

# THE HISTORY OF REINDEER HERDING ON THE ALASKA PENINSULA, 1905–1950

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## INTRODUCTION

The stories of reindeer herding on the Alaska Peninsula illustrate a vibrant period of transition and economic innovation, but few of these stories have been widely shared (Morseth 1998:134–140; Partnow 2001:233–235; Ringsmuth 2007:103–111; Unrau 1994:309–317). This history began thirteen years after General Agent of Education Sheldon Jackson introduced reindeer herding among Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula as an economic development and acculturation project to “improve” the welfare of Alaska Natives (see Ellanna and Sherrod 1994; Olson 1969; Schneider et al. 2005; Simon 1998; Stern et al. 1980). The industry extended onto the Alaska Peninsula in 1905 when reindeer from Yup’ik and Saami managed herds around Bethel were driven to the southern shore of Lake Iliamna, establishing the first regional reindeer herd (Jackson 1906). These introduced reindeer rapidly propagated and became the progenitors of the herds that were used to establish five government reindeer stations on the Alaska Peninsula and Bristol Bay (Kokhanok, Eagle Bay, Koggiung, Ugashik, and Choggiung<sup>1</sup> [Wood River]) (Map 1, color plates) and several private herding enterprises, within the rangelands between Lake Iliamna and Port Heiden (Map 2, color plates).

The reindeer industry in this region was culturally and linguistically diverse: three local cultural groups—Dena’ina, Yupiit, and Alutiit—were working with Saami,<sup>2</sup> Inupiaq, and Yup’ik immigrant herders. Saami and Yup’ik herders from the Kuskokwim River region worked as chief herders with local Yup’ik and Dena’ina apprentices around Lake Iliamna, which marked the historical boundaries between Dena’ina and Yupiit (Dissler 1980:5–11). Dena’ina occupied the northeastern part of the lake, including the contemporary village of Iliamna. Yupiit lived along the southern and western shoreline of Lake Iliamna, including Newhalen, the mouth of the Kvichak, and over to Kokhanok. Yupiit also occupied regions along the Kvichak and Alagnak Rivers. Residents at Naknek Lake and those who moved into the Naknek River region after the 1912 Katmai eruption (see Feldman 2001; Pratt 2013) referred to themselves as Alutiit or Aleut, as did residents of Egegik and the central Alaska Peninsula, including Ugashik,

Pilot Point, and Port Heiden. In the early 1900s, several Inupiaq families immigrated to the Alaska Peninsula and eventually managed herds in Ugashik, Pilot Point, and Port Heiden with local Alutiit apprentices and herders (Morseth 1998:131–140). This diversity adds to the historical richness and distinguishes it from herding done elsewhere in Alaska (e.g., Burch 2012; Ellanna and Sherrod 2004; Fair 2003; Finstad et al. 2006; Koskey 2003; Mager 2012; Olson 1969; Schneider et al. 2005; Simon 1998; Stern et al. 1980).

In addition to its rich cultural diversity, Alaska Peninsula herding was marked by its variation in herd sizes. Herd numbers on the peninsula ranged from as few as ten to fifteen animals to as many as 4,000 to 6,000. In the early 1930s, based on archival sources, reindeer numbers reached their peak for the study area with approximately 10,000 reindeer. Within two decades, however, the region’s herding industry ceased. Because of its low reindeer

population (compared to Northwest Alaska), its short history (forty-five years), and distance from the center of reindeer affairs (Nome), Alaska Peninsula reindeer herding has received much less scholarly attention than herding in other parts of Alaska (Morseth 1998:147–148).

Drawing on archival sources,<sup>3</sup> oral histories, site surveys, and interviews with residents of the Alaska Peninsula, this paper documents some of these stories. By following reindeer movements to and across the Alaska Peninsula (Map 1, color plates), I make an initial foray into the region's herding practices, describing herding origins and developments within the region of Lake Iliamna, along the Kvichak, Naknek, Egegik, and Ugashik rivers and south to Port Heiden. I also delineate boundaries of the rangelands used by both government and private herding operations (Map 3, color plates). I review how government reindeer stations spread throughout the region, how Alaska Native independent herding enterprises emerged, and compare the two different herding structures and patterns. As a broad history of the region's reindeer industry, this paper serves as a comparison to herding done in other parts of Alaska.

## U.S. REINDEER SERVICE POLICIES

Although herding on the Alaska Peninsula was likely inevitable, driving reindeer to the southern shore of Lake Iliamna was not planned (Unrau 1994:309). In February 1905 when Saami-American Hedley Redmyer ended up in “one of the finest reindeer countries” (Redmyer 1906:163) with 300 reindeer from Bethel, he had no idea that he was at Lake Iliamna. Sheldon Jackson had tasked Redmyer to drive reindeer from Bethel to Copper Center, north of Valdez, in order to establish a reindeer station and extend the reindeer program in Alaska. But finding a passable route through the Alaska Range proved more difficult than Redmyer predicted. He wrote:

As a rule, people who have had no experience with reindeer only by reading are always led to believe the reindeer capable of more than they really are. They are in fact far ahead of any animal to go through a wilderness, but there is a limit to all (Redmyer 1906:160).

Still hundreds of miles from Copper Center, in wolf country and with no reindeer lichen in sight, Redmyer and his crew of Finnish men from northern Michigan (including Louis Karbum, Erick Lampela, and John Wuori

and Peter J. Hatta, a Saami man) retreated to the southern shore of Lake Iliamna with the reindeer (Jackson 1906). With Jackson's approval, the herders established the first reindeer station on the Alaska Peninsula at Reindeer Bay, called “Iliamna No. 1” or “Kokhanok Station at Reindeer Bay.” This original station was located less than fifteen kilometers from the Yup'ik fishing village Kokhanok, which was at or very near the Yup'ik village of Isigiug, first recorded by the U.S. Census in 1890 (Dissler 1980:8).

Jackson's approval of the station's location was his parting influence on the region's reindeer affairs. Based on concerns that the reindeer program had lost sight of its original intention, which was to improve economic conditions for Alaska Natives, in 1905 the Department of the Interior launched an investigation. The lead investigator, Indian Agent Frank Churchill, identified Jackson as the main culprit, arguing that his dual role as reindeer superintendent and agent for the Presbyterian missions was a conflict of interest and benefitted the missions at the expense of Alaska Natives. Churchill recommended secularizing Alaska's reindeer affairs (Willis 2006:291). With the mounting pressures from Churchill's report, Jackson resigned in 1906 and William Lopp, who had been involved in Alaska herding since the beginning in Teller, replaced him.

In his new position as superintendent of both Alaska schools and reindeer, Lopp initiated a major overhaul of the reindeer policies with his formation of the U.S. Reindeer Service. These new policies focused on increasing Alaska Native reindeer ownership and empowering Alaska Native herders (Willis 2006:292). The regulatory structure of the program also changed; no longer would missions administer reindeer affairs. The U.S. Reindeer Service was part of the Bureau of Education of the Department of the Interior. In Southwest Alaska, school buildings would be jointly established with government reindeer stations and teachers would both teach and administer reindeer affairs as local superintendents (Unrau 1994:312). This led to the parallel development of reindeer stations and schools in the Yup'ik villages of Kokhanok and Koggiung and in the Alutiiq village of Ugashik. Unlike herding on the Seward Peninsula among the Inupiat, missions and missionaries would play no role in the development of the industry in Southwest Alaska. The new Reindeer Service policies and the firmly rooted Russian Orthodox Church in the Alaska Peninsula ensured that other churches had limited influence in the region.

The system of apprenticeship used to train Alaska Natives in herding techniques was also revised for the U.S. Reindeer Service after complaints from prior apprentices that the program was controlling and confusing. Local teachers would employ “promising” young Alaska Native men to work with chief herders at government herds for four years. The apprentices were also promised some school education. Hannah Breece, the teacher at Old Iliamna from 1909–1912, wrote about the Yup’ik and Dena’ina apprentices she taught (Fig. 1):

My most unusual pupils were six young men apprenticed at the reindeer station. . . . These youths were entitled by the government to two months’ schooling a year. They came to us two at a time. They brought their own food and lived in a small, comfortable cabin built for them near the schoolhouse. I sent books and writing materials back with the first pair so they could teach the third pair what they had learned and give them a good start before they reached us. The third pair, with

that good start, took back more advanced work to teach the others. They were bright and diligent and eager to teach each other, so they advanced almost as much as pupils able to attend school all winter (Jacobs 1995:110).

The apprentices also earned reindeer for each year of training they completed, progressively earning more deer each year. Apprentices earned six reindeer the first year (four females, two males), eight reindeer the second year (five females, three males), and ten reindeer the third and fourth years (six females, four males) (Unrau 1994:311). At the end of four years, they might have as many as thirty-four reindeer plus offspring—enough to generate a private herd.

### GOVERNMENT VERSUS PRIVATE HERDING

After graduating from their apprenticeship, some individuals remained with the government station as hired



Figure 1. Reindeer apprentices from Kokhanok Reindeer Station arriving at Old Iliamna, 1909–1912. Courtesy of Jane Jacobs and the National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Katmai National Park and Preserve, cat. no. H-1853.

herders and maintained their reindeer within the government herd. Others left the government stations with their reindeer, establishing a private enterprise. This created an additional herding structure. One major difference between the two operations was that government stations were financially supported. Government herders were paid and supplied with sleds, ropes, and lumber for corrals in exchange for providing pastoral care for government and some privately owned reindeer. Government apprentices earned reindeer but were inconsistently supplied with provisions. For example, Kokhanok apprentices received yearly supplies but those in Koggiung needed to seasonally fish or sell their earned reindeer in order to buy yearly provisions. In contrast, the government provided no resources to private herding operations, even though the Reindeer Service attempted to retain some control over independent herders. For example, Reindeer Service local superintendents discouraged herders and owners from killing any female deer. Through policies of the Reindeer Service, superintendents also pushed independent herders into the formal apprenticeship system; “the herder must then in turn train and reward apprentices in accordance with the provisions of the rules and regulations” (Updegraff 1908a:399). In reality, however, few private herders maintained official apprenticeships. Some family members learned the trade by participating (see Salmon, this issue) but most herders who worked for private enterprises were

employed seasonally and were compensated with money, reindeer products, or trade goods. Different herding patterns emerged from these two different structures.

### ILIAMNA REINDEER STATIONS AT KOKHANOK AND EAGLE BAY

In 1905, the first reindeer station on the Alaska Peninsula, Kokhanok Reindeer Station, or what was originally called the Iliamna Herd at Reindeer Bay, became the testing grounds for the U.S. Reindeer Service and its new set of policies. Some of the men who originally drove the reindeer to Kokhanok stayed on as herders. Hedley Redmyer became chief herder. The station also employed two Yup'ik apprentices, who were likely brothers Pete and Evon Olympic.<sup>4</sup> Additional apprentices, some of whom were Dena'ina, joined the following years, including Pete S. Gregory, who started his apprenticeship with the Kokhanok herd in 1906 (U.S. Reindeer Service 1913a). The original 300 reindeer driven to Kokhanok flourished in the lichen-covered tundra of Lake Iliamna, Big Mountain, and Kukaklek Lake. By 1908, the herd had increased to 720 deer (Unrau 1994:312) (Fig. 2).

Recognizing these initial successes, reindeer officials wanted to extend the reindeer programs in Bristol Bay. Earlier in the summer of 1908, Commissioner of Education Dr. Updegraff had traveled between Iliamna



*Figure 2. Kokhanok Reindeer Station, circa 1910. Courtesy of Bert and Edna Foss and the National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Katmai National Park and Preserve, cat. no. H-921.*

Bay and Bristol Bay, obtaining reports and inspecting the potential for expanding herds. Updegraff (1908b) reported excellent rangelands and was told there was no greater concentration of lichen than around the Nushagak and Wood rivers. He wrote, "Dr. Romig says that thirty miles above Nushagak on Wood River there is the best place for . . . a reindeer station he has ever seen. It will be easy to reach with provisions and they may be placed there at a low rate" (Updegraff 1908b).

Based on these reports, Superintendent Lopp wanted a reindeer station established within the Nushagak River region (Henkelman and Vitt 1985:310). He also had plans for expanding the industry into the Aleutian Islands. Lopp and other reindeer officials likely concluded that a reindeer station in Bristol Bay would be an accessible location from which to supply other regions with reindeer. So in 1909, while Lopp was in southwestern Alaska to move Kuskokwim area herds to Quinhagak, near Kuskokwim Bay, he also traveled to the Kokhanok Reindeer Station (Henkelman and Vitt 1985:310). He and several of the Kokhanok herders divided the herd and drove 500 reindeer from the station, down the Kvichak River, and into Bristol Bay to establish the Koggiung Reindeer Station.

This herd division came on top of employment changes at Kokhanok Station. The Saami herder Peter Hatta replaced Redmyer as chief herder after suspicions surfaced surrounding Redmyer's management practices. Reindeer Service officials questioned Redmyer's shipping charges, while Lake Iliamna residents accused him of stealing station supplies and selling them locally at inflated prices (Young 1908). Graduating from their apprenticeships, the Olympic brothers took up full herder positions. Pete moved with the 500 deer to the Koggiung Station. Evon stayed in Kokhanok with the remaining 336 reindeer, and became chief herder in 1910. As locals came to know about the reindeer program, new apprentices were appointed to the station, including Kavelilla Olympe (1908) (likely the brother of Pete and Evon Olympic), Matfe Bavel (1910), Wassilie Dehkittie (1910), and Ivan Kaloviaslak (1910) (Unrau 1994:312).

The initial promise of Kokhanok's herd productivity was relatively short-lived. By 1912, the herd had increased to 467 reindeer, a gain of only 131 deer after the initial herd split in 1909. J.L. Brown, who started teaching in Old Iliamna in 1911 and was assigned reindeer superintendent duties, complained of general herd mismanagement by the chief herder, reporting that the herd was largely scattered (Jacobs 1995:227). Perhaps to mitigate

these troubles, the Reindeer Service determined to split the Kokhanok herd again (Unrau 1994:314). In 1913, a second station at Lake Iliamna, called Kenai Reindeer Station (so named for the Dena'ina ("Kenai Indian") herders who would be operating it), was established on the north shore of Iliamna, at Eagle Bay, hereafter called the Eagle Bay Reindeer Station (Map 1, color plates). Many of the Kokhanok herders and apprentices drove the majority of the Kokhanok reindeer to the new station at Eagle Bay. In 1913 Eagle Bay Reindeer Station had a total of 240 reindeer of which the government owned 67; herder Pete S. Gregory owned 49; Dena'ina apprentices Wassillie Dehkittie, Hamoska Zackarr, and Ivan Kalovislak owned 26, 20, and 30 reindeer respectively; and owners Zimion Nehkittie and Zackar Zacharusky owned 9 and 39 respectively (U.S. Reindeer Service 1913b). Willie Kasayuli, a Yup'ik from Bethel, was chief herder. After reindeer were moved to Eagle Bay, only 99 reindeer remained at the original Kokhanok Station. These reindeer were owned by Evon Olympic, Kavelilla Olympe, Matfa Bavel, and John Kelwack. No government reindeer remained at the Kokhanok Reindeer Station.

The government's involvement in the Eagle Bay Reindeer Station was limited. Only one year after the Eagle Bay Station was established, chief herder Willie Kasayuli and the station's apprentices moved all Eagle Bay government reindeer to the Koggiung Station, leaving no government reindeer in the Iliamna region by the winter of 1914–1915. Government financial support for apprenticeships and herding provisions ceased as well. Perhaps during his visit in 1909, Superintendent Lopp decided to shift U.S. Reindeer Service resources to the Nushagak and Ugashik regions. Local teachers, however, continued to carry out limited superintendent duties such as counting reindeer and supplying annual reports. In 1917, superintendent Fred Phillips reported 157 reindeer at Eagle Bay, which were owned by only four Dena'ina Natives (chief herder Pete Siwa, herder Hamoska Zackarr, owner Zimion Nehkittie, and apprentice Pete Simion) (U.S. Reindeer Service 1917a). The small herd size reflects the government pull-out of Iliamna, but adding to the small herd size at Eagle Bay was the fact that private herders moved to different rangelands, spreading into the Newhalen, Talarik Creek, and Kaskanak regions. Local superintendents likely could not reach these areas to count reindeer and might not have even known about these private herds.

Despite the government's absence, both reindeer population numbers and Alaska Native ownership of reindeer steadily increased in the Iliamna region in the late teens and early 1920s. By 1925, there were 2,094 reindeer around the rangelands of Lake Iliamna. Reindeer meat became an important food source for those who could afford it, since big game was scarce (see Plattet and Lincoln, this issue). The Annual Reindeer Report for Iliamna lists 2,118 reindeer in 1929. That same year, the secretary of the interior shifted responsibility for the reindeer program from the Bureau of Education to the governor of the Alaska Territory (Willis 2006:297). Transitions took place for the Iliamna herds as well. Smaller private herds ranged in Eagle Bay, Newhalen, Big Mountain (southwest shoreline of Lake Iliamna), and Kukaklek Lake to the south (Unrau 1994:315). These herds were owned by several individuals who hired herders and elected a chief herder to manage their enterprises. The chief herder drove reindeer to more productive rangelands and/or to flee predators. For example the late Mary Tallekpalek, born 1915, discussed her father's move from Kokhanok to Big Mountain with his herd. He was the chief herder at Big Mountain into the 1930s:

My dad got reindeer [a] long time ago, before I was born. He got reindeer, up [the] other side of Kokhanok. First he got them from the government, right there. Mamma told me. Then he moved down—too many wolf—moved down reindeer, in about Kvichak, before I was born (Tallekpalek and Tallekpalek 1998).

Private reindeer herds of the Iliamna Lake region continued to increase in the early 1930s as herders spread out and ranged their deer away from the once central government stations (Fig. 3). Herders sold reindeer meat both locally and to the canneries. For example, the late Rose Hedlund (born in 1917 in Chekok on the north shore of Lake Iliamna) grew up eating reindeer. Her father purchased two reindeer each year from the Eagle Bay herd (Hedlund and Hedlund 1985). Herders also trained sled deer to transport supplies along the Kvichak River, stopping at trade stores in Igiugig, Levelock, and the Alaska Packers' Association cannery, Diamond J, near the mouth of Bristol Bay. In 1930, fifty-three reindeer were butchered out of Newhalen's 422 reindeer, and twenty-six were trained as sled deer (Unrau 1994:315). Under chief herder Simon John, the Newhalen herd reached 1,008 reindeer



*Figure 3. Reindeer in corral at Eagle Bay Reindeer Station, circa 1930. Courtesy of Gladys Evanoff and the National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Katmai National Park and Preserve, cat. no. H-976.*

by 1936, but quickly declined after his death. Lack of management of the herd, fueled by overgrazing and disease, led to rapid depletion of reindeer numbers. By 1938, a portion of the Newhalen herd was driven to Kukaklek Lake, where Alexi Gregory herded his privately owned reindeer until 1947 (see Salmon, this issue). The remaining Newhalen reindeer scattered and either joined the Mulchatna caribou herd or were killed by wolves (Unrau 1994:315–317). This diffusion of reindeer made tracking their numbers difficult for superintendents, but based on discussion with descendants of herders it appears that other Iliamna herders experienced similar rapid declines of their reindeer. With the exception of Kukaklek Lake, and perhaps smaller unknown private herds, reindeer herding ended around Lake Iliamna by 1938.

### KOGGIUNG REINDEER STATION

The initial successful propagation of reindeer in Lake Iliamna nourished the optimism of reindeer superintendents. Not only were officials such as Updegraff confident about the region's grazing potential, but they also saw a market for meat in the region's growing workforce. Since the 1880s, the Alaska Packers Association and other fisheries companies operated salteries and canneries along the Nushagak, Kvichak, Naknek, and Ugashik rivers, which brought a number of Asian, American, European, and Scandinavian workers to the region seasonally. Reindeer officials acted quickly to bring government stations to these regions. Koggiung was an ideal location from which to expand operations in Bristol Bay. Thus, shortly after Kokhanok herders drove 500 reindeer down the Kvichak River to establish the Koggiung Reindeer Station in 1909, this group of animals was again subdivided and used to establish reindeer stations on the Wood River, near Dillingham and south to Ugashik. In March 1910, newly appointed Koggiung teacher and local superintendent Rudolph Ramslund reported helping regional reindeer superintendent Dr. Henry Schaleben and the herders secure the deer prior to their transport. Ramslund (1910) wrote, "A corral had been erected before we arrived and to secure the necessary number it was necessary to lasso all the deer required for the two herds." Herder Robert Eqsack, whom Lopp had appointed chief herder for the herd at Nushagak in 1909, drove 165 reindeer to the Wood River, while Schaleben and other herders drove 190 reindeer to set up the Ugashik Reindeer Station.

Koggiung had long been a seasonal Yup'ik settlement. The prospect of cannery employment and the newly built school offered additional incentives for Yup'it to remain in the community. Ramslund and the herders recruited Yup'ik apprentices from Koggiung, Levelock, and the Alagnak River to manage the 150 reindeer that remained at the Koggiung Reindeer Station, which was located on the Alagnak River, just up from Bristol Bay. These apprentices included Andrew Koghanoak, Andrew Noatak, Wassillie Pangolukpalik, Zaccha Paingiluguk, Alexi Gregory, and Miska Apoulooks (U.S. Reindeer Service 1913c). By the winter of 1912–13, the Koggiung herd had increased to 247 animals but faced a number of challenges. In the late winter of 1913, wolves began attacking the reindeer. Herders reported that wolves killed thirty-six reindeer in one night, leaving much of the meat to rot. That winter and spring wolves attacked the herd four times, killing fifty-six reindeer (French 1913). These attacks were in fact so frequent that government doctor L. H. French (1913) requested poison from Superintendent Lopp to bait the wolves. The most serious threat to the herd, however, was ash fall from the 1912 Katmai volcanic eruption. As Koggiung teacher/superintendent G. A. Barton described in a letter:

Great showers of ashes fell on the moss, and other vegetation, and when the deer were grazing they got so much of the ashes in their food that they became very sick and died. We examined the jaw of one of the deer that died while we were at camp and found that its teeth were all worn off entirely so it was impossible for it to chew the moss even if it did succeed in getting it into its mouth (Barton 1913).

In an effort to find lichen free of ash, chief herder Andrew Kogkhanoak moved the reindeer to the banks of Kvichak River, between Kaskanak and Levelock, just below Kaskanak Flats. The herd benefited from the move up the Kvichak and the new rangeland was timely as more reindeer arrived for Koggiung in 1914. As mentioned previously, Eagle Bay Reindeer Station chief herder Willie Kasayuli and the station's apprentices drove all of the government reindeer to Koggiung. They intended to continue their travels to Wood River, but by the time they arrived in Koggiung it was almost fawning season. It was not until the next winter that Kasayuli and the apprentices from the Eagle Bay and Koggiung stations drove all government reindeer from Eagle Bay and most of the government reindeer from Koggiung to the Wood River (Map 1,

color plates). This left five government reindeer and only four Koggiung herders with their privately owned deer at the Koggiung Station (Barton 1914, 1915).

Over the next few years, Koggiung herders moved their reindeer to different areas, searching for ash-free rangelands. In 1916, herders Andrew Noatak with 79 reindeer, Wassillie Pangolukpalik with 41 deer, Alexi Gregory with 45 deer, and Miska Apoulooks with 71 deer moved their herds “up to the lakes” (probably referring to Lakes Iliamna and Kukaklek) according to schoolteacher/superintendent Preston Nash. Nash wrote no official report, explaining that he could not get up to the “lake” where the herds resided (Nash 1916). The succeeding teacher/superintendent T. R. Glass also had trouble completing his annual reindeer report. He had no boat or guide to reach the herd, which had moved up a creek “in the foothills about twenty or thirty miles from [Iliamna] lake” (Glass 1917). As reindeer populations owned by Alaska Native herders increased, the influence of reindeer superintendents and other reindeer officials declined. Although superintendents tried to maintain some control over herders and their reindeer once they were privately owned, archival documents demonstrate their ineffectiveness. Communication was limited, as local superintendents could not physically locate or reach herds and generally did not have the knowledge to advise chief herders.

Reports and communications about reindeer affairs are limited after 1917. Influenza hit Koggiung severely in spring of 1919, and a large number of Alaska Natives died, further adding to disruption in official reindeer reporting. We know that one Koggiung herder, Alexi Gregory, moved his herd to Kukaklek Lake where he herded with his family until 1947 (Salmon, this issue). It appears that Miska Apoulooks herded in Ugashik at a later date. The other herders, if they kept herding, operated private herds. It is likely that official reindeer business ended for the Koggiung Reindeer Station in 1917–1918. There are two archival references, however, from the late 1930s indicating that herding persisted in the region. The first reference is a 1938 Reindeer Service map depicting the Koggiung Reindeer Station. The second is a 1941 report that states, “This village [Koggiung] formerly had a large reindeer herd but due to wolves molesting the herd and injury to the chief herder who had long taken an interest in the herd, the herd was abandoned three years ago according to the reports of the chief herder who now works at the Feldner-Gals Trading Post” in Bethel (U.S.

Reindeer Service 1941:3). These references were likely to a private herd.

### UGASHIK REINDEER STATION: PILOT POINT AND PORT HEIDEN

Establishing a government station at Ugashik was the continuation of the plan by reindeer officials to spread herding throughout the Alaska Peninsula and into the Aleutian Islands. Superintendent Lopp (1909) recommended a herd should be based at the Alutiiq village of Ugashik so the Reindeer Service could easily move reindeer to other locations from nearby Port Heiden. Ugashik reindeer were sent to at least three islands. An unknown number of reindeer were established on Unimak Island (Burdick 1941). In 1914, forty reindeer were shipped to Atka Island.<sup>5</sup> Seven years later, fifty-four deer were sent to Kodiak Island. The Ugashik Station, however, did more than supply other regions with reindeer. The original 190 reindeer driven south in 1910 from Koggiung by Schaleben and Kuskokwim Yup’ik herder “Jesse,” developed into a herd of almost 4,000 by the mid-1930s. All of these animals descended from the original 190 reindeer from Koggiung and not from reindeer shipped on a U.S. Revenue cutter, as suggested by Morseth (1998:134).

Over the years, the Ugashik herd was managed by nonlocal chief herders, which was a constant source of tension for the Ugashik residents who considered themselves to be Alutiiq. Jesse stayed on as the first chief herder after helping move the reindeer to Ugashik. Before the end of the year, however, he returned to the Kuskokwim because he was at odds with the local Alutiiq. According to Schaleben (1910), as Russian Orthodox believers, the locals felt superior to Jesse, who was likely Moravian. Pete Olympic, a Yup’ik from the Iliamna region, replaced Jesse—but he would eventually suffer similar complaints since, even though he was Russian Orthodox, he was not Alutiiq. It is not clear why the Reindeer Service continued to appoint nonlocals as chief herders in Ugashik but this pattern continued into the 1920s. Andrew Krause, another Yup’ik herder from the Kuskokwim River, replaced Pete Olympic. Later on in the 1920s, after Inupiat immigrated to the Alaska Peninsula (Morseth 1998:131–140), Inupiat herders managed many of the herds in the Ugashik and Port Heiden regions. In an attempt to resolve cultural conflicts between locals and Inupiat, herders eventually consolidated their herds into

one of two reindeer companies. Alutiiq locals worked for the Ugashik Cooperative Reindeer Company, started in the early 1930s, and the Inupiat immigrants formed the Peninsular Eskimo Reindeer Company in 1936. Ethnic group tensions may have been the result of controlling of local resources as much as cultural or religious conflicts. The relationships between local residents and the reindeer superintendents were also often strained. Local superintendent J. C. Laur (1911) wrote to Lopp, “The apprentices say they desire to take their deer to themselves and be independent of government aid as soon as they serve their apprenticeship.”

Long before consolidation of the Ugashik reindeer into two companies, however, the herders and reindeer superintendent of the Ugashik Reindeer Station had difficulty tracking the herd’s population growth. In 1909, teacher/superintendent H. G. Davis reported that the herd increased by almost fifty animals. In his Record of Herders, Apprentices and Owners report (U.S. Reindeer Service 1909), Davis listed the first five apprentices, all of whom were from Ugashik: Nicolía Engiak, Alexie Johoktike, Apaluk Miska (perhaps Miska Apoulooks from the Koggiung Station, who was likely misidentified as from Ugashik), Samilo Jacowan, and Zachar Chicali. Following the U.S. Reindeer Service’s procedures, each apprentice had earned six reindeer. The government owned the remaining 238 deer. Three years later, teacher/superintendent J. B. Laur reported 446 reindeer, of which 330 belonged to the government (U.S. Reindeer Service 1912). As the herd grew over the years, the lack of trees or driftwood to build corrals added to the difficulty of systematically counting and marking reindeer each year. The herd was not counted again until 1916 when teacher/superintendent W. A. Wilson, the Ugashik herders, and Dr. French drove the herd to Naknek temporarily—within range of trees—to make a corral and count the herd. According to Wilson’s Annual Reindeer Report, 380 reindeer were counted; the government owned 131 of them while Pete Olympic owned 67 (U.S. Reindeer Service 1917b). The remaining animals were owned by the apprentices who had completed their training: i.e., Nake Engiak (likely Nicolian Engiak), 47 reindeer; Samilo Jacowan, 54; Yerman Amanquishkok, 46; and Alexie Golohan, 35. Wilson wrote at the time, however, that he knew of “two bunches of reindeer” that they had been unable to bring in with the larger herd.

After the corralling in 1916, the Ugashik herd was separated into two locations. The first apprentices (who by 1916 had become full herders), including Engiak, Jacowan, Amanquishkok, and Golohan (as well as Alexie Paming), took their reindeer to Dago Creek. They continued to herd around Dago Creek until the late 1930s at what was called “Reindeer Camp” (E. Neketa 2013). Chief herder of the Ugashik Station Pete Olympic left government work and independently herded reindeer north of Ugashik. The government reindeer and the newly appointed apprentices were sent to herd around the Ugashik Lakes under the leadership of chief herder Andrew Krause from the Kuskokwim region. The 1917 Ugashik annual report lists 502 reindeer (U.S. Reindeer Service 1917b).

In 1919, influenza hit Ugashik and Pilot Point very hard, claiming the lives of many adults. From the two communities, thirty-two children were sent on the steamer *Kodiak* to an orphanage in Kanakanak (Morseth 1998:69). Herders at Dago Creek survived the epidemic because they were separated from the villages. Pilot Point resident Gust Griechen intercepted the Dago Creek herders before they entered the village and could contract the influenza. Nick Neketa of Pilot Point relayed how his great uncle, Yako (Nake) Engiak, herded at Dago Creek and raised his father, Nefutie Neketa, after his parents died from influenza (N. Neketa 2013). Nefutie Neketa learned herding and earned reindeer from his uncle and eventually owned a small number of reindeer, between ten and twenty, which he herded at Reindeer Creek with collie dogs before he married and had children (E. Neketa 2013; N. Neketa 2013). Eli Neketa (2013) recalled that the location was ideal for herding reindeer, trapping, and traveling between Egegik and Pilot Point.<sup>6</sup>

While the Dago Creek herders survived the influenza devastation, the fate of the herders who ranged around Ugashik Lakes after they split from the Dago Creek herd in 1916 is less certain. One speculation is that they perished in the influenza outbreak of 1918–1919 and the Reindeer Service hired Inupiat settlers to manage their reindeer. Inupiat had immigrated to the Alaska Peninsula in the early 1900s seeking hunting grounds and employment in the canneries (Morseth 1998:131–140). While a few families traveled by umiat, eleven families and two single men traveled aboard the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear* in 1911 (Ducker 1996:55). John Kigolnok, originally from Wales, traveled south aboard Nome-based fur trader Charley

Madsen's *Challenger* (Madsen and Douglas 1957). A 1937 report to General Reindeer Superintendent Sidney Rood from Ugashik Superintendent Samuel Hanson suggests that in the 1920s the government had hired Kigolnok as chief herder (Hanson 1937). Kigolnok apparently retired in 1930 after several years of service because he could secure no apprentices. Some Pilot Point residents today also remember Kigolnok as a chief herder.

Sometime in the 1920s, other Inupiat also started herding reindeer around Port Heiden and Pilot Point. It is unclear how they obtained reindeer but Inupiat ranged deer around Port Heiden, Hook Lagoon, Cinder River (Shegong), and Ugashik. These herds, however, were never reported as government herds. Somehow, the Inupiat obtained the reindeer immediately as owners and not through the standard apprenticeship program. Perhaps because many of them had been herders on the Seward Peninsula before moving to the Alaska Peninsula, they did not need training, but the government needed herders. Or perhaps they simply purchased reindeer outright from local owners.

William Zunganuk, originally from Mary's Igloo, was chief herder of the Port Heiden herd in the 1920s and early 1930s and grazed his deer on lands south of Cinder River, past Port Heiden, as far south as Unangashak (Morseth 1998:141–45) (Map 2, color plates). Elizabeth (Zunganuk) Risch (2013) explained that her father worked the Teller herd before moving to the Alaska Peninsula. Zunganuk had two cabins up North River, near Aniakchak, which were likely used when trapping and herding in the Aniakchak pastures. With the help of local Inupiaq families and well-trained herding dogs, the herd was corralled at the mouth of Reindeer Creek, on the north side of the river. The Supsook family, also Inupiat, had a cabin nearby and would help the Zunganuks corral and mark the deer each year (Morseth 1998:146). Other Inupiaq herders included Nikavak, who ranged his herd around Cinder River (Morseth 1998:147–148). He had married Sam Supsook's daughter. Valentine Supsook explained that during winter corralling five or six young men would camp "back of Cinder River" (Morseth 1998:146). The whole lagoon would fill up with reindeer as men moved them to the corral. The settlement established at the location where Nikavak's herd was corralled was known as Shegong. Nick Meticgoruk, perhaps a relative of Nikavak, also herded at Cinder River. He might have been employed by Nikavak or took over the herd at

a later date. Nick Meticgoruk had a cabin at the mouth of Cinder River and a cabin near Aniakchak on "the plateau" where he moved his deer seasonally. Today, this cabin is called "Caribou Cabin" by Pilot Point and Port Heiden residents.

Like many residents of Pilot Point, Ugashik, and Port Heiden, the Inupiat herders spent summers commercial fishing in Pilot Point. Zunganuk's eldest daughter, Pauline Supsook, remembered that her family would leave the deer near Unangashak in the summer to fend for themselves while her father fished in Pilot Point to earn money for their yearly provisions (Morseth 1998:146). Limited oversight of the herds during fishing season and the general increase in reindeer led to individual herds mixing in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. This caused growing tensions between owners. In fact, Eli Neketa remembers these times as "the herding wars," explaining that many of the problems stemmed from the fact that the Inupiat and local Alutiit could not communicate well because they did not share a common language (E. Neketa 2013). Disputes often erupted for economic reasons; by 1932, the estimated number of reindeer in the Ugashik region was 3,665 animals. With locals owning over 2,814 of those reindeer, losses could have been financially significant (Hanson 1937). As evidence of these disputes, cairns that demarcated rangeland boundaries remain on the landscape today (E. Neketa 2013) (Fig. 4). These disputes culminated in the formation of the Ugashik Cooperative Reindeer Company (UCRC) and the Peninsular Eskimo Reindeer Company (PERC) in 1936.

Despite this new organizational structure, the reindeer herds around Ugashik faced a number of challenges. Because trapping and fishing were so much more lucrative, the two reindeer companies could not retain enough herders, which led to scattered reindeer. By 1937, UCRC and PERC reindeer had completely mixed. To reduce friction between the two companies and keep a more accurate count of reindeer, a roundup was planned to separate the herds. Superintendent Hanson described the February 1937 roundup in a report to Rood:

Two weeks the Native Aleuts and Eskimos were out hunting for deer. . . . Finally, however, we had the deer down on Pike Lake . . . we let them spread out in a crescent, over the surface of the Lake—a crescent about a mile long. . . . The plan was to see from the "hill" where to divide the herd. It had been agreed by all that the Eskimos were to have 400 deer over half the herd, to compensate for



*Figure 4. Eli Neketa pointing out a historic cairn outside of Pilot Point, Alaska, in June 2013. Photo: Patrick Plattet.*

the 400 that weren't rounded up. I had previously calculated from the original ownership certificates and the estimated yearly increase, that the herd would be pretty nearly equally divided between Eskimos and Aleuts. I then told the two presidents where to split the herd, and Willie Zunganok, the president of the PERCo, and Charley Johnson, the president of UVRCo [UCRC] approached the herd from opposite directions, and the herd was easily divided (Hanson 1937).

According to Hanson's estimate, the UCRC received approximately 1,100 reindeer and were to occupy the Dago Creek Range. The PERC received around 1,500 reindeer and were to graze their deer on the south side of Ugashik River. Despite tremendous efforts to keep the herds separate, they quickly reunited. Participating in the division, Valentine Supsook (Supsook and Supsook 1997) recalled that the herders stayed with the reindeer as long as they could but all of them needed to earn money trapping so they left the PERC herd. Shortly afterwards, their reindeer rejoined the UCRC herd on the north side of the river.

Keeping the two herds separated was a constant problem. During the fawning season, the reindeer would crave salt-water and would cross the river and join the Dago Creek herd by the coast (Hanson 1937).

The mixing of the herds was not the only challenge facing the Ugashik reindeer herds. Hanson complained in his reindeer reports of alcohol abuse among herders and of poaching by trappers from Egegik, Kanatak, and Becharof Lake who were using deer meat as bait for their traps. Wolves also heavily preyed on the herds. Hanson (1937) wrote to Rood:

The wolves are running in small packs and are pulling down and scattering the Ugashik herd of reindeer. They kill the big deer, and tear out their tongues, and the carcasses. Then the coyotes follow up the wolves and feed on the dead carcasses. There are a lot of ravens, too, and eagles, that are bothering the new-born fawns...there were as many as five wolves seen at one time.

The herds were also hit by both environmental and volcanic conditions that depleted their numbers. Three difficult winters in the 1930s took their toll on the reindeer population. Deep thaws followed by freezing made ice so thick that reindeer could not dig for lichen, and major die-offs resulted (Skoog 1968:218–222). Moreover, the 1931 eruption of Aniakchak left ash-covered lichen, limiting reindeer rangeland.

The UCRC did not make it through these challenges. The company dissolved before 1940. The PERC, however, applied for a Reindeer Grazing permit in 1941, which included the rangelands once used by the UCRC; a clause in the permit allowed Ugashik Natives to range their deer within PERC's rangeland boundaries, paying no fees, as long as they participated in herding activities. Unit Superintendent Opland approved of PERC's application but it seems that if the PERC carried on herding, it was only for a few more years. In 1944, Opland recommended that a northern government reindeer herd at Egegik expand into the Ugashik River since, he concluded, there was no active herding at Ugashik. Upon his departure from Ugashik and Pilot Point in 1945, longtime reindeer superintendent of the Ugashik herd Hanson lamented that he really tried to make herding viable but he had little success: "I had hoped that I could do something toward putting this herd on a sound basis; I have worked at it for years" (Hanson 1945). His succeeding teacher, Laura Buchan, had no reindeer duties (Buchan and Allen 1952). By 1945, Ugashik herders had shifted back to hunting caribou and wild reindeer, a transition that had been taking place since the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

## REINDEER STATION AT NAKNEK LAKE

The Naknek drainage supported two private reindeer herds in the 1920s and 1930s. By 1922, and possibly earlier, Pete Olympic and his extended family stationed their herd at the mouth of Naknek Lake at what was locally referred to as "Reindeer Station," until the mid- to late 1930s. Pete's brothers Nick and Evon also lived at Reindeer Station with their families. In 1931, a second herd moved into the region. Saami herders from the Kuskokwim drove reindeer to South Naknek in the hopes of supplying meat to the growing Naknek community. The Saami herders, who had formed the Pioneer Reindeer Company, were an extension of the Saami herd of Akiak near Bethel. They ranged their herd between South Naknek and Egegik.

After passage of the 1937 Reindeer Act, which restricted reindeer ownership to Alaska Natives and required non-Native herders to sell their reindeer (McAtee 2010), the Saami herders were bought out by the government, which in turn transitioned the Pioneer Reindeer Company into the Egegik Government herd.

Brothers Pete, Evon, and Nick Olympic operated Reindeer Station at Naknek Lake with their privately earned reindeer. Few government documents reveal the activities of the station, but the biographies of Pete and Evon and interviews with descendants of the Olympic brothers offer clues to the station's history. After apprenticing in Kokhanok, moving to Koggiung and then Ugashik, Pete retired from government work in 1916. During his extensive travels throughout the Alaska Peninsula, he likely identified productive lands in which to range his own reindeer. Before moving to Naknek Lake, he ranged his herd between the Naknek and Egegik rivers, near Becharof Lake (Olympic et al. 1932). Evon Olympic had also traveled as a herder. According to his daughter, Akelena Holstrom of Naknek, after serving as chief herder in Kokhanok, Evon and his first wife, Agrifina, herded at Big Mountain, where one of their daughters was born sometime after 1914. They then moved to Naknek Lake sometime before 1922.

By the time Akelena Holstrom was born at Reindeer Station at Naknek Lake in 1922, her father and her uncles had a well-established private herding operation. During interviews in 2012, Holstrom explained that her uncle Pete had both a house and shop near her parent's mud house and her other uncle Nick lived in a house farther away. Her account is supported by Pete Olympic's 1932 reindeer rangeland permit record. When the Alaska governor's office took over reindeer affairs in 1929, it instituted rangeland permits. The Olympic permit lists four cabin structures and two reindeer timber corrals built by the herders (Olympic et al. 1932). Holstrom explained that the herders used the corrals to mark ears and butcher reindeer. Her family consumed reindeer products and "people from Naknek used to come up and get some meat, reindeer meat . . . what they want to eat. [They would] buy some from the family, maybe my uncle or dad's reindeer" (A. Holstrom 2012).

There is some discrepancy in the number of reindeer in the Olympic herd. A telegram from April 1931 estimates the Olympic herd at 2,000; however, the 1932 Olympic grazing permit reports a much smaller number. This application lists the number of reindeer as 398, bro-

ken down by individual owners as follows: Pete Olympic, 250; Eli or Elia [Evon] Olympic, 50; Nick Melonlak [Melgenak], 50; Deacon Fred, 40; Nagaly Dvitikof, 6; and Driffen Ungsaiknak, 2. Their reindeer ranged in the northwest region of what is now Katmai National Park and Preserve, within the boundary of Kvichak Bay drainages between Naknek River and Naknek Lake on the south; and the Alagnak River, Nonvianuk, and Kulik Lakes in the north. When the Olympics formalized their rangelands in 1932 with the rangeland permit, it is likely they felt threatened by the Saami-owned Pioneer Reindeer Company, which moved approximately 2,000 reindeer in close proximity to them in 1931.

It is not known to what extent the Saami herd influenced the health of the Olympic herd, but by the late 1930s, the Olympics were no longer herding. As with other reindeer herds on the Alaska Peninsula, a number of factors reduced reindeer numbers, both personal and economic. Pete Olympic died sometime in the 1930s. Evon's wife also became very ill in the mid-1930s and Holstrom took care of her when they moved to South Naknek with no reindeer. Annie Zimin, granddaughter of Evon, who lived with her grandparents as a child at Reindeer Station, could not remember when they moved to South

Naknek, but she did recall attending the "New Territorial School" by age seven, which would have been 1937. In an article published as part of a Naknek High School journalism project, Holstrom's daughter June wrote that Holstrom and her family moved to South Naknak in 1929 (J. Holstrom 1982). That date seems too early since both Holstrom and Annie Zimin have memories of playing at Reindeer Station, but Zimin was not born until 1930. They may have had seasonal residency in both places, however. When Zimin asked her grandfather what happened to the reindeer, Evon told her that the wolves scattered and destroyed them (Zimin and Zimin 2012). Holstrom emphasized the fact that there was no one left to take care of the animals since everyone was gone or fishing.

### THE PIONEER REINDEER COMPANY AND THE EGEGIK GOVERNMENT HERD

With the Olympic herd gone, the Pioneer Reindeer Company herd could expand without the concern of mixing reindeer. And there was a justification for this growth. Naknek was rapidly becoming the region's economic and transportation hub. When the Saami drove roughly 2,000 reindeer to South Naknek in 1931 from the Kuskokwim,



*Figure 5. Saami herder Pher Thuuri around Naknek drainage, circa 1940. Courtesy of Dorothy Berggren and the National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Katmai National Park and Preserve, cat. no. H-798.*



*Figure 6. Saami herders Lars Nelson and Matt Anderson in South Naknek, circa 1930s. Courtesy of Dorothy Berggren and the National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Katmai National Park and Preserve, cat. no. H-782.*

herders Pher Thuuri, Matti Anderson, Lars Nelson, and Ole Polk sought to supply local residents and cannery workers with fresh meat (Figs. 5, 6). Despite some concern that their herd might be too close to the Olympic herd, the Reindeer Service granted Thuuri and the others a grazing permit, the boundaries of which were south of Naknak River to the Egegik River and Bristol Bay to the easternmost point of Becharof Lake. While there is some discrepancy in the numbers of reindeer within the Pioneer Reindeer herd at Naknek, archival documents indicate that Thuuri and his partners were earning \$4,000 annually in the late 1930s from meat sales at 13 and 14 cents

per pound; thus, they were butchering approximately 300 reindeer per year (Rood 1940).

Many Naknek residents still remember the Saami men who quickly became part of the community and supplied the region with fresh meat. Naknek resident Alvin Aspelund explained in an interview:

Pher Thuuri was pretty much what they call the honcho, he was in charge of them. . . . They were stationed here . . . but each one had an interest in [the herd]. They'd tag their ears and each guy would know which was his when they had young ones. They traveled with them all the time, they had reindeer pulling sleds with their tents and equipment, and when the reindeer move, they move with them. . . . They had collie dogs that helped them, you know, and they used skis in the wintertime. What they did in the summer, I don't know. It'd be pretty swampy, they'd travel and then, sometimes in the summer, they must have got them located in good feeding areas because they'd go fishing for a month and then they'd go right back to them (Aspelund 2012).

Oscar Monsen of Naknek recalled in an interview that his parents ordered meat from the "Lapps." He explained:

They kind of took orders so they knew how many to kill off, and maybe one family would order a whole one and somebody else might want a half of one and somebody else [would] want a quarter. We always seemed to have enough of it though . . . that's where your meat supply would come from, cause [we] didn't have as many freezers around then so when the time came to kill them, and you put your order in and they cleaned them and brought the meat to you (Monsen 2012).

According to the late South Naknek resident Carvel Zimin, the herders would butcher the reindeer right in South Naknek (Zimin and Zimin 2012).

In accordance with the 1937 Reindeer Act, the U.S. government purchased most Saami reindeer for \$3 a head. The Pioneer Reindeer Company at Naknek, however, received \$6 for each of their 6,000 reindeer and Pher Thuuri received \$8 for his privately owned herd of 540 animals (Burdick 1941:14). The higher Naknek acquisition price for reindeer was justified, according to DOI administrator Charles G. Burdick, because "in that locality it [the reindeer industry] has a bright future. Meat prices of 13 to 15 cents per pound and \$3.00 to \$5.00 for adult skins to be used as mattresses by fishermen would allow the operation of the herd at a good profit" (Burdick

1941:14). The government assumed control over the same rangeland and also purchased the structures built by the Saami herders (which included one corral, one butchering corral, two cabins, and a cabin warehouse) for \$2,575.00. In total, the government purchased 6,540 reindeer from the Saami herders of Naknek, but some reindeer officials later argued that the herd was never this large, since by 1943 a count of the reindeer produced only 2,100, a loss of over 4,000 animals in four years (Geeslin 1944).

After the Pioneer Reindeer Company was forced to sell its herd to the U.S. government, reindeer administrators struggled over who would manage the herd, which was renamed the Egegik Government herd. Part of the confusion resulted from yet another transfer of administrative control. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) took over reindeer affairs in 1941. The BIA had high financial expectations for the herd, which they estimated to be worth \$50,000. Naknek was favorably located and had adequate transportation networks to supply meat to Egegik and Dillingham. Furthermore, a local market for deer meat was bound to grow. A 1941 report pertaining to North and South Naknek explains that, "Because of the large numbers of canneries, that are bound by Union Agreements to furnish meat to fishermen, an insured meat supply provided by cold storage facilities would be in demand to that consumer" (U.S. Reindeer Service 1941). Securing a local food source was also a government priority during World War II.

Out of their concern over inexperienced managers jeopardizing reindeer profits, in February 1941 the U.S. Reindeer Service contracted Pher Thuuri to manage the Egegik Government reindeer herd (the same herd that he was forced to sell in 1938), even though he was not an Alaska Native. His tasks included marketing reindeer meat, managing meat storage, property upkeep, and hiring butchering help. Andrew Krause, who had worked in Ugashik and Ekwok, was hired as chief herder and was responsible for the herd as well as employing herders. This proved especially difficult in the 1940s because so many young men were drafted for military service. One herder who was regularly employed with the herd was Jimmy Crow. These men and hired help filled orders for meat and hides in the early 1940s. Thuuri and Krause butchered reindeer at Johnson's Hill and often shipped the meat via airplane to the Wood River Cannery and the Dillingham hospital for 17 cents a pound. They also supplied meat and hides to locals in Naknek. Davy's, the lo-

cal Naknek store, purchased meat at 14 cents a pound. In two-and-a-half years, Thuuri and Krause sold \$6,839.01 worth of reindeer products (Geeslin 1944). This arrangement lasted until September 1944 when Thuuri requested to be released from his contract in order to seek health treatment "outside." Pher Thuuri died in South Naknek in 1949.<sup>8</sup>

After Thuuri's retirement, archival reports indicate that Krause took over his responsibilities and Crow continued to work for Krause. In 1944 the reindeer dispersed. A small number of animals grazed around Johnson's Hill while the larger portion grazed at Blue Mountain, near Becharof Lake. Opland complained that the herd split as a result of neglect; herders left the reindeer during fishing season. Fishing remained a constant source of frustration for the reindeer officials who could neither compete with fishing wages nor prevent herders from participating. In 1944, the Egegik Government herd rangeland expanded to include rangeland as far south as Ugashik (Opland 1944) (Map 3, color plates).<sup>9</sup>

While the Reindeer Service records for the Egegik Government herd drop off by 1945, some local residents remember the herding activities of Krause and Crow. King Salmon resident Ted Melgenak (born in 1937) knew them from when they visited his home in Savonoski. He explained in 2012:

They used to come visit at the house at Savonoski . . . in the wintertime, just taking care of reindeer, but I never watched how they do, but they're [reindeer] loose out there, when I travel with my dog team, I used to pass right by them and my dogs go wild. They're just moving around, never run away, maybe 50 some[times] 100, and them guys [herders] they know which reindeer they own. I don't know if they own them but they herd them anyway, and some . . . [reindeer] end up down Savonoski, and down towards Johnson's Hill, way back Reindeer Creek and some up at the lake [Naknek Lake], and these people take care of them during the wintertime (Melgenak 2012).

It is not clear how long Krause and Crow continued managing the Naknek government herd.<sup>10</sup> According to Melgenak, who would have been ten years old in 1947, Krause and Crow may have maintained the herd into the late 1940s. As with other herds on the Alaska Peninsula, it appears that herding gently subsided as herders spent less and less time with the reindeer and locals began hunting the resident reindeer (Plattet and Lincoln, this issue). The

Alaska Peninsula herding industry finally succumbed to its many challenges and ceased by 1950. Many variables contributed to its demise. The multiple and detailed descriptions of wolves depleting reindeer in the 1920s and 1930s cannot be ignored. The Aniakchak volcanic eruption and the three severe winters in the 1930s also decreased the reindeer population. The greatest challenge to herding, however, was its limited economic return for herders. Reindeer became vulnerable to wolves and mixing with caribou when herders were not present to care for them.<sup>11</sup> But close-herding techniques meant missing out on necessary remunerative activities such as trapping and fishing, which took up much less time than herding. As one superintendent put it, herders could earn more in one month of fishing than in herding reindeer all year (Unrau 1994:316–317). The industry simply did not offer a sustainable economic return.

Caught up in the rhetoric of the industry as an economic development project for the welfare of Alaska Natives, many of the local superintendents bemoaned the loss of herding, accusing herders of laziness or worse. Schoolteacher/superintendent of Newhalen John Gordon recognized the inability of herding to compete with fishing but still complained of herders' negligence after reindeer joined caribou herds. In a report to General Reindeer Superintendent Rood in Nome, Gordon wrote:

I feel very put out about the whole matter because I had planned to ask your office to secure several hundred reindeer for us to re-stock and strengthen the herd. Large earnings in Bristol bay and drinking has caused this disastrous depletion and disappearance of our herd. The herders received no compensation for their services hence cared less. "Gone with the caribou," is their easy answer (cited in Unrau 1994:317).

Charged with overseeing the government's plan to turn subsistence hunters into entrepreneurial pastoralists (Ellanna and Sherrod 2004), local superintendents criticized Alaska Natives for not working to make that plan a reality, even when it meant losing profits or opportunities to harvest traditional foods. Although difficult for superintendents to understand, herding did not support families, and so herders abandoned their reindeer, which they eventually began to regularly hunt as "wild" game.

## CONCLUSION

Detailing the various histories of the government stations and some of the larger private herding enterprises on the Alaska Peninsula gives us the opportunity to contrast the two herding structures as well as compare them to herding in other parts of Alaska. Relying on both archival records from the U.S. Reindeer Service and oral history accounts from herders or their descendants to understand reindeer affairs brings to light how the policies and expectations of reindeer officials were in fact practiced by the residents of the Alaska Peninsula. Local and regional superintendents intended for the herding industry to reduce financial insecurity among Alaska Native households and replace subsistence hunting. Even in the 1940s, as herding all over the peninsula had failed, General Reindeer Supervisor Sidney Rood expressed his belief (shared by a number of reindeer officials) that herding would have been lucrative if only herders had applied themselves. He wrote:

I feel that if the Ugashik and Pilot Point Natives had expressed a real interest in managing a reindeer herd, and had cooperated with Mr. Hanson, they would have a tame herd of excellent animals in custody today, the crop from which could have been a very valued resource, and would have provided a good income for herders (Rood 1943).

Rood could not fully appreciate the herding obstacles that included the difficulties of moving meat to markets, the Great Depression, predators, the intermixing of reindeer with wild caribou herds, the limited materials available to make corrals in order to count and mark animals, and the freeze/thaw winter conditions and volcanic eruptions leading to reindeer starvation.

At the best of times, herding was at most only ever supplemental income. Government reindeer stations offered two to four professional positions with a livable salary at any given time. In many cases, herders were prohibited from harvesting their own reindeer and apprentices needed to secure their own provisions, which often required commercial fishing in the summer. In later years, as commercial fishing expanded, the only way Reindeer Service officials could employ herders was if they allocated one month off each year for fishing. Private herders incorporated reindeer into their yearly subsistence livelihood, which included trapping and, for most private herders, also commercial fishing by the 1930s.

Where herding lasted longest and was most successful, it was part of an indigenized and independent herding pattern. These kinds of operations incorporated reindeer activities into a yearly subsistence cycle. AlexAnna Salmon (2008) characterizes this form of herding structure in the Lake Iliamna region as a transitional economy from a subsistence-based livelihood to a settled, wage-labor economy. Reindeer herding became incorporated into a mixed economy of subsistence hunting and gathering, trapping, and commercial and subsistence fishing. For instance, in his description of herding on Big Mountain, Mike Andrew stressed that his mother was taking ground squirrels for hides and food while others managed the reindeer (Andrew and Andrew 2012). His sister, the late Mary Tallekpalek, elaborated on her family's pattern of herding:

[We] moved up on the Big Mountain, my dad and my family, all of 'em, my uncle, too, my *apa*, too, [the] only full house. I [was] born right there on the Big Mountain. I know, we got reindeer [around] all the time... Spring was spent below Kokhanok. Mama hunt[ed] squirrel at the same time. Around November they would sell the reindeer skins, in the [late] spring, they would move up and reindeer would have calves (Tallekpalek and Tallekpalek 1998).

The yearly routine for the Olympics at Naknek Lake also included hunting and fishing. Akelena (Olympic) Holstrom (2012) explained that her family hunted beluga in the fall as the whales followed the fish up Naknek River. They also traveled up Katmai for late season "red fish" and beaver.

These private herds contrasted with the government herds in that they tended to have fewer reindeer, thus requiring a smaller rangeland and allowing greater flexibility in where they could travel. These private owners consumed reindeer meat and hides, used sled deer for transportation, and sold small numbers of deer annually. Herders would trap throughout the winter and sell fur when they were also selling reindeer products to the canneries and larger villages, such as Koggiung and Naknek. Many herders in the Lake Iliamna and Kvichak River region (where trees were available) protected their herds from wolves with fences. Deer roamed free in the daytime but were gathered up each night behind the protection of a fence. Howard Nelson (2012) of Levelock heard stories when he was young of reindeer being so well trained that a herder could whistle and the deer would return to their fenced-in

corral. Private herders had more agility with smaller herds and would protect their reindeer with physical barriers rather than through constant surveillance.

Alaska Native-owned herds were organized around family households and often around extended families; thus, herding was commensurate with the yearly cycle of subsistence and commercial activities. For example, Alexi Gregory's private herd at Kukaklek Lake would move with the family during their seasonal routine. They spent the majority of the year at their winter settlement. Before Christmas, Gregory would drive a portion of the herd to the trading posts at Igiugig and Levelock in order to sell the meat (Salmon 2008:98–101). He hired men to care for the reindeer while he trapped during the late winter and early spring. The whole family traveled to the east end of the lake in summer. The men would tend to the reindeer as they grazed on surrounding hillsides while the women put up sockeye salmon. In later years, Gregory and the other men traveled down the Alagnak River to Bristol Bay and Naknek to commercial fish. Mary Olympic and her childhood friend would take care of the reindeer. By the middle of September, they would move with the reindeer to their fall camp (near Battle Lake) in order to get "red fish." Mary's mother would trap ground squirrels, while her father would hunt bear. Alexi would use the bear hide to make a boat, which would transport their gear and fish to their winter settlement (Gram-Hanssen 2012; Olympic 1995). This land-use pattern resembled pre-herding Yup'ik ways of life—reindeer were simply being incorporated into it. Extended families worked together to manage the herd, living semipermanently at the herding station.

The U.S. Reindeer Service's dismissal of the family structure was one of its greatest administrative failures. They hired bachelors, discouraging the participation of families, and only reluctantly employed married apprentices, thereby creating an unsustainable herding structure. These herders and apprentices rotated between the reindeer stations and the herds, but for the most part they were removed from family and village life. Many of the professional government herders remained bachelors until late in life. Others quit herding once they married because they could not support a family on the government herding wage. Peter Apokedak (2012) of Levelock explained that his father Evon herded around Iliamna and Koggiung in the 1920s and 1930s but when he got

married, he quit herding: “He got married to my mom, he wanted to go fishing and support his family, he wanted to start being on his own . . . he was a good provider” (Apokedak 2012). The system of apprenticeship was also incommensurable with local inheritance practices. Local superintendents appointed apprentices to learn the trade, but children of herders inherited reindeer. One result was that descendants who inherited reindeer did not always know how to take care of them because they neither served an apprenticeship nor were they incorporated into a herding lifestyle.

These two different types of herding were coexisting simultaneously on the Alaska Peninsula, and certainly there were variations of private and government herding patterns, which were shaped by herd sizes, available rangelands, and personalities. For example, the Pioneer Reindeer Company operated by the Saami herders was something of an anomaly. Though it was a private enterprise, the herders worked full time, with limited engagements in other livelihoods. These various modes of herding were certainly not practiced in isolation. Since apprentices had to learn how to herd reindeer in large government herds before starting their own private operations, and since private reindeer were often kept in government herds, high levels of communication and interaction took place between these two herding structures. In the end, neither private nor government herding structures withstood the test of time, but both left a durable mark on the landscape of the Alaska Peninsula and upon its residents.

Despite its relatively short duration, specific events from herding history and policies of the U.S. Reindeer Service permanently shaped the region. Alaska Peninsula herding made a lasting impact on the region’s landscape and village demographics. The region is littered with place names associated with herding and the reindeer stations. Since schools were established at the same time as government reindeer stations, often placed in locations more amenable to herding than schooling (see Jacobs 1995), communities grew up around both institutions. Most of these communities remain today, long after herding ceased. For instance, Kokhanok originated as a permanent village due to reindeer herding. Movements of people and reindeer during the first part of the twentieth century also shaped the contemporary demographics of these communities. Herders, like the Olympics, who started as apprentices in the Lake Iliamna region, moved into Naknek rangelands

and married locals from Savonoski (Feldman 2001). Many of their family members remained and now call these places home. Moreover, reindeer herding attracted and retained Inupiaq immigrants from Northwest Alaska to Pilot Point and Port Heiden. While there are a few Inupiat still living in the region, there are many more living elsewhere who consider their family histories to be rooted in communities of the Alaska Peninsula. The reindeer herding industry added to the region’s long history of multiculturalism and the vibrant stories still told among residents today.

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## NOTES

1. Choggiung Reindeer Station at Wood River near Dillingham is outside of the regional scope of this paper (see Nicholson 1995:109–112; O’Leary 2009; VanStone 1967:83–89).
2. Sheldon Jackson brought Saami reindeer herders from Norway to Alaska in 1894 and 1898 to teach Alaska Natives reindeer husbandry. Initially, the Saami were able to own reindeer and were very successful at developing and propagating herds throughout northwestern, western, and southwestern Alaska.
3. In keeping with the style of the journal, I have used in-text citations of archives when directly quoting from and summarizing archival documents. I consulted the following archives for this article: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Division [microform]: general correspondence, 1908–1935, University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library. Record group 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Division: Records relating to reindeer in Alaska, National Archives, Washington, DC. Record group 75 Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Reindeer Service, boxes 44, 45, 47, 53,

National Archives, Anchorage. The National Archives at Anchorage closed in June 2014 and records are now located at the National Archives at Seattle.

4. The spellings of names in historical documents are inconsistent. The contemporary name “Olympic” was often historically spelled “Olympe.” Likewise, “Evon” was often written “Ivan” and in one case “Elia.” Citing a personal communication with K. L. Arndt, Feldman (2001:109) writes that “Evon Olympic was born ‘Ioann Kuliliuk’ of Kiatagamiut descent in 1880 at or near Kashkinak in the Lake Iliamna area. . . . He was recorded as a Church member at ‘Alagnak’ from 1894 through 1899, and at ‘Kakhonak’ from 1903 through 1910.”
5. It is not clear if people ever herded these reindeer. In the 1950s, the community of Atka offered butchering licenses, similar to those in Ugashik in the 1930s. By the 1970s they tried to corral the animals to sell antlers.
6. A recent site survey of Reindeer Camp with Eli Neketa and Patrick Plattet documented the remnants of thirteen barabaras and cabins (E. Neketa 2013).
7. Resulting from the pressures of local residents who wanted to harvest reindeer from the growing herds, the Reindeer Service issued harvest permits to residents, which allowed them to hunt reindeer in the government herd.
8. South Naknek residents remember that Pher Thuuri also worked as the local postmaster shortly after he sold his herd to the government. Alvin Aspelund thought he started in 1940 and worked for a few years.
9. Thus, Ugashik/Pilot Point herding ended before 1944. Certainly some of the Ugashik reindeer remained and were wild. It is likely that some of them joined the Naknek herd.
10. See also Feldman (2001). One of Feldman’s anonymous informants stated, “There were still a couple (Native) guys being paid to be herders when I came in 1945” (2001:112).
11. Similar challenges for herders are described by Mager (2012) in the Barrow region and by Schneider et al. (2005) on the Seward Peninsula.

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