

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

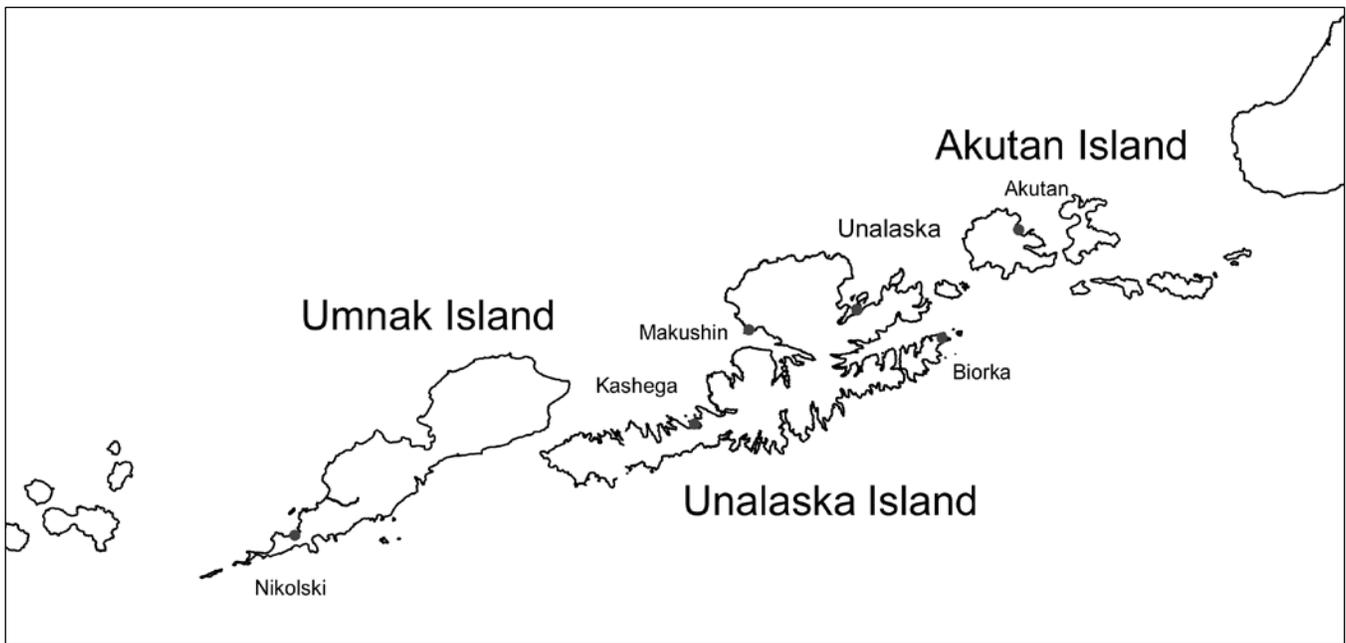


Figure 1: Villages in the Unalaska Island area, including the “lost” villages of Kashhega, Makushin, and Biorka. See map on p. 2, this volume, to see Unalaska Island in a broader geographical context.

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 Nikol’ski’s 72 were brought to Wrangell on July 13, 1942. Twenty people from Kashhega, 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, Nikol’ski, Biorka, Makushin, and Kashhega 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 re-settle 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 Kashega 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 Kashega 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, Kashega, 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, Kashega, 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, Kashega, 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 Kashega, 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 Kashega, 1946? Cause: desire for independence	
Moving from Biorka to Unalaska, ca.1956. Cause: isolation need for employment/cash	
Moving from Kashega 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lost Villages Project is part of the National Park Service World War II in the Aleutians Program and is co-sponsored by the Ounalashka Corporation. I am grateful to elders Matrona Abloogalook, Mary Diakanoff, Bill Ermeloff, Nick Galaktionoff, George Gordaoff, Nick

Lekanoff, and Eva Tcheripanoff for sharing their memories of Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega as well as of Ward Lake, Unalaska, Nikolski, Akutan, and Chernofski. Descendents of residents of the former villages, and other Unalaska residents, have also provided valuable assistance for this paper. Oral histories collected by Raymond Hudson and research by Annaliese Jacobs Bateman are central sources of data for the Lost Villages project. I have also relied greatly on Martha Murray's genealogical research. Thank you to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, particularly Debbie Corbett and the captain and crew of the M/V *Tiġlaġ*, for making it possible for elders and others to revisit the villages left behind more than half a century ago.

REFERENCES

- Alaska Weekly*
 1954 Obituary, John Peter Olsen. February 12, p. 5.
 Bateman, Annaliese Jacobs
 2005 Shrouded in Fog, Shrouded in Memory: The Lost Villages of the Aleutians. Paper presented at the

- annual meeting of the Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage.
- Berreman, Gerald
1953 A Contemporary Study of Nikolski, an Aleutian Village. M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, Eugene.
- Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
1982 *Personal Justice Denied*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
- Davis, Nancy Yaw
1970 The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Five Pacific Eskimo Villages as Revealed by the Earthquake. In *The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964*, vol. 7, *Human Ecology*, pp. 125–146. National Research Council, Washington, D.C.
1971 The Effects of the 1964 Alaska Earthquake, Tsunami, and Resettlement on Two Koniag Eskimo Villages. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle.
- Diakanoff, Mary
2009 Personal communication with Rachel Mason, Juneau, March 16. Notes on file at National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, Anchorage.
- Downing, Theodore E., and Carmen Garcia-Downing
2009 Routine and Dissonant Cultures: A Theory about the Psycho-socio-cultural Disruptions of Involuntary Displacement and Ways to Mitigate Them without Inflicting Even More Damage. In *Development and Dispossession: The Crisis of Forced Displacement and Resettlement*, edited by Anthony Oliver-Smith, pp. 225–254. School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe.
- Ermeloff, William
2008 Personal communication with Rachel Mason, Juneau, July 11. Notes on file at National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, Anchorage.
- Hudson, Ray
1998 *Moments Rightly Placed: An Aleutian Memoir*. Epicenter Press, Fairbanks.
- Kohlhoff, Dean
1995 *When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II*. University of Washington Press, Seattle.
- Lekanoff, Nicholai S., Nicholai Galaktionoff, Eva Tcheripanoff, Irene Makarin, and Moses Gordieff
2004 *The Beginning of Memory: Oral Histories on the Lost Villages of the Aleutians*. Introduced and edited by Raymond Hudson. Report to the National Park Service (Anchorage), Aleutian Pribilof Islands Restitution Trust, and the Ounalashka Corporation (Unalaska).
- Madden, Ryan Howard
1993 An Enforced Odyssey: The Relocation and Internment of Aleuts during World War II. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of New Hampshire, Durham.
- Murray, Martha
2005 Lost Villages: Mini-biographies of the Last Inhabitants of Attu, Biorka, Chernofski, Kashega, and Makushin. Draft genealogical report on the Lost Villages. Research conducted for the National Park Service; manuscript on file, Alaska Regional Office, Anchorage.
- Turton, David
2003 *Conceptualising Forced Migration*. Working Paper No. 12, Refugee Studies Centre. University of Oxford, Oxford.
- Unalaska City School (UCS)
[1978] 2005 Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages Abandoned in the Aleutian Islands in the Twentieth Century. In *Cuttlefish Volumes One, Two, and Three: Stories of Aleutian Culture and History*, edited by Ray Hudson, pp. 65–134. Unalaska City School District, Unalaska.

