Bay. These bay-side points were held by the intrusive speakers of Central Yup'ik referred to in early documents as Aglegmiut, now commonly written *Aglurmiut* (Dumond 2005:fig. 41). Archaeological evidence can be interpreted to indicate that this Aglurmiut intrusion had occurred between about AD 1800 and 1810. Before that time Alutiiq speakers had extended to the Bristol Bay coast (e.g., Dumond 2003).<sup>1</sup>

When portions of the upper peninsula were mapped with relative completeness by Russian explorers, there were three named communities in the Alutiiq areas of

the Pacific coast: Katmai, Kukak, and one reported as Kayayak. Within the interior Alutiiq area west of the Aleutian Range (which divides the peninsula lengthwise), settlements identified as Ikak and Alinnak were located on the course of what is now known as the Savonoski River, one at its mouth on upper Naknek Lake, the other a score of kilometers upstream (Fig. 1; see also Dumond 2005:fig. 40). It was Alutiiq communities in these locations that would be displaced in 1912 by the world's largest eruption of the twentieth century, which emanated primarily from Novarupta Volcano, with some involvement of nearby Katmai Volcano. The two settlements at the mouth of the Naknek River, occupied principally by Aglurmiut descendants, were relatively unaffected.

1. As is well known, the early Russian explorers applied the term "Aleut" not only to inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands but also to the members of a different language group who inhabited islands in the northern Gulf of Alaska as well as the adjacent mainland. Through time this usage was accepted by the local people. Linguists have referred to this latter language as Sugpiaq or Pacific Yupik, but since the 1980s they have recognized that "Alutiiq," a Sugpiaq rendition of "Aleut," is more acceptable to the people themselves (e.g., Krauss 1985:5). In Russian literature, as in local conversations in English, the term "Aleut" is nevertheless current.

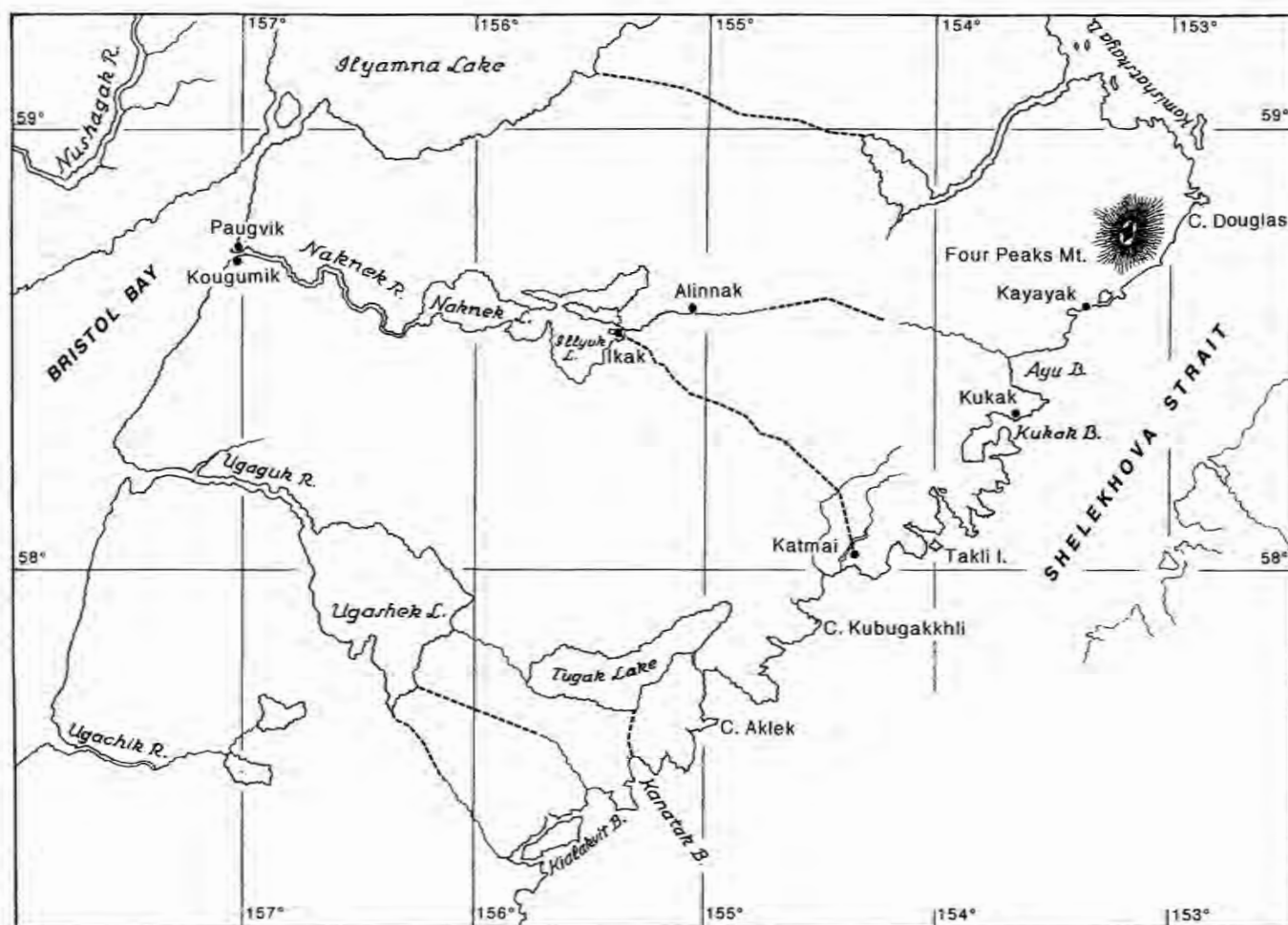


Figure 1. Composite rendition of two maps of Ivan Ya. Vasil'ev (after Dumond 2005:fig. 40). The two villages shown at the mouth of the Naknek River are from his map of 1829 (VanStone 1988:76), the overall form and other details from his map of 1831–32 (Lütke 1836:atlas, facing p. 286). Spellings are transliterated from the Russian labels. In relation to current maps, Paugvik was ancestral to modern Naknek, Kougumik (recognized as “Qinuyang” by modern informants) ancestral to present South Naknek. Ikak and Alinnak were among those referred to in Russian times as “Severnorsk settlements.” Kayayak is shown in the vicinity of what by the American period was recognized as Douglas, marked on some recent maps as Kaguyak.

All of these communities, of course, had by 1912 become attuned to commercial enterprises developing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, first under Russians, later Americans. Although it appears that attraction to commerce marked people of both coastal and interior Alutiiq settlements, the long-term survival of the new communities established by the displaced people varied significantly. Here, I treat the pre-eruption communities of the Pacific coast and those of the more interior regions

separately, before turning to the eruption itself and then to comparisons.<sup>2</sup>

## PACIFIC COAST

On the coast, the settlement of Katmai was the first to appear in Russian sources, with a Russian outpost established there in the 1780s (Partnow 2001:65–66). By 1800 the local Native people had been drawn into the fur trade,

2. The history of the Pacific coastal communities has been treated by Partnow (2001), whose work is drawn on heavily here, together with unpublished work generously communicated by Katherine Arndt of Fairbanks. Accounts of the interior communities are drawn especially from Dumond (2005). A particularly useful summary of events related to the volcanic eruption and the displacement of people is in Hussey (1971). All three of these works are heavily referenced to original sources, and interested readers are directed to them for identifications of primary materials.

receiving in return for pelts items that included some they would have made or produced themselves if they had not been working for the Russian-American Company—bird-skin parkas, *kamleikas*, seal skins, and nets—plus imported goods such as tea, sugar, tobacco, glass beads, metal pots, knives, axes, mirrors, and so on (Partnow 2001:68). The people Christianized, a chapel was constructed in the 1830s, to be replaced at least twice thereafter (Partnow 2001:162). With the American purchase of Alaska in 1867, the trading post of the Russian-American Company was assumed by the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) and operated briskly until fur trading closed in 1902 with a collapse of the fur market (Partnow 2001:113, 128), although more limited trading continued.

Kukak Bay, which provided one of the most promising harbors on the Pacific coast of the peninsula, was mentioned as a settled locality in Russian documents dating before 1800 (K. Arndt, pers. comm.). A more specific description is in the report by G. H. von Langsdorff (1993:II, 138–141), which details a visit in 1806 to a settlement of “summer huts” somewhere on the bay and known as Tonjajak. By 1880, after the American purchase, there was a chapel present at the bay (Partnow 2001:162), and in 1891 the ACC opened a post there which it operated for a time (Partnow 2001:113). However, by 1895, presumably because of better opportunities for trade, the few remaining inhabitants reportedly moved farther northeast to the settlement known by then as Douglas (K. Arndt, pers. comm.) where an ACC post remained active.

According to at least one report, this nineteenth-century settlement of Douglas—a name derived from Cape Douglas, to the northeast—had been established by 1876 by people from Katmai and from the multisettlement interior Alutiiq community across the mountain range, Severnovsk (known as Savonoski to the later Americans). This new coastal village the Natives knew as Ashivak, although it was at about this same time that the ACC post was established at what was referred to as Douglas—possibly but not certainly the same location. The Douglas post would continue to operate until 1901 when it was closed in the face of the declining fur market (Partnow 2001:113, 128). Whatever the truth of this account that Ashivak/

Douglas was established relatively late by Alutiiq-speaking Natives, the immediate vicinity had long been the site of a settlement, or settlements, reported variously as Kayayak (Fig. 1), Kaliak, Kaguyak, or Naushkak (K. Arndt, pers. comm.; Dumond 2005; Partnow 2001).<sup>3</sup>

Although these coastal settlements evidently had thrived when the fur market was active, especially with sea otters available, the close of more active trade by the ACC in the years immediately after 1900 was followed by some decline in population. Sometime before the 1912 eruption at least a partial stopgap was provided by the growing market for preserved salmon. In response to this, a summer fishery and saltery was established by a man named Foster on an inlet—Kaflia Bay—immediately southwest of the mouth of Kukak Bay (Partnow 2001:185–190).

That Kaflia Bay was chosen for the purpose was clearly no accident: the geographic conformation provides a funnel-shaped outer bay, which leads through a narrow pass into a restricted and more convoluted inner bay, into which a modest sockeye salmon stream debouches.<sup>4</sup> This early twentieth-century seasonal operation quickly came to employ or otherwise attract virtually the entire able populations of both Douglas and Katmai, which were located some 50 to 75 coastal kilometers on each side of Kaflia Bay. As a result, beginning in the early summer both villages would be almost depopulated as the people moved to the saltery for the chance to enter, if only in a small way, into a larger industrial enterprise.

How many people were involved? According to the U.S. census of 1910, the populations of Douglas and Katmai were that year some 45 and 62 respectively, for a total of a few more than 100.

## PENINSULA INTERIOR

There were two interior Alutiiq settlements, apparently no more than 20 km apart and constituting what in effect was a single community; in Russian records they were frequently lumped together as the “Severnovsk settlements” without further distinction. The first reference to them occurs in those same accounts from the first two decades of the nineteenth century that reported the Aglurmiut

3. The known Douglas site was tested archaeologically in 1953 (Davis 1954:45–56) and again in 1964 (Dumond and Nowak 1965:9–13) and found to yield only historic materials, apparently of the American period. A prehistoric site is recorded some 5 km to the south on the same broad bay, however (Dumond and Nowak 1965:43; Dumond et al. 1964:37–41).

4. The site has been known by fishery regulators as a favorite with twentieth-century poachers. When the inner bay is filled with migrating salmon, a gill net threaded around this natural fish trap permits the entire bay-full of fish to be drawn in at once (pers. comms. in the 1960s from various Bureau of Commercial Fisheries personnel).



incursion into Bristol Bay. According to these reports, the people now known as Aglurmiut had been dislodged by warfare from their homes in the Kuskokwim River region and had then moved to the head of Bristol Bay. There they forcibly occupied the mouths of the rivers Nushagak, Kvichak, Naknek, and Egegik and displaced the people of at least the latter two points southward and eastward, where some of them became known as the Severnovsk people of the upper Naknek River drainage (Wrangell [1839] 1980:64; see also Dumond 2005:47–48). More complete information came with the establishment of the Russian church in the region, the Russian priest Veniaminov referring before 1830 to “Severnovsk Aleuts,” and the Kodiak church establishment recording the baptism of forty-six people of the Severnovsk settlements in 1841 (Dumond 2005:60). Thereafter the latter settlements were visited periodically, if somewhat intermittently, by priests from the mission at Alexandrovsk Redoubt (i.e., Nushagak) near the mouth of the Nushagak River. In the 1870s a log chapel was constructed at the lower of the Severnovsk villages—a place by then referred to more specifically as Ika or Ikkhagmiut (with some variations in spelling)—and in 1905 a chapel was added at the upper village, then known as Kanigmiut (Dumond 2005:64–65, citing Russian church documents).

Unlike the villages of the Pacific coast, neither a Russian-American Company nor an Alaska Commercial Company post was ever established at the Severnovsk villages. Rather, trade was conducted through Native traders who received goods for resale from the commercial trading posts on the Pacific coast (K. Arndt, pers. comm.). Throughout the nineteenth century, trade with nearby Alutiiq settlements on that coast was preferred by the Severnovsk people over concourse with the downriver settlements that had been in the hands of their Aglurmiut enemies; this was attested by Ivan Petroff (1884:24) following his tramp through the area as recorder for the U.S. census of 1880. There is also other evidence of the coherence of the Alutiiq or Sugpiaq people of the northern peninsula, as suggested by the indication above that the late settlement of Douglas was founded by a combination of Katmai and Severnovsk people and by repeated references in vital statistics records of the church in which people born on the coast resided at Severnovsk, and vice versa (K. Arndt, pers. comm.).

Communication between the coastal and interior areas apparently depended on two major routes (Fig. 1). One, apparently the better publicized among non-Natives, was the more southerly route across Katmai Pass connecting the Severnovsk villages with Katmai (see, for instance, Dumond 2005:71–78). A second, evidently easier although less known, was up the course of the Savonoski River, then over a relatively low pass some 2000 m lower than more formidable Katmai Pass and along a stream leading downslope to Ayu Bay (shown in modern maps as Hallo Bay). The coastal end of this route is between Kukak Bay to the south, and the site of Douglas on the north.<sup>5</sup> As enumerated in the 1910 census, there were around seventy-five people in the two Severnovsk settlements—a number smaller than that of their relatives on the Pacific coast.

Given the apparently isolated location of Severnovsk, what opportunity did its people have for engagement with the industrial economy? One, of course, was the developing fishing industry of Bristol Bay. By 1890 there were both canneries and salteries located near the mouth of the Naknek River. By 1910 cannery output there had increased more than thirty fold, and by that date a hundred or more Native people found seasonal jobs, with benefits such as cannery byproducts in fish trimmings presenting an additional attraction. By then a majority of the Severnovsk people were accustomed to moving downstream to the vicinity of the fish processing establishments on Bristol Bay—in opposition to their earlier preference to deal only with Alutiiq-speaking people (Dumond 2005:83).

There was one additional factor, apparently hinging on the discovery of gold to the north of Bristol Bay, especially in the vicinity of Nome on the southern Seward Peninsula. The latter discovery occurred in 1898, and for the next two years the run was on. Most of the stampeders from the States sailed north, passing through the Aleutians and into the Bering Sea by way of Unalaska. But there were other possibilities to cut off some of that sea journey. In 1900 the preliminary report on the Nome gold region by the U.S. Geological Survey described a “well-known winter route along the coast,” which had been used “to some extent by the Russians. Starting from Katmai . . . and crossing the base of the Alaska Peninsula,” then following the coast around the eastern shore of the Bering Sea (Schrader and Brooks 1900:37). According to the major early report on

5. This information draws on a route shown in one of the sources for Figure 1, and also on interviews, especially including one in 1961 with the late Mike McCarlo, then of Savonoski village (Davis 1961).

the so-called Katmai (i.e., Novarupta) volcanic eruption of 1912, during the Nome gold rush (after 1898) traffic northward had become heavy enough through Katmai Pass to induce the Katmai trader to provide housing for transients (Griggs 1922:267). Although Katmai Pass was touted as primarily a winter route, in which travel would continue around the Bering Sea by dogsled, a still later USGS report said specifically that:

hundreds of prospectors preferred the rough trail and the fury of the winds in the pass to the long and hazardous ocean trip of 300 miles [480 km] around the end of the [Alaska Peninsula]. A bunk house was constructed at Katmai, and small boats plied Naknek Lake and Naknek River to accommodate the travelers (Smith 1925:192).

How summer travel was managed around or across the Bering Sea was not specified, however. And the only specific account I have found of prospectors' travel from east to west through Katmai Pass, this in early 1901, was indeed in winter by dogsled (Beach 1940:61–68). Even so, whether or not there was a need for boat travel across Naknek Lake and down the Naknek River—which presumably would have called on services of people of Severnovsk, who lived at the end of the overland trail from Katmai—Native people must have been involved in the traffic by foreigners, a situation that would certainly have spurred interest in a world outside of the Naknek Lake and river system. This seems to have had a particular impact on one Petr Kayagvak, a leading resident of the lower Severnovsk settlement, Ikak or Ikkhagmiut.<sup>6</sup>

Kayagvak, born in 1872 in the settlement of Togiak, across Bristol Bay from the Naknek region, had come to Ikkhagmiut in 1897 as guide to the Orthodox priest from the Nushagak mission, Father Vladimir Modestov. Within days Petr married a local girl, Pelagia Itug'yuk, and so remained at the Severnovsk village, where with Fr. Modestov's appointment he served as lay reader in the chapel and then as local school teacher. Near the end of the year the Kayagvak couple had a son. But in 1905 the priest visiting the village, now called Nunamiut rather than Ikkhagmiut, reported in the confessional register that Pelagia was widowed. Similar reports followed through 1909, and yet in 1910 the church records report the birth of a daughter to Petr and Pelagia (Dumond 2005:88–90). Two years later Petr was to be one of the closest witnesses

to the volcanic eruption near Katmai Pass; by then he was known as "American Pete."

What had happened in the interim? The modern family tradition is that Petr Kayagvak's nickname was acquired because of a stay in San Francisco (e.g., Nielsen 2005:note 7). How did he get to California? The known records are silent, but it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that his travel to the contiguous United States was a spin-off of the increasing involvement of Severnovsk people in the larger economy—one symptom of which was the tendency after 1900 for the people to spend summers downriver near the functioning canneries. Indeed, it is not at all unlikely that Petr's trip stemmed from contacts made during the time of Nome gold rush traffic through Katmai Pass and across Naknek Lake.

In any event, with American Pete we are led to the eruption of 1912.

## CATAclysm

The active phase of the massive eruption, which was first (and erroneously) reported as emanating from Mt. Katmai itself, has been dated according to witnesses from the Pacific coastal side as occurring from June 6 to June 11, although activity on the Bristol Bay coast was reportedly more evident between June 12 and June 15, the difference apparently dependant on the winds. With prevailing wind from the west, the mass of ejecta spilled onto the Pacific coast of the peninsula and on northern Kodiak Island, whereas the coast of Bristol Bay received no more than a centimeter or two of fine ash (Fig. 2; Dumond 2005:84–85). On the coast between Katmai and Douglas pumice fell around 50 cm deep, and at Severnovsk about half that. As a result, four separate Native villages were precipitately abandoned—Douglas, Katmai, and the two Severnovsk settlements—although no lives were lost.

On the Pacific, the bulk of the population was gathered that June at Kafia Bay in preparation for the fish run; those few not present there were evidently able to flee successfully along the coast. People trapped at Kafia Bay (114 individuals in all) were picked up on June 12 by a small steamer sent from Kodiak (Partnow 2001:191). Meanwhile, across the mountains near upper Naknek Lake the Severnovsk villages had also been virtually abandoned as the bulk of the population moved to the lower

6. It is this lower settlement, site of the older Orthodox chapel, that would be known in the American period as Savonoski, or, following its abandonment, Old Savonoski.



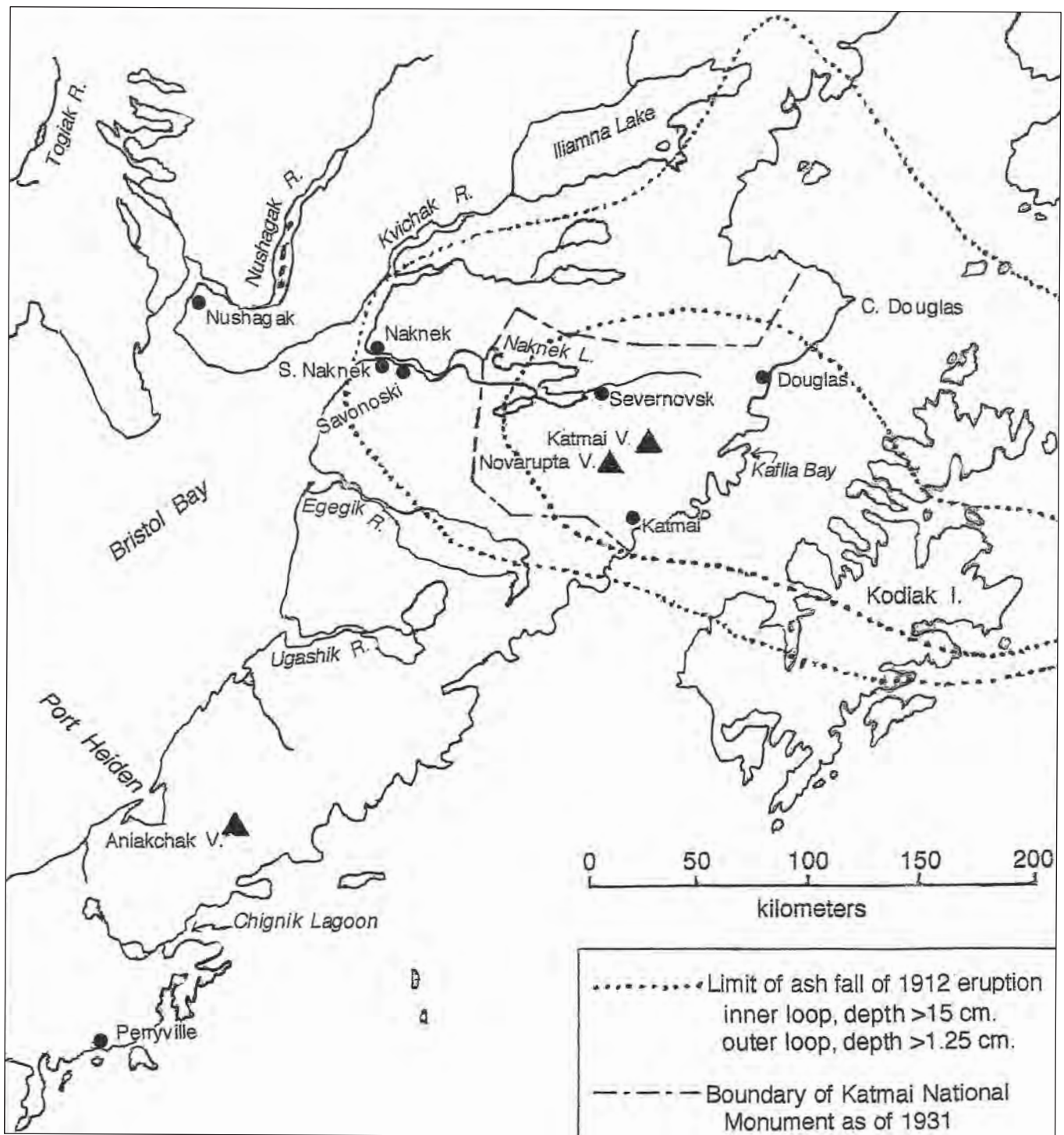


Figure 2. A portion of the Alaska Peninsula, showing major settlements mentioned in the text as well as the area of heavy tephra fallout from the eruption of 1912 (the latter based on Griggs 1922). Severnovsk represents the area of the Russian-period Severnovsk settlements, especially the major one individually designated Ikak and then Nunamiut, and still later Old Savonoski. Eruption fugitives established ("New") Savonoski on the lower Naknek River.

Naknek River to await the opening of the salmon season. Of those remaining, American Pete was apparently witness to at least some of the pyrotechnics, as sand-sized pumice was ejected in the violent flow that engulfed the upper tributaries of the Ukak River. What was once a partially wooded valley was instantly turned into the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. The few people still at Severnovsk fled down Naknek Lake and river in boats (Dumond 2005:86; Griggs 1922:17–19).<sup>7</sup>

And so, what next? Their villages swamped in pumice, people of the Pacific were taken by Revenue Service ships to their home settlements to retrieve belongings, and then most were moved southward where after a false start they were settled at the site that would become Perryville, the village name recognizing Captain K. W. Perry of the Revenue Service vessel *Manning*, the ship that provided the transport.<sup>8</sup> To the west, in the summer of 1912 the Severnovsk fugitives camped as necessary along the lower Naknek River; in the fall a meeting by Native leaders from both Severnovsk and Naknek villages, moderated by the priest from Nushagak, resulted in an agreement that the newcomers would establish a settlement, a new “Savonoski,” on the Naknek River some 10 km upstream from South Naknek (Dumond 2005:87; Partnow 2001:195–198).

These displacements were permanent. Although a family or two from the new Savonoski settlement reportedly attempted not long after the eruption to move back to their former home, the pumice with its residual heat made it impossible (Davis 1961). Whatever further interest the fugitives of both inland and coastal villages may have had in returning to their homes, the establishment of Katmai National Monument inhibited repopulation; although centered on the eruption zone, the original monument of 1918 incorporated the territories of both Katmai and the Severnovsk settlements (Griggs 1922:endpaper map). In 1931, ostensibly for reasons of wildlife conservation, the monument was expanded northward to Cape Douglas, including the site of Douglas village, and westward to incorporate almost the whole of Naknek Lake (Fig. 2; Hussey 1971:422–423).

After resettlement, both Perryville and Savonoski endured for a time, but as years passed the histories of the new villages diverged. Although in both cases it is possible

to think that the involuntary shifts in location of the communities served in the long run to move their people in the direction in which they both were already headed—into further participation in the greater economy—the physical positions of the new villages alone led to differences.

## THE POST-ERUPTION SETTLEMENTS

### PERRYVILLE

At Perryville, the new village was relatively less isolated than had been the ancestral villages of Katmai and Douglas. Subsistence fishing and hunting, as well as trapping, were available locally as well as in the larger Ivanof Bay to the southwest, and for the first few years were sufficient to be sustaining. Importantly, no more than 90 coastal kilometers to the northeast was the Chignik River and lagoon system, with a burgeoning fishing industry. Similar fish processing centers were present only a bit farther away to the southwest on Unga Island of the Shumagin group—both of these farther away than Kafia Bay had been from the two earlier villages, but both with opportunities immeasurably greater. Although at Chignik in particular, opportunities for Natives to find work in the fishing industry were somewhat limited before the 1920s, they grew sharply thereafter. Furthermore, in the 1920s and 1930s a change in world fashions drove prices for furs higher, encouraging the establishment of family traplines on nearby lands in winter and leading to some commercial fox farming. As years passed, the pattern of seasonal cash employment developed in the Russian fur trade and continued at the Kafia Bay saltery continued with winters spent seeking fur bearers and summers in moves to Unga or Chignik (Partnow 2001:235–243).

Yet Perryville itself remained a living village. In 1914 the bell for a hoped-for church had been obtained from a wrecked ship, and thereafter lumber was acquired for the building (Partnow 2001:198), a sign of permanence. Although some people would move to hunt and later to settle on Ivanof Bay, and some would be drawn to other developing locations, in 1920 the Perryville population was still recorded as eighty-five. A grade school was established by 1922 (Partnow 2001:251), another strong influence for stability of family residence through the school

7. Much of the detail regarding the eruption and the ensuing movement of people is from USRCS (1912–13); a concise and coherent summary of events, based on these and other sources, is Hussey (1971:chap. 11).

8. The details of the selection process are unclear, as Hussey (1971:363) comments.

year. During that same decade, a new post office removed the necessity to seek postal facilities as far away as Chignik (Hussey 1971:368). In 1930 the census-enumerated population stood at ninety-three. In 1950 Perryville was recognized as a federally incorporated Native village under terms of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA), as amended for Alaska in 1936 (Perryville 1950). In 1971 the village was listed in section 11(b)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) as a Native settlement subject to the act, and by 1974 it was recognized as having an approved ANCSA village corporation named Oceanside with an enrollment of 130 (Arnold 1976:312, 333). Today the resident population is somewhat more than 100, with outside seasonal employment still economically important.

### SAVONOSKI

At the new Savonoski, a major church edifice was erected in the years after the eruption, the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Kazan, as that at the Severnovsk village of Ikak, later Nunamiut, had been. At first the chapel grew by the efforts of American Pete, the old lay reader, who died around 1918. More than a year later the building was finished by Nikolai Melgenak, who in 1919 had become the second husband of Pelagia, Petr Kayagvak's widow (Dumond 2005:90). Yet not many years after 1912 the recognized headman of the settlement had moved to Naknek village, closer to active canneries on the north side of the river, where he and his wife were both listed in the original enumeration sheets of the U.S. census of 1920. Naknek in 1924 claimed the earliest school in the area, a factor that undoubtedly attracted new residents.<sup>9</sup> By 1918 or 1919, the remaining Savonoski population, originally nearly 100, had dropped by half (Davis 1954:71). The year 1919 saw the local manifestation of the worldwide influenza pandemic, which Perryville was evidently spared. Thirteen Savonoski people were carried away by the sickness, a fourth of the remaining population. In the U.S. census of 1920 the Savonoski residents numbered only twenty-two.

Unlike Perryville, and despite the substantial presence of the Savonoski chapel, there was never to be a school or a post office there. Both institutions were located no closer than the developing village of South Naknek.<sup>10</sup> Although Pelagia, now wife of Nikolai Melgenak, is credited with raising at Savonoski a number of children of her relatives, the population there continued to drop. In 1953 it was said to be nineteen (Davis 1954:7). There is no record of any attempt to establish Savonoski as a recognized Native village under the Indian Reorganization Act. Although listed in 1971 as a settlement potentially subject to land and cash distributions under ANCSA, it is not shown in the U.S. census of 1970 as a village with a population greater than twenty-five—the minimum necessary for recognition under section 11(b)(2) of ANCSA. On the other hand, nearby Naknek and South Naknek are both shown as ANCSA-eligible villages at that time (Arnold 1976:332–333).

In 1975, however, steps were taken by remaining residents to incorporate Savonoski, and an application was submitted for recognition as a smaller Native group under ANCSA section 14(h)(2) and for lands in the amount of 2,560 acres. But following investigation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs the application was ruled ineligible on the grounds that the seven people enrolled as Savonoski Incorporated and who had resided in the settlement on the crucial census date of April 1, 1970, were members of a single family and household and for that reason ineligible to form a separate Native group under Code of Federal Regulations 2653.6(a)(5). Although appealed, the decision was upheld by the Land Use Board of Appeals (IBLA 1984). Before that date, however, according to local information the settlement itself had been essentially abandoned, its remaining inhabitants moving to South Naknek in 1979 (Hodgdon 1981:7).<sup>11</sup>

### COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

This brings the question posed at the outset: What was the effect of the displacement? At least a partial answer to this, I think, must be that despite the dislocations, trau-

9. The same former Savonoski headman and his son (listed respectively as Trefan [sic] Angasan, age 55, and Trefem Angasan, age 27) were recorded in the 1938 census as among fourteen Native residents of Naknek village north of the river (Meggitt 1938).
10. South Naknek was said to have a school in the 1930s (Meggitt 1938), which was later than the village of Naknek, although some local people recalled that a school first appeared there as late as the 1950s. The South Naknek post office was established in 1937 (Dumond 2005:99).
11. In 1984 the head of the last Savonoski family testified they had moved to South Naknek to be near the school, although he claimed to return to Savonoski in the summers (McCarlo 1984).

matic though they must have been for the Alutiiq people involved, the enforced settlement changes served in both cases to further movement along the pathway the Native inhabitants of the villages had already shown evidence of choosing: toward ever-greater participation in a world economy. Although antiquarians and nativists may lament this change, it is simply the taking up of the work of modern people in a modern world. Thus, in at least one sense the dislocation may have sped the people on their inevitable way.

But there is also an obvious contrast. Between the bases of Savonoski and Perryville there is the matter of relative isolation. Perryville, on one hand, was sufficiently isolated to make its selection as a location for schools and postal services entirely reasonable, the school in particular then promoting permanence of settlement. The recognition of Perryville as a Native village, first under the IRA and later under ANCSA, cemented these tendencies. Thus one can argue that the degree of isolation of Perryville with its relative maintenance of population was a factor in the community's continued existence.

Savonoski, on the other hand, was close to industrially developing communities that tended to draw people away almost immediately, and at the same time its nearness to those facilities inhibited its selection as a location for a school or post office. Policies of the U.S. government were involved in disallowing Native village status to Savonoski, of course, but in crucial interplay with these was the steady decline in resident population. This was what ultimately caused Savonoski to be eliminated from eligibility for some of the centralizing institutions that Perryville achieved.

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# YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN: PROCESSES OF DISPLACEMENT AND EMPLACEMENT IN THE "LOST VILLAGES" OF THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS

Rachel Mason

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; rachel\_mason@nps.gov

## ABSTRACT

During World War II, Unangan residents of villages in the Aleutian Islands were evacuated by the U.S. government to internment camps in southeast Alaska. After the war, the former residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin learned they would not be returned to their home villages but would be settled in other Aleutian villages. Some of them stayed in Akutan; others moved to Unalaska, the regional hub city. A few determined people temporarily resettled their home villages, but ended up moving back to Unalaska. The processes of displacement and emplacement are examined in the context of Unangan history, particularly in regard to village leadership. The Unangan response to the twentieth-century wartime displacements was formed by past experience in the Russian colonial and American territorial eras.

**KEYWORDS:** Unangan, World War II, evacuation, relocation, Aleutian Islands

## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1942, the U.S. government removed Unangan villagers from their homes in the Aleutian Islands, ostensibly for their own safety. Boats took them to abandoned canneries and camps in southeast Alaska, where they were interned for the rest of World War II. During the next few years, the people of these small villages moved and resettled several more times, sometimes by their own decision but more often at the direction of outside authorities. Many of the village residents never returned again to their homes. This paper focuses on the experiences of those villagers who returned to the Aleutians at war's end and tells the story of the attempted resettlement of two villages.

Displacement, as used here, means removal from a place. Emplacement means coming to a place, often in hopes of creating a home there. Both can be voluntary or involuntary. This paper looks at the displacements and emplacements of Unangan during and after World War II and situates these events in the context of colonial and ter-

ritorial history as well as social and economic trends in the twentieth century.

Beginning soon after first contacts in the eighteenth century, the Russians forced Unangan, especially the men, to migrate because they needed skilled labor in sea otter and fur seal operations. While later American companies did not force Unangan men or women to work, they continued a pattern of trade and resource exploitation begun by the Russians. During both Russian and American administration, settlements arose, grew, or shrank around commercial enterprise or trading centers and were abandoned when those centers moved. Even more significantly, throughout the Russian and American eras, many villages were depopulated by devastating western-introduced epidemic disease, causing not only deaths but migrations of surviving individuals and entire villages.

Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were three tiny Unangan villages located around Unalaska Island in the central Aleutian Islands (Fig. 1). Russian and American





*Figure 1: Villages in the Unalaska Island area, including the “lost” villages of Kashaga, Makushin, and Biorka. See map on p. 2, this volume, to see Unalaska Island in a broader geographical context.*

records show that each had been established at its current site by the end of the nineteenth century. The village of Biorka is mentioned in 1778, before its move to a new location around 1848. Russians reported using a trail between Makushin Bay and Unalaska in 1790, suggesting there was already a community at Makushin (Lekanoff et al. 2004:6–11). All three villages had experienced both collective relocation and individual outmigration by the mid-twentieth century.

In the summer of 1942, 881 residents of the Aleutian Islands, almost all of them Unangan, were transported away from their homes by boat, first to the grounds of a government-run Native boarding school in Wrangell, and then to five different camps in southeast Alaska. The approximately 160 residents of the smallest villages were all taken to Ward Lake, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp outside Ketchikan. Akutan’s 41 residents and Nikolski’s 72 were brought to Wrangell on July 13, 1942. Twenty people from Kashaga, 18 from Biorka, and 9 from Makushin arrived with them to stay at the Wrangell Institute (Commission on Wartime Relocation 1982:333). Two months later, residents of the smallest villages were transferred to Ward Lake. The people from Akutan, Nikolski, Biorka, Makushin, and Kashaga were interned together at Ward Lake, while those from Unalaska village, the hub village of the region, were taken to Burnett Inlet.

In 1941, before deciding to relocate the Aleutian Islanders to southeast Alaska, the Office of Indian Affairs had first discussed evacuating Native women and children from the Unalaska area to villages on Unimak Island and the Alaska Peninsula, which had been chosen in consultation with the Unangan (Commission on Wartime Relocation 1982:324–325). After Dutch Harbor was attacked and Attu and Kiska occupied, however, there was more urgency to evacuate the Aleutian Islanders to a place farther away from the battleground. The landscape of southeast Alaska was completely different from the Aleutians and was a major reason the Unangan interned at Ward Lake experienced dissonant culture, defined as “temporary reordering of space, time, relationships, norms, and psycho-socio-cultural constructs” (Downing and Garcia-Downing 2009:230). Ward Lake was surrounded by thick trees, and there was no view of the water. The setting seemed claustrophobic and oppressive to people who had spent their lives on the windswept, treeless Aleutian Islands. The older Unangan, especially, found southeast Alaska too hot and wet. They said the trees blocked their view and kept them from feeling the wind in their faces. Some concluded after the war that the foreign climate contributed to the numerous deaths of elders at Ward Lake (Berreman 1953:256).

While the internees at Ward Lake were crowded into cabins and communal housing, their conditions were not as bad as those in other Unangan internment camps. They did have electricity and running water, although they had to share a public toilet some compared to a trough. They ate at a mess hall, where the food was different from their customary food. Irene Makarin, eleven years old at the time of evacuation, recalled that she was served a breakfast of cereal on board the ship to southeast Alaska. She had always eaten boiled fish (Makarin in Lekanoff et al. 2004:190–191). Although Unangan staying at other internment camps in southeast Alaska remembered that Tlingit Indians shared subsistence foods with them and lent them boats and fishing equipment, the internees at Ward Lake did not report such experiences. In addition, it was difficult for the Unangan at Ward Lake to harvest their own fish and game. The lake was a popular recreation site for Ketchikan residents, and hunting and fishing were strictly restricted and regulated.

Compared to other Unangan evacuees, the residents of Ward Lake had the closest access to a city, Ketchikan. However, some of the residents of Ketchikan campaigned to keep the Unangan out. Restaurant owners and the police chief complained that the Unangan were publicly drunk and were likely to spread sexually transmitted and other diseases. While most of the Ketchikan taxis refused to go the 13 km to Ward Lake, the internees developed a good relationship with one cab driver, Eugene Wacker, who lived nearby. Wacker, their only means of accessing the big city, began to operate a bus service between Ward Lake and Ketchikan.

Despite the difficulties in transportation, Ward Lake was more accessible to the larger world than any of the other internment camps. The people interned at Ward Lake were from the smallest and most remote villages, but they were resourceful in seeking wage opportunities. Some of them found employment in Ketchikan or elsewhere in southeast Alaska. The Army hired Unangan men, including Bill Ermeloff of Nikolski, to work on a construction project building an air base near Metlakatla during the war. Perhaps ironically, Ermeloff's job was to clear trees growing around the air strip (Ermeloff 2008). Other Unangan men got summer fishing jobs. Both men and women found work in Ketchikan. Sophie Pletnikoff from Kashega worked in a factory and as a housecleaner. One family and a few single people who were working in Ketchikan were able to find places to live there instead of at Ward Lake. For example, two women worked at the

hospital and boarded there (Commission on Wartime Relocation 1982:348).

Despite the hardships of camp life and their churlish reception in Ketchikan, some of the internees at Ward Lake enjoyed having new work and entertainment opportunities (Berreman 1953:258). The brief introduction to a more conventional wage economy affected some residents' willingness to return to remote and isolated villages in the Aleutians. Those who found jobs in Ketchikan or Metlakatla instead of staying at the Ward Lake camp may have found it easier to stay in southeast Alaska or move elsewhere after the war.

The Ketchikan City Council discussed moving the Ward Lake internees to a more inaccessible location, with the apparent goal of protecting the Ketchikan people, not the Unangan. The residents of Unalaska, who were already considered worldly troublemakers, had perhaps been deliberately placed in the most remote spot, Burnett Inlet (Kohlhoff 1995:102). Eventually, forty-six people from the smallest villages were transferred from Ward Lake to Burnett Inlet to join the Unalaskans for the last two months of internment (Kohlhoff 1995:130).

After the Unangan had stayed for nearly three years in southeast Alaska, government officials decided that Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin would not be resettled. In January 1945 the Ketchikan paper reported that the Unangan staying at Ward Lake would only be returned to Akutan and Nikolski (Kohlhoff 1995:156). At least seven people (about 15%) from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin died during the years of internment (Madden 1993:118)—perhaps not counting babies who were born and died in those years. The village of Nikolski lost thirteen of seventy-two people (18%) at Ward Lake (Berreman 1953:30). In April 1945, an army transport boat picked up the Unangan at Ward Lake, then at Burnett Inlet, to take them home.

When they were returned to the Aleutians in the spring of 1945, most of the people from Biorka and Kashega got off at Akutan (Lekanoff et al. 2004:129–130). Only four were left from Makushin; they were taken to Unalaska with the 135 residents of that village. A few days later the surviving Makushin residents went to Akutan instead. Eventually some Biorka and Kashega people moved to Unalaska. In either Unalaska or Akutan, despite the many kinship connections between the villages, it must have been difficult for new residents to find places to stay or to adapt to village life. Both the Unalaska and the Akutan people were having trouble repairing and cleaning up their

houses, which had been looted by the U.S. military during the war. The host villages were further stressed by the addition of residents from the smallest villages. Not all the former residents of Biorka or Kashega accepted living in another village. In fact, most of the Biorka people and a few Kashega residents decided to return to their former homes. The next section describes in more detail the post-war history of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin, the three “lost villages” of the Unalaska Island area.

## BIORKA

Biorka was the nearest of the three villages to both Unalaska and Akutan. In the past, it was the largest of several villages around Beaver Inlet on Sedanka Island, adjacent to Unalaska Island. Biorka was the only village there by the twentieth century (Fig. 1).

The whole village of Biorka moved from one location to another when Andrew Makarin was a boy (Unalaska City School [UCS] [1978] 2005:126), perhaps because of damages from an avalanche, a storm, or other natural disaster. Andrew was born in 1889 and came to Unalaska in 1919. Around that time, he said, a flu epidemic killed forty-two people at Biorka. While depopulation by disease was one of the main reasons a village might be abandoned, in that case most of the remaining Biorka people stayed there. Andrew was in Unalaska three years, went briefly back to Biorka, and then returned to Unalaska, where he worked unloading coal boats. Like other men in the region, he used to work in the summer fur seal harvest in the Pribilof Islands (UCS [1978] 2005:121). In 1942, Andrew and his family were evacuated to Ward Lake with the Biorka people.

In the decades before World War II, when Biorka was a viable community, its residents used to travel to Unalaska by dory and on foot, carrying fox furs and baskets to trade for food and supplies. It took them three or four hours to hike over the pass from Ugadaga Inlet to Unalaska. A former resident of Unalaska remembered seeing the Biorka residents arriving on foot for their regular shopping visits (Diakanoff 2009). In fall the Biorka people caught fish to smoke and dry; in winter they trapped fox. They were not destitute, but they didn’t have much money. In a 1967 interview, Andrew Makarin said that the Russian Orthodox Brotherhood in Unalaska always helped Biorka people and others in need.

Biorka never had a government-run American school. Before the war, some of the children went to the Russian

school in Unalaska. Boys who came in from the villages stayed at the school, but all the female students were from Unalaska and lived at home. Although people respected what the priests and elders told them to do, Andrew said that some of the priests sent to Unalaska did not stay long because they could not get along with the local church readers (UCS [1978] 2005:121).

Andrew Makarin was one of the twenty-one Biorka residents who were dropped off in Akutan in April 1945. An exceptionally courageous and resolute man (Hudson 1998:120), he began almost immediately to plan a return to Biorka (Kohlhoff 1995:157). By summer he had started building a dory to use to move back to the village. In November the government moved the Biorka people again, from Akutan to Nikolski (Kohlhoff 1995:173). That winter Andrew and several other men went to Biorka to trap foxes, staying in Andrew’s house (Lekanoff et al. 2004:129–130). In the spring, in preparation to resettle, Andrew spent a day with a friend from Unalaska testing the cod fishing grounds around Biorka. Although they caught only a few sculpin, Andrew pushed ahead to return. He went to Unalaska and talked to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) representative about resettling the community. The BIA man promised the Biorka people lumber in a few months, even though he couldn’t help them right away (UCS [1978] 2005:127). Andrew got more immediate results when he talked to U.S. Deputy Marshall Verne Robinson, also in Unalaska, who arranged for army barges to bring lumber to the village, along with boats to transport the rest of the Biorka people (Lekanoff et al. 2004:130).

Andrew moved from Akutan to Biorka on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service vessel *Penguin*, with his wife and daughter (UCS [1978] 2005:127–128). Several other Biorka households joined the settlement. The households were closely interrelated and many of the participants had previously lived in several villages on Unalaska Island (Table 1).

The re-established Biorka residents restored the village with some help from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They stayed for nine years, according to Nick Galaktionoff, which would have put their departure around 1956. There were seasonal interruptions when the men worked in the Pribilofs and the women spent the summers in Unalaska.

Although trapping was good the first year, the settlers found it more difficult to live in Biorka than it had been before the war. Trade in fox furs, a Russian colonial introduction, had become the main winter source of income.

*Table 1. Participants in the postwar resettlement of Biorka, 1946 (Source: Murray 2005)*

Family Members	Demographic Information
Andrew Makarin	57, Lay reader—b. 1889 in Biorka, d. 1969
Ester Makarin	47, Andrew's wife—b. 1892 in Akutan, d. 1968
Irene Makarin	16, Andrew and Ester's adopted daughter—b. 1930 in Unalaska, d. 2004
Alex "Candy" Ermeloff	65, Chief of Biorka and lay reader—b. 1881 in Makushin or Nikolski, d. 1956
Mary Ermeloff	76, Alex's second wife—b. ca. 1870, death unknown
Irene Ermeloff	17, Alex and Mary's adopted daughter—b. 1929 in Biorka, d. 1967 in Unalaska
Ralph "Ruff" Ermeloff	36, Alex's son—b. 1910 in Makushin or Biorka, d. 1992
Agapha Ermeloff	25, Ralph's wife—b. 1921 in Biorka, d. 1970
Anastacia Ermeloff,	4—b. 1941 in Biorka
Mattie Ermeloff	3—b. 1943, d. 1949
George Yatchmenoff	55—b. 1891 Makushin, lived in Chernofski, moved to Biorka, d. 1963
Elsie Yatchmenoff	35, George's wife and daughter of Alex Ermeloff—b. 1911 in Biorka, d. 1966
Fedy Yatchmenoff	13, George and Elsie's son—b. 1933 in Unalaska, d. 2002
Margaret Yatchmenoff	9, George and Elsie's daughter—b. 1937 in Biorka
Mary Yatchmenoff	7, George and Elsie's daughter—b. 1939 in Biorka
Peter Lukanin	28, Andrew Makarin's half-nephew—b. 1918, d. 1964
Molly Lukanin	25, Peter's wife—b. 1920, d. 1965
William "Coco" Yatchmenoff	23, George's son—b. 1923 probably in Makushin, d. <1990
Nick Galaktionoff	William married Irene Makarin, Andrew and Esther's daughter.
	26, Molly Lukanin's brother—b. 1925 in Makushin
	Nick married Irene Ermeloff, Alex and Mary's daughter

Fur prices had declined precipitously since their peak in 1929. Fishing had also declined, possibly related to war-time disturbances. Biorka residents found it impossible to support themselves in the re-established village (Hudson 1998:26). Since the settlers included several school-age children, the lack of a school must have also been a factor in the decision to leave the village. The Biorka families began staying in Unalaska for longer periods, and finally settled there permanently. They settled in Unalaska rather than Akutan in part because, even before the war, they had always obtained supplies in Unalaska and had closer ties to that community. One person thought that after the war the Biorka people couldn't get along with the Akutan people. The men went to the chief of Unalaska and asked if they could move to that village instead (Lekanoff et al. 2004:104).

The first Biorka settler to move to Unalaska was George Yatchmenoff. He didn't tell Andrew he was moving, but he found a house in Unalaska and then went back to Biorka and got his wife and family. Alex Ermeloff was next, then Ruff Ermeloff. Finally Peter Lukanin came to Unalaska for the summer, planning to return to Biorka. Instead, he stayed in Unalaska.

Andrew Makarin was a Russian Orthodox lay reader. He didn't want to leave the church in Biorka, but finally he too had to move to Unalaska. A year or two later a storm hit the empty village, weakening the church and destroying several houses. Andrew came back to Biorka and got the holy icons. On a later trip, he dismantled what was left of the church and built a little house over the altar table (UCS [1978] 2005:127) (Fig. 2). By 1956, all the residents had moved, mainly to Unalaska.

Biorka was not voluntarily abandoned. Its residents made a concerted effort to return to the village even though they had been told they could not go back. Four houses left in the villages were still habitable. Andrew Makarin, the leader of the move, even obtained government help to move people back to Biorka and to build new houses. The eventual migration to Unalaska was gradual and, at least for Andrew, reluctant. The effort to resettle the village ultimately failed, for reasons that seem primarily economic. Those who returned after the war found they could no longer make a living in Biorka. The pull of home was strong, but the need for economic survival was even stronger.





*Figure 2: Small house Andrew Makarin built in 1965 at the site of Biorka church (photo courtesy Marie Lowe)*

### KASHEGA

The village of Kashega, on the northwest side of Unalaska Island, was the largest of the three “lost” villages and the farthest from Unalaska. It was the only one of the three that had a school, though it was only open for a few years. In April 1945, eighteen former Kashega residents were dropped off at Akutan (Kohlhoff 1995:157). Not all the remaining members of the community chose to come back to the Aleutians or were able to return after living in Ward Lake. Some had died during their internment. Some families were split apart by economic or health concerns, such as hospitalization for tuberculosis. At the reparation hearings held in the 1980s, one woman from Kashega testified that she, her brother, and her son were the only members of her family who returned to the Aleutians (Madden 1993:184).

Two Kashega men made a sustained attempt to resettle their former village. Fifty-year-old George Borenin and forty-nine-year-old Cornelius Kudrin, initially accompanied by Cornelius’s half-brother Mike Kudrin, went back to Kashega from Akutan (Lekanoff et al. 2004:133). George’s wife Oleta had died sometime before the war. Cornelius had been married as a young man, but the 1930 census listed him as single. Cornelius and George got along well for a time after Mike decided to go back to Akutan, but after several years they lived at opposite ends of the village and rarely interacted (Fig. 3). It was reported that when the mail boat came to Kashega, each man rowed out to the mail boat in his own dory to collect his mail (Hudson 1998:34).

In the early 1950s, Cornelius moved back to Unalaska for access to better medical care, but George was determined to stay in Kashega. Visiting in 1954, anthropologist Ted Bank II took a series of photos of George’s solitary figure in different places in Kashega, including both inside and outside the Chapel of the Transfiguration of Christ, where George had been a lay reader before the war. Even when he was the only resident of the village, George continued to take care of the church and keep it meticulously clean (Fig. 4). Finally he, too, decided to move to Unalaska (Hudson 1998:34). Before he left he tore the church down and built a little structure over the site of the altar (Lekanoff et al. 2004:63), which Andrew Makarin had done in Biorka. After moving to Unalaska, George, described from this time as “gaunt and aristocratic,” collected driftwood and fished just as he would have in Kashega (Hudson 1998:31, 39). O. Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory remembered both George and Cornelius from her childhood in Unalaska. She and her siblings called one of them “Santa Claus” and the other “Uncle Man.” Cornelius died in 1964 and George in 1966.

### MAKUSHIN

Makushin, the smallest of the three “lost” villages, was 48 km northeast of Kashega, at the base of Makushin Volcano. At the time of evacuation, it had only nine residents, but the community was not always so small. Makushin had a proud history of successfully resisting the Russians in the mid-eighteenth century; its rebellion ended when the Russians captured the Makushin chief (UCS [1978] 2005:74).

Elia Borenin and his three adopted children, Nick, Akinfa, and Matrona, were the only four surviving residents of Makushin who returned to the Aleutian Islands after the war. Both Elia’s wife Eva and his brother’s fifteen-year-old daughter Eva had died at Ward Lake a few days apart in the spring of 1943 and were buried side by side in the Ketchikan cemetery. Upon return from Ward Lake, Elia and his family settled in Akutan (Lekanoff et al. 2004:147). Matrona only stayed in the Aleutians for a short time after the war and then returned to southeast Alaska to the newly opened Sitka Sanatorium for treatment of children with tuberculosis. She later went to boarding school at Mt. Edgecombe in Sitka. Akinfa died in Akutan in 1951. Elia lived in Akutan until his death in 1965.



*Figure 3: Cornelius Kudrun and George Borenin at Chernofski in 1948 (photo courtesy Alaska State Library Historical Collection)*



*Figure 4: George Borenin inside Kashaga church (photo courtesy University of Alaska Anchorage, Ted Bank II Collection)*

A villainous Norwegian storekeeper, Pete Olsen, ran the town of Makushin like a dictator, especially in the decade prior to World War II. If someone crossed him, Pete drove the person out of town. He was the only likely suspect in the murder of three men in 1937, two of whom were set to testify against him at an upcoming trial. He successfully blamed their deaths on a walrus attack. Pete was one of the few non-Natives evacuated to southeast Alaska in 1942 with other village residents. Pete, his Unangan wife Katie, and his adopted son Johnny separated from the rest of the group in Wrangell and settled there. Johnny, his son, was sent to a tuberculosis sanitarium in Tacoma and died there in 1944. Katie appears in a list of internees at Burnett Inlet in 1944 (Murray 2005) and died in a house fire in Wrangell in 1948. Pete died in 1954 in Wrangell (*Alaska Weekly* 1954).

Unlike Kashaga and Biorka, Makushin was never resettled after the war. Perhaps the widowed Elia Borenin didn't want to live all alone in Makushin. Elia's adopted son Nick Borenin, then in his early twenties, also stayed in Akutan. He had a girlfriend there, who became his wife (Lekanoff et al. 2004:130).

Former Makushin residents continued to camp occasionally in the village. Some of the houses in the village were damaged but some were habitable when a few people camped there after Christmas in 1945 for trapping (Lekanoff et al. 2004:147). Pete Olsen's large house was still there, empty. Despite the hardship of being interned at Ward Lake, the Makushin people also had unhappy memories from their own village.

### DECISIONS TO STAY AWAY OR RETURN

Despite attempts, the villages of Biorka, Kashaga, and Makushin were never permanently resettled after World War II. Their populations, already small before the war, were significantly reduced after the wartime relocations. At least twenty internees from the small villages had died at Ward Lake, representing more than ten percent of the original population, and about six others had been removed for treatment of tuberculosis. Others had married or taken jobs in southeast Alaska.

As occurred in the past, some Unangan migration was by individual choice. Other decisions to move were collective and often initiated by the chief. Village leaders, especially the chiefs and church readers, played an essential part in the Biorka, Kashaga, and Makushin villagers' decisions about where to live after the war. The role of



the chief evolved and changed during the Russian and American periods.

Prior to European contact, Unangan chiefs functioned mainly as lineage heads and war leaders. Their role became more complex under Russian rule, when colonial administrators relied on Unangan chiefs to maintain order and organize labor (Bateman 2005:2). A village chief was elected by the village residents but had to be approved by the Russian managers as well. The revised role of chief as a middleman between the village and the outside world carried over to the American era. As Unangan oral histories show, in the early twentieth century a village chief had broad powers to allow someone to live in the village, allow fishing or hunting near a village, arrange marriages, or direct a couple to give up a child for adoption. There might be a second or third chief as well, whose authority was slightly less than that of the first chief. The experience of evacuation and internment in an unfamiliar setting outside their control hastened the loss of these traditional functions of village leaders.

Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin each had a Russian Orthodox chapel. In the absence of a resident priest, a local lay reader presided over services. Like the chief, the lay reader had authority in the village. Responsibilities might be divided between the more secular duties of the first chief and the church duties of the lay reader, who also served as second or third chief. Andrew Makarin, who led the attempt to resettle the village of Biorka after World War II, was a church lay reader. Interviews with Makarin in the 1980s reveal his memories of past strong leadership by chiefs. He said the many villages formerly dotted around Beaver Inlet were all ruled over by one powerful chief living on the east end of the inlet. The other villages had to ask the chief's permission to hunt sea lion or whale; sometimes he granted it, but at other times he refused. He also told the others when they could hunt. As soon as a village had the chief's permission, its top hunters went out so they did not waste the opportunity they had been given to hunt. The main chief had guards out to stop people who hunted without his express approval. Each chief also directed division of the meat after a whale was taken (UCS [1978] 2005:119–120). In his own era, Andrew followed chiefly protocol in village migration. He asked permission of the chief at Unalaska before he moved there after living at Biorka for almost a decade.

The American government treated a secular chief as more powerful than a church lay reader, but in some contexts a church reader had more influence. Before the war

Andrew Makarin was not the first chief of Biorka, but as a church reader, he took a leadership role in the resettlement of the community. One person suggested Andrew found it difficult to stay in Akutan because he did not get along with the chief there. The government agencies resettling the Unangan after the war probably did not consult the Akutan chief to ask whether the residents of the smaller villages could resettle there. George Borenin, one of the two men who resettled Kashega, was both the chief and the lay reader of that village. After the war, although both he and Cornelius Kudrin returned to live in the village, only George was in charge of the church.

Unalaska was an administrative hub and commercial center under both the Russians and the Americans. In the first part of the twentieth century, the Native chief of Unalaska was considered the paramount "chief of all the Aleuts" (Bateman 2005). However, this title may have been imposed by the Americans and not accurately reflect the powers of the chiefs (Berreman 1953:17). In fact, much of the power to direct moves from one village to another in the American era appeared to rest with the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) agents and later with independent storekeepers. The records of ACC agents in the Unalaska Island area shows that these men assumed authority over the Unangan villagers in matters of employment and migration (Lekanoff et al. 2004:12–16).

In addition to resting with chiefs or lay readers, leadership in Unangan communities was often assigned to or assumed by non-Natives who took charge of the villages. Even before the war, the evacuees from Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka had had decisions made for them. When the residents of these small villages were told to pack up to go to southeast Alaska, they did not challenge the order. At Ward Lake, the government designated a non-Native teacher from Nikolski and her husband to be in charge of the camp, just as white teachers were put in charge of the Unangan at other evacuation camps.

Nevertheless, during the internment the Unangan chiefs continued to represent their villages as advocates. While the residents of the small villages were interned at Ward Lake, for example, the chief of Akutan wrote a letter to the newspaper protesting the treatment of the Unangan in Ketchikan (Commission on Wartime Relocation 1982:349). At Burnett Inlet, the chief of Unalaska agitated on behalf of his village for a better relocation site, continuing his efforts after his wife died within a few months of arrival at the internment site (Kohlhoff 1995:102–103).

After the war, the Unangan returning to the Unalaska Island areas found that many of their houses and churches had been damaged or destroyed by the military. Weather had also taken its toll. Ironically, the empty sites of Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega did not suffer as much harm as Unalaska or Nikolski, where soldiers' looting added to natural damages.

The Biorka church was intact but in Makushin the church building had already started leaking (Galaktionoff in Lekanoff et al. 2004:148). In Kashega, lay reader George Borenin took good care of the church and kept it meticulously clean inside, even when he was the only worshipper there. In a study of the 1964 Alaska earthquake, Nancy Yaw Davis has written about factors influencing rebuilding or abandonment of Alutiiq villages. She found that some villagers based their decision to stay in their original location on whether the church survived. If the church had been destroyed, there was no longer a reason to go back to the village (Davis 1970:138). Residents of Kashega and Biorka appear to have made similar decisions after World War II.

Unlike those from other Aleutian communities, the internees from the smallest villages had been unable to bring the icons or other holy objects with them to southeast Alaska. There was no priest at Ward Lake, but the residents of the small villages managed to hold church services. One building was converted to use as a chapel, and lay readers from the villages led services there (Berreman 1953:257). Conflict over the division of responsibilities between lay readers from different villages is a possible source of stress during the war.

After the war, when the last hope of resettling Biorka or Kashega was gone, in each case a lay reader carefully closed the church. The 1928 abandonment of Chernofski, a former village on Unalaska Island, gives evidence of this customary practice when leaving a village. That year, after many of the Chernofski inhabitants succumbed to disease, several of the dozen or so remaining residents moved to Kashega. Others, including the chief, moved to Unalaska; one man went to Biorka. The Chernofski population had been decimated by illness, and the few people left tore down their church and then waited for transport. They took items of value to the Kashega church (UCS [1978] 2005:8). Similarly, when Kashega and Biorka were abandoned for the last time, lay readers dismantled the church and built a little structure where the altar had been.

The church still represents the essence of each village to those who once lived there. As part of the National Park

Service's "Lost Villages" project, in late August 2009 elderly surviving residents, their descendents and relatives, and agency staff prepared for a trip to revisit two of the lost villages, Kashega and Makushin, on the R/V *Tiġlaġ*, the USFWS research vessel. The importance of the Russian Orthodox Church became apparent as the elders and descendents planned for the trip. The Ounalashka Corporation's maintenance department made two crosses, one for Makushin and one for Kashega. The priest in Unalaska blessed both of the crosses before the boat left. Rough seas prevented the *Tiġlaġ* from reaching Kashega, so only Makushin was visited. There, planting the cross at the site of the old church, now completely gone, became the central focus of the visit. Nick Lekanoff, called "Starosta" in Unalaska for his role as Russian Orthodox Church elder, was more concerned about the church than any other aspect of the village. He directed the younger people how to position the cross.

The lack of schools and teachers, and the low number of students in the smallest villages, also must have played a part in the decision to resettle only Akutan and Nikolski. There was no teacher for Biorka, Makushin, or Kashega. Unalaska had been a hub village since Russian colonial times. Historically, some boys were sent to Unalaska from surrounding villages to go to school, perhaps coming from the wealthier families or those with the best connections to the church. Unlike the experiences of many Alaska Natives, this migration for education was not forced by the government but was by choice of the students' families. None of the three villages of Biorka, Makushin, or Kashega had an operating school at the time of evacuation in 1942. Before the war, some of the children in these small villages had never attended school at all. Akutan and Nikolski had schools operated by the BIA, as did Kashega, briefly, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the internment at Ward Lake, the Nikolski teacher held classes for all the school-aged children. After the war, the schools at Akutan and Nikolski were reopened, but two teachers had to divide their time between both villages. Several individuals and families eventually migrated from Akutan or Nikolski to Unalaska.

In prewar times residents of the villages around Unalaska Island took a variety of temporary jobs as longshoremen, fishermen, and construction workers, often in Unalaska (Kohlhoff 1995:7). Women more often stayed in their home villages while the men traveled to work. After the war, most employment in the region was in Unalaska. Kashega was closer than the other villages

to the Chernofski sheep ranch, and a few of the Kashega residents—notably those with kinship connections to Chernofski village—found short-term employment there. Before the war, the whaling station at Akutan occasionally employed some Unangan, and some people from Nikolski found work at a ranch near their community. After the war, while neither Akutan nor Nikolski could compete with Unalaska in money-making opportunities, they provided more than either Biorka or Kashega. After the war, Akutan and Nikolski people experienced the same deflation of fur prices as other trappers in the region. Dumond's paper on displaced villages on the Alaska Peninsula (this volume) illustrates how, in another part of Alaska, the availability of subsistence or commercial resources or of seasonal jobs could either draw people back to their villages or propel them to move elsewhere.

Historically, Unangan used deserted villages as temporary camps for trapping or subsistence pursuits. For example, after Chernofski was abandoned in the late 1920s, the old village was used in winter as a fox-trapping camp. The trappers went from Kashega to Chernofski in baidarkas and stayed two or three months (UCS [1978] 2005:105). In the winter of 1945–1946, some of the men went back to Makushin for trapping. There was still a very good stove in Pete Olsen's house, the largest in the village, but the men didn't use it. Instead, they stayed in Elia Borenin's house (Lekanoff et al. 2004:103). Biorka trappers went back to their own village in the belief that the red foxes there had longer fur. Finding that four houses were still livable, they stayed in Andrew Makarin's house. The low fur prices after the war soon led trappers to abandon their efforts.

Each of the villages had been known in the past for particular subsistence resources, contributing to the interdependence of the Unalaska Island communities and their hub, Unalaska. Certainly the large berries or good fishing locations were nostalgically remembered by the people who left the villages behind. Kashega had plenty of salmonberries and blackberries, but not many blueberries, while Biorka was a good place to get big salmonberries and blueberries. Silver salmon were abundant in Biorka (Lekanoff et al. 2004:200); rockfish and sea urchins were also found near the village. Makushin had rockfish, hot springs, and medicinal plants (Lekanoff et al. 2004:133, 151). On the other hand, Makushin had no wood at all and its residents had to travel far to find driftwood.

Life in the remote villages required health and vigor. George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin were older single

men when they decided to go to Kashega. A picture of them taken in 1948 (Fig. 3) shows their cheerful smiles after they had gone from Kashega to the Chernofski ranch in an open skiff. Eventually, however, both of them moved to Unalaska because of their failing health and need for medical care. Members of the postwar Biorka colony, too, found life there increasingly difficult. As they got older, the men could not carry their groceries on their backs anymore, as they had in the past when they went by skiff and on foot from Biorka to Unalaska for supplies. Only a few of the Biorka settlers were youthful and agile enough to carry such packs (Lekanoff et al. 2004:196–197).

Before the war, there were many kinship connections, as well as individual migrations, among the villages around Unalaska Island. There were always marriages between people from Chernofski and Kashega, like Eva Tcheripanoff's parents, or between Biorka and Akutan, like Andrew and Esther Makarin. Marriages were often arranged by parents, priests, or chiefs. The wartime experience may have increased the possibility of choice and courtship. Nick Galaktionoff thought some of the young men from smaller villages wanted to stay on in Akutan after the war because they liked the Akutan girls (Lekanoff et al. 2004:179). Certainly, as a result of internment together, there were other marriages between people from different villages. Eva Tcheripanoff, from Kashega, met her husband John from Akutan while they were in southeast Alaska. They married right after the war (Lekanoff et al. 2004:63).

As they had done before the war, people also moved between villages when family members needed their help. Eva Tcheripanoff stayed in Akutan, her husband's village, after the war, but her mother Sophie Pletnikoff settled in Unalaska instead. As Sophie's health failed, Eva kept going to Unalaska to stay with her sick mother, even after she had children. Finally she convinced her husband to move to Unalaska (Lekanoff et al. 2004:88).

## CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING VILLAGES BEHIND

Prior to European contact, Unangan settlements or individual residents relocated for a variety of reasons. During the Russian colonial era, Unangan communities were frequently moved, abandoned, or consolidated. Other relocations, such as those caused by epidemics or commercial opportunities, were indirectly related to Russian or American influences. While the evacuations of World War II were the first dislocation experience for some of the residents of the

lost villages, others had previously moved from one village to another, and a few who had once lived in Chernofski had even participated in disbanding a village.

Most had heard stories from parents or grandparents about past moves. Nick Galaktionoff, for example, remembered hearing that Makushin moved a few kilometers, from Volcano Bay to its present location, at the end of the nineteenth century around the time that almost all the residents died in an epidemic. Whole families died in their barabaras. One of the three who didn't get sick had the job of walking from Volcano Bay to the new village to carry back lumber to build coffins (UCS [1978] 2005:94).

Unangan were also accustomed to regular seasonal migrations. In the prewar years, people in the tiny villages left in summer to work in the Pribilofs, in winter for trapping, during the school year for education, and at various times for medical care. If they wanted to get married without waiting a year or more for the next visit from the priest, they needed to take a boat to Unalaska.

When the former residents of Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega were brought back to the Aleutians after internment in southeast Alaska, their inability to return to their home villages expedited the process of leaving behind a traditional way of life. If the government had allowed them to return home, they might have eventually moved to other villages. If the villages had not been evacuated during World War II, they still might have been abandoned within a few years.

Postwar life in Kashega, Makushin, or Biorka was harder than it had been before the war. There were no stores or schools in any of the villages. Driftwood, already in short supply, had become even more difficult to procure. Fox trapping no longer brought much money. Fishing was poor, many thought as a result of disturbances caused by the war and military presence. The men continued to go to the Pribilofs for the seal harvest, but while they were gone the women went to Unalaska instead of occupying themselves with subsistence pursuits in their village, as they used to do. The villages had never been economically autonomous but were linked with other villages in a seasonal pattern that allowed for both wage labor and subsistence pursuits. After the war, the hub of Unalaska became the only site of economic activity.

The wartime relocation also broadened the Unangan social horizon. Nancy Yaw Davis found that after the 1964 Alaska earthquake, the Alutiiq villagers she studied had greater knowledge of the available social services (Davis 1971:409), but they also had a greater awareness of them-

selves as an "outsider" group, marginal to mainstream society. Similarly, wartime experiences in Ward Lake may have given Unangan an opportunity to learn how to request help from government agencies. Andrew Makarin, for example, went to the BIA, the U.S. deputy marshall, and the military to get help in moving the Biorka people back after the war. George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin, on the other hand, appeared to have no agency support for their modest existence in Kashega.

Despite their experience of dissonant culture in internment camps, the Unangan taken to southeast Alaska had a practical response to their situation. Some of them lodged protests, but others dealt with their situation by getting jobs outside the internment camps. Asked whether he liked his stay at Wrangell Institute before Ward Lake, Bill Ermeloff replied, "Sure, it was something new" (Ermeloff 2008). As poor as conditions might have been in Ward Lake, some happy developments came from being grouped together with other Aleutian villagers. A couple of marriages occurred between young people from different villages. Some also made lasting business contacts and friendships with non-Unangan in southeast Alaska.

## THEMES IN THE EXPERIENCES OF THE LOST VILLAGES

Although extensive village resettlement occurred in pre-Russian times, the Russian colonials brought Unangan villagers their first experiences with forced displacement and emplacement. Voluntary displacement or emplacement requires group or individual agency or will, while forced migration is something imposed on a group (Turton 2003). The experiences of the residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin illustrate four combinations of the themes of displacement and emplacement, voluntary and enforced migration. Table 2 shows some of the villages' experiences of the combined themes.

In precontact times, it was not uncommon for Unangan villages to move for greater access to resources. During the Russian colonial era, when many villages were decimated by disease and the Russian administrators needed to consolidate population for labor, the villagers experienced involuntary displacement. The Russians brought Unangan to settle the Pribilof Islands solely for the fur seal harvest. As Unangan were drawn into commercial enterprises, they also made decisions to stay in or move from a community based on opportunities for work or cash.



*Table 2: Displacement and emplacement, voluntary and forced, in the recent history of Biorka, Kashaga, and Makushin*

Voluntary Displacement	Forced Displacement
Leaving old Beaver Inlet villages, ca. 1880–1900. Cause: natural disaster	Evacuation to southeast Alaska, 1942. Cause: ostensible safety precaution
Leaving old Makushin village in Volcano Bay to build new village, ca.1898. Cause: Depopulation from epidemic disease	Individuals leaving Makushin, ca.1937. Cause: escaping despotic storekeeper
Leaving Chernofsky, 1928. Cause: Depopulation from epidemic disease	
Leaving Biorka, ca.1956. Cause: difficulty living without services or cash opportunities	
Leaving Kashaga, ca.1956. Cause: difficulty living without services or cash opportunities	
Voluntary Emplacement	Forced Emplacement
Consolidation at Biorka, 1880–1900. Cause: natural disaster	Placement at Ward Lake, 1942–1945. Cause: ostensible safety precaution
Individuals living in Ketchikan instead of Ward Lake in wartime, 1942–1945. Cause: need for employment, dissatisfaction with conditions	Placement at Akutan, 1945. Cause: Not worth the trouble of resettling in old village
Resettling Biorka, 1946. Cause: desire for independence	
Resettling Kashaga, 1946? Cause: desire for independence	
Moving from Biorka to Unalaska, ca.1956. Cause: isolation need for employment/cash	
Moving from Kashaga to Unalaska, ca. 1956. Cause: health issues, isolation, need for employment/cash	

The evacuation of Unangan people to southeast Alaska was an involuntary displacement to a foreign environment commanded by the U.S. government. It resulted in the demise of several villages, whose residents were told that they would have to live somewhere else. Some returned to their villages anyway and found that they could not return to their homes. The life they had left behind was impossible to recover. Since they were practical, they moved according to need and changed circumstances, temporarily or permanently, as individuals or groups. The physical displacement did not sever their ties to a village or region. The residents' attachment to the former villages lived on in stories and memory.

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## SECTION II: INTRODUCTION

### MOVED BY THE STATE: PERSPECTIVES ON RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH

Peter Schweitzer

Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, PO Box 757720, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7720; ppschweitzer@alaska.edu

The two papers in the following section are the result of the collaborative research project “Moved by the State: Perspectives on Relocation and Resettlement in the Circumpolar North” (MOVE). As the project leader of MOVE, it may be appropriate to introduce this section with a few words about the project and its approach to population movements in the circumpolar North.

MOVE is one of seven projects with the EURO-CORES scheme Histories From the North—Environments, Movements, Narratives (BOREAS) of the European Science Foundation (ESF). BOREAS has been an innovative program, the first European funding scheme entirely focused on arctic humanities and social science research. Likewise, this was one of the first ESF attempts to include U.S. and Canadian funding into its portfolio (the research by Mikow was funded through NSF, and Rockhill’s work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada).

MOVE was first conceptualized in discussions between Yvon Csonka (University of Greenland at the time), Tim Heleniak (University of Maryland), Florian Stammler (University of Lapland), Niobe Thompson (University of Alberta; he was later replaced by Elena Khlinovskaya Rockhill), and myself in 2005. After the collaborative project passed ESF reviews in 2006, five individual MOVE projects were started in College Park, Edmonton, Fairbanks, Nuuk, and Rovaniemi in late 2006 and 2007. The five research teams focused on different spatial, temporal, and topical aspects of the overall themes and questions. Given the tremendous impact of Soviet and Russian interventions, three projects had their primary focus in Russia. Other circumpolar regions covered include Alaska, north-eastern Canada, and Greenland. Each project dealt with

indigenous and nonindigenous northern residents, thereby overcoming a common dichotomy in arctic social sciences (see also Khlinovskaya-Rockhill, this issue). As of 2011, almost all of the individual projects have been completed.

The starting point for the project was the recognition that the twentieth century in the circumpolar North had been characterized by state projects that regulated and engineered the movements of human groups. On the one hand, indigenous communities were enticed or forced to settle around newly developed infrastructural nodes, such as churches, schools, and stores. On the other hand, the planned movement of a nonindigenous work force to the North was a necessary requirement for the realization of “high-modernism” state projects (Scott 1998) north of the temperate zones. At the turn of the twenty-first century, several new developments emerged: indigenous communities started to question the authority of state projects, the Russian state initiated a massive resettlement project aimed at moving workers south again, and climate change began to threaten the existence of many coastal communities.

Previous research on various forms of state-sponsored migration and resettlement had focused almost exclusively on the political motivations and repercussions, as well as demographic consequences, of such movements. While these lines of inquiry are important, they provide no clues about local perceptions and impacts. This, in turn, leads to poor predictions about the possible consequences of voluntary and involuntary future movements on northern populations. We saw the need for ethnographic attention to local ways of perceiving, experiencing, and reacting to state interventions, coupled with comparative perspectives focusing on the political, economic, and demographic trends in which local developments are embedded. We

were also interested in “place-making”—that is, the strategies individuals and communities use to appropriate new social and geographic space, to remember places of past habitation, and to imagine future spatial circumstances.

While the two papers to follow showcase some of the breadth of the MOVE project, they cannot cover all of it. By focusing on Alaska and the Russian Far East, we had to eliminate regional examples from Greenland, the European Russian North, and western Siberia. Likewise, important work resulting from MOVE on post-Soviet demographic trends (e.g., Heleniak 2009) and on labor recruitment in western Siberia’s oil and gas industry (Dzida et al. 2009) cannot be covered here. Even MOVE Alaska cannot be fully represented in this issue. Elizabeth Marino’s important work in Shishmaref can only be mentioned here, as well as its important connections to the historical King Island case (see Kingston and Marino 2010).

Now, let me finally say a few words about the two papers represented here. Elizabeth Mikow’s paper, “Three Times and Counting: Remembering Past Relocations and Discussing the Future in Kaktovik, Alaska,” is based on her master’s thesis, which she completed in summer of 2010 at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In a way, Mikow’s topic is at the heart of MOVE: a small indigenous community “moved by the state,” in this case by the U.S. military. The example of Kaktovik is interesting because the community endured multiple relocation events, which were conducted differently and led to different community responses. At the same time, Kaktovik is one of many Alaska coastal communities threatened by erosion and facing the prospect of another relocation.

The Russian Far East certainly experienced more than its share of state-induced population movements. While the relocation of small indigenous communities in Chukotka has been investigated within MOVE (e.g., Holzlehner 2011) and before (Krupnik and Chlenov 2007), the role of the state in nonindigenous population movements has rarely been studied in the same context. Elena Khlinovskaya Rockhill’s article, “Living in Two Places: Permanent Transiency in the Magadan Region,” focuses on a region traumatized by Stalin’s labor camps and deals with the quest for belonging that characterizes many northern settler communities (e.g., Thompson 2008). In Magadan—in Kaktovik and many other places in the North—past patterns of place-making cannot be ignored when thinking about present and future configurations.

In the end, “Moved by the State” demonstrates that community relocations are never entirely voluntary and rarely completely involuntary. Instead, the story of state-induced population movements is about how local individuals and communities navigate and negotiate external pressures, power hierarchies, and cultural discriminations. Anthropology is in a privileged position to provide a perspective that highlights local agency, a perspective that is all the more important given the pending relocations of the twenty-first century.

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# THIRD TIME AND COUNTING: REMEMBERING PAST RELOCATIONS AND DISCUSSING THE FUTURE IN KAKTOVIK, ALASKA

Elizabeth Mikow

Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, P.O. Box 757720, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7720;  
ehmikow@alaska.edu

## ABSTRACT

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the United States began to put defensive measures into place in Alaska to guard against attack by the Soviet Union. These measures included constructing airfields and a system of radar stations known as the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line. Barter Island, home to the Iñupiaq village of Kaktovik, was chosen for both an airfield and a DEW line installation, which resulted in three forced relocations between 1947 and 1964. Kaktovik is currently threatened by coastal erosion and may be forced to move again. Drawing from current perspectives and memories of the villagers, I explore how community members negotiated their relationships with the military and a changing physical environment and describe local perspectives on coastal erosion and relocation.

**KEYWORDS:** DEW line, Iñupiat, Alaska Native communities, erosion, relocation

Walking through the village of Kaktovik, Alaska, one constantly encounters reminders of a military past. Remnants of rusted oil drums litter the beach, Quonset huts stand beside modern housing, and the DEW line facility, now a part of the Alaska Radar System, stands in the background. This military past shaped the course of the history of this community, one that includes three forced relocations in less than two decades. One danger of looking at the state as a force of social change is the risk of viewing the actions as stemming from a unified entity. Michel Foucault ([1991] 2006) illustrates the idea of state involvement through the concept of “governmentality,” a composite formed by institutions, their actions, and calculations that allow for the exercise of governmental techniques with which to intervene within a population. The stability of the population is the end goal for this intervention, which in turn makes the population more governable. This composite, in his view, contains a whole host of “governmental apparatuses,” creating and using different kinds of knowledge that act upon society (Foucault [1991] 2006:142). I consider the situation that unfolded in Kaktovik in light of state authority,

conveyed by different institutions and actors. These actions were prompted by concerns of national security and, as such, were focused upon the stability of the greater population of the country as a whole. In any case, tensions at the international level brought state intervention—in the form of the U.S. Air Force—upon this community. The human element in state decision making is important to remember. Norman Long (2001) explains that research on development examines social change at the broader scope of institutions, structures, and trends on the one hand, and changes at the level of the actors themselves on the other. While social changes can certainly be caused by external forces, these forces have to enter the lived worlds of individuals and groups, who in turn negotiate and alter them. Changes to social order come about through the communications and struggles between different kinds of social actors, not only those who are directly interacting with each other, but also those who are not physically present and whose actions influence and alter the situation. The agency and power of particular institutions, then, is formed by networks of individuals (Long 2001).

This paper explores the Kaktovik relocations within the social and historical context in which they occurred in order to understand how members of the community negotiated their relationships with the military as an extension of the state. I draw upon current perspectives and memories of the villagers as they reflect upon their own history and how they feel the relocations and the presence of the military have shaped the community in which they live. Kaktovik also faces the threat of coastal erosion; therefore, this legacy of relocation may continue in the future. I also explore local perspectives on how another relocation of the village should take place if it does become necessary.

Going beyond a simplified view of forced relocation as an event in which the powerful state imposes its will upon a helpless population, I instead look at how villagers actively negotiated their changing physical environment and relationships with the state. Turton (2006) discusses what constitutes forced migration within the context of development-induced displacement. He advocates viewing a forced migrant as an ordinary person placed in a particular social, political, and historical context. By viewing migrants in this light, we avoid depersonalization and include individual agency in the picture (Turton 2006). Turton's ideas are echoed by Long (2001:13), who feels that social actors need to be recognized not simply as "passive recipients of intervention," but instead as individuals who actively process information and strategically engage with others at different levels. Long discusses the importance of exploring the ways in which people deal with difficult situations by their actions and choices, "turning the 'bad' into the 'less bad'" (2001:14). As I demonstrate below, past relocations at Kaktovik were forced in the strictest sense of the word, but individuals were active in dealing with the changes imposed upon them.

Much of the information presented here was obtained through fieldwork conducted in the village in May 2009. During my three-week stay, I formally interviewed fourteen current residents of Kaktovik and had informal conversations with a number of individuals. In order to inform the community of the goals of my research and the reason for my presence, I made a public presentation in the community center in conjunction with another researcher, Stacey Fritz. While the majority of interviews were taken in English, a few individuals spoke Iñupiaq, and these interviews were facilitated by Kaktovik resident Clarice Akootchook.

## BACKGROUND

A large prehistoric village once existed on Barter Island, as noted by Canadian explorer and anthropologist Diamond Jenness (1991), who counted thirty to forty old house sites there in 1914. According to oral history accounts, these ruins were that of the Qagmaliks, or "people-from-farthest-away" (Libbey 1983:2), most likely a whaling group from Canada. The abandonment of this settlement may have been due to warfare with Iñupiat from Alaska. One legend states that this conflict was caused by the Qagmalik murder of an Iñupiaq couple's only son, whose body was fished out of the water with a seining net. This legend is said to have given Kaktovik (Qaaktugvik) its name, which translates as "seining place" (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:3). A similar situation occurred in the mid-to-late 1930s, when a man named Pipsuk was reported to have drowned in the lagoon on the eastern side of the island. A seining net was used to pull his body to shore, and the name of the modern community of Kaktovik was adopted in memory of the event (Libbey 1983:3).

Before the 1920s there was no year-round settlement at Barter Island, and for centuries the region was an important location of trade between Canadian Inuit and Iñupiat from the Barrow region (Nielson 1977). The island was also used as a seasonal home for subsistence hunting and fishing and at the turn of the twentieth century, as a stop for commercial whalers in the region. The first year-round settlement came into being in the 1920s, when Andrew Akootchook and his family moved to Barter Island. Andrew was the brother-in-law of trader Tom Gordon, who was convinced to move his fur trading post to the island because of its good harbor and excellent hunting opportunities (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:3). Because of the existence of a store on the island and easy access to hunting grounds in the mountains, people began to settle along the coast around Barter Island. Fur trapping was a large portion of the local economy, with furs serving as a form of currency with which to obtain store goods and supplies (Libbey 1983:16). Although a year-round settlement existed during the 1920s and 1930s, most of the inhabitants of the region continued to live a seminomadic lifestyle spread out along the coast, mainly gathering around the trading post during holidays and special events (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982). Contact with non-native settlers during this period was minimal, consisting of dealings with the local trader and occasional



visits from scientists, explorers, and missionaries (Nielson 1977). The economy in the region changed drastically when the price of fur declined in 1936, heralding the end of the trapping era. This, combined with the end of reindeer herding in the late 1930s, led several families to move to Herschel Island, Canada (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:5). Isaac Akootchook, a resident of Kaktovik, recalled that after 1936 “people began scattering—moving out. A few stayed” (Libbey 1983:65). For those who did stay, the first military contact occurred in the 1940s, when Marvin “Muktuk” Marston came to the community to organize the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) during World War II (Nielson 1977). Unbeknownst to the inhabitants of Kaktovik, by 1946 the U.S. military had begun an investigation into building and updating existing radar stations in Alaska to protect against a northern attack by the Soviet Union. Worries about attacks from Soviet bombers coming over the pole prompted concerns over the fact that the only operational airfields in Alaska were in the Aleutians, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Nome. The commander of the Alaskan Air Command began closing Aleutian bases in late 1946, and air power was subsequently moved closer to perceived enemy bomber routes in the North (Denfeld 1994).

### THE FIRST MOVE, 1947

Before 1947, those who remained in Kaktovik were concentrated on a spit on the eastern side of the island. In July of 1947, the Air Force arrived on Barter Island in order to build a 5,000-foot runway and hangar. While the unexpected arrival of the military must have been unsettling, the situation worsened when the village was informed that this airstrip would be built on the very site where they were currently living. This action was presumably covered under Public Land Order (PLO) 82 of 1943, which allowed for the withdrawal of lands for the purposes of the war, but no specific withdrawal order had been made in the case of Kaktovik. The forced relocation of the village was to happen immediately, and villagers had little time to gather their possessions. Few of the villagers spoke English, and many did not understand why they were being moved (Nielson 1977). Mary Ann Warden, a resident of Kaktovik who was five years old at the time of the first relocation, explained this event as a kind of “invasion.” She remembered being terrified of the military men who came into the village and recalled the startling effect of the loud noises that accompanied the big ships offloading

their supplies. She was stopped with her cousin by two military men who wanted to ask them a question:

We were just walking along, and all at once we stopped by these two guys, those guys in uniform, and we just stand there and...had no idea what to say because we didn't understand English back then, this was before they started teaching us English. We're just standing there, and you know we're very cultural, we have to stand, and with our heads down, if the elders are talking to us, we have to stand and you don't move if the elder is talking to you...you have to stand and keep your head down and listen. And then if they stop, then you take off while they stopped talking. And we took off! [laughs] We couldn't...understand them anyhow! And we go into the house where everybody was, and we ran in there and they said, “What did they say? What did they say?” And we were all talking in Iñupiaq (Warden 2009).

The village at this time consisted mostly of sod houses, driftwood structures, and a few frame buildings, the fragments of which were hauled about a mile away from the original site by bulldozers. In addition to the destruction of homes, this abrupt movement led to the loss of personal possessions and valuable ice cellars, which prompted an angry response from inhabitants (Chance 1990). Daniel Akootchook (2009), a resident of Kaktovik, explained that the villagers had to take all of their possessions out of their sod homes and carry them to the new village site on foot and that the food stored in the ice cellars was lost during the move. Another resident, Ben Linn, described the amount of labor that went into constructing ice cellars by hand:

when that pick gets dull, get a camp stove, heat up the pick end and start banging it back into a point, and then just keep at it again. Keep at it and keep at it. Yep, that's all we used: pick and shovel. But there was my father, Adam, me, Isaac, Dorothy, about five of us, six of us, just go down there and work for a couple hours, and chip at it. Take us about eight months or so, or somewhere around there (Ben Linn 2009).

Left without housing, community members proceeded to build new homes and dig new ice cellars, mostly with the aid of cast-off DEW-line lumber either given to them by the station personnel or found in the dump located at the end of the spit (Chance 1990). Daniel Akootchook (2009) remembered finding lumber floating in the lagoon that had either fallen off or been cast aside by a Navy ship. He explained that he went out in his boat and collected



the lumber from the water and took it back to the village to use to construct a home.

During interviews, several individuals pointed out that none of the military personnel helped them during the building process. The organization of the community itself was left to the discretion of the inhabitants, and Norman Chance, who was in the village in the late 1950s, noted that the houses were arranged in a manner that allowed close relatives to live next to each other and were built with the help of extended family members. While at first glance the layout may have appeared disorganized, with the houses facing a number of different directions and unbounded by roads, this arrangement allowed for close kin to share the same power generators for electricity (Chance 1990). Construction activities extended to other community buildings as well. Norajane Burns (2009) remembered her grandmother telling her about how Harold Kaveolook organized the construction of the village's first school out of DEW-line material and packing crates, piecing it together with the help of the community out of what they could salvage from the dump. The construction of the school began in 1950, the same year the U.S. census counted forty-six people living in Kaktovik (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:5). The presence of the DEW line and the school would have profound effects on the village in the future.

The first encounter with the military was clearly a forced relocation. The politically charged climate of the Cold War and its accompanying international tensions brought sweeping changes to the community of Kaktovik. The Air Force, with authority granted by the federal government, bulldozed the original village site in order to make way for a military installation. Those living in the community were put in a difficult and painful situation as they watched their homes and possessions being destroyed by individuals with whom they were largely unable to communicate. Despite this disadvantageous position, community members were active in negotiating the changes imposed upon them. As Long (2001) and Turton (2006) remind us, forced migrants are social actors who are operating in a particular social, political, economic, and historical context. Even in the most difficult of situations, they actively work for their own interests. In Kaktovik, community members picked up the pieces after the destruction of their village and rebuilt their homes with what materials were available to them. Although they did not choose the new location of their village, they chose where their homes were built and worked together to recreate their community.

## GROWING MILITARY PRESENCE AND THE SECOND MOVE, 1948–1963

The construction of the airstrip was the first step in the creation of a much larger arctic radar system. By 1949, the United States had already planned to construct a 400-mile experimental line from Kaktovik to Barrow, a plan that was cemented in the summer of 1952 when the concept for the DEW line emerged (Nielson 1977). In preparation for construction of a larger facility in the village, Kaktovik had been withdrawn as a military reserve in 1951 by PLO 715. This order allowed the Air Force to assume control over 4,500 acres of land, including nearly the entire island. While some provisions were made with respect to subsistence activities and rights of possession, the order stated that all withdrawn lands would be returned to the Department of the Interior when they were no longer needed for the purposes of the military installation (Chapman 1951). Air Force contractors began construction of the DEW-line station in August 1952 (Nielson 1977). Despite the growing presence of the military and outside contractors, there was some level of control at the village level. Mary Ann Warden (2009) explained that her grandfather would not allow any military presence in the village during the wintertime unless the individual coming in was a commissioned officer, a rule that lasted until his death in 1951. After that time, she explained that the leadership of the village was taken over by other prominent community members. Work on the DEW line continued, and in 1953 the village was forced to move again to accommodate changes to the layout of the installation and to facilitate new road construction. This move does not seem to have been done at as large a scale as the previous relocation, moving the village site a little to the west and farther back from the beach (Nielson 1977). No one I spoke with remembered any specifics about this move. It seems possible that only a few buildings were shifted, as the village remained very close to the original site on the bluff. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cultural resource report on the region does not count this second relocation as a separate site of the village for this reason (Grover 2004). It may have had less of an impact on the memories of residents because the buildings in the village at this time were constructed out of lumber and could be moved with less damage than the sod houses and driftwood structures at the original site. This second move may also be less notable than the first because the community was undergoing so many other changes during this tumultuous period.

At the same time that the Air Force was expanding operations, the community of Kaktovik was growing. Schooling had begun in late 1940s when an Air Force sergeant began teaching the children. Daniel Akootchook (2009) began work as a caretaker for the school when it opened and related a humorous story about the original teacher having to be woken up by the children of the village when it was time to attend school. Harold Kaveolook, an Iñupiat from Barrow, took over educational efforts in August 1951 when he opened a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982). Also during this time, several men from the village began working for the Air Force as laborers and construction workers (Nielson 1977). It was the creation of this school and the availability of jobs in connection with the DEW line that prompted a population boom in Kaktovik. From 1950–1953, the population of the village grew from 46 to 145 people (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:5).

After the initial move of the village, relations between Iñupiat and military personnel, although not without tension, began to improve. A possible turning point was related by Norajane Burns (2009), who heard this story from her grandfather:

I guess that one time, he said that when they went to work, they had this...guy that was very prejudiced and he didn't like the natives, I guess. And they had this real bad blizzard, and he was going to go from the one, right across, he was going to just walk from just one train to the other train, and he got lost in between there. And they were looking for him. They somehow, they went and got the guys that were working at the DEW line, and then they, those guys, went looking for him and they found him and brought him back. And he changed his mind about...After the Natives found him, because he came pretty close to freezing out there and they found him, and it sort of got better.

Lillian Akootchook (2009) also mentioned that this particular station chief did not allow local residents to purchase anything from the station, which at this time was the only store on the island. Her husband, Daniel, was a part of the rescue party, and he explained that after the incident the station chief had a much friendlier attitude and allowed residents to shop at the DEW-line store (D. Akootchook 2009).

Based on the memories of the people I spoke with, it appears that over time the community and DEW-line personnel came into closer contact, although the time frame is unclear. Medical care was offered at the station and several of the people I spoke to remembered being seen by a doctor

or dentist there. Shared social events became more common, including gatherings at the station for major holidays, dances, sporting events, and movies. The opening of the Barter Island Social Club, a bar at the station, also allowed for mingling of non-Native and Iñupiat DEW-line workers and other members of the community. Norman Chance noted that relations between Iñupiat and white DEW-line workers seemed friendly and they engaged in recreational activities together. He did, however, note that the policy of the village council was to continue to limit admittance of non-community members to specific times (Chance 1990). According to several of the people I spoke to, non-Native DEW liners occasionally accompanied men of the village when they went out to hunt. Personal relationships between outsiders and local women also occurred. Carla Kayotuk (2009), a village resident, explained how her father and mother became a couple in the early 1960s:

I do remember that it was, there was no contact for many years between the DEW line and the village. There wasn't supposed to be socializing between the two, I think. But my mom and dad ended up together anyway. I was actually telling you the other the day, when they started going out...they had to hide him in the house when they came looking for him. And, so...for him to move into the village or marry my mom, the tribe had to adopt him. So he was adopted by the Native Village of Kaktovik, and then so, he was able to move into the village that way. And then, I don't know if they changed the rules after that or what.

Carla's parents were not alone in their experience; at least four other marriages occurred between local women and DEW liners. Although social relationships between DEW-line personnel and members of the village appear limited at first, these interactions increased over time.

The time period following the installation of the runway up until the early 1960s was one of intense military activity on Barter Island, as the Air Force and its contractors ramped up building activities and expanded the DEW-line station. The federal government chose to make Barter Island a military reservation, in effect taking control of the very ground on which the village stood and expanding state control over the entire island. Although the second relocation may have had less of an effect upon the physical layout of the village than the first, the increased presence of the military led to more employment opportunities and the creation of the school. These changes brought new residents to Kaktovik and altered the social dynamic of the village.

## THE FINAL MOVE, 1964

In 1962, the Air Force again ordered a move in order to expand its facility (Nielson 1977). Missionary John Chambers noted in his memoirs that both the Air Force and Federal Electric Company employees had approached the village about a move earlier, with a suggested location three miles west along the bluff. The community opposed this move because it would place them farther away from the freshwater lake, beach facilities, and the airport. According to Chambers, the village council was successfully persuaded to move by a sanitation officer following an issue with sewage runoff and trash accumulation. According to Chambers, the negotiation was a complicated process. The location favored by the village was nearly a mile away from the present site, closer to the freshwater lake and not far from the airport. The Air Force commanding officer explained at the time that while informal permission could be granted, the community would hold no official rights to the land. Chambers (1970:150) recounted that he wrote a letter to the Alaska congressional delegation, signed by the head of the village council, seeking assistance for the release of the lands. He added his own correspondence, pointing out that no provisions were made for the community when Barter Island was originally chosen as a DEW-line site. In Chambers' opinion, the fact that Barter Island had been reserved for military usage when it was already occupied land embarrassed the Air Force when it was brought to the attention of the federal government. Due to this embarrassment the Air Force was more willing to work with the community in order to avoid negative publicity. Less than a week after receiving the letters, officials in Washington, D.C., had already set up meetings with Air Force officials (Chambers 1970:50). This time, Kaktovik was given the opportunity to participate in the relocation process. The president of the village council, Herman Rexford, sat down to discuss the matter with several government agencies, including the Air Force, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the BIA, the U.S. Public Health Service, and the Alaska State Division of Lands. The reasons for this relocation were enumerated by the area director of BLM, and included inadequate housing facilities at the present site, the community was in direct line with the runway, the new site allowed for expansion, and erosion of the coastline at the present site posed a threat to the village (Nielson 1977:6). Ben Linn (2009) remembered that the main reason for the relocation stemmed from worries over possible

plane crashes, and explained that they held a town meeting with the BIA. Norajane Burns (2009), who was a child at the time of the final relocation, remembered the adults in the community attending many meetings to discuss the upcoming move. The village created a proposal favoring a new village site, but it was made clear that the final decision rested with the Air Force alone (Nielson 1977). John Chambers noted that the proposal was granted in what he considered to be record time, taking only three months from submission to acceptance. The original town plot layout presented to the community by outside officials was not accepted, because it prevented people from living close enough to each other (Chambers 1970:151). Eventually, an agreement was reached and the process moved forward. Norajane Burns (2009) explained that the council had tried to choose an area with the highest, driest ground available and many of the families were excited about the new location. She also recalled that the community worked together to build a new church and school before the move, while individual families staked out the locations where their homes would rest in the new village site. In 1963, the community filed a request for a town site survey with BLM, which was conducted in April of 1964. With Air Force approval, Kaktovik was granted the plot upon which the relocated village would rest. The actual move of the community occurred under the supervision of the BIA and with the use of Air Force equipment (Nielson 1977). Ben Linn (2009) remembered the houses being hauled over to the new village site with tractors, which put stress on the older structures. Several individuals that I interviewed explained that while the equipment used for the move was provided by the Air Force, it was operated by men of the village who worked at the DEW line. Mary Ann Warden (2009) recalled Vincent Nageak, a former resident of Kaktovik who had moved to Barrow, weighing in on the matter: "He said, 'don't you dare try to move yourselves. Let the military move you.' But we didn't want anybody else to touch our stuff." When the move was completed, Kaktovik rested on ground owned by the community itself for the first time since 1947.

The final relocation was a complex interplay of different social actors representing diverse interests. While the Air Force clearly had the last word on whether this relocation was carried out, local social actors, whether residents of the community or missionaries, influenced the way in which it took place. Air Force and Federal Electric contractors had attempted to have the community move earlier to a location that was unsatisfactory to

them, and villagers successfully refused. Circumstances such as sanitation and the proximity of the runway were the catalysts for the residents to pursue relocation. It is unclear whether a direct order was in place prior to the negotiation for the relocation, but letters to federal government and military officials written by missionaries and local community members brought pressure on local Air Force personnel. This pressure may have led to the community being granted a more active role in choosing the new site and working out the details of community layout with government agencies. The village layout reflects a grid system of house placement, perhaps an attempt to bring the physical structure of the community more in line with state norms. Despite being given a more active role, however, the labor for this move was provided by Kaktovik residents. Individual families chose their house plots, the community as a whole worked to construct the church and the school, and residents of the village who worked at the DEW line operated the equipment to move the structures to the new site. While the military ordered the move and state agencies shaped the way it took place, the community actively negotiated its new location and did the majority of the work themselves.

Even though the last move occurred in 1964, the community's struggle with the military and state continued. Although the village was granted the rights to the land on which it rested, it was still surrounded by military holdings into the late 1970s. With the advent of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, the Air Force relinquished a 360-foot-wide strip of land bordering the western edge of the village by the passage of PLO 5448 in 1974 and released a further 3,609 acres to the public domain and federal jurisdiction by the passage of PLO 5565 in 1975 (Horton 1974; Hughes 1975). In 1977, however, the old village cemetery and land needed for further expansion was still in the hands of the Air Force. The village made its needs known to the North Slope Bureau Planning Department in 1976 in a report by Jonathan Nielson (1977), who reported that the North Slope Borough had attempted to work out an informal agreement with military representatives over issues of community development on this particular tract of land, but was met with delays, indifference, and a lack of action. The particulars of negotiation during the intervening years are uncertain; however, the land was formally transferred

with PLO 6615 in 1986, which partially revoked prior public land orders. These revocations allowed for the selection of land by the Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (Griles 1986). The negotiation process was a complex one, with representatives of both Kaktovik and the North Slope Borough working for the best interests of the village despite initial difficulties with military officials.

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST AND LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Many residents of Kaktovik reflected that the most helpful effect of the DEW line on the community was the creation of jobs that allowed families to supplement subsistence hunting with cash. Others commented that access to health care was of benefit to the community. One detrimental effect mentioned by nearly every individual I spoke to was the introduction of alcohol into the village. One resident summed up this issue:

Yeah it started a whole, I guess it got our generation starting to drink, you know. When we were young, 'cause they had a bar there, they'd bring booze in. Everybody said, "Yeah, let's go have a happy time!" Yeah, uh-huh, that would have been the first thing that I would have banned from this village, alcohol. It just ruined the livelihood of a whole generation (Anonymous 2009a).<sup>1</sup>

Several people mentioned that the village was unable to obtain an adequate location during the selection process of a new site in 1964 because the DEW line was already occupying the highest, driest land on the island. (Flooding occurs in the lower-lying areas of the village every year during the spring melt.) Opinions vary as to whether the community deserves reparations from the Air Force for its ordeal. With a sense of resignation, one individual said "What good is compensation? It's all done and gone with" (Anonymous 2009b).<sup>2</sup> Several other individuals felt that Kaktovik deserves compensation, citing a number of factors, including the stress undergone by the community and the loss of artifacts in the initial move. Norajane Burns (2009) stated:

For the elders. The ones that are left of our elders and maybe their descendants, you know. 'Cause they are the ones that suffered lots from losing a house and their cash, or their ice cellar, and all that food that they caught.

1. Due to the sensitive nature of alcohol-related issues, the author elected not to identify the interviewed individual in this case.

2. The interviewed individual in this case chose to remain anonymous in any material I might publish utilizing portions of this interview.



Issues of land and compensation are echoed in discussions of the future of the village. The Army Corps of Engineers has identified Kaktovik as one of the communities threatened by coastal erosion, although a detailed assessment has not been completed (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2007). The airstrip, located on a spit on the eastern side of the island, is threatened by erosion from annual summer and fall storms. The runway has been repeatedly flooded and the North Slope Borough has attempted mitigation on the northern side by installing geo-grid material. Despite this, erosion continues and the airstrip floods approximately every two years (Stankiewicz 2005). Flooding apparently also occurred in the past. Daniel Akootchook (2009) remembered working on a crew to reinforce the runway, using old Air Force fuel drums filled with sand.

Two recent storms have highlighted the serious nature of flooding: one in 1986 completely submerged the airstrip and the other, in 2000, covered over half of the runway with water (Stankiewicz 2005). The Federal Aviation Administration (2009) found that it was necessary to relocate the airport on Barter Island; however, the Army Corps of Engineers determined that the erosion situation on Barter Island will not immediately impact the village. The Corps estimates that it will be over a century before the situation becomes detrimental to the future of the community (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2006). Presently, Kaktovik is on a list of sixty-nine communities being monitored for continued erosion (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2009). When asked about the possibility of a future relocation because of environmental factors, several of the residents of the village felt they would indeed have to move sometime in the future. Carla Kayotuk (2009) said:

Well, what I think would be nice, because I think eventually we're going to have to be relocated, maybe not in my lifetime, but definitely in the future we're going to have to relocate. What the community right now, what we're fighting for is our new airport to be relocated on the mainland, and the FAA and the borough are fighting to have it on the island. But, we're thinking further down in the future, we're gonna have to relocate to the mainland. Put the, the runway on the mainland, where we want it now, so you save your money in the future.

Other members of the community echoed her sentiments, although the FAA has already decided to relocate the airstrip on the island, approximately one mile southeast of the community (FAA 2009). There does seem to be a clear consensus that the nearby mainland represents the best site, should a relocation become necessary. The general

feeling was that the community should choose the future village site, with the help of surveyors, and the federal government should be responsible for logistical and financial support. Several individuals mentioned that the state and the military should participate financially, especially in light of past forced relocations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Overt state action prompted the forced relocations at Kaktovik, which were brought about by international tensions arising from the Cold War. The military exercised the authority that led to the relocation of the village on three separate occasions in order to build and expand a radar station. Although concerns for the inhabitants of Kaktovik were secondary to national security, the strategic location of Barter Island brought state intervention to bear on this isolated community. In each case of relocation, the process of negotiation between state and local actors varied. In the first instance, the community of Kaktovik was forced to react to the sudden destruction of the original village. Although it would be easy to view this situation through the lens of a powerful state acting upon a helpless population, individual agency of residents is clearly visible as they recreated their community under their own manpower and organized the construction of individual homes and public structures in the ways they saw fit. The second case of relocation, on the other hand, appears to have been less extensive, and possibly less traumatic, as illustrated by the lack of ethnographic data.

The time frame between the first and final relocations was a time of social change in the community as schooling and employment attracted many new residents to the area, nearly tripling the population of Kaktovik. Likewise, increased presence of military and contract personnel altered the social dynamic of the village. These factors were the product of the decision of the Air Force to build a military installation on Barter Island. However, villagers were active in negotiating this changing social dynamic, especially with outside DEW line personnel. While socialization between DEW liners and the community appears to have increased over time, residents of the village controlled these interactions, at times limiting them.

The discussion of the last relocation illustrates a greater level of negotiation than the preceding cases, involving the military, a multitude of government agencies, and regional actors, including residents and missionaries, some of whom apparently contacted congressional representatives



at the national level. These representatives in turn contacted national military officials, who brought pressure on local military personnel in Kaktovik. Once the process of relocation was initiated, a number of state agencies worked with community representatives and shaped the way in which the move took place. Representatives of these different governmental institutions intervened in different ways, including persuading the community to relocate, surveying a town site, planning organizational meetings with residents, designing the layout of the community, and supervising the actual move of the village. While these institutions had large parts to play in the overall relocation effort, the inhabitants of Kaktovik were also active in negotiating the future of their community. They worked to choose the location of their village, initially refusing an undesirable site. They requested changes to the proposed layout of the community, which they had determined was unacceptable for the needs of the village. Individual families chose the locations for their homes, residents worked to build the school and church prior to the move, and the manpower for the relocation came from the community. While the level and character of state intervention varied in each case, the inhabitants of the community were active participants. Although they had little choice in the changes imposed upon them, they re-created their community through multiple moves and negotiated with the military and state agencies.

Coastal erosion may be the impetus for yet another relocation in the years to come. Although this cause is environmental, rather than governmental, Kaktovik residents will have to negotiate with the state if significant erosion occurs. Discussions with residents point to a clear consensus to move the village to a location chosen by the community on the nearby mainland with the logistical support of government agencies. Some Kaktovik residents feel that the military and perhaps federal agencies should be financially responsible for a future relocation. While interviews with a portion of the inhabitants of the village cannot be taken as representative of the community as a whole, it appears that if a relocation becomes necessary, the residents of Kaktovik are prepared to once again negotiate with the state and actively participate in planning the future of their community in the face of forces beyond their control.

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# LIVING IN TWO PLACES: PERMANENT TRANSIENCY IN THE MAGADAN REGION

Elena Khlinovskaya Rockhill

Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER, UK; evr20@cam.ac.uk

## ABSTRACT

Some individuals in the Kolyma region of Northeast Russia describe their way of life as “permanently temporary.” This mode of living involves constant movements and the work of imagination while living between two places, the “island” of Kolyma and the *materik*, or mainland. In the Soviet era people maintained connections to the *materik* through visits, correspondence and telephone conversations. Today, living in the Kolyma means living in some distant future, constantly keeping the *materik* in mind, without fully inhabiting the Kolyma. People’s lives embody various mythologies that have been at work throughout Soviet Kolyma history. Some of these models are being transformed, while others persist. Underlying the opportunities afforded by high mobility, both government practices and individual plans reveal an ideal of permanency and rootedness.

**KEYWORDS:** Siberia, gulag, Soviet Union, industrialism, migration, mobility, post-Soviet

The Magadan *oblast*<sup>1</sup> has enjoyed only modest attention in arctic anthropology. Located in northeast Russia, it belongs to the Far Eastern Federal Okrug along with eight other regions, okrugs and krais. Among these, Magadan *oblast*’ is somewhat peculiar. First, although this territory has been inhabited by various Native groups for centuries, compared to neighboring Chukotka and the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), the Magadan *oblast*’ does not have a majority Native population or similarly distinct ethnic character. As of 2005 the regional population stood at 163,000 with 5,746 Natives<sup>2</sup> (Kokorev 2005). Second, the Magadan *oblast*’ has been occupied by non-Native people for only a short time. Although explored by Russians in

the mid-seventeenth century, the history of its *prishloye naseleniye*<sup>3</sup> started in the 1920s when the Kolyma region became known for gold mining and Stalinist forced-labor camps.

These regional peculiarities—a small indigenous population and a distinct industrial Soviet history—partly account for the dearth of anthropological research conducted in Magadan. English-language sources, besides memoirs and travel logs, are limited to a few scholarly works on gulag history (e.g., Norlander 1998), Kolyma geography (Round 2005) and demography (Heleniak 2009). This lack of research also reflects a general interest among Siberianists in Native, rather than non-Native, history and

1. There are eight federal okrugs in the Russian Federation. Magadan *oblast*’ belongs to the Far East Federal Okrug and is a subject of the Russian Federation. An *oblast*’, like a *krai*, is an administrative unit subdivided into smaller units, or *raions*, and further to municipalities.
2. Members of eleven Native groups live in Magadan *oblast*’. They are, in descending order of population: Even, Koryak, Itel’men, Sakha, Kamchadal, Chukchi, Oroch, Yukagir, Chuvan, Eskimo, and Evenk. In 1855 some 4,662 persons lived in Magadan; 4,118 were Native people. The few Russians were mainly state administrators, Cossacks, traders and priests (Polyanskaya and Raizman 2009).
3. Literally, “those who came,” as compared to *korennyiye narodnosti* (aboriginal people). The term *priezshkiye* (newcomers) has a different temporal connotation: they are still *prishliye* but arriving recently, which distinguishes them from *starozhilye*, who are *prishloye naseleniye* who have lived in the Russian Far East longer. These terms apply to Siberia more generally, as well.

experiences. In his book on white settlers in Chukotka, Thompson (2008:8) argues that “interest in the indigenous subject [has] monopolized the field” of northern studies. Among others, Anderson (2000), Ingold (2000); Kerttula (2000), King (2002), Krupnik (1993), Rethmann (2001), and Vitebsky (2005) have conducted research on reindeer husbandry, gender relations, property rights, shamanism, nationalism and ethnic identity—all focusing on indigenous people. Thompson (2008:213) maintains that European settlers “offer themselves as a foil against which are built rich descriptions of indigenous lifeways, identities and cosmologies.”

However, recent anthropological research into the life of non-Native populations in the Russian North has produced interesting data relevant not only to northern studies (e.g., studies evaluating the role of the Arctic in general, and viability of the Russian North in particular) but to wider theoretical frameworks, specifically political economy, identity, belonging, and the temporal aspects of human mobility. The geographic remoteness of the northern “peripheries,” climate, and the political rationalities of planned and market economies produced a distinct evaluation of the Russian North as a burden: “The return of market mechanisms, distance and climate took their revenge: much of the industrialization of the North... proved economically nonviable under market conditions” (Blakkisrud and Honneland 2006:193; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Kauppala 1998). Consequently, the North is considered to be “over-populated in relation to economic resource base” (Blakkisrud and Honneland 2006:195; Heleniak 2009; Kokorev et al. 1994; Round 2005). Yet, many local people would disagree with this evaluation, given the devastated landscapes of broken down houses and communities, the rapid depopulation of the Kolyma, and the ensuing shortage of labor.

This paper contributes to studies of the nonindigenous populations of the Russian Far North by demonstrating that many Kolyma inhabitants, like many people in other northern regions (Bolotova and Stammmler 2010; Stammmler 2008; Thompson 2008), feel ambivalent about the North as a home.<sup>4</sup> I explore a lifestyle that some locals describe

as “permanently temporary,” where people came to the region to live and work temporarily but ended up spending much of their adult life there. This mode of living and state of being, which I call “permanent transiency,” involves constant movements and imagination, as inhabitants live between two places, the “island” of Kolyma and the *materik*, or mainland, a term that I discuss in greater detail below. Migration within the Russian Federation turns out to be similar to other types, such as transnational migration. For example, Wilson et al. (2009) studied reverse diasporas of New Zealanders in the UK and found some who intended to return to New Zealand and never did. I join Wilson et al. in calling for more detailed studies of “middling” forms of migration situated between studies of transnational elites and developing-world migrants.

## THE PLACE ON A MAP

The Magadan *oblast'* is a remote region located in Northeast Russia, eight time zones from Moscow. Although geographically within Northeast Siberia and the Russian Far East, locally nobody thinks of the region as belonging to either. Most commonly locals call this region the “Far North” (Krainsiy Sever), a term that also refers to Northeast Russia more generally, Magadan and the Kolyma. The Kolyma takes its name from the Kolyma River. Administrative borders of the region have changed throughout the twentieth century and have included portions of Chukotka and Kamchatka. On 14 July 1939, the Kolyma okrug within the Khabarovsk krai was created with its center in Magadan. On 3 December 1953 Kolyma okrug became Magadan *oblast'*.<sup>5</sup> “Kolyma” refers to the whole of the Magadan *oblast'*, while “Magadan” is used as a metonym for Kolyma.<sup>6</sup>

Magadan *oblast'* is comprised of eight *raions*, covers some 462,500 km<sup>2</sup>, and had a population of 163,000 in 2009. Magadan, a compact coastal city overlooking Nagaevo and Gertnera bays, is the administrative hub of the region and home to 106,400 people. The city is surrounded by hills, making the town feel small and landlocked. The main streets of old Magadan are still lined

4. This paper is based on ten months of fieldwork during 2007–2009 in the Kolyma Region. Using various techniques, I interviewed approximately ninety-five people of different ethnic backgrounds (Russians, Belorussians, Uzbek, Ingush, Ukrainians, etc), ages ranging between fifteen and seventy-six, and of different social and professional backgrounds (students, workers, drivers, administration officials, pensioners, etc.). All names have been changed due to promised anonymity.

5. Until 1991 it included Chukotka Autonomous okrug.

6. For example, Magadanskoye zemlyachestvo in cities in western Russia unite people not only from the city of Magadan but from the whole region. A *zemlyachestvo* is an official or unofficial organization of people who presently reside in one place but have all come from another place.



with stone buildings built by prisoners in the 1930s and 1940s, but wooden barracks and houses have been replaced by multistory apartment buildings. Magadan is expanding<sup>7</sup> into nearby valleys, yet the remnants of the Dal'stroi period, small private wooden houses without amenities, still survive on the town's outskirts.

Transportation from outside the region is via air. The seaport is primarily for cargo. Magadan is connected with regional communities by a network of roads. The *Kolymskaya trassa* (Central Kolyma Road), the 2000-km dirt road leading to Yakutsk, is used for transporting supplies and people, but not for regular automobile travel between the Kolyma and the *materik*. *Materik*<sup>8</sup> is a peculiar concept that has been in circulation in colloquial speech since the 1930s (Shirokov 2009). The remoteness of Kolyma and the fact that at that time it was accessible only by ship<sup>9</sup> made Kolyma "an island,"<sup>10</sup> which nevertheless had been fully incorporated into the *materik*. There is no border between Kolyma and the *materik*, which is more conceptual than concrete. In most cases the *materik* is the Russian heartland, a territory west of the Ural Mountains, and (former) Soviet republics. In Soviet times, the Kolyma was peripheral to this center, an arm of the state projected to the east. In post-Soviet times this term is still in use, albeit not in such a totalizing manner, since the former republics became independent countries and open borders allow people to travel abroad, expanding possibilities beyond the *materik*.

### PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS BUT SEDENTARY POPULATION: AN UNRESOLVED TENSION

The Kolyma has been defined by its natural resources. Its minerals currently constitute some 5% of the resource base in the Russian Federation (Pruss 2001). Seafood is the other major natural resource of the region. The development of the Kolyma territory was a product of Soviet eastward expansion and was integral to the Stalinist plan of forced industrialisation. As some historians of the region maintain, it was an internal resource colony (Rodoman

1996; Shirokov 2000, 2006), although others prefer the term *osvoyeniye* (exploration and development) (Batzhev 2002), which lacks allusion to the unequal power relations between a metropolis and a colony.

From the very beginning of its history, the Kolyma has been marked by ambiguities and contradictions, one of which is whether the population living in the North should be temporary or permanent. The contemporary tension between permanency and temporariness is rooted in the policy and practice of populating this area in the twentieth century, which I briefly examine next. The Soviet period of Kolyma history may be roughly subdivided into three periods: Dal'stroi, Soviet, and post-Soviet.

### 1930S–1950S: THE DAL'STROI PERIOD

This was a time of exploration and economic development of this scarcely populated region. Upon the discovery of industrial quantities of gold, the state set up a "super-organization" in 1931 (Batzhev 2002; Pilyasov 1993) called Dal'stroi,<sup>11</sup> the State Trust for Road and Industrial Construction, charging it with comprehensive development of the region and giving it extraordinary powers (Shirokov 2006). The main purpose of the Dal'stroi was the mining of precious metals and minerals, such as gold, tin, silver, wolfram, zinc, lead, copper, and coal. The Kolyma *trassa* (road) was constructed at this time, connecting Magadan and its seaport with numerous communities that were built around mining industry and geological surveys.

Massive exploitation of mineral resources required a substantial labor force which, during the Dal'stroi period, was comprised of *zakluychenniye*, or forced labor (criminal and political prisoners and former prisoners of war) and *vol'nonaemniye*, or people who volunteered to work in the Kolyma. This was a period of economic development but also of the utter destruction of human capital; thousands of prisoners, who were treated as disposable, died in the Kolyma labor camps. Living conditions even for the *vol'nonaemniye* were poor. Between 1932 and 1940 the capital investments in industrial

7. An apparent paradox, but population increase is due to considerable intraregional migration.

8. Also called Bol'shaya Zemlya ("Big Land"). The remoteness in other places of the North, such as Yamal, is also embodied in the term *zemlya* (Lipatova 2010).

9. Regular air transportation began developing only in the 1950s.

10. According to local historian David Raizman (personal communication).

11. Dal'stroi: *Gosudarstvenniy Trest po Dorozhnomu i Promyshlennomu Stroitel'stvu v Raione Verkhnei Kolymy*.

development were nearly sixty times greater than those in sociocultural development (Zelyak 2004).

The state developed incentives for *vol'nonaemniye*. The first law outlining material benefits to stimulate the moving of labor to remote regions was introduced on 12 August 1930, followed by the 1932 law designed “to attract and retain” highly qualified and experienced specialists to the North (Armstrong 1965; Etkina 1965; Stammeler-Gossmann 2007). The Dal'stoi-specific benefits were introduced in 1945; these included pay increases, extended vacations, guaranteed employment, an earlier pension,<sup>12</sup> and a reward for uninterrupted long-term employment. Within a few years the population swelled (Table 1).

The question regarding what kind of labor force should participate in developing this region dates back to the beginning of this era. The first director of Dal'stoi, Berzin,<sup>13</sup> considered that by the 1940s only *vol'nonaemniye* should work in the Kolyma (Polyanskaya and Raizman 2009), but the use of forced labor ended only after Dal'stoi was reorganised in 1957. In 1953–1954 some 102,000 people left and were replaced in 1955 by only 13,677 *vol'nonaemniye* (Zelyak 2004). Hence much of the Dal'stoi population was transient.

#### 1950S–1991: THE SOVIET PERIOD

This was a time of a relative stability, of further regional development, expansion of the state infrastructure and considerable investments into human and economic capital, but labor became a tangible problem. In 1960, the reduction of northern benefits by 35–40%, the slow rate of housing construction and sociocultural infrastructure resulted in labor fluidity, which proved very expensive for a state that spent millions of roubles bringing people to the region. Labor fluidity and labor shortage meant that without material incentives people did not move to the North in the numbers required by the state for effective economic development. Hence the issue of attracting and retaining a working-age labor force became a multifaceted problem subject to targeted policy and research in the fields of sociology, public health and labor management. Migration

became a managed process (Perevedentsev 1965) in order for the labor situation to improve, the population to increase (Gurvich 1965; Yanovskiy 1965), and the process of *prizhivaemost'*<sup>14</sup> to be studied (D'yakonov 1965; Kokorev 1976). To increase *prizhivaemost'*, additional measures were suggested, such as job creation for spouses, investments and development of the sociocultural sphere (i.e., building more flats, day care centers, and schools), and increased benefits. These included northern wage increments,<sup>15</sup> resulting in higher wages than in the *materik*, longer biannual paid family leave, a work contract, and *bron'*.<sup>16</sup>

It was also suggested that “the system of material stimulation must be supplemented by forms of moral stimulation, aimed at the increase in the public recognition of the work of those who dedicated themselves to working in the North” (Etkina 1965), necessitating a particular *image* of the North. For non-Natives, Kolyma—scarcely populated and industrially undeveloped before the Dal'stoi period—was, using Yi-Fu Tuan's conceptual framework, more “space” than “place”: “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan 1977:6). In the post-Stalin period, the meaning the Soviet government inscribed into this space was marked by two characteristics: Native ways of relating to the land were omitted (the government launched a project to “civilize” Native people and assimilate them into the dominant culture instead), and the issue

Table 1. Number of people working for Dal'stoi

Year	Number of people working for Dal'stoi	Free labor	Forced labor
1938 <sup>1</sup>	113,430	19,452	93,978
1939 <sup>1</sup>	189,826	26,351	163,475
1940 <sup>1</sup>	216,428	39,743	176,685
1941 <sup>2</sup>	210,674	62,373	148,301
1945 <sup>2</sup>	189,089		
1948	213,300 <sup>1</sup>	110,100 <sup>3</sup>	103,200 <sup>3</sup>
1950 <sup>3</sup>	258,100		

<sup>1</sup> Polyanskaya and Raizman 2009, <sup>2</sup> Batzaev 2007, <sup>3</sup> Zelyak 2004

12. Women could retire at fifty, men at fifty-five (compared to fifty-five and sixty, respectively, for *materik*).

13. Eduard Petrovich Berzin (1893–1938) fell victim to the Stalinist repressions. He was accused of being a counter-revolutionary Trotskyist and executed in 1938.

14. Factors that influence people's decisions to settle down.

15. *Severniye koefficient* and *nadbavki*.

16. The right to retain accommodation in the *materik* while working in the North.

of forced labor was submerged.<sup>17</sup> What was created was the image of a frontier, stressing the spirit of “pioneer exploration” and development while clearly articulating its economic purpose. The Kolyma supplied the country with gold, was a place of hard work and harsh living conditions, and had an environment that forged people capable of overcoming difficulties together. For that they were compensated, although accommodation remained a problem. Magadan *oblast’* had the highest percentage of people in the Russian Federation living in communal flats: 17.7%, compared to the national average of 11.1% (Navasardov 1994). Still, those coming to the Kolyma knew that their lot would improve and the regional population started growing again (Table 2).

### PATHS TO THE KOLYMA<sup>18</sup>

It was not easy to get to the Kolyma. The region was a “closed” border territory, where one needed an invitation issued either by employers or by individuals (i.e., relatives). The most typical paths included: (1) recruitment of young specialists; (2) private initiative after a person learned about earning potential; (3) Komsomol call (*Komsomol’skiy prizyv*) for young people to take up professional and unskilled labor; (4) job placement in the Far East and Northeast upon graduation from educational institutions, sometimes at the request of the graduate; (5) job transfers (i.e., as KGB officers); or (6) the curiosity, romance or adventure of working in the northern wilderness. The following examples illustrate each of the ways new entrants came to the Kolyma.

1. Tatiana, a weathered Kolyma veteran, recalls how in 1955 she visited a Moscow institute on a business trip. While waiting for her contact, she saw a job advertisement for an agricultural climatologist in Magadan. Two days later she was on her way to Magadan, leaving behind extreme poverty and a querulous extended family in the cramped house of her in-laws. The state paid for her and her family’s tickets and lug-

gage. Her employer even paid for her child’s nanny, who worked as a cleaner in the same place as Tatiana. This nanny, like many other employees, was a former prisoner. The family lived in a commune until 1962 when they received a two-room flat. They spent thirty years in Magadan and upon retirement at the age of sixty, Tatiana and her family moved to a town in the Moscow Region, having acquired a cooperative flat, a car, and enough money to settle in the new place and buy a dacha. This move was followed by the typical experience of post-Magadan retirement: Tatiana’s children and grandchildren remained in Magadan, visiting her and her husband every two years; in their cooperative flat they were surrounded by former “northerners” from the Magadan *oblast’*. They also enjoyed a higher pension and savings until, in 1991, both were devalued by hyperinflation during the

*Table 2. Number of people in Magadan oblast’ (without Chukotka)*

Year	Magadan oblast’	Magadan town	Urban	Rural
1954 <sup>1</sup>	207,700	48,400		
1957 <sup>1</sup>	252,700	57,800		
1959	188,889	62,200	164,176	24,713
1970	253,000			
1979	336,951		270,912	66,039
1980	345,400			
1989	391,687		328,293	63,394
1991	384,525	325,374	59,151	
1994	300,157	254,130	46,027	
1996	240,215	212,457	27,758	
1999	211,696	105,300	190,571	21,125
2007	168,530	159,697	8,833	
2008	165,820		157,558	8,262

1. Grebenyuk 2007. All other figures are from Statisticheskii Ezhegodnik 2008.

17. Both issues seeped into the public domain, the former (the native people) in an objectified form, the latter (forced labor) as rumors and vague references, mixing and co-existing with the dominant view on the region.

18. A number of interviewing techniques were used to gather the data presented here, depending on the situation. These techniques included formal taped (with permission) interviews with officials at municipal and state organizations. Where taping interviews was not possible or inappropriate, both formal and informal interviews were recorded by hand either during the interviews or shortly after. Some quotations are remarks in general, often unplanned discussions on the topic, since the issue of “staying or going” is a common conversational topic. Informants were first selected strategically from among municipal officials; members of the younger generation born in the region; members of the older generation, some of whom were free labor, some forced labor; and working-age residents. Additionally, I used the “snow-balling” method of sampling (Morse 2004) and informal interviews with random individuals who I met during my visits to many regional communities.

*perestroika* “shock therapy” period. “In the Kolyma I had the best years of my life,” Tatiana said in 2008, “I had financial independence, an interesting job, and my family.”

2. Sergei, a driver, was invited to Kolyma by his uncle, who informed him about the material benefits. In 1970, Sergei and his family came to Sinegor’ye (500 km from Magadan) where he worked on building the Kolyma hydroelectric station. Now pensioners, Sergei and his family still live and work there, hoping to move to Magadan where life is easier, but not to the *materik*.
3. Galina arrived to Kolyma in 1961 to work as a teacher, eventually becoming the director of a school in Seimchan (500 km from Magadan), where she retired. She now works in the *raion* administration and still visits her home town of Rostov. However, after fifty years in Seimchan, she said in 2009, “I feel this is my home; on vacations, when I rest a bit from Kolyma in Rostov, I soon realize it is time to go home.” She has no plans to move back to Rostov: “There is nothing left for me there. But there are not that many of us, the old-timers, left here either. We probably will die here.”
4. Upon graduation, Georgiy, a young geologist, chose to go to Chukotka. Later he moved to Magadan but travelled all over the Kolyma on geology trips. After twenty-five years he and his wife moved to Moscow, but their daughter remained in Magadan. He works at a Moscow research institute and regrets leaving Magadan, although he feels he had no choice since his state organization closed during the ruinous 1990s.
5. Ivan, a Federal Security Service (FSB; formerly KGB) officer, was transferred to Magadan from a Central Asian republic, spending some ten years in Magadan before being transferred outside Kolyma. Later he left the FSB, joining a guard and protection firm in Saint Petersburg. He regards his time in Magadan as some of the most interesting years of his life: “Where else can you see such a concentration of interesting people and places? A possibility to see events you would not have a chance to see in Moscow, like meeting Vladimir Vysotsky,<sup>19</sup> for example. I made friends with some former labor force prisoners. I was privileged to hear such stories.”

6. Alexei came to Magadan from Crimea without any invitation, working first as an unskilled laborer in geological surveys. Later he acquired an education and moved to Magadan where he worked in a vocational school. In 2000 he moved to a town near Moscow.

Many people went to work in the Kolyma because of material incentives or, as they say, “to get a long rouble” (*za dlinnym rublem*). Some hoped to make enough money to buy a flat, a car, and a dacha back in the *materik* in the future. It is also important to consider what people were running *from*.<sup>20</sup> Many of my older informants reported that prior to coming to the Kolyma they experienced extreme poverty, death of their relatives from hunger in Ukrainian and Russian villages, hard work, a chronic lack of money, or life in postsiege Leningrad, all of which made them look for a way out. But solving one’s problems of survival and material incentives were not the only factors that were of consequence. First, the Kolyma offered an opportunity to work for a greater cause than just personal gain, to be useful to the country and the state. Retrospectively, one may see how conspicuous the labor management policy was that stressed the moral aspect of working in the North. As a result, people felt appreciated. A former Magadan resident said: “We were taking pride in developing this region, in overcoming difficulties, proud of ourselves, our collective spirit and camaraderie, helping each other.” Secondly, there was an opportunity for challenging, interesting and creative work in professions such as engineering, geology, the biological and biomedical sciences, agriculture, building construction and even party operations. The unique natural, social and economic environment of the region and the small size of its communities allowed for rapid career advancement. Many talked about the North as the place where they became fully fledged professionals and acquired personal and group characteristics that distinguished them positively from the people in the *materik*. I shall come back to this point later.

This “northern project,” then, seems to be a classic case of the technology of power Foucault (2007, 2008) called “biopolitics” and “biopower,” a conspicuous state policy managing population for state benefit, where nevertheless state goals often fused with individual goals for mutual benefit. The state offered inducements, but it was up to an individual to take advantage of them.

19. A popular Soviet-era poet, singer and actor.

20. Thanks to Miron Markovich Etlis for suggesting this point.



Most research endeavors and policies were concerned with immediate needs: attracting and retaining a labor force for industrial development, where “in the areas with favourable climate it would be expedient to create permanent population, while in the unfavourable climate it would not be expedient” (Etkina 1965). It seems that in the long run, whether purposefully or unintentionally, what was created is an *osedloye* (sedentary) but essentially temporary population, since after receiving their pensions retirees were encouraged to move back to the *materik*. In Yi-Fu Tuan’s terms, a historical time was created: “The intention to go to a place creates historical time: the place is a goal in the future” (Tuan 1977:130). This timeline had a clear starting point but an open-ended future. Working-age people dedicated a part of their lives to the North, this aspiration being embodied in policy and benefits, but there was no policy that stipulated that retirees must leave the North. Instead certain discourses circulated, constituting a particular view on what they should do: retire and move to the *materik*. The Far North was thought to be about doing and working, and not about just being. In the words of a former Magadan resident, it is “a place for the young and ambitious. The *materik* is for the experienced and tired ones.” It is only in the post-Soviet period that this diffused understanding of what people should do upon retirement coalesced into a policy of relocation targeting pensioners. Conspicuously or not, the message was clear: pensioners belong in the *materik*.

#### 1990S—PRESENT: THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

During this period, the state withdrew from all major industries, including gold production, leading to high unemployment and the death of many communities. The “northern provision,” the supplies of food, material goods and building construction were stopped, and the void filled with private businesses. Currently administrative, medical, educational and research facilities are funded from local and federal budgets, although the state holds an interest in many private enterprises.

The post-Soviet period once again raised the question about what kind of population should inhabit the Kolyma. In 1991, during his short visit to Magadan, Egor Gaidar, then the head of the Council of Ministers, stated that the North is overpopulated. He proposed to use shift labor

(*vakhtoviy metod*) for all major projects. This controversial suggestion was delivered at the time of political and economic changes, when it was most effective and destructive, setting off a massive wave of outmigration. By 2010 nearly 60% of the regional population had left for the *materik*. Owing to the new economic rationality, between 1990 and 2004 some seventy-seven communities along the Kolyma *trassa* had been categorised as *nepersepectivniye* (without a viable future) and closed down (Tseitler 2009). People were encouraged or compelled to relocate either to the *materik* or to other communities within the Magadan *oblast’*. Intra-regional migration, which flowed from rural towns to *raion* centers and to Magadan constituted 38% of all migration (Tseitler 2009:15). Current maps of the region are not available; the old Soviet maps show communities that are no more.

Post-Soviet relocation programs are aimed at groups considered to be noncontributing members of society—pensioners, the unemployed, and handicapped. The federal government still believes that the North should be populated by a working population, since a pensioner in the Kolyma costs the state three to four times more than a working-age individual. However, it was the young and enterprising who left while pensioners remained. In 1991, pensioners constituted 5.2% of the Magadan population, but in 2009 their numbers rose to 14.5% (Tseitler 2009). In some struggling places, the proportion was higher; in Srednekanskiy raion in 2007, for example, 1,380 (35%) of the 3,900 residents were pensioners.<sup>21</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and its monolithic discourse of unity, of the country as a “whole,” the separation of the state into federal, regional and municipal levels resulted in regionalism and an adjustment in the relationship between the Magadan *oblast’* and the federal center. If in Soviet times Magadan was seen as part of a whole, a “frontier” of the center projected eastward, in post-Soviet times decentralization affected not only political and economic, but also psychological spheres; the center moved to Magadan. Because of the changes in paradigm (meanings inscribed into the place) and scale (country/region), the Kolyma became even more of an island. The crisis in transport and communications that affected this region more generally (Vitebsky 2000) led to the inability of residents to leave Kolyma for many years. Although tied to Moscow in many ways, people of the

21. Electronic newspaper of the Srednekanskiy Raion administration, online at <http://www.kolyma.ru/magadan/index.php?newsid=332>.

Kolyma began looking eastward to the Asian-Pacific region for economic cooperation and investments.

## LIVING BETWEEN TWO PLACES

### MOVING TO MAGADAN BUT LOOKING BACK TO THE *MATERIK*

One of the main characteristics of life in the Kolyma was the pervasive and inescapable issue of movement. Compared to many places in the *materik* where people live permanently, coming to the Kolyma was the first step to a lifestyle that implied a particular rhythm of periodic and temporary movement between the Kolyma and the *materik* before the anticipated final return to the *materik*. Dealing with distances in the remote Kolyma with its limited accessibility was a part of life. Geological exploration and the mining industry took many individuals all over the region. Acutely aware of isolation in the Kolyma, residents made an effort to stay informed and not to be provincial, which made places such as Moscow and Leningrad seem closer. There was no choice but to cross vast territories when going on vacations or business trips to the *materik*. In Soviet times air travel was affordable and regular, allowing people to reconnect with their homeland, visit places of previous residence, and go on vacations, all the while observing and experiencing a contrast between Kolyma and *materik* life. This involved constant comparisons and weighing up of what “they” have there and what “we” have here. The limited comforts of the Kolyma threw into relief people’s imaginative landscape of what the *materik* could offer:<sup>22</sup> real seasons, warmth, light, tall buildings, “real trees” with lush green foliage, different landscapes, colors and smells, the availability and diversity of cultural life, fresher, cheaper and better quality food, access to many other places through travel on trains and ships. While on vacation, Magadan moved into the background, becoming another imaginative landscape, a confined space populated by networks of friends and relatives, a familiar rhythm of everyday life, cool air, subdued colors, dwarf trees and small buildings. It offered a different set of joys and problems.

This pattern was interrupted in post-Soviet times when, in the 1990s, many people could not afford vacations, re-

maining in Magadan for five to eight years, which many found very difficult. I heard people say, “We are prisoners of the North once again.”<sup>23</sup> Their children now constitute a younger generation that lacks the experience of regular trips to the *materik*, which are usual for their parents. As a result, the *materik* is a foreign land for them, distant and imagined. This process is exacerbated by limited sources of information; national newspapers are not available in this region on a regular basis and internet access is very expensive, often unreliable, and in some places not available at all. Some university students I spoke with have not been outside Magadan, not even to regional communities. Some dream about the *materik* but, as one young man put it, “They [young people] go to Moscow, thinking... New York! New York! But soon realize that in Moscow they [local residents] have enough problems of their own.” As one parent said, those who could send their children to study to the *materik* or abroad have done so. In 2008–2009, the federal government introduced subsidies for students and pensioners, covering the usual vacation period, May through September, allowing many hitherto “locked up” people to finally go to the *materik*. Some prefer to spend their vacations in China and Southeast Asia, which are often cheaper and of higher quality than resorts in the *materik*. Low-income people from regional communities can afford to go to Magadan only. Whatever the destination, long-distance taxi drivers make a lot of money during the vacation period. Since intra-regional state-funded bus and air transportation ceased to exist, people hire taxis to go between the Magadan airport and their respective communities on the trassa.

People react to coming back to Magadan differently. In 2009, a seventy-year-old female said:

I come back and feel depressed: not these horrible hills again! These grey buildings, everything is so small and run down. I want to sit and look into the distance. Where is distance here? You look one way and your glance stumbles upon a hill, you look another way and it is the same! Especially coming back in the fall knowing that soon there is this snow, this cold, these icy surfaces I can hardly walk on.

Irina, a forty-five-year-old second generation Magadan resident and a mother of two working in a state organization, feels very differently:

22. Here I summarized answers to my question, “What do you like in the *materik* that Magadan cannot offer?”

23. “*Opyat’ my kak zaklyuchenniye na Severe.*” The expression “We are hostages of the North” is also used. In 2009, I heard from a local multimillionaire, “the real hostages here are business people,” meaning that Magadan businesses are region-specific, keeping people tied to Kolyma. Both expressions are post-Soviet.

I don't mind living here provided I can leave once in a while. Last summer I went to Vietnam but after a while I started missing Magadan. I know everything here, every stone, and every street. It is home. When I came back, I felt energetic, ready to work. But if I knew that I might be locked up here, that I cannot get out... then I'll consider leaving for good.

Olga and Ivan spent nearly ten years in Moscow and Khabarovsk before finally returning to Palatka (80 km from Magadan): "It's bad everywhere," they said, "At least here we are at home."

Another change that occurred during the post-Soviet era, due to interrupted regularity and affordability of travel as well as state withdrawal from food provision, was that local people were able to participate in private food production to a much greater extent. Hence private *dal'stoi* houses with vegetable plots acquired a new significance. Owners sell root vegetables, cabbage, herbs, tomatoes, and cucumbers grown in their greenhouses and gardens. Although in Soviet times it was thought that the land could produce nothing but hardy vegetables, currently people grow broccoli, cauliflower and even strawberries. Imported food (i.e., frozen meat from Argentina, long-life dairy products with preservatives from the *materik* or produce from Vladivostok, where, people believe, it is grown by the Chinese and is full of chemicals) is plentiful but undesirable. Locally produced food is considered to be better but is significantly more expensive.<sup>24</sup> [Irina regards fresh sour cream and cottage cheese as luxuries.] The summer months become quite lucrative for some pensioners. One strawberry seller charging the equivalent of \$17 for a quart jar told me: "In Soviet times I was a teacher, I lived in a flat. In the 1980s I bought a house with a vegetable plot and now I grow strawberries to sell."

#### THE AMBIVALENCE OF LIVING IN-BETWEEN

In the Soviet era, moving to the Kolyma meant that homes and lives were left behind but people maintained connections through periodic visits to the *materik*, correspondence and telephone conversations. Living in the Kolyma in the present meant living in some distant future, constantly keeping the *materik* in mind, as high wages and benefits of the present ensure future material sufficiency elsewhere. Many difficulties (e.g., remoteness and

cold) were overcome precisely because people imagined that once they moved back to the *materik* these difficulties would disappear. This frame of mind affected those who had a short spell in the North as well as those who continued working there for many years. Stories abound of people who came for three years, bought beautiful china or expensive rugs for future enjoyment, and kept them in storage for years to be used when they moved back to the *materik*. Psychologists have described this as a "syndrome of delayed life" (Kuznetsov and Kuznetsova 2003; Serkin 2004). Life "here and now" was not believed to have as much value as the delayed, real better life in an undetermined future, maybe a few years from the day of arrival, maybe not until retirement age.

The "psychology of the temporary" (*psikhologiya vremenshchika*) becomes an explanation of negligence and is not conducive to the idea of sustainability, which presupposes an investment of various kinds on the part of citizens and the state in the community to keep it viable and to sustain its growth and development. Whether on the individual, governmental, or business levels, the "psychology of the temporary" results in lack of investment in the present, as people restrict their involvement, whether civic, professional, or personal, for future and more worthwhile places. A local government official described this phenomenon to me in 2008:

If it is temporary, you do not have to take care of anything. Here today, gone tomorrow. If I live in a flat with little furniture and eat from cracked plates, it's OK for now because I'll have it better in the future in the *materik* where I'll finally start living fully. Why bother repairing street pavement or reclaiming ground after gold-mining operations? We only work here; we are not going to live here. The same goes for the government that has no development policy of the North: they make short-term plans that are beneficial for them now. After that, they don't care.

Balancing short-term northern contracts was a higher pension at an earlier age. After working for three years, some extended their contracts, turning a temporary situation into a permanent one but with the understanding that it was temporary. While maintaining connections back home, Kolyma residents spent years in the Kolyma, working, raising families, obtaining flats, developing social and professional networks, and waiting for retirement, pushing their previous homes into the past.

24. In 2009, I observed that one can buy tomatoes from Vladivostok for 70 roubles a kilo, and local tomatoes go for 350 roubles a kilo.

Kolyma became what many people called their *Malaya Rodina* (lesser Motherland), producing second and third generations.<sup>25</sup> Often people move back to the *materik*—not to their home towns, but to places where buying accommodation became possible. This happened both in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, although a considerable post-Soviet complication was the dissolution of the Soviet Union as some people left for former republics, now new countries, to acquire and maintain new citizenships. Others remained in their homes in the Kolyma, where the absence of state guarantees and high unemployment increased reliance on family and social networks. Hence the center of gravity was moving from the previous home town to a new Kolyma one and back to the *materik*, creating a space of possibilities but rarely centering on one place, for other places were constantly kept in mind.

From the 1930s to the 1980s, the Soviet government encouraged permanency by instituting *propiska*,<sup>26</sup> or rewarding continuous employment in one place of work. In the North, towns were set up as both simulacra of *materik* towns and as hegemonic impositions by the state of the Soviet spatial regime in aesthetics and architecture (Low 1996). Older towns are scattered all over the Kolyma with 1950s Stalinist architecture (e.g., Houses of Culture) similar to those one sees in any Soviet city. Many have a Dal'stroi-era part of town, which looks much like a Russian village<sup>27</sup> with wooden houses and gardens. To make life more comfortable and retain specialists, many Kolyma towns, even those located in close proximity, had well-developed infrastructure with schools, day-care centers, heating plants, and hospitals. Currently, local governments consider paying for infrastructure as wasteful and people are thus compelled to move to larger towns. The destruction of these communities, which had become home for many, is perceived as a personal tragedy. People fondly remember how they lived so far away from Magadan and in close proximity to nature yet had such a comfortable life.

Vladimir and Katerina and their two adult children moved to Magadan from Kadykchan, a town of 15,000, when the town froze up due to a heating plant accident. Vladimir cried when he talked about raising their chil-

dren, remembering when they received their three-room flat and the opening of the town's kindergarten. Mikhail, a sixty-five-year-old mechanic, was relocated with his family to Tver' in central Russia. After a year, he returned to ruined Kadykchan, leaving his wife in Tver. He lives in a wooden shack on the outskirts of Kadykchan, left entirely to himself: "It's too hot in Tver', and uncomfortable. I feel much better here." Thompson (2008: 216), describing the sense of belonging among the non-Native settlers in neighboring Chukotka, describes Mark Nuttall's concept of memoryscape (Nuttall 1991), "a cultural landscape revealed through its place names... that tell of subsistence activities that inform us of a multitude of... close human associations with the natural environment." I would like to apply this concept to the built environment, for the inhabitants of the Magadan *oblast'*, specifically those living in its urban areas, do not seem to be engaged with the land to the same extent as settlers in Chukotka. Cityscapes are infused with individual memoryscapes on a nuanced level that Yi-Fu Tuan called "intimate experience of place" (Tuan 1977:137), producing emotional familiarity with place that some of my informants refer to. Not surprisingly, former forced labor camp survivors carry different memoryscapes. The shadow of gulag history still hangs over the Kolyma. An eighty-year-old former political prisoner still living in Magadan commented on the abandonment of Kadykchan: "Finally, the last [labor] camps are closing."

Despite attempts at permanency the issue of impermanence hovers in conversations. Two women share news on a street: "Their son is graduating from high school. The question is where he will attend a university. Should he enroll here or should they send him to the *materik* and be done with it?" A twenty-five-year-old Magadan resident, a geologist working in gold mining, does not want to settle in Magadan: "I want to buy a flat in Vladimir [near Moscow] and come here to work during the season. If I buy here, I'll get married, have children, and put down roots, it will be too difficult to leave later."

Staying temporarily, even for a long while, and then settling permanently outside the Kolyma is what many people think about doing. This affects even Kolyma na-

25. As of 2009, 46% of the regional population was born in Magadan *oblast'* (Tseitler 2009).

26. Housing registration with police.

27. Most Dal'stroi-era towns look alike. There is an old part of town made up of wooden houses, which now are partly abandoned, partly inhabited and partly used as dachas; there are spacious 1950s two- to three-story apartment buildings along with administrative buildings, and the distinctive Soviet-era apartment buildings built between the 1960s and 1980s.



tives or those of working age who have nothing left in the *materik* and who are not considering moving. But the issue is what they are considering, regardless of the outcome. Hence I found people who, having lived all their lives in the Kolyma, continue weighing the pros and cons of staying or leaving while counting years going by. If going on vacation is a clear issue because there is no finality involved, the overall duration of life in Magadan is wrought with ambivalence about whether to stay or leave. Previous certainties regarding temporariness of the present and a predictable future yielded to an uncertainty regarding both. These considerations are firmly connected to temporality. Since pension age no longer means retirement, many continue working after they secure pensions. It is easier to find work through local networks people built for years and this is where networks acquire temporal depth. Finding a job at this age is not guaranteed in the *materik*: "Nobody needs us there, they have enough people of their own," echoes a sentiment strikingly similar to those heard in other Russian diasporas, e.g., Kirgizstan (Kosmarskaya 1999). Leaving before pension age is also problematic; people are afraid to lose higher pensions when there is no guarantee that one will find another job. Leaving the Kolyma also means leaving relatives, a prospect many find unacceptable. Embeddedness, not only in the network of friends (Round 2005) but also in a chain of relatives, keeps people in place. Irina says:

If I go, what about my boys? One is married and his wife's parents are local. They are thinking about going, but not quite yet. Without them, she is not going to leave, so [neither] is my son. Without him I am not going.

These types of situations can be resolved very quickly, though. A middle-aged woman had been vacillating for years. One day she came back from vacation, packed up her things and left within a week for a *materik* town where she was offered a similar job, leaving her flat to be sold by her adult children. Her husband, a die-hard Kolyma resident, is now considering wrapping up his business and leaving as well.

Decisions of this kind are not made in a social vacuum. Living in the Kolyma is a story of how region-specific narratives of movement, uncertain homelands, and a unique northern environment and frontier made a place, but also how these narratives constitute normative

models that channel trajectories of individual lives. These narrative-models are what Margaret Somers, building on concepts of social epistemology and social ontology, called ontological narrativity. Somers (1994:606–607) demonstrates the discursive identity formation by linking identity and narrative:

It is through narrativity that we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities... [T]his new ontological narrativity<sup>28</sup> provides an opportunity to infuse the study of identity formation with a relational and historical approach that avoids categorical rigidities by emphasizing the embeddedness of identity in overlapping networks of relations and shift over time and space (cf. Wodak et al. 2009).

Stories, Somers (1994:614) maintains, guide action and "people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity, but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives." Next, I shall examine which ontological narratives influence individual actions in the Kolyma.

#### NARRATIVE-MODELS

The two aspects inherent in most Magadan inhabitants' lives, imagination and movement, fuse into a mutually constitutive entity, a part of the local social environment. People's lives are constructed in this social milieu consisting of additional discourses, which embody various mythologies that have been at work throughout Soviet Kolyma history. Some of these models are being transformed, while others persist.

The overarching narrative employed by the Soviet government was the value of individual participation in the common effort to develop a region of great significance for the whole society. The post-Soviet disintegration of this discursive sort of community is evident in the new discourse that scaled the Kolyma down from a national "frontier" to a modest regional level, leaving questions such as "What are we doing here *now*?" and adding more ambiguity to the already difficult dilemma of leaving or staying and attempts to rationalize each choice. A fifty-six-year-old man named Sergei said:

28. As compared to narratives as a mode of representation (Somers 1994:606).

We were proud to be people “from the North.” Now one is ashamed of it. When I go home [to Rostov], my acquaintances ask me, what are you doing there? You can make more money here than in the North. But we are used to living here; we have jobs, our flat and dacha. Nobody is going to hire us in the *materik*.

The policy of attracting a working-age mobile population created a narrative-model of the Kolyma as a place for the young and working, a place for doing rather than a place for being, which persists. Whether upon retiring one would have reasons to move to the *materik*, or could afford to, is an open question and some of my informants say they try not to think about the future, which sets this time apart from the Soviet period when the future was predictable. I asked Sergei and his wife if they would like to remain in the Kolyma much longer. They answered, “As long as we have jobs. If not, what is there to *do* here?” Many therefore reconcile themselves with the loss of pride of living in the region, rather than a frontier, but also with living in the present rather than in the future.

Another persistent narrative is that the Kolyma is a place where the health of the population is at risk. A memo from the state дума’s Committee for the North indicated that life expectancy in the North is shorter by some four to five years, and rates of child morbidity are twice as high as in the *materik*. At the same time, locally there is a strong belief that with time northerners physiologically adapt to the environment and that moving to warmer climates would result in a speedy death. This is partially why Nikolai, a taxi driver, does not want to return home: “At least five of my mates who moved back became ill or died within two years.” Although in the majority of cases these adaptations are cast in biomedical language and concepts, some admit that untimely death may be the consequence of the second translocation with ensuing socioeconomic problems.

The narrative-model of a “northerner” living in a frontier place where life is a series of hardships, hence populated by hard-working, strong and helpful individuals, is undergoing a transformation. Narrating a place is connected with self-narration. An identity that facilitated the rationalization of life in the Kolyma hardened in the process of territorialization (Delanda 2006) when it came into contact with those from the *materik*, the place where people are seen as being (negatively) different from “good” northerners. An idea was developed in Soviet times that this northern character was the result

of a few factors. Here is a summary of my informants’ explanations:

1. Material sufficiency, besides affecting economic aspects of an individual’s life, engendered such characteristics as generosity and kindness. Living in such a small place, Kolyma inhabitants’ shared experiences and discourses created a feeling of closeness and trust. A common story I have heard was of people lending a fellow Kolyma resident, a stranger stranded in the *materik*, money that they promised to pay back when they came home, a promise that was invariably fulfilled.
2. People who came to the Kolyma were young, mobile, enterprising, curious and adventurous—a state idea for a place of young people in society and an ideal match for the execution of the Soviet high modernity development projects throughout the country and in the North.
3. Those newcomers who could not match the lifestyle and requirements for northern living left the region quickly; thus I have heard people saying that “natural selection” ensured that “bad” people did not remain. The rest were expected to adhere to customs of helping each other. According to a former Kolyma resident, that was often the only way to physically survive, especially for those who lived in small rural communities along the *trassa*. In contrast to this, people from central Russia were seen as less dynamic. In the words of a fifty-five-year-old Magadan resident, they were “counting kopeks, living in their flats as if in a fortress, busy with their own little worlds.” For those in the *materik*, Kolyma residents became people “from the North” representing distant unfamiliar lands and symbolizing gold, prisons, prosperity and enterprise.

These regional legends are still subject to social reproduction. Yet despite the seeming “wholeness” of Kolyma and the way Magadan *oblast’* presents itself to outsiders (expressed in discourse, for example, as, “northerners are better than *materik* people”), the view from the inside reveals a certain fragmentation. Within Magadan *oblast’*, we see a replication of nested center-periphery relationships. For example, there are no administrative borders to separate *materik* from the North (i.e., the *materik* does not have a border). But as I have shown, this does not prevent people from developing regional identities, such as “northerners” and “people from the *materik*.” In the Kolyma, Magadan embodies the “center,” representing civilization, urban landscape, concentration of resources, administration, bet-

ter supplies, cultural life, variety and opportunities. The farther from the “center,” the farther from civilization and the closer to nature and only a step away from the wilderness in the literal sense, whether one speaks about Moscow and Magadan,<sup>29</sup> Magadan and Susuman—the administrative center of Susuman *raion*, and from there, to municipalities for which Susuman is the “center.” For a Magadan resident, a Susuman individual may be “from the trassa”;<sup>30</sup> for a Susuman resident, people from surrounding communities bring with them a certain foreignness. A small shop owner in Susuman told me:

There are fewer and fewer familiar faces around here. Who is coming here instead? Those alcoholics and *neblagopoluchniye*<sup>31</sup> families with loads of children and no money, and what kind of town are we becoming, then?

In the neighboring town Kholodnyi, with its population of only one thousand people, I heard similar complaints regarding newcomers from smaller communities that were closed down as a part of the state program of liquidating those communities considered not viable.

We are presented, then, with an identity that has been described as a multiplicity, whether fractured (Haraway 1991), hybrid (Elwert 1997), narrative (Somers 1994), or aggregate (Thompson 2008). Kolyma presents us with the case where the multiple and shifting identities include those of previous homelands, “northern” and local. Stammeler uses Beck’s (2000) concept of hybrid identity and place polygamy to explain the process of emplacement in Yamal, in which the North becomes home (Stammeler 2008). Sørensen and Olwig (2002) refer to studies of diasporas that describe multiple attachments (Clifford 1994), multiple homelands (Shuval 2000), and cultivation of affective-expressive links with past migration histories (Cohen 1997), all helping us to understand the sense of home among people defined by mobility. However, in the Kolyma, maintaining two homelands is difficult at best (except in seasonal gold-mining employment). When compared to the European Russian North where commuting by train or car are possible, the distance between the *ma-*

*terik* and the Kolyma is so great that even when collapsing the mental distance is possible, geographic expanse, lack of transportation infrastructure and travel costs preclude easy travel. Thus one has to choose.

## MOVING TO THE *MATERIK* BUT LOOKING BACK TO KOLYMA

Leaving the Kolyma does not make one free of it, as I realized while studying former Kolyma inhabitants currently living in the *materik*. Where possible, people are trying to move to the same towns in the *materik* as others from the same community. Belgorod, for example, is a popular destination for people from Susuman. Kolyma is recreated through relationships and memories, including the material effects associated with living in the North. Visiting flats of my informants in Aleksandrov near Moscow is like going back to Magadan circa the 1980s: shipped from the Kolyma, there are recognisable rugs on the walls and crystal on the shelves, all part of middle-class Soviet living, but also wall hangings made of sea mammal fur and ivory, which are unusual for most locals. In many European Russian cities former Magadan residents created networks, meeting privately and also through two public organizations, the formal Council of Veterans of the Magadan Region, and a *zemlyachestvo*. *Zemlyachestvo* is an open-membership association that organizes events, meetings and celebrations, and trips to resort areas and helps those in need. It is important for former Kolyma residents to be a part of this network because, as various members told me: “It is a continuation of life in Magadan,” “These people are witness of my former might,” “It is a breath of fresh air, it is psychological support.” People use this network to share news, to look for jobs, and to help each other. Every August 31 they gather in front of Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow remembering old friends and meeting new ones. Most of my informants experience nostalgia for the first few years until they become settled and grow into their new lives. Some wondered if they left too early; whether under different circumstances they might

29. People away from the center are “lesser” people than those from Magadan. Similarly, Magadan people are “lesser” people than those from Moscow. Curiously, the close proximity of Magadan to the wilderness is what many people appreciate; one lives in the city but it is only a short drive to the seashore or the forest to get away from people and civilization. In regional towns like Kadykchan you could walk into the wilderness.

30. Meaning those living in regional communities outside Magadan.

31. These are families where parents have no jobs or money, who do not look after their children properly, who often abuse alcohol and lead an anti-social lifestyle by many.

have returned. There is always, however, something that prevents them from doing so, a job, lack of money, or the health of their relatives. Hardened Kolyma patriots find reasons to come to Magadan, such as celebrating the anniversary of the famous School N1, or the seventieth anniversary of Magadan city in 2009.

My research among former Kolyma residents who now live in Moscow yielded an interesting observation. While talking about the Kolyma, the region as a place did not figure strongly. There were a few usual references to its beauty and proximity to nature, but much more prominent were the reminiscences of what was going on within that place. In other words, although the place and their lives in that place were inseparable, the place seems to be incidental. That place contributed to the formation of their identity (they became “northerners”) but, in general, people were engaged with the local land in a very *materik*-like style. Much stronger were ties to the urban environment, which was imbued with memories and populated by complex social networks. This is in stark contrast to many anthropological studies that inextricably tie identity and natural environment, both in the North and elsewhere (e.g., Anderson 2000; Feld and Basso 1996; Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Ingold 2000; Vitebsky 2005), where individuals become “written” on to the land (e.g., Nuttall 1992:54–58). This makes me think that possibly social and physical environments could be separated.

Living in two places is not easy; this lifestyle is marked by constant separation and longing. Moving to the North and separated from their parents and siblings, migrants maintained extended family relations by correspondence and visits, which became complicated when spouses were from different parts of the USSR. Some parents moved away while their adult children and grandchildren stayed behind, now waiting for their pensions. Some have spouses, but many single and lonely people lost their savings, large pensions and other benefits due to post-*perestroika* reforms, when the market economy deprived them of opportunities to visit their families back in Magadan or even visit the towns where they spent their happiest years. They rely on the network of former Magadan residents living in the same city. One Alexandrov resident told me, “I had a wonderful youth, but my old age is awful. My daughter and grandchildren are still in Magadan, and I am here by myself.” But staying in Magadan does not mean that people are surrounded by the old network; friends and relatives move, leaving gaps. As one former Magadan resident

said, “I don’t want to return to Magadan. What is there to *do*? Everybody I know has left already.”

## CONCLUSIONS

The data presented here sit comfortably within a wider frame of human mobility and diaspora studies (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Shuval 2000). Whether reverse diasporas of New Zealanders in the UK (Wilson et al. 2009), returning Soviet German immigrants (Werner 2007), “Asian Russians” in Kirgiziya (Kosmarskaya 1999), or “northerners” coming back to the *materik*, living between places involves the physicality of a geographic place superimposed onto an imagined one.

Settling even temporarily in a new place creates not only a place out of space but also multiple identities. People in the Kolyma share one commonality: either personally, or through older generations, they all are recent arrivals from elsewhere and have previous affiliations with places. Having developed a “northern” identity they form “diasporas” elsewhere in the *materik*, but this identity seems to be for internal consumption rather than public display to non-northerners.

The possibly long-term temporariness engenders a host of issues individual actors have to deal with. One is the disjunction between the *idea* of temporariness, a habituated permanence, and the inability to leave, whether for health reasons, kinship ties, the foreignness of other places, or the lack of funds. These reasons are partly economic, but partly rooted in the specific understanding of the place embodied in local narrative-models. When it comes to what economists call “push and pull” factors that influence decisions regarding staying or leaving, neither identity nor “moral” factors (i.e., patriotism) are decisive in making this choice. More important seem to be a temporal aspect of economic well-being, familiarity with the place, and embeddedness. Embeddedness is a double-edged sword: social networks help but are also an impediment to mobility. Economic sufficiency and mobility also have generational boundaries. Young people are scarcely familiar with the *materik* but live in the environment permeated by mythologies of the *materik* as a desirable land. Middle-aged people are still working and are often afraid to lose jobs and pensions while at the same time, they are plagued by lack of funds and the increasing distance between their current lives and those of the *materik*. At the same time many are unsettled by the thought of spending their old age in the Kolyma. Pensioners are often attached



to the Kolyma through kinship, health issues and lack of funds. Expectations of leaving and settling in the *materik* come at a time in one's lifecourse (retirement) when in more permanent places people are expected to be settled. Hence "northerners" are being transplanted twice, at different ages but both times into an unknown.

Since Soviet times Magadan was a permanent place filled with an essentially temporary population leading a lifestyle where residents were neither completely here nor completely there. They lived in-between two places both physically, while moving between them, and mentally while keeping the *materik* in mind as they came to the Kolyma temporarily, expecting one day to return, but when and where was often undecided. Although many people have left, some postpone this final decision into an indefinite future; many temporary arrangements became temporarily permanent. This indicates that underlying the lifestyle of high mobility was the idea of permanency and rootedness revealed in both government practices and individual plans. This sets Kolyma residents apart from those Rapport and Dawson (1998) categorised as "migrants of identity" who live their lives in movement. The contradictory policy of mobility versus permanency resulted in years of indecision regarding staying or leaving and reveals a profound ambivalence characterized by "expansion of the space for personal and familial livelihood practices to two or more localities" (Sørensen and Olwig 2002:5). Whether this is ambivalence and the uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty is a product of Russia's agricultural past that presupposes rootedness and an attachment to the land with limited mobility, or is an unintended result of short-term Soviet migration policy, is open to interpretation.

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## SECTION III: INTRODUCTION

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

Becky Saleeby

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. 5th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; becky\_saleeby@nps.gov

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.

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# EMPLACEMENT AND “COSMOBILITY”: RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION AND INDIGENOUS FUTURES IN ALASKA

Hannah Voorhees

Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 3260 South Street, 325 Museum, Philadelphia, PA 19104;  
hannahv@sas.upenn.edu

## ABSTRACT

Migration from rural to urban Alaska has led to renewed concern about the future role of rural places for Alaska Native communities. Key to this concern is the question of whether, and in what way, place will remain relevant to a strong sense of Alaska Native identity and cohesion. Drawing on recent ethnographic work, I highlight two distinct versions of indigenous future-making vis-à-vis territory: emplacement and cosmobility. Emplacement is the framing of contemporary Alaska Native interests in terms of the moral necessity of working against migration and restoring attachment to place. In contrast, cosmobility entails a positive reinterpretation of mobility, not as displacement, but as the extension of vibrant Alaska Native culture and cosmologies, which, in this view, can persist autonomously of territory. In drawing attention to these two projects, I attempt on the one hand to restore a sense of history to the essentialized politics of emplaced indigeneity, and on the other to interrupt narratives about the inevitability of Alaska Native outmigration as cultural loss.

**KEYWORDS:** displacement, Alaska Natives, indigeneity, identity

## INTRODUCTION

The diverse examinations of displacement in this issue of the *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* all hinge on the disruption and reorganization of geographical place as an ordering principle of distinctive social and cultural ways of being in the world. We have taken as our definition of displacement “the forced removal from a place” (Mason, this volume), while recognizing that in practice it is most often impossible to distinguish between structural coercion driving removal and migrant desires for a better life.

Displacement, even in Alaska, is not an isolated phenomenon, but is linked to global—yet asymmetrical—flows of people, goods, information, and ideas (Appadurai 2008). Global flows generate reflexive valuations of displacement, mobility, and cosmopolitanism, on the one hand (Salazar 2010), and rootedness, place, and autoch-

thony, on the other (Malkki 1992); negotiations of “local” Alaska Native subsistence and territory rights, for example, now take place within the globalized category of indigeneity (Muehlebach 2001) and the transnational framework of human rights (Niezen 2003).

Situated practices have long been vital to the survival and autonomy of Alaska Native subsistence communities; more recently, it has also become necessary for indigenous groups to explicitly mobilize demonstrations of place-based knowledge, affect, and memory in order to secure and defend status and rights (Povinelli 2002; Stevenson 2006). Yet even as Alaska Natives have gained a measure of political success vis-à-vis territory (Mitchell 2001), migration from rural communities to urban parts of the state has accelerated (Goldsmith et al. 2004), leading to serious concerns about the future role of rural places for Alaska



Native communities. Key to this concern is the question of whether, and in what way, place can, or should, remain relevant to a strong sense of community cohesion. I use “place” in the abstract sense and do not refer only to physical geography. Rather, place is meant to denote multiple dimensions of social, cultural, and historical attachment that make these geographies legible.

In this article, I draw on recent ethnographic studies pertaining to the role of place for arctic indigenous populations to counter-pose two very different strategies previously applied to the question of displacement: *emplacement*<sup>1</sup> and *cosmobility*.<sup>2</sup> Emplacement refers to the framing of contemporary Alaska Native interests in terms of the moral and political necessity of working against displacement and deepening attachments to place, and in particular, to subsistence landscapes. Emplacement can be understood as a specific kind of restorative “place-making” which, according to Anna Tsing (2008:77), is:

always a cultural as well as politico-economic activity. It involves assumptions about the nature of those subjects authorized to participate in the process and the kinds of claims they can reasonably put forth about their position in national, regional, and world classifications and hierarchies of places.

In contrast to this project, cosmobility entails a positive reinterpretation of mobility, not as involuntary displacement but as an extension of vibrant Alaska Native culture and “portable” cosmologies, which, in this view, can persist and flourish autonomously of territory. Cosembility is meant to capture the balancing act through which Alaska Native students, business leaders, and community representatives attempt to simultaneously inhabit the apparently incompatible social categories of indigeneity and cosmopolitanism. In drawing attention to these two different modes of being indigenous relative to place, I attempt to restore a sense of history and caution to essentializing politics of emplaced indigeneity and to interrupt narratives about the inevitability of Alaska Native outmigration as cultural loss.

## EMPLACEMENT

During the first half of the twentieth century, many arctic and subarctic indigenous groups were displaced through government education and settlement policies intended to accelerate acculturation (Hirshberg and Sharp 2005; Kelm 1998). More recent forms of migration are, at face value, the result of voluntary decisions made by individual laborers, students, patients, and consumers as they seek to improve their standard of living. Thus, it is increasingly difficult to classify displacement as straightforwardly “forced.” Nonetheless, the end results of modern-day rural-urban migration may prove just as profound for arctic indigenous communities as past forms of forced displacement and acculturation.

Recognizing the importance of attachment to local subsistence landscapes for Alaska Native identity and self-determination, anthropologists have worked as indigenous advocates to counter both physical and cultural displacement, directly contributing to the crafting of an emplaced Alaska Native future. Ethnographers and indigenous elders have collaborated to record “memory ethnographies” of traditional local practices, both within an applied traditional ecological knowledge framework (Gearheard et al. 2006; Tyrell 2008) and within a more widely circulating genre of elder biographies intended to serve as sourcebooks for future generations (e.g., Andrew and Fienup-Riordan 2008; Bodfish et al. 1991).

Beyond the practical work of rendering local ecological knowledge concrete, scholars have begun to produce rich ethnographic records of the everyday experience of living within the ethics of emplacement itself, showing how members of northern indigenous communities are grappling in everyday life with the politically inflected task of holding onto the significance of traditional territories, including the relationships, histories, affect, and knowledge that enmesh inhabitants (Cruikshank 2005; Stevenson 2006; Thornton 2008). Despite representing a wide range of theoretical approaches, these authors can all be described as working within emplacement, as a discursive project of

1. My use of the term *emplacement* is cognizant of, but departs from previous use of the term by Lovell (1998), Englund (2002) and Cobb (2005). Englund’s use refers to the situated embodiment of subjects of globalization, Cobb’s to the way in which people are “drawn into places” (Cobb 2005:564). Lovell’s usage is closest to my own; where Lovell means to invoke the role of physical places in mediating social relations, my use is meant to additionally capture the constitutive role of reflexive ideologies of place in mediating social and spatial relationships.
2. Noel B. Salazar has previously used this term in his ethnography of tourism to refer to “figurative cosmopolitan mobility” (Salzar 2010:16). In contrast, my use of the term refers to the mobility of indigenous world views, or cosmologies, beyond the geographic and discursive bounds of traditional territory.

(re)embedding Alaska Native communities in territories of subsistence sociality in order to achieve moral correction in relation to ongoing processes of structural violence.

Julie Cruikshank, for example, has made a key contribution to recovering our sense of the possibilities of place-making by denaturalizing hegemonic Western ways of relating to geographies of the natural world. Her ethno-historical account of Southeast Alaska, *Do Glaciers Listen?* (2005), shows us how the settler-state's project of mapping Alaska's "new land" materially and rhetorically erased the presence of prior human societies and converted peopled landscapes into "wilderness." By highlighting historical moments of rupture between presettler and postsettler conceptions of territory, Cruikshank reveals how apparently neutral terms such as "resources" and "land" bear a distinctive ideology regarding the status of humans and nature: that nature is a resource, available for human use, but fundamentally separate from human communities. Cruikshank shows that this ideology continues to be challenged by present-day Tlingit views of landscapes as sentient and responsive. That is to say, within Tlingit lifeways, glaciers *do* listen, and respond to human actions—sometimes violently. Glaciers, like humans, are emplaced in the sense of being locally accountable within a reciprocal social and moral order. Perhaps, Cruikshank suggests, environmental change will ultimately force us to take this particular understanding of localized, attentive human-nature sociality more seriously as a valid framework for indigenous *and* nonindigenous futures, rather than as merely generative of data for use in resource management.

Where Cruikshank uses historical trajectories to defamiliarize instrumentalist (as well as purely romantic) Western relationships with land in order to allow us to entertain the possibility of an alternative kind of place-based existence, Thomas Thornton (2008) attends to present-day Tlingit experiences of living with territory. Like Cruikshank, Thornton demonstrates that a unique relationship exists between Tlingit people and their territory, and argues that the lived dimensions of this relationship push up against the limits of our English language. For the Tlingit, ties to particular geographies are not simply defined by "use" but have been configured through the multiple dimensions of social organization, language and cognitive structures, material production, and ritual processes.

Thornton is realistic about the degree to which this relationship has been subjected to displacement; his ethnographic work painfully demonstrates that "what is lost in the first instance [by indigenous people] as a result of dis-

possession is knowledge of places" (Thornton 2008:191). Yet Thornton is unwilling to relegate knowledge of places to history but instead advocates for a renewed commitment to emplacement as a practical necessity for indigenous continuity: "The key to future success lies in cross-cultural recognition of biological and cultural health as two sides of the same entity: place" (Thornton 2008:196). Anthropology, in this view, has a mandate to ameliorate displacement by helping to create conditions of knowledge and discourse under which place can be recovered.

Taking a more recursive approach to place-making, Stevenson (2006) shows how widely traveling values attached to emplacement have been taken up and self-consciously reworked in the context of everyday Inuit life in Nunavut. Within the multicultural, future-oriented Canadian state, Stevenson argues, recovering and perpetuating an emplaced existence has become both a practical and political necessity for sustainable, autonomous community survival. Remembering ways of being on the land in Nunavut has therefore been recast in Inuit communities as a moral obligation, an "ethical injunction to remember" (Stevenson 2006:168). Stevenson documents the proliferation of everyday forms of emotional labor—attention to the past, elders, and the land—that this injunction demands. Increasingly popular culture camps, for example, provide opportunities for youth to enter into this affective economy of indigenous memory by cultivating emplaced knowledge about how to survive on and relate to the land.

These ethnographic accounts serve as important antidotes both to official versions of recent arctic history and to dominant rhetorical and material reductions of socially laden landscapes into wildernesses free of human interference. As these studies make clear, indigenous arctic communities have a unique, long-lived, and enduring relationship with their traditional territories that is at the same time dynamic and self-aware. However, just as we have come to understand that Western concepts of nature are in no way "natural," we should also be cautious of essentializing indigenous relationships with territory. Arguably, the emplacement project circulating today, with its emphasis on the moral value of being bound to place, is not without its own history and has to some extent grown out of the cultural translations between sedentary and nomadic societies entailed in the processes of land settlement and continued political struggle for subsistence rights (Cobb 2005; Dombrowski 2002).

As Michael Jennings has argued, the crafting of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971

was “fought out in a Western political arena, not a traditional one. As it had done for centuries, the U.S. government allowed at the negotiating table only voices that it recognized” (Jennings 2004:69). In order to open the way for resource development, Alaska lands had to be delineated as discrete plots with clear functions (Haycox 2002). As the state went to work gathering testaments to regular land use and classifying land claims as legitimate or illegitimate according to a sedentism-centric worldview, the possible forms of Alaska Native land use were gradually and subtly narrowed from extensive nomadic and semi-nomadic patterns to a more intensive, fixed existence on the land.

Arguably, this history has contributed to the key paradox of indigenous cultural politics in Alaska today: community representatives (and anthropologists) continue to recognize and advocate for the importance of distinct territories for identity, recognition, and cultural continuity. At the same time, the historical reduction in patterns of mobility and the legal detachment of subsistence rights from land claims that has occurred within the messy translation of indigenous land use into the terms of a sedentary state has meant that it is increasingly difficult to materially realize the spirit of Alaska Native political victories. Successfully occupying the indigenous slot within modern-day settler societies imposes conditions on mobility—whether nomadic or cosmopolitan. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987:23) presciently observed, “History is always written from a sedentary point of view . . . even when the topic is nomads.”

In addition, there is at least one worrying side effect of the way in which indigenous claims have been handled within a settler-state such as Alaska: the merging of racial and spatial orderings. Through a history of cultural translation around land settlements, indigenous citizens have come to appear symbolically as well as physically displaced in the context of urban environments (Esbach 2004). Matthew Kurtz (2006) argues that the solidification of a rural-urban divide subtly recuperates elements of a much older racism. As Alaska Natives, of necessity, made themselves “legible” within geographies of identity-linked compensation (Scott 1998), “rural” versus “urban” has come to be code for “Native” versus “White” in popu-

lar discourse. This essentialized version of ethnic orderings carries with it a normative message: that Alaska Natives “belong” in rural areas, while white citizens are the rightful inhabitants of urban areas.<sup>3</sup>

Kurtz supports his argument with evidence that some urban Alaskans are posed to actively enforce these spatial and ethnic boundaries. In a particularly brutal example, three members of my own suburban high school filmed themselves patrolling the streets of Anchorage in 2001, armed with paintball guns. The high school students harassed and mocked Alaska Natives walking on the streets in Anchorage before shooting them in the face with frozen paintballs (Alaska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2002; Kurtz 2006; Porco 2001). Nor was this merely an isolated incident; since 2001, there have been other premeditated attacks targeting Alaska Natives in Anchorage. In 2003 a young Alaska Native woman was the victim of a paintball attack. In a 2009 incident, eggs and glass bottles were the weapons of choice. Bizarrely, these most recent accused perpetrators also filmed themselves, suggesting a disturbing trend of performative urban “Eskimo hunting.”

While we should not attribute any more self-awareness to these perpetrators than is warranted by the senselessness of their attacks, it is worth examining the local meaning structures in which such attacks could have become conceivable. Specifically, “hunting” is a particularly potent way of framing violence towards indigenous people in Alaska. First, because it refuses to recognize the humanity of Alaska Natives, instead treating them as an exploitable feature of nature (which does not belong in urban areas), and second, because it tries to undo the core cultural identity of Alaska Natives as self-sufficient hunters. This latter subtext connects to several decades of painful political battle over the legitimacy of commercial versus subsistence hunting and urban versus rural subsistence priorities in the state.

In short, while the political and cultural project of emplacement has been, and continues to be, absolutely vital for Alaska Natives’ ability to recover and secure territory, identity, and community from the pre-ANCSA period to the present, emplacement is ultimately a two-edged sword that has resulted, at times, in an over-determination of what it

3. In fact, there are both Alaska Natives and non-Natives in communities deemed “rural” or “urban” in federal subsistence regulations, which presume that communities with populations over 7,000 are nonrural but include several exceptions (*Federal Register* 2007). Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the enabling legislation for federal subsistence management in Alaska, was first written to refer specifically to subsistence opportunities for Alaska Natives. As a last-minute compromise in order to pass the law, the language of the act was changed to give subsistence opportunities to all rural residents, Native and non-Native.

means to be indigenous within settler-states. Alaska Native communities have by necessity defined what it means to be indigenous within a Western framework of land ownership and definitions of nature—as well as what it might mean to “live close to nature.” Contradictions now arise between the representational parameters of emplacement and the practical necessity of being mobile in order to survive in a mixed subsistence economy and beyond. Although the normative momentum of an over-simplified version of emplacement may not always be apparent, it is periodically revealed in moments of urban violence towards Alaska Natives.

### “COSMOBILITY”

In a recent press conference on his book *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow* (Hensley 2009), Iñupiaq author William Iggiagruk Hensley’s daughter asked him a question. To paraphrase: “If our identity is rooted in rural Alaska, isn’t there an obligation on the part of the state to support our villages? What will happen to our culture otherwise?” Hensley, who played a pioneering role in securing land claims settlement for Alaska Natives, responded in a way that at first surprised me: “Spirit and community are more important than land. Our people have always been mobile. They can take their culture with them.”

Anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan (2000:153) has articulated a vision for the future of Yup’ik communities:

I invite you to turn this picture [of rural to urban migration as cultural loss] on its head. Yup’ik communities are not disintegrating, their lifeblood gradually seeping away. Many can be seen as actually expanding and recreating themselves in unprecedented ways until today, when they are as strong and vital as at any time in their 2,500 year history.

In this view, territory is reimagined as a “touchstone” (Fienup-Riordan 2000:155). Although homelands continue to play a vital role in reproducing traditions, one does not—at least according to Fienup-Riordan—have to actually inhabit these territories in order to maintain culture and community. Although displacement involves a physical rupture in geographical habitation, it does not necessarily bring a weakening of ties between culture, identity, and specific places. That is, displacement does not always entail “deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), or the weakening of ties between culture and place. Places can simultaneously act as the original context of a community *in situ*, and, following displacement, as a common source of

situated memory around which new kinds of community may congeal, albeit with varying degrees of success.

Hensley and Fienup-Riordan seek to link a nomadic past with the cosmopolitan present, a version of indigenous resilience that I have come to think of as “cosmobility,” or enactments of Alaska Native worldviews as portable and enduring beyond their relationship with territories. While this version of indigenous future-making runs counter to dominant discourse on cultural politics, and indeed, may seem implausible to some readers, it does sanction a second look at the work of anthropologists who have documented trajectories of indigenous mobility across the indigenous Arctic over the last fifty years (e.g., Blackman 2008; Fogel-Chance 1993; Graburn 1969; Honigsmann and Honigsmann 1965; Kishigami 1999, 2008; Lee 2002; Spratt 1994).

Nancy Fogel-Chance (1993) was one of the first ethnographers to argue against the assumption that Alaska Natives moving from subsistence landscapes to urban areas necessarily leave their values and lifestyle with the land, being subject to assimilation once living in the city. Through her ethnographic work with twenty-five North Slope Iñupiaq women living in Anchorage, Fogel-Chance shows how rural-urban migrants are able to strike a balance, simultaneously “living in both worlds.” “Worlds” here refers to cultural rather than physical terrains. While Iñupiaq women have become primary household earners in the urban workplace, they have combined this adjustment with a home life that self-consciously emphasizes traditional means of child-rearing and gender relations, family obligations, and social reciprocity.

Although Fogel-Chance’s work shows that indigenous ways of being have successfully traveled to Anchorage—indeed, her work may lead us to question the very notion that Alaska Natives living in Anchorage should be thought of as perpetually “displaced”—she also cautions that this apparent cosmobility in fact depends on the continued cultivation of social networks in rural communities. Specifically, her work implies that Iñupiaq ways of living and viewing the world can only travel as far as subsistence food networks. Interjecting in ongoing political debate about subsistence rights in Alaska, Fogel-Chance (1993:106) warns, “greater recognition needs to be accorded to how the loss of these foods to urban households would eliminate a crucial element reinforcing Iñupiaq identity there.” Territory, therefore, although distanced, remains a significant limiting geographical factor in projects of Iñupiaq cosmobility.



Molly Lee (2002) has likewise documented the persistent role of subsistence foods for Yup'ik women living in Anchorage, as well as the length to which Alaska Natives living in urban areas will go to access these subsistence foods. Lee's collaborator, a Yup'ik artisan living in Anchorage, travels to rural communities to visit her friends and relatives and exchange "city foods" for caribou ribs, seal meat, and salmonberries. By following this "cooler ring" in action, Lee (2002:4) comes to understand the cooler as a symbol for the "ties that bind these women to the land." In doing so, Lee represents the viability of urban indigeneity as at least partially contingent on ties to a home village and to relationships with hunters in that village. Ties to territory provide a foundation for community strength, even under situations of displacement. However, when territory is understood as the core of Alaska Native identity, these displaced ties can form a nexus of vulnerability. While Lee's informant had the financial and social capital to travel to home villages, maintain large social networks, and continue to access traditional foods while living an urban lifestyle, not all Alaska Natives living in urban parts of the state are so lucky. Lee's work thus points towards the possibility that cosmobility is generative of new culturally based class divisions between groups of rural-urban migrants.

Intriguingly, Lee suggests that the "portability" of worldviews and practices, although viable through maintenance of ties to home villages, is unevenly distributed according to Yup'ik gender roles. Because women have traditionally worked as gatherers and processors of food, "the urban woman's continuity with the past is asserted every time she flenses a seal on the laundry room floor or stirs up a pot of basket dye on the kitchen stove" (Lee 2002:6). In contrast, because the role of men has traditionally been as hunters in the primary stages of subsistence harvesting, male identities are tied more fundamentally to specific places and knowledge about those places. It is true that Alaska Native women are far more likely to spend at least part of their lives living in Anchorage than their male counterparts (Hamilton and Seyfrit 1994). Ironically, then, the apparently successful cosmobility of Alaska Native women may in fact be perpetually dependent on the continued emplacement of Alaska Native men.

More than Fogel-Chance or Lee, Blackman (2008) places indigenous mobility, rather than subsistence roots, front and center in her ethnographic work, highlighting the (neo) nomadic past and present of Nunamiut

Eskimos who travel back and forth between Fairbanks and Anaktuvuk Pass in order to gather supplies and maintain social relationships. Blackman documents the complex meanings that city life has come to represent for Nunamiut travelers over time. In doing so, she demonstrates that modern forms of mobility are vital to the maintenance of Nunamiut identity. In fact, her work hints at the impossibility, for Nunamiut, of living a truly emplaced life. The ability to maintain ties to territory cannot, in the end, be separated from the necessity of traveling to urban areas and hub communities.

One of the more revealing moments of Blackman's essay is her observation that nonindigenous travelers arriving in Anaktuvuk Pass are strictly greeted as "visitors" rather than tourists. Blackman's account of this adherence to guest-host sociality has several implications. By claiming the right to act as hosts, Nunamiut tour guides are communicating their status as rightful inhabitants of their territory (Urban 2010). Less obviously, guest-host sociality negates a commercial relationship in favor of a gifting relationship. By describing tourists as "visitors," Nunamiut in Anaktuvuk insist on the possibility of a reciprocal visit; as guests in waiting, they subtly break the mold of emplaced indigeneity in favor of a more commensurate relationship to geography.

"Traditional" anthropological approaches to the Arctic have tended to focus on territory and its recovery (Riches 1990). Fogel-Chance, Lee, and Blackman depart from this model, to varying degrees, in order to highlight the resilience and flexibility of actual Alaska Natives, who are able to maintain a sense of community and identity beyond the borders of indigenous territory. A closer reading of these accounts of cosmobility, however, suggests that these ethnographers worked with a distinct portion of the Alaska Native urban social universe: women who possessed the financial and social capital necessary to successfully "live in both worlds" by maintaining ties to subsistence culture through travel and social networks.

Although such a cross-cultural balancing act would be difficult in any context, it is especially challenging in Alaska due to the extremely high cost of travel to and from rural parts of the state, which lie off the road system. This cost poses an obstacle to the multiple geographical strategies necessary for cultural and physical survival, for rural as well as urban Alaska Native residents. As Ann Fienup-Riordan (2000:165) has observed, "Yup'ik community members are painfully aware of the problems and contradictions of continuing to live off the land when this

comes with a price tag that only those with a steady cash income can afford.” In urban areas, in particular, subsistence foods are likely to become scarce. At what point, then, will mobile rural-urban migrants have to “cut the network” (Strathern 1996), breaking off reciprocity towards those urban relatives and friends who cannot afford to live within the circuits of indigenous cosmobi- lity?

## CONCLUSION

Place-making in Alaska is not only a matter of remembering and renewing ways of living in local geographies. It is a wider genre of discursive and political behavior that seeks to negotiate the value of place in a world of global flows. In this paper, I have argued that the implications of rural-urban displacement in Alaska can only be fully understood once we have examined the ways in which place itself is imbued with meaning in the context of indigenous cultural politics within the settler-state. Drawing on recent ethnography, I have identified emplacement and cosmobi- lity as projects that diverge on the role of territory in constituting indigenous identity and community; each posits a particular view of the proper relationship between culture and place for robust, self-determined Alaska Native futures.

Discussing the future of Alaska Native communities solely in terms of their ability or inability to support sustainable lives in fixed geographies leads to a limited and essentialized understanding of what it means to be indigenous in the modern world. In recent years, anthropologists have drawn attention to the flexibility and ingenuity of indigenous migrants in the Arctic, who, despite living apparently “displaced” lives outside traditional territories, have often maintained a strong sense of identity and community cohesion, indicating a dynamic relationship between culture and place. However, this focus on cosmobi- lity carries its own hazards: an unmitigated celebration of emergent indigenous cosmopolitanisms overlooks the fact that not all Alaska Natives can afford to cultivate a mobile lifestyle that integrates the resources of rural and urban worlds.

Anthropologists have a key role to play as advocates for sustainable rural lifestyles, but they should likewise turn their attention to the differential stakes of rural-urban migration for differently positioned social actors, and to the new forms of social and cultural life that this mobility engenders or forecloses. Who can be mobile, and who cannot, and at what cost? In what ways do economic resources structure continuing participation in sharing

networks and legitimized cultural membership for urban Alaska Natives? How might the need for increased mobility create new divisions between those who are “inside” or “outside” culture?

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# CONTEMPORARY RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN ALASKA

Marie E. Lowe

Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508;  
marie.lowe@uaa.alaska.edu

## ABSTRACT

As economic conditions in Alaska's rural communities worsen, residents face difficult choices about remaining in home communities and what they should do to prepare the next generation for a possibly different future. A survey of new families in the Anchorage School District demonstrates movement to Anchorage from both on the road system and off the road system for employment, educational opportunities, and because of a rising cost of living. Flexible migration strategies that involve return or circular movement mitigate the socioeconomic challenges rural families face in finding employment, adequate housing, and educational opportunities and in negotiating lifestyle changes. The data suggest a complex and evolving relationship between rural and urban Alaska as families and particularly young people struggle with the cultural transitions this relationship entails.

**KEYWORDS:** youth, mobility, education

## INTRODUCTION

In 2008, an unforeseen and sudden increase in the Anchorage School District's enrollment prompted the superintendent and the Anchorage mayor to send a letter to Governor Sarah Palin, requesting attention to a possible population influx from Alaska's rural communities. This enrollment coincided with the global financial crisis of 2008 and soaring energy costs, which had instigated a one-time energy rebate distributed in concert with the largest ever Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend payout. As economic conditions in Alaska's rural communities worsen because of economic crisis, diminishing local access to natural resources, and a rising cost of living, rural residents are faced with difficult choices about remaining in their home communities and preparing the next generation for a possibly different future reality. Current demographic studies demonstrate that Alaska's rural population has declined since 2000 (Williams 2010; Windisch-Cole 2009).

Drawing from research conducted with families in Anchorage that have school-aged children, this article ad-

resses contemporary rural-to-urban migration in Alaska and its cultural implications. Findings from a survey of Alaska families enrolling new students in the Anchorage School District in 2007–2008 demonstrate a gradual migration trend among families rather than a sudden movement to Anchorage triggered by economic crisis, children moving independently of families, and return or circular migration patterns. This article describes where Alaskans are moving from, why they are moving, and who is moving and examines rural-urban migration patterns as both economic and cultural strategies employed to mitigate the effects of rapid socioeconomic change.

### WHERE ARE PEOPLE MOVING FROM?

Alaska has a small population for a big place. With 1,518,800 sq km in total land mass, only 692,314 people live in the state, and over 50% of the population resides in the municipality of Anchorage and the nearby Mat-Su

Borough (Mercer 2010). The next largest communities are semiurban, including Fairbanks at approximately 35,000 residents and Juneau at slightly more than 30,000 residents. Alaska has few roads connecting its communities. Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, Fairbanks, and the majority of the rest of the state's population centers are accessible by road, whereas the capital in Southeast Alaska, Juneau, is only accessible by air and sea. Slightly more survey respondents moved to Anchorage from road system communities than from off-road system areas between 2007 and 2008. Families are also moving from rural, regional hub communities in off-road systems throughout the state, such as Barrow on the North Slope (pop. est. 4,000), Nome in the northwest (pop. est. 3,500), Bethel to the west (pop. est. 5,800), and Kodiak to the south in the Gulf of Alaska (pop. est. 6,600). In addition, migrants come from small towns and villages across the state. Of Alaska's 149 communities, approximately 80% have populations with less than 1,000 residents; many are also remote and off the road system.

#### **WHY ARE PEOPLE MOVING?**

Families and children are moving to Anchorage for multiple reasons. In neoclassical economic theory, the traditional explanation for internal migration is a desire for better employment opportunities. In Alaska, families *are* moving primarily for employment opportunities and because of an attendant rising cost of living in rural areas. However, access to education for both children and adults was also a reason to move. Many respondents reported dissatisfaction with rural schools and a desire to provide their children with access to broader educational and life opportunities. Families are also moving because of existing family connections in the city or because of family troubles, for a life change, and because of rural housing shortages.

#### **WHO IS MOVING?**

Families are moving to Anchorage, but a considerable number of children are moving independently to the city from rural areas, a trend particularly noticeable among Alaska Native families. Migratory chains established through kin and other close social relations appear to play a major role in facilitating the movement of both families and children. However, rural to urban migration in Alaska is complex and demonstrates return and/or circular migration patterns as well: repeated movement between

Anchorage and rural communities whereby some families and children appear to be living a dual existence between their home communities and the city for many years.

#### **MIGRATION AS STRATEGY**

Anchorage is playing an increasingly central role in Alaska's response to changing economic times, particularly as a springboard to better employment and educational opportunities. Yet rural families face considerable challenges in Anchorage in transitioning children to urban life and schools and finding affordable housing in the city. Alaska Native and older, high-school-aged children appear to experience the most difficulties in overcoming cultural transitions and often move back to their home communities, or back and forth between them and Anchorage. This circular movement represents a combination of economic and cultural strategies for families and children attempting to negotiate two worlds. The data suggest a complex and evolving relationship between rural and urban Alaska as families and particularly young people struggle with the cultural transitions this relationship entails.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The increased enrollment in the Anchorage School District presented an opportunity to better understand whether rural Alaskans are indeed moving to Anchorage, where they are coming from, and why they are moving, at a time when rural communities are faced with both economic challenges and potentially considerable concomitant and rapid social change. The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Alaska Anchorage conducted a survey with the parents/guardians of 881 new students in the Anchorage School District enrolling in the 2007–2008 or 2008–2009 school years who were transferring in from other Alaska school districts. The purpose of the survey was to provide information to the Anchorage School District and the Municipality of Anchorage about what they could do to best help new students and new migrants to the city.

Prior in-state transfer enrollment data were not available for comparison to understand whether 2008 was unique in the number of people moving to Anchorage from other parts of the state. However, concurrent studies conducted by the State of Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs and its Department of Labor and Workforce Development demonstrate that Alaska's ru-

ral population has been declining since at least 2000 (Windisch-Cole 2009) and movement into Anchorage increasing since 2004 (Williams 2010).

Because of the difficulties in expediently conducting research with 881 minors, the parents and/or guardians of newly enrolled students were identified as survey respondents rather than the students themselves. In October and November of 2008, the Anchorage School District provided contact and point of origin information for students newly enrolled in the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years who transferred into the Anchorage School District from another district in Alaska.<sup>1</sup> Using a simple, cross-sectional survey research design, three sets of survey questions were developed to address (1) ISER's continuing interest in the causes and patterns of migration in Alaska and the Arctic, (2) how the Anchorage School District can best address the needs of new students, and (3) the extent to which the Municipality of Anchorage will need to address a potential influx of families. The survey was a one-page form with seventeen questions (mixed forced response and open-ended) and an open-ended comment area provided on the back of the form (see Appendix A).

From the data the school district provided, 791 potential survey families were identified. Since the number of potential respondents from the Mat-Su Valley was high, a random sample (20%) of this population was drawn. A total of 681 surveys were mailed and followed up by phone calls for nonresponders.<sup>2</sup> We obtained an average 67% response rate from respondents who allowed the school district directory access (86% of total) and an 18% response rate from respondents who did not allow directory access (14% of total). Military families and respondents who did not fit the survey criteria of having recently enrolled a new student in the district<sup>3</sup> were removed from the sample, resulting in 349 surveys deemed eligible for inclusion in data analysis.

Mixed methods approaches were employed in data analysis. Survey data were entered into an SPSS data file and frequencies and crosstab analyses were performed on largely nominal data. Respondent comments provided on the back of the survey in the open-ended

comment area were recorded by respondent ID number in word processing documents and analyzed for thematic content in ATLAS.TI qualitative data analysis software. A preliminary network analysis on migration paths and community relationships with Anchorage was performed using UCINET and NETDRAW social network analysis software.

## WHERE ARE ALASKANS MOVING FROM?

Data analysis indicates that during the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, 881 Alaska students originating from outside Anchorage enrolled in the Anchorage School District; 56% came from road system districts and 44% from off-road system districts. From the information the school district provided, 490 students from road system communities accounted for the majority of the new enrollees, hailing primarily from the Mat-Su Borough communities of Wasilla and Palmer. Although a greater number of new students came from road system communities and school districts, 391 new students represented moves from off-road system districts. A substantial number of new students arrived from the Bethel and Nome census areas (Figs. 1 and 2).

A preliminary network analysis was conducted on the survey data collected about parent/guardian point of origin and the previous communities in Alaska in which parents/guardians of new students had lived. Fig. 3 illustrates the complex movement of respondents around Alaska. Each line represents the moves by a respondent or group of respondents who now live in Anchorage. Arrows indicate direction of the move. Finer analysis shows many respondents have moved between Anchorage and other communities more than once; i.e., for this sample, the line between Nome and Anchorage has an arrow at each end and the line represents twenty-four moves from Nome to Anchorage and seven moves back to Nome in the data matrix imported into UCINET.

The thickness of the line connecting the communities indicates number of moves between communities and, for this sample, a range of 1 to 90 moves total be-

1. The school district identified such students by using three criteria from student records: (1) students whose IDs started with "08" and whose previous state was Alaska but previous city was not Anchorage, (2) students whose entry code said "transfer from another Alaska school district," or (3) students whose parents had authorized the school district to ask the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development for their state test records.

2. Those respondents who gave the school district permission to provide directory access to their contact information.

3. Military families (primarily moving between the Fairbanks North Star Borough and Anchorage bases) were not included in this study because their moves are often not their decision. They also face different constraints than the rural families this study targeted.

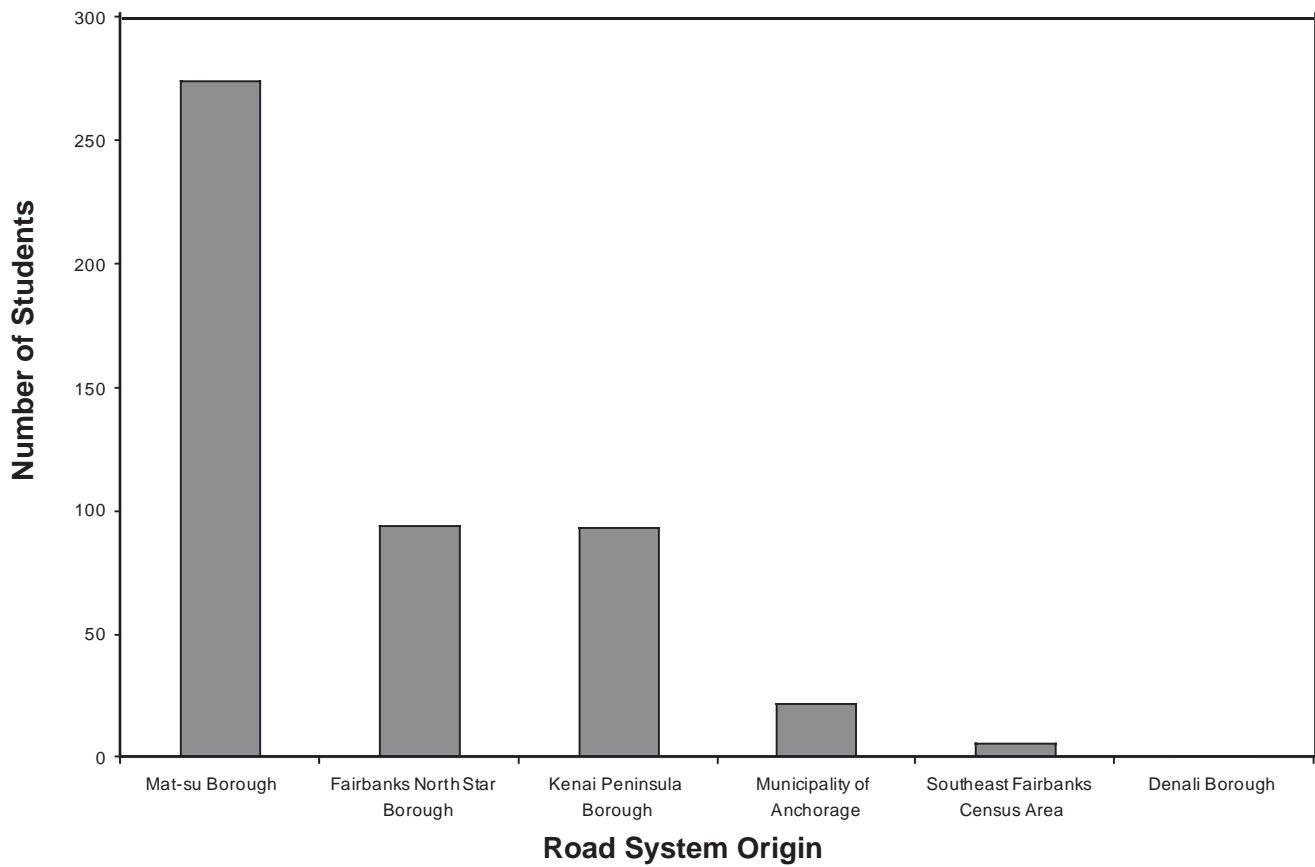


Figure 1: Road system borough/census area origin, number of students  $n = 490$

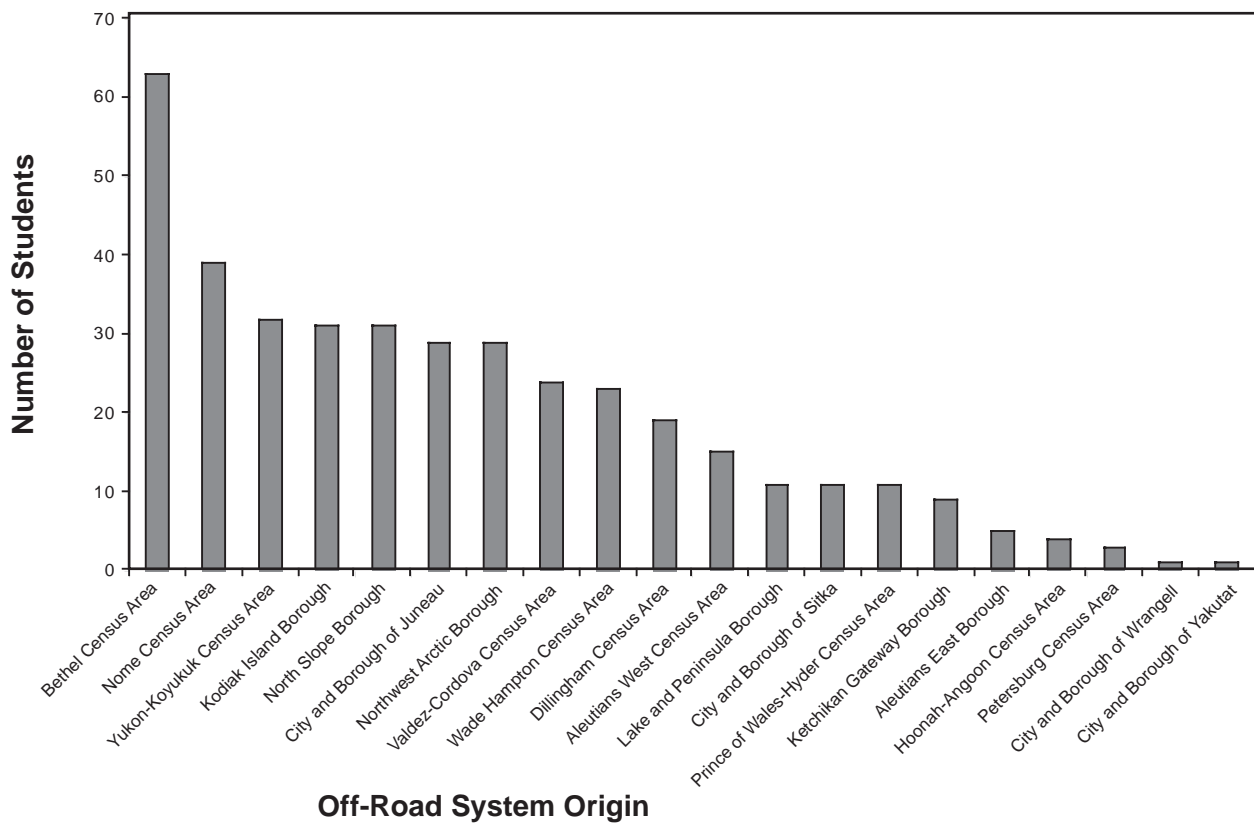


Figure 2: Off-road system borough/census area origin, number of students  $n = 391$



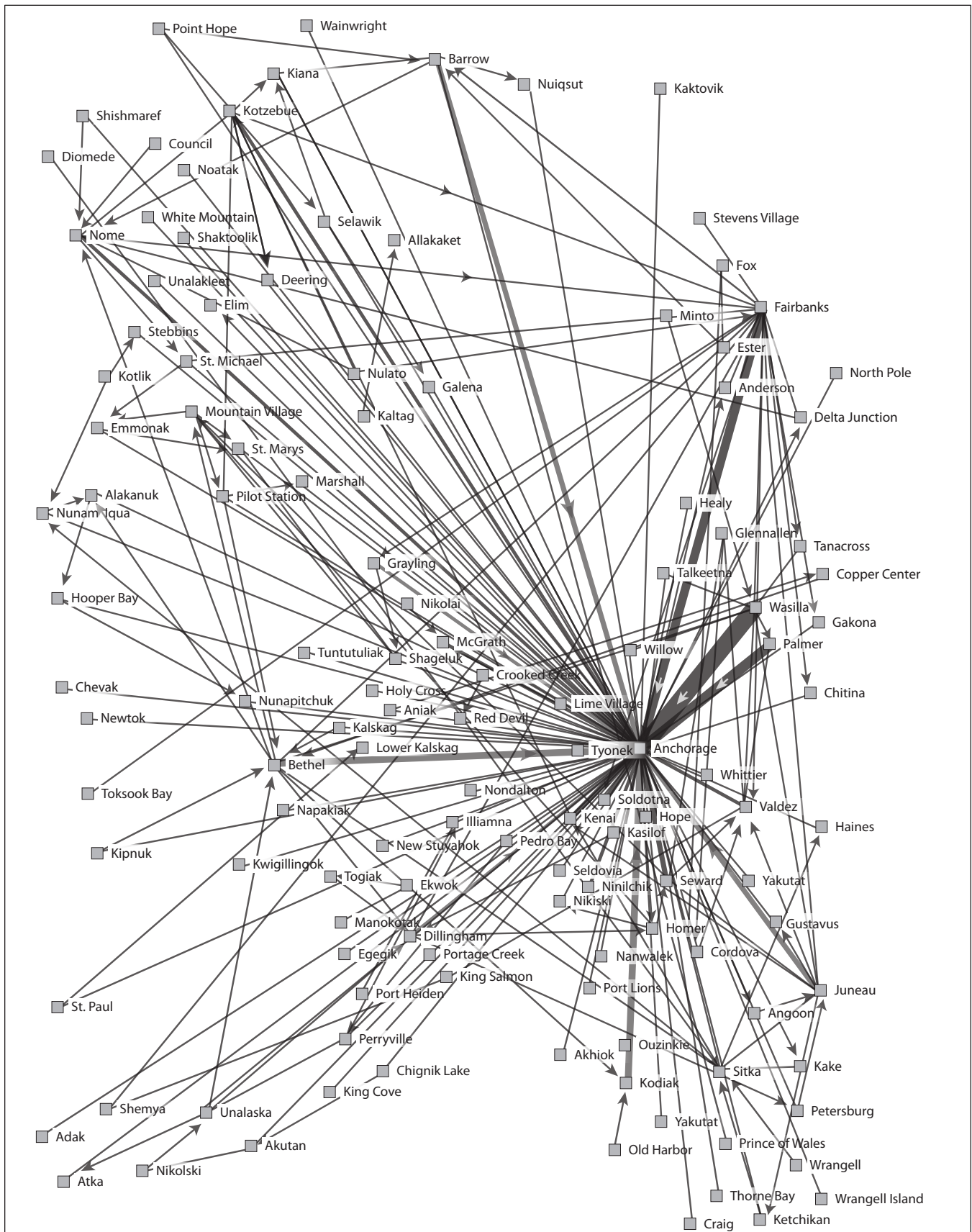


Figure 3: Alaska community network, ASD migration survey

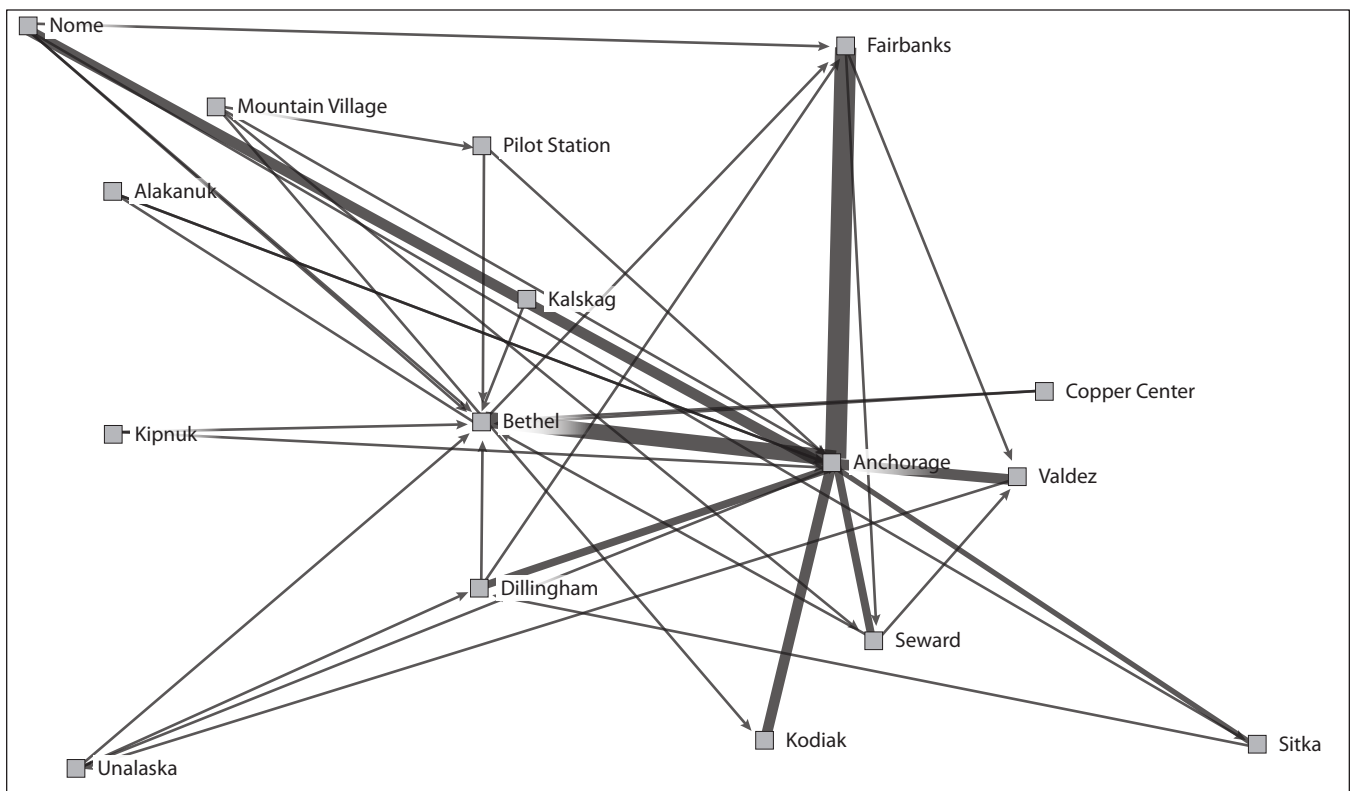


Figure 4: Ego network for the community of Bethel, Alaska, ISER migration survey

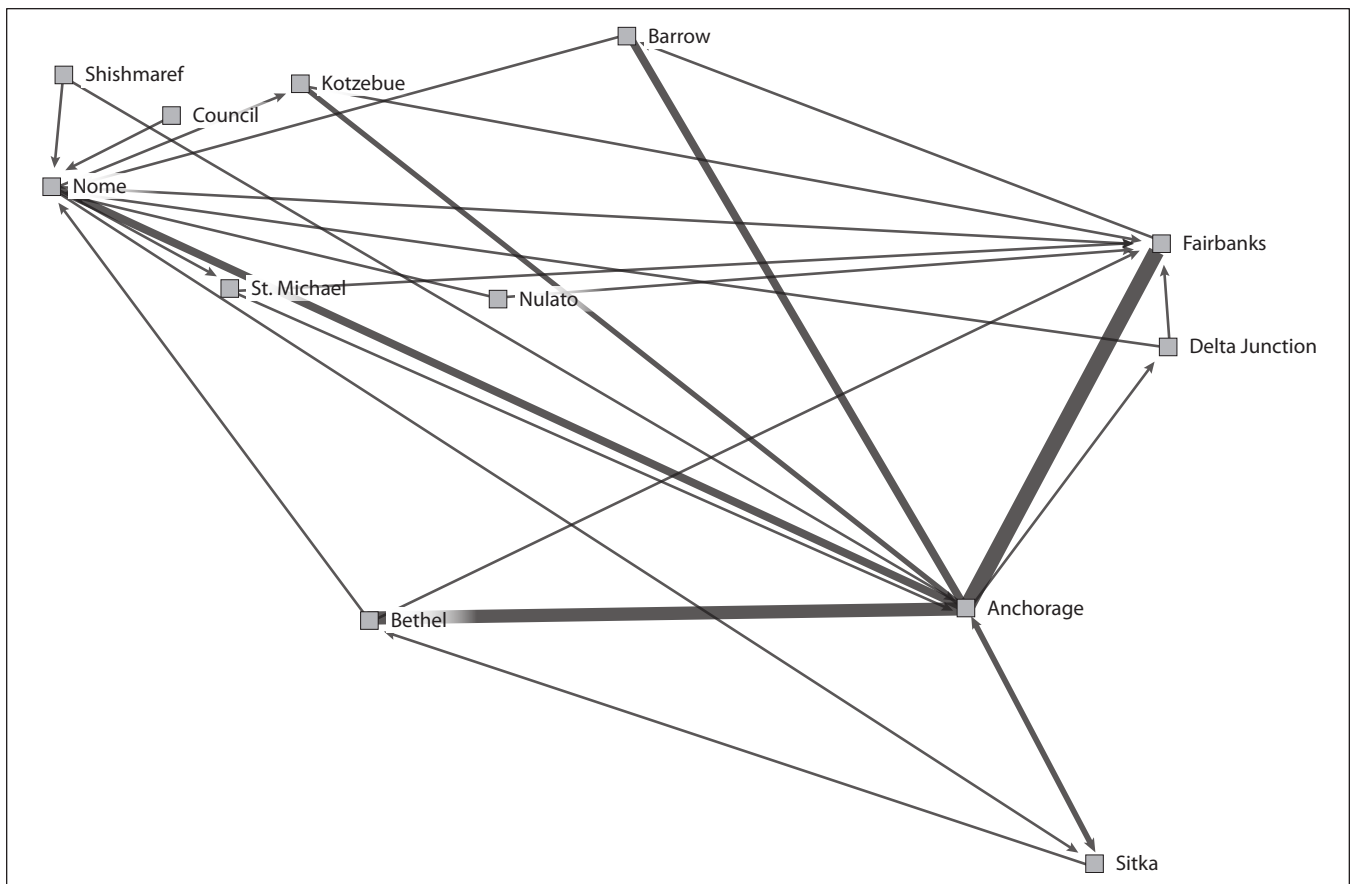


Figure 5: Ego network for the community of Nome, Alaska, ISER migration survey

tween communities. These data demonstrate strong ties between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough communities of Wasilla and Palmer, and other semiurban areas such as Fairbanks and Juneau. There is also significant movement from Alaska's regional hubs, such as Bethel, Nome, Barrow, and Kodiak. As elsewhere, migration in Alaska is complex, and enrollment counts and census data alone do not track return and/or circular migration effectively.

The strong relationship and movement between Anchorage and regional hub communities initiate further questions about conditions in these hub communities:

- (1) Do the data demonstrate more people moving from regional hubs as a function of higher populations in those communities?
- (2) Do people in regional hubs have more resources at their disposal that enable them to move?
- (3) Have resources and services reached maximum consumption in regional hubs?

The survey data generate a further hypothesis to examine in the context of possible population "tipping points" (i.e., number of jobs, available housing, and access to health care) for rural Alaska communities—that eventually rural communities with limited resources cannot sustain growing populations and people will be forced to move.

Figs. 4 and 5 illustrate "ego" (focal node) networks for the communities of Bethel and Nome, the moves of survey respondents in and out of these communities during their lifetimes. Because there are more small villages in the census areas of these hubs than visible here, these diagrams and associated data do not necessarily demonstrate a "step-wise" pattern of migration otherwise observable in historical census data, i.e., people using a hub community as a regional stepping stone to get to Anchorage (Howe 2009) or regional hubs acting as "way-stations" for Anchorage (Hamilton and Seyfrit 1993). Although the network data from the current study is limited in scope, Windisch-Cole (2009) did not find evidence of step-wise migration in her analysis of Alaska's rural population and school population trends.

In addition, considerably fewer respondents in the 2008 Alaska Native Policy Center survey of 1,051 attendees of the annual Alaska Federation of Natives conference reported recent moves to regional hubs than

moves to Anchorage (Alaska Native Policy Center 2009). In his study of migration using Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend data, the Alaska state demographer notes: "Anchorage was by far the primary destination from the Majority Native Areas<sup>4</sup> over the 2000–2009 period" (Williams 2010:7).

As already discussed, there are regional differences to be considered as well as the economic and structural differences between communities in the same region. Further study could examine if the eventual move to Anchorage might be accelerating as the cost of living increases in hubs and as services and resources become limited. The study of migration in Alaska would benefit from further regional analysis because Alaska regions differ widely culturally, geographically, in access to resources, and in economic development. Demographic studies (Hamilton and Mitiguy 2009; Windisch-Cole 2009) demonstrate current outmigration exceeding natural increase (birth rate minus death rate) in many areas of rural Alaska. However, in some regions current birth rates are above average, such as in the Northwest Arctic Borough and the Wade Hampton Census Area, in the northern portion of the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta (Windisch-Cole 2009). Recent studies on the population dynamics of arctic communities demonstrate place-to-place variation in migration trends within the same region. The authors suggest possible differences in social networks, educational opportunities, or economic circumstances that require further elucidation through ethnographic work on the community and family levels (Hamilton and Mitiguy 2009:395).

Further regional-level or community-level studies could also illuminate how population trends interact with local social structures. For example, in their study of First Nations mobility, Cooke and Belanger (2006) draw attention to the political structure of Canadian rural communities in which powerful families often dominate local access to resources such as jobs and housing, forcing other families to move when resources are limited. The "super-household" theory (Magdanz et al. 2002; Wolfe 1987), by which certain families in Alaska Native communities lead subsistence production, is an analogous construct demonstrating local variation in political economy.

4. As defined by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the state's "Majority Native Areas" include the North Slope Borough; the Northwest Arctic Borough; the Nome, Yukon-Koyukuk, Wade Hampton, Bethel, and Dillingham census areas; and the Lake and Peninsula Borough (southwest of Anchorage).

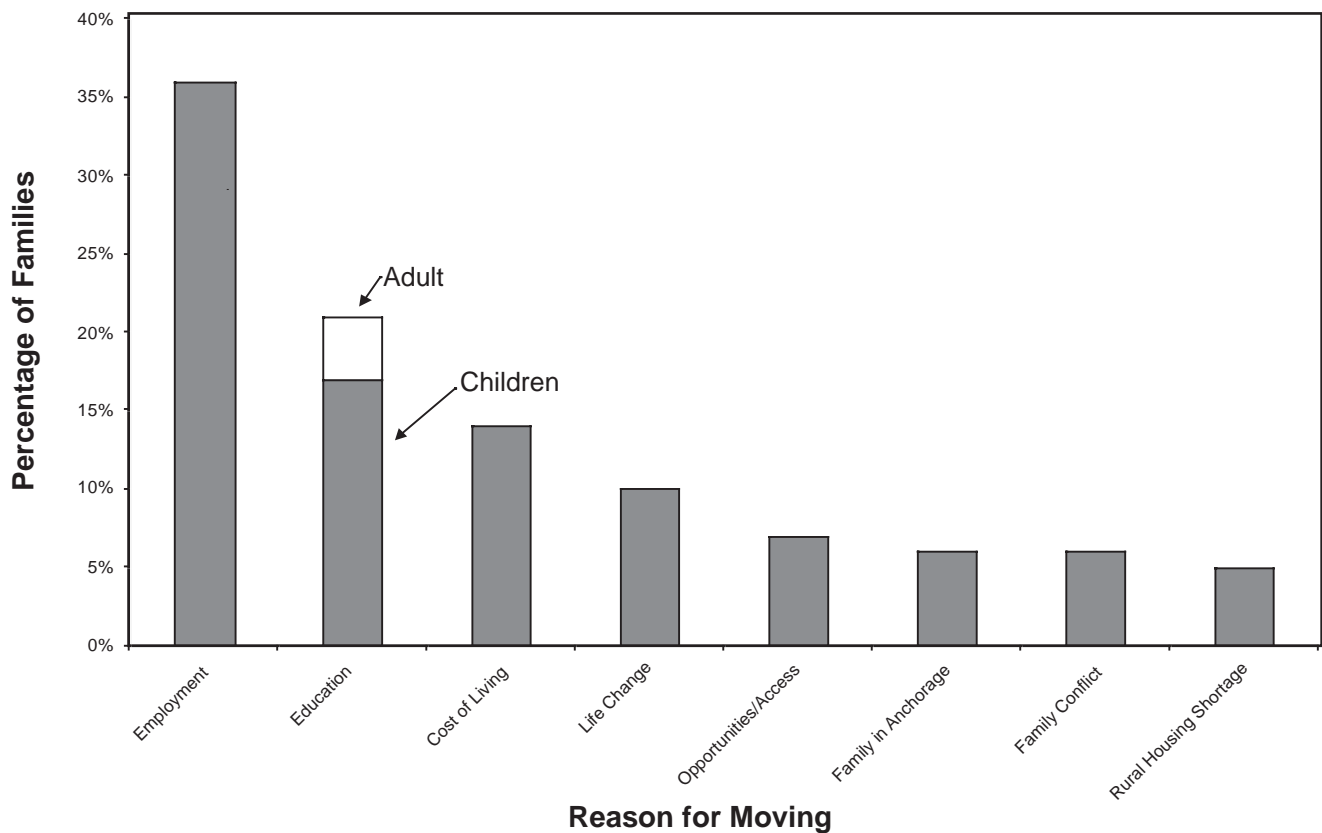


Figure 6: Reason for family move to Anchorage

### WHY ARE PEOPLE MOVING?

Survey respondents most often cited the following reasons for moving to Anchorage: employment (36%), education (21%), and the rising cost of living in communities outside Anchorage (14%) (Fig. 6). Note these categories are not mutually exclusive and that respondents often offered more than one reason for moving to Anchorage.

When respondents were asked if they knew of other people from their home communities who considered moving for the same reasons, 31% indicated yes. When respondents were asked if they knew of people who were moving for different reasons, 18% said yes and provided a list of reasons, in many cases related to those already presented: commute, fuel prices, housing, kids' future, most have already moved, professional turnover, retirement, school closing, shopping, trouble with the law, and weather. The search for employment is the traditionally defined impetus for migration, but as the data in Figure 6 show, employment is only one factor in the decision to move.

For many, the reasons for and causes of migration are multiple and often noneconomic (Domina 2006; Huskey

et al. 2004; White 2009; Wilson 1994). When these multiple reasons are combined with the continuing relationship many migrants have with their home communities, migration is also necessarily complex. Martin et al. (2008) note that for Alaska, "Migration is not a one-time event." In arctic Alaska, Huskey found the number of out-migrants equaled 60–80% of in-migrants between 1995 and 2000 and therefore concurred: "migration is not one way" (Huskey 2009). Martin (2009) further stresses how the "Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic" of 2003 found rural arctic residents returning home primarily to live near family. Particularly for men, subsistence activities and way of life in rural areas was a reason for return.

Using Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend data, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development reports movement from Alaska's most rural or "Majority Native" areas (which include approximately 30% non-Alaska Native residents) has increased since 2004 and averaged 1,400 people in both 2008 and 2009 (Williams 2010:6). Williams qualifies these figures with others, however, which suggest there are an average of 800 return migrants per year moving back to Majority Native Areas.



Even so, Williams' study estimates a 10% net population loss between 2000 and 2009 from Majority Native Areas. Though limited in scope, the survey data from the present study demonstrate migration paradigms reflecting migratory chains (Haug 2008; Hendrix 1975; Wilson 1994) and circular migration (Howe 2009; Vertovec 2007), discussed below. Migratory chains link networks of migrants through kin or other close relationships. Circular migration implies bidirectional movement between point of origin and destination.

The Alaska Native Policy Center in Anchorage is also examining rural to urban migration among their populations, preferring to use the term "movement" rather than migration (Alaska Native Policy Center 2009), and links current trends to discourses of a historical continuum of movement among Alaska's indigenous people. This construction could have the effect of diminishing concern for the very real socioeconomic problems rural Alaskans face today, and the case for a connection between Alaska Natives' former seminomadic settlement patterns generations past seems rather tenuous at best. However, this discourse also calls attention to the cultural features of the current movement. Its circular qualities may represent a dual existence for many migrants, in effect "linking rural and urban spaces into a single formation" (Mills 2001:178), and a strategy that mitigates the effects of culture change in an urban setting.

This study demonstrates that migration is fluid in Alaska; there is a potentially evolving duality between rural and urban areas, but at present the characteristics of this duality remain largely unexplored in northern studies. While studies have focused on the reasons for the outmigration of women (Hamilton and Seyfrit 1994a, 1994b; Martin 2009) and youth aspirations (Hamilton and Seyfrit 1993; Seyfrit and Hamilton 1997), more attention could be devoted to understanding the features of migration chains and circular migration in Alaska—that is, how rural-urban connections in Alaska affect economic and cultural institutions such as livelihood strategies, localized impacts on rural development and stresses to urban areas, kinship and social networks, and, particularly

for this study, the enculturation and life-making practices of the next generation.

## WHO IS MOVING?

This study includes larger communities such as Juneau in the off-road system category because of a focus here on how access to urban resources and opportunities impacts families and children. Communities like Juneau have a more ethnically heterogeneous population than those rural communities that Goldsmith et al. (2004:31; see also Huskey 2009) identify as "remote-off road system," meaning that 82% of the residents are Alaska Native or the Alaska state demographer denotes them as "Majority Native Areas" (Williams 2010), in which the average percentage of Alaska Native residents is more than 77%. Anchorage School District survey respondents for the current study (parents/guardians) self-reported 49% White/Caucasian ethnicity, 35% Alaska Native, and 4% Alaska Native and other ethnicity. The remaining 12% of respondents reported African-American (2%), Asian-American (4%), Pacific Islander (1%), Latino (3%), or Multi-Ethnic (2%) ethnicities. Although it is an oversimplification, the majority of road system families self-report a White/Caucasian ethnicity while the majority of off-road families self-report Alaska Native ethnicity.

Survey results indicate not all families surveyed were new migrants to Anchorage. The 349 respondents enrolled 407 students in Anchorage schools. Of those students, 43% moved but their families did not; 57% moved together with their families. Student movement independent of families was unanticipated in the survey design but the level of its occurrence is a key finding (Table 1). Windisch-Cole (2009) also notes that the rural school population is declining more rapidly than the overall rural population. Alaska students from study families moving alone in the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years were (1) sent to Anchorage from another community in Alaska to live with family, (2) moving because of custody arrangements, (3) moving to live with Anchorage foster families, (4) previously homeschooled, or (5) transferring

*Table 1: Numbers of students moving alone and reasons for new enrollment, n = 177*

	Sent in to Family	Custody Arrangement	Foster Child	Previously Homeschooled	Within District Transfer	Other	Total
Number of Students	69	30	14	22	39	3	177

between schools but had originally come from an Alaska school district outside Anchorage.

The survey also revealed both children and families moving back and forth between rural communities and Anchorage, a finding also apparent in the network data in Figure 4, although the survey questions did not directly measure the characteristics of this movement. The qualitative data collected from the open-ended comment area at the end of the survey are rich in detail on this subject.

Students moving back and forth between Anchorage and a rural community are often moving between parents who are separated. One mother, for example, described how she and her son moved to Anchorage from a small Aleutians East Borough village in 2005 while the father stayed behind. The son only stayed with the mother for a short time and then returned to the Aleutians to finish the school year. In September 2006 the son again came to Anchorage and attended school in the Anchorage School District for the 2006–2007 school year. He returned to the Aleutians to attend school for 2007–2008. He again returned to Anchorage to attend middle school for the 2008–2009 school year. The mother says the son may continue spending a year with his father and then a year with her until he reaches high school, but they have not really reached a final decision yet.

The highest number of independent migrants was in the category of students being sent from another Alaska community to Anchorage to live with family (Table 1). These relatives include parents working in Anchorage, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and adult siblings. Of the 349 total parent/guardian respondents, Alaska Native respondents accounted for the most independent migrants; forty-one families reported these independent migrants as having been sent to Anchorage to live with them.

One uncle described how his niece came from a southwestern Alaska community in August of 2008 to try to go to school in Anchorage. She had previously tried attending Mount Edgecumbe, a boarding school in Sitka, but had difficulties there so she returned to her parent’s home in southwest Alaska. In September 2008 she started at Dimond High School in Anchorage, but about a month later she left because she was not able to get the academic help she needed. She has since returned to southwest Alaska to live with her parents and is attending school there.

The relatively higher numbers of Alaska Native families reporting their students in the category of “sent to family” suggests this type of movement could be prevalent among this group. Table 2 also demonstrates the highest number of independent migrants associated with self-reported White/Caucasian parents/guardians were students who were previously homeschooled. These numbers are included here should further discussion on this issue be warranted, because no comparative data exist on annual homeschoolers entering the district. Whether the numbers of previously homeschooled children represent a new trend is unknown. In many cases, however, it appears it was the child’s decision to go to public school because of the desire for more activities and opportunities, a finding that mirrors comments collected from parents and children moving to Anchorage from rural areas for the same reasons.

Ten percent of families surveyed have a student who transferred schools. These families were flagged for inclusion in this study because their children had school records transferred from other districts in the state at some time in the recent past. One eighteen-year-old student, for example, described how her mother had moved to Anchorage from a southeast Alaska community in 2002 and how she,

*Table 2: Number of families reporting student movement alone, n = 160*

Ethnicity of Parent or Guardian	Sent in to Family	Custody Arrangement	Foster Child	Previously Homeschooled	Within District Transfer	Other	Total
Alaska Native	41	9	7	0	15	1	73
White/Caucasian	11	12	5	20	15	1	64
African-American	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
Asian-American	2	1	0	0	1	0	4
Pacific Islander	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Multi	4	2	1	0	3	1	11
Native American	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Latino	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
<b>Total # Families</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>160</b>

the daughter, followed her mother in 2003 while she was in middle school. The daughter started using drugs and because of resulting behavioral problems was sent to a rehabilitation center outside the state. After four months at the center, she was sent back to southeast Alaska where she lived with grandparents. She returned to Anchorage in 2005 to begin high school. She started at Service High but then transferred to East High. After 11th grade, she was again sent to drug rehabilitation for several months. She returned to East High in 2008, transferred to West High after four months, and then dropped out. She has tried the Nine Star and I Grad programs and is attempting to complete a GED while she is living on her own in "hotels" with the help of public assistance.

These within-district transfers were also included in the sample because they are important in demonstrating overall student movement; the instability of economic, home, or social life that many children appear to be facing once in the city; and the gradual movement of families to Anchorage over the last several years. The open-ended comment area of the survey reveals some new migrants moving to Anchorage and then within the city until they stabilize employment and living arrangements.

The literature on student mobility demonstrates a correlation between mobility and poverty (Kerbow 1996) and that this correlation is prevalent among certain ethnic groups and disadvantaged populations, such as African-Americans (Kerbow 1996), Native Americans and Alaska Natives (Zehr 2007), and Aboriginal Australians (Prout 2009). Research also demonstrates the numerous negative effects of high student mobility on education outcomes.

Several Alaska studies demonstrate a greater tendency in Alaska for children and young adults to move away from their home communities than other age groups (Huskey 1994, 2009; Kruse and Foster 1986; Hamilton and Seyfrit 1993, 1994a; Seyfrit and Hamilton 1997). Hamilton and Seyfrit (1993) found a greater expectation of moving among "town" children than among "village" children in Alaska, and greater expectation among town children to go to college. These findings may help explain the high level of movement from regional hubs. Studies outside of Alaska cite a positive relationship between the parents' level of education and the likelihood a child will move (Domina 2006; Elder et al. 1996). Conger and Elder (1994) stress the lack of local jobs as the primary impetus for youth to leave their home communities. Jones (2000) suggests a culture of migration forms part of the cultural capital of families.

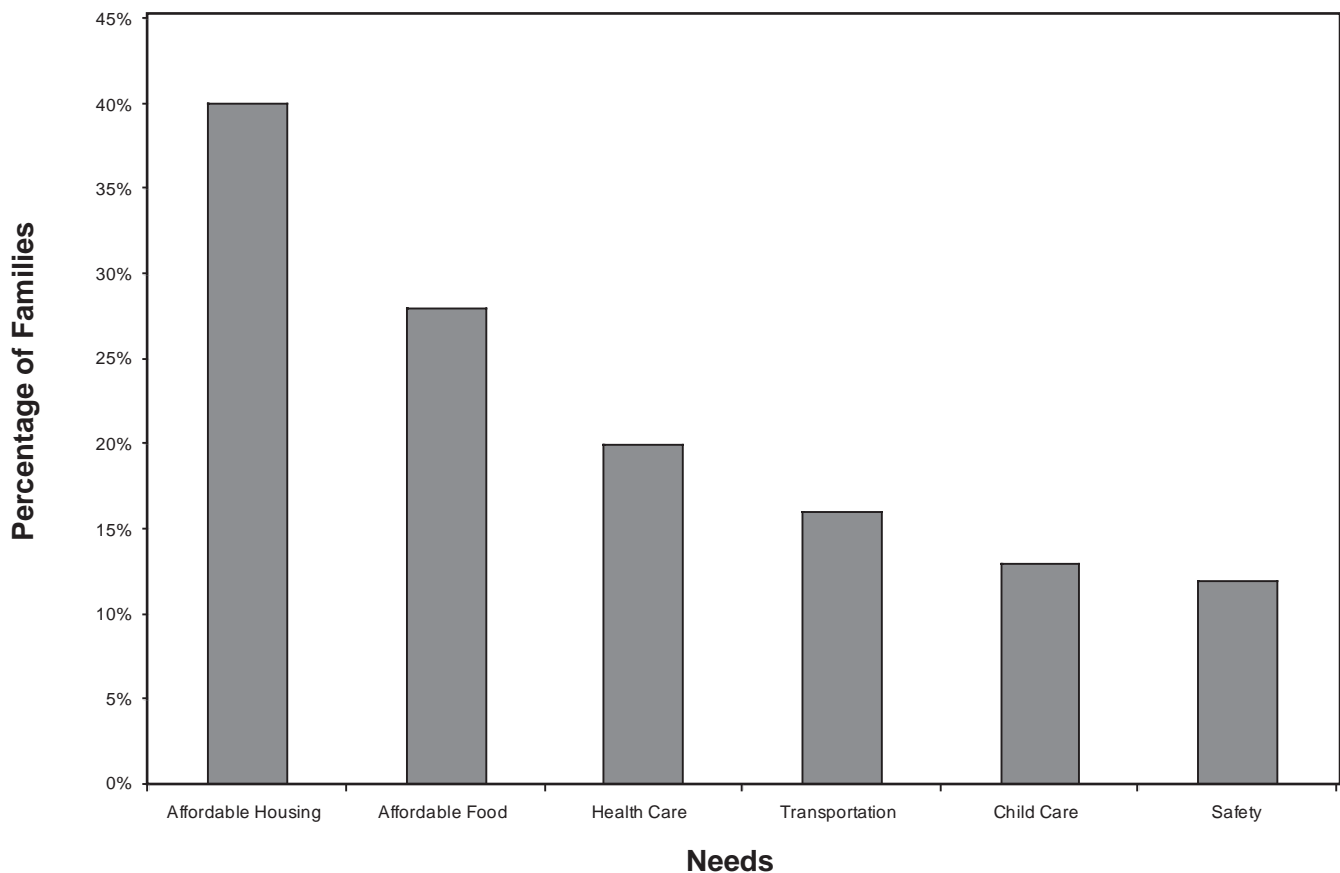
## MIGRATION AS AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Results from the Anchorage School District survey suggest respondents are using migration or movement to and from Anchorage as a strategy for mitigating socioeconomic challenges they face in their home communities and in transitioning to urban life. In addition, they are providing their children with new forms of cultural capital. While the subject of internal rural-to-urban migration held sway in anthropological studies in 1960s and 1970s postcolonial contexts, it has been largely replaced by investigations of transnational migration. However, as globalized transportation and communication systems enable frequent return or circular migration in both transnational and national contexts, new social configurations and cultural interpretations arise for international and intranational migrants alike. In her study of rural-to-urban migration in Russia, White (2009:569) notes: "with regard to internal migration, transregional identity develops which is equivalent to transnational identities observable among international migrants."

Older studies of internal migration demonstrated that (1) rural-to-urban movement was not necessarily unidirectional; (2) it did not necessarily result in "de-tribalization" in the urban setting (Kearney 1986; Ross and Weisner 1977); and (3) social networks were both created and maintained in the city and between city and home communities. These studies now undergird contemporary anthropological understandings of migration/movement as an adaptive strategy with a focus on migrant agency employed in mitigating the effects of rapid social change (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003; Goldscheider 1987; Mills 2001; White 2009). The following section addresses how the Anchorage School District survey respondents negotiate uncertainties and challenges associated with employment and housing, find adequate educational opportunities for their children, deal with the cultural transitioning issues that youth in particular face today, and maintain connections to home communities and ways of life.

## URBAN HOUSING

Survey respondents moved to Anchorage for opportunities in employment and education in addition to a lower cost of living. However, a lack of affordable housing in Anchorage complicates the move for many and was survey respondents' primary concern in response to the question,



*Figure 7: Families' needs in Anchorage, n = 349*

"In Anchorage, I need..." with the choices employment, affordable housing, affordable food, child care, health care, transportation, or to feel safer (Fig. 7; see Appendix A).<sup>5</sup> As discussed previously, some families and students continue to move around Anchorage and Anchorage schools in an effort to find the most favorable living conditions. Research demonstrates a relationship between housing instability and student mobility, low achievement scores, high dropout rates, and school instability (Crowley 2003; Hartman 2002; Nichols and Gault 2003). One Anchorage School District survey respondent who had formerly lived on the Kenai Peninsula noted:

Affordable rental housing near schools that are performing above district was very difficult to find. We are renting a house (near an excellent school) that belongs to acquaintances living elsewhere. If we need to seek another rental in the future, I expect to have a challenging search.

Many survey respondents are living in the lower income areas of Anchorage, many in trailers, and some families are

living in motels. One mother, for example, has been moving back and forth between a Northwest Arctic Borough village and Anchorage since 1993 because of the high cost of living in the village, particularly for oil and food. She noted that the village store often ran out of essential food items. She lives in a motel in Anchorage and finds work as a front desk clerk. She has been trying to save money to buy a trailer. She wanted to move out of the motel as soon as possible because she doesn't feel safe there and characterized it as "a freaky place to stay long term. The month-long people are okay but the nightly guests are scary."

#### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In conjunction with data reflecting more students moving independently and families reporting education as a reason for their move, many survey respondents voiced concern about the inadequacy of rural schools to prepare their children for the future. The following comments reflect this concern:

5. The choices here were not mutually exclusive and respondents gave multiple answers for this question.



Kids struggle to their grade level because they had poor education in [western Alaska village]. We had moved to Anchorage August 2007 for a better education for my kids. During the summer times we go back for subsistence fishing, hunting, and harvesting! Our struggle here in Anchorage is keeping our traditional values.

Schools in [Interior village] did not prepare kids for anything. In fact, the school in [Interior village] didn't even have grades. Kids in [Interior village] are not doing well. There is also a very high teacher turnover rate out there and this creates many problems. There is a general lack of education in the bush communities.

### CULTURAL TRANSITIONS

Families encounter difficulties in transitioning to urban life, particularly its fast pace, and many commented on their own or their children's homesickness. Respondent comments addressing family transitions concerned finding affordable housing, traffic, loss of social networks, and lack of orientation resources for either living in the city or for children starting in a new school. The school district posed a question on the survey to measure how students were adjusting to new schools on a Likert Scale and the results were mixed: 47% of parents/guardians noted their children were adjusting "very well," 22% "well," 18% "OK," 10% "poorly," and 3% "not at all."

Students' difficulties in transitioning to new schools will be compounded by instability at home. Difficulties in transition were the most-mentioned topic in the open-ended comment area of the survey (sixty-two comments regarding children's difficulties), particularly for Alaska Native respondents and for those families with high-school-aged children. These respondents reported their children leaving Anchorage to go back to their communities after only a short time because of the hardship in transitioning due to cultural differences. The problems older students face in adjusting to the new setting are logical, because their enculturation experiences are more firmly rooted than those of younger children, added to the problem of leaving their established social networks behind (Elder et al. 1996). The following comments reflect the concerns of several different respondents about adjusting to life in Anchorage:

With more families moving here they face larger challenges. Most do not understand paying rent plus utilities. When you live in a village, people support one another and know that the family next

door will share what they have. You will not go without shelter, heat. Classrooms have friends/family that you grow up with. A peer pressure support group. When something happens to one, it happens to all. When in the city you get evicted, families don't know about food bank or are too ashamed to go. People are moving because there are no jobs, they want better education for their children. Price of travel is outrageous. The price of food is like going to a 7-11 on steroids! But what families don't see is the hardship it is on the children to take out of their environment leads to trouble with the law, drinking, smoking, using drugs and suicide.

Took 2–3 years to feel safe; older ones were scared; younger were easier, difficult with older. Coming from small schools, difficult for kids to "stick their neck out" in bigger school. Wish there were jobs in the village so I could move back.

I think all the young native kids have a chance in the city. Expect some live harder here because they miss out on the tradition and life style the elders teach them, no more native get-togethers like Eskimo dances, Christmas potlucks, native Christmas games, no more hard core basketball for students that like sports; some young girls and boys can't even join sports because it costs too much money; in the villages it's free to join sports, we can't even go to open gym evening time not like the villages. Our Eskimo food subsistence food we can't even eat them here. Most of the families end up moving back to the village due to the different living style. I even wish they had a High School here for young native boys & girls only, they would feel more comfortable and play sports like everyone else in the city and have the confidence for sports. Maybe even better education if they had High School for Natives that move from the village, they wouldn't be scared.

Culture is very exclusive and high-pressure. No one really cares about my kid or my family. She wishes she felt more welcome and more included. Wish she had more friends. School is not about helping kids just holding them to "white" standards.

My daughter couldn't adjust and didn't get help in school. She is leaving to go back to [small Bethel census area community]. East [High] is too big, too many students, not enough personal attention from teachers.

Child in school not only challenged by transition, but also limitations due to unequal education

(rural vs. urban), sociocultural changes, and unrealistic expectations. Choices do not stabilize (as an adult may have opportunity) and self-identity and worth degrade, creating emotional dysfunction and relational instabilities.

Respondent comments indicate that lack of employment and education opportunities in their home communities are driving movement to Anchorage but that transitioning to city life is difficult for many. Parents/guardians highlight challenges for both children and families involving the loss of social support and connectedness, difficulties in adjusting to bigger schools, accommodating a different lifestyle while missing cultural activities associated with home communities, and inequalities that are at once economic and cultural. They recognize that these pressures can and do result in social problems for children and their families.

Some respondents noted that a number of the new students, and particularly older students, who enrolled in 2008 had already left Anchorage to return to their communities. School district enrollments (both rural and urban) do not reflect the movement between two worlds in which Alaska children and families currently often find themselves. Migration data derived from census, vital statistics, and enrollment records do not usually account for strategic movement between rural and urban spaces that people employ to alleviate economic and cultural pressures they face during these times of economic uncertainty. Particularly compromised by the lack of affordable housing in Anchorage and difficult cultural transitions, some rural Alaskans feel trapped between a life of few opportunities in their home communities and living on the margins in the city.

## CONCLUSION

Parents/guardians of students newly enrolled in the Anchorage School District were surveyed to find out whether rural Alaskans are moving to Anchorage, where they come from, and why. New students enrolling in the Anchorage School District in the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years transferred in at a high rate from other state school districts that were in close proximity to Anchorage (i.e., Palmer and Wasilla) and from a wide range of off-road system communities, particularly regional hubs (i.e., Bethel and Nome).

Families are moving to Anchorage primarily for the associated reasons of employment and educational oppor-

tunities and because of the high cost of living in communities outside of Anchorage. Families are also moving to Anchorage for a general life change and for more access to the resources urban life offers, because they have family in Anchorage or have experienced family conflict in their home communities, for better health care, and because of a lack of housing in their home communities.

Considerable numbers of children are moving independently to Anchorage or around Anchorage schools. Some of this movement appears to be related to family conflict, such as divorce or separation or behavioral problems with children. Children are also being sent to family living in Anchorage for access to opportunities and a more well-rounded education. Many respondents report dissatisfaction with rural schools and worry about their children's preparation for the future.

Flexible migration strategies that often involve return or circular movement between Anchorage and home communities mitigate socioeconomic challenges rural Alaska families currently face in finding employment, adequate housing, educational opportunities, and making cultural transitions in the urban context. Older, high school-aged and Alaska Native children appear to experience the most difficulties in overcoming culture shock and fitting in with their peers at Anchorage's large schools, and parents worry about their children being academically behind their urban peers. Many of the older students do not succeed in this transition and move back to their home communities. Many children and families appear to live a dual existence between their home communities and Anchorage for many years.

Further study should include the seemingly substantial migration from regional hub communities despite those communities having developed economies, and whether the eventual move to Anchorage might be accelerating as the cost of living increases in hubs and services and resources become limited. The study of migration in Alaska would also benefit from more in-depth regional- or community-level analyses, because Alaska regions differ widely. Finally, more attention could be devoted to understanding the features of migration chains and circular migration in Alaska; that is, how rural-urban connections in Alaska affect economic and cultural institutions such as livelihood strategies, localized impacts on rural development and stresses to urban areas, kinship and social networks, and, particularly for this study, the opportunities and constraints migration places on the next generation.

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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY



**UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research Survey Note: \$20 Gift for Participating**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female 3. Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 a) Where did you live before you moved to Anchorage? 4b) What years did you live there?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Please list any other communities in Alaska you've lived in and the years you lived in each:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 a) Your move to the Anchorage area is (check one): ☐ Permanent ☐ Temporary. 6 b) If "Temporary", how long will you stay? \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Where I live right now in Anchorage, I (check one) ☐ Rent ☐ Own ☐ Stay with Family  
☐ Stay with Friends ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Why did you move? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are other people planning to leave the community you moved from for the same reasons? (check one)  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know
- 10 a) Are there other people are planning to leave for different/other reasons? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know
- 10 b) If yes, please write the reasons \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are you working in Anchorage? (check one) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Looking for work
12. What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What kind of transportation are you using the most? (check one)  
☐ My own vehicle ☐ Bus ☐ Sharing rides ☐ Walking/Bicycle ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
14. In Anchorage, I need (please check all that apply):  
☐ Employment ☐ Affordable Housing ☐ Affordable Food ☐ Child Care ☐ Health Care ☐ Better Transportation  
☐ To feel safer ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ None of the Above
15. a) Does/do your child(ren) feel welcome at school? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know  
b) Do you feel welcome in your child's school? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know
- c) If "No" to either 15 a) or 15 b), please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 16 a) Please rate how your child (ren) is/are adjusting to the new school? (please circle one)  
☐ Very well ☐ Well ☐ OK ☐ Poorly ☐ Not at all
- 16 b) If "Poorly" or "Not at All", please explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 17 a) Do you think your child (ren) is/are receiving the help he/she needs to be successful in school?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know. 17 b) If "No", please tell us  
why \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Over Please**

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CONTEMPORARY RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN ALASKA

# ANCHORAGE, ALASKA: CITY OF HOPE FOR INTERNATIONAL REFUGEES

Becky M. Saleeby

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; becky\_saleeby@nps.gov

## ABSTRACT

Over the last thirty years, international refugees have fled their home countries and arrived in Anchorage, where they have made new homes and often thrived. Although the federal government provides an infrastructure for refugee resettlement, there are still formidable challenges to be met by both the host community and the families themselves, particularly for those who do not speak English or possess marketable skills. The significant role of religious and nonprofit organizations and community volunteers in easing the transition from the status of refugee to that of an American citizen is discussed in this paper.

**KEYWORDS:** refugees, nonprofit organizations, Hmong, Sudanese, acculturation

## INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Anchorage is Alaska's largest urban area, extending along Cook Inlet from Eklutna to Girdwood and numbering over 290,000 people (State of Alaska 2010). While Anchorage has had a tremendous rate of population growth since it began as a tent city in 1915, its overall numbers have not spiked recently as they did during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the cultural and ethnic diversity of its residents has skyrocketed in the last two decades. At present, at least one in every ten people in Anchorage is foreign-born (Ohlemacher 2008), with Mexico, Samoa, the Philippines, and Korea best represented in its immigrant population (Goldsmith et al. 2005:9). One gauge of the diversity of the municipality can be found in the statistics kept by the Anchorage School District, which touts the fact that ninety-four different languages are spoken at home by its students. After English, the most commonly spoken languages are Spanish, Hmong, Tagalog, Samoan, and Korean (Anchorage School District 2010).

Anchorage has also opened its doors to a subgroup of immigrants, refugees from places such as Kosovo, Sudan, Somalia, and Laos who have been displaced from their own countries from fear of political, religious, or ethnic

persecution. While many immigrants voluntarily move to Alaska for economic or family reasons, refugees are resettled in the state through a complex process involving international agreements along with national policies and regulations. Some of the languages added to the Anchorage School District list by the children of refugee families are Bosnian, Serbo-Croatian, Nuer, Somali, Ukrainian, Wolof, and Yoruba. The largest wave of refugees in the last few years has been from Sudan, and for them and the thousands of other refugees who preceded them, "Anchorage has become a city of hope" (Bluemink 2008).

I first became aware of the immigrant and refugee population in Anchorage a few years ago when volunteering as an English teacher at the Alaska Literacy Program. There were immigrant and refugee students from Thailand, Laos, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Dominican Republic, and Gambia in my classes. In some cases, they had lived in the United States for many years and only recently had come to Alaska, but in other cases, they were "fresh off the ship" from their home country. Many had children, jobs, and cars and appeared to be doing quite well despite the fact that they were still struggling to learn English. I

marveled at their resiliency and wondered how they ended up in Alaska. This paper is the result of my attempt to better understand the resettlement process as well as the refugees' process of adaptation. It is based on an examination of some of the voluminous literature related to refugees worldwide, nationally, and locally; interviews with key individuals who manage nonprofit organizations or support groups for refugees in Anchorage; and personal communications with a family of Somali refugees with whom I worked as an English teacher. Recently in this journal, Feldman (2009:6) pointed out, "the emerging global village has a local face," and we as Alaska anthropologists cannot ignore the significant human processes that are reshaping our largest urban area.

## REFUGEES WORLDWIDE

Refugees have a distinct legal status that sets them apart from other immigrants, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention of the United Nations. They are defined as people who have left their own country and cannot return or do not want to return because of credible fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in social or ethnic groups (UNHCR 2010). After fleeing and crossing an international boundary, refugees congregate in camps or in segregated settlements, where they are often deprived of their freedom of movement and livelihood. Host countries where refugee populations initially resettle are located throughout Africa and Asia, with large numbers in Kenya, Tanzania, Pakistan, and Thailand, among other countries (USCRI 2008). Refugees are often forced to reside in these camps for a number of months or years until they are interviewed for potential permanent resettlement by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Less than 1% of the refugees worldwide are ever resettled in a third country (U.S. Department of State 2010).

While refugees are resettled in many countries around the globe, the United States is the leader in the terms of total number of people assisted. In 2008, the U.S. resettled over 48,000 refugees, more than twice as many as those resettled in Australia and Canada combined (USCRI 2008:27). According to the Refugee Act of 1980, there is a standardized resettlement process for all refugees to this country. One year after their arrival they are eligible to become permanent residents, and five years after arrival they can petition for naturalization. In passing this legislation, the U.S. government intended that refugee resettlement

be as dispersed as possible in order to facilitate assimilation and that resettlement should ultimately result in self-sufficiency for the refugee families (E. Lee 2006). The president determines the priority of each nationality as well as the total number who can be admitted annually. It has been argued that although our country's generosity is authentic, foreign policy agendas also enter into decisions on the quotas and countries each year (Bixler 2005:xiv; Loescher and Scanlan 1986).

The Refugee Act is administered by bureaus within the departments of State, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, within the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for distributing the funds for resettlement. There are ten U.S. Refugee Resettlement Agencies currently assisting newly arrived refugees to settle into local communities. These agencies include Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Iowa Department of Human Services, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief (Refugee Council USA 2009). These agencies review the list and ascertain whether the person or family already has relatives in the U.S. If so, they must be placed with that relative; if not, they are matched to a resettlement site. In other words, there must be an available sponsor for each refugee. Essentially, refugees come to Alaska either because they have relatives here or because they have been assigned to Anchorage as a "free case," which means they have no family or friends to assist them in resettlement (Ferguson 2009a).

While the U.S. provides the legal framework and funding for refugees to enter the country, there are a host of other issues that merit the attention of social scientists in general and anthropologists in particular. For example, how do those who arrive as free cases survive without a family safety net? How do they learn English and communicate? Navigate local public transport? Enroll children in school? Seek and receive medical attention? Adjust to new kinds of foods? Do they thrive in their new environment or become marginalized, and what factors contribute to each? The anthropological literature on refugee populations around the world addresses some of these questions, and others that relate to traditional versus Western medicine and ways that refugees establish a sense of community and identity in their new homes (Chernela et al. 2009;



Gozdziak 2004; Jessen 2009; McMichael and Manderson 2004; Turton and Wheat 2006).

## REFUGEES MAKE NEW HOMES IN ALASKA

International refugees began arriving in Alaska in the early 1980s, but the actual number is difficult to pin down because there are discrepancies in available records and census records are not clear about refugee or immigrant status. Another factor that complicates the picture is that a person can start out as a refugee in one state, become a permanent resident or a U.S. citizen, and then relocate to Alaska. These secondary immigrants from other U.S. cities consider Anchorage to be a highly desirable destination, primarily because it is perceived to have clean air and to be a safe place for children, so there is hardly any out-migration once they arrive (Ferguson 2009a; Smith 2008). One source estimates that between 1983 and 2002, over 700 refugees came to Alaska, ending up mostly in Anchorage but also Delta Junction, Kodiak, Juneau, and Sitka (Tsong 2002). During the 1990s, refugees from countries such as Bosnia were assisted by the Alaska Refugee Outreach, which operated out of St. Mary's Episcopal Church (McDaniel 1995).

The best data for the last six years come from the Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance and Immigration Service (RAIS), which is now the only state and federally funded resettlement program in Alaska. RAIS serves as a bridge for refugees from their former lives to new skills required for success in the U.S. and tracks each person assisted by the program. At the end of 2008, about 1,100 people (300 families) were included in their databases. Some of these families were secondary refugees who migrated from the Lower Forty-eight after they had been in the country for a few years (Ferguson 2009a). Karen Ferguson, RAIS director, started helping the refugees from Kosovo and Albania in 1999 while she was still a volunteer with Catholic Social Services. In 2004, she assisted Hmong from Laos and Thai refugee camps. As the program developed she has seen more people from Africa—Sudan, Congo, and Togo—as well as some from the Middle East and South America. In 2009, refugees came to Anchorage from Somalia, Sudan, the Congo, Burma, and Bhutan; in 2010, they are also expected from Iraq, Iran, Russia, and Eritrea (Ferguson 2009b).

RAIS provides a safety net for refugee families, beginning when they first arrive at the airport and lasting for the next five years if necessary. The staff begins planning

when they are given notice by the Department of State that a new group of refugees will be arriving, sometimes with only a two-week notice. They must first find these new Alaskans an apartment and furnish it according to a standard list of essential items, such as furniture, radios, cleaning and laundry supplies, kitchen cookware, utensils, warm clothes, and wallets. Each refugee gets \$425 when they first arrive, but once rent and security deposits are taken out, there is little left. They also begin to receive state-administered public assistance, which amounts to \$821 per month for a family of three, in addition to food stamps. Among the RAIS staff who ease the transition of the refugees are interpreters who speak fluent French, Russian, Hmong, Spanish, Arabic, Nuer, Urdu, and Somali (Ferguson 2009a, 2009b). RAIS volunteers, particularly the family mentors, are also crucial during the refugee families' first year or more in Anchorage.

This initial government-sponsored assistance offered to each refugee family starts them on the road to self-reliance, but it is only one step in the journey. Day-to-day assistance comes not only from RAIS, but from ethnic and religious organizations, schools, nonprofit organizations, and a cadre of volunteers (Table 1). Anthropologist Lacy Hamner (pers. comm. April 6, 2009), who is a member of the Islamic Community Center, believes that there are about 3,000 Muslims in Anchorage, with 500 to 600 attending worship services at the *masjid* (mosque). She observes that when refugees first arrive, their most important network revolves around people who speak their language, which in many cases is Arabic, French, or one of the tribal languages. Her community of fellow Muslims mobilized to assist the wave of refugees from Sudan and Somalia who arrived in 2008 and 2009.

A large number of state and nonprofit agencies have also stepped up to offer services, ranging from community gardening to legal and immigration issues to English and naturalization classes. The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service has partnered with RAIS to implement a community garden program in Mountain View, an Anchorage neighborhood with many refugee families. Horticulturalist Julie Riley leads the program aimed at teaching refugees small business skills by helping them grow and sell Alaska vegetables at farmers markets (UAF Cooperative Extension Service 2007), which are popular during the summer (Fig. 1). A community group whose volunteers have assisted the most recent wave of refugees is Save Darfur Anchorage, a local advocacy group begun to spotlight the genocide in Sudan

*Table 1: Organizations and individuals providing assistance to refugees in Anchorage\**

<b>International</b>
United Nations High Commission on Refugees
<b>United States</b>
Department of Health and Social Services (Office of Refugee Resettlement)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (nonprofit)
<b>Alaska</b>
UAF Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Municipality of Anchorage</b>
Anchorage School District—English Language Learners program
Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center
Anchorage Community Health
<b>Nonprofit organizations</b>
RAIS (affiliated with Catholic Social Services)
Alaska Literacy Program
Bridge Builders
Habitat for Humanity
Immigrant Rights Coalition
Salvation Army
<b>Religious organizations</b>
Islamic Community Center
Mormon Church
First Presbyterian
St. Mary's Episcopal
Central Lutheran Church
First Hmong Baptist Church
St. Anthony's Church
Anchorage Universal Unitarian Fellowship
<b>Cultural and Community Support Groups</b>
Hmong Alaska Community Inc.
Southern Sudanese American Community Association
Save Darfur
Refugee Youth Choir in Mountain View
<b>Private and Private Employers</b>
Providence Alaska Medical Center
Target
Hotel Captain Cook
Municipality of Anchorage—airport and bus station
Marriott Hotel
<b>Volunteers</b>
Alaska Bar Association
UAA nursing students
volunteers with all the nonprofits listed above

\* only represents a partial list of agencies and individuals who provide assistance



*Figure 1: Oliver and Pascaline, brother and sister from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sell their produce at the University Center Farmer's Market in Anchorage, 2009.*



*Figure 2: A Hmong musician demonstrates his skills at a Meet in the World in Anchorage event, sponsored by Bridge Builders in 2009.*

even before the first refugees from Darfur actually arrived in Anchorage (Deborah Bock pers. comm. Sept. 28, 2009). At one recent event, Save Darfur Anchorage volunteers, directed by Sudanese women, prepared an authentic Sudanese feast at St. Mary's Episcopal Church as a fundraiser for the Darfur Stoves Project, which provides super-efficient stoves for women in refugee camps in Africa. Yet another example of a committed nonprofit organization is Bridge Builders of Anchorage, the sponsor of many community events such as Meet the World in Anchorage during the annual Fur Rendezvous in February. Hundreds of residents of all ethnic backgrounds, including refugees from several different countries, join together for cultural activities at this event (Fig. 2). With each new helping hand, with each new friend, the network of support grows.

While most Anchorage residents are well aware of the Mexican, Korean, Samoan, and Filipino immigrants in the city, I would guess that many do not realize the true extent and diversity of the refugee population. Fortunately, newscasters and reporters for the *Anchorage Daily News* have enlightened the public with television broadcasts and articles about the changing face of the city (e.g., Baeza 2006; Blanchard 2008a, 2008b; Bluemink 2008; Bronen 2004; Demer 2000; Dunham 2008; KTVA 2010; McDaniel 1995; McKinney 2007; Ohlemacher 2008; O'Malley 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Senkowsky 1999; Tsong 2004, 2005). Two refugee groups that have gained national and local recognition—the Hmong and the Sudanese—are well represented in Anchorage and provide good examples of the social and medical challenges facing all refugees to the state.

### THE HMONG IN ANCHORAGE

The Hmong are the most numerous of the refugee groups residing in Anchorage. While 150 came directly to Anchorage from the Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand in 2004 and 2005, the majority of the 4,000 now living in Anchorage migrated northward from the large Hmong communities in California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, looking for better schools and new opportunities (P. Lee 2009; Tsong 2004). In the group of arrivals from the Thai camp were Hmong elders, parents, and school children, all of whom began attending classes in English as a second language at Tyson Elementary and were helped by Gershon Lee, a Hmong bilingual tutor at the school (Tsong 2004, 2005).

Pasert Lee is prominent in the Hmong community in Anchorage (Fig. 3). He moved from California in 1998 because he believed Alaska would provide a better environment for his family, which now includes twenty-six members. Lee is president of Hmong Alaska Community, which provides interpreters, translators, culture counselors, and event planners for its members. During



*Figure 3: Pasert Lee, president of the Hmong Alaska Community, Inc. (courtesy of Pasert Lee).*

our interview, Lee stressed the importance of education for the Hmong youth and proudly listed several men and women attending the University of Alaska Anchorage (Pasert Lee 2009). Nancy Xiong is one of these students; she wrote about her ancestral culture in an anthropology class, saying that students are now learning about “everything that was lost... [they] are learning dances, folk songs, flute songs” (Xiong 2009).

Pasert Lee wears many hats in the Hmong community. Among them is shaman and traditional healer, on-call twenty-four hours a day. He presides over Hmong New Year celebrations by blessing chickens and communicating with spirits. While traditional beliefs retain importance within the community, some Hmong are converting to Christian denominations. Converts do not include Thai Lee, Pasert Lee's son, who says that converting would be a dishonor to his father (O'Malley 2006a). However, the influence of the Mormon Church is strongly felt by Hmong families in need because of the support it offers in terms of donated clothes, furniture, food, employment assistance, spiritual guidance, and friendship (O'Malley 2006b). *Anchorage Daily News* journalist Julia O'Malley interviewed Hmong who converted to Mormonism and stated that “for the young and converted, taking on Mormon beliefs is often bound up with a desire to fit into American society, and to succeed” (O'Malley 2006b). In 2009, Reverend Priestly Lee, the founder of the First Hmong Baptist Church of Alaska, estimates that there were ten to fifteen Hmong Mormon families in the greater Anchorage area, and some fifty



families who belong to his own church (Priestly Lee, pers. comm. Dec. 11, 2009). Several Hmong families also attend Central Lutheran Church in Anchorage. Their pastor contends that her church does not have an evangelical mission to convert the Hmong but simply to preach a mission of acceptance and try to help them preserve their culture (O'Malley 2006b).

Another dilemma and source of conflict for the Hmong is choosing between traditional and modern forms of medicine. Two recent anthropological studies on the Hmong in Alaska (e.g., Hickman 2007; Jessen 2009, this volume) have addressed the topic and reached similar conclusions. They contend that the Hmong do not prefer one belief system over the other but utilize elements of both depending on what they perceive to be the most effective in addressing a given health problem. For example, they may eventually go to a health care provider but first seek help from a shaman to achieve the best outcome (Jessen 2009:94). Such was the case of a young boy diagnosed with leukemia in 2006. His mother first consulted with Pasert Lee and other elders in the Hmong Anchorage community but finally decided to take him for treatment to an oncology center in Seattle. The boy recovered. According to Pasert Lee, as quoted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, the recovery was “70 percent doctor, 30 percent shaman” (O'Malley 2008a).

## THE SUDANESE

The second Sudanese war (1983–2005) created an estimated two million internally displaced people and another 500,000 who took asylum in neighboring African countries. The first group of refugees from the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya made their way to several U.S. cities in 2000–2001 (Chrostowsky 2010:39). Among the new arrivals were 3,800 men in their late teens and early twenties, known as the “Lost Boys of Sudan” (Bixler 2005) because they were driven from their homes and families when they were just children. In February 2003, violence again erupted in Sudan, this time in the western region of Darfur where the Sudanese government armed nomadic Arab militia in a brutal campaign against African farmers, killing hundreds of thousands and displacing at least 2.5 million people (Bixler 2005:xi, 231; Wax 2006).

Thousands of southern Sudanese refugees began settling in the U.S. in the 1990s, mainly in the Midwest. In the last few years, they have built a community in Anchorage. Bajek Deng arrived in Alaska in 2005 and

went immediately to Dutch Harbor to work in the seafood industry. Now living in Anchorage, Deng and fellow Sudanese Tor Gach organized the Southern Sudanese American Community Association to help incoming families. Some of the Southern Sudanese families, now estimated to number about 600 people in Anchorage, worship at the First Presbyterian Church, where a service is conducted in Nuer (Blanchard 2008a; Bluemink 2008).

The first refugee family from Darfur arrived in Anchorage in early 2008 from a refugee camp in western Ghana. The father, Attahir Kariief, speaking in Arabic, told reporters through an interpreter that their flight from Sudan began with ten days walking through the desert to Chad, after which the family made their way to Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and finally Ghana. After three years in tents, the UN granted the family refugee status and they headed to Anchorage, where they have been assisted by the RAIS program. Both Attahir Kariief and his wife have found work (Blanchard 2008b). Another refugee from Darfur, Safi Ali, works as a houseman at the Hotel Captain Cook. He traveled through Africa and the



*Figure 4: Halima Bakhit, a refugee from Sudan, attended the Save Darfur fundraiser held at St. Mary's Church in Anchorage on November 15, 2009.*

Middle East, searching for work and his family. When his plane landed in Anchorage in April, he encountered a landscape so alien and forbidding that he joked that he thought he would be dead within two weeks (Deborah Bock pers. comm. March 3, 2010; O'Malley 2008b).

When interviewed in 2008, Karief said that the two Sudanese groups would not necessarily associate in Sudan because of religious and ethnic differences, but in Anchorage, their relations were friendly at the beginning. Darfurians attended meetings hosted by the Southern Sudanese at St. Anthony's Church (Blanchard 2008b; Bluemink 2008), as well as fundraising events sponsored by Save Darfur Anchorage (Fig. 4). However, the situation between the two Sudanese groups has become strained since more Darfurians began arriving in Anchorage, and their interactions are now more typical of their attitudes toward each other in Sudan. By early 2010, there were thirty-three Darfurians living in the city (Deborah Bock pers. comm. March 3, 2010).

## SUCCESS STORIES

Measuring success is often subjective, but certain factors, such as employment, housing, and level of education are considered to be common indicators of how well an individual or a group of people are doing. RAIS can be proud of its 78% success rate in obtaining full-time employment for refugees in their first six months in country, thus enabling these families to be dropped from the roles of public assistance (Ferguson 2009a). Although many qualify only for unskilled jobs, particularly if they do not speak English well, there are some who were professionals in their home countries. For example, Claude Mabudu works loading cargo at the airport despite the fact that he was a high school librarian and teacher in Togo for over twenty years before he was forced to leave the country and finally brought his family to Anchorage in 2008 (Deborah Bock pers. comm. March 3, 2010; Catholic Social Services 2008). One former Bosnian doctor initially found employment as a sales clerk, and a college professor was hired as a receptionist (McDaniel 1995). In other cases, highly skilled refugees from the former Soviet bloc countries have had unrealistic expectations and believe they will find the same professional employment once they arrive in Anchorage. The most successful refugees are those who are willing to take jobs outside their comfort zones (Ferguson 2009a).

Economic success can also come from putting in long years at low-paying jobs and building up enough savings to open a small business. Such is the case for William Lo, a former refugee now living in Anchorage. He arrived in California from Laos many years ago and after working as a farm laborer in California and later as a kitchen assistant at a Thai restaurant, he was finally able to purchase an Asian grocery store in the Mountain View neighborhood of Anchorage (Baeza 2006). Some families, such as the Mabudu family from Togo, achieve a dream shared by many Americans of owning their own home. They were selected to help build their own Habitat for Humanity house and now make monthly mortgage payments on a spacious home rather than paying rent for a cramped apartment (Deborah Bock pers. comm. March 3, 2010; Habitat for Humanity 2009).

When interviewing RAIS director Karen Ferguson, a clinical psychologist by profession, I asked her if she thought there were any cultural differences in the ability to adapt successfully to life in Anchorage. Her response was that the ones who succeed have individual characteristics, such as education, resiliency to trauma, or personality traits that far outweigh any ethnic or cultural factors. In other words, some people just have a better ability to cope. As examples, she referred to three families—from Togo, Uzbekistan, and Darfur—with different religions and different levels of education. All of these families adapted readily and were able to quickly make it on their own. The majority of the refugees rise very fast, but the ones who get stuck are the ones who become dependent on relatives. The groups from rural areas who practiced subsistence lifestyles, like the Hmong, face the biggest challenges because they have few skills marketable in a modern society (Ferguson 2009a).

On the flip side of the success stories is the reality that arriving in a new country can be a daunting experience, particularly when many are struggling for housing and employment and possibly falling short of becoming self-sufficient. Ethnic and racial tensions can also take a toll on individuals striving to succeed in a new environment. Hate crimes do exist in Alaska (Troostle 1996), but refugee groups do not seem to be the target of defamation as they are in other states. Another factor to consider is that assimilation into mainstream society may not be a goal of certain individuals and families, and in these cases success is difficult to gauge and quantify. There is great potential for anthropologists to better understand how refugee populations in





*Figure 5: International Refugee Day, an event sponsored by RAIS at Mountain View Lions Park in Anchorage on June 19, 2009.*

Anchorage gain success, and how the nonprofit agencies, the municipality, and the state can better help them reach their goals.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

My original intention was to explore how family and social networks kept refugees afloat during their transition period in a new country and new culture. I greatly underestimated the complexity of these networks. Although there is a framework provided by the federal government to begin the resettlement process, the gaps in the framework must be filled by programs offered by schools, church groups, and nonprofit organizations. These gaps are also filled by volunteers who interpret, provide legal expertise, provide transportation, help fill out applications and teach English; employers willing to fill jobs with someone who has only marginal abilities in English; and property managers willing to hold apartments for the arrival of the next wave of refugees. Alaskans have not always been ac-

cepting of people from other parts of the world or ethnic backgrounds (Carey 1999), but fortunately we Alaskans seem to be for the most part open and welcoming to new residents of the state and city. It is not a one-way street. Anchorage is enriched by the new faces, voices, strengths, and cultures of the growing international community for whom it is now home (Fig. 5).

Cornelia Jessen (2009, this volume) has taken a leap into almost uncharted territory in terms of anthropological research in Alaska by completing a master's thesis on cross-cultural medical encounters between healthcare providers and a sample of Anchorage refugees. In addition to medical issues, the Anchorage refugee population provides tremendous opportunities for the study of a range of other social, economic, and religious topics for both academic and applied purposes. In an era of dwindling resources for foreign travel and research, it is heartening to know that a world of international studies exists right here in Alaska.

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# REFUGEES AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA: UNDERSTANDING CROSS-CULTURAL MEDICAL ENCOUNTERS

Cornelia M. Jessen

2439 E. Seventeenth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99508; cmjessen@anthc.org

## ABSTRACT

Refugees are part of the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of Anchorage's population. With over ninety languages now spoken in Anchorage homes, this trend has implications for the delivery of culturally appropriate healthcare services. This paper examines cross-cultural medical encounters between healthcare providers and refugees in Anchorage. In-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted with healthcare providers ( $n = 10$ ) and refugees ( $n = 9$ ). These qualitative data were analyzed for thematic content regarding healthcare barriers, cross-cultural challenges, keys to success, and areas of agreement and differences in perceptions. Conclusions were that refugees in Anchorage had a generally positive perception of local healthcare providers who display cross-cultural empathy and take time to establish trust despite time limits, lack of mental health services, language difficulties, and differing health beliefs. Steps should be taken on a provider and organization level to address identified barriers and challenges.

**KEYWORDS:** Hmong, Sudanese, sociolinguistics, medical anthropology, folk beliefs, refugees

## INTRODUCTION

The migration of displaced peoples to Alaska, such as refugees and asylees (individuals who were granted asylum while in the U.S.), is a sign that globalization is increasingly penetrating the Last Frontier. Hence, applied anthropologists need to move away from solely focusing on Alaska Native issues to issues affecting people with diverse ethnic backgrounds. As a city, Anchorage has already begun to recognize that many of its residents are displaced peoples from all corners of the world. In Anchorage, World Refugee Day is an annual celebration in June with a well-attended community event featuring music, dancing, food, and children's activities. The event is organized by Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS) program, the agency responsible for facilitating the resettlement of refugees in Anchorage. RAIS provides assistance in many aspects of refugees' new lives, including cultural and linguistic

support to access medical services and coordinating the federally mandated initial health assessment (or medical screening) for all arriving refugees. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement states that the initial health assessment sets the stage for refugees' entry into the U.S. healthcare system, which may be very different than healthcare in refugee camps or countries of origin and represents the gateway to continuing medical care (Lee 1995). This paper analyzes which factors are involved with success in, and barriers to, healthcare provision for refugees living in Alaska (see also Jessen 2009).

Alaska has a very diverse refugee population, but receives relatively few refugees compared to states such as California or Texas, which resettled 16% and 8.5% respectively of all refugees admitted to the United States in 2008 (Martin and Hoefer 2009). A systematic literature review did not reveal any pertinent information regarding



refugees' healthcare experiences in Alaska. To address this gap, this study examined medical encounters between Anchorage healthcare providers and refugees, including asylees. This pilot study identified barriers and challenges but also highlighted successful pathways to providing refugee healthcare by asking:

- What are the keys to successful medical encounters between healthcare providers and refugees or asylees?
- What are barriers and challenges of providing healthcare to refugees?
- How do refugees perceive the healthcare services that they receive in Anchorage?

## ALASKA'S REFUGEE POPULATION

In 2004, a series of *Anchorage Daily News* articles (e.g., Bronen 2004; Tsong 2004a, 2004b) brought the arrival of new Hmong refugees to the public's attention. While conveying awareness of the history and the struggles that Hmong refugees endured before finally reaching Alaska, these articles familiarized Alaskans with Hmong culture, shared stories of success, and gave insights into the process of integration into the Anchorage community. A group of refugees that has also received attention in the local news is the Sudanese community, which established a nonprofit organization, the South Sudanese American Community Association (SSACA) (Bluemink 2008). This association provides outreach to southern Sudanese refugees who moved to Alaska from other states and need assistance relocating. Newly arrived refugees, such as those from the genocide-torn Darfur region in Sudan, may find a support system through SSACA but are also served by the RAIS program at Catholic Social Services.

The services that the RAIS program provides to its clients include housing and employment assistance, case management, cultural and linguistic support, enrollment in English language and other training classes, as well as coordination of federally mandated health assessments, which are separate from general medical care but are often the introduction to the U.S. healthcare system. When newly arrived refugees come to Anchorage, they have to undergo a two-step health assessment (Dr. Karen Ferguson, director of the Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services, pers. comm., 2008). The first step involves the municipal health department for tuberculosis screening and immunizations, and the second step involves the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, a

federally qualified community center, for physical exams and lab tests.

The RAIS program serves about 1,060 clients. These clients have typically come to Alaska as refugees from their countries of origin but also include refugees who moved to Alaska after their initial resettlement elsewhere in the United States (secondary migrants) and asylees. The majority of refugees are Hmong originally from Laos, followed by refugees from the former Soviet Union, and nationals from various African countries, including the Darfur region of Sudan within the past two years. The Hmong community estimates that there are about 5,000 to 6,000 Hmong in Alaska, and the overall Sudanese population is thought to be about 1,000, the majority of whom are southern Sudanese (Karen Ferguson, pers. comm., 2009).

The statistics published by the Office of Refugee Resettlement for FY 2008 (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2009a) show that Alaska welcomed fifty-two refugees overall, of which sixteen came from Sudan, fifteen from the former USSR, ten from the Democratic Republic of Congo, eight from Togo, two from Iraq, and one from Ethiopia. These numbers also include refugees who came to Alaska in the context of family reunification, but not secondary migrants who made up the majority of refugees in Alaska prior to 2004. Table 1 shows data on refugee arrivals in Alaska between 2000 and 2008. The low numbers are probably due to the fact that Alaska has a comparatively small population, a labor and housing market that may not have the capacity to absorb large numbers of refugee arrivals, and the fact that Alaska did not have a refugee resettlement program until 2004. Data are only available after 2004, when the RAIS program took on initial refugee resettlement in Alaska (Karen Ferguson, pers. comm., 2008). Alaska's new refugees were primarily Slavic and Hmong before 2008. Since then, however, the refugee population has become much more heterogeneous, a factor that may affect the ability to culturally tailor the provision of healthcare, whether in the form of health assessments or continuing healthcare, if this trend persists.

## BACKGROUND

Cross-cultural medical encounters between refugees/asylees and healthcare providers that occur during health assessments and/or continuing healthcare visits were the focus of this pilot study, because they constitute a major component in the overall quality of healthcare delivery.

*Table 1: Refugee arrivals in Alaska by country of origin, 2000 to 2008*

Country of Origin	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Former USSR	7	39	18	24	28	13	16	30	15	190
Laos					14	65				79
Yugoslavia	4	15	1	4						24
Sudan									16	16
Congo									10	10
Togo									8	8
Vietnam	2						4			6
Cuba							4			4
Iran		1				2				3
Iraq									2	2
Ethiopia									1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>343</b>

Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement 2009b

Considering the global nature of refugee issues, the health of refugees and asylees is an international concern due to the dire situations of many camps and the conditions of diaspora. Only a handful of developed nations have refugee resettlement programs, and refugee policies that determine access and delivery of healthcare vary depending on location. Nevertheless, a common thread is the diverse ethnic composition of refugee communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, which is reflected in the published literature that addresses refugee health needs, provider-patient interactions, and access to and utilization of healthcare systems. Consequently, the provision of healthcare to refugees is an interdisciplinary area of concern and not exclusively reserved to anthropological inquiry.

Work on cross-cultural medical encounters has been done primarily by the medical establishment, with contributions by social and behavioral scientists. Despite different angles of investigation, the predominant barriers and challenges found in the literature are associated with language and communication (Manderson and Allotey 2003; Miller Lewin 2004; Murray and Skull 2005; Stephenson 1995), availability and quality of interpretation services (Bischoff et al. 2003; Burnett and Gebremikael 2005), differential cultural understandings of health/disease and valid treatments and expectations (Bischoff et al. 2003; Carroll et al. 2007; Koehn 2005; Lawrence and Kearns 2005; Murray and Skull 2005; Stephenson 1995), cultural and/or religion-based rules for gender relationships (Carroll et al. 2007; Miller Lewin 2004), cost of medical visits (Lawrence and Kearns

2005), and mental health needs due to trauma and socioeconomic factors or stress of resettlement (Dhooper and Tran 1998; Gilgen et al. 2005). Together, these factors impact healthcare provision and delivery.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was employed to gain an understanding of the perspectives of both sides involved in the medical encounter by addressing the main research question: What are the keys to successful medical encounters between healthcare providers and refugees/asylees in Anchorage? In-depth face-to-face semistructured interviews with both refugees/asylees and healthcare providers served as a primary research method. Basic socioeconomic data were also gathered. In addition, the opportunity arose several times to interview providers in their work environment and refugees in their home environments, which afforded a research perspective that is to some degree grounded in the daily realities of participants. The interview protocols for both groups of participants were based on a critical-interpretive anthropology approach, in which healthcare and disease are understood to have meanings specific to certain ethnic groups and within national and global contexts (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996). The refugee interview protocol was piloted to check for appropriateness and clarity of the interview questions, which led to some minor changes in the wording of the questions, although the content remained the same. All interviews were conducted between May and September 2008 and

lasted between thirty and sixty minutes with providers and between thirty minutes and two hours with refugees. Refugees and healthcare providers were only interviewed after they gave written consent on an Institutional Research Board-approved form.

All in-depth interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and later transcribed verbatim. Provider interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti to identify key themes addressed in the interview questions. Use of ATLAS.ti was determined to be inappropriate for analysis of refugee interviews.

## PROVIDER AND REFUGEE FINDINGS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The ten healthcare providers who volunteered to participate in in-depth interviews about their experience in serving refugees ranged in their professional background from nurses ( $n = 2$ ) at the municipal health department to physicians' assistants ( $n = 3$ ) at the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center and physicians ( $n = 5$ ) at the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center and Providence Family Medicine. The majority of medical providers interviewed were women (eight out of ten) and fairly homogenous in their ethnic backgrounds (nine Caucasians and one Asian provider). Most providers were middle-aged; average age was forty-four. Providers had an average of fourteen years of medical training, had served refugees for an average of more than five years and primarily saw refugees in their practice on a weekly basis. When asked about recent medical encounters with refugees, most healthcare providers recounted experiences with Hmong or African, such as southern Sudanese, refugees, which corresponds with the refugee demographics in Anchorage and with the origins of refugees interviewed for the pilot study.

Refugee participants can be categorized into two groups: African nationals from southern Sudan ( $n = 4$ ), Senegal ( $n = 1$ ) and Togo ( $n = 1$ ) and Southeast Asians from Laos ( $n = 2$ ) and Thailand ( $n = 1$ ). The majority were male ( $n = 6$ ); the average age was thirty-eight. Except for two, a woman from Thailand and a man from Togo, all participants had lived in other states before moving to Alaska; they were thus secondary migrants. At the time of the interviews, refugees had come to Alaska as recently as three months ago and as long as eight years ago. Two of the Hmong participants had been in the United States for twenty-eight years. Furthermore, the one individual

from Senegal was actually a voluntary immigrant but also responded to the interview questions as an informant for a refugee family from Darfur, since he acts as their interpreter at medical appointments. Seven of the study participants spent time in refugee camps before coming to the U.S. Most completed at least elementary school and three of those interviewed had college degrees before entering the U.S. After coming to the U.S., five received high-school diplomas; four went on to graduate from college. All of the participants were fluent in conversational English and many spoke several languages, including Nuer, Dinka, Arabic, Hmong, and French. As a result, six of the nine had some interpretation experience in a healthcare setting. The majority (6) had jobs, two were disabled, and one was temporarily unemployed. The employment status is reflected in the type of healthcare coverage, since three had coverage through Medicaid and one through Medicare. Four participants had health insurance through their employers and one temporarily had no healthcare coverage at all. Four were patients at Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, three sought healthcare at hospitals, one used urgent-care clinics, and one was a patient at a private practice.

### KEY THEMES

Both structural and cultural barriers to healthcare were identified. Providers recognized time, indeterminacy of refugee status, missing paperwork, lack of mental health services, and heterogeneity of the refugee population in Anchorage as major structural barriers to providing proper healthcare. On the cultural side, language difficulties, varying interpreter quality, differential understanding of health and illness, and gender issues were mentioned as predominant cultural challenges. Mediating these structural and cultural hurdles are factors such as Medicaid coverage, a good refugee support system in the Anchorage community, partnership and collaboration between community organizations that help refugees resettle, and familiarity of providers with a diverse patient population. The individual characteristics of medical providers in community health organizations further mediated structural and cultural challenges. Cross-cultural empathy, in particular, appears to be a result of prior experience in working with ethnically diverse populations in a variety of settings. Providers identified several needs: more case managers or social workers, better medical histories for the refugees, and more knowledge and educational resources

about various refugee populations. Despite these shortcomings, medical providers highlighted several keys to success in cross-cultural medical encounters:

- Establishing patient-provider relationships based on trust by listening and respecting health beliefs that may differ from the biomedical understanding of the disease process.
- Changing the traditional approach of clinical care focused on the individual to a group approach in which members share the same language and a similar cultural background.
- Maintaining and fostering partnerships and collaboration across agencies that serve refugees.

A further positive aspect that aids in the success of cross-cultural encounters is the perception among providers that refugees deserve their help and that doing so opens a window to the world outside their clinics and exposes them to diversity. When juxtaposing provider findings with findings from in-depth interviews with refugees, there are important areas of agreement. A theme that consistently emerged from provider interviews was how different the Hmong are compared to African refugee patients

in two critical healthcare components: the Hmong presented many more mental healthcare needs due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and differed significantly in their beliefs about disease cause and treatment from typical American patients and from other refugees. Sudanese refugees were perceived to be more aligned with healthcare providers' biomedical model than Hmong, who were often seen as having nonanatomic, nonphysiological disease explanations. This notion was confirmed by interviews with Hmong refugees, who gave accounts of cultural practices affecting healthcare and the role that traditional remedies and shamans play in medical care (Table 2).

Providers' efforts to empathize and establish trust and rapport with their patients resonated positively with refugee participants, who generally have a positive perception of healthcare providers. Many providers emphasized that listening, having patience, and trying to understand a refugee's perspective and cultural background are crucial components in making healthcare agreeable and effective (Table 3).

*Table 2: Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part one*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
Even as I have been here 26 years and I see many Hmong people, they're still pretty mysterious to me.	Hmong Refugee: I don't want to do your CAT scan because traditionally in our culture when I am pregnant my parents won't allow that and my husband. In our beliefs are not allowed, the spirit cannot be contacted while, you know, I am pregnant and so...
I just more recently started to see Sudanese folks and they were just really happy to have a doctor who, it seemed like, I saw one woman and then within one week I have seen like ten of her friends and family members and it just keeps expanding.	Sudanese Refugee: Well, they [doctors] are doing well because I think they got no problems, because they know what they do. I trust them because they know what they do. Whenever they ask me I do tell them what they ask because I know they know what they do.

*Table 3: Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part two*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
What really worked well for me is asking them, what is your cultural belief and how can we work within these boundaries and what aren't you willing to talk about and what do you want to talk about.	Hmong refugee: I've been to the Providence Hospital with my last babies. The nurses are really awesome, they are wonderful, the doctors are... culturally I think this city, Anchorage, they are really diverse. They really care about cultures, traditions and they highly respect that. And I am just so amazed.
You know, I think what has worked well for me is if there is an ongoing continually relationship in which you can gain confidence, respect and in that process whether or not they ever perhaps come to understand why I'm doing what I'm doing, you can develop a trust.	West African refugee: I think everything is great, they're, they are kind, they take care of us. Even if we forget appointment they call us to remind us of.



Furthermore, the providers observed that gender tends to be an issue when cultural and/or religious customs set certain rules for interactions between men and women. This corresponds to findings from interviews with participants of African origin, southern Sudanese, and others, who stated that the gender of the provider is more of a concern for Muslims than for Christians. Also, refugee interviews indicated that it was most often a concern for female Muslim patients (Table 4).

There were also areas of disagreement between refugees and healthcare providers. While providers brought up time constraints as a limiting factor, this did not emerge as a problem in refugee interviews. Personal provider attributes were much more significant to refugees, as was the complaint that medical providers often ask too many questions (Table 5). For example, among the Hmong, a close personal relationship with a provider is very important, and touching is seen as essential in diagnosing illness rather than talking and asking a lot of questions (Table 6). Equally affected by cultural expectations is the healthcare provider's assumption that patients should or will raise questions with healthcare providers regarding their illness, diagnosis, and treatment, because a medical provider is regarded by refugees as someone with authoritative knowledge.

Healthcare providers often expressed concerns about the accuracy and reliability of in-person interpretation and the obligation to give up some of their control in a medical encounter to an interpreter. Refugees who had experience interpreting echoed this concern, saying that it is often difficult to find corresponding medical terms in the language spoken by a refugee (Table 7).

One provider described a Hmong patient's reluctance to accept prescription medication. The Hmong appear very concerned about the ingredients in medication, being prescribed the wrong medicine or being overdosed. On the other hand, these issues seemed to be of no concern for the majority of refugees of African origin, who regarded the prescription of medication as the core component for the successful treatment of a health complaint. At the same time, a common theme among African refugees was their general trust and confidence in their healthcare provider's knowledge and skill to address and solve physical ailments, which was less true for Hmong patients (Table 8).

The interview protocol did not address trauma or mental health issues, and thus it was not possible to conclude how much PTSD and depression are perceived as

problems among Hmong or other refugees who participated in the in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, mental health certainly appeared to be a concern among providers and worthy of further investigation, as it was mentioned frequently in the context of providing healthcare to Hmong patients. Many refugees mentioned that they only seek medical care if absolutely necessary, which might make providing preventative care a challenge. This seems to be partly due to previous experiences, or lack thereof, that refugee participants had in non-Western healthcare settings, such as hospitals and refugee camps where controlling acute diseases was the priority.

The current pilot study offers some valuable insights into Hmong traditional health beliefs, such as postpartum diet and breastfeeding, with implications for maternal and child healthcare. The traditional Hmong diet dictates that women can only eat certain foods and only drink warm beverages for six weeks after giving birth so that the body can heal itself. Integrating the traditional Hmong diet into hospital menus would make healthcare delivery to Hmong women more culturally sensitive and appropriate. Recommendations to breastfeed, on the other hand, may face opposition among the Hmong due to the apparent belief that breast milk can be lethal to men. Thus, many Hmong women may opt to use formula, since the traditional custom of sleeping in separate quarters and eating alone to safeguard the father of the child are no longer practiced to the same extent as they were in the past. Because many Hmong are still grounded in their cultural traditions and customs despite living in a dominant Western society, shamanism and herbal medicine play important roles in health. Many providers regard Hmong as very different from the typical American or even African patient. This was an unexpected finding but echoed previous research on cross-cultural healthcare involving Hmong patients. For instance, Barrett et al. (1998) found that Hmong patients and their Western medical providers have diverging ideas about health and illness, and it was challenging for providers to understand Hmong health beliefs as they relate to acute versus chronic diseases, prevention, and pain. As in this pilot study, Barrett et al. (1998) reported that many providers mentioned psychological illness and disability as concerns in caring for Hmong patients.

## DISCUSSION

This study joins a limited number of other medical anthropological studies that included interviews with

*Table 4: Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part three*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
When asked about gender as an issue: Muslim. And that's picked up across the board of all variety of countries.	When asked about gender as an issue: That is a problem with the Muslims. The doctor can be woman or man, no problem. And for my wife.

*Table 5: Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part four*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
Advice to other providers: Ask a lot of questions.	But sometimes you know so many questions. You know, some people don't like to ask so many questions, you know. They just kind of don't wanna answer because, you know, for problem of confident [confidentiality] you know.
Advice to other providers: And, you know, try to understand what they are asking. Give them help to ask or have questions if they have any and try to listen.	They [family from Darfur] didn't know that they can ask questions. To them, you just go to the doctor, OK doctor, um, I have a headache. You know and then, so you deal with that and no questions, no whether I should get this whether I should, you know, have a certain diet or I should, no they just, you know, go by what the doctor says. Basically, they did not know the type of question to ask.

*Table 6: Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part five*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
People need to be listened to, people need to be touched. I mean this is the thing that people tell me over and over again, say the last doctor didn't listen to me.	Touching you and feeling you when lay there, feeling your head or your stomach then find medicine.

*Table 7. Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part six*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
I'll ask them a sentence so then it gets translated as either like one word or twice as long or you know, it's not translated exactly and then it comes back and it's not the answer to the question I asked.	There are so many words that are not native in our language, even how you translate it might be difficult. Here you have to go word by word, you know. I am gonna go shorter maybe just one word, yeah, but maybe doctor might say, oh, oh, how, almost too quick, too short, you know.

*Table 8. Juxtaposition of provider and refugee findings part seven*

Provider Quote	Refugee Quote
Where we sort of come up against challenges with them [Hmong] is for instance birth control. They're very suspicious about what this pill will cause and I actually had a discussion, since we've run into this a couple times, they tend to have lots and lots and lots of babies and so our first question is you know, do you wanna have these babies and then so why? And so one of the families that I'm just getting to know I said, what is your cultural feeling about birth control. And it was well we don't know what that pill is gonna do. Vitamins, same thing. Just the fact that it's a pill they have to swallow.	Hmong refugee: I still concerned about the medication that I taking every day because, well this kind medication is not nature, it's not from the nature like my ancestors use and this one, this is chemical medication. It's from factory.  Sudanese refugee: What I like is I went to emergency and they give me the medicine. I feel good about that 'cause most of the doctors are good people, nice too.

both healthcare providers and refugee patients (Koehn 2005; Lawrence and Kearns 2005; Miller Lewin 2004; Stephenson 1995; Suurmond and Seeleman 2006). Similar to findings from previously published work on refugee healthcare, this study identified cultural challenges such as the impact of language dissonance on provider-patient communication, the importance of quality interpretation through professional rather than lay interpreters, gender concordance between provider and patient, prevention as an often alien concept, and cultural differences in the understandings of health and illness (Bischoff et al. 2003; Carroll et al. 2007; Kang et al. 1998; Murray and Skull 2005; Stephenson 1995; Wissink et al. 2005).

This study shows that patient-provider discordance in explanatory models of medicine varies between ethnic and cultural groups, since Hmong patients were more frequently mentioned in this context than African patients. This became evident in providers' statements that Hmong disease explanations often do not conform to their own biomedical models. Furthermore, interviewed refugees more often recounted seeking medical care for acute or chronic ailments as opposed to preventive care. This was a common finding in the reviewed literature and may be due to previous non-U.S. health care experiences where acute health concerns outweighed prevention due to necessity (Kang et al. 1998; Miller Lewin 2004).

Providers often cited untrained family, friends, and community members as inappropriate interpreters even though they may be able to provide cultural interpretation. The literature reviewed does not specifically address the use of phone interpretation in cross-cultural medical encounters, but providers interviewed for this exploratory study seemed to prefer it over lay interpreters. However, the quality of in-person interpretation will hopefully improve in the near future with the inception of a newly formed language center in Anchorage through the Alaska Immigration Justice Project (2009), whose goal it is to certify interpreters for the court system as well as for health care and social service organizations. Although several studies cite preference of female patients for female providers as a major barrier to cross-cultural communication, it does not appear to be a major concern of providers or refugees in this study. As the literature shows, in cases where it does emerge as a problem, it usually involves Muslim patients, such as Somali women, who because of religious reasons prefer to be seen by female providers (Carroll et al. 2007; Miller Lewin 2004; Wissink et al. 2005).

On a macro level, literature points to structural barriers such as bureaucracy and limited financial resources, refugee's socioeconomic issues related to income and employment, healthcare providers' lack of cultural competency, cost of healthcare, and incomplete health records (Burke 2007; Lawrence and Kerns 2005; Murray and Skull 2005). Findings from the present study do indicate that healthcare provision is negatively impacted by time allocated for medical visits; however, this issue is not reported as a significant challenge in the literature. Providers in Anchorage do not have adequate time to prepare for visits, educate patients, or address mental health issues. Providers may not know that a patient is a refugee until the patient walks into the room. Furthermore, healthcare providers did not consider socioeconomic and political issues to be a barrier to providing medical care to refugees, mainly because they considered Medicaid eligibility, a sound refugee support system through various refugee groups, and good collaboration between agencies involved in refugee resettlement as mediating factors. Refugees who participated in this study did not appear to be significantly concerned about having to pay for medical visits, since most of them had Medicaid coverage or insurance through employment. Much like Adair et al. (1999) found among Somali refugees, neither transportation nor location appeared to hinder access to healthcare among the refugees in the Anchorage study. Providers showed a great degree of cross-cultural empathy, likely due to the fact that many had prior experience and training with ethnically diverse populations. Medical providers identified better medical histories and records management as well as better access to mental health resources, more social work support, and educational resources as areas in need of improvement.

What appears to be a special challenge for healthcare providers in Anchorage is the composition of the refugee population, which is smaller than in other resettlement states but has also become more heterogeneous recently (see Table 2), thereby making it more difficult to be knowledgeable about their patients' diverse cultural backgrounds. However, local providers in Anchorage serve a diverse patient population in general, which may make them better prepared than their counterparts elsewhere when encountering diversity. Koehn and Swick (2006) suggest transnational competence (TC) as a tool to help providers in overcoming the challenge of a culturally diverse patient population. Training in TC focuses on five skill sets: analytic (ethnocultural and sociopolitical analysis), emotional (respect of traditional practices),

creative (integration of biomedical and ethnocultural explanatory models), communicative (facilitation of an open dialogue), and functional (establishment of close interpersonal relationships). Proficiency in these skills gives providers competence in working with patients who differ ethnoculturally and socially from themselves to achieve positive health outcomes.

The issue of mental health of refugees who have experienced violence, rape, and forced migration is well documented in the literature on refugee healthcare (e.g., Barrett et al. 1998; Bischoff et al. 2003; Burnett and Gebremikael 2005; Dhooper and Tran 1998; Gilgen et al. 2005; Koehn 2005; Lawrence and Kerns 2005). This issue also emerged in the Anchorage study; providers attributed the problem to an overall lack of mental health services and identified it as a particular concern in caring for Hmong patients due to an anecdotally high prevalence of PTSD and depression in this refugee population. As Dhooper and Tran report (cited in Kinzie et al. 1990 and Mollica et al. 1987), between 50% and 80% of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian Hmong, and Afghan refugees in the United States suffer from PTSD. However, there seems to be a lack of information on Hmong perceptions of mental health and whether PTSD and depression are perceived as pressing health issues by the Hmong, especially since this population often presents with physical symptoms in response to psychological distress. Future studies should focus on mental health conditions and needs, perceived and actual, among different refugee populations and on how mental health care can be incorporated into a comprehensive approach to healthcare delivery.

Most relevant literature in refugee healthcare tends to focus on barriers and challenges rather than helpful factors and structural and provider-driven strategies that have proven successful in delivering healthcare to refugee patients. Keys to success in cross-cultural medical encounters that have been identified as helpful for healthcare providers are establishing trust, listening, respecting alternate health beliefs, moving from an individual-centered to a group-centered approach to care, and partnership and collaboration across agencies that serve refugees.

## CONCLUSION

This study addressed barriers and challenges as well as successful strategies for providing cross-cultural healthcare to refugee patients in Anchorage. As Alaska establishes itself as a refugee resettlement state under the coordina-

tion of the Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS) program, healthcare providers in primary care organizations and other local health facilities are poised to encounter increasing numbers of refugees with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The findings presented here can help to make healthcare services more responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse refugee population. Structural and operational limitations often restrict healthcare providers' ability and flexibility in providing proper care to refugee patients. These structural challenges are often exacerbated by cultural and linguistic differences that arise in the provider-patient encounter. Such challenges should be addressed on both provider and organizational levels.

As the first study of its kind in Alaska, this research established a baseline for future studies on refugee healthcare despite some limitations, such as the potential generalizability of its findings to refugee populations in Alaska as a whole. These findings are not necessarily applicable to the healthcare experiences of voluntary legal or illegal immigrants, as they may encounter different circumstances. The study relied on a convenience sample for both providers and refugee patients and had refugee eligibility criteria that excluded participants without conversational English skills; this resulted in a limited pool of potential participants. As a result, the findings are based on the perspectives shared by fairly experienced and empathetic providers as well as educated refugees from a limited number of cultural groups. The results are thus likely more representative of refugees who have lived in the United States for several years than of new arrivals, who may face greater challenges. Nevertheless, this pilot study offers rich insight on challenges and has identified several keys to success for more productive cross-cultural medical encounters. Subsequent studies built on lessons learned here should focus on mental and preventative healthcare, include more refugees who are not yet proficient in English, and consider analysis that matches refugee responses with those of their healthcare providers to facilitate more focused comparisons.

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## SECTION IV

### EPILOGUE

Rachel Mason and Carol Zane Jolles

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; rachel\_mason@nps.gov  
University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Box 353100, Seattle, WA 98195-3100; cjolles@u.washington.edu

Our colleague, Herbert O. Anungazuk, passed away on August 24, 2010, before he could see his words in print in this volume. His paper, "The Many Faces of Displacement" presented at the Displaced Peoples of Alaska symposium in Juneau in 2009, serves as the epilogue for the special issue portion of this volume. Herbert, an Iñupiaq from Wales, Alaska, was a well known and highly respected cultural anthropologist with the National Park Service (NPS). He was also an extremely talented writer and orator, much sought after as a presenter at professional conferences. Born into a traditional community of bowhead whalers and trained as a hunter, he continued his education in Sitka, graduating from Mount Edgecumbe High School and then attending Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. In 1968, he was drafted into the army and served honorably for two years in Vietnam. After the war, Herbert remained connected with his Vietnam brothers.

Herbert was employed by the NPS Alaska Region beginning in 1985, and he worked for NPS until the time of his death. An early position was that of Native liaison and heritage specialist. Beginning in 2003, he worked as a cultural anthropologist for the Cultural Resources Team at the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage. His knowledge of Iñupiaq language and the history of the Bering Straits communities, and his training by the elders of his community as an Iñupiaq hunter and whaler, facilitated his work as an anthropologist.

He frequently worked in partnership with other anthropologists and scientists conducting research in

Iñupiaq communities. Herbert worked with an amazing list of scholars, including Barbara Bodenhorn, Ernest S. "Tiger" Burch, Jr., Hajo Eicken, Susan W. Fair, Craig Gerlach, Evgeniy Golovko, Roger Harritt, Julie Hollowell, David Hopkins, Carol Zane Jolles, Deanna Kingston, Igor Krupnik, Mary Ann Larsen, Allen McCartney, Peter Schweitzer, and Laura Zanotti. Herbert worked with many within the National Park Service, but especially with Jeanne Schaaf and Donald Callaway. He was not only instrumental, but invaluable, in work conducted in northern Alaska, particularly on the Seward Peninsula.

Within the broader Iñupiaq community, Herbert was sought out for his deep knowledge of kinship connections throughout the Bering Strait region and beyond. He was a major contributor to the *Wales Sea Ice Dictionary*. One of his last projects was to develop a more comprehensive Wales Iñupiaq dictionary, and he had added 4,000 entries by the time of his death. Wherever he went, he took his small green pocket notebook with him. Over the years he filled many of these with kinship connections, words, and any information that might contribute to preserving the history and culture of Iñupiaq people. Because of Herbert's long service and significant contribution to Alaska anthropology, he was presented with the Alaska Anthropological Association's Professional Achievement Award in 2010.

Herbert is deeply missed by his colleagues at the National Park Service, by his large and loving family, and by an enormous circle of friends.

## THE MANY FACES OF DISPLACEMENT

Herbert Anungazuk

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, 240 W. Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501

In the early 1970s the boat crew I was a member of took a researcher who wanted to gather samples and temperature readings from various depths in the waters of the Bering Strait. We took him a mile offshore from shorefast sea ice. The researcher got the information for his research but came away quite confused at the readings he obtained. He was confused why the water was so “warm.” Was this the beginning of the winds of change related to climate change? Was this one of the signs that something was running amok in the sea? Signs of change may have started fifty, seventy years ago or even earlier, according to the stories that related to adverse weather occurring beyond the norm. Stories tell of unseasonably savage storms that dumped tons of snow into the community of Wales; this period is orally documented with the harvest of a bowhead calf in which my uncle (born in 1928), just months old, was given a strip of baleen from the tiny whale as his share. The late 1950s also had strange weather happenings. It was in mid-winter 1958, perhaps, that we had a southeaster that hovered in the strait for an extended period with temperatures in the forties. Tons of ice and snow became snowmelt that gathered in the lowlands of the shore belt. The hardiest of plants, the stink weed or wormwood, began shooting out of the ground. Seagulls and various marine birds, pintails and other avian species came in anticipation of an early spring but disappeared when the winter freeze returned. This became a time of pure happiness for children as the whole coast and lowlands became a skating rink.

Climatic changes have altered the lives of the hunters in many ways. The arrival and departure of sea ice, once expected at almost a precise time, year after year, has fluctuated dramatically, and the noticeable changes have affected hunter success among hunter-gatherer nations. How does sea ice apply to the hunter-gatherer? So much of what the hunter must learn applies to sea ice. The signs that the ice offers are numerous and the clues must be learned and taught by the elders so that the hunters will return safely home. Worry and the possible pain

of loss are present in the world of the northern people as they face the possibilities of displacement from tidal action of fall storms that have begun to erode arctic coastlines. Storms increased in frequency and intensity and noticeable changes were observed in higher tides or extreme surf that grinds away at shorelines. It was then that you began to hear terms like *sila at-unogtug* or “the weather has changed” uttered by the elders. Adverse changes in weather patterns became very noticeable to residents at least three decades ago.

The northwesternmost part of the North American continent north of Cape Prince of Wales has sandy beaches providing a low-lying coast with ever-shifting sands. Coastal people, regardless of which nationality they represent or traditions of survival they pursue, will have identical aims as their lifestyles follow a seasonal norm. The Bering Strait is on the crosshairs of storms bred in the Bering Sea as the narrow funnel of water pulls tropical depressions that wander above the North Pacific past the Aleutian Islands. Storms savage in intensity announce their arrival with a black narrow cloud lining the horizon. The winds arrive within hours and can last several days. Natural catastrophes of various types have occurred among hunter-gatherer societies that threatened the very structure of their societies since the far distant past. Severe storms, war, or times of famine will require decisions that people must move for the safety of their families, their people, and their total well-being, thus adding guarantee of survival for themselves.

Oceanic waves do not always erode unstable beaches. The wind from a precise direction will add to coastline, beach ridge by beach ridge, which through time can anchor firmly a new coast. Such activity is continually observed by the people so as time permits the people can move ever closer to the sea as the formation of land appears permanently set.

With specific tidal action water between sandbars becomes exceedingly deep. The coastal waters once



experienced extreme low tides in the fall during my youth. Such activity, if it occurs frequently, can cause the formation of additional beach ridges. The formation of beach ridges may not happen quickly, but as time passes trapped water becomes ponds and lakes. Fast-growing weeds trap windblown sand and dust that over time separate lakes and ponds and also form countless small islands that are ideal for nesting birdlife. Beach ridges show the passage of time through their numbers. The ridges farthest from the sea show evidence of ancient human habitation. How far into the sea do the ridges go, and how vast was the land before the lowlands became the Bering Strait? Storms, like serene seas and skies, are a part of the drama of environment. The land may have disappeared into the purging waters but its presence remains as sand bars or shallow shoals that today retain the names given them by the people.

The Arctic and Subarctic are a part of the kingdom of the hunter-gatherer. The hunter must continually analyze his surroundings from all different points and be willing to take positions based on what would be most beneficial for everyone. His realm includes the ice, which has provided for the well-being of the people since dawn immemorial. Sea ice is an integral part of the lives of indigenous people; thus it is not a small part of their lives. The short summer is long awaited after a winter of wind, ice, and snow. Winter is never a dormant season as the season provides ample time to build or repair equipment for the spring harvest that is soon to arrive. Summer is a time of intense activity; new homes, boats, sleds, and hunting equipment must be built during the short comforts of summer while the women gather the gifts of the land. Loss of equipment can prevent movement of people, as from a permanent location to traditional gathering areas, until losses have been replaced or equipment may be loaned between family or members of hunting crews. Indigenous people live within a seasonal round. Plants, roots and berries may grow in all parts of the land, but their growth depends on a good summer growing season. Heavy snow conditions have been used in predicting a successful summer's growth for berries. Life in the far north is to understand who you are and where you must live. Our communities rest along the flyways, byways and mountain game trails that became gateways to survival to the indigenous people of the land. During the summer the men hunted game of opportunity and fished.

Arctic and subarctic areas can be subject to adverse weather of the most severe nature, and the people of the seacoast, the islands and capes have memories of them;

storms of ferocious intensity are becoming more frequent during the winter months. Beginning in recent decades noticeable changes in weather patterns started to be observed by the hunters and certain communities became imbedded in the limelight of concern because existing beaches are losing ground to wave action, thus endangering life and property. In the Arctic and Subarctic many communities are situated along coastal shores of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas. To have an understanding of where the people must live you need to know about the land and its people, and you must probe into the deepest depths of how they must live.

Displacement is not a new term, as the term now implies in the vocabulary of many people whose lives are being intermingled with change in weather patterns not comparable in magnitude to the changes that occurred in the past. It is understandable that the mammals, birds, and fish are more adaptable to change and it is not our course to change in the manner that they can, but to ever retreat to higher ground. Our ancestors have always followed retreating waters near choice movement areas of prey; we have always pursued our prey to be nearer to them. Loss of harvest potential because of changes of migration patterns of sea mammals can result in severe shortages of winter staples.

We owe eternal gratitude to our ancestors for our successes in continuing to reside in the environment chosen by them. Cold and warmth are two elements we have learned to contend with over the countless generations that the people have lived upon the land. In or near coastal communities you will see abandoned *inipiat*, or semisubterranean houses, now collapsed and reclaimed by the earth, and the oral history of the people tells of villages that were moved to higher ground to flee rising seas; no evidence whatsoever remains of former communities that have been reclaimed by the sea. Our land carries strong ethnic traditions; our language comes from the earth through our association with our beliefs and lifeways. In the very recent past the people held the birthright of language within them, but that value is being shoved to the wayside, marked into possible oblivion by progress. The language comes from the land and the instructions of survival that will come from the land may not be understood when dire circumstances begin to prevail because of the adverse effects of climatic change. Oral history is living history, and the people learned very early how to abide by its truth. My father would state, "It's the true" when he made special emphasis of what had proven very important in his life. He and many other elders have been very special teachers

to us. They related continually of ancient times and of special periods of our people's unwritten history that continue to enhance our daily lives today.

Depths of erosion over the eons are not known, but it must have been massive over time, because the oral history of coastal people tells of former villages now tens or hundreds of feet below present sea levels. The oral histories of Wales and Little Diomedes tell about the land and the sea. Our land and sea take care of us as a mother would her child. The signature of the sea can change almost instantaneously, as from the serene slumber of calmness to an astounding fury of wind-driven and current-challenged whitecaps. The sea is as ancient as the land. The mammals and fish have more rights to residency in the sea than we do because they are a part of the sea as we became a part of the land. The mammals, birds, and fish are not continually present in our waters because they are ever on the move, season to forthcoming season. The mammals know who we are as much as we believe we know them; they shy away from us as if we own the sea.

Each village is a nation to her own. We adhere to our language and dialects and profess ourselves to be people of a specific place. We are people of place. Winters are cold and can be severe or deadly for the unprepared, and for eons storms have been a part of our lives. One of the most pleasant memories of any person is to reminisce about youth and early adult years. The first time when a hunter harpoons a whale is a special moment in the life of a hunter that never fades from memory. These are special moments that the hunter, his family, and the people remember. It is not only once in our lives that we remember our encounters with our Mother Earth or the sea; we remember the encounters always because we live them. Our encounters with reality are us; it is us. We have lived with reality since the moment we came to remember who we are.

Among hunter- and warrior-class societies, warfare can be a constant threat from adversaries of ancient standing. Many nations have protocol and follow specific instruction in the event a raid surprised the people. The Kingikmiut, or people of Wales, were especially vigilant as traditional enemies were just across the water from them. War commanders closely supervised warriors constantly to avert the possibility of surprise and the event of being displaced in the event of a rout. The *inuqshuq* [pl. *inuksuit*] or stone men and upright stone spires imitate sentries along mountain tops, thus alleviating some element of surprise.

The ancient occupation of the hunter still prevails among indigenous people. Sadly it is an occupation that is the most regulated among all others in the world today and very much more so in arctic lands. Regulations to harvest sea mammals and migratory birds were imposed upon people when and only when game resources were within the ample harvest range of people. The authorities did not realize that prey species are available to us only during a specific season, and allowed hunting after most species returned to wintering grounds far from the reach of the hunters. One of the recent prophecies stated by our elders past was that the days of what is referred to as easy living will pass and that the people will have to revert to the ancient ways of survival founded by our ancestors.

Year-round opportunities are limited in hunter-gatherer communities, thus lack of jobs has been the cause of movement to urban communities where jobs may be found. The ratio of hunters in a small community is exceedingly high. Most indigenous people have a lifetime of hunter-gatherer experience before being displaced to urban areas in varying ways, so a hunter will have great difficulty in finding employment that may match his life experiences among strange societies who have no place for people with hunting experiences only.

As a young child I became aware of some communities having many more elders than the elders we had in Wales. This was especially noticeable when the people of Little Diomedes Island landed briefly in Wales going to summer camps in Nome or Kotzebue. Then again in the fall of 1958 my father took us to establish camps north of Wales. The trip, by *omiak* [or *umiak*; i.e., skin-covered boat], included a stop in Shishmaref to replenish supplies we had expended. This trip allowed my father to barter walrus skins he had for any items that may not be available in Wales. It was in Shishmaref that I saw many more elders than I have ever seen anywhere. It was later that I found that it was the elders of Shishmaref that stopped the invasion of a black, invisible, odorless death.

The influenza pandemic that circled the globe in 1918 took the lives of many people in communities throughout the north, and Wales being a community almost solely inhabited by Inupiat with no immunity to infectious diseases, people succumbed by the hundreds. The young men and women, many with young and adolescent children, died, thus my father's generation is largely a generation of orphans. The very young and the generations of grandparents survived, although many of them also became gravely

ill. Several newborn infants died when dying mothers could no longer care for their babies. Many of my generation experienced life never feeling the loving embrace of a grandfather or grandmother.

It became known that the children whose parents died in the pandemic were to be taken away to orphanages established in several places throughout the Seward Peninsula. Wales was very likely approached on this heinous subject but surviving elders decided that the children would not be taken away when it became apparent that helpless children must be cared for in the best way possible. Many and sometimes most capable adults in surrounding communities died, and the people averted displacing the orphans by taking them as their own. My father was raised by an elderly couple whom he thought were his natural parents until he was told. Two older siblings were raised by an aunt in Teller, where an older brother died and an older sister married and raised a family.

The transfer of traditional knowledge to the young is one of trust; it is placed upon trust so that those who were taught specific functions of the culture will pass on what they have learned to those who request an answer to the many questions that form in their minds throughout their lives. Our culture is ingrained into all aspects associated with who we are as people. Culture enriches your whole being; the whole being of the people. Culture is an environment by itself as the phenomenon encompasses the people in a complete circle. Our culture is associated with the language, the land, the sea, and all of its creatures. Our association with it is ingrained into our heritage of survival. You are representative of the land and the sea as what you have been taught has been ingrained into your being so wholly that the land and the sea becomes a part of your substance.

The young people have been a catalyst in the return of traditional dances among many groups, Wales included. Interest was piqued very quickly when two special elders began teaching the arts of Eskimo dancing to the students in their spare time. After several years the community put out invitations to dance groups from surrounding communities. The invitations were well received and now the dances, held annually, have international representation with several dance groups from the Russian Far East having attended past dances. Dance groups from Point Hope, Little Diomed, and King Island have attended yearly along with several mainland groups. The younger generation's rate of absorbing information is very finely honed; their ability to learn is exceptional. Young boys and girls, tutored at a very young age in the arts of hunting and sur-

vival, become ardent supporters of the subsistence ways of life observed by the people, and the young people become exceptional writers when they employ their traditional learning to their schoolwork. Here, in part, is a short edited essay written by Raymond Seetook, Jr.:

[T]here are many reasons to support and believe in subsistence hunting. No other type of existence has been as healthy to mankind and toward the health of the earth. Subsistence living encourages each person to understand the web of life and our place in that web. As a hunter I am part of that land. It keeps me healthy in my body and soul. The prey and I are really part of each other. When I kill my prey I respect the life that I had taken and with respect I take that food to my family. As a hunter I must learn vital skills. Among those skills is knowledge of the animals I hunt. I am familiar with the thrill of the hunt and the quiet sadness comes over me when I realize I have taken the life of a living being. I know that its death allows my family to live and I am grateful for the food I get from the earth. There is no life without death. As a subsistence hunter I have had to face my own fears and I know the satisfaction of meeting nature on its own terms. I also believe that subsistence hunting provides a good example to the world which is a lesson that my ancestors knew and practiced for thousands of years. Subsistence hunting also supports strong families. The life of each member of the family depends on the actions of each member of the family. The adult male has a natural and important role in the family. He knows he is vital to the well being of his family (Seetook 2007).

Raymond finishes by stating, "He [the hunter] has true value."

The hunters reside in a position of respect within a hunter-gatherer community. The respect mounts not only within the community but among the people when he and his crew are responsible for landing a whale. Hunting is the cradle of indigenous culture; it is a part of the profound way of the people, as survival is assured with harvest success that is uniformly shared among the crews, the families, and the people.

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*Herbert Anungazuk (1945–2010) at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve in 2008 (photo courtesy of Nancy Swanton)*



# INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON “THE METHOD OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RECONSTRUCTION” BY ERNEST S. BURCH, JR.

Kenneth L. Pratt

Bureau of Indian Affairs, ANCSA Office, 3601 C Street, Suite 1100, Anchorage, AK 99503; Kenneth.Pratt@bia.gov

In September 2010, Ernest S. (Tiger) Burch, Jr., unexpectedly passed away at his home in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, at the age of seventy-two. The loss of northern anthropology's most eminent ethnographer was a shock to his many friends and colleagues, some of whom have included retrospection on Burch's impressive career as part of their grieving process. Among other results, this exercise renewed interest among certain of his colleagues in one important paper he had never published.

The paper in question is titled “The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction.” Tiger may have started writing it as early as about 1975, but his first presentation on the paper's subject matter took place in March 1981 at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association in Anchorage. In October 1988, he presented an expanded version of the paper at the Sixth Inuit Studies Conference in Copenhagen. The latter is the version included in this issue of the *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*. The manuscript was provided by Tiger's dear friend Igor Krupnik and is published with the permission of Deanne Burch, Tiger's wife. Legitimately, some readers may question the editorial decision to publish this paper the way Tiger had written it more than twenty years ago, and with only minor revisions. The following comments are meant to address any such concerns by placing the paper in its proper historical context.<sup>1</sup>

Tiger Burch was an extremely productive, widely respected scholar who had an unusually high commitment to transparency. That is, Burch was diligent about stating his research objectives, explicitly identifying and defining the methods and concepts he was using to attain them,

and openly acknowledging his own past errors of fact or interpretation (see, e.g., Burch 1991a). His research was always thorough, and the associated findings were reported in clear and precise language. He carefully evaluated existing concepts relevant to his work, often modifying them to improve their utility; if his research indicated a concept was unsound, Tiger did not hesitate to call for its rejection (e.g., Burch 1976; cf. Burch 1998:307–308).

His deep commitment to scientific research and improving the methods, concepts, and techniques of anthropology are plainly evident in this paper. It is uncertain why Tiger failed to submit the paper for publication, but he may have considered it too long and didactic for an anthropological journal. The paper was unquestionably intended to be an educational tool; as such, it will become part of Burch's enduring contribution to anthropology. In this paper, Burch describes in detail a methodology he developed through trial and error for the conduct of “retrospective research,” the domain in which the majority of his work occurred. Significantly, the paper pays particular attention to an array of issues related to the collection, evaluation, and utilization of oral history data from indigenous populations. This is noteworthy given that Tiger devoted much of his career to demonstrating oral history's relevance to and reliability in ethnographic reconstructions.

When Tiger first began to emphasize and heavily rely upon oral history accounts in his work he was bucking existing scholarly trends, especially with regard to his conviction that oral accounts could illuminate events from the deep past (i.e., the late 1700s, early 1800s). Fellow social scientists and other scholars were skeptical of that position.

1. After careful deliberation, one thing that was not modified is the male bias (i.e., references to male informants and male investigators; no use of the female pronoun) that permeates the text, since it reflects the state of the discipline at the time the paper was written. Given the chance, however, Tiger would surely have corrected this bias; he did have female informants and he recognized and respected his professional female colleagues.

His paper “From Skeptic to Believer: The Making of an Oral Historian” (Burch 1991b; cf. Burch 1996) was a direct response to such criticism: in it Tiger admits that he formerly shared his critics’ attitudes about the limitations of oral history, an admission that made the paper all the more effective. His manuscript on “The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction” was the foundation for many of the arguments he made regarding the validity of oral history as a source of historical information. Accordingly, it also had a major role in the formulation of Tiger’s remarkable and encyclopedic trilogy on the Iñupiaq peoples of Northwest Alaska (Burch 1998, 2005, 2006).<sup>2</sup>

It has now become standard practice for anthropologists to incorporate oral data in discussions concerning the history of Alaska Native peoples; Burch’s extensive work with indigenous oral history no doubt helped bring about this development. The growing public and scientific interest in processes and impacts of climate change in Alaska will further increase the consideration given to Native oral history. Although the increased appreciation of research involving oral history is a positive change, it also has some drawbacks. Most notably, the trendiness of oral history research in Alaska gives rise to numerous quality control problems. Some researchers treat the data produced in ways that suggest virtually every Alaska Native oral account is important and has historical validity. In other words, oral history data—and the informants from whom such data derive—often are not subjected to the types of critical evaluation required to verify their accuracy and demonstrate their relevance as information sources for scientific research. This is contrary to the scholarly rigor characteristic of Tiger’s own work with oral history and to the valuable guidance he provides in “The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction.”

The publication of this paper makes it accessible to students and scholars interested in learning the tenets of ethnographic reconstruction and/or oral history research with indigenous peoples. By extension, Tiger’s main objective in writing the paper may finally be realized: i.e., anthropologists and other scientists have an opportunity to learn from his mistakes and the many practical insights he gained through over fifty years of anthropological work in the North.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Deanne Burch for granting the *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* permission to publish “The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction.” I also thank Erica Hill for editorial assistance in preparing the paper for publication, and Igor Krupnik for helpful comments on a draft of this introductory note.

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2. Less obviously, the paper also complements his effort to develop an approach that might enable archaeologists to reconstruct prehistoric societies in northwest Alaska (Burch 1988).

# THE METHOD OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RECONSTRUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Ernest S. Burch, Jr.

## ABSTRACT

This paper outlines an approach whereby one can acquire accurate knowledge of past events, ways of life, and individuals by means of orally transmitted information. Included in the presentation are discussions of (1) types of evidence, (2) sources of information, (3) time, (4) space, (5) subject matter, (6) bias, and (7) tests of reliability. General points are illustrated with examples from the author's research on the histories of the Caribou Inuit of the central Canadian subarctic and the North Alaskan Inuit [Iñupiat].

**KEYWORDS:** Alaska, Iñupiat, Caribou Inuit, oral history, ethnohistory

## INTRODUCTION

The need to describe phenomena that existed at some time in the past is common in social research. The variety of studies that might have need of retrospective information is vast, ranging from the reconstruction of life in a small camp of fifty thousand years ago to the determination of the details of a festival that has just been completed. One critical problem confronting all retrospective studies, regardless of their time depth or scope, is the fact that the investigator cannot see or measure directly the very phenomena he wishes to describe. Consequently it is necessary to rely on indirect evidence, be it a set of artifacts or other physical remains that have been left behind or the statements of others who witnessed or participated in a particular event.

Within anthropology there are two basic approaches to the reconstruction of past phenomena: archaeology and ethnohistory. The former involves making inferences about social, cultural, or demographic phenomena on the basis of the physical evidence the people concerned left behind. Ethnohistory, on the other hand, depends for its

information on written documents, which may or (more often) may not have been written with anthropological issues in mind. Archaeology and ethnohistory are major disciplines and their methods and techniques are the topic of considerable discussion, debate, and publication. An approach that has received relatively little systematic treatment in this regard is ethnography, yet it, too, has considerable value in retrospective research.

Ethnography is generally conceived of as the description of ongoing social systems, i.e., those of which the investigator can obtain at least some firsthand experience and observation. However, everyone who has ever done ethnographic research has had to inquire about customs that are no longer practiced, beliefs that are no longer held, or periodic events that do not happen to take place while one is in the field. Other investigators go further and try to reconstruct, on the basis of interviews, performances, or other sorts of oral evidence, social or demographic patterns and even entire societies that no longer exist. But regardless of variations in time

1. Ernest S. "Tiger" Burch, Jr., died in September 2010, leaving several projects unfinished. Igor Krupnik, Tiger's friend of many years, had a copy of the manuscript of this paper, which was originally written between 1981 and 1988 and presented at the 1988 Inuit Studies Conference in Copenhagen. Deanne Burch, Tiger's wife, kindly granted permission to publish it in *AJA*. As discussed in Kenneth Pratt's "Introductory Note" (pp. 125–126), the paper is reproduced here as originally written and with very minor edits. Although he avoided the exclusive use of the masculine pronoun in reference to informants and investigators in his later works, Tiger's original usage has been retained here, as it reflects scholarly attitudes at the time.—*Ed.*

depth or subject matter, the general problem of retrospective research is there.

At least some authors (e.g., Lee and DeVore 1968:146, 148) contend that ethnographic reconstruction beyond a very short period of time is impossible. Similar opinions have been expressed to me informally by both students and experienced field workers. According to this view, if contemporary written accounts do not exist, thus permitting the corroboration of field data through the use of ethnohistorical material, a reliable reconstruction simply cannot be made. Vansina (1985), however, has demonstrated that this position is untenable, at least as a general proposition. My own experience has shown it to be false even in the study of hunters and gatherers, people often considered as having been devoid of history prior to contact with Europeans. In principle, at least, the reconstruction of the past can be carried out by means of ethnographic techniques in *any* kind of society. Those who fail to make use of ethnography in dealing with historical questions often cut themselves off from an extensive body of valuable information.

The major purpose of this paper is to present a method whereby ethnographic reconstruction can be done. In other words, I outline an approach whereby one can collect reliable information about the past through personal contact with living people. By "method," I refer to the logic, or type of reasoning, that underlies this type of research. The focus is on the middle ground between epistemology, on the one hand, and the specific techniques or procedures of data collection, on the other. Although my remarks obviously relate to both of those areas, to deal adequately with the former would require a philosophical treatise, whereas many of the latter already have been described elsewhere (e.g., Dean and Whyte 1958; Irvine 1978; Langness 1965; Lewis 1962; McCracken 1974; Rogers and Black Rogers 1978; Sitton et al. 1983). Many of the elements of this approach have been discussed by others, particularly in Vansina's excellent work (e.g., 1970, 1985), but I attempt to systematize them more rigorously here than they have been heretofore.

A second objective of this paper is to present a statement of the strategy upon which much of my own recent research has been based. For nearly two decades I have been attempting to reconstruct the social and demographic structures of two Eskimo populations. One is the Inuit-speaking Eskimo population of Alaska as it was in the early and middle nineteenth century; it is referred to subsequently as the "traditional North Alaskan Inuit" (see

e.g., Burch 1980). The other study population is "the traditional Caribou Inuit," who lived in the central Canadian Subarctic, immediately west of Hudson Bay [in what is today Nunavut], during the late nineteenth century (e.g., Burch 1986). I do not claim to have applied the method fully: indeed, I made a number of mistakes. But it was precisely in the respects and to the extent that I failed to apply it that my most serious errors were made. Thus, while I illustrate general points with reference to my own research, the examples are sometimes presented as ones to avoid rather than ones to emulate.

## TYPES OF EVIDENCE

The raw material of ethnographic reconstruction consists, in principle, of any kind of oral expression that, either directly or by allusion, refers to an event, tradition, social system, individual, population, or state of affairs that existed at some previous point in time. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: narratives, performances, dances, epic songs and poems, tales, legends, myths, proverbs, riddles, jokes, anecdotes, and even offhand remarks (Dundes 1968; Vansina 1985:3–26). At the most general level, virtually any utterance should be considered a possible source of information about the past.

The major criteria for determining the relative significance of the several possible forms of evidence in any given study should consist of (1) the local cultural emphasis with regard to the conveyance of historical information, (2) the specific subject matter of one's research, and (3) the degree of time depth being sought. If the local emphasis is on dramatic performances, then they will provide more information than legends and myths. If one is attempting to reconstruct an event that happened only a few months ago, anecdotes and offhand remarks, perhaps augmented by question-and-answer sessions with knowledgeable informants, may suffice. If one is attempting to reconstruct a battle that took place three thousand years ago, epic songs, poems, and legends may be more informative.

The basic point here is that there is no *a priori* or programmatic way to determine which of the several possible forms of ethnographic evidence is best. The answer to the question will vary according to the time depth, possibly the subject matter of primary interest to the researcher, and the particular tradition by which historical information is conveyed in the culture concerned. While the former may be known prior to the research, the latter



may require both intensive and protracted field research to determine.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ethnographic data, by definition, are those derived through the personal contact of an investigator with living people. Members of the population with whom the investigator actually makes contact may be referred to as the “resource population” who live in the “research period.” The population whose culture (or whatever) is being reconstructed may be called the “study population,” and they lived in the “study period.” The resource population may—or may not—consist in whole or in part of people who previously belonged to the study population, and its members may—or may not—be directly descended from the study population. The individuals who actually provide information to the investigator, by whatever means, are “informants.”

The absolute prerequisite of any successful reconstruction is a supply of qualified informants. Considerable care must be paid to their qualifications, recruitment, handling, and evaluation.

## THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED INFORMANTS

The presence or absence of qualified informants in any resource population depends on a number of variables. These include the following: (1) the local emphasis on the retention of historical knowledge, (2) the nature of historical criticism in the resource population, (3) the education system, (4) transmission problems, (5) retention problems, and (6) the time depth of the research.

“Historical knowledge” is defined as any knowledge, information, supposition or allegation about past situations, events, people, things, and processes. The extent to which the retention of such knowledge is considered important by members of a resource population obviously has significant bearing on the number of individuals in that population who are likely to be qualified informants. The greater the *general* interest in historical matters, the greater the number of qualified informants there is likely to be. The possibilities here vary considerably, from an almost total rejection of the past as a topic of interest, at one extreme, to a general fascination with and systematic retention of historical information, at the other. A related variable is the specific type of information concerned, since even in populations where historical data are collect-

ed and retained, some kinds of information will be considered important while others will be virtually ignored. Sturtevant (1968:464–465) has described a number of examples illustrating this variation. I focus my attention here on two arctic populations with which I have experience.

The Caribou Inuit and the North Alaskan Inuit [Inupiat] differ considerably in the extent to which they value the retention of historical information. The North Alaskan Inuit have a relatively well-defined historical interest, and they draw a distinction between legendary and factual accounts (Jenness 1924:1–2; Rainey 1947:269), whereas neither was true for the Caribou Inuit. Members of both populations, however, had a keen interest in folklore (Ostermann and Holtved 1952; Rasmussen 1930).

In North Alaska, for at least the last several generations, there have been a number of individuals who have been interested in remembering the present and learning about the past. This interest was not purely idiosyncratic since such individuals became recognized and appreciated as historians, they were consulted as authorities by their contemporaries, and they were in increasing demand as sources of information as their knowledge grew. I interviewed several native people who had previously and independently conducted self-conscious research into various historical questions. They had done so by means of systematic interviews with older people who had either lived during the period in question or who had similarly investigated the topic among representatives of still earlier generations.

Among the Caribou Inuit, on the other hand, this historical interest was relatively poorly developed. The members of this population tended to be much more existential in their orientation, focusing on the present and immediate future and caring rather little about the past. The best Caribou Inuit informants could present a general account of their own life experiences, and they could generalize reasonably well about the customs and practices they had observed during their youth. However, they were able to recall relatively little about specific events and places, and they knew even less about events, places, or individuals in the years before they were born.

The nature of the historical criticism that is practiced in a resource population is a second important variable affecting the general availability of informants. As Pitt (1972:55) and Sturtevant (1968:464–465) have pointed out, even among peoples where the collection and retention of historical knowledge are important, there can still be wide variation in the specific criteria used to evaluate

historical sources. Consequently there can be different considerations employed in handling information, and even different types of information collected between one society and another. In one population there may be considerable emphasis on factual accuracy, while in another there may be complete disregard for it as long as certain esthetic standards are met. Other variables include (1) the form in which information is presented; (2) personal characteristics, such as the age, sex, or wealth of the source; (3) the amount of detail; (4) the political or religious significance of an account; (5) chronology; (6) entertainment value; and (7) relative emphasis on ideal versus actual patterns.

The two resource populations in my research differed in the nature of their historical criticism. Among the North Alaskan Inuit, sources are evaluated primarily in terms of four criteria: factual accuracy, proper sequence of events, the amount of detail, and the manner of presentation, in that order of priority. The most devastating criticism that they make of their own historians is that they got the facts or the sequence wrong. Storytellers who make such errors are privately ridiculed and, while their presentations are tolerated, they are otherwise ignored. A secondary consideration is the amount of detail included in an account. Sources who recall vast numbers of details are highly respected—as long as the facts and their sequence are correct. In addition, sources are evaluated with respect to their style of presentation, good speakers being appreciated more than poor ones—as long as the other three criteria have been met. Finally, the North Alaskan Inuit distinguish clearly between the ideal and the actual. Informants who rank high according to the other criteria often go to some lengths to make certain that the anthropologist-interviewer keeps the two separated with equal clarity.

The Caribou Inuit, by contrast, have little interest in sequence, and they are not particularly concerned with the differences between actual and ideal. Consequently, except when dealing with personal experiences of fairly recent date, informants tend to generalize rather vaguely, report ideal rather than actual patterns, and are often difficult to pin down on specific illustrations. But, since they are not particularly interested in history anyway, it is not surprising that their criteria of historical criticism are not well developed. On a more positive side, the best Caribou Inuit informants, like their North Alaskan counterparts, rarely present speculation under the guise of fact. If they

do not know something they tell you so rather than guessing about what might have been the case.

The education system is a third important variable affecting the general availability of informants in a resource population. In general, it can be assumed that the frequency of qualified informants will vary in direct proportion to the extent to which historical information is an element in the education of the population as a whole. If such information is transmitted to both males and females, for example, the pool of potential informants will be much greater than if it is passed on to just males. A second aspect of the education factor is the span of time over which the relevant education is carried out. If instruction is limited to a few weeks or months prior to an initiation ceremony of some kind, there will be a strong emphasis on excellent memory. The number of good informants in the resource population will be lower under those conditions than if historical education begins in early childhood and continues to be reinforced and expanded more or less uninterrupted throughout one's life. On the other hand, the comparatively few informants of the first type may be exceptionally well informed.

A third consideration is who does the teaching. Is historical teaching carried out by recognized experts in the field, or is it left to each set of parents to conduct with respect to their own offspring? If the latter there may be a large *number* of informants in the resource population, but they may not be as knowledgeable as they would be if specialists were involved in the process at some point.

The two resource populations of concern here were similar in that historical instruction was not restricted to any particular age group or to the members of one sex; hence historical instruction was an element in the education of the general membership of the population. Everyone had some knowledge of history. However, since the Caribou Inuit were not particularly concerned with teaching history in any case, instruction in that area was unsystematic, and it was not subject to quality control by way of explicit criticism of historical accounts. In North Alaska, on the other hand, history was a subject of general interest, and discourses in historical matters were subject to criticism. In both populations historical information was transmitted by both experts and "laymen," but there was a clearer distinction between the two in North Alaska. One knew who should be believed and who should be ignored by the time one reached adolescence.

A fourth variable affecting the number of informants in a resource population is the number and severity of

“transmission problems.” By this I mean an event or process that inhibits or prevents the transmission of historical information from one generation to the next. There seem to be three relatively common information bottlenecks which can break the continuity of transmission of historical information and which can limit the supply of knowledgeable people in a resource population as a consequence. These three are: (1) disaster of some kind, (2) population movement, and (3) rapid and profound cultural change.

Of the many types of disaster that can befall a population, famines and epidemics seem to have the most serious consequences for the transmission of historical information. Such events typically eliminate the oldest and the youngest age groups, which represent the major sources and the primary recipients, respectively, of historical knowledge in the population at the time. Famine may be the more detrimental of the two because even survivors seem to experience some memory loss as a result of the experience, apparently for physiological reasons (Mayer 1975, 1976). Other calamities, such as war, earthquakes, and floods may constitute less serious intellectual bottlenecks if they do not lead to a famine or epidemic and if they do not strike particularly hard at the older members of the population concerned.

Both of the resource populations in my research have been subject to severe epidemics and serious famines, and a tremendous amount of historical knowledge has been lost as a result. In North Alaska such disasters struck with particular force during the 1880s, while in the Caribou Inuit area the years from about 1915 to 1925 seem to have been the most critical ones. There was a difference between the two areas in the scope of specific events, however, one that accounts at least in part for the greater availability of reliable historians in North Alaska. In Alaska most famines and epidemics seem to have been local or regional rather than all-encompassing in scope. At least some people knowledgeable about the history of a particular group were normally living or visiting in another region when disaster struck their own country. Subsequently, they were able to bridge, at least in part, the information gap resulting from it.

The same cannot be said about the Caribou Inuit, who experienced at least two disasters in the twentieth century that reached every inhabited locality in their country more or less simultaneously. The first and most serious was the famine of 1915–1925, which led to the deaths of more than half of the human population. A famine of this magnitude would have had particularly severe effects

on the older segment of the population. The second general disaster came in 1956–1957, when famine and disease struck the Caribou Inuit area. This event resulted in many deaths, but its consequences were ameliorated to some extent through the provision of government welfare and medical aid to the stricken population. In addition to these two general disasters, the Caribou Inuit have been subjected to frequent local and regional famines and epidemics of various kinds since the early twentieth century. I strongly suspect, although I cannot demonstrate, that it was this succession of disasters and not a fundamental disinterest in the past that led to the comparatively low level of historical knowledge in the modern population. Members of neighboring Inuit populations seem to have had a higher level of recall than members of the Caribou Inuit population (Arima 1976).

Population movements can also affect the availability of informants in a resource population, even if they are not associated with disaster of some kind. Emigration, for example, can disperse the members of a population and result in their absorption into other groups with different histories and traditions. Even when emigration does not have a dispersal effect, it takes people out of the country in which their previous history occurred. Far from landmarks and historical places of one’s youth and/or ancestors, it becomes increasingly difficult to retain the knowledge of what transpired there.

Population movement has significantly affected the distribution of informants in North Alaska. The descendants of people from virtually every region are now scattered over a huge area, while at the same time the populations of individual villages tend to be made up of people whose ancestors lived elsewhere. Kivalina, for example, is made up primarily of people of Upper Noatak, Point Hope, and Seward Peninsula ancestry, supplemented by just a few descendants of mid-nineteenth century Kivalina people. If one wants to reconstruct the 1905–1915 period in the region, one can obtain much useful information from informants in the village. But if one wants instead to reconstruct the situation as it was in the 1870s or earlier, one has to seek informants elsewhere.

The third and final transmission problem is rapid social change. Perhaps the ultimate development in this direction took place during the 1940s, when World War II brought the abrupt arrival of thousands of foreign men, tons of mechanized equipment, and radically new ways of life to many areas previously isolated from the rest of the world. Suddenly the past history of the indigenous populations of

such areas became irrelevant, and people simply failed to pass on information about it to their descendents.

In both the Caribou Inuit and North Alaskan areas, social change, though rapid, was gradual enough until recently so as not to constitute a serious hindrance to the transmission of historical knowledge. There are a few exceptions to this rule, however. For example, in some North Alaskan villages during the mid-1950s there was an abrupt change in the language used in the home. On the assumption that ability to speak English was an important factor in getting good jobs, bilingual parents, who constituted a majority of the population in villages concerned, began talking to their children exclusively in English. One result of this trend was that many monolingual Inuit-speaking elders could not communicate effectively with their equally monolingual English-speaking grandchildren. The result was a significant hiatus in the transmission of information across generational lines. Recently there has been a strong reaction against this trend, but it has come too late to retrieve much that was lost during the previous thirty years.

The final variable affecting the general availability of informants in a resource population is the time depth of the research. If one is attempting to reconstruct a system that was in operation only five years previously, virtually anyone over about six or seven years of age might be able to provide at least some information on that system as a result of their personal participation in it. The further back in time the study period is, the smaller the supply of informed people is likely to be. Although the *best* informants are not necessarily individuals who were themselves members of the study population, the greatest *number* of informants in a resource population is likely to be found where survivors of the study population are fairly numerous.

In my Caribou Inuit research the study period was 1890–1910, but the field research was carried out in 1968–1970. The time gap between the two was thus sixty to eighty years. In 1970 there were only forty-seven people in the resource population of 1,271 (or 3.7%) who had been alive during the study period (Canada DIAND 1971), and many of them had not been members of the study population. The number of potentially helpful informants was much greater than that, of course, because many aspects of traditional life in the central Canadian Subarctic persisted for many years after 1910. If I had been trying to reconstruct the 1930 situation instead, I could have drawn on a pool of 198 individuals (or 15.6% of the resource population) who had actually been one year old or older during

the study period (Canada DIAND 1971); the number of qualified informants would have been greater still.

In North Alaska, on the other hand, the study period was the early and middle nineteenth century; my research was carried out after 1965. In this case not a single member of the study population survived to be a part of the resource population. Indeed, all of the members of the latter had been born long after the study period had ended. This meant that reliable informants, if they existed at all, were likely to be specialists in historical matters, and they would have to be located, recruited, and interviewed on that basis. None of them could provide any information on the study population as a result of personal experience. In the Caribou Inuit case, despite the fact that relatively few expert historians were to be found in the resource population, a few dozen individuals could provide information about the resource population on the basis of personal experience. Careful interviewing elicited much valuable information from such individuals despite their lack of interest in historical issues.

#### THE SELECTION OF INFORMANTS

The selection of informants involves a number of steps, the precise number depending on the availability of candidates in the resource population. In general, the greater the number of candidates, the greater the need for careful sampling procedures of some kind. The smaller the number, the greater the emphasis can be on a complete coverage of the individuals involved.

Even where the number of informants is not particularly large, it is often useful to select a stratified sample just to make sure that the most important aspects of one's study have been investigated. The criteria used to establish cohorts may vary widely, of course, depending on the time depth, the geographic breadth, and the general subject matter to be covered by the study. Someone interested in learning how women used to make and decorate pots twenty years ago will certainly be concerned with a different set of criteria than someone interested in how men used to hunt whales a century ago.

In my research in the both the Caribou and North Alaskan Inuit areas I was particularly concerned with geographic breadth because I was interested in reconstructing the general social and demographic situation over two large geographic areas. In particular, I was interested in the locations of major social and ethnic boundaries. The resource populations, however, were concentrated in a rel-



atively small number of communities, and large sections of both study areas were uninhabited at the time I did my research. Therefore, the primary criterion in stratifying the samples was the specific region about which people had the greatest knowledge. On the basis of prior library research and preliminary interviews, the Caribou Inuit area was divided into five districts; in Alaska the number of districts began with only three, but expanded to twenty-five as the research proceeded. Cohorts consisted of individuals known or thought to be knowledgeable about each of these districts.

Some cohorts turned out to contain zero individuals and some just one or two, while others contained a dozen or more. It was necessary to try to get information from everyone in the smaller cohorts. With respect to the larger ones, further sampling criteria had to be applied because I lacked the time to interview the entire group. In choosing these additional samples, I sought the expertise of people with the most comprehensive knowledge of the region in question.

To determine expertise I had to make preliminary contact with the individuals involved and interview them informally so as to form an (admittedly subjective) assessment of how much they knew. Sometimes I made what were found to be serious mistakes because these initial assessments were wrong. More often, however, I was able to make good choices because I took advantage of other knowledge to locate qualified individuals. In Alaska, for example, some individuals were *known* to be experts on a particular area. All I had to do was ask who they were. In cases where no obvious experts were available, I relied on my knowledge of Inuit socialization techniques to guide me. During preliminary surveys I inquired about who was raised by their grandparents, and for what length of time each had lived with them. Some of my best informants turned out to be individuals who had not lived in the region in question, but who had grown up in households that included grandparents who had.

The selection of a sample is, of course, just the first step in the exercise. There inevitably follow the tasks of (1) locating and establishing rapport with the individuals selected, (2) discovering which of the individuals chosen have the memory, physical endurance, interest, and time to be effective informants, and (3) actually conducting the interviews. For numerous practical reasons, the initial sample often has to be revised. All of these matters fall under the heading of “techniques” rather than method. Hence they fall outside the scope of this paper; they are

also covered in every general text on field research procedures. But I cannot emphasize enough the importance of *method* in the selection of informants. Being adopted into a Native family, learning the language, and various other field techniques, while important, cannot substitute for proper sampling procedure in historically oriented research. One must carefully consider which criteria to use in sample selection, and one must make a determined effort to identify everyone in the resource population who meets those criteria. Only then can one know with whom it is *useful* to establish rapport, and, knowing that, begin to work on doing so.

Informant selection procedures are important in any field research, of course. They are particularly so in retrospective research because literally all of one’s information is acquired from them. A considerable proportion of the researcher’s time therefore has to be spent in identifying individuals who meet the criteria relevant to one’s project. By considerable time I mean that the search may be *the* dominant activity for as long as six to nine months of a twelve-month field study, and it probably should never cease altogether. If the selection criteria have been properly determined, and if the search has been productive, the actual interviewing often can be done effectively in a fairly brief period.

#### WORKING WITH INFORMANTS

Having located and selected one’s informants there remain the problems of recruiting and interviewing them. Most of the issues appropriately included under those headings fall within the area of field techniques. A few extend to at least some degree into the domain of method: these are communication, recall, and subject matter.

Communication between researcher and informant is obviously a critical problem in reconstructive research since literally all of the former’s results depend on information provided by the latter. One question is, what should be the medium of communication? It is generally agreed that the informant’s language is best, to be preferred over the language of the interviewer, a third language, or an interview conducted through an interpreter. Written questionnaires and other such devices are usually ineffective. Reconstructive studies pose a particular problem because the language of the resource population may—or may *not*—be the same as the language of the study population, depending on the time depth of the study. Even when the former is a direct descendent of the latter, one must keep

alert to possible changes in both forms and usage between the two periods.

A second point about communication is that the use of interpreters, a third language, or some other less than ideal medium of communication does not necessarily mean that the results are less *reliable* than those deriving from interviews conducted exclusively in the informant's language. If the informant is fully fluent in the interviewer's language, or if the services of a highly competent interpreter have been acquired, then one might have considerable confidence in the results as long as other measures of reliability can be applied. Reliance on anything *but* the informant's language usually results in at least some loss of descriptive detail, though, and often in some loss of understanding as well. Whether this is critical or not depends as much on the specific subject matter of the study as it does on the character of the communication between informant and researcher.

A second methodological aspect of working with informants concerns informant recall, although this topic extends directly into the technical area. The basic problem is that most of what a person knows is subconscious. In addition, much of what a person once knew is forgotten, although there is tremendous variation from one individual to another in both respects. The challenge for the ethnographer, particularly where give-and-take interviews are involved, is to get the informant to render explicit what may have been implicit previously and to recall on request things that were long since forgotten, or at least not thought about for some time.

The acquisition of knowledge from an informant, particularly in reconstructive studies, is usefully conceived of as a developmental process. Accordingly, it should last over a number of interview sessions. One begins slowly with relatively superficial but comprehensive topics, and proceeds gradually to both greater time depth and to increasing detail of subject matter. As a result of this experience a good informant begins to think about the past in new ways and perhaps to a heightened degree; gradually his powers of recall may improve.

Recall can be increased sometimes through the use of stimuli of various kinds. For example, after preliminary work in a normal interview context, the investigator might accompany an informant to the location where the events under discussion actually took place. Once there the informant may be able to recall all kinds of details that did not occur to him in the more formal interview setting, particularly if he has not visited the place for some time.

In my own research this approach would have involved tremendous expenditures of time and money because of the distances involved; I simply could not afford to do it. However, I achieved excellent results through the use of topographic maps, by means of which informants could travel vicariously over large tracts of country. A good map greatly improved their powers of recall and also evoked information on a tremendous variety of topics, ranging from settlement location and economics to religion and world view. Although the most productive techniques no doubt vary from society to society, the methodological point still holds: just because an informant *does not* recall something when first asked about it does not mean that he *cannot* recall it under the right set of conditions. The challenge for the researcher is to find out what those conditions are.

The final methodological aspect of working with informants concerns the nature of the topics covered during an interview. If the resource population contains a number of knowledgeable people, and if one's recruiting has been successful, then one's informants will probably be very intelligent and knowledgeable people. But few individuals anywhere, no matter how knowledgeable or intelligent, carry a fully articulated model of their society (past or present) around in their heads. Furthermore, almost no one in any society can simply sit down and spew upon request all of the specific information a researcher wants to have. Instead, informants must be guided to the topics significant to one's research by specific questions posed by the researcher.

Permitting informants to talk about subjects of interest to *them* provides information about the informant, hence about the resource population. It probably will *not* provide much useful information about the study population, yet it is the latter that one wants to have. It is sometimes useful to give informants relatively free rein for one or two sessions because of the information it provides on the informant's perspective, but continuing the process for very long can be very time-consuming and may yield information peripheral to the primary research question. Given time and funding constraints, sooner or later the topics discussed must reflect the interviewer's interests.

The interests of the interviewer are determined by the choice of research problems and the analytic framework. The imposition of these factors on the content of an interview of course biases the results. *Failure* to impose the investigator's choice of topics also prejudices the results of an interview because it merely involves the substitution of the informant's biases for those of the investigator. Since

bias cannot be eliminated from ethnographic research, one might as well attempt to structure the situation in such a way that the results are biased in a manner that contributes the most to the achievement of the research objectives.

## THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Time is an important factor in any kind of ethnographic research, but in reconstructive studies it is crucial. The general topic is discussed below under two headings: upstreaming and control.

### UPSTREAMING

It would appear self-evident that research which proceeds systematically from the known to the unknown is more likely to be accurate than research which proceeds in some other way. Since the reliability of ethnographic evidence tends to decrease with time depth (Buckhout 1974:26; Pitt 1972:28), the obvious method to use in reconstructive research is to begin with the most recent time period for which data are available and to work from there to periods progressively more remote. In ethnohistory this approach is known as "upstreaming," and it seems reasonable to use that term in ethnography as well.

Given the nature of ethnographic research, the phenomena that can be described most reliably are those in existence at the time the research is being conducted. Thus, the systematic ethnographic study of the past is best initiated with a careful investigation of the present.

If it is true that (1) the most reliable data derive from the present, and (2) information becomes progressively less reliable with increasing time depth, then the following conclusion appears inescapable: a reconstructive study is more or less reliable to the extent that events and patterns that existed during the study period can be systematically related to those existing during the research period. The most reliable reconstructive studies are those which are in fact studies of social change, whether or not the study of change *per se* is an objective. This is true regardless of how long before the research period the study period happens to be.

### TEMPORAL CONTROL

It is absolutely necessary in reconstructive studies to establish correct chronology. This requirement holds because only through control of the time factor can si-

multaneity be determined and sequence be established. Among peoples to whom chronology is important and among whom an absolute dating system is in general use, it may be possible simply to ask an informant when certain events took place and get a precise and accurate response. In most societies these conditions are not met (Vansina 1970:168).

Chronology is not considered particularly important in many societies; certainly most societies have not had absolute dating schemes in use. But even where the ideal conditions are met, most informants do not recall with precision just when specific events occurred or when certain customs were practiced. However, they often can remember when something happened in relation to something else. Consequently, particularly at the outset, the investigator is advised to place primary emphasis on some sort of relative dating procedure. At the same time, one should attempt to assign absolute dates whenever possible.

One useful way to begin to establish a chronology is with personal data about informants, who can often relate an event or development to a particular stage in their own lives. Women are particularly valuable in this regard. Certain "life crisis" events for females are biologically controlled and subject to very narrow variation from one population to another. Menarche and the births of the first and last offspring, for example, can often be assigned a rather precise relative date, and they are often events that are vividly recalled. Given assumptions or facts about the age of the informant and knowledge of the timing and duration of periods in a life cycle in the society concerned, the investigator can significantly narrow the range of time in which important events probably occurred. Systematic use of several informants of different ages to date the same event or sequence of events can narrow the range even more.

When employed carefully, life history data alone can sometimes reduce the margin of error to five years or less, even at a time remove of seventy-five to a hundred years. On the basis of knowledge of his own life history and that of his mother, one of my North Alaskan informants, who knew his approximate year of birth and his place in the birth order of siblings, calculated in 1970 that a particular event had taken place "around 1899," eleven years before he was born. An historical source subsequently confirmed that it had taken place *exactly* in 1899.

Genealogical data are also useful in the development of a chronology, particularly when used in conjunction with life history data on the people included in it. When

collecting genealogies for this purpose it is especially important to try to establish the correct birth order of siblings, since an informant can frequently date events with reference to the birth of specific individuals. When dealing with greater spans of time, phenomena can often be associated with particular generations even when more precise dating is impossible. In societies where the collection and retention of genealogical knowledge is considered important it may be possible to establish a broad chronology for several centuries in this way. On the other hand, in societies where it is taboo to utter personal names, or where genealogical data are jealously guarded for political or religious reasons, this important means of establishing a chronology may be unavailable.

The third type of information that is useful in the establishment of a chronology consists of “watersheds” in the history of the society or region concerned. A “watershed” for this purpose can be any event or development that is of brief duration, yet significant enough to be clearly recalled by many people. Common examples of watersheds are natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, famines), wars, the beginning or the end of the reign of a particular ruler, the arrival of a particular explorer, the establishment of the first mission, and the like. Particularly valuable are watersheds that can be independently dated by means of external evidence, either historical or archaeological.

It is worth reiterating at this point that any careful dating scheme will begin with the present, i.e., with the time when the investigation is actually carried out. By tying a chronology directly to the present, one can begin with a precisely dated body of information that can be related to the progressively more obscure past through references to life histories, genealogies, and watersheds. The only exceptions to this generalization would be in cases where there are unusually complete ethnohistoric sources concerning the people or region concerned, in which case it may be possible to begin with the period dealt with in those sources.

In my own research, I established chronologies using a combination of life history, genealogical and watershed data. Neither the North Alaskan nor the Caribou Inuit are particularly concerned about absolute dates, but they are extremely interested in and informed about the relative ages of individuals, i.e., in the sequence of people. They are also pretty good at relating events and people to one another. Because of this juxtaposition of interests, I was able to establish fairly detailed sequences in both areas back as far as about 1890. I was greatly aided by the fact that

the approximate birth dates of all of my informants were known (thanks to government administrators) and that both areas were liberally supplied with watershed events whose dates could be independently established. In the Caribou Inuit area 1890 was about as far back as I could go with my informants. In North Alaska, however, the best informants were able to relate specific events and developments to particular stages in their parents' lives, and occasionally even to stages in their grandparents' lives. In some cases, this information, combined with genealogical data which connected individuals mentioned in narratives to people in the resource population, enabled me to date a few events to nearly two centuries before my research was carried out.

Detail, as well as factual accuracy, normally decreases with time depth (Vansina 1970:172). Consequently, the further back in time the study period happens to be, the greater the need to rely on analysis in terms of periods rather than specific dates. A “period” for purposes of ethnographic reconstruction is any unit of time in which events may be considered to have taken place *more or less* simultaneously, or in which relatively little change took place. Because of the loss of information with time depth, the further back the study period happens to be, the greater the advisability of including greater lengths of time within a given period. For example, working back through time from the present, one might begin with seasons, progress to years, then decades, and finally to generations. By this means one can preserve accuracy even when losing detail.

By working from the present back through time one should be able to obtain accurate information on *trends*. Once one has information on trends, one can extrapolate backward or forward through time into periods for which one is unable to collect much information. Given knowledge of any two stages in a temporal sequence, it is possible to establish at least a range of possibilities about the state of affairs in the third (Levy 1952:75). Of course one should not confuse a range of possibilities with a specific case, nor a hypothetical state of affairs with the actual one. But, if one proceeds carefully, the least one can do is formulate hypotheses about the situation at any given point in time and use those hypotheses to focus and guide one's research.

Perhaps even more important, one can formulate ethnographically based hypotheses about conditions at a certain time period and then test those hypotheses against data obtained through ethnohistorical and/or archaeological techniques. Sometimes even a very modest amount of



ethnohistorical or archaeological data can be made maximally useful in this way. Conversely, otherwise unverifiable ethnographic data can be evaluated by checking them against even a small quantity of ethnohistorical or archaeological information.

One final point with reference to time: it is important to extend one's investigation *beyond* the period in which one is specifically interested. By so doing one is able to bracket the study period in time, and hence control chronology at least to the extent of ascertaining whether events occurred before, during, or after the period of primary interest. Failure to follow this procedure can result in the confusion of the study period with one or more periods that preceded it. Such an approach leads easily to error, and often to naive notions about some kind of world in the past in which nothing ever changed (Rowe 1955; see also Sturtevant 1968:466).

## THE SPATIAL DIMENSION

The determination of where events took place is just as important as when they occurred, and it is often just as difficult to discover. The diffusion of some practices, the loss or invention of others, and population movements of every kind can produce significant changes in the distribution of both people and customs over time (Sturtevant 1968:467). For example, the Cheyenne horse-borne hunters who inhabited the northwestern Great Plains in the early nineteenth century were direct descendents of pedestrian woodland people who had lived several hundred miles farther east only two hundred years previously (Hoebel 1960:1). Any twentieth-century attempt to reconstruct their way of life during the latter period on the basis of their distribution in the former would have been completely untenable. Of course this particular movement is well known because of earlier research, but in many parts of the world information of this kind is not available. In order to guard against serious error on this score it is advisable to proceed on the premise that the spatial relationship between populations or customs at two different points in time and space must be demonstrated; it can never be assumed.

The easiest way to begin to establish spatial control is simply to ask informants to locate events in space as well as in time. The procedure is easy enough in theory, but it is one that can be overlooked if the underlying problem has not been recognized. It is rarely easy in practice. In order to establish location effectively the investigator may have to have on hand detailed maps of large tracts

of country, and he may have to spend long hours poring over them with informants in order to locate the places being discussed.

Another way to establish spatial control—one that should be used in conjunction with the first—is to expand the geographic area covered by one's research. With respect to the research population this means seeking informants from a wider area than might appear necessary; with respect to the study period it may require at least the partial reconstruction of several populations in addition to the one of primary concern.

The ideal procedure is to “bracket” geographically both the resource and the study populations, and this is the primary methodological point. Bracketing the resource population involves expanding the search for qualified informants outward in space until one has passed well *beyond* the area where they can be found. With respect to the study population the approach requires that one attempt to reconstruct the location of both the population of primary concern *and* of its neighbors. Information from both inside and outside the study population makes it possible to define its boundaries with relative precision, and it is well worth the effort. In addition one can make a stronger case for the reconstructed location of the study population if one can show precisely what other populations were living in adjacent areas as well.

With respect to spatial control it makes a big difference whether one is attempting to reconstruct an earlier stage in the history of a specific population or society, on the one hand, or the general situation that existed previously in a particular *geographic area*, on the other. If one is interested in reconstructing the late eighteenth-century Cheyenne way of life, for example, one could probably do so by recruiting informants in each of the reservations where Cheyenne are currently to be found. If, on the other hand, one is interested in reconstructing the late eighteenth-century situation of a particular portion of the Great Plains, one would have to interview descendents of every population whose ancestors might have occupied or visited the area during the study period. The latter would be a much more difficult task than the former, both intellectually and physically.

In my own research I was interested in reconstructing earlier situations in both northern Alaska and the central Canadian Subarctic. Previous investigators had established a general relationship between the research and the study populations in both areas, but the details were by no means clear. In North Alaska I visited eleven out of

the twenty-five villages in the area. Although I did not visit all parts of the study area, I was able to interview people from all sections. This proved to be fortunate because several now-abandoned regions turned out to have been inhabited during the study period, while others that are now occupied were not. An additional discovery was that, although the best informants on some districts were sometimes found living in those districts, the best sources on others were found tens and even hundreds of kilometers away from them. There was no way to anticipate just where the best informants on a particular area would be found. In the central Canadian Subarctic three out of the five villages in the area were visited, with similar results.

There remained, however, the problem of bracketing the two study areas by visiting the districts outside but adjacent to them. My methodology called for complete coverage of the surrounding areas, but limitations of time and funding prevented me from meeting that requirement. Fortunately I was able to utilize a combination of historical sources and correspondence with people living in the relevant areas to fill in some of the gaps in field coverage, but even these were deficient in many respects. However, I learned enough to know that, had I not had access to this information, I would have made a number of major errors in my analysis. This disconcerting experience has greatly strengthened my belief in the value of bracketing both the resource and the study populations as a method of spatial control.

## SUBJECT MATTER

In principle there is no limit to the variety of subjects that can be investigated by means of ethnographic reconstruction. There may, of course, be limitations imposed by the age or sex of the informants or the researcher, by the loss of certain kinds of information, or by cultural limitations on discussing certain topics. This is true of all ethnographic research, reconstructive or otherwise. However, there is one methodological point to be made here, and that is that one should attempt to reconstruct as much of the system as possible, regardless of the researcher's particular interests. In other words, the principle of bracketing should be applied to the subject matter of one's investigation just as to the temporal and spatial foci.

Subject matter bracketing is advisable for two reasons, both of which relate to tests of reliability. The first is that the more comprehensive the subject matter that is to be covered by the work, the greater the opportunity the re-

sults will offer for consistency tests. The second is that the more comprehensive the subject matter, the greater the likelihood that at least some topic will be covered that might be checked against an independent source of information, either another investigator or an ethnohistoric or archaeological source. Since those are the only tests of reliability available in ethnographic reconstruction, the significance of subject matter breadth may be understood to be of considerable importance to the overall outcome.

## BIAS CONTROL

Bias cannot be eliminated from ethnographic research conducted by normal human beings. Bias can, however, be recognized and described, and therefore controlled to at least some degree. In general, ethnographic research is more or less reliable to the extent that bias is explicitly indicated by the investigator and/or can be established independently through an examination of the researcher's field notes and published reports.

There are several areas in which bias enters ethnographic research. The investigator's cultural and personal backgrounds and research interests are important sources of bias. In addition, there are the cultural and personal biases of the informants, both individually and collectively. The recognition and description of all these biases requires considerable time and effort, and complete control is impossible. Nevertheless there are several steps one can take to establish at least some measure of bias control, and the greater one's efforts in this direction are, the more reliable one's results are likely to be.

Investigator bias is created through the choice of certain problems for investigation, the selection of specific techniques for studying those problems, the general theoretical approach being used, the general development of the field at the time, and the cultural milieu in which the researcher has grown up (Pitt 1972:47, 52, 56; Sturtevant 1968:461–462; Vansina 1970:172). Whether *any* researcher can really analyze his or her own biases is debatable, particularly when actually conducting the research in question. However, one can at least try to be explicit about one's choice of problems, techniques used, etc., so that others can make judgments on this score at a later date (Sturtevant 1968:460–461).

Information on investigator bias often makes for dull reading, and editors have a tendency to excise all but the briefest summaries of the topic. But relevant data are invariably contained in field notes, grant applications, corre-

spondence, and unpublished manuscripts. These materials can be made available to specialists, or through donations or bequests to archives for subsequent examination and assessment. As Sturtevant (1968:461) has pointed out, field work involves the production of primary ethnographic documents and “the author should feel an obligation to assist those who will apply the historian’s canons of criticism of sources” to them. I might add that, in another generation or so, the raw field notes of the last century will constitute *the* primary sources on a large number of societies. Unless we take steps to ensure their availability to future generations of researchers an invaluable body of information will be lost.

Informant bias often can be established more precisely than investigator bias—at least by the investigator himself. The method for doing so is analogous to the one used by historians to establish the authenticity of a document (Pitt 1972:47). Among the areas of assessment are the following: (1) the learning context, (2) the interview context, (3) informant accuracy, (4) attitudes toward the subject matter of the research, and (5) the tendency of informants to emphasize ideal over actual patterns.

“Learning context” refers to the situation in which the informant acquired the information that he subsequently imparts to the ethnographer. Did the informant personally see (participate in, belong to, experience) the phenomena he is describing? If so, what was his role in the proceedings, how old was he at the time, and what were his attitudes toward what was happening? If the informant was not directly involved, on the other hand, one must find out who his source was, assess *that* source’s biases, and ascertain the context in which the informant acquired the information. All of these factors will color a person’s perception of social phenomena. Collection of the information listed will enable the investigator to make a number of judgments about the biases involved.

Another area of analysis in the control of informant bias is the interview context. In this connection a number of questions can be asked. These include: (1) the nature of the audience, if any; (2) whether or not the interview took place in strange (familiar, threatening) surroundings; (3) the extent of the informant’s experience in interview situations; (4) the extent to which interpreters were involved in the interview and the nature of their participation; (5) whether the informant was cooperating voluntarily or under duress; and (6) the informant’s physical and emotional state during the interview. Most of these factors are reasonably apparent to an experienced inter-

viewer whether or not he is specifically looking for them, but they must be recorded in order to be of subsequent value. A seventh is less apparent, this being the specific set of questions posed by the interviewer. This factor is at least as important as the others, however, since specific questions frequently encourage particular responses (Buckhout 1974:27; Loftus 1974), hence they significantly bias the outcome. In ethnographic research it is probably impossible to ask a truly unbiased set of questions. The best way to deal with this problem is to record the questions as well as the responses.

Accuracy is the third area to pay attention to when assessing informant bias. To a significant extent accuracy can be determined only with reference to other sources, but certain internal factors are amenable to evaluation. For example, what is the informant’s general reputation for accuracy—given local standards for determining same? Is he giving answers he thinks you want to hear, or is he trying to present an accurate picture regardless of your opinion? Is the information provided by this informant internally consistent (without regard for its relationship to information acquired from other sources)? Perhaps most important of all, how aware is the informant of the limitations in his knowledge, and how candid is he in admitting them to you? Finally, it should be noted that accuracy should be distinguished from honesty, since even honest and well-intentioned informants can provide erroneous information (Buckhout 1974).

The fourth area to consider is the attitude of the informant toward the subject matter of the research. How does the informant feel about what he is describing to you—ashamed? proud? indifferent? Has he a vested interest in reporting things in a certain way? Is he aware of his biases, and can he characterize them for you? All of these considerations affect the information that will be acquired, but all are capable of description and control to at least some extent.

Finally, to what extent does an informant emphasize ideal patterns over actual ones? What people think they *should* do and what they do in fact are by no means the same, and failure to differentiate between the two can seriously distort the outcome of a reconstructive study (Lee and DeVore 1968:148). For example, it was reported for years that the average Chinese family was very large in traditional times, while in fact it tended to be extremely small except among the gentry (Hsu 1943). This was a simple case of confusion of the ideal state of affairs for the actual one, yet the difference between the two was great

enough to distort the perceptions of several generations of scholars about one of the most thoroughly studied societies in world history. Finally, it is important to keep the actual/ideal problem separated from that of accuracy, since an informant can present an accurate account of the *ideal* system to an investigator who thinks he is collecting data on the actual state of affairs.

#### BIAS DIVERSIFICATION

An extremely useful way to control both informant and researcher bias is through what has been called "bias diversification" (LeVine 1966) or "triangulation" (Cook and Campbell 1979). This involves the use of sources or techniques having different biases, ideally ones that offset one another. Reliability increases to the extent that the sources or techniques having different biases produce similar results.

Bias diversification does not necessarily result from a simple multiplication of sources, although increasing the number of sources may be a start in the right direction (Hickerson 1970:121). But if, for example, one has time for in-depth interviews with only six of twelve qualified informants, including both men and women, the results will be more reliable if there are three women and three men in the sample than if the six are chosen on a completely random basis. Other types of bias that one can control effectively are age, place of origin, wealth, family (clan, association, etc.) membership, education, religious affiliation, occupation, and social status; the list is theoretically endless.

Just as there is no way to determine just how many sources constitute an adequate number (Pitt 1972:54), there is no way to know just where to stop in the diversification of bias. There probably are no ultimate limits in either case since complete knowledge will always remain an elusive goal. But one can make an effort to determine the biases of the members of the resource population and then include a diversity of same in the people recruited to be informants. All other things being equal, a study in which bias has been systematically diversified will probably be more accurate than one in which it has not.

#### TESTS OF RELIABILITY

Having gone through the effort of locating and recruiting informants and of obtaining a more or less complete body of data from them, there remains the crucial problem of

reliability. Just how much confidence can one have in a description of phenomena that one has not personally seen or experienced? Unfortunately, no objective measure exists to assess the reliability of reconstructive studies in social science. Even research replication, so essential in most of the physical sciences, is rarely possible in this area, and it is often severely biased even when feasible.

Despite the many problems inherent in ethnographic reconstruction, the reliability of retrospective studies is amenable to at least qualitative assessment. These are the tests of consistency and corroboration.

#### TESTS OF CONSISTENCY

Tests of consistency are extremely important in assessing reliability in reconstructive studies, and they are the only tests that can be applied if one's field data are the only data available on the study population (Lee and DeVore 1968:5–6). The basic assumption is that reliability increases to the extent that the various elements in the database are consistent with one another.

Tests of consistency are simple in concept although often demanding in practice. The first test is that of assessing the *internal consistency* of the information provided by each informant. Then one checks the information obtained from each informant against that provided by every other informant; this is the test of *mutual consistency*. To the extent that all of the bits of information fit together in a coherent picture, the more reliable the result is assumed to be.

One can take a number of steps to increase the value of tests of consistency, although they all involve the multiplication and diversification of items that must be assessed in this respect. In other words, all the steps involve bracketing. For example, with respect to the information provided by a single informant, one can maximize the *variety* of facts which must be consistent with one another by attempting to reconstruct as much of the system and its setting as possible. Secondly, one can maximize the number and especially the diversity of informants whose accounts must be consistent, both internally and with one another. Third, one can broaden the spatial coverage of one's investigation so that the reconstruction of the study population is consistent with the reconstruction of both neighboring populations and the nonhuman environment. Finally, one can increase the temporal coverage of the reconstruction to periods before and after the one of primary interest. The recon-



struction must be consistent in space, through time, and over a comprehensive set of subjects.

Obviously there is no limit to the process of increasing and diversifying information, reconstructive or otherwise. All that can be said is that the further one proceeds in this direction, the more reliable one's results are likely to be.

#### CORROBORATION

Corroboration of one's findings by a completely independent researcher is the second means of determining reliability in ethnographic reconstruction. The "independent" investigator may be another ethnographer (who acquired similar information from different informants), an archaeologist, or a contemporary observer who produced what constitutes an ethnohistoric source in this particular context. Consistent with the method of bias diversification, I suggest that confirmation by an entirely different *type* of data—i.e., either archaeological or ethnohistorical, or, ideally, both—produces more reliable results than confirmation by independently collected ethnographic data (cf. Pitt 1972:54; Sturtevant 1968:476).

The independence of field investigators may be a problem since few conduct field research without first familiarizing themselves with other ethnographic, historical, and archaeological research on the area. Could it not be that similar results are the result of biases unconsciously acquired while reading this material? The answer must be in the affirmative: familiarity with previous results will inevitably result in biased questions, and biased questions invariably prejudice the answers (Buckhout 1974:27).

The other side of the coin of independence is the problem of "passing by" (McCall 1964:146–148; Vansina 1970:170). Passing by is what happens when there is so little overlap between two sets of data that they cannot be used to cross-check each other. By maintaining complete independence from other investigators' research, one runs the risk of not collecting *any* data amenable to independent confirmation by other sources.

The combined problems of independence and passing by pose a dilemma. To preserve independence one should not read anything at all, yet to keep from bypassing the work of others one should read a great deal about the group concerned. There is no obvious way to resolve this problem. In my own research it was handled by default. Before I began my field research I was familiar with the general anthropological literature on the areas concerned, but quite ignorant of the contents of most of the ethno-

historical sources. However, I was unaware of the extent of my ignorance at the time because I had seriously underestimated the extent of both the published and particularly the unpublished sources on each of the two study populations. As a consequence, my field research filled some major gaps in the anthropological literature yet it maintained enough overlap with sources then unfamiliar to me to make possible independent confirmation of many of my results.

On the basis of my experience, I feel that the most effective way to cope with the conflicting demands of independence and passing by is through the use of a middle-of-the-road type of approach. Prior to the field work one should familiarize oneself with the major *topics* that have been dealt with by previous investigators, and ascertain their general findings in each area. One should not, however, achieve command of the details at this point. This approach enables the ethnographer deliberately to collect enough material for partial confirmation without completely sacrificing independence. The more advanced the state of knowledge about a particular area happens to be, however, the less feasible this approach will be. At the other extreme, when one is working in a virgin area, one should emphasize the collection and presentation of data which can be confirmed or refuted by subsequent research (Vansina 1970:167).

A final problem with independent confirmation concerns the priority of evidence from different fields. What if the ethnohistorical data contradict the ethnographic findings? Which should receive priority in reconstructive studies—ethnographic, ethnohistorical, or archaeological data? Herskovits (1959:230; see also Vansina 1970:167) has flatly stated that ethnohistorical data are intrinsically more reliable than ethnographic data. A more balanced approach has been recommended by Vansina (1970:168), however. He argued that no *a priori* statement can be made with respect to the relative value of data from different fields. In his view, *all* the evidence that can be brought to bear on an issue should be. The reliability of all of the data from every source must be assessed separately, then evaluated in the light of the emerging synthesis.

My own experience supports Vansina's position on the futility of making *a priori* statements about the relative value of ethnohistorical and ethnographic data, and, by extension, archaeological data as well. For example, in the Caribou Inuit area, Albert P. Low (1906:135) claimed that the Sauniqturmiut tribe was located on the Dubawnt River. My informants, however, indicated that their territory was

at least 300 km east of the Dubawnt. Who was to be believed, a few old people interviewed seventy years after the study period, or a reputable, scientifically trained observer who was in the region at the time? Fortunately, my informants' statements were corroborated by several other ethnohistorical sources, so I never really had a problem in coming to a decision. But if the other sources had not been available, I might have had a very difficult time convincing other anthropologists that the ethnographic findings were more reliable than the ethnohistorical ones.

In North Alaska I had exactly the opposite experience. Over the course of interviews carried out during the fall and winter of 1969–1970, I had been able to determine the major social units and boundaries that had existed along the coast between Bering Strait and Point Barrow, but I had not been able to discover the names of two of the major social units. Knowledgeable informants interviewed on the topic stated flatly that the units in question had never had any names. However, a few years later, I discovered that a Russian expedition, which included a multilingual interpreter, had explored the pertinent section of the coast in 1838 (VanStone 1977). The journal of that expedition reported precisely the same social units and boundaries that I had been able to reconstruct on the basis of informant data in 1970, but it also included the missing names of the two social units. My informants were wrong in this case. The societies had had names, but they had been forgotten during the rapid social change and demographic dislocations that occurred during more than 120 years between the research and the study periods.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The method of ethnographic reconstruction outlined here has a number of important elements. First, of course, there is the very careful selection, recruitment, and interviewing of informants. In this respect, reconstructive research is indistinguishable from any other ethnographic study, although greater care may be needed here because observation and participation cannot be used to supplement data provided by informants. The second element is what I call the “expanding horizons approach.” This involves working from the known to the unknown, in time, space, and subject matter. The third element is bracketing—going beyond what one is specifically interested in, in time, in space, and in subject matter. This enables one to establish trends in both time and space, knowledge of which can be extremely useful in understanding what happened at par-

ticular points in time and/or space. Bias control, accomplished primarily by means of bias diversification, is next, followed by the application of tests of reliability. If applied systematically, this approach will enable the investigator to reconstruct social and demographic patterns as far back in time as the fund of historical knowledge held by members of the resource population will permit. This conclusion is every bit as justified in the case of hunting and gathering peoples such as the Inuit as it is in chiefdoms or states, such as those in Africa and Polynesia.

As a final point, it is worth noting that ethnographic reconstruction requires a great deal of time and effort, much more than ordinary field research does. This is because, in most cases, a comprehensive study of the present is a prerequisite to a systematic reconstruction of the past. The standard “year” of field work is just the beginning. But it is worth doing because it is very often the most informative way to learn about the past of a great many of the world's peoples.

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## RESEARCH NOTES

**Anne M. Jensen, editor**

UIC Science, LLC, Box 577, Barrow, AK 99723; anne.jensen@uicscience.org

### CENTRAL ALASKA

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE TANANA STATE FOREST

Submitted by Charles Holmes,  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Archaeological survey and testing (sponsored by the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology) was conducted in the Tanana Valley State Forest where the 19,000-acre Gilles Creek forest fire burned in May and June 2010. Charles Holmes (UAF) and Randy Tedor (UAA) recorded three new sites. Although pedestrian navigation across the burned landscape was difficult, areas where ground vegetation was completely burned away made it easier to identify surface depressions. One of the sites contains both prehistoric and historic artifacts. Two of the sites have multiple components and may contain house pit features.

#### EXCAVATIONS AT SWAN POINT AND NEARBY SITES

Submitted by Charles Holmes,  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Barbara Crass (University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh) and Charles Holmes (UAF) continued to test the spatial extent of the Mead site and found that the site may be twice as large as previously believed. New areas of the site will be explored when collaborative excavations resume with Ben Potter (UAF) in 2011. A new site on private property in the middle Tanana Valley near the Gerstle River was discovered and tested by Charles Holmes (UAF) and Randy Tedor (UAA). The site has multiple components in about 2 m of stratified loess. A single test pit produced lithic artifacts of chert, rhyolite, basalt, and obsidian.

Well-preserved faunal remains are associated with artifacts in the deeper sediments. Of note are a bison maxilla fragment in Early Holocene context and numerous eggshell fragments in the oldest components.

### EASTERN ALEUTIANS

#### AKUN ISLAND

Submitted by Jason Rogers

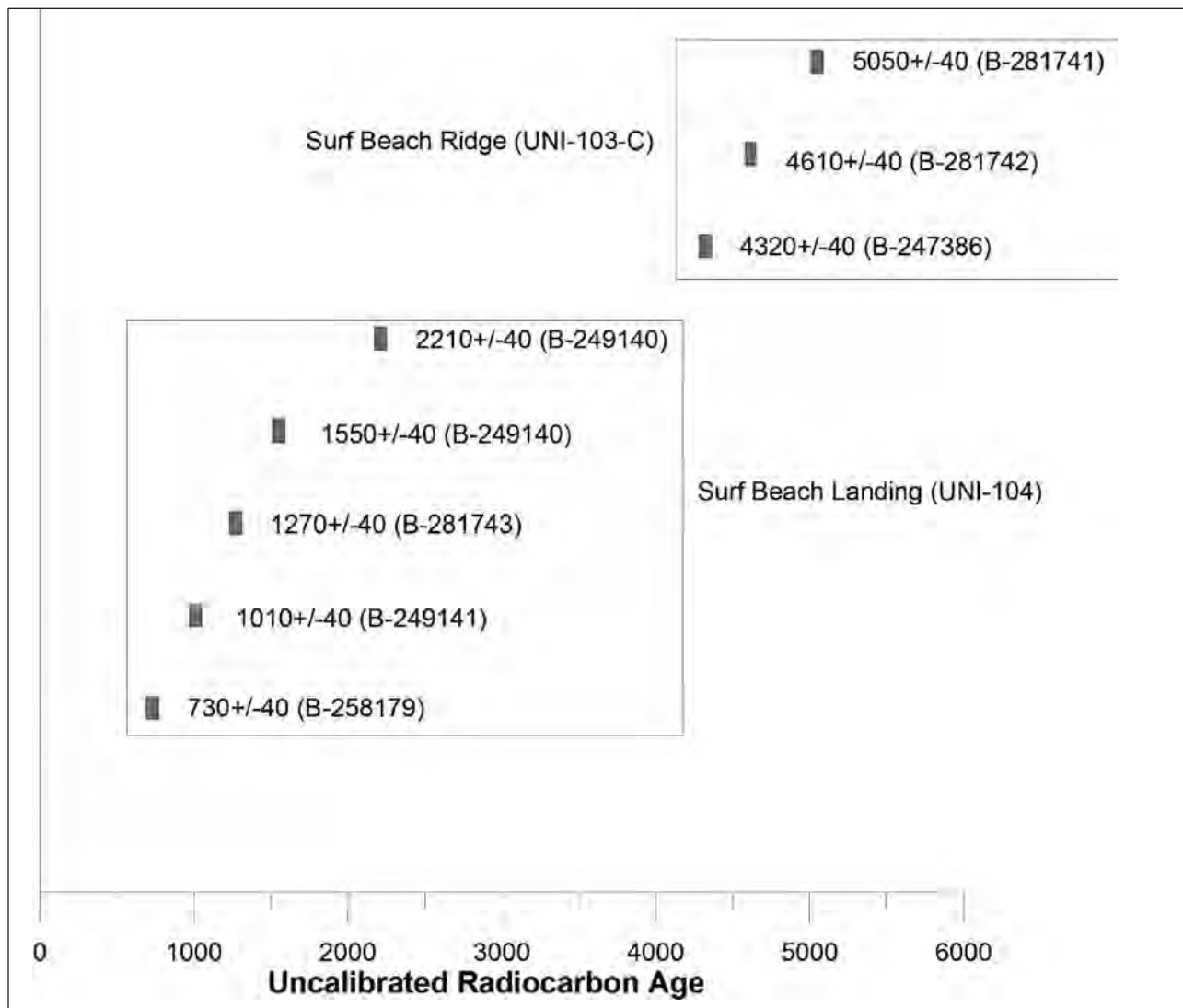
Excavations in 2008 and 2010 at two sites on Akun Island have produced several radiocarbon dates. Both sites consist of deeply stratified middens. One site (UNI-104) is located on a gently sloping backshore beach, while the other (UNI-103-C) is on a higher ridge or saddle overlooking the ocean. The project, conducted by Cultural Resource Consultants, LLC, also produced extensive collections of faunal material, lithics, and other artifacts. The collections are currently under analysis. Radiocarbon dates are provided in Table 1 and Figure 1.

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*Table 1: Akun Island radiocarbon dates, calibrated using INTCAL04 (Reimer et al. 2004).*

Site	<sup>14</sup> C Years BP	Calibrated Years BP	Lab Number
UNI-103-C	5050 ± 40	5910–5670	Beta-281741
UNI-103-C	4610 ± 40	5460–5380, 5330–5290	Beta-281742
UNI-103-C	4340 ± 40	5030–5010, 4980–4840	Beta-247386
UNI-104	2210 ± 40	2340–2120	Beta-249140
UNI-104	1550 ± 40	1530–1350	Beta-281744
UNI-104	1270 ± 40	1290–1080	Beta-281743
UNI-104	1010 ± 40	970–990, 860–820	Beta-249141
UNI-104	730 ± 40	720–650	Beta-258179



*Figure 1. Akun Island radiocarbon dates*

## **SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA**

### **ETHNOHISTORY IN SEWARD**

Submitted by Kerry D. Feldman,  
University of Alaska Anchorage

Kerry Feldman is reexamining his 2007–08 ethnohistorical study, completed with the assistance of Rachel Mason at the request of the Qutekcak Native Tribe of Seward, Alaska, for its anthropologically relevant information. The study was part of Qutekcak Native Tribe's effort to secure tribal recognition under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 as applied to Alaska in 1936. Their petition is still under review, so only general comments on the nature of my current research derived from that study are given here.

This research continues the discussion of Native American identity and essentialist constructions in anthropology. Of anthropological interest is the nature of identity over time of the primarily mixed-descent Native people residing in Seward since the 1890s, most of whom had a Euro-American father, grandfather, or great-grandfather. From the time of contact with Russian fur traders up through the U.S. purchase of Alaska from Russia after 1867, the Prince William Sound region was a diverse cultural mixing area with no indigenous group dominating the region politically or culturally.

Four Native groups whose ancestral villages were located in Alaska towns and cities that today are dominated by non-Native inhabitants received recognition as indigenous "Named City Corporations" as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. With that recognition the indigenous populations in Juneau, Kenai, Kodiak, and Sitka were recognized as Native tribes. Natives in the town of Seward were not listed among these ANCSA indigenous city corporations. Why not? Seward's history as a town (incorporated in 1912) actually begins with a mixed-descent Alaska Native woman and her white fur-trader husband as early as 1884. What kinds of bonds of association did Native people residing in Seward have from the early 1900s until the enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971? How did Natives in Seward maintain a Native identity when it was personally, financially, and socially dangerous to openly display such an identity and bonds? This study will examine how their Native identity was affected by the coming to Seward of the Jesse Lee Home orphanage in 1925, World War II, the 1964 Alaska earthquake and tsunami, the establishment of a tuberculosis sanitarium, and ANCSA in 1971.

## **NORTHERN ALASKA**

### **HOMESTEADING IN NORTHERN ALASKA**

Submitted by Robert King, Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage

Robert King continues his research on the privatization of certain federal lands to individuals in northern Alaska, including cases on the Seward Peninsula and a few locales in the Brooks Range and on the North Slope. The rationale was to find examples of the Homestead Laws and related Alaska land conveyance laws in the Far North. This research is connected to King's overarching interest in the history of homesteading in the United States, due in part to the upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012 of President Lincoln's signature of the 1862 Homestead Act. The BLM will mark that anniversary with a website, for which King is researching homesteading in Alaska, including the question of how homesteading could occur north of the Arctic Circle.

### **CAPE ESPENBERG THULE ORIGINS PROJECT**

Submitted by John F. Hoffecker and Owen K. Mason,  
Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR),  
University of Colorado at Boulder

The second field season of a three-year research project at Cape Espenberg on the northern shore of the Seward Peninsula (within Bering Land Bridge National Preserve) was completed June–August 2010. The project is funded by NSF and is focused on human responses to climate change during the critical period ~1000–500 years ago at a crucial locale in Northwest Alaska. The principal investigators are John F. Hoffecker and Owen K. Mason. During 2010, John Darwent (University of California Davis [UCD]) employed a total station to complete a high-resolution map of cultural features on the ten most recent dune ridges at Cape Espenberg, from the easternmost storm surge channel for ~2 km to the cape. With the exception of the youngest ridge (E-1), all the dunes contain evidence of settlement associated with eight newly recorded (KTZ-313–320) and two previously recorded sites (KTZ-101, 171), with more than forty house and cache pit features. In early August, Nancy Bigelow (University of Alaska Fairbanks) cored ponds and peat deposits for paleoclimatic proxy data to reconstruct local environmental history. During June through August 2010, three house features (21, 33, 68) were excavated in three sites on

successive dune ridges at Cape Espenberg, under the direction of Christyann Darwent (UCD), who was assisted by six UCD field school students, five NPS-mentored students, and two graduate students from the University of Paris. In total, 87 m<sup>2</sup> were uncovered to a depth of about 1 m. Excavations produced 4,300 artifacts, 47,200 faunal remains and more than 700 macrofossil and wood samples. Five newly run <sup>14</sup>C samples on caribou bone supplement the chronology for the three sites.

Feature 21, on Ridge E-6 in KTZ-304, represents the earliest phase of Inupiaq settlement at Cape Espenberg, with a date between AD 1270 and 1400 based on two caribou bone collagen samples (680 ± 40 BP, Beta-286168; 640 ± 40 BP, Beta-286169). Feature 21 was excavated by Jeremy Foin (UCD), assisted by Hans Lange (Greenland National Museum). In early August, human remains were encountered within the house floor, apparently marked by a whale bone; work was subsequently suspended, pending NAGPRA consultations with local communities. The entire 30 m<sup>2</sup> excavated in Feature 21 yielded 1,352 artifacts, more than 18,700 faunal remains, 670 pottery fragments, one ceramic lamp, ten amber beads, five antler arrow points, four leister prongs, an ivory fish lure, a walrus scapula shovel, two mattocks, two ivory sealing harpoons, a wound pin, twelve slate ulu blades, seven chert bifaces, two microblades, and 365 fragments of chert debitage. Exotic materials included nephrite, obsidian, iron pyrite, and five mammoth ivory fragments. Four whale bones, including two mandible fragments, were also recovered from Feature 21.

On Ridge E-5a, Chris Darwent directed the excavation within 26 m<sup>2</sup> of a multiroom house with an entry more than five meters long (Feature 68), part of the large site, KTZ-087. Feature 68 was occupied between AD 1440 and 1640, based on two caribou bone assays (250 ± 40 BP, Beta-286171; 360 ± 40 BP, Beta-286172). Feature 68 yielded 1,890 artifacts and about 14,000 faunal remains. Although the overwhelming number of artifacts were either chert debitage (n = 986) or potsherds (n = 479), diagnostic objects include a copper needle, six amber beads, four slate knives, four ulu blades, five sealing harpoons, nine antler arrow points, two knife handles of bone/antler, one piece of slat armor, three wrist guards, six awls (bone and ivory), a labret, and a substantial number of wooden artifacts (toy bow, arrow point, bowls, shafts, rods), including roughly 1,000 pieces of wood flaking debris. The

copper needle and slat armor are especially significant. In addition to whale bone elements from within Feature 68, which included a mandible and two vertebrae, seventeen pieces of baleen were found in the former house.

The most recent feature excavated in 2010 was located on Ridge E-4, where Frédéric Dussault (Laval University) excavated 31 m<sup>2</sup> of a north-facing two-room house with a long entry (Feature 33) that may date between either AD 1670 and 1780 or between 1790 and 1960 (120 ± 40 BP, Beta-286170). Feature 33 yielded substantial evidence of fishing in addition to bones of seal, caribou, walrus, and whale. Feature 33 produced about 14,500 faunal remains, 1,000 wood fragments, and about 1,000 artifacts, with over half either lithic debitage or potsherds. Other artifacts included one amber bead, four chert bifaces, four chert scrapers, two slate blades, an ulu blade, forty-two net sinkers, two antler arrow points, four sealing harpoons, one fishing harpoon, two knife handles, a marlin spike, two mesh gauges, one ceramic lamp, a fish lure, a labret, and two leister prongs. Wooden artifacts included four points, a rod, four shafts and five shaft fragments, and one wick trimmer.

The role of whaling in the Cape Espenberg economy, which is a major research focus of the project, remains problematic and subject to taphonomic studies by Chris Darwent. Another focus is wood, and during 2010, Claire Alix (UAF/University of Paris) conducted beach surveys and recorded archaeological features to examine the driftwood supply and its uses in architecture and in technology at Cape Espenberg. In early August, Scott Elias (Royal Holloway University of London) collected sediment samples to obtain beetle remains for paleoecological analysis and <sup>14</sup>C dating. In addition to participation of students from UCD and the University of Paris, high-school students from local communities assisted with the research during late July under the Student Mentorship Program of the National Park Service, managed by Becky Saleeby. Village elders from Shishmaref, including informant Clifford Weyiouanna, visited Cape Espenberg in late July, in association with Josh Wisniewski (UAF), postdoctoral researcher and cultural anthropologist. The research team will return in 2011 for the third and final season of the project.



#### NUVUK ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, BARROW

Submitted by Anne Jensen, UIC Science LLC

The Nuvuk Archaeological Project, funded by NSF and the Department of Education ECHO program, completed the sixth large-scale field season in July 2010 at the eroding site at Point Barrow. Once again, the crew was composed largely of North Slope high school students, thirteen in all, with Anne Jensen as principal investigator, assisted by Laura Thomas (UIC) and Ron Mancil, a graduate student at University of Alaska Fairbanks. In 2010, the Nuvuk Project uncovered an additional seven graves, yielding a total of eighty graves from the Nuvuk cemetery, excavated since 2000. Physical anthropological observations on the human remains were completed by Shawn Miller of the University of Utah and the remains await reburial. To reconstruct the regional trends of Inupiaq genetic history, Dennis O'Rourke, as well as postdoctoral researcher Jennifer Raff and graduate student Justin Tackney, also from University of Utah, continue analyses on the aDNA samples obtained from burials within the Nuvuk cemetery, with a number of  $^{14}\text{C}$  samples in preparation for submission. For the remaining Nuvuk mortuary collections, cataloging and analysis is proceeding apace under the direction of Anne Jensen.

#### NAUTICAL SURVEY IN ST. MICHAEL AND STEBBINS

Submitted by Kate Worthington, Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A&M University

Kate Worthington, M.A. candidate at Texas A&M's Nautical Archaeology program, and John Bean, Department of Geomatics, University of Alaska Anchorage, traveled to St. Michael in summer 2010 to complete an initial assessment and archaeological survey of abandoned Gold Rush-era Yukon River sternwheel steamers. This involved a week of surveying the steamer remains, which lie mostly in the intertidal zone; collecting total station and laser scan data; filming video records; describing and recording each wreck; and of course, enjoying the brilliant sunshine. Great thanks are owed to the villages of St. Michael and Stebbins for enabling survey of the historical steamboat wrecks. We hope to come back next summer, survey for additional wrecks, gather supplemental comparative data on the wrecks already recorded, and assess changes in the site formation processes.

## REVIEW

### *LIVING OUR CULTURES, SHARING OUR HERITAGE: THE FIRST PEOPLES OF ALASKA*

*Edited by Aron L. Crowell, Rosita Worl, Paul C. Ongtooguk, and Dawn D. Biddison, 2010, Smithsonian Books, Washington, D.C.*

*hardcover \$50, paperback \$29.95, 312 pages, color figures, ; ISBN 978-1588342706*

**Reviewed by Amy Steffian**

Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, 215 Mission Rd., Suite 101, Kodiak, AK 99615; amy@alutiiqmuseum.org

It is almost possible to smell salmon smoking, to feel an Aleutian Island breeze, or to hear the beat of a skin drum as you turn the pages of *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska*. This beautifully illustrated volume is literally overflowing with Native Alaska. From the voices of Native people to objects that document the ingenuity of ancestors and photos that capture the vibrant, living traditions of today's Native communities, *Living Our Cultures* is a celebration of Alaska's first peoples.

At the core of the volume are 200 ethnographic objects from the Smithsonian Institution's Alaska collections, most procured over a century ago and cared for in Washington, D.C. In partnership with the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center worked to bring the objects home on extended loan and create opportunities for exhibition and exploration. Published in 2010 by Smithsonian Books, *Living Our Cultures* is one piece of this impressive effort at reconnection. Many of the items in the book are currently displayed or available for study at the Anchorage Museum.

To frame the historic objects, volume editors offer essays on nine Alaska Native cultures written by contemporary cultural leaders. Each essay considers themes of (1) sea, land, and rivers; (2) family and community; and (3) ceremony and celebration, to present a personal view of Native experience. The editors have carefully woven museum object photos and provenance throughout these essays. A complete set of Athabascan summer ceremonial regalia ca. 1926 appears amid Eliza Jones' description of a

Koyukon memorial potlatch (pp. 193–194). Nineteenth-century Sugpiaq hunting gear follows Gordon Pullar's discussion of the pressures felt by today's fishermen (pp. 151–156). The effect is a sense of timelessness. Western, linear notions of past and present are suspended in favor of a more fluid sense of time where ancestors' objects contribute to the broad, complicated landscape of contemporary life.

The chapters also include short topical essays by culture bearers, adding a chorus of voices to the presentation. Aaron Leggett writes about being a Native person from Alaska's urban center, Anchorage. Ricardo Worl discusses the challenges of learning clan knowledge and becoming a Tlingit leader in the modern world. Karla Booth explores her connections to Metlakatla and the wild foods that provide physical and spiritual sustenance. While tensions brought by increasing globalization are evident, the presentation is celebratory. A sense of cultural pride pervades the book and, like the title, reminds readers that Alaska's Native cultures are living cultures. Photographs that highlight the Alaska landscape and the work of Native peoples also capture this spirit, filling the book with color and activity.

Chapters on the larger Living Our Cultures Project (by Aron Crowell), Alaska Native history (by Paul Ongtooguk and Claudia Dybdahl), and Alaska Native self-determination (by Rosita Worl) introduce the culture-specific essays. These essays frame the discussion, providing a broader context for understanding current perspectives on material culture, heritage preservation, collaboration with museums, and issues of identity.

Importantly, *Living Our Cultures* is the first survey of Alaska Native cultures primarily written by Alaska Native peoples. Although it is one of a growing number of publications that reflect collaborations between Alaska Natives and anthropologists around the interpretations of collections (e.g., Crowell et al. 2001; Fienup-Riordan 1996, 2007; Haakanson and Steffian 2009), it is the first to tackle a statewide presentation.

Like previous works, this book reflects a commitment to collaborative anthropology. Signs of this collaboration, and of a truly respectful engagement of multiple perspectives, appear in the details throughout the work. For example, *Living Our Cultures* represents each Alaska culture independently—as related yet unique societies. The Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures, so often lumped in summaries, are considered individually, as are the Sugpiaq and Unanga. Similarly, the book ends with a chapter on collaborative conservation (by Landis Smith, Michele Austin-Dennehy, and Kelly McHugh), discussing the ways that partnership can extend beyond interpretation to the physical care of objects.

A number of the objects in this book have been published before. Some of the same ethnographic items can be found in *Inua* (Fitzhugh and Kaplan 1982), *Crossroads of Continents* (Fitzhugh and Crowell 1988), and *Looking Both Ways* (Crowell et al. 2001). However, the current presentation is unique. Showing collections from multiple cultures illustrates the breathtaking diversity of Native Alaska. It allows readers to contrast pieces with those from neighboring groups. The book offers an opportunity to study both the broad similarities and subtle differences between cultures and to consider their sources.

Another benefit of the presentation is that the object photographs are large and in color. *Living Our Cultures* shares 200 objects, each with a three-quarter page portrait. The objects are skillfully imaged on a white background. Although each is only pictured once, from one angle, it is possible to see fine details of constructions on many—to count stitches, to see how decorations were at-

tached or inlaid, and to examine graphic designs. This will please contemporary artists.

Beneath each object, readers find its Native and English names with size and provenance data. This is paired with a detailed caption that provides information on materials represented, a photo of the object in use, oral history information about the object, and a quote about object function. For example, we learn that a 14-cm-long *aangqaq*, or ball, from St. Lawrence Island is made of bleached sealskin and stuffed with reindeer hair (p. 95). Yupik people used the ball in a game that celebrated the first whale harvested each season. Men played against women, and a fair amount of flirtation was involved. This level of detail is one of the work's strengths. The authors have developed a rich context for understanding every object and interpreting the Smithsonian's Alaska collections far into the future. The object captions weave the material, social, and spiritual significance of each object together, providing a deeper, more holistic understanding. Editor Aron Crowell says it well: "Behind every object is a story about people and relationships" (p. 13).

The construction of the book also pays homage to its contents. Though just over 300 pages, the hardcover volume weighs nearly five pounds due to its thick, glossy paper. This and the use of rich colors—earthy brown, ice blue, salmon pink, wildflower yellow—give the publication a luxurious feeling. This is not a quick read, but a book meant to be revisited for years.

*Living Our Cultures* is a warm, lively introduction to Alaska's Native people and a valuable reference to Alaska Native material culture. It will appeal to both public and scholarly audiences. Anthropologists and museum professionals will find its multivocal presentation and rich contextual details on material culture valuable for interpreting related archaeological, ethnographic, and contemporary objects. This book belongs on your shelf between volumes of the *Handbook of North American Indians* and *Alaska Native Art* (Fair 2006). It will be an enduring reference.

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## REVIEW

### ***BEFORE THE STORM: A YEAR IN THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS, 1941–1942***

*By Fredericka Martin. Edited with supplemental material by Raymond Hudson. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, 2010.*

*Paperback; xiv + 385 pages, maps, photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, index; ISBN 978-1-60223-076-7*

#### **Reviewed by Douglas W. Veltre**

Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Anchorage, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508; afdwv@uaa.alaska.edu

Of all Alaska Native communities, it is likely that none has experienced a longer or harsher history of exploitation than the Pribilof Island villages of St. Paul and St. George. Known in precontact time to Aleuts (Unangan) of southwestern Alaska, the islands were uninhabited until Russian fur hunters located them in 1786 and 1787. Within a few years, competing companies had set up camps at several locations on each island to harvest northern fur seals, millions of which came to the islands each summer to haul ashore and give birth. Unlike the various species of hair seals, fur seals have an unusually dense and soft double layer of fur, giving them high value on the international marketplace. Russians first brought Aleuts to the Pribilofs as laborers for the sealing industry on a seasonal basis and later settled them into two permanent villages, one on St. Paul and one on St. George.

In 1799, the Russian-American Company took sole control of fur hunting and other business ventures in Alaska until the territory's sale to the United States in 1867. From then until the cessation of commercial fur sealing in 1984, the U.S. government directly or indirectly oversaw the sealing operations. During much of this Russian and American history, tens of thousands of fur seals were harvested each summer, although at times over-killing resulted in the suspension of commercial sealing for some years. Throughout this entire history, it was Aleuts who provided the bulk of the labor for harvesting and processing the fur seal skins as well as for many other island tasks. Unfortunately, most aspects of the Aleuts' lives were controlled by the businesses and governments in

charge, for whom the profits from sealing were always a far greater concern than was the welfare of the Aleuts.

It was in this context that Samuel Berenberg was hired in 1941 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to serve for one year as the physician for St. Paul. His wife, Fredericka Martin, thirty-six and a trained nurse who had travelled widely, accompanied him. Although they had had only one month's notice that they would go to St. Paul, Martin arrived on the island enthusiastically determined to learn all she could about the geology, animal and plant life, weather, and, importantly, the people of the Pribilofs. As her narrative makes clear, she hit the ground running. Before she left the island in 1942, she had already begun writing an account of her stay, which she finished in the next year. *Before the Storm* is that manuscript.

Following Hudson's helpful Introduction, which sets the stage for Berenberg's and Martin's sojourn on St. Paul, Martin's account is composed of forty-three short chapters, each focused mostly on a single topic or experience. Overall, they follow the course of Martin's year on the island, ending somewhat abruptly with her departure from the island in the company of the Pribilovians themselves, who were being removed to internment camps in southeast Alaska following Japanese incursions and bombings in the Aleutian Islands.

While Martin delighted in the natural environment of St. Paul—"our personal northern Eden" (p. 328)—it was the oppression of the Aleuts by the government that aroused her greatest passion. Housing, education, and health shortcomings on St. Paul are all confronted by

Martin, and time and again she underscores the ways in which the lives of the island's Aleut residents were manipulated by the government and how Aleut life "was far removed from the rarefied atmosphere of the [Fish and Wildlife] Service families" (p. 97).

Interspersed throughout the book Hudson has placed brief sidebars, most excerpts from Martin's own journals. These are nice additions, providing color and immediacy to the main text. In his Afterword, Hudson does an excellent job of outlining the essential elements of Pribilof history from the war years to the present, including, importantly, details of the internment experience of the Pribilovians and other Aleuts and of the Pribilovians' subsequent struggle for independence from government control.

Three appendices round out the book: the foreword written by Martin to her original manuscript of the book, excerpts of the medical report written by Samuel Berenberg of his year on St. Paul, and a list of men from St. Paul and St. George who served in the military during World War II. Of these supplements, Berenberg's report is an especially enlightening document in its own right, for, as Hudson notes, the concerns he raises are presented in a larger historical and social context and often mirror those brought up by Martin.

As it turned out, Martin's year on St. Paul came at the beginning of the end of seventy years of unbridled U.S. government oppression in the Pribilof Islands, what Dorothy Jones described in her account of the astonishing U.S. treatment of Pribilof Aleuts as "hidden, internal colonialism" (Jones 1980:84). With the World War II internment in southeast Alaska of Aleuts from the Pribilof Islands and elsewhere came military service, employment off of the islands, and increased contact with the outside world. Empowered in part by these experiences, Pribilof Aleuts began to seek greater control over their lives once the war was over.

Martin's interest in the Pribilof Islands was no passing fancy. Within two years after leaving, she had edited linguist Richard Geoghegan's *Aleut Language* (Geoghegan 1944), for which she wrote the introduction, and published *The Hunting of the Silver Fleece: Epic of the Fur Seal* and *Sea Bears: The Story of the Fur Seal* in 1946 and 1960,

respectively (Martin 1946a, 1960). She also remained a fierce advocate for the rights of the Pribilovians. As Hudson writes in his Afterword, Martin "called for the obliteration of 'social caste barriers' between islanders and white employees, for 'just cash wages for all their work,' and for 'the sealers' right to a voice in settling their own community problems and casting their votes as citizens'" (p. 322, quoting Martin 1946b).

Martin's account will certainly be of interest to a wide audience, including students of Alaska political and economic history, Native cultures, women's history, medical history, and the natural sciences. Particularly because so few books about the Pribilofs have focused on the people of the islands, *Before the Storm* offers an especially welcome perspective to our understanding of the unusual history of the Aleuts there. Hudson, an artist and writer who for several decades has contributed substantially to our appreciation of Aleut culture, is to be commended for doing such a fine job in bringing Martin's contribution to its long-awaited publication.

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## REVIEW

### ***CHASING THE DARK: PERSPECTIVES ON PLACE, HISTORY, AND ALASKA NATIVE LAND CLAIMS***

*Edited by Kenneth L. Pratt, 2009. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Region, ANCSA Office, Anchorage  
Paperback; xiv + 472 pages; color photos, maps, and drawings, three appendices, no index; ISBN 978-1-60725-740-0  
Available gratis by contacting the Bureau of Indian Affairs, ANCSA Office (907-271-3695); Kenneth.Pratt@bia.gov*

**Reviewed by Noel D. Broadbent**

Arctic Studies Center, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution; broadben@si.edu

When I agreed to review this fascinating book, I figured it would be a fairly straightforward and familiar type of academic exercise. After all, I am a northern archaeologist, had been to many of these regions in Alaska, and know many of the authors. I even thought I was familiar with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). But nothing prepared me for one of the most unusual books I have ever run across. I should have been forewarned when I picked up this ridiculously heavy 472-page tome. What I discovered was a beautifully illustrated mindscape of texts ranging from government lingo to poetry, self-examinations, and stern reminders of the colonial past to the challenges facing Alaska youth today. Section 14(h)(1) of ANCSA was a one-of-a-kind effort resulting in a vast, rich and diverse record of Alaska Native history and culture; but *Chasing the Dark* is certainly no ordinary academic treatise on the subject.

The goal of the publication is very clear: to reveal the richness of the records of this now thirty-year-old program and, as pointed out by the editor, to rectify the fact that this program is largely unknown to the general public and even to many Alaska Natives. The starting point is ANCSA 14(h)(1) legislation (Public Law 92-203), passed in 1971. The act created twelve Alaska Native regional corporations, extinguished all claims of aboriginal rights in Alaska, and awarded title to 40 million acres of land. This was done for the simple reason that access was needed for the oil pipeline that was to be built from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. Like many Native Americans in the Lower 48, Alaska Natives had been “bought” along with their terri-

tories in 1867, albeit after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865. This corporate model was again applied to Alaska Natives through ANCSA, and this is the curious backdrop for the whole enterprise. The Native corporations were to identify and apply for conveyance of historic and cultural sites and cemeteries which the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), following agency research, was to then certify. This is the only place in ANCSA legislation where culture and history were central to the claims.

The book is divided into six sections, most with multiple chapters, and three appendices. Additional sidebars, photos, illustrations, maps, vignettes, and essays are interspersed throughout the chapters.

#### **BEGINNINGS**

In Section I, Kenneth L. Pratt, editor and a major contributor to the volume, provides a detailed description of the program, which he has managed since 1996. Pratt pulls no punches about the difficulties of making this thing work, the failures of government agencies, researchers, and conflicts within the Native communities themselves. One can hardly imagine a more daunting task.

#### **HISTORY AND CULTURE**

Section II illustrates the varied nature of the sources and the challenges of the ANCSA endeavor. The thirteen papers begin with a chapter by William L. Sheppard

on Siberian-Alaskan warfare, the history of battle sites, and the nature of these conflicts, a largely unknown aspect of Alaska Native history. Rita Miraglia documents Steller's landfall on Kayak Island in 1741, the first time a European set foot on Alaska soil. Alice J. Lynch and Pratt give an account of Neets'it Gwich'in caribou fences and caches, illustrated with drawings and photos of elders. William E. Simeone writes of the varied historical narratives relating to fishing on the Copper River, the Batzulnetas site in particular, and the Katie John case in which Ahtna fishing rights were contested and eventually won. Matthew O'Leary provides two Koniag place-name lists and maps of Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula based on information provided by elders Anakenti Zeeder, Larry Matfay, and Nick Abalama. Miraglia writes of now-abandoned Chilkat Tlingit villages near Haines claimed under ANCSA and the difficulties of this conveyance. In "Vestiges of the Past," Francis Broderick and Pratt present a collage of artifacts from the Kuskokwim Bay area. Pratt writes of identity and change among the Dena'ina people of the Kenai through an interview with Peter Kalifornsky and Fedosia Sacaloff. He also writes of the story of Kapegualria, a shaman, and a unique Yup'ik memorial mask illustrating the story, along with a place-name analysis. David P. Staley presents fascinating material on settlement mobility in the Buckland region, a treasure to archaeologists trying to understand site remains. The story of a *tengmiarpak*, a giant eagle, is presented in a sidebar by Pratt. Miraglia follows with a great paper that describes the process of ANCSA documentation and research. In "Weaving History," she defines the eight "strands of evidence" involved: the application by the regional corporation, the physical setting, the cultural remains, the historical maps, the historical photos, the oral histories, the written histories, and finally, the interpretation of the material as a whole. The last chapter, by Pratt, presents toponyms, cultural geography, and a site inventory of the Kulukak Bay area of southwestern Alaska. This chapter lays a foundation for the subsequent discussions.

My main quibble is that the reader needs better overview maps of Alaska to follow the narrative. A map showing language areas, topography, vegetation, and climate would also have been helpful, especially for non-Alaskans. The individual maps in the various articles are colorful but needed insets showing the reader where these places are in Alaska, as well as north arrows and scales. The color pho-

tographs are spectacular and bring the places, accounts of elders, and the entire book to life.

## IMPLEMENTATION

O'Leary starts this section with a description of Edward W. Nelson's sledge journey through the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in 1878–1879. The Nelson collection is one of the finest in the Smithsonian Institution and is now part of the Arctic Studies exhibit at the Anchorage Museum. Miraglia writes of the hospitality and assistance of elders Pete and Ruth Koktelash of Nondalton—a tribute to their generosity and warm hearts towards hapless researchers. Matthew L. Ganley gives an account of the frustrating relocation of the Bear Rock Monument for the Bering Straits Native Corporation and the luck associated with the effort once earthquakes had done their work. Two sidebar texts on a grave at Chisana (Upper Tanana) and caves at Ikligurak, inhabited by invisible people, pop up before a chapter by O'Leary on prehistoric blowout sites at Dickey Lake in the Alaska Range. Miraglia examines Chugach "smokehouses," which functioned as dwellings of various kinds and actually have little to do with subsistence and the smoking of fish and game. Elder Frieda Roberts' retrospective on female menstruation restrictions is a sidebar narrative accompanied by the editor's comments on the sensitivity of such personal information.

Dale C. Slaughter's "Aleutian Field Images" gives an engaging visual account of fieldwork experience. O'Leary's chapter on the reindeer villages of the Lower Mulchatna River, Bristol Bay, reflects on Sheldon Jackson's reindeer program and his 1892 social engineering experiment. Pratt's "Reflections on Russian River" casts light on the fishing of "reds" (sockeye salmon) on the Kenai and the multiple stakeholders involved in this "public fishing hole." The ethnography and archaeology of this region is presented in a sidebar article that makes it clear that the Dena'ina did more than catch salmon in this area. Fred Harden writes of the nineteenth-century caribou hunters of the Seward Peninsula. Clues about a winter village called "Under-the-Rocks" on the Anvik River are presented in a sidebar text. O'Leary discusses the marine reservoir age of shells from archaeological sites on Uyak Bay, Kodiak Island; modern shells give dates up to a millennium too old, with serious repercussions for archaeology. Pratt writes of a weird experience involving a haunted site in southwest Alaska that made people sick—which Pratt experienced first-hand.

This section includes sites, surveys, oral histories, policy dilemmas, and methods encountered by ANCSA fieldworkers and their local colleagues. The images and maps are stunning. The diversity of the content is almost overwhelming, but Section IV, Interpretation and Innovation, boils the subject down.

## INTERPRETATION AND INNOVATION

Robert M. Drozda's "An Agattu Island Journal" consists of notes and personal reflections on place, spontaneous thoughts, and memories of his time on this Aleutian island and, previously, on Nunivak Island. His wonderment captures the feeling of being there and "the mix of metaphor and logic that cannot be completely explained with linear language" in which the lines between "human consciousness and the physical world begin to blur" (p. 318). A sidebar on the Sawmill Bay site on Prince William Sound contains a quote by John Klashinoff from an ANCSA tape: "Don't destroy nothing." Gerald A. Bair and Pratt write of the Fish River Eskimos, the Omilak Mine, and the beautifully decorated Golovnin Bay drill bow from the Nelson collection. A sidebar describes Kokrines, an important abandoned Koyukon Athabascan village. Monica Sheldon's piece on the "dreadful" days of winter darkness and the power of the sun is a delightful essay on the story of a man named Akmalier, who captured daylight in a seal bladder, and the songs, dances, and masks connected with this festival. Michael Seyfert gives a personal narrative of his experience of coming north and the process of listening and understanding voice and memory in oral histories. A sidebar presents a text on traditional teaching by two Native elders. Marshall elder Ben Fitka speaks of learning how to live on the land, and Wrangell elder Dick Stokes tells a migration story. "The Last Harvest" by Gerald Bair is an elegant fictionalized reconstruction of the last blue fox harvest on Agattu Island, inspired by Parascovia Lokanin Wright and Innokenty Golodoff. This story takes place over eight months (August to March) and leads up to the Japanese invasion in 1942.

This "Interpretation" section is more essay than description and captures the essence of human experience, including that of researchers, in this part of the world.

## MOVING FORWARD

This section returns to the nuts and bolts of implementing ANCSA 14(h)(1) and opens with an overview of the

places and cemeteries in the vast Doyon region by Robert A. Sattler, who describes the administration of this investigative and legal process through the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the necessity for redoing documentation that proved inadequate, interagency coordination, consultation, management of allotments, and continuing work with the ANCSA archives. "Protecting the Past for the Future," by John F.C. Johnson of Chugach Alaska Corporation, gives Native voice to the loss of ancestral lands and the urgent need to preserve Native knowledge as world heritage. The work of the Sealaska Corporation, one of the twelve regional corporations, is presented by Sarah Demmert. Like Johnson, she describes the dilemmas of ANCSA and the conflicts between fulfilling government protocols and perpetuating Native culture. Carl M. Hild writes of the value of local and traditional knowledge and proposes that those who use the ANCSA materials deposit reports or summary materials in the collection in order to develop and sustain it.

The ANCSA staff lists in Appendix A are full of cartoons and photos and vivid testimony to the hard work that went into this program by so many people over the years. It closes with a powerful sidebar article by Howard T. (Nakaar) Amos, from Nunivak Island, on page 449. A polite and respectful acknowledgement of the efforts by ANCSA staff is tempered by the realities of the loss of Native culture, knowledge, and values. Appendix B, by O'Leary, Drozda, and Pratt, describes the content, organization, and disposition of the ANCSA 14(h)(1) records collection. Appendix C, by O'Leary, describes "Native Groups" and "Native Primary Places of Residence" (NPPR) claims under ANCSA. Two certified Native Groups are highlighted: Olsonville, Inc., an Aleut-Swedish community, and Tanalian, Inc., on Lake Clark. Two NPPRs are also described: New Kassigluq on the Holitna River and Dehsoon' Cheeg, an Ahtna village on the Nabesna River. This last section pulls together both the substance and the process of the ANCSA 14(h)(1) undertaking.

I like this book for many reasons. It has made ANCSA records more visible and accessible in a well-written, referenced, and beautifully designed format. I am certain it will become a valuable teaching tool and guide to Native Alaska and cultural research at the university level but, hopefully, also in school lesson plans. The thousands of tourists who visit Alaska for its natural wonders need to have a look at this book as well. But in the final analysis, this book is a legacy of Native culture and history



achieved through years of hard work and scholarship by numerous individuals through the ANCSA 14(h)(1) program. The faces and the landscapes merge into a whole through Native knowledge and voices. The series title “Shadowlands” is explained as the loss of knowledge today, and *Chasing the Dark* is the effort to shed light on these fragile traces of Native heritage. The shadows have been transformed into exquisite and vibrant images in this outstanding book.