

***AN ETHNOHISTORY
OF THE
CHISANA RIVER BASIN***



View of *Theetsa Niign* - Lower Chisana River Valley to the West, from *Cheejüil Niign* - Mirror Creek

(N. A. Easton)

Prepared By

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Summary

The Chisana River Basin is part of the traditional homeland of the ancestors of the *Dineh* – “people” in the aboriginal language of the region - who occupy the lands astride the Alaska - Yukon border in the area of the Alaska Highway. Its primary known occupants of the past were speakers of the Upper Tanana Athapaskan language, although there is a close association today and likely deep into the past with members of the neighbouring *Ahtna* and Tanacross language speakers to the west, Northern Tutchone speakers to the east, and Han Gwichin speakers to the north. This report is intended to document the aboriginal *Dineh* use of the Chisana River basin for public education and integration into the management plans and interpretive programs of the U. S. National Park Service's *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park*, located along the international border in Alaska.

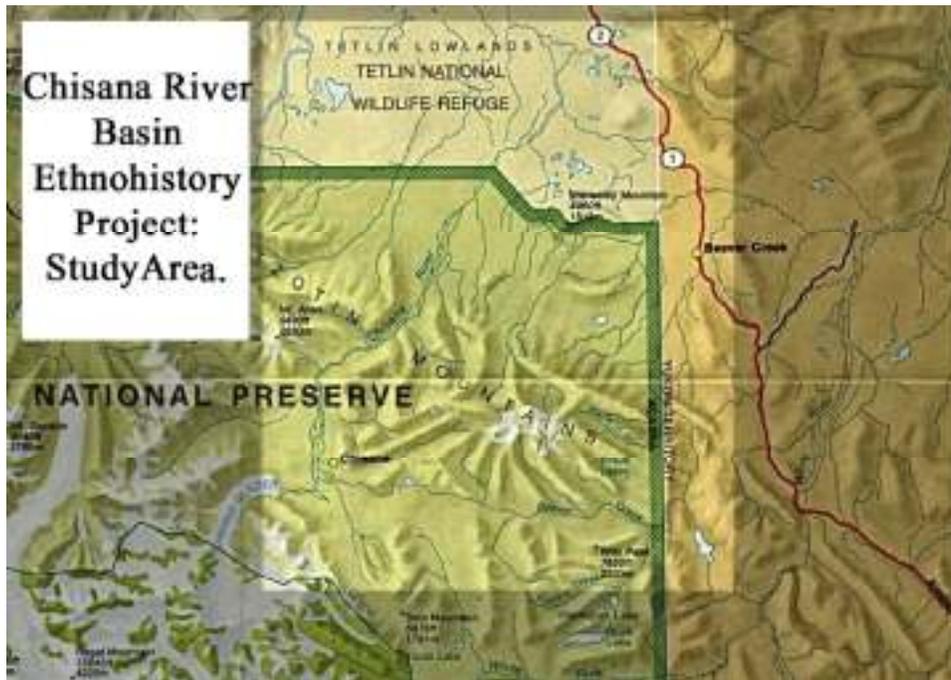


Figure 1. Chisana River Basin Study Area

Figure 1, above, presents a general map of the study area. Technically it encompasses the Chisana River basin from its headwaters to its confluence with the Nabesna River near Northway and its principal tributaries – Mirror and Scottie Creeks – which flow into the river from Canada to the west. Figure 2, below, provides a more detailed map of major drainages and settlements referred to throughout this report.

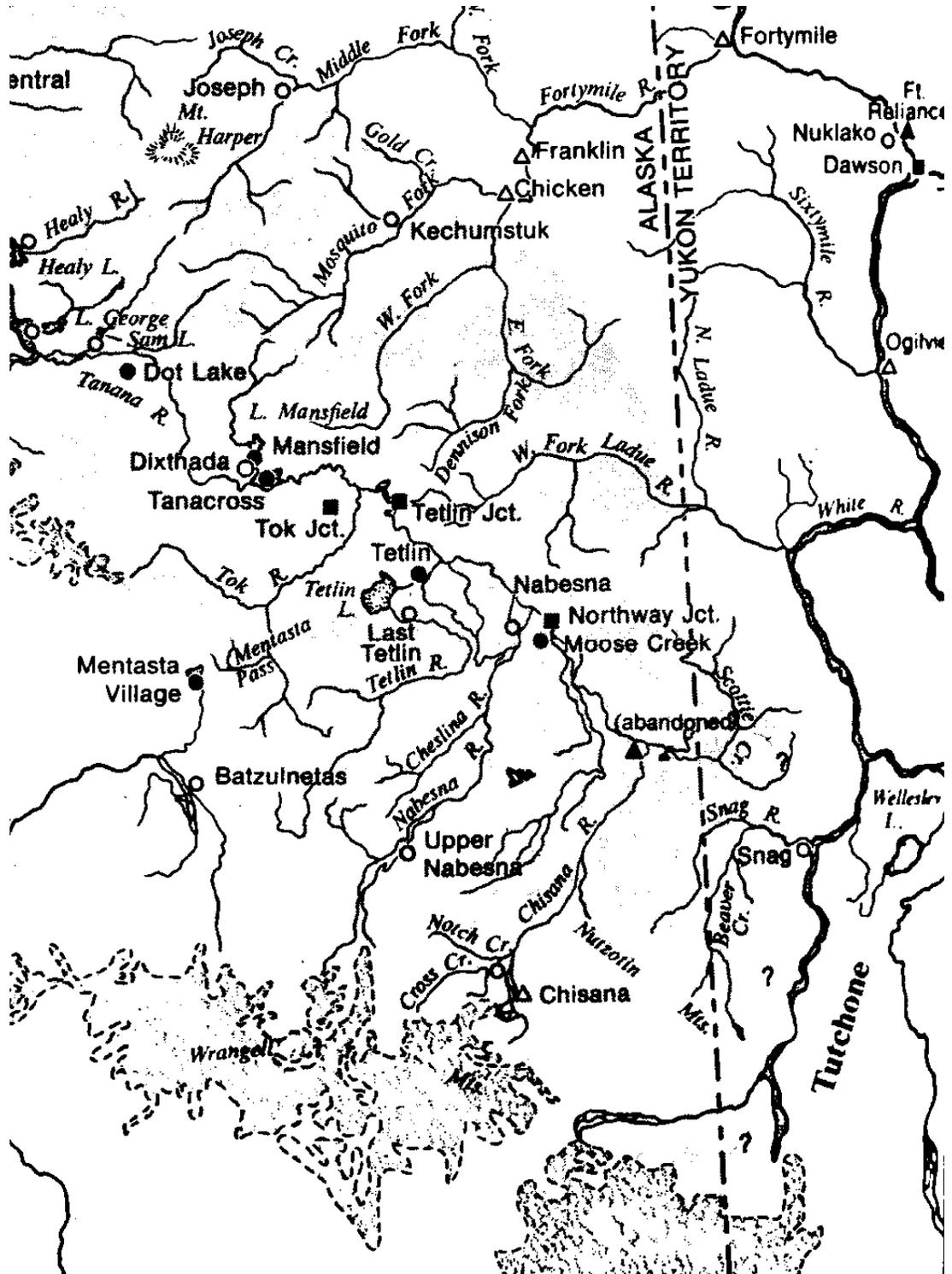


Figure 2. Major Settlements and Drainages of the Study Area.

(adapted from McKennan 1981: 564)

I begin with a presentation of the environmental setting: how the landforms of the region developed geologically, how the land has changed during the glacial period of the Pleistocene and the post-glacial period of the Holocene, and the contemporary environmental ecology of the upper Tanana River basin. The landscape of the borderlands has undergone enormous changes during the time of *Dineh* occupation and has had, and continues to have, a critical influence over their material and ideological lifeways.

Next I present a series of indigenous Upper Tanana *Dineh* accounts of the creation and subsequent formation of their world according to their mythology and legends. These are more than simple or fanciful tales. They embody many important moral and epistemological values – such as respect for self and others, generosity and reciprocity, and the limits of personal authority and knowledge – which are basic to *Dineh* culture.

After this I discuss the region's human prehistory as revealed by archaeology, the western science by which we attempt to discover past lifeways of people for whom there are no written records by analysing the material remains of their lives preserved in the ground. The upper Tanana River valley is of great significance in this reconstructed history, holding evidence of human occupation back to the earliest known occupation of North America by human beings, some 14,000 years ago.

I then discuss the Upper Tanana language. The *Dineh* of the upper Tanana River valley, including the Chisana River basin, speak one of a family of native american languages known as Athapaskan. Its syntax and grammar are distinctly different than that of standard English, and the study of differences and similarities between the languages and dialects within the Athapaskan language family can suggest something of the history and movements of the human carriers of this language in the past.

The scientific reconstruction of the human past in North America generally, and the western subarctic in particular is severely hampered by dramatic changes in aboriginal population structures due to the introduction of a wide number of diseases and illnesses of European origin for which native americans had little or no immunity or resistance. I discuss the known and probable effects of this devastation in a section on aboriginal demography.

Finally, in the concluding portion of this first section on origins in the region I refer to a number of oral history accounts of the origin and migration of specific matrilineal clans, which are the fundamental family units of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. As one example of this form of history I present in Appendix 2 Mr. Walter Northway's clan history. It is indicative of this mouth to ear transmission of the events of the past known as *Oral History*, which until the late 19th century was the only means by which the past was recorded and recalled among the *Dineh*. It remains an important component of their culture today, with grandparents, parents, and now anthropologists like myself, retelling to the young the stories of their ancestors. I selected Mr. Northway's account for another merit as well, in so far as it reflects the wide-ranging movement of *Dineh* individuals and families across hundreds of kilometers of land during the course of a lifetime, as they responded to local ecological changes, sought mates, visited loved relatives, or merely explored areas unfamiliar to them.

The next section is entitled Places and presents both descriptive data and interpretative meaning to the construction of an indigenous Upper Tanana *Dineh* cultural geography of the region through an examination of the trails, settlements, and geographic place names which they have developed during their long history of occupation and use of the landscape. An extensive database of some 600 Upper Tanana language place names accompanies this report in a number of digital and paper formats in a series of appendices. These names and associated stories reveal an intimate knowledge of the physical landscape which in turn is tied closely to the Upper Tanana *Dineh* moral and spiritual landscape of their minds and souls.

The next major section of this report presents a number of aspects of Upper Tanana *Dineh* Culture. These include a discussion of subsistence and trapping seasonal rounds, modes of travel, hunting and its critical importance to *Dineh* ethnic identity, and fishing and collecting. A description of traditional dwelling structures is provided to assist in lands managers recognition of the remains of these features.

A description and discussion of the structure and importance of kinship and associated relationships between people reveals important differences from mainstream American households in the way Upper Tanana *Dineh* organize their family and productive lives, while the following section on potlach, reciprocity, and leadership

reveal similar important distinctions in economic and political relationships among the *Dineh*.

The historical interaction between Upper Tanana *Dineh* and non-native immigrants over the past one hundred and fifty years or so comprises the final and longest section of this report. It makes use of both documentary evidence and native recollections gathered in interviews which are presented, compared, and critiqued to produce an accounting of the past known as an *Ethnohistory*. Documentary or written accounts of the past have been collected from a variety of archival sources, including an extensive examination of the United States and Canadian government files held at their respective National Archives during a one-year Fulbright Scholarship which I held in 1996 – 1997, the University of Alaska – Fairbanks Rasmussen Archives, and a variety of regional ethnographies, local histories, biographies, and personal correspondences. Native recollections of this past have been provided by personal interviews with dozens of collaborators over the past decade or more. The combination of these sources at times produce corroborative accounts of events and at other points conflicting testimony of experience. I have endeavoured to weigh these differences judiciously, but caution the reader that there are many ways of interpreting the past and sometimes significant differences between historical actors' experience and recollection of it; all hold some merit and meaning. Our retrospective task is to develop our own informed meaning.

The early written history of the Upper Tanana region was one of inconstant interaction between resident natives and non-native explorers and transient fur-traders. Among the most significant of these were the explorations of Henry Allen in 1885, who provided the first detailed descriptions of the geography and people of the Upper Tanana River valley, and I present extended extracts of his report as it pertains to the region from his rare report.

The establishment and enforcement of the International Boundary between Canada and the United States along the 141st meridian would forever alter the lifeways of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, dividing a once cohesive aboriginal community into two separate modern state jurisdictions. Here I present and contrast the official records related to this effort with two oral history accounts of the time. While the immediate effects of this division was minimal, it would come to have important long-term effects which today

continue to challenge the Upper Tanana *Dineh* as they struggle to maintain and cultivate their identity as *Dineh* in the 21st century. The somewhat tragic role of the trader William (Bill) Rupe, the first resident trader in the Chisana River basin in facilitating the initiation of the imposition of state authority over an independent people contains a message of both hope and despair over the capacity of different cultures to accommodate their differences with some measure of respect, dignity, and fairness.

Prospecting for the next big gold strike occupied many in the northwest subarctic throughout the 20th century and the Chisana River basin was no exception. The region felt the effect of two principal strikes at the headwaters of the Chisana and Nabesna Rivers, and their effect on the Upper Tanana *Dineh* is described in some detail.

I have chosen to combine the historical accounting of the activities of missionaries, traders, and policies and agents of the State in order to emphasize the perspective that each of these categories of interaction were involved in both complementary and conflicting attempts to *change* the lifeways of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. The discussion in this section often strays afield of the study area proper, since events sometimes far away would eventually come to bear on the lives of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. World-wide urban fur market prices, for example, could make the difference between economic prosperity or depression. Department of the Interior policies set in Washington, D. C. would wind their way down to guide government agents' actions in the field. Canadian government collusion with the Christian churches would result in the forced exodus of most children to residential schools. Despite many apparent exceptions, the Upper Tanana valley has been enmeshed in "globalization" for most of the past one hundred and fifty years. I attempt to ground the implications of these far-off sources by examining their effects in the local scene in the arenas of trapping, missionary activity, and the role of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Education's Alaska Native Service.

Finally I provide an account of the building of the Alaska Highway through the region, which was undoubtedly the most significant of events in so far as its irrevocable effects on the society and culture of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. Many who have lived through this time are acutely aware that their lives were fundamentally changed by the establishment of easy access to their land. Prior to the highway the Upper Tanana *Dineh* maintained considerable control over many components of their interaction with non-

native society; after the highway the sheer volume of people, commodities, ideas, opportunities and regulations overwhelmed and reduced their capacity to resist increasing enculturative forces and much of importance to the preservation of *Dineh* culture, *The Dineh Way*, was lost. In particular, the previous structure of native – non-native interaction, based on reasonably equivalent social and political power and positive reciprocity, was largely replaced with relations based on negative reciprocity and increasing exploitation of the lands, resources, and lives of the *Dineh*. As a line of communication and travel, the highway allowed the State to attempt to impose its full coercive authority with a force hitherto unknown. In turn, the Upper Tanana *Dineh* became increasingly aware of the need to react politically to, incorporate judiciously, and resist these attempts to assimilate their society into the encapsulating states of Canada and America. I conclude this report with a brief accounting of significant changes in the region on both sides of the border during the post-war years.

Despite the massive and in many cases unalterable changes to the lands and lives of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* they have proven to hold a remarkable cultural resilience in many aspects of *The Dineh Way*, sometimes successfully subverting some attempts to repress their culture, at other times winning belated official State recognition of indigenous rights through the politics of embarrassment, or righteously winning back these rights through constitutional legal challenges. As well, contemporary *Dineh* continue to hold a deep attachment to their ancestral lands and practice a variety of ways to demonstrate and pass on this connection to the younger generation. Much of this practice is invisible to the casual outside observer, with many non-Natives believing that the integration of television, automobiles, homeboy fashions, and hip-hop music into village life demonstrates the final assimilation of the *Dineh* into western capitalist consumer culture. But the image is imaginary, unreflective of the social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs and practices which, though unarguably changed by history, remain unalterably *Dineh* in nature.

The document, although voluminous, is by no means comprehensive of the social history and cultural geography of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. However, it is, I feel, a good beginning to a long-felt need by the Upper Tanana *Dineh* and others to document the history and geography of the region. While in some ways it is not the final product which

I envisioned when setting out on this project three years ago, it has allowed the compilation for the first time of a wide range of documentation related to the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, including observations of my own gained through yearly fieldwork in the region since 1992. I am grateful to the National Park Service of the United States for having supported its creation.

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It should be abundantly clear, however, that the principal acknowledgement for support of this document must go to the many *Dineh* people who have shared with me their time, memories, and knowledge of the *Dineh Way*, the set of beliefs, practices, and history which together comprise the culture and identity of the aboriginal people of the Upper Tanana region. They are too many to mention them all, but I would be remiss not to attempt to. Foremost have been the siblings Mrs. Bessie John and Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny, both of whom welcomed me into their worlds for extended periods of time, transforming my status from one of outside researcher to one of internal kinfolk, and changed my life for the better as a result.

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ORIGINS

INTRODUCTION

Who are the Aboriginal People of the Chisana River Basin? How did they come to be there? Who and where are they now? To answer to these questions is not as easy as it might seem, since the nature of identification with and use of the area is embedded in a complex network of relationships between people and place within the regional culture and society of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, a network of relationships developed over thousands of years of occupation and history, as the archaeological record shows.

It is simply impossible to talk of "Chisana People" as some sort of discrete and distinctive group of people, except in the most time-constrained fashion - the people who lived in the area in the winter of 1929, for example.

It is a more accurate to talk of the Upper Tanana as a regional group within which a collection of families historically occupied the eastern area in which the Chisana River basin lies. But even this must be done with some caution, since the families or their individual members moved regularly through the seasons and their lifetimes. Furthermore, spouses would come from afar to settle in the area – Ahtna speaking people from the Copper River valley, Tanacross speaking people from the south Dawson Range, and Tutchone speaking people from the Yukon would all contribute to the occupation and history of the Chisana River region.

In this section on *Origins*, therefore, I will be using larger categories of inclusiveness, which while more generalized are more appropriate to developing an understanding of the occupation of the area based on the knowledge we have. In *Environmental Setting*, I present first a discussion of the physical geography and ecology of the landscape according to geological science. In *The World That Raven Made*, I present several accounts of the creation myths of the Upper Tanana and the actions of Raven and Tsa'ushaw in completing the formation of the world, as it exists today. In *Archaeology of the Past*, I present what prehistorians have uncovered in their work in the region and what they believe these material remains of the past imply. A section on *Language* presents an account of the place of the Upper Tanana language within the Athapaskan Language Family, what linguistic analysis can tell us of its history, and describe some specific features of the language. Finally, in *Clans and Settlements* I make reference to the origin, movement, and settlement histories of several local clans.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING



Figure 3. Upper Chisana River Valley, to Southeast.

Top right is the headwaters of the river and the Chisana Glacier, top right the mouth of Cross Creek, location of the traditional 19th century Dineh village.

(N. A. Easton)

Introduction

The physical geography of the Chisana River Basin is a complex combination of a number of geomorphologic features and environmental ecologies, as illustrated in the Figures 3, 4, and 5. The following account is much simplified, both for the sake of brevity and the more compelling fact that there are no extensive geological studies which embrace the area in full detail. And, as with many topics in the region, the presence of the International Border has resulted in different nationalist traditions and approaches its study. That being said, I offer the following accounts on the initial geological formation of the region, its environmental ecology during the Pleistocene and pre-modern Holocene time periods of the past 100,000 years or so, and its contemporary environmental ecology.



Figure 4. Middle Chisana River Valley, to Southeast.

Nutzotin Mountains and Wrangell – St. Elias Mountains in background, the Chisana River breaking through at centre, and typical boreal spruce forest and karst-formed lakes on the middle valley's glacial outwash plain.

(N. A. Easton)



Figure 5. Lower Chisana River Valley, to Southwest.

Eroded foothills of the Dawson Range in foreground, Chisana River along top right.

(N. A. Easton)

Geological Formation

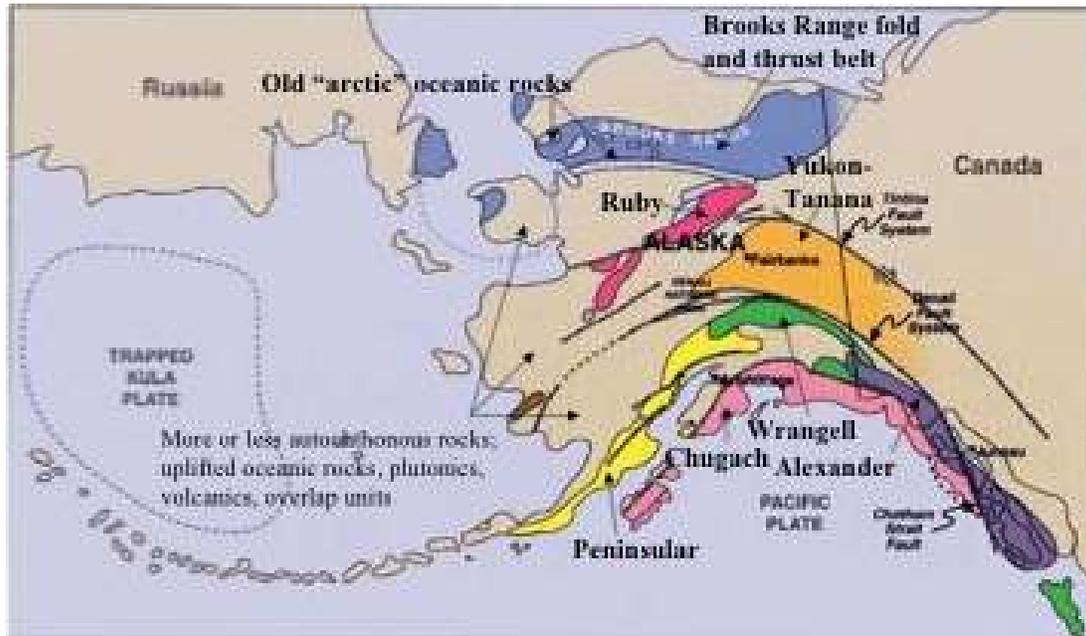


Figure 6. Geological Units of the Yukon - Alaska Borderlands

The map above shows the major geological elements, which make up the Yukon – Alaska borderlands. They consist of a series of rock formations of different origins, which have combined through the movement of the earth’s crustal plates (Smith et al. 2004).

The more or less "autochthonous rocks” (Figure 1.) are the base components which were originally formed as part of the original Pangea super continent prior to the movement of the North American continent to its present position, as well as additional material which subsequently adhered to this formation as uplifted oceanic, plutonic, and volcanic materials from the immediate adjacent region. Most of the remaining geological elements are “allochthonous terranes” (Figure 1.) which have come from elsewhere and accreted to the Yukon–Alaska region, often bounded by distinctive geological faults. Four of these terranes are present or active in the Chisana River Basin: the Yukon-Tanana, the Wrangell, the Alexander, and the Chugach.

The Yukon-Tanana terrain’s northern edge defines the Tintana Fault, while its southern edge defines the Denali Fault; the former is relatively inactive, while the latter is quite active, as measured by the frequency and magnitude of earthquakes along thier margins. The terrane itself is made up of sediments and volcanics, which are Paleozoic (about 600 to 230 million years) in age. It includes the Dawson Range of mountains which lie to the north of the Chisana River

valley, as well as most of the lands around the lower reach of the river below its expulsion from the Nutzotin Mountains to the south.

The Wrangell, Alexander, and Chugach terranes represent the movement of three separate plate fragments from southern Pacific Ocean origins. These plates migrated northward into the continent as a series of accreted island arcs, uplifting to form mountains, folding, and depositing marine sediments, expelling volcanic materials, and eroding to form a complex contemporary mixed matrix of rocks and sediments which range in age from the Paleozoic to the recent Holocene. While the three terranes have different specific origins, they share similarities in their attachment to northwestern North America as island arcs, and have subsequently folded as a single unit. The three terranes are often combined as a single “super-terrane” under the name Wrangellia, or as a morphologic unit referred to as the Insular Belt.

Continued movement of the Yakutat terrane on the Pacific coast into the continent has kept Wrangellia active with both earthquakes and volcanic activity today. These earth movements have also been responsible for mass wasting of slopes in earth slides, although much of the surface geology of the Chisana River Basin has been a function of more recent earth processes of erosion and deposition, governed principally by the series of Quaternary glaciations which have occurred over the past two million years (Smith et al. 2004).

Pleistocene and Holocene Environmental Ecology

The physical geography of the southwestern Yukon - Alaska borderlands represents the northeastern end of the upper Tanana river catchment basin, which lies within the Alaska Plateau physiographic region (Hosley 1981a; Smith et al. 2004). It consists of broad valleys bordered by rounded mountains, suggesting a lack of extensive glaciation in the area.

The valley floor averages about six hundred metres above sea level with hills to about 900m, while the higher mountains to the north rarely exceed 1500m except along the extreme southern edge where the Nutzotin Mountains lie. Beyond these rise the 3,000 to 5,000m glacier bound, jagged peaks of the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains.

Despite its proximity to these contemporary ice-fields, the region north of the Nutzotins was not glaciated during the last two glacial periods: the Illinoian (c. 200,000 to 130,000 years ago) and the subsequent Wisconsin glaciation (c. 70,000 to 11,000 years ago) (Hughes 1968).

Locally, the glacial maximums associated with these periods are known respectively as the Mirror Creek and the Macauley-Kluane glaciations, the latter lasting from about 40,000 to 13,500 years ago (Rampton 1971a). The figure below illustrates the hypothesized maximums of these two glaciations. The Mirror Creek glacial maximum followed the line of Mirror Creek, while the Macauley-Kluane maximum seems to have only reached as far as Macauley Ridge. Furthermore, Denton (1974) suggests that the decay of the last glacial advance was relatively rapid, beginning at about 13,700 years ago and completed between 1,500 to 2,700 years later; in other words, about 12,200 to 11,000 years ago.

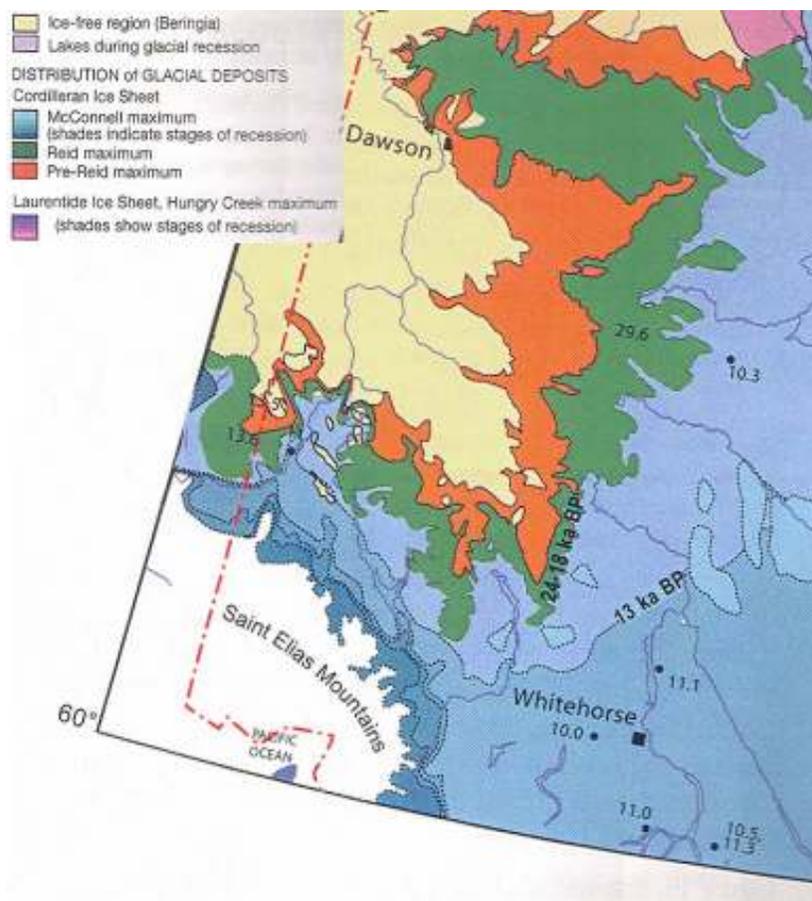


Figure 7. Maximum Extent of McConnell (Macauley) and Reid (Mirror Creek) Glaciations
(from Smith, et al. 2004:25)

Thus, this is the region that once encompassed the eastern edge of the ice-free lands of Beringia, which stretched from this point across the Bering Sea to Siberia, and may possibly hold archaeological evidence of early human occupation in North America. Bessie Johns shared

recollections of Upper Tanana land relationships at a Renewable Resources land claims sub-agreement community meeting in Beaver Creek:

Oh yeah, special places like Scottie Creek [a tributary of the lower Chisana River]. That's old, old land there. My old people say that when the glaciers, you know, ice everywhere, all around Yukon, that place was okay. Lots of old-time animal, like elephant, cat. Scottie Creek had no glacier and that's where Indian people lived that time. They hunted elephant for food, meat like moose. That place has got lots of elephant bones and other old animal bones (Bessie Johns, 16 July 1996 in Easton n.d.).

I have received other separate accounts of stories, which seem to be of ice-age origin, since they specifically refer to hunting mammoths, the glaciation of the lands to the east in central Yukon, and the land bridge between Asia and America we call Beringia. The mythological accounts of *Ts'awusha* and his travels to "set the animals straight" may well reflect, at least partly, the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene and the remarkable faunal changes, which occurred as a consequence. The fact that people living today hold these accounts suggests that they may have been passed on through the generations from the time they were formulated in situ at the end of the Pleistocene.

Several palaeoecological studies have been carried out in the region, which allow us to reconstruct the local post-glacial environmental history of the past 13,000 years or so. Rampton (1971b) analyzed sediments from Antifreeze Pond, just south of Beaver Creek, while MacIntosh (1997) examined sediments from "Daylight Coming Out" Lake (Upper Tanana = *Yikahh Mann*) just north of Beaver Creek and the uppermost lake on the Little Scottie Creek drainage, and "Island" Lake (Upper Tanana = *Cha'atxaa Männ'*), which lies just over the Alaska border and drains into Big Scottie Creek via Desper Creek. The results of these two studies were in general agreement, differing slightly in some aspects of dating and environmental indicators. In combination they present us with the following palaeoenvironmental reconstruction:

1. Herb-Tundra Steppe Zone

The late glacial environment of between 13,500 to 11,000 years ago was dominated by grasses (*Gramineae*), sage (*Artemisia spp.*), willow (*Salix spp.*) and sedges (*Cyperaceae*), equivalent to that of a predominantly herbaceous tundra steppe zone proposed for much of

eastern Beringia at the end of the Wisconsin glaciation.¹ MacIntosh estimates minimum July temperatures of five degrees Celsius.

2. Birch Rise

The period between 11,000 and 8,000 years ago is marked by a significant (up to seventy-five percent of the pollen record) increase in birch (*Betula spp.* - predominantly dwarf birch - *Betula pumila* var. *glandulifera*), with a slow decline in the levels of Artemisia. These data suggest a continuing warming climate to at least a minimum mean July temperature of nine degrees Celsius. A rise in aquatic plants and algae is also noticeable in the pollen record, suggesting increased moisture and precipitation, as well as a general reduction in erosion and accompanying stabilization of the landscape.

3. Spruce Rise

This is a relatively short period, which is marked by the first appearance of spruce (*Picea spp.*) in the region. It is also one which different localities present different time depths. Rampton's estimates for Antifreeze Pond place the onset of spruce at about 8,700 years ago; MacIntosh's data from *Yihkah Mann* place it at between 7,400 and 8,400 years ago. Birch and willows retain the high values of the previous period however, while other taxa are greatly reduced. The presence of spruce suggests a minimum mean July temperature of thirteen degrees Celsius.

4. Spruce Zone

After about 7,500 years ago, spruce becomes predominant within the pollen record in the region, with an accompanying dramatic decrease in the presence of birch and willow. Sphagnum pollen also rises noticeably, with a corresponding decrease in aquatic species. These data suggest at least a maintenance of minimum mean July temperatures of thirteen degrees Celsius.

5. Alder Zone

A rise in alder (*Alnus spp.*) is found at about 5,400 years ago at *Yihkah Mann*, and 5,600 at Antifreeze Pond; both suggest an increase in relative moisture in the region at about this time

¹ There is not unanimous agreement on Wisconsinan Beringian environments, but I follow the position set out by

to about present levels. Both Rampton and MacIntosh interpret their data as indicating the onset of an environment generally similar to that of today, with the exception of a gradual rise in mean annual July temperatures to its contemporary level of about twelve degrees Celsius.

It was during this last period that the region experienced the ash fall from two major volcanic eruptions at Mt. Bona, near the headwaters of the White River. The figure below shows the limits of the two ash falls.

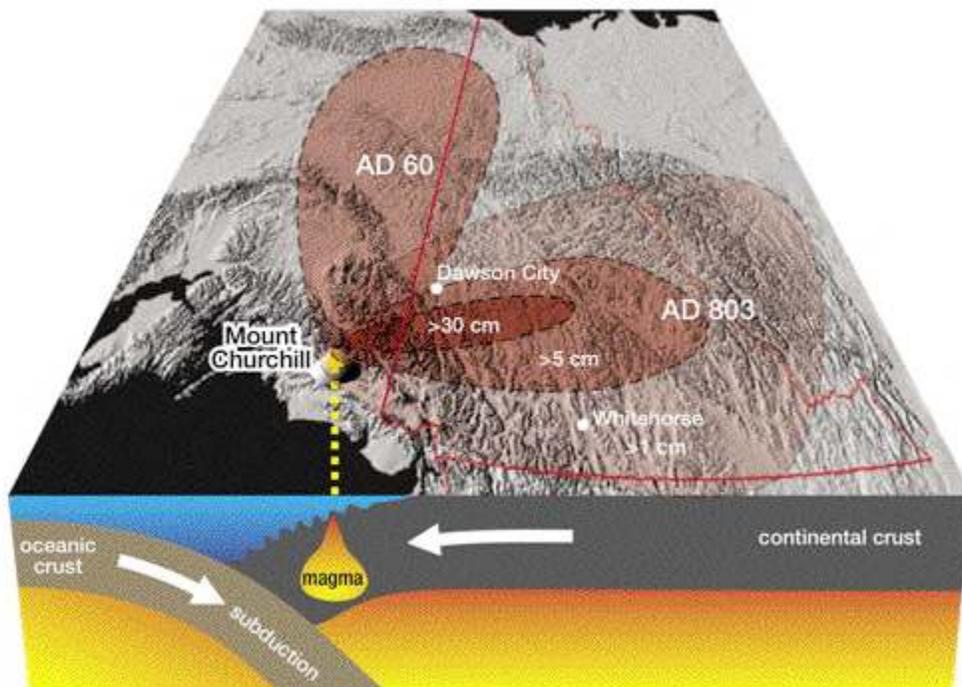


Figure 3. Distribution of the White River Ash fall, c. 1,900 and 1,250 years ago
(from Smith et al. 2004:28)

The first, smaller eruption occurred at about 1,900 years ago; the majority of ash was deposited northward from the eruption. The second, larger, eruption occurred at about 1,250 years ago; the ash fall from this eruption was carried eastward to beyond the Yukon - Northwest Territory border (Lerbekmo et al. 1975). The effect of these ash falls must have been significant for both the environment and the humans living in the region (Workman 1974). Moodie and Catchpole (1992) suggest that this may have been the impetus for the migration of the

Guthrie (1990) on the matter, which argues for a productive "mammoth steppe".

Athapaskan speaking ancestors of the Navaho and Apachean peoples into the American southwest desert lands. I have been told by several Upper Tanana Elders that the traditional village site of *Leek'ath Niik* / muddy water creek /, which lies on the eastern side of the middle Scottie Creek valley, was the location to which their ancestors retreated at the time of the eruption and subsequent ash fall - a time referred to in their oral history as the year of two winters.

After the last eruption about 1,200 years ago the region's environment has been relatively stable, although fluvial erosion and redeposition of sediments as well as localized mass wasting of hillsides continued to occur.

Contemporary Environmental Ecology

From a contemporary perspective, Oswald and Senyk's (1977) categorization of the ecoregions of the Yukon place the southwest Yukon and the adjacent Upper Tanana valley which includes the Chisana River basin, within the eastern portion of their "Wellesley Lake Ecoregion" (pp. 42-45; see also Smith et al. 2004). The surface of the valley floors are characterized by extensive meandering streams across boggy, largely permafrost muskeg. Though technically discontinuous, permafrost is extensive and can reach as deep as thirty metres (Rampton 1980). Frozen ground features include fen polygons, stone nets, felsenmeer, solifluction lobes and stripes, and rock rivers.² Loess (wind blown) sediments and volcanic ash deposits, both of which can reach over 50 cm in depth, are also found throughout the region (Oswald and Senyk 1977).

Today the ground is covered with sphagnum mosses, sedges, blueberry, bearberry, Labrador tea, and is dotted with remnant oxbows and a plethora of small lakes ringed with willows. Black spruce bowers and scattered growth of dwarf birch, alder, and willow crowd any

² All of these surficial features are directly related to permafrost conditions:

- Fen polygons are peatlands with slowly moving water above or below the surface, commonly supporting grasses, sedges, cottongrass, bulrushes, and reeds, on patterned ground, roughly polygonal in shape.
- Stone nets are characterized by fine-grained soils in the centre and coarse-grained, stony materials found on the rim of patterned ground intermediate between sorted circles and sorted polygons.
- Felsenmeers are chaotic assemblages of fractured rocks resulting from intensive frost shattering of jointed bedrock.
- Solifluction lobes and stripes are two forms of surficial sediment deposits which have resulted from the slow, gravitational downslope movement of saturated, unfrozen sediments moving as a viscous mass over a surface of frozen material (Oswald and Senyk 1977).

rise in the valley landscape, which are often elevated frost mounds, shading ground patches of cranberry and wild rose. The surrounding hillsides support alternating patches of white and black spruce, birch, alder, aspen, and poplar trees and a wide variety of shrubs, up to their low summits. Due to the near surface presence of permafrost, north-facing hillsides are predominantly black spruce. Many of these plants were used by the Upper Tanana (see Appendix 10 – *Upper Tanana Plant Names and Use*).

Despite the abundance of water in the region, the humidity is low. This is because the lowland bogs are more a function of the low relief and summer solar thaw of the fifty or so centimetres of soil above the permafrost than of precipitation, which averages only about 30cm per year. Seasonal variation in temperatures is extreme, ranging from -57 degrees Celsius or greater in the winter to the low 30s in the summer. The mean low temperature is -31 degrees Celsius in January, the mean high temperature is 12 degrees Celsius in July, and the annual mean temperature is -6 degrees Celsius. (The lowest recorded temperature for North America was recorded at nearby Snag, Yukon on 3 February 1947 of -62.8 degrees Celsius (-81 degrees Fahrenheit). Cloud coverage is relatively high, averaging overcast for 27% and broken for 30% of the year (Wahl et al. 1987).

The low mean temperatures combined with the low solar values associated with the high cloud cover, result in long winters with lakes and streams frozen from October to mid-May (Hosley 1981a). And while the depth of snow is never very deep, it can come as early as September and remain on the ground until May. As a result, the seasons of spring and fall are short, while the difference between winter and summer might best be summed up as frozen or wet.

In the present, the basin supports a wide range of fish species, large and small mammals, and is an important component of the interior western continental flyway; in Alaska the lower Chisana River basin is completely within the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, while the upper portion lies in Wrangell-St.Elias National Park and Preserve.

Dominant large mammals include moose (*Alces alces*), black and brown (grizzly) bear (*Ursus americanus* and *Ursus arctos*), mountain sheep (*Ovis dalli*), and caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) of the Chisana and Forty-Mile C aribou Herds.

Furbearers include wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*), otter (*Lontra canadensis*), and the snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*).

Pre-eminent among the fish species are whitefish (*Coregonus sp.*), grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), pike (*Esox lucius*), sucker (*Catostomus spp.*), and lingcod [burbot] (*Lota lota*).

Like the plants, most all animals were integrated into Upper Tanana culture. All retain an important social and spiritual relationship to people - animals are culturally categorized by the *Dineh* as non-human persons - and many were important components of the aboriginal technology and subsistence persons.

THE WORLD THAT RAVEN MADE



Figure 8. *Taatsant'o* - Creator and Trickster

“In our world Raven had something to do with making this earth. He is a complicated character – he is both good and bad, helpful and trouble-making” (Jerry Isaac, Tanacross, 10 Aug. 1996).

Overview

Like most indigenous people everywhere, the Upper Tanana conceive of themselves as having always occupied the region in which they live "since time immemorial." Their existence as *Dineh* - People, attest to this belief. To them, it is self-evident that they have been present in the region, if not at any precise location, since the settling of the world by human beings. Within their own accounting, the world which *Dineh* occupy was created in the distant past by the Creator and molded into its present form through the activities of *Taatsant'o* - Crow or Raven. This origin belief is a variation of the widespread "earth diver motif" found throughout North America, in which the earth is made by mud brought up from the bottom of a body of water (Boas 1914; Thomson 1929).

At the beginning of creation animals and humans could communicate and it was largely through the efforts of Raven that they were differentiated. But becoming different also created conflict and many accounts attempt to demonstrate ways in which humans and animals can get along together in a respectful way, the consequences of not doing so, or reversing/inverting contemporary roles to dramatically highlight the inherent ambiguities of existence and knowledge. Other ancient beings played a dramatic role in setting the world in its modern form; in Upper Tanana land it principally the Culture Hero *Ts'awusha* who established additional rules for proper behaviour between people and animals and amongst people themselves.

Indigenous accounts of origins are often referred to as mythology or legend, but they cannot be understood merely as fantastic speculative tales. Malinowski (1925) believed that myths provide a social charter, which serves to legitimate contemporary social beliefs and norms. Others have presented myth as a philosophical discourse examining important moral, ethical, and existential cultural concerns, just as our own biblical myths are (Frye 1982). As Levi-Strauss has persuasively argued in his *Mythologiques* (see, e.g., Levi-Strauss 1969, 1973), many indigenous accounts are not concerned with origins per se - that is from where and at what point in chronological time people first came to some place - as they are with establishing the nature of the proper relationships which ought to prevail within that space. In both approaches, indigenous accounts are seen to be seeking to understand the present more than the past (Cruikshank 1978; McClellan 1970).

In addition, the mythological figure of *Taatsant'o* - Raven or Crow - is one of great depth of character. He is simultaneously the all-powerful Creator and the tragic Trickster, a "divine figure but deeply flawed and very human....[symbolizing] the frailty and human qualities of the gods and their closeness to humans" (Lee 1999:827). The *Dineh* understanding of the creation of the world is contained in a long cycle of stories involving the activities of Crow/Raven and *Ts'awusha*. I have never heard the complete cycle myself, only portions of it, nor have I found any full recording of the cycle by anyone else. McKennan (1959:105) was told that "in the old days storytelling was confined to the winter months and that the *Tsa-o-sha* [sic] or transformer, cycle of stories was only narrated during the moon of *tcitcium-sa* ("hook-game moon", December).

In July of 1994, Mr. Andy Frank obliquely refused my request to retell some of these stories, noting, "When winter time, that the time you tell that story, when you lie down to bed. So

we listen good that way. When we're ready to go to sleep, they make us lay down and listen now. And they tell story, the old time story. Oh, that lot of that man go around the world, that's a long story, a long story. I don't want to talk about it now." Mr. Frank was insistent, however, on my understanding that the stories of *Ts'awusha* and others from the myth-times were sacred, to be taken seriously and contemplated for their moral value; "A long time, that man go around the world and come back. Some, lots of bad animals, he straighten 'em out too, that man. That man, my old people they say, he walk like God that man go around the world, he walk with God. Way back, no white man, they know God too, they know. . . *T'odiht'ay*, they call him." He then went on to tell me an abbreviated version of the story of how two sisters chasing butterflies passed into the other world - Heaven, where one foolishly took the wrong ("bad") road, while the other the "good" road; the latter was returned to her people on a spider's thread through a hole beneath the rock of the moon so that she could tell everyone.³ "That's why they know he God, old time people. God sent him back, he come back this world. That's why old time people they know, that picture - you know God? You know Jesus? They know way back, they know too." Mr. Frank then concluded, "When I see bible, I tell my grandpa, you were right." I have heard many other *Dineh* similarly refer to their myths as "the Indian bible."

McKenna (1959:175-195) recorded a number of stories of Crow/Raven and *Ts'awusha*, which I will not repeat here, since they are widely available through his publication. Mrs. Mary Tyone (1996) has published a corpus of fourteen such stories in Upper Tanana and transliterated English. Vitt (1971:175-184) presents two moral tales, which describe the arrival of the bow and arrow and the poor boy who gains power by practicing discipline and sharing. In my own fieldwork, I was told an account of the initial creation of the world and several *Ts'awusha* stories, which I present in the following pages.

³ A more extensive version of this tale is presented in Upper Tanana and transliterated English in Tyone (1996:23-33) as *When Butterfly Went up to Another World with Two Girls*.

The Story of the Creation of the World

Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny told me the following account of the Creation of the Dineh world in 1999. We were camping at the traditional village site of *Taiy Chi*, which lies in the low hills just south of the Chisana River on the Yukon Alaskan border. Dinner was complete, and we drank tea and spoke of some of the time he had lived at this site during his lifetime. I asked him if he would tell me a story of how this world came to be and he replied:

How did the world start up? Okay, the very beginning, okay.

They say that this planet was just water, right? There was no ground. And so . . .

You see what we see today, that swan there? That swan there - gee, it's funny how things work out like that.

Fish-woman, you know, fish-girl, like fish, but here [above the waist] like woman, eh?

Funny how Native people know that a long time ago, the very beginning. You don't see that in a book today.

There's that one, that Fish-woman, and a Swan. And a Crow, you see, that's the main Crow. Okay? Crow.

You see, they say Sandpiper he's got little checkered this way [around his neck], he say "Let me borrow your necklace." But Crow, tired, he's got no place to land, eh, he's Crow, like Raven, he's got no place to land. Tired, he can't float, he just drown. So he kept flying, out above the water. This earth was all covered with water.

So, he gets tired and pretty soon he sees just a little stick sticking out like that. He pull like this, he pull like that, Crow, you know? And then Fish-girl come up.

"Let's see your baby," he said. The Fish-woman, she had a little baby, eh? There was no ground, just a stick sticking out like that.

So he tell that Fish-girl, "Let me see that kid for a while," you know, Crow. So, yeah, she give it to Crow and that's a mistake, eh? That's a mistake there, yeah, because that Crow he take off, eh? He hold that baby.

That Fish-girl is got her hand out and Crow is holding the baby there. The Fish-girl say "Give me back my kid."

"No, I'm not giving it back. Give me a little mud, a little ground like this. Ground. You got to go down." Dive? Down below, she bring up ground like that and fold it like that [over the stick]. "Bring some more."

Tired, she just going down there. Pretty soon it's a little bit big, eh? Ground. It gets bigger, and bigger, and bigger, eh? See now, this is the Crow now, pretty soon he think, "Bring mud too, mud, you know mud? Under the water, bring that up too, mud. Bring this one - bring willow, you know."

He hold that baby. He got three feet, like that. He jump on it eh? The ground there? Jump on it.

The Crow there, he's holding the baby, eh? Pretty soon the ground is going out like that, right? Yup, spreading it out.

"Bring some more, bring some more, you want your baby!" The Fish-woman just half crazy, eh? She was so tired, pretty soon she's just standing there. Crow, he keep flattening it out, going out, going out, like that, eh?

Oh, she's so tired. "Last time, I'm going to get you some more for me. Just go down and get you maybe five."

"Bring me up the tree," he said, "tree." You see the tree there? You see the trees here? "Bring me up little ones", you know? Bring me up the five of them."

Oh, what else? "Go down and get the willow too. Get birch. Get poplar." He name it for them, eh?

She go down and take it off and bring it up like that, eh?

That Crow, he don't give baby back. He take off with that kid, eh! Crow, he dancing around, his three feet, the ground is growing out like that.

Pretty soon that's how this world is made. Crow, Crow made that!

It's getting so big, the ground is getting so big, it grows.

The ground grows, did you know that? The ground there? It grows.

You see that lake, we see. Bill Mann there? You see - we used to look from here, big lake, like that. You come today; you see that everything is growing together, like that, cover up that lake.

You see *Dakteel*, I tell you border, before we took off? That was a lake. It's just nothing now. That was deep down there.

Ground grows.

So, that time that everything just going like that, that Europe was just how it is today.

Europe was just floating on the ocean.

Beaver. Beaver. Beaver and porcupine, they stand together like that. The one from Europe is Porcupine, right? "I want to go across there. How am I going to go across?"

Because the water is just going like that [It's wavy on top?] Yeah. So, Porcupine's there.

"You got too many quills!" He tell Porcupine, "You got too many quills! How I'm going to give you a ride up there?" Right?

"Well, let's figure it out," he said.

So he said, Porcupine, "Oh, quills eh?" So he plucked himself like that, he plucked himself like that, eh? Yeah, from his belly.

O.K., you're not going to get no quills. So, where am I going to sit?"

"Right on top of my back," Beaver say. "I'll take you across to that island there."

See, he's got tough skin there, you know, fat where all Beaver is, on top there? Porcupine sit on top there. No Crow for him, eh? He went across. And he came back here, to North America.

The world was new that time, you know. The world was new them days. Just Crow, the main, the main . . . Native people know, He made this planet! Crow. Yeah.

Tales of *Ts'awusha* – The One Who Set the World Straight

Introduction

Ts'awusha is a figure in Upper Tanana mythology, which in anthropology we recognize as the "Culture Hero." This figure is common archetype in practically all known cultural traditions. A shared feature of this figure across cultures is his or her role in the transformation of the world from the preceding myth-time to the world, which exists today. The Culture Hero reflects the transitions required in order for human society to emerge in its present form. I have been fortunate to have been told a series of *Ts'awusha* stories by Upper Tanana Elder Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny, several of which I present here.

Mr. Johnny is the oldest son of White River Johnny, who was also known as Little John, a respected Upper Tanana of the twentieth century. His son continues to live in his father's last cabin just off the Alaska Highway near the international border, from which he heads out into the bush to hunt and, until recently, trap in the Scottie Creek valley. He is well known throughout the region as a capable bushman and hunter who shares the animal meat he kills with his many relatives and friends throughout the area. I have had the good fortune to spend considerable time with Mr. Johnny over the years, who has been a patient and knowledgeable teacher of the *Dineh* way.

The stories that follow were told to me in the late summer of 1995. The day before Mr. Johnny had killed a moose and we had spent the day butchering it with the help of a coterie of relatives who had come out to the cabin to help and receive a share. After they had left we talked about other hunts he had been on and, in particular, the need to keep a keen physical and spiritual awareness in the bush. The night had grown long; it was about 1:30 am and the cabin was darkened, although there was a soft blue-white light in the sky outside. Tommy got up for more coffee.

"*Ts'awusha* started that," he tells me from the shadows near the stove. "He was the one who made things the way they are now. You guys call him Jesus. He was Jesus, the first one. He did a lot of things to fix things up. You should talk to Bessie about that, boy, she can tell that story good."

I was about to see that his modesty was ill-placed; beginning by the stove, moving across the room, animating the actions he described, dropping and raising and changing his voice for

character and dramatic effect, Tommy told me the following episodes of *Ts'awusha's* adventures in the time after Crow's creation of the world. In those days, animals were like people sometimes; they could stand up and walk around, use tools, and talk to each other, and some would kill people to eat them. They were bigger than today, too. Everything was confused. Somebody had to straighten things out; and it was *Ts'awusha* who did that.

***Ts'awusha* Teaches the Animals How to Dance to Please Moose**

Once he came by and found Wolf just hungry. "What are you eating?" he asked Wolf.

"Just mice, rabbit."

"Where's the moose?"

"They're all gone. We ate them and now they're all gone." So, *Ts'awusha* thought he would fix that up. Bear was there too, and Fox.

"Here's what you're gonna do. You're gonna dance and those moose and caribou will come back. They're up in the sky."

The world has got levels, here, up there, down there. You can get between them, if you know how. Wolf didn't know this. *Ts'awusha* knew that up above, the sky, it was just like cellophane, a layer. You could punch through it if you knew how. So he showed them how to dance. Wolf dance this way, Fox like this, Bear like that. He showed them how to dance and they started dancing. Wolf, he dance like this [half-crouched, with arms extended at an obtuse angle from the body, fingers of hands closed parallel with each other, turning head slowly and deliberately to one side, then another]. Fox dance too, but he's little, mostly run in circles. Bear, he growl and tear up ground over his head.

They dance like that for a long time, then . . . Wolf jump, whoosh, up and right through the sky. Fox, he jumps too but he only gets his head through. He got stuck; his head through and his body hanging down tail swinging in the air. He

looked pretty funny; you could just see his ass. Bear just got mad, tear up the ground some more.

Wolf was up there, in heaven. He looked around and saw all those moose, and caribou too. He chased him back down to earth and then they had plenty to eat again.

Ts'awusha tell him, he tell them "You gotta do that. You guys gotta dance and you guys gotta come back. What you want these guys to eat - moss? They need you here - you gotta come back."

***Ts'awusha* Straightens Out Eagle**

Ts'awusha did lots of stuff. Eagle? He straighten him out. Those days Eagle eat men, humans. So he set out to fix that. He snuck up to the nest and watched the Eagle, mother and father fly off, one fly that way, one fly this way. *Ts'awusha* climbed up after they were gone and heard two babies; they were arguing with each other over food, pulling on a piece of meat between their them. "Hey, which one of you guys is gonna tell on me?" he asked them.

There were two of them, a brother and a sister. The girl says "I'm gonna tell on you when my mother gets back." So *Ts'awusha* goes towards her and she backs up, backs up some more. He's got his arrow and he shoots her by the ledge and she falls out of the nest, down to the ground. She's dead now.

"What about you," he says to the brother, "Are you gonna tell on me."

"No. No," he squeaked, scared.

"Ok, make sure. I'll be watching you." And *Ts'awusha* climbed back down and hid behind a tree nearby.

Pretty soon the sky starts to thunder. It's the Eagle father coming back. He's got no food. He's coming back and its thunder. "Hey, where's your sister?"

The boy looked down to where *Ts'awusha* was hiding, nervous. He knows he's there with his arrow, watching him. "She was backing up to the ledge to take a shit and she fell over!" The father looked around. It's O.K. So he sits there and *Ts'awusha* shoots an arrow right through him. He's dead.

A little while later it starts to hail. It's the Eagle mother coming back. She's got something in her feet. It's a human. She's gonna eat it and feed it to her kids.

"Hey, where's your sister?"

The boy looked down again at the place where *Ts'awusha* was. "She was taking a shit off the ledge and fell over," he told her.

Eagle mother looked around. "Where's your father?" she asked him.

"He was carrying too much meat and he fell" the son lied.

Then she bent over to start eating that dead man. *Ts'awusha* shot her then and killed her.

Ts'awusha went up to the boy eagle. "Now what are you gonna do?" he asked him. "Are you gonna eat humans any more? Don't do it or else I'll come back here and do the same to you. You don't kill humans anymore - you kill salmon, whitefish, rabbit, marten, but no more humans"

The last eagle agreed and so *Ts'awusha* left him there to make his new way.

***Ts'awusha* Fixes Wolverine**

Later on, *Ts'awusha* was walking up in the mountains, alongside a big pack of ice. He was following a trail. Wolverine lay trap along the path by that glacier, with spikes of ice below the trail where you would slide down, impaling yourself.

Ts'awusha was wary along the trail and he saw the trap. He slid down carefully. When he got down there, he pushed one of those spikes through his clothes and then bloodied his face by hitting himself on the nose; he smeared some of that

blood around the spike. He lay there, pretending he was dead until Wolverine came back.

Wolverine came up to *Ts'awusha* and looked him over, smelling him; *Ts'awusha* kept still, with his eyes closed. Wolverine pushed *Ts'awusha* around and when he didn't move back figured he was dead. So he took *Ts'awusha* and tied him to a birch bark sled to tow him back to his camp.

As they crossed a bridge over a stream, *Ts'awusha* farted. "What the hell was that?" asked Wolverine. He looked around. Whoo, it stunk. He poked *Ts'awusha* with a stick, but he stayed still. "Jeez, he must be dead a long time, he stinks so much." Then Wolverine got going again.

Again *Ts'awusha* farted. He was laughing pretty hard to himself, trying to hold it back. Wolverine was looking around, trying to find out where that noise came from, but he couldn't figure it out, so he moved on to his camp.

At Wolverine's camp he had dead beaver piled up high all over. His wife was fat and pregnant, skinning beaver. There were several young ones playing about, running around the camp.

Wolverine placed *Ts'awusha* by the fire and went to greet his wife. *Ts'awusha* opened one eye carefully to check out the camp that was in his view. The youngest kid of Wolverine saw him open his eye and cried, "Daddy, look!", but when Wolverine looked at *Ts'awusha* he saw nothing; *Ts'awusha* had closed his eyes and held his breath again. He checked him, anyways; Wolverine turned *Ts'awusha* over to check him and still thought he was dead. But now *Ts'awusha* could see the other side of the camp. Again the youngster saw *Ts'awusha* open his eyes, and again he called out to his father, and again Wolverine turned *Ts'awusha* over and declared him dead, and told his kid to stop fooling around.

Now *Ts'awusha* could see the last part of the camp and knew how many of them were there and where they were. He leaped up and began shooting them all with his arrows. The mother ran past trying to escape and *Ts'awusha* slit her belly with

his caribou-rib knife. From her guts spilled all the animals that Wolverine had killed - rabbit, silver fox, black fox, red fox, otter, martin - and the dead beavers piled high came back to life and went back to their lodges. *Ts'awusha* killed all the wolverine except for the one child who had seen him.

He chased that last one to kill it, but she ran away, pretty fast, and got up into a tree. *Ts'awusha* started to climb up after her but she began to shit and piss down on top of him. He jumped off. He tried again and she shit on him again.

"You're a smart kid," he told him, "but now you know, Wolverine can't kill humans anymore." She laughed at him. So he tried to climb that tree again and she just piss and shit all over him down there. Finally he said, "Forget it," and left her there. That's why we still got problems with Wolverine; she still steals from us and is pretty mean if you meet her on the trail.

***Ts'awusha* and Bear**

But Bear was the toughest *Ts'awusha* ever faced. He had to be smart to face Bear.

Once he was camped up on a ridge, like here, above this place. Two Bear sisters saw his camp and whispered to each other. "Let's sneak up on him while he's sleeping. We can take his knife and kill him." So they circled around the ridge, each from a different direction, as quiet as they could. But they were not quiet enough; *Ts'awusha* heard them coming. He pretended to remain asleep, but slipped his good knife from his cover and hid it under his arm, replacing it with one that was only half-made; the point was still soft copper, which bent easily.

The sister Bears crept up to *Ts'awusha*; they thought he was still asleep. One of them picked up the knife and stabbed him with it. It didn't do nothing to him, it only bent against his clothes. *Ts'awusha* drew out the good knife from beneath his armpit and killed them both with it.

There was the brother Bear below the ridge that saw this. He was mad and began to race up the hill to get *Ts'awusha*. *Ts'awusha* took off as fast as he could but he

knew he couldn't outrun Bear. He ran down through the bush to where he knew there was a big lake and jumped into the water. Bear got to the shore just behind him but wouldn't follow him into the water. *Ts'awusha* stood out there, in the middle of the lake, laughing at Bear and teasing him, which made Bear even angrier. He wanted to kill *Ts'awusha*, for sure, but he was afraid of the water.

There was a frog on the shore of the lake. Bear went to him and told him to start drinking up the water in the lake so that he could get out to *Ts'awusha*. If the frog didn't do it then Bear would kill him. So the frog began to lap up the water of the lake with his tongue. Slowly the level of the water in the lake began to drop and *Ts'awusha* stopped laughing out there in the middle. He could see that he was in trouble; soon Bear would be able to walk out on the mud to get him.

Ts'awusha saw a sandpiper walking across the mud, pecking at the food there. He spoke to it in bird language, "Tuee, tuee," just like that. He told him if he would do something for him, then he would give him a gift. *Ts'awusha* would give him a necklace if Sandpiper would stop that frog. "Just pretend that you are eating, and you can get close enough to him to do something," *Ts'awusha* advised him.

So the Sandpiper worked his way over towards Frog, picking at the ground, eating, pretending he didn't even notice Frog and Bear. "Hey, what are you doing?" demanded Bear of Sandpiper.

"Oh, I'm just eating bugs in the mud," he replied innocently. He continued to walk around, but each time he would get a little closer to Frog. Soon he was right beside him. Instead of pecking at the ground, Sandpiper thrust his beak into Frog's soft, bloated belly. The water inside Frog came rushing out, refilling the lake with a flood.

Ts'awusha could see his chance to escape. He dove into the moving stream and let it carry him towards the creek, which drained the lake. But Bear saw his plan. He knew if *Ts'awusha* made it to the creek he would be carried away faster than Bear could run. So Bear took off his pants and placed them open at the mouth of the

creek to capture *Ts'awusha* in them when he was brought to the mouth of the creek. He thought he would get him for sure.

But *Ts'awusha* was smart. He had grabbed a stick and stuck a piece of sod on the end. He held the stick ahead of him, the sod in front of him, and when he came to the mouth of the creek the sod went into Bear's pants instead of him.

Bear scooped up his pants, thinking he had finally caught *Ts'awusha* but it was only mud and grass. *Ts'awusha* floated by and then called out to Bear, laughing, knowing that he had escaped. Bear stood there watching him go, angry at his escape, with his pants full of stinky mud. He was beat.

In return for his help, *Ts'awusha* gave a white necklace to Sandpiper; he carries it still today, a line of white feathers around his neck.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PAST



Figure 9. Mid-Holocene Northern Archaic Point Fragments from *Nii-ii* - KdVo-6

(N. A. Easton)

Introduction

The Chisana River Basin simply has not had the intensive archaeological attention that is needed in order to be able to make any certain statements about the earliest human occupations in this region, the furthest reaches of the Upper Tanana valley. However, based on the limited work which has been done in the area and more extensive work in the middle Tanana River valley, we are able to construct an accounting of the general sequence of prehistoric cultures from the recent past to about 12,000 years ago, which to date represents the earliest firm archaeological evidence for human occupations in the western subarctic and indeed, the western hemisphere proper.

Unfortunately, Alaskan and Yukon archaeologists have developed separate nationalist terminologies for the archaeological sequences on either side of the International Border. Below, we provide an outline of each of these sequences and a discussion of their similarities and differences.

Recent archaeological survey and excavation by the author has uncovered early Holocene - late Pleistocene cultural and palaeontological remains on the banks of Mirror Creek, a tributary of the lower Chisana River, about two kilometres east of the International Border in Canada. This site (designated KdVo-6) may well provide the archaeological evidence to firmly link the two separate sequences, which to date have been geographically separated by hundreds of

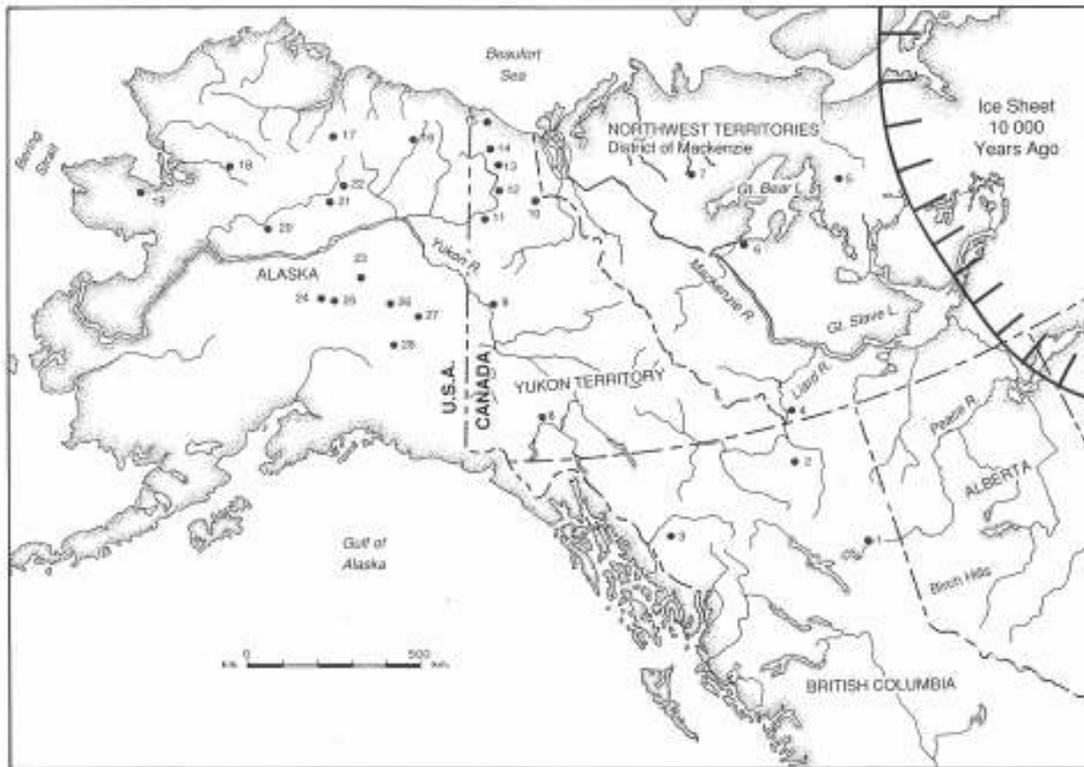
kilometres. Additional archaeological survey and excavation by the author in the Scottie Creek valley, another tributary of the Chisana River, confirms the presence of the general regional sequence (Easton 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

The ancient Beringian environment which prevailed in the Chisana basin during the last glacial maximum, some 27,000 to 12,000 years ago during the late Pleistocene geological epoch, and the general environmental changes which occurred in the region over the past 11,000 years or so of the subsequent Holocene epoch was presented in the previous section. There is widespread agreement on the presence of human societies occupying eastern Beringia during the final millennia of the Pleistocene and early Holocene Epochs. Currently there are two regional schemes, which prevail in our understanding. The first is one, which was developed to account for the prehistory of glaciated Yukon; the second is one, which was developed to account for the prehistory of unglaciated eastern Beringia (central Alaska and western Yukon). In this section I present first the northwestern Canadian (Southwest Yukon) archaeological sequence,⁴ followed by a presentation of the eastern Alaskan sequence, and then a comparative discussion of both archaeological sequences, which relates one to the other. Finally, I discuss specific archaeological sites within or immediately adjacent to the Chisana basin proper.⁵

The following map shows the general location of western subarctic archaeological sites of the late Pleistocene and early Holocene (from perhaps as early as 14,000 to about 8,000 years ago).

⁴ I am leaving aside discussion of the proposed early (20,000 years +) cultural tradition based on a bone tool technology proposed by Richard Harrington, Jaques Cinq-Mars, and Richard Morlan (Cinq-Mars and Morlan 1982) for the unglaciated northeastern Beringia. The archaeological evidence for this early culture is equivocal at best and not generally accepted by the majority of archaeologists. The upper late Pleistocene – early Holocene (circa 11,000 years ago) microblade and burin component of the Blue Fish Caves assemblage in the Old Crow basin is variously assigned to the Paleo-Arctic, Denali, Beringian, or Dyuktai archaeological traditions which are discussed below (c.f. Fagan 1987:122-127; Dixon 1999:58-61).

⁵ This current study had proposed to undertake limited archaeological survey and test excavation within the basin, in particular at the Cross Creek village site and downstream in the vicinity of the confluence of Big Scottie Creek and the Chisana River proper, however, international permitting difficulties prevented this.



Map 4. Ancient Sites in the Northwestern Area, 11 500 to 7 000 Years Ago The sites shown belong to Clovis Palaeo-Indian, Palaeo-Arctic, and early Northern Cordilleran peoples. Microblade people of the Palaeo-Arctic tradition became established in Alaska around 10 700 years ago, and expanded eastwards, probably absorbing or displacing earlier inhabitants of the Cordilleran region.

1 Charlie Lake Cave, P-I	9 Dawson placer mines, P-I & Moosehide	19 Trail Creek Caves, P-A	Abbreviations P-I: Palaeo-Indian P-A: Palaeo-Arctic NC: Northern Cordilleran group HR: Significant in history of research
2 Pink Mountain, P-I	10 Rock River sites, NC	20 Batza Tena, obsidian source, P-I	
3 Mount Edziza, obsidian source	11 Bluefish Caves, P-I, P-A	21 Island, P-I, P-A	
4 Fisherman Lake & Pointed Mountain, NC, P-A, HR	12 Old Crow River Flats, P-I	22 Girls' Hill, P-I	
5 Acasta Lake, NC	13 Dog Creek, P-I	23 Campus, HR	
6 Franklin Tanks, Gt. Bear R., HR	14 Kikavichik Ridge, P-I	24 Walker Road, P-I	
7 Airport, NC	15 Engistlack, NC, HR	25 Dry Creek, P-A	
8 Canyon Creek, NC	16 Putu, P-I	26 Broken Mammoth, P-A, NC	
	17 Mesa, NC	27 Healy Lake sites, NC, P-A	
	18 Onion Portage, P-A, HR	28 Tangle Lakes, P-A	

Figure 10. Late Pleistocene - Early Holocene Archaeological Sites of the Western Subarctic (from Clark 1991a)

The Northwestern Canadian (Southwest Yukon) Archaeological Sequence

Based on current knowledge, the archaeological sequence for the southwest Yukon first proposed by Workman (1978) has been refined by the recognition of a non-microblade Northern Cordilleran Tradition in the early Holocene (Clark 1983), a mid-Holocene “Annie Lake” technological complex of small, deeply concave-based lanceolate points (Greer 1993; Hare

1995), and the combining of Workman's Aishihik and Bennett Lake phases into a Late Prehistoric period. Broadly speaking, then, the southwest Yukon chronology is as follows.

Northern Cordilleran Tradition

Lasting from at least 10,000 years ago to about 7,000 years ago, this tradition is characterized by large straight and round-based lanceolate point forms, large blades and flakes, and transverse notched burins. Significantly the assemblage lacks microblade technology (Clark 1983). The climate at this time shifted from the colder and dryer climate associated with the terminal glacial period to increasing warming throughout (from a mean July temperature of 5.5 to 7.2 degrees Celsius to 7.2 to 9.9 degrees Celsius), while the vegetation seems to have been dominated by shrub tundra. Representative site components of this tradition include the basal levels of the Canyon (JfVg-1) and Annie Lake (JcUr-3) sites, and the Moosehide (LaVk-2) site.

As discussed by Hare (1995), two possible sources for this tradition have been proposed. The first, following Clark (1983, 1992) is derived from populations of the Cordillera geophysical region, themselves derivative from late Paleoindian Plano peoples of the northern prairies, which co-existed with microblade making populations entering the Yukon from the northwest. However, Hare (1995:131) suggests that, “given the broad morphological similarities between blades from Annie Lake and those for the 11,000 BP Nenana Complex (discussed below) (Goebel et al. 1991) and the apparent dissimilarities with the Early prehistoric period, Clovis-like blades of northern Alberta (see Le Blanc and Wright 1990), it is unlikely that the Northern Cordilleran Tradition is derived from southern-based Plano influences. Instead, it is probable that the roots of Northern Cordilleran are to be found in the indigenous northwestern Paleoindian tradition.”

Little Arm Phase or Northwest Microblade Tradition

Lasting from about 7,000 to 8,000 years ago to about 4,500 to 5,000 years ago, this tradition is characterized by composite tool production using small blades or microblades, multiple graters and burins, round-based projectile points, and a variety of end and side scrapers (Workman 1978). The Little Arm site (JiVs-1) of Kluane Lake is the type site of this regional phase and sites of this type and period are found everywhere throughout the southwest Yukon, many of which might also include some notched points (although Workman would disagree with

including such sites on that basis). The climate during this time continued to become warmer than today's average temperatures, while the vegetation shifted from shrub tundra to a spruce forest ecosystem

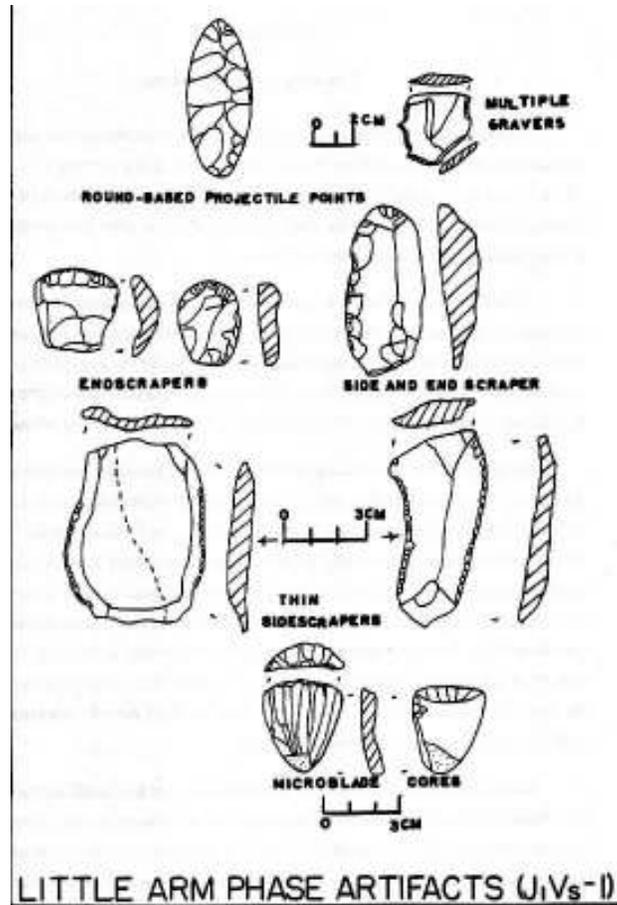


Figure 11. Little Arm Phase Artefacts

(from Workman 1978)

The Northwest Microblade Tradition (NWMt) as proposed by MacNeish (1964) included both wedge-shaped microblade cores and side notched points. It was seen by some as attempting to embrace far too many regional phases over too great a geographic area (from the Mackenzie River basin to Fairbanks) to have any great utility. More recently, its use has been resurrected by some in the Canadian northwest as representative of a merging of microblade technology diffused from Alaskan (and ultimately east Asian) origins and combined with the developing indigenous Yukon-Northwest Territories-based Northern Cordilleran tradition (Wright 1995; Clark et al. 1999). Clark et al. (1999:175) suggests that:

The genesis of the Northwest Microblade Tradition, at least its microblade industry and possibly also its burins, lies in the spread of Denali culture to the Yukon about 7,000 or 8,000 years ago and its further, later spread into the District of Mackenzie and adjacent areas of British Columbia and Alberta . . . [which] resulted in considerable heterogeneity. . . . The Northwest Microblade Tradition should be viewed as a frontier culture [in the Cordillera] vis-à-vis the Denali focal region.

Annie Lake Complex



Figure 12. Annie Lake Points

(N. A. Easton)

Lasting from about 6,900 to about 2,900 years ago, this complex is characterized by projectile points - called Annie Lake Points - which are relatively diminutive (3.5 to 4.25 cm), basally thinned (or "deeply concaved lanceolate" in Greer's (1993) morphological description), and additional lithics which are "characterized by thin, well made tools of high quality raw materials, with a debitage suggesting extensive curation and maintenance of tools (Hare 1995:132).

To date these points have been exclusively located in the Southern Lakes region around Whitehorse, Yukon. The Annie Lake Complex is found stratigraphically above microblade-bearing horizons of the NWMT and below Taye Lake Phase or Northern Archaic Tradition horizons. Temporally, however, it lies astride both the preceding and following tradition, leading Hare (1995:121-2) to suggest that it may represent "a small colonizing population...or, and

perhaps more likely, the Annie Lake complex represents diffusion of early Northern Archaic traits into an indigenous microlithic tradition.”

Taye Lake Phase or Northern Archaic Tradition or Middle Prehistoric Period

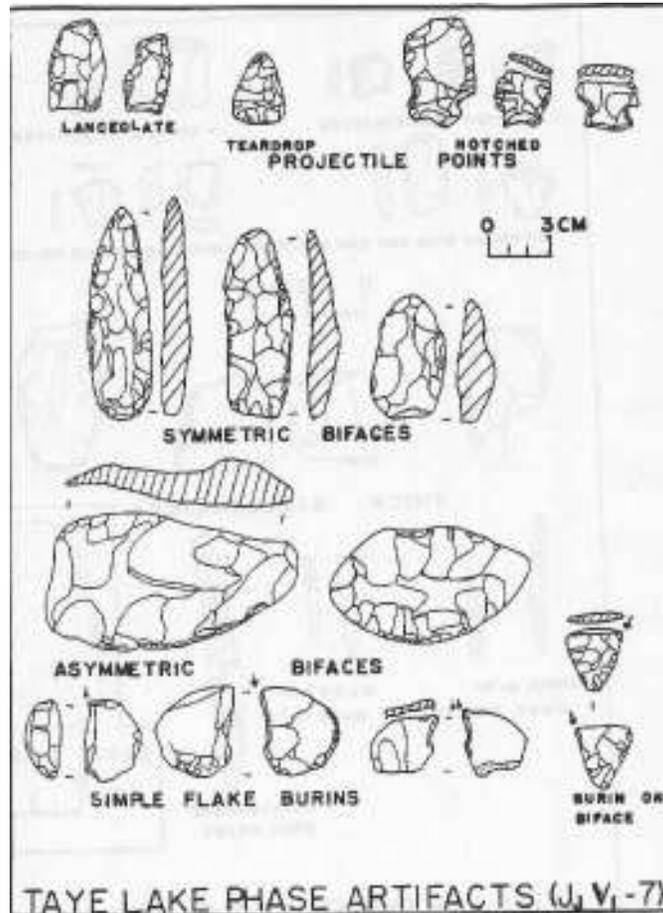


Figure 13. Taye Lake Phase Artefacts

(from Workman (1978))

Lasting from about 4,500 to 5,000 years ago to about 1,250 years ago, this archaeological culture is characterized by the introduction of a variety of side-notched and stemmed spear and arrow points (Anderson 1968a, 1968b; Workman 1978), a variety of scraper forms, net weights, and a notable increase in the recovery of bone artefacts of a variety of functions (although this last attribute may be a function of preservation, and the amounts are less than those found in the subsequent Late Prehistoric period). At some sites we find the appearance of microblades as well (c.f. Clark et al. 1999). A cooling and moister climate begins this period, with a neo-glacial

period at about 2,600 years ago, followed by a drier climate at its terminus. Vegetation was similar to that of today.

Both Anderson and Workman noted that the lithic artefacts at this time become increasingly crude in their workmanship, with little retouch flaking and dominated by poor, coarse-grained materials. This fact, combined with the general expansion in the size and diversity of the overall toolkit is interpreted to represent a population, which has adapted and expanded its comfortable adaptation to the boreal forest landscape to include a wider variety of subsistence resources.

Aishihik Phase - Late Prehistoric Period

Lasting from about 1,250 to about 200 years ago, this archaeological culture (Workman 1978) is essentially Northern Archaic, but differentiated from the Taye Lake phase by its presence above the White River Volcanic ash fall - Taye Lake material is below the ash. It is characterized by increased use (or perhaps only archaeological recovery) of bone and antler tools, native copper implements, and small-stemmed arrow points (Kavik or Klo-kut points). While initially cooling and moist the climate became warmer at the end of this period and the vegetation was not significantly different from today.

Interestingly, recent dating of a large number of well-preserved atlatl darts and bow arrows found in melting ice patches in the southwest Yukon has revealed that the latter is exclusively a Aishihik Phase technology in this region (Farnell et al. 2005; Hare et al. 2004). Such a correlation between the second White River Volcanic ash fall and the introduction of the new bow and arrow technology replacing the longstanding atlatl is suggestive of a brief period of rapid population displacement and replacement, although undoubtedly of the same Athapaskan language family.

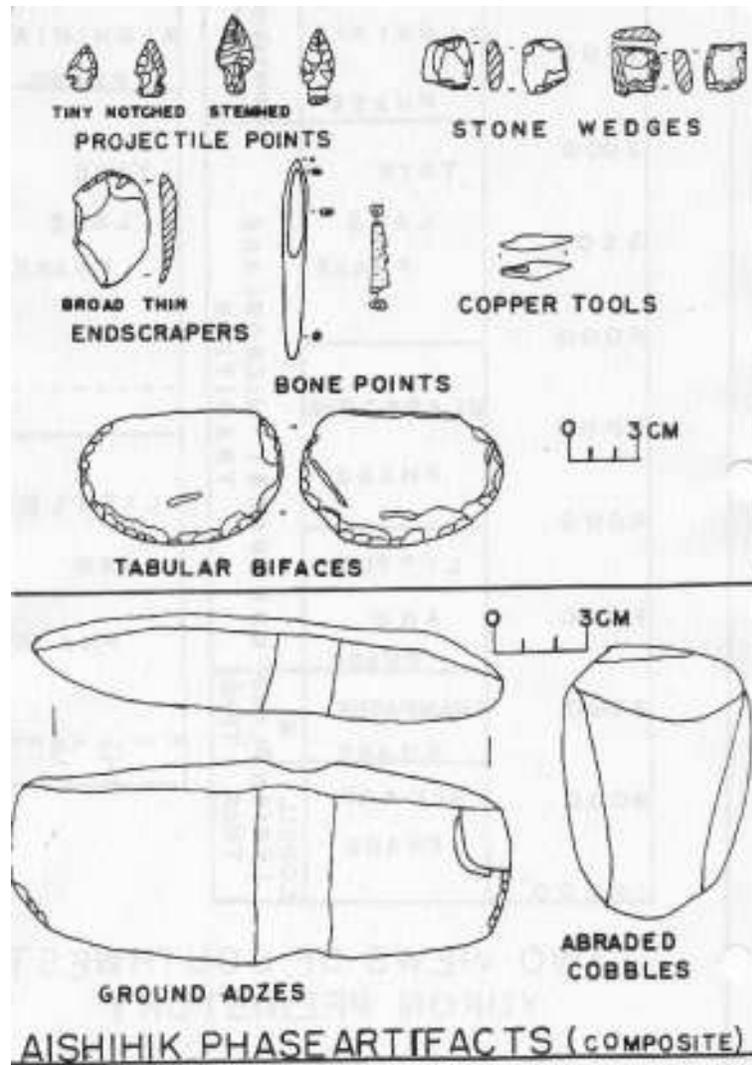


Figure 14. Aishihik Phase Artefacts

(from Workman 1978)

Bennett Lake Phase - Late Prehistoric

Lasting from about 200 years ago to this century, this archaeological culture (Workman 1978) is characterized by the introduction of European trade goods and their integration into aboriginal technology, and is prior to the full encapsulation and transformation of aboriginal technology into its modern form. Expedient lithic tools such as simple cobble scrapers (Upper Tanana=*Thichos*), choppers, and bipolar flakes are found along with scrapers made from bottle glass and strips of metal, fish-hooks made from nails, and bunting arrow points made from spent cartridges, and are common at sites such as those at Dawson-Tr'ondek and Fort Selkirk.

Discussion of Southwest Yukon Sequence

The Figure below presents a summary of the technological sequence of the southwest Yukon presented above.

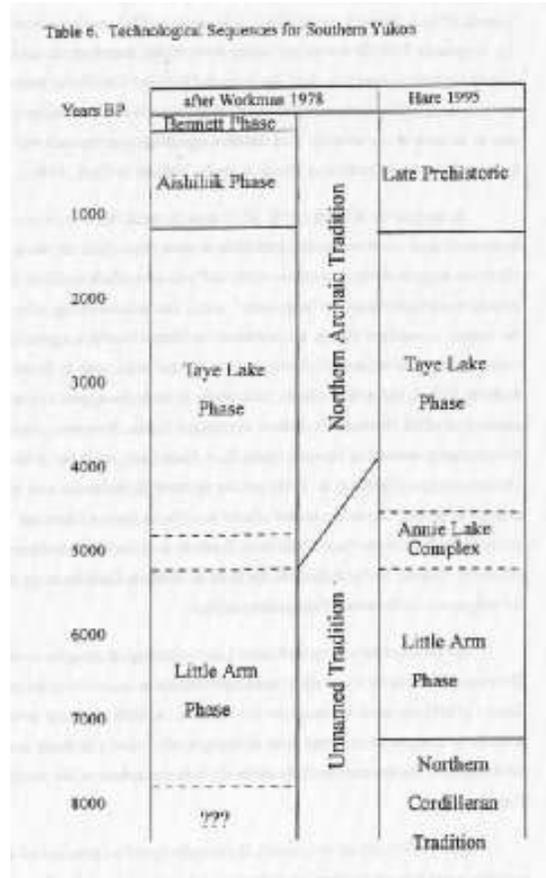


Figure 15. Technological Sequences for Southwest Yukon

(from Hare 1995)

There is no doubt that there is direct historic continuity between the contemporary inhabitants of the southwest Yukon and the people of the Bennett Lake phase. Similarly there is a direct connection between the people of the Bennett Lake phase and the preceding Aishihik, since the only defining difference is the introduction of European trade goods. This connection is reflected in contemporary archaeologists' movement away from the use of these phase names towards a more regional and generalized Late Prehistoric categorization with clear affiliations to modern Athapaskan groups (c.f. Greer 1983; Gotthardt 1990; Hare 1995:125).

The relationship between the Late Prehistoric period and the preceding periods is summed up in one of the most recent reviews of southwest Yukon prehistory. Hare (1995:17) writes:

As outlined by Workman, most researchers agree that the Northern Archaic and Northwest Microblade traditions gradually evolved into the Late Prehistoric Athapaskan Tradition and while there was considerable regional variability there is evidence for continuity in terms of technology, settlement and subsistence patterns.

In past years some archaeologists had suggested that the changes in technology between the Microblade and Northern Archaic periods reflected the migration of new culture-bearing people into the region (see especially Anderson 1968 and Workman 1978).

However, many archaeologists now favour models of population continuity in this period as well and suggest the possibility that the principal factor in these changes has been necessary adaptations to changes in the environment or the result of indigenous populations adapting diffused technological elements of neighbouring cultures (see, for example, Clark and Morlan 1982; Morrison 1987; Clark 1992; Hare 1995:16-17). Furthermore, Hare and Hammer (1997) have shown that the temporal range of microblades within the Yukon has more components outside the proposed range of the Northwest Microblade tradition than within it (see also Clark et al. 1999). Thus, for example, Morrison (1987) prefers the use of the term *Middle Prehistoric period* over that of the *Northern Archaic Tradition* in the Mackenzie and eastern cordilleran regions, while Clark and Morlan (1982:36) view the Northern Archaic as the later *phase* of the Northwest Microblade Tradition.

In other words, it can be argued that the changes in material culture in the archaeological record do not imply a physical replacement of the people in a region. Consider our own material culture changes from the introduction of new technology - the archaeological remains of my family or any of my neighbours 25 years ago would not have included a personal computer, diskettes, cd-roms, or video-tapes. Today they do. To suggest, based on material remains alone, that the differences between the material remains of then and today reflects *the replacement of one resident population with another* is clearly wrong in this instance. It could be wrong in prehistory as well, and increasing numbers of archaeologists are considering this fact.

The notion of a Northern Cordilleran Tradition was first proposed by Clark (1983) in order to account for the presence of non-microblade archaeological components underlying microblade-bearing deposits throughout the Yukon. The application of this tradition is now generally accepted to account for early Holocene sites characterized by large straight and round-based

lanceolate point forms, large blades and flakes, and transverse notched burins, but which lack microblades. However, even this tradition is increasingly regarded as having direct continuity with the subsequent Northwest Microblade Tradition (Wright 1995; Clark et al. 1999).

The Archaeological Sequence of Eastern Beringia (Central Alaska and Northwest Yukon)

Introduction

West (1996) and his collaborators have most recently summarized the prehistory of Alaska, which generally agrees with the Yukon sequence of technology but favours earlier dates and a slightly different terminology. The principal exception to this generalization is that the earliest components are variously classified as belonging to the Nenana Complex, the Denali Complex, or the Eastern Beringian Tradition.

Nenana Complex or Chindadn Complex

This archaeological culture has been dated at the Broken Mammoth site on the Tanana River at about 12,000 years ago and possibly as late as about 9,500 years ago at Healy Lake. It is characterized by an emphasis on bifacial technology on blades and flakes, triangular and tear-dropped shaped (Chindadn) projectile points and / or knives, straight and concave-based lanceolate projectile points, perforators (including bone needles), endscrapers and sidescrapers, but is lacking microblades. The type site is a set of sites on the Nenana River, namely Dry Creek, Walker Road, and Moose Creek (Powers and Hoffecker 1989; Hoffecker, et al. 1993), but the Complex name has also been extended to include a series of sites along the Tanana River proper (Goebel and Slobodin 1999; Hamilton and Goebel 1999). I have recovered a Nenana assemblage at the *Haah Tuuh Taiy* site (KdVo-6) overlooking Mirror Creek, a tributary of the lower Chisana River (Easton et al. 2004, 2005).

Due to extensive coverings of wind-blown glacial silts known as loess, many of the Nenana complex sites have exceptional organic preservation of bone, antler, and mammoth ivory the latter presumably scavenged from earlier Pleistocene deposits exposed along river banks, which has revealed in some detail the diet of these culture carriers (Dilley 1998). Besides the

expected remains of larger game – bison, elk, and sheep - their diet clearly included significant proportions of small mammals, migratory waterfowl and their eggs, and fish (Yesner et al. 1992, Yesner 1996).

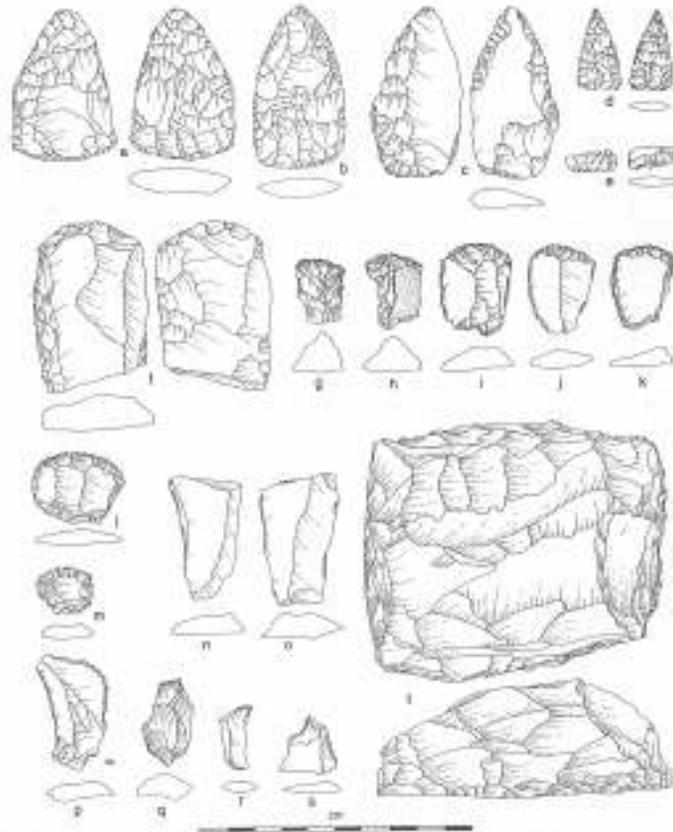


Figure 7-8 Component I of the Dry Creek site (Nenana complex) bifaces (a-f); side scrapers (g); end scrapers (h-m); bilaterally retouched flakes (n, o); retouched flakes (p-u); quadrilateral endscrapers (v).

Figure 16. Dry Creek, Component I, Nenana Complex

(from West 1996)

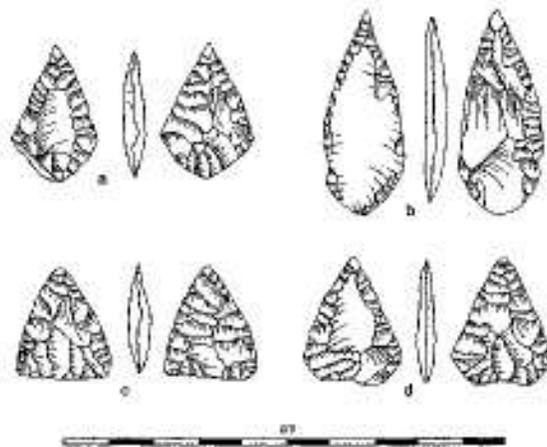


Figure 17. Chindadn ("Ancestor") points from Healy Lake.

(from West 1996)

Denali Complex (American Palaeoarctic Tradition / Beringian Tradition)

This archaeological culture is found from about 11,000 years ago to about 9,500 years ago and is characterized by the presence of microblades, wedge-shaped microblade cores, and burins. The American Paleoarctic Tradition was originally defined by Anderson (1970a, 1970b) on the basis of excavations at the Akmak and Onion Portage sites near the Brooks Range. It has subsequently been applied to a great number of assemblages within a wide variety of environmental contexts (maritime, transitional, interior, montane, northern, central, and coastal Alaska and Yukon). West (1981, 1996) subsumes these assemblages into an even wider Beringian Tradition that extends geographically into eastern Siberia / western Beringia, and would include the Nenana complex assemblages as well, on the basis that the lack of microblades is explained by site function – they are not found where they are not used. The presence of wedge-shaped microblade cores (one of a number of alternative core forms from which microblades can be struck) is the common element, which unifies the designation. Some archaeologists (e.g. Dixon 1999, and myself), find the inclusion of such a variety of assemblages to reduce the utility of both constructs to little more than some indication of relationship between them; a more useful construct for the Tanana River valley is West's earlier defined Denali complex.

West (1967) defined the Denali complex based on a suite of sites in the Fairbanks and Denali regions (Tangle Lakes, Donnelly, and Campus, and latterly components found above Nenana complex components at Dry Creek, Panguingue Creek, Healy Lake, and Broken Mammoth). The assemblage is typified by the presence of wedge-shaped microblade cores, core tablets, blades, bifacial biconvex knives, end scrapers, burins and burin spalls (particularly of the “Donnelly burin” form), and retouched flakes.

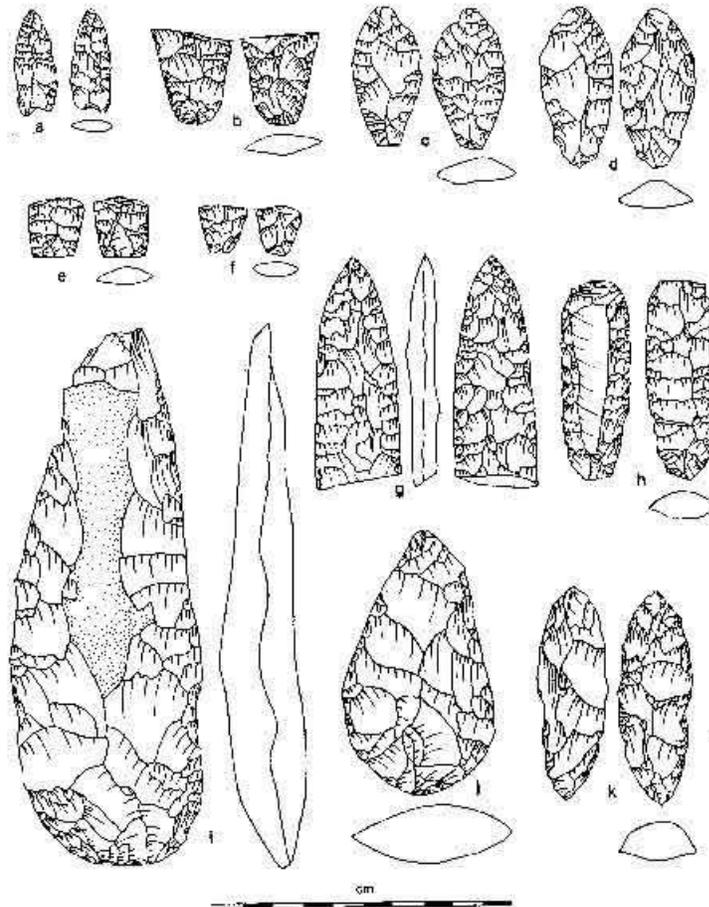


Figure 7-10 Bifaces from Component II of the Dry Creek site; complete projectile point and base fragments (a, b, e, f); bifacial knives and preforms (c, d, g-h).

Figure 18. Artefacts from Component II (Denali Complex) of the Dry Creek site

(from West 1996)

Despite West's assertion that the Denali complex includes the assemblages I have referred to as belonging to the Nenana complex, with the exception of the Swan Point site (which is yet to be fully reported and may be subject to processes promoting mixing of the strata), non-microblade bearing Nenana complex components consistently lie both stratigraphically lower and radiometrically younger than Denali complex materials both within and between the sites where they are found.

Northern Archaic Tradition

I have described this archaeological culture earlier. It is found from about 6,000 years ago to about 1,500 years ago in Alaska and characterized by the appearance of small, side-notched projectile points, as well as high numbers of endscrapers, and the presence of notched pebbles, presumably used for net weights.

Late Denali Complex

The presence of wedge-shaped cores in the Campus site, as well as others, which have been subsequently radiocarbon dated to the late Holocene led to the notion of a “Late Denali complex,” circa 3,500 to 1,500 years ago. It is characterized by the presence (reappearance?) of microblades and burins, in components which otherwise are similar to the Northern Archaic (i.e., contain side-notched points, etc.).

Athapaskan Tradition

This archaeological culture is found from about 1,500 years ago to about 150 years ago and is characterized by a shift from lithic to chacolithic copper technology, stemmed projectile points, and the increased use of bone and antler arrowheads (although it is likely that this is a largely a function of better preservation of more recent organic material).

Euroamerican Tradition

This archaeological culture began about 150 years ago and is characterized by the introduction of European manufactured goods and materials

Comparative Discussion of the Interior Southeastern Beringian Archaeological Sequence

As can be seen, there are several direct correspondences to be made between the Alaskan and Yukon chronologies. For all intents and purposes the Euroamerican Tradition is equivalent to the Bennett Lake Phase and the Athapaskan Tradition to the Aishihik Phase. In combination, both of these Alaskan traditions are equivalent to the Lake Prehistoric Tradition. There is also a direct correspondence between the two regions' Northern Archaic Traditions.

The presence of a microblade bearing Late Denali Complex within the time of the Northern Archaic has correspondence as well. Recent analyses of the temporal range of microblade technology in the Yukon has suggested that in many local areas this method has persisted up until quite recent times (Hare and Hammer 1997; Clark et al. 1999). Grouping together both microblade and non-microblade sites with the more embracing Middle Prehistoric Period, or altering our definition of the Northern Archaic to include the presence of microblades, may be called for.

The distinguishing feature between the Denali Complex (c. 11,000 to 9,500 years ago) and the Northwest Microblade Tradition (c. 7-8,000 to 4,500-5,000 years ago) is time. Yet most researchers agree that the latter represents the migration of this technology eastward over space through this time.

Finally, there does seem to be some correspondence between the Nenana Complex and Clark's Northern Cordilleran Tradition with their emphasis on bifacially worked tools, the presence of blades, and the lack of microblades. However, we can also see distinctive differences including the presence of Chindadn type and basally thinned points in the Nenana Complex and their absence in the Northern Cordilleran Tradition.

Recent comparisons of the components associated with the Nenana and Denali Complexes has led some to suggest that these may all belong to a single over-arching tradition, which West has named the (Eastern) Beringian Tradition. West has put the case most strongly:

There is no unique Nenana artifact. Every Nenana artifact form can be duplicated in Denali. The absence of microblades surely has simpler explanations than . . . calling upon another culture - and one without antecedents at that. This certainly suggests that Nenana is, at best, a Denali variant (West 2000:4, quoted in Heffner 2002:26).

Resolution of this question may well hinge on archaeological evidence within the borderlands region of the Chisana River basin. Heffner's (2002) excavation and analysis of the KaVn-2 site, not far south of Beaver Creek, brought to light an early component dated between 10,670 and 10,130 radiocarbon years before present, which was occupied within a few hundred years of deglaciation in the area. Heffner argues that the, "assemblage can be seen as intermediary between the Nenana Complex or Northern Cordilleran Tradition and the Denali Complex or American Paleo-Arctic Tradition" (Heffner 2002:119). He goes on to state that this fact lends support to the Eastern Beringian Tradition as the most appropriate cultural historical classification for early sites in interior northwestern North America. As noted earlier, the Eastern Beringian Tradition posits that the Nenana and Denali Complexes of Central Alaska, and by extension the Northern Cordilleran Tradition and American Paleo-Arctic Traditions as well, are technologically related and that assemblage differences in early archaeological sites can be better explained by site location, site function, and site seasonality (Heffner 2002:120).

Given the facts that KaVn-2 was within the area of late Pleistocene glaciation, and that it was occupied about 500 years after deglaciation in the area, we might expect to find similarly early, or earlier, sites in the unglaciated lands of the borderlands to the west, which may make a further contribution towards resolving the ambiguities of this early period of human colonization of eastern Beringia. Indeed, this has been a guiding assumption in my own archaeological work in the region, which has recently been supported by the discovery of unequivocal Nenana Complex artefacts at the KdVo-6 site (Easton et al. 2004, 2005).

Archaeological Sites within the Chisana Basin Study Area Related to Aboriginal Occupation

There has been limited archaeological survey and excavation within the Chisana Basin related to aboriginal occupation. The work, which has been done, however, indicates that Native Americans have occupied the region since the late Pleistocene through to the time of contact.

Johnson first conducted survey efforts in the area in 1944 and 1948, after the construction of the Alaska Highway, but he did not record any archaeological sites in our area of interest (Johnson 1946, 1964). A number of archaeological survey efforts passed through the area during environmental impact assessments for the Foothills natural gas pipeline project in the late 1970s and early 1980s and they are summarized in Damp and Van Dyke (1982). Only one site was recorded within our area of concern. Tests at KaVn-1 recovered a small collection of debitage flakes. Walde (1991) conducted survey along the Alaska Highway right-of-way in 1991 from the border to the White River, returning to undertake mitigation excavation at Borden sites KaVn-2, KbVo-1, KbVo-2, and KdVo-3 (Walde 1994). I conducted some survey in the area of Beaver Creek in 1994 (Easton 2002a). In 1999, Ty Heffner revisited KaVn-2 to complete the excavation and analysis of this site, as well as survey a number of localities around Tchawsahmon Lake (Heffner 2000). I have conducted additional surveys of the middle reach of Scottie Creek in 2001 and 2002 (Easton 2002a, 2002b), and the northern Mirror Creek drainage in 2003 and 2004 (Easton et. al. 2004, 2005). Finally, a series of site surveys of historic native settlements and graveyards have been undertaken by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Alaska on the upper Chisana and Nabesna Rivers. While several of these sites are presumed to hold additional evidence of prehistoric occupation, limited subsurface excavation undertaken in the course of the surveys did not uncover any artefacts and so do not bear directly on this current discussion (BIA 1993a, 1993b, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b).

The following Table I following presents information on most of the archaeological sites recorded to date on the Canadian side of the border eastward to about the White River.⁶ As can be seen, the archaeological record reported on to date, with the exception of KaVn-2, is relatively slim. Nevertheless it reveals a pattern similar to that of the regional archaeological sequences to the west and east of the study area.

⁶ Adapted, with some modification and additions, from Dobrowolsky (1997).

Table I. Canadian Archaeological Sites of the Yukon - Alaska Borderlands.

KaVn-1	S of Sanpete Creek and E of Ak. Hwy, S of a knob located between creek bottom and Horsecamp Hill. Original find was two dark silicified siltstone-like flakes on surface. Test pits yielded 53 blue-grey flakes of various sizes. As no prehistoric sites had been previously recorded in this region of S. Yukon, the site is considered inherently valuable.
KaVn-2	Moose Lake. On a sand ridge on E side of Ak. Hwy at NW base of Horsecamp Hill overlooking Moose Lake. Archaeological site excavated during Alaska Highway realignment. The basal component is dated to be about 10,400 years BP, making this the oldest known site in southwest Yukon, the second oldest in the territory (Walde 1991, 1994; Heffner 2002)
KbVo-1	Km 1918.550, N side of Ak. Hwy on a knoll on the top of a ridge at the edge of the highway cutbank, overlooking Enger Lakes to SE. Scatter of lithic debitage, artefacts and burnt bone. Second excavation uncovered unformed tools projectile points, microblade core fragment, hide scrapers, hammerstone and eight pieces of copper. Dated at approx. 1800 years before present.
KbVo-2	N side of Ak. Hwy, km 1918.5, on top of ridge at edge of the highway cutbank overlooking Enger Lake. Initial test pits included obsidian flakes, basalt flakes and burned bone fragments. 1993 investigation included lithics and faunal material.
KbVo-3	About 320 m east of KbVo-2 on n side of Ak. Hwy. Large burnt mammal bones collected.
KcVo-1	<i>Taatsan Tôh</i> - Red Hill. On W side of Ak. Hwy, N of Beaver Creek, km 1983. Historic lookout site of the WRFN. Five lithic scatters identified; subsurface testing recovered material related to Late Prehistoric, Northern Archaic, and microblades possibly related with Workman's Little Arm phase / NWMt. Site subject to continued destruction from quarry operation.
KdVo-1	Along Little Scottie Creek trail, ca. 1 km east of Ak. Hwy, on E side of Sourdough Hill. Prehistoric scatter.
KdVo-2	East side of Ak. Hwy, km 1949.3, approx. 150 m east of highway on the north shore of a small lake. Probably a prehistoric campsite.
KdVo-3	S side of Ak. Hwy, km 1950 at an YTG rock quarrying location. Near Mirror Creek. Prehistoric scatter of tools and bones. Dated at 810 +/- 80 BP.
KdVo-5	<i>Nii-ii</i> - Hunting Lookout associated with nearby traditional village site. Late Prehistoric and Northern Archaic occupations reported by Easton (2002a) and MacKay (2004).
KdVo-6	Large multi-component site containing stratified components of the Historic, Later Prehistoric, Northern Archaic, Denali / NWMt, and Nenana complex. Strata sequence ranges from several cc to over a m across the site. An undiagnostic component associated with culturally altered bones of a variety of taxa is dated to 8,900 BP and is presumed be related to the

	Denali component (Easton et al. 2004, 2005).
KdVo-7	Small multi-component hunting lookout on the Mirror Creek plain 2 km to the south of KdVo-6. Side-notched points of the Northern Archaic and round-based lanceolate point within loess similar to the Nenana stratum at KdVo-6 (Easton et al. 2004).
KeVo-1	<i>Naagat Káiy</i> - Traditional village site on middle reach of Scottie Creek containing Historic, Late Prehistoric, Archaic, Denali components, and possibly an earlier occupation within buried paleosols located in test pits 80 cm + below surface (Easton 2002b).
KeVo-2	Contemporary trapline cabin of Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny and traditional campsite of his great-grandfather, <i>Tsay Suul</i> . Early Historic remains include musket balls and beads, and undiagnostic, presumably Late Prehistoric flakes and debitage (Easton 2002b).
KeVo-3	<i>Ta' ah</i> - Historic hunting lookout containing modified flakes, hammerstone, and flake core (Easton 2002b).
KeVo-4	Historic hunting lookout containing microblades and flakes (Easton 2002b).

In addition to archaeological remains related to the prehistoric occupation of humans, the Mirror Creek, Little Scottie Creek, and Big Scottie Creek basins have been the location of the recovery of Pleistocene-age paleontological remains, including mammoth, bison, caribou, horse, saiga, and unidentified feline spp. Local residents and road construction crews have reported a number of these finds. Several associated fragments of *Equus lambei* recovered during highway reconstruction in 1996 have been dated to 20,660 +/- 100 BP. Three juvenile mammoth tusks were found close to each other in the middle Little Scottie Creek basin (MacIntosh 1997, Easton n.d.). Both the horse and juvenile mammoth tusks were recovered less than two km from the Nenana complex site of KdVo-6. The region clearly has the taphonomic potential to recover additional Pleistocene paleontological remains.

Finally, we can expect to locate additional archaeological deposits at many of the named landscape features along the trails of the region, such as hunting lookouts (*Naakeeg*), campsites and cabins (*Sha*), and village sites. These localities are discussed in the *Places – Naming the Landscape* section below, and are plotted on the accompanying maps (Appendix 9). A full listing of documented place names in the region can be found in the *Upper Tanana Place Names Database*, provided with this report in Appendices 4-9.

LANGUAGE

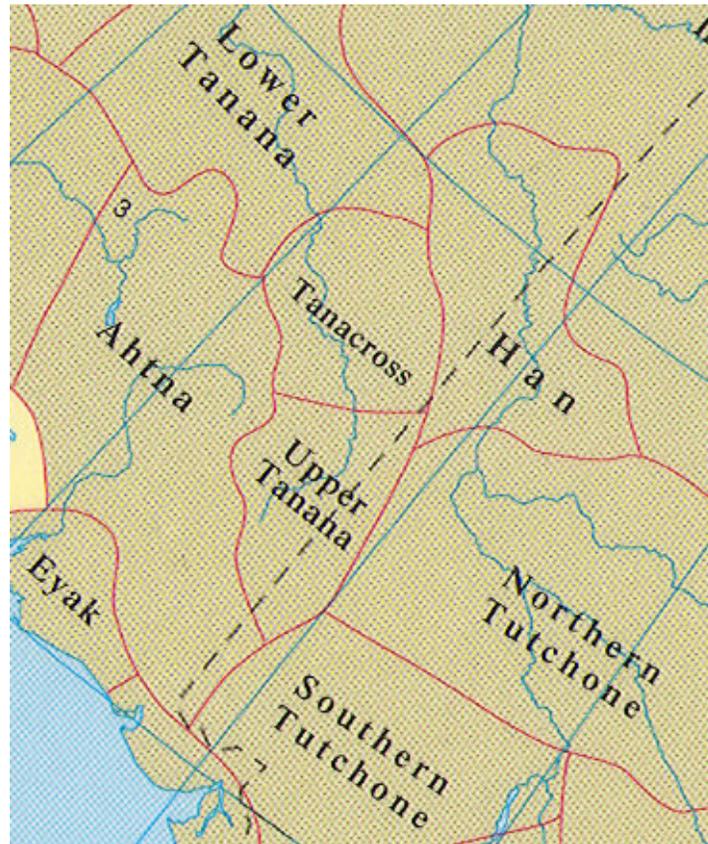


Figure 19. Aboriginal Languages of the Yukon - Alaska Borderlands.

(Yukon Native Language Centre)

Introduction

Historically, the aboriginal people of the Chisana River basin spoke several dialects of the Upper Tanana linguistic continuum, a distinctive language within the Athapaskan Language Family and one of twenty-seven (mostly) contiguous languages spoken in the northwestern subarctic from the Bering Sea to Hudson's Bay. Athapaskan also has geographic expressions on the Pacific coast in northern California and Oregon where 8 languages are spoken, and in the American southwest and adjacent plains, which include the 7 Apachean languages (Krauss and Golla 1981). The Upper Tanana language seems most closely related to the Hān and Gwich'in languages, which lie, to the North (Ritter, pers. comm,n.d.).

The Tanacross language, spoken to the east of Tetlin, and the Lower Tanana (sometimes called simply Tanana) language, spoken yet further downstream along the Tanana River, are mutually distinct, though closely related, languages which combined with Upper Tanana constitute the Tanana linguistic group proper.

The Scottie Creek dialect represents the eastern-most expression of the Upper Tanana language. To the west are dialectally differentiated members centered at the mouth of the Nabesna River - referred to as speakers of Northway dialect, and about Tetlin Lake - referred to as speakers of Tetlin dialect.⁷ However due to a lack of any concrete linguistic data, it is uncertain whether there was a distinctive Upper Chisana River dialect. Based on the dialectical differentiation present between Scottie Creek, Northway, and Tetlin, this distinction may have been possible, but its features are now undoubtedly lost to us.

Based on genealogical connections, the dialects spoken in the Chisana River Basin certainly included Northway Upper Tanana and Scottie Creek Upper Tanana, and included some speakers of the Tetlin dialect of Upper Tanana, and of the Tanacross, Ahtna, Han, and Northern Tutchone Athapaskan languages who had married into the area.

In 1979, there were an estimated 250 fluent speakers of the language, a figure that has declined with the passing of Elders over the recent decades. Although there are a considerable number in the middle-aged generation who can understand and speak the language to some extent and with language teaching at the local schools, it is difficult to say if the language will survive beyond the passing of the current fluent language holders. It is certain that many of the more subtle features of the language associated with indigenous pre-contact culture has been lost as the Upper Tanana have adapted to or assimilated non-aboriginal cultural practices within hunting, spiritual beliefs and behaviour, and technology.

⁷ Some would disagree with this categorization: lumping the Nabesna, Scottie Creek, and Chisana localities as a single dialect group of Upper Tanana that is distinct only from Tetlin dialect (c.f. McKennan 1981:563 & 562). Based on my exposure to the language, participation in language workshops sponsored by the YNLC, and discussions with its director, linguist John Ritter, I am inclined to make the distinction. More importantly, this position is further supported by linguistically competent speakers who also recognize subtle, but consistent distinctions in pronunciation of personal and place names. Having said this, I also believe, based on my understanding of demographic migrations in the area that the current dialectical distinction between Northway and Scottie Creek arose relatively recently, perhaps within the past two hundred years.

Inferences of the Past from Historical Linguistics

Historical linguistics requires well-developed descriptions of the languages concerned before it can be applied with any degree of certainty and this fact has seriously hindered its application to all indigenous non-western languages, including those of the subarctic.

The method of historical linguistics is one of comparison between different languages or dialects in order to develop an appreciation of the degrees of similarities or differences, which they express. All things being equal, it assumes that languages, which are highly differentiated, are not at all or only distantly related, while those languages, which are very similar, may have developed from a common root language.

This common root language is often referred to in the literature as a *Proto-language*; thus we speak of "Proto-Athapaskan," for example, to refer to the reconstructed form of the ancestral language of all contemporary Athapaskan languages. A shared linguistic history is not the only reason why two languages might share similar characteristics however. Languages may share similarities not because of common linguistic origins, but because one language has borrowed elements from another language.⁸ The simple comparison of lexicons, or word lists, may provide a beginning to establishing historic relationships between languages, but this impression of relatedness must be further supported by additional linguistic comparisons, of phonological, morphological, and grammatical similarities or differences (Sapir 1916; Bloomfield 1933).

Unlike the case for its eastern indigenous linguistic neighbour, Algonquian, Athapaskan linguistic relationships cannot be adequately described in terms of discrete family-tree branches. This is because intergroup communication seems to have been relatively constant (presumably a function of inter-regional marriage), and no Northern Athapaskan language or dialect has ever been completely isolated from the others for very long. This characteristic can be illustrated by examining the distribution of phonological, morphological, and lexical features, which display some areal, or geographic, distribution.

⁸ An example found in Upper Tanana is the word for "money" or "dollar" - / *lisuu* /, derived from the French /le sou/; thus in the Scottie Creek valley there is a round lake which is called / *Lisuu Mann* ' - "dollar lake".

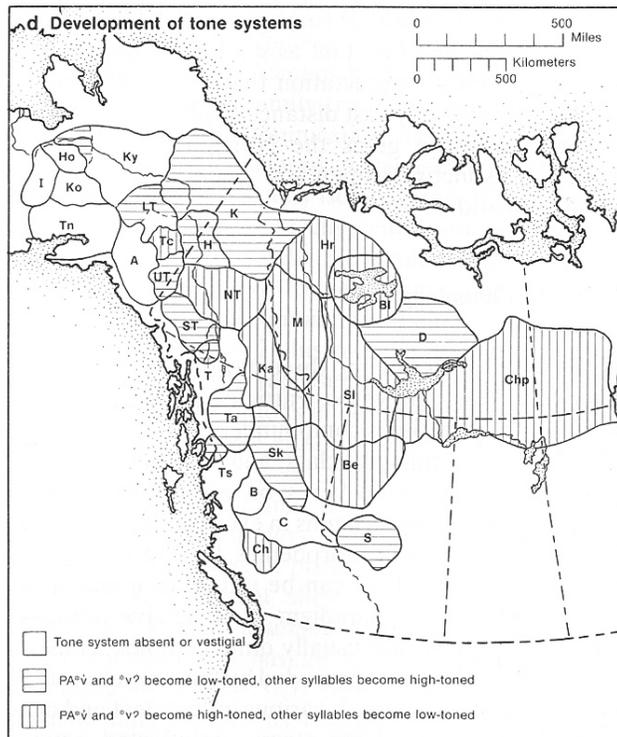
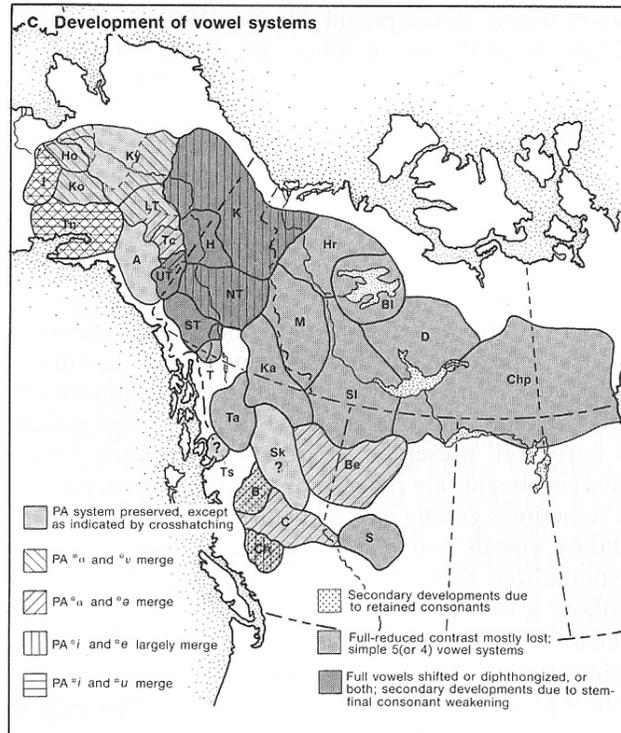


Figure 20. Areal Distribution of Two Phonological Developments in Northern Athapaskan.
 (from Krauss and Golla 1981:70-71)

If we look at the areal distribution of the two phonological features in Fig.20, above, we see that there is no coherent and consistent differentiation to be made between groups, and this pattern is repeated for additional linguistic features as well. Depending on the characteristic feature chosen, we can link groups differently. This discontinuous overlap of phonological features is mimiced in the lexicon as well, as illustrated by the percentages of shared cognates between Athapaskan languages presented in Table II below. In this table many of Northern Athapaskan languages which share a geographical border share less lexical similarities than they do with another Athapaskan language more geographically distant and linguistically seperated.

Table II. Percentages of Shared Cognates Between Athapaskan Languages

	Koy	Tana	At	Ing	Kut	Han	Nab	Hare	DR	Slave	Chip	Bcav	Car	Sar	Hupa	Mat	Kato	Gal	Nav
Tanaina	56	58	63	59	57	60	61	55	52	56	59	46	61	56	48	45	47	54	55
Koyukon	x	79	69	75	76	75	69	63	65	65	72	71	70	66	59	63	61	62	64
Tanana		x	72	70	74	73	68	64	66	66	71	68	71	64	57	60	57	59	59
Atna			x	71	70	72	69	65	66	67	69	68	68	62	57	58	57	62	67
Ingalik				x	69	73	68	64	67	68	71	67	69	64	58	57	55	61	64
Kutchin					x	84	81	74	74	73	79	75	77	69	64	69	68	69	71
Han.						x	82	74	74	74	79	76	77	61	61	64	64	67	70
Nabesna							x	74	71	70	73	71	73	66	59	63	63	66	67
Hare								x	86	85	83	78	76	72	65	63	68	73	71
Dogrib									x	88	85	77	75	72	59	59	62	68	68
Slave										x	81	83	77	70	61	58	63	68	69
Chipewyan											x	78	83	79	64	65	68	73	76
Beaver												x	78	75	64	61	66	70	70
Carrier													x	73	63	62	66	71	73
Sarsi														x	60	61	63	66	68
Hupa															x	76	75	75	65
Mattole																x	76	71	65
Kato																	x	78	69
Galice																		x	73

Source: Hoijer, personal communication.

(from Dysen and Abele 1974:12)⁹

Thus for Northern Athapaskan it is relatively fruitless to search for the kinds of extensive correlations which serve to develop historically discrete relationships between distinctive dialectical (and perhaps language?) subgroups and an assumed Proto-Language; certainly within the region it is not possible to create any sort of family-tree-like relationships.

⁹ Note that Hoijer's data labeled as "Nabesna" in this table is "in fact from Tanacross", and not Upper Tanana Nabesna or Northway dialect. See Krauss and Golla 1981:76.

This is not to say that historical relationships cannot be developed or inferred for the northern Athapaskan language as a whole. According to Krause and Golla (1981:67-68) and Krause (1973), the application of historical linguistics can lead us to several statements on the history of the Athapaskan language, notably:

- Athapaskan is related to Eyak, a contiguous Alaskan coast language isolate.
- Athapaskan-Eyak is not related to both Tlingit and Haida within the so-called Na-Dene, as Sapir (1921, 1929) proposed, although there remains a close demonstrated similarity between Athapaskan-Eyak and Tlingit verb morphology, which may reflect a historical relationship between Athapaskan-Eyak and Tlingit.
- Proto-Athapaskan-Eyak* probably differentiated by 3500 years ago. They are also both likely of an interior (as opposed to a coastal) origin: Athapaskan as evidenced by the deepest lines of cleavage indicating homelands (following Sapir's (1916) Centre of Gravity Principle), and Eyak by its lexicon and social-economic adaptation. Following the split between Eyak and Athapaskan, no linguistic contact is apparent. Eyak is no closer linguistically to Ahtna, its closest linguistic neighbour, than it is to Navaho.
- The degree of diversity within Athapaskan indicates that Proto-Athapaskan* was still undifferentiated until about 2500 years ago or later.
- The homeland of Proto-Athapaskan* is likely the southwest interior region of its distribution - eastern interior Alaska, the upper drainage of the Yukon River, and northwestern British Columbia. This is evidenced by a) the deepest cleavage (differentiation) between languages lie within this area; and b) the fact that both external connections - Eyak and Tlingit - are in southeastern Alaska. McKennan (1981:563) noted that "the Tanana [River languages] show more linguistic diversity than any of the other named groups [in the western subarctic]."

Krauss (1980:11-12) speaks more specifically to this notion, as follows:

One can only guess where within this territory the homeland of Proto-Athabaskan was. Since the Eskimo and Athabaskan contact in Alaska does not seem very old or intense, and since both Eyak and Tlingit are in southeastern Alaska, it would seem likely that the location of Proto-Athabaskan was in eastern Alaska, and probably also northwestern Canada, especially in southern Yukon and perhaps also northern British Columbia. From here, Athabaskan territory must have expanded farther west into Alaska, as well as south and east.

- A series (?) of intermontane and coastal migrations prior to about 1500 years ago led Athapaskan speakers west into central Alaska and south along the interior mountains into

central and southern British Columbia. The Pacific coast Athapaskan languages were established at about this time from, "perhaps the Babine area" (Krauss 1980:12).

- Subsequent to these migrations, two further movements occurred: one was eastward into the Mackenzie River basin and beyond to the western shores of Hudson's Bay, the other was south along the eastern Rockies into the American southwest. These movements may have been connected, since the closest linguistic tie between the Apachean languages appears to be with the Sarcee, in northern Alberta. Oral histories and geological dating of the extensive White River volcanic ash outfall at about 1250 years ago, may be linked with this latter migration of Athapaskan speakers (Workman 1974; Moodie and Catchpole 1992).

The regional relationships between Upper Tanana and its neighbours are less certain, but we can make several observations on the matter. To begin with, as noted above, the differences between Upper Tanana and their linguistic neighbours are relatively slight, reflecting considerable interchange of speakers across language boundaries within the region. This lack of extensive linguistic differentiation reflects an important social-cultural characteristic of northern Athapaskan speaking peoples, namely that:

Intergroup communication has ordinarily been constant, and no Northern Athapaskan language or dialect was ever completely isolated from the others for long. The most important differences among Athapaskan languages are generally the result of areal diffusion of separate innovations from different points of origin, each language - each community - being a unique conglomerate Between Northern Athapaskan as a whole and the band or community dialects that are its fundamental sociolinguistic units the only useful larger categories are languages, and even these are sometimes arbitrary.... Whatever the language boundaries, the network of communication in the Northern Athapaskan dialect complex is open-ended.... People from adjacent communities usually expect to be able to understand one another's speech, if not immediately then surely after some practice. Local dialects and languages are important as symbols of social identity, but the native expectation that these differences, even across relatively vast distances, will not be barriers to communication gives the Northern Athapaskan speaker a distinctively open and flexible perception his social world (Krauss and Golla 1981:68-69).

The Upper Tanana language is no different in this regard. While it is a distinct language, it nevertheless shares similar features of one sort or another with Tanacross, Gwi'chin, Northern and Southern Tutchone, Lower Tanana, and Han. This indicates considerable linguistic and hence social exchanges over an area stretching from east of Fairbanks to the Old Crow flats,

exchanges which the evidence suggest have been going on for several thousands of years. As McKennan notes:

The Athapaskans on the Tanana and Yukon rivers, from the Tutchone to the Ingalik, do not fall easily into a number of discrete cultural or linguistic blocks; rather, they constitute a continuum of local bands whose respective microcultures and dialects differ only slightly from those of their immediate neighbors. Over a span of several bands the linguistic differences are compounded, with mutual intelligibility diminishing in rough proportion to the intervening distance . . . it is hard to say whether the linguistic jumps from the Minto dialect (of Lower Tanana) to Upper Koyukon and from Upper Tanana to Southern Tutchone are greater than the jump from Minto to Upper Tanana (Michael E. Krauss, communication to editors 1978). Indeed, both Tanacross and Upper Tanana speakers told McKennan that they are able to converse with Lower Tanana speakers less easily than with speakers of Han, Ahtna, and Southern Tutchone, although it is not clear whether or not this is because they have acquired some degree of competence in these languages through extensive and often intimate contact (McKennan 1981:563).

Finally, it seems pretty clear that a multi-lingual capacity was the traditional norm amongst the western subarctic Athapaskans. Bessie John, at a language workshop in Whitehorse told how, "In the old days we were sent to another village to learn their language, when we were little we would just stay there and speak their language; then we know it." She herself learned Northern Tutchone as a young girl from her years living at Fort Selkirk, where her maternal grandmother was from, and Coffee Creek, which was shared by speakers of both Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone.¹⁰ For the neighbouring Ahtna, Kari has observed that:

The Upper Ahtna have an impressive tradition of multilingualism. Most Upper Ahtna Elders can speak the two distinct languages of the Tanana drainage - Upper Tanana and Tanacross - and they are familiar with the other dialects of Ahtna spoken down the Copper River and to the west. The Upper Ahtna often sing and dance with the Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway people at Copper River potlatches. . . . The . . . Dena'ina or (Tanaina) of Cook Inlet, and the Western Ahtna had a tradition of speaking and understanding each other's languages. Early in the period of Russian occupation the Russians employed Dena'ina as agents and interpreters as they contacted the Ahtnas and other Athapabaskans in interior Alaska (P. Kari 1985:16, and footnote 3, pp. 16-17).

¹⁰ Bessie John, Upper Tanana Language Workshop, Yukon Native Language Centre, 12 November 1997.

Linguistic Features

Upper Tanana Phonemes

The basic phonemic structure of Upper Tanana is presented below, which provide lists of the consonants and vowels used in the language, written in the orthography developed by the Yukon Native Language Centre.

The underscored characters are "semi-voiced". That is, they begin as voiceless but finish as voiced. For instance th begins as /th/ but ends as /dh/. Any of the six vowels can be long in which case they are written double, e.g., short i and long ii. Any long or short vowel may be nasalized. This is written with the nasal hook under the letter(s).

The Upper Tanana Alphabet

(b) d dl ddh dz j g '

t tl tth ts ch k i ü u

t' tl' tth' ts' ch' k' e o

a

l dh z gh

f th sh x

th s sh x h

m n

nh

(mb) nd

w y

yh

Upper Tanana Tones

Like many Athapaskan languages, Upper Tanana uses a variety of tones in its articulation of phonemes. The tone system includes the following elements:

- Upper Tanana, like its neighbours, Han and Gwi'chin, is a low tone language, in contrast with its other neighbours, Tanacross and Northern Tutchone, which are high tone languages. Thus, in the orthography the low tone is marked with a grave accent (e.g., à, è, etc.). The normal register (neither low or falling or rising tone) is unmarked.

- Upper Tanana varies its vowels with the application of both falling and rising tones to the articulation. In the orthography, this is marked with a circumflex accent (e.g., â, ê, etc.).
- Upper Tanana uses nasalization on vowels as well; orthographically this is represented by a nasal hook (i. e. a small forward hook - ̣ - under the vowel).

Additional Phonetic Features in Upper Tanana

Additional features of the Upper Tanana language include:

- the fricatives, dental, alveolar, palato-alveolar, and velar, and the alveolar lateral all include voiced /z/, voiceless /s/, and intermediary semi-voiced forms /s̥/; the semi-voiced form begins voiceless and shifts to voiced with a dropping in tone. These phonemic features are shared with the neighbouring language of Tanacross, but are distinctly absent from their other neighbours. The sounds are very subtle, and difficult to hear in normal conversation, but they are recognized by native Athapaskan speakers. At the Dawson-Han Literacy Workshop in May 1994 it was noted by both Tanacross, Upper Tanana, and Han speakers as one of the distinct linguistic features of the former two languages, “That’s one way we know where you come from,” said a Han speaker of the difference.

***Dineh* Speech Characteristics**

Although we may generally recognize that reticence in speech among the *Dineh* is a social norm, the capacity for oratorical speech among the *Dineh* is highly valued. This oratory is expected at public social gatherings, such as Potlatches and community meetings. *Dineh* oratory has certain characteristics, which we can recognize:

1. the establishment of personal authority through the recounting of trails, settlements, and genealogy. For example, a speech could be prefaced by:

"My great people, our trails hold us: Chistochina, Chitna, Mentasta, Chisana, Northway, Taiy Chi, Tsoo Got Guy, Nii-ii, Snag, Coffee Creek, Selkirk, and Tetlin, Tanacross, Ketchumstuck, Dawson, all the Yukon River people."

2. the maintenance of personal authority by speaking only to what one knows:

"I can only say what I know."

"I was there when it happened."

"My grandpa Bell John told me this, and I believe him when he said it."

3. the use of repetition, in particular the interrogative, to emphasize key elements of the communication:

"So what are we going to do? What will our people do now?"

"We are all Indian People, all First Nation People, all One Nation, One Family."

4. reference to commonly known narrative motifs as a metaphor for the situation at hand:

"These days are like the time of *Ts'awusha*" [in reference to the upheavals and changes brought by the white man].

5. the avoidance of direct reference to events or circumstances which represent a period or activity harmful to social solidarity or community well-being

"Once we had trouble here" [in reference to a death].

6. the expressive use of silence to emphasize the need for people to think about what has just been said.

Simeone (1995) records and comments on several Potlatch orations made at Tanacross, while J. Kari (1986) provides several examples of respected *Dineh* oratory by Fred John in *Ahtna* and English.

Language Preservation and Publications

Paul Milanowski has worked with native speakers, principally in the Tetlin dialect and Tanacross language, to produce several booklets and a dictionary (Milanowski 1979) for use as curriculum materials in local schools (see also Milanowski 1962). Because the Upper Tanana language is spoken in both Yukon and Alaska, it has also been documented by both the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the Yukon Native Language Centre (YNLC), each of which use a slightly different writing system (the former de-emphasizes the tone, the latter insists upon it).

Jim Kari of the ANLC has prepared several publications with Upper Tanana transcriptions. Tyone (1996) was transcribed and edited by Jim Kari. While ostensibly concerned with the Upper Ahtna, Kari (1986) necessarily includes subsidiary Upper Tanana materials resulting from the close kinship connections between his principal collaborators and Upper Tanana speakers. Kari has also undertaken extensive documentation of Upper Tanana, Tanacross, and Ahtna geographical place names, which he has generously shared with me and which forms a major underpinning of my own work on this topic.

The Yukon Native Language Centre has produced several curriculum aids, including basic language lessons (e.g. John and YNLC 1995) and computer-based talking books lessons in a number of Upper Tanana dialects and idiolects, as well as regular printed accounts of their group literacy workshops (e.g. YNLC 1995, 2001). Daniel Tlen transcribed a glossary of basic words in the Scottie Creek dialect of Upper Tanana in collaboration with Mrs. Bessie John (John 1997).

My own linguistic work has focused on Upper Tanana names for geographic features, personal names, and animal and plant names, a great deal of which has been incorporated into this report directly or as stand-alone appendices (Easton n.d.). Projects on Upper Tanana bird names and knowledge with Doris Johns and Upper Tanana fish names and knowledge with the Alaska Department of Fish and Wildlife and community members, as well as continuing further work on geographical place names will continue in the coming years.

The schools at Beaver Creek, Northway, and Tetlin provide some measure of language training to both youth and adults. To date, however, there is nothing approaching a language-based immersion curriculum, which is generally regarded as one of the most efficacious methods for ensuring competent inter-generational language transmission.

Further information on the Upper Tanana and Athapaskan languages can be found at the websites associated with the Yukon Native Language Centre [www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/ynlc/] and the Alaska Native Language Center.

ABORIGINAL DEMOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL EPIDEMICS



Figure 21. Cross Creek Village Cemetery, 1939.

(T. W. Ranta no. 56, USGS Photo Archives, Denver)

"They told us of a great tale of woe of how many Indians had died from which we understood that some epidemic had afflicted them."¹¹

The fact that our anthropological knowledge of the subarctic cultures must be somehow different from the "aboriginal horizon" is particularly clear within the study of the population numbers, birth, death, and illness rates and causes, and age distributions within these categories. In collecting genealogies it was noted to me several times, as I attempted to reconcile inconsistent reports of descent and clan membership that, "you have to understand, everything changed at the turn of the century So many became orphans, or lost their children to illness, everyone got messed up."

There is considerable variance among historical demographers as to the size and makeup of aboriginal populations prior to their actual enumeration by census. Kroeber's (1939) estimates, built on earlier work by Mooney (1928), are the most often cited authority. For the Subarctic Culture Area generally, Kroeber places a mean estimate of about one person per 100 square km,

¹¹ C. E. Griffith, 1900, "From Knik Station to Eagle City." *Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska*. Washington, D.C. pp. 724-733. (the quote is from page 726). This took place when C. E. Griffith was on a visit to Mansfield in 1890.

proposing a total population of about 30,000 to 35,000 east of the Rocky Mountains within the Canadian Shield and about 25,000 in the Western Cordillera. His estimates arise from an examination and extrapolation of census records, as well as assumptions about the carrying capacity of the environment as a function of the subsistence pattern and ethnographic technology. In total, Kroeber's work proposed a total pre-contact (1492) North American population of about 4.6 million; including Meso-America his figures rose to 8.4 million.

While Kroeber was reworking Mooney's estimates, Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah were developing their own reappraisals based on an estimation of population reductions due to disease and extermination prior to census activities in Meso-America, which resulted in an estimate for that area alone of three times Kroeber's total of 8.4 million (Crosby 1992).

Subsequent work by Crosby (1976), articulated the catastrophic population decline which accompanied "virgin soil epidemics," that is the introduction of epidemic disease of extremely high mortality, "either because the disease is new to the population, or because it has not been present in it for such a long time that many individuals who had acquired anti-bodies to it have long since died. In either case, the population lacks acquired immunity to the disease" (Waldram, et al. 1995:44; see also Mausner and Kramer 1974:27). Henry Dobyns (1966) suggested that many of the early epidemics introduced in the American southeast should be more properly considered as "pandemics" which subsequently effected populations throughout the continent, the disease being transmitted through aboriginal trading networks. In any event, such virgin soil epidemics characteristically carry a mortality rate of thirty to seventy, and in some cases, one hundred percent (Boyd 1990).

It is uncertain what effect, if any, these postulated continental pandemics had on the aboriginal populations of the interior western subarctic, but they may have been considerable; epidemic diseases and depopulation are recurring themselves expressed within the regional folk history (see, for example, McClellan 1975: Chapter 1, and Coates 1991:9-14).

Among the Upper Tanana, Allen (1900: 445) records that at Last Tetlin:

Nandell had informed me that there had been many deaths among these people, and as nearly as I could understand him, he feared they might attribute them to our entrance to the country. . . The inhabitants around these lakes, including Tetlin's following, were almost without exception suffering from sever coughs, and many showed unmistakable signs of pulmonary troubles.

Regarding Kheeltat’s place, Allen (1900:445) writes, “... the consumptive look and its accompanying cough were more marked here than at the former place (Last Tetlin).”

It is more certain, however, that the Upper Tanana *Dineh* were likely effected by a series of epidemics, which passed through the central interior in the mid-1800s: smallpox in 1838-39; scarlet fever in 1851 and 1865 (McKenna 1981). The effects of these latter epidemics (as well as later incidences of measles at the turn of the century, a major influenza epidemic throughout the Yukon basin in the 1920s, and endemic tuberculosis through much of the 20th century – see Table IV, page following) were undoubtedly substantial.

Scottie Creek Elders all maintain that their village at *Tsoogot Gaiy* was made of several hundreds of people in their younger years (1880s to 1920s). Mr. Andy Frank believed that it was "1917 or '18 when a great number of people died in the region from 'flu'," (possibly the northern reach of the worldwide Spanish influenza?) an epidemic that was repeated in the early 1940s.

In 1929 McKenna (1959:18) recorded a population for the entire Upper Tanana of 152, distributed as in the Table III, below.

Table II. Upper Tanana Population by "Band", Winter 1929.

	Upper Chisana Upper Nabesna	Last Tetling	Tetling	Mouth of Nabesna	Scottie Creek	Total
Men	6	5	9	16	6	42
Women	5	6	10	16	7	44
Children	5	7	15	27	12	66
Total	16	18	34	59	25	152

McKenna suggested that:

The older Indians all stoutly maintain that formerly their number was much greater. They said that *previous to the coming of the white man* great numbers suddenly died from disease. The earliest explorers on the Yukon all met with a similar story (1959:19, emphasis added).

Guedon (1974:10) writes that:

The Natives still maintain that large villages or camps were drained of their population before or just after ‘the coming of the white men.’ Whether this refers to the scarlet fever of about 1868 or to other epidemics, or whether it reflects other events, this belief is basic to the Natives’ view of the past. We need more information to draw a better picture of the aboriginal times, but we cannot rule out the hypothesis of a larger population during the 19th century: a difference of 20 to 50% would be sufficient to support the Native point of view. Archaeological research is needed in the whole area as well as ecological studies.

Table III. Epidemic Diseases of Note in Northwestern North America.

1781 ^a	Smallpox, demonstrably effecting Chipewyans and Cree
1820s ^a	Unidentified, but quite deadly, contagious disease among the eastern Dene is recorded in fur post records
1835 ^b	Epidemic among coastal Tlingit with 20 to 50% population mortality; "likely transmitted to interior during trading expeditions"
1838-39 ^a	Smallpox throughout the northwest subarctic; high mortality
1838 - 39 ^c	Smallpox epidemic in central Alaskan interior
1840s - 1850s ^a	A number of diseases, in particular whooping cough, with high mortality among children
1846 ^d	"great mortality" amongst the Native women of Fort Youcon reported by Alexander Murray
1848 ^b	Epidemic among the Han after visits to Fort Selkirk and Fort Yukon
1850s ^b	Small pox among Tlingit spread up the Alsek River drainage to "various parts of the interior, decimating entire villages"
1850 - 1851 ^b	Famine in the interior of the Yukon; diarrhea among children and incidents of pulmonary infections
1851 ^d	As many as 1/3 of the Native population along the upper Yukon river carried off by what Robert Campbell believes to be mumps
1851 ^c	Scarlet fever epidemic in central Alaskan interior
1851 - 52 ^b	Epidemic "scarlet fever?" and severe famine among all Indians - "One third of population dead"
1860 ^b	Scarlet fever epidemic at mouth of Alsek River and inland to upper Yukon River
1862-65 ^a	Scarlet fever
1865 ^{cd}	Scarlet fever epidemic in central Yukon and Alaskan interior; both Fort Youcon and La Pierre trade posts report 50% mortality of local Natives
1868 ^b	Epidemic at Fort Yukon
1873 ^b	Dysentery among the Han
early 1880s ^a	Diphtheria
1887 - 88 ^b	"many die among the Han and Stewart River Indians"
1897 ^{a,b}	Another round of Scarlet fever; "Selkirk Indians dying off fast"
1898 - 99 ^b	"numerous deaths from illness among Indians" in the central Yukon
1901 ^b	NWMP reports great mortality among Yukon Indians due to pulmonary infections
1905 ^b	Diphtheria epidemic at Fort Selkirk
1907 ^b	Tuberculosis is considered endemic among Yukon Indians
1916 ^b	"'Consumption is rife' among Selkirk people; occasional epidemics of small pox, diphtheria, la grippe, chicken pox, and measles
1918 ^a	Worldwide Influenza pandemic crossed the subarctic
1925 ^b	Influenza epidemic throughout the Yukon
1928 ^a	An even more virulent, and mortal, influenza virus passed through the north.
1929 ^b	"Tuberculosis among Indians of Southern Yukon is present in 10 to 15% of the population, and accounts for more than 50% of deaths"
	1850s - onwards to today - endemically high rates of tuberculosis; recently resurging in a new mutated strain, which is proving to be resistant to antibiotic treatment.

Table Sources

a - Helm 1981; b - Gotthardt 1987; c - McKennan 1959; d - Coates 1991

Gotthardt 1987 sources include: Hudson's Bay Company and Church Missionary Society Archives, cited in Legros 1981, 1984; Northern Lights (various issues); Helm, et. al. 1975; Marchand 1943; Bancroft 1886; Dall 1870; Archand 1966; Dept. of Indian Affairs Annual Report 1954; Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report for 1902.

In regards to the last two points, I would add two of my own thoughts. The first is that based on place names research which has elucidated the location of village sites throughout the Chisana and Scottie Creek basins, it certainly seems that there were plenty of places that people lived within this small area (see *Cultural Geography* for details). Guedon (1974:8) seems to concur with her observation of the existence of smaller camps surrounding both Tetlin and Mansfield, at which additional people lived in association with the main village. Now, the existence and distribution of these settlements and camps may only reflect a small and scattered population constantly shifting over the landscape, or they may in fact document a much larger, and more settled, pre-contact population in the region. Archaeological excavations at these village locations is needed to explore this hypothesis, however the pre-contact ecology of the upper Tanana drainage supports the notion of a larger population, which is my second point on this matter.

I have long considered that an important overlooked aboriginal subsistence resource in the Upper Tanana region is migratory waterfowl. Even today the area is visited by hundreds of thousands of birds; prior to their denudation by European immigrants they numbered in the millions. In particular, we must take into account that the biggest predatory pressures on migrant birds occurred thousands of miles away, over several hundreds of years prior to the arrival of any Europeans in the Upper Tanana region, far south in the winter ranges of these animals. The devastation of the Chisana caribou herd during the short-lived Chisana Gold Rush of 1913-14, would have compounded this collapse of the aboriginal subsistence resource, and quite likely contributed to further population contraction in the region.

Be that as it may, it is clear that the historic populations documented by the earliest known censuses capture a picture of a people in population decline due to epidemic and endemic disease, quite likely exacerbated by nutritional stress caused by erosion of their subsistence resources, both factors over which the aboriginal population had no control. Some families, villages, and entire local groups (“bands”), were totally wiped out by these diseases, while others were merely devastated, depending on whether they had lost key hunters, childbearing women, children, or adolescents. As a result, fundamental adjustments were needed to adjust to the new demographic realities of the aboriginal occupants of the landscape. These changes and challenges would have included:

- a dramatic increase in the availability and size of subsistence exploitation areas;

- at the same time, an effective decrease in the population available to be mobilized for co-operative hunting and other group-orientated tasks;
- an effective decrease in the number and dependability of subsistence resources (wildfowl in the nineteenth century, caribou, moose, and salmon in the early twentieth century);
- significant changes in the distribution and availability of culturally suitable mates;
- these factors would, in turn, lead to major redistribution of populations, particularly from decimated areas, in order to avoid demographic collapse - the concentration of remaining populations to reach sustainable levels of reproduction would leave many areas apparently "uninhabited" to the earliest European arrivals.
- a dramatic increase in 'adoption' of orphaned children, and subsequent realignment of their social categories through fictive kin mechanisms, effectively muddling traditional kinship relations.

CLAN MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT



Figure 22. Seagull, a Traditional Moiety of the Upper Tanana

Historically, and quite likely deep into the past, the Upper Tanana were socially organized into exogamous matrilineal descent groups. These were clans to which you belonged by virtue of descent from your mother; in addition, you were required to choose your spouse outside of this maternal group, and provide aid and support to your own clan and that to which you married into. While this form of social organization was quite common among many of the western subarctic Athapaskan language groups, among the Upper Tanana its form may have been a three group Phratry system, rather than the more common two-group Moiety system.

Moiety systems are "dual organizations", so-called because they allow the division of every member of society into either one or the other of two complimentary groups. In many Athapaskan communities these two groups are associated with and named Wolf and Crow. In contrast, there appeared to be three major descent groups among the Upper Tanana in the past; social organizations of more than two exogamous descent groups are called Phratry systems.

A group called *Na'ltsiin*, commonly referred to as "Crow" in english, and another group referred to as "Seagull" seem to have been the two dominant phratries. Each of these in turn were

comprised of a number of subsidiary matrilineal clans. These two groups were expected to marry and maintain ritual services, such as caring for each other's dead. However, many accounts also mention a smaller third group, most often referred to as *Niisu* and/or *Tsuuk* – “Marten” people, which stood "in between" the former two, as "almost a cousin to us all." However, in the historic period this third phratry seems to have been absorbed into the *Na'ltsiin*, resulting in the contemporary formation of a dual or moiety organization of Crow and Seagull people, each of which contain a number of named clans (McKenna 1969a, 1969b; Guedon 1974).¹²

Many of the clans hold stories of their origins, some versions of which are presented in Guedon (1974: 67-77), collected both during her own research and from publications by McKenna and others. I will not repeat them here, referring the interested reader to those sources instead, along with the observation that while they provide some general indications of undoubted historic migrations into the region by maternal family groups, the different accounts are fraught with differences and a frustrating lack of detail beyond indications of migration from “the Copper River area” or “Canada.”

In recording his family's history as he knew it, Walter Northway identified the origins of several of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* sib or clan groupings. I include a copy of this section of his life history (from Yarber and Madison 1987) as a separate Appendix for that reason. Additionally, I believe it is an excellent portrayal of the continuous movement of *Dineh* individuals and families, as they search for better subsistence opportunities, appropriate spouses to marry, the initiation of social relations with strangers and their maintenance with kin, and a general curiosity for the world external to their immediate experience (a curiosity which I believe is reflected in the *Dineh* interest in the supernatural world as well).

¹² I will discuss the social role of these matrilineal descent groups and moieties more fully below in the section devoted to Kinship.

PLACES



Figure 23. Mount Sanford, Upper Tanana Repository of Damned Souls

INTRODUCTION

The life and culture of the *Dineh* of the Chisana River basin is fundamentally connected to the landscape of the region, a landscape shaped by ancient and ongoing geological processes, and a long history of occupation by their ancestors. This connection is demonstrated in their intimate knowledge of their environment, the ecological subsystems it contains, how to navigate about the land from place to place along ancient pathways, and a truly astounding repertoire of geographical place names in the Upper Tanana language. Their settlements and camps were scattered about the land, providing them with places at which to secure the resources - animals, plants, water, and minerals - on which they depended for their survival. Well-used trails ran between these settlements, facilitating travel between them, but also providing a physical metaphor for the interconnectedness of *Dineh* to each other, the land they were embedded in, and the spirit world, which watched over them.

Western physical geographers often emphasize the oscillating extremes of the subarctic environment: from freezing winters to sweltering summers, animal abundance cycling into population crashes, boggy lowlands and windswept highlands, pretty to look at from afar but a harsh and unforgiving land.

While no *Dineh* would deny the hard work required to survive in this landscape, many would say that the subarctic world is not an unforgiving hostile wilderness, but *a giving environment*, one, which nurtures and provides for *Dineh* in return for their respectful behaviour. Indeed, it can be said that they hold their land with love and the land in turn shows its love for *Dineh* by the provision of its bounty (see Bird-David 1990).

This section on places explores this intimate knowledge through a series of subsections. We have previously discussed the landscape in terms of its physical geography and development in the Origins section, above. Here we will present information on Trails, Settlements, and Geographical Place Names.

An important supplement to this discussion is the Upper Tanana Place Names Database supplied as a separate group of files on the accompanying CD-ROM and as Appendices 4 through 9 – *Upper Tanana Place Names Database*.

TRAILS



Figure 24. Who or What We Might Meet Walking Our Trail is Unpredictable.

(N. A. Easton)

The existence of trails on the landscape provides a visceral reminder of the pathways of our lives, physically and spiritually, threading together earth and heaven, our friends and neighbours, the past, present, and future. Keith Basso writes of the Athapaskan Cibeqe Apache conception of the past as:

A well-known 'path' or 'trail' (*intin*) which was traveled first by the people's founding ancestors and which subsequent generations of Apaches have traveled ever since. Beyond the memories of living persons, this path is no longer visible - the past has disappeared - and thus it is unavailable for direct consultation and study. For this reason, the past must be constructed - which is to say, imagined - with the aid of historical materials, sometimes called 'footprints' or 'tracks' (*Bike' goz'aa*), that have survived into the present. These materials come in various forms, including Apache place-names, Apache stories and songs, and different kinds of relics found at locations throughout Apache country (Basso 1996:31).

Trails are the threads, which tie together the land and the animals and the people who live on it. There are many types of trails to be found all around the *Dineh*. Some you can see quite clearly, even today, such as the trail between High Cache on Desper Creek and Big Scottie Creek village at the confluence of Scottie Creek and the Chisana River.



Figure 25. Tayh Tsalh Trailhead to the West.

At the western end of the village site this path through the trees will take you onwards to the "high cache" proper from which the village of Tayh Tsalh derives its English name, and beyond that to the village site of Tthee K'at / rock wier place /, which in English is known as Big Scottie Creek, at the confluence of Scottie Creek and the Chisana River. (N. A. Easton)

The photo above shows the trailhead entering into the forest from the High Cache village; it remains largely open today, some half century after its last sustained use in the late 1950s, with only the occasional windfall or young poplar impeding its path.

Other trails have been destroyed by the construction of the Alaska highway and other modern roads, which were built over the old trails because they were the best ways across the land. Still other trails have become almost impossible to see, made obscure by lack of use, erosion by wind and rain, and the cover of plant growth.

But even these obscure trail remnants might be followed if one has some knowledge of their path and pays close attention to the signs left behind by the tens of thousands of *Dineh* travelers over thousands of years who have walked upon them. Blazes upon trees are commonly found along a trail's path, for example. New growth in old forests can often show the way. And attention to the ground beneath your feet will warn you when you stray from the trail; the ground surfaces of trails, even when covered with sphagnum moss, are harder than the ground off the trail. And, as the photo below shows for the trailhead leaving *Naagat Kayy'* / Fox den / village, the ground is often lower than the surrounding landscape as well.

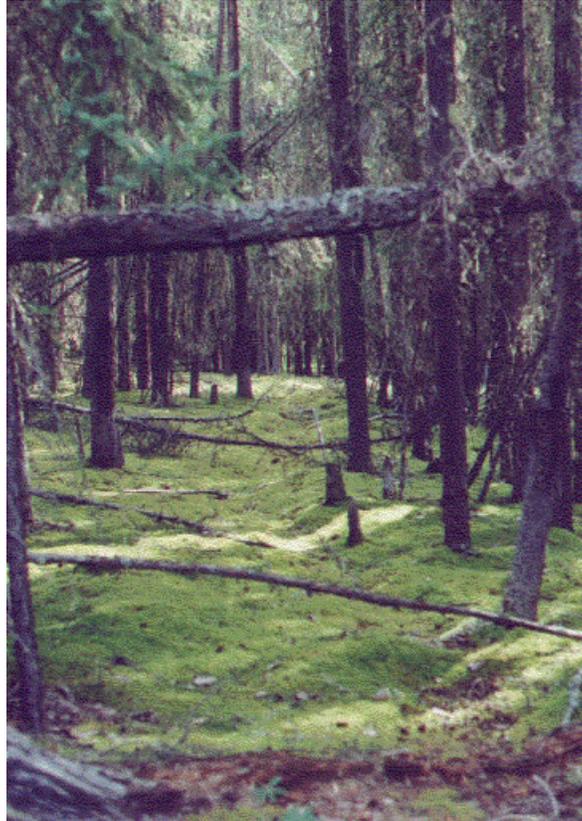


Figure 26. Naagat Kayy' Trailhead.

The main trail away from the old village site of Naagat Kayy' / fox den /. If you look on the ground in the centre you will notice the depression in the ground, which marks the trail, despite the overgrowth of sphagnum moss in the years of its disuse. (N. A. Easton)

However, some trails are always difficult to see – the trails of heaven, which parallel the trails of the earth and carry the spirits of the non-human persons of animals and the ancestors of *Dineh*. You need to develop your special "awareness" to see these trails lie which lie always close to your early pathways.

Trails are important for many reasons. They were the means by which *Dineh* stayed in contact with each other between their many villages and camps. They are still the best places to travel along to find animals, which will give themselves to you to share with your people if you are kind in action and generous in spirit. And all along the trails are places with *Dineh* names, which commemorate many important occurrences in their history.

Among the Upper Tanana, they included places such as *Tayh Chii*, / the point on the hill /, where many *Dineh* were born, lived, and passed on, including the *Dineh* leader *Taiy Cho*. Or *Yihkah Mann'* / daybreak lake / which is a campsite on the trail from *Nii-ii* village to the

borderland village of *Ts'oogot Gaay*, and is the place where *Dineh* doctor *Bell Gaay* found his red-throated loon healing power.

When we listen to *Dineh* Elders speak of their life on the land, they often emphasize the importance of trails by beginning their speech with a recitation of the trails they know of and the places they will take us. These accounts demonstrate that even without maps, *Dineh* knew their land far beyond the region in which they lived their lives. They learned this landscape without an atlas or writing, but by listening carefully to their own Elders when they were children. Some of the trails they can recite they have not even physically walked, but they know where they go. The existence of these earthly trails are paralleled in the other world, Heaven, as well. Furthermore, there are "trails to heaven" which link this world with the other world. Stories such as "The Girls Who Married Stars" tell of humans who have traveled these ephemeral trails, and a person's entire life can be summed up as "walking their trail to heaven", the ultimate destination of their life's journey (Ridington 1988).

Among the Upper Tanana, when you are walking a trail on the earth you can see that it is intersected by the trails of other animal - persons, such as rabbit, muskrat, beaver, and moose. So too, these trails intersect with the trails to heaven. We can see them best when we find a spider's web across the trail with the sun ahead of you. For some *Dineh*, the intricate lattice construction of the spider's web mimics the intricate lattice of intersecting trails of the worlds. It is especially good luck to peer through such webs, and then carefully step around it and allow the sunshine to pass over your shoulder and through the web. One should attempt to avoid walking through such webs; to do so is disrespectful to the life and work of spiders, and a neglect of the importance of our being careful during our passage through time and space.

In an address at the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge interpretation centre, Wilson Justin,¹³ a Chisana area descendent, explained that across many parts of the landscape there were two parallel trails. Local residents used one and visitors from other areas followed the other. And the path of some trails were always closely guarded; these were the trails to places of special spiritual power, where dream doctors would go to sleep and travel into the other world in order to do battle with evil, retrieve souls to heal the sick, see the future, or gain new powers.

¹³ 3 June 1999 (Easton, fieldnotes, n.d.).

Some of the trails we know of today are superimposed on the satellite image below. More detailed outlines of the trail system of the borderlands is found on the 1:250 map insert accompanying this report.

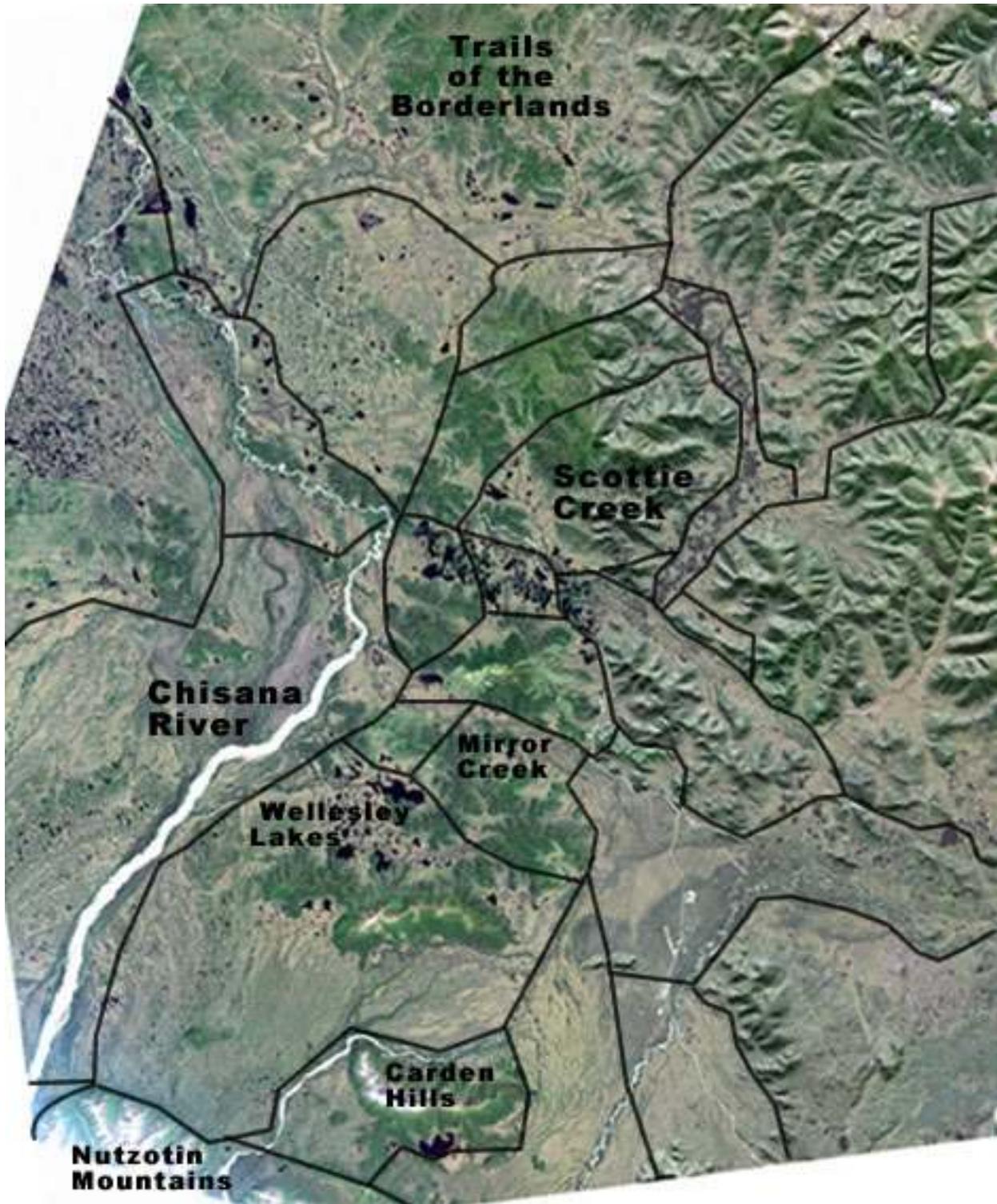


Figure 27. The General Trail System of the Chisana River Basin.

VILLAGES



Figure 28. Cross Creek Village, c. 1915.

(Lewis V. Stanley Collection, Tacoma Public Library)

Introduction

The documentation of Native villages in the region of the Upper Tanana has revealed a surprising number given the presumed low population densities, which most scholars attribute to a general foraging economy in the Subarctic. The maps below show the general location of over forty village or seasonal camps known to have been used in the last two hundred years in the western Upper Tanana language area.¹⁴

Part of the explanation for the many locations at which people were known to have lived lies in the required mobility of foraging populations, both seasonally, and over longer cycles of time, a topic discussed below in the section on Subsistence and Trapping Rounds.

Yet Native consultants have consistently impressed upon western subarctic Aboriginal ethnohistorians, such Robert McKennan in 1929 that, "formerly their number was much greater. They said that previous to the coming of the white man great numbers of them suddenly died

¹⁴ I have created a PDF subset of the Upper Tanana Place Names Database, which contains only the villages and major camps; you can view this on the accompanying CD-ROM or as a printed version in Appendix – Villages and Camps – Upper Tanana Place Names Database.

from disease. The earliest explorers on the Yukon all met with a similar story" (McKenna 1959:19). Thus, it may be that the aboriginal population levels of the region were much greater than we currently imagine them to have been, and this might also be part of the explanation for the large number of documented village sites. I explore this question of aboriginal populations more fully below in the section on Aboriginal Demography and Epidemics.

As noted above, a number of these villages and camps have been field surveyed in the course of post-ANCSA documentation or archaeological research. Their current conditions range from apparently obliterated by natural erosion or human construction to pristine. Additional archaeological fieldwork at the unsurveyed locations is called for and will certainly reveal important additional insights into *Dineh* history.

Distribution of Documented Upper Tanana Villages

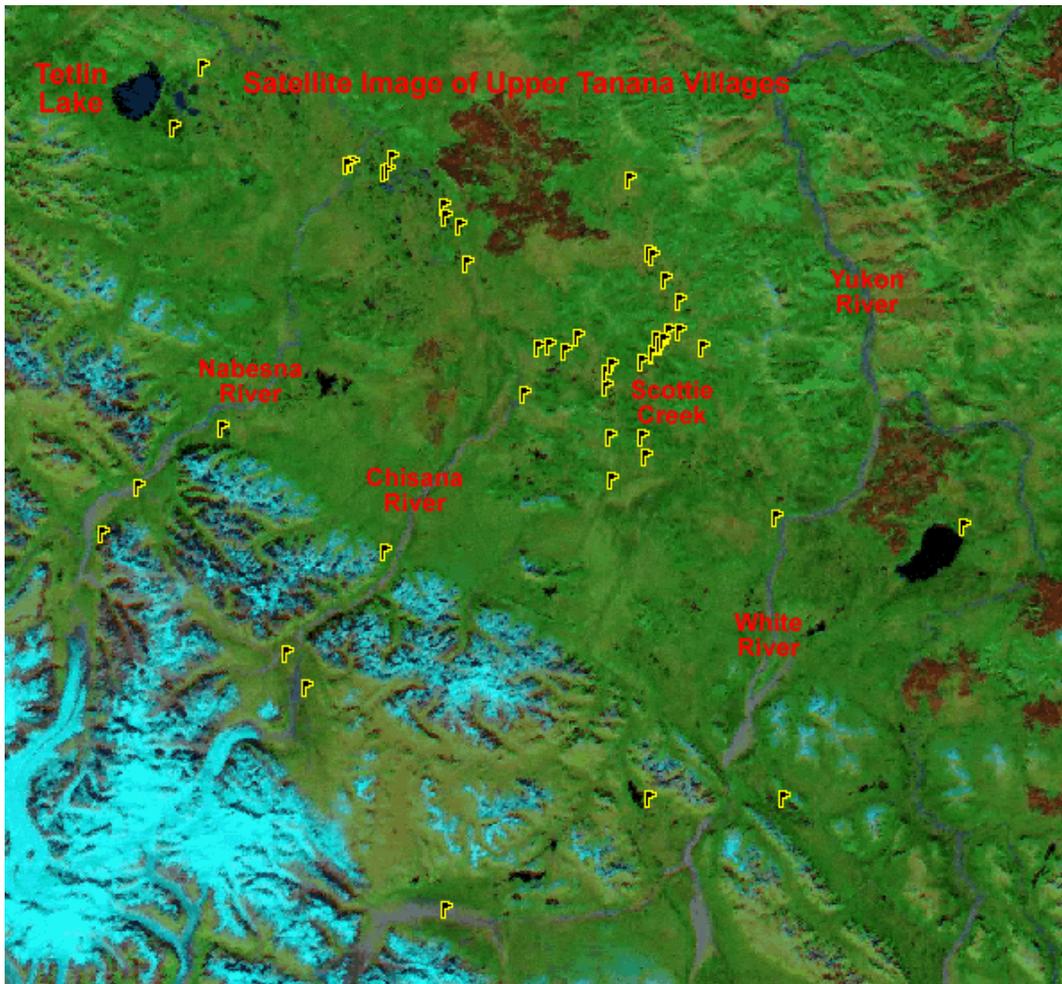


Figure 29. Satellite Image of Documented Villages of the Upper Tanana Language Area.

Traditional Villages of the Upper Chisana River Basin

The map below shows the approximate locations of Upper Tanana villages and camps in the Upper Chisana River basin. The numbers are keyed to their Upper Tanana Place Names Database entry number.



Figure 30. Villages of the Upper Chisana River Basin.

(N. A. Easton)

Documented villages of the upper Chisana River include:

- 608 - the historic Cross Creek Village on the headwaters of the Chisana River
- 609 - an earlier, pre-contact Village upstream of Cross Creek, nearer the historic townsite
- 420 – *Taacheeg* / King City on the Chisana River prior to its entrance into the Wrangell Mountain foothills



Figure 31. Pre- and post-contact upper Chisana River village layouts.

(from Pitt 1972:164)

Traditional Upper Tanana Villages of the Lower Chisana River Basin

The map below shows the approximate locations of Upper Tanana villages in the Scottie and Mirror Creek valleys, tributaries of the lower Chisana River. The numbers are keyed to their Upper Tanana Place Names Database entry number.

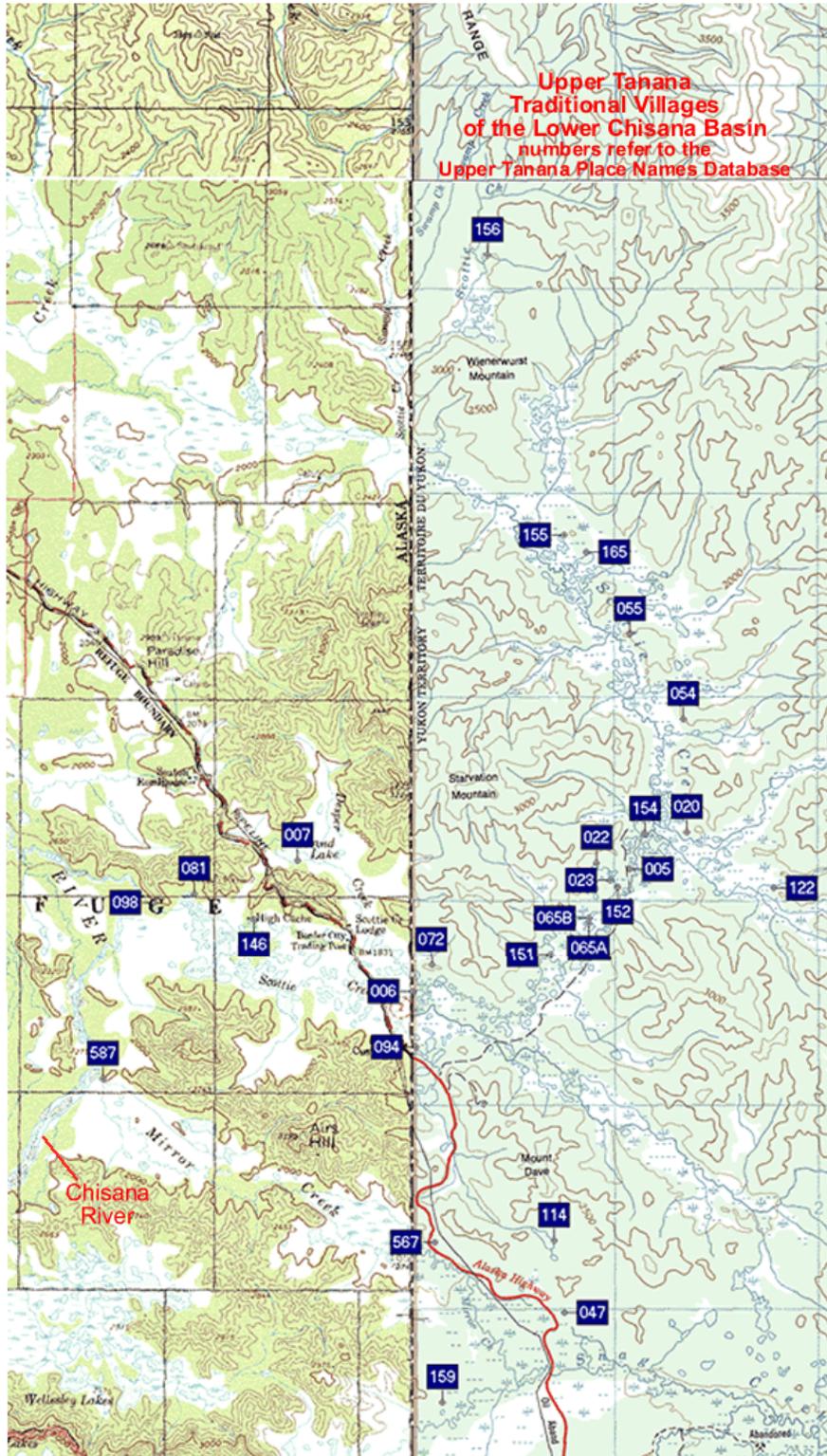


Figure 32. Villages of the Lower Chisana River Basin.

(N. A. Easton)

Documented villages of the lower Chisana River basin include:

- 587 - / meat cache / - seasonal camp at the mouth of Mirror Creek
- 098 - *Tthee K'at* / rock weir / - Big Scottie Creek Village, at the confluence of the Chisana River and the mouth of Big Scottie Creek
- 081 - *Tehmill K'et* / fishnet place / - seasonal fishing camp, between Big Scottie Creek Village and High Cache
- 146 - *Tayh Tsalh* / hill small / - High Cache Village at the confluence of Big Scottie Creek and the mouth of Desper Creek
- 007 - *Ch'atxaa Mann' / ? /* - Island Lake seasonal camp at the head of Desper Creek
- 072 - *Taiy Chi* / hill point / - Village in the foothills of the Dawson Range overlooking the Chisana valley
- 006 - *Bell Gaiy Mann' /* Bill John lake / - seasonal camp on Big Scottie Creek near the border
- 094 - *Ts'oogot Gaiy / ? small /* - Little Scottie Creek Village, on the shore of *Ts'oogot Gaiy Mann'*, right on the International border below the Alcan custom station
- 567 - *Haa Tuuh Taiy /* end of the hill / - '1216' seasonal hunting camp; also a significant multi-component archaeological site dating to at least 10,100 years ago, and perhaps earlier based on the presence of a Nenana Complex component
- 159 - *Taatsaan /* crow or raven / - Village on the right bank of Snag Creek, near where it crosses the International border
- 047 - *Nii-ii /* lookout [away from] / - Village, also known more recently as Sourdough; archaeological deposits located here date to the mid-holocene (Northern Archaic tradition)
- 114 - *Yikah Mann' /* daylight [comes out?] lake / - an often used campsite on the trail from the Snag to Scottie Creek drainages, at the head of Little Scottie Creek
- 151 - *Diah kateeLay /* sandpiper / - Village at the confluence of the creek of the same name with Scottie Creek
- 065a & 065b - *Tah'aa / ? /* - two Villages at the lake of the same name, occupied at different periods
- 152 - *Naagat Kay /* fox den / - historic and prehistoric Village, in the middle reach of Big Scottie Creek valley, west side

- 022 & 023 - *Lii Tthiitth'ann Mann'* / dog head bone lake / - two Villages at the lake of the same name, in the middle reach of Scottie Creek valley, occupied at different periods
- 005 - *Tsay Suul Sha* / Tsay Suul = Joseph Tommy Johnny's great-grandfather, sha = house or home / - on the southern bank of Marilyn Lake
- 154 - *Tuu Tuh Tay* / water across trail / - Village along the trail up Scottie Creek valley
- 122 - *Leek'ath Niik* / muddy creek / - Village on the middle reach of the Scottie Creek valley, east side; according to oral history, the location at which *Dineh* of the region grouped together to survive after the ash fall of the White River volcanic eruption, about 1,900 years ago
- 020 - a currently un-named Village location
- 054 - *Enuk Sha* / Enuk's home / - the home of one of the most powerful shaman's of the region
- 055 - *Rupe Sha* / Rupe's home / - the location of the first trade post in the Scottie Creek region opened by Bill Rupe at the turn of the 19th century
- 123 - *Nahtsia ch'ihchuut* / wolverine grab something / - Pepper Lake Village on the lake of the same name
- 165 - *Tayh Shiit* / hill in / - the younger of two Villages of the same name north of Pepper Lake
- 155 - *Tayh Shiit* / hill in / - the older of two Villages of the same name north of Pepper Lake
- 156 - *Niiduu Ts'inehdayh* / lynx shot with arrow / - a Village at the head of the Scottie Creek valley on the flanks of *Ch'ohtl'aa* - Wienerwurst Mountain; possibly the village which Old Northway came from.

NAMING THE LANDSCAPE - "WISDOM SITS IN PLACES"



Figure 33. *Yikahh Mann'*, headwaters of *Tsoogot Gaiy Niign* (Little Scottie Creek).

(N. A. Easton)

A place that is named carries a complex symbolic capacity. Its name may arise from an historical event but the name may be remembered less for the event itself as for its contemporary meaning in the construction of local identity and sense of place. As Keith Basso, an American linguistic anthropologist whose primary work is with the Apachean Athapaskan communities of the American southwest, (1996:7) notes:

Long before the advent of literacy, to say nothing of history as an academic discipline, places served human kind as durable symbols of distant events and as indispensable aids for remembering and imagining them - and this convenient arrangement, ancient but not outmoded, is with us still today. In modern landscapes every where, people persist in asking "What happened here?" The answers they supply...should not be taken lightly, for what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth, and while the two activities may be separable in principle, they are deeply joined in practice. If place making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of doing human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine.

Basso (1984) has also discussed the means by which place names can evoke not only history but complex moral positions, as the stories related to space are embodied in the name itself. This is also an observation which both Julie Cruikshank (1978, 1984) and I have made

among the western subarctic *Dineh* proper. Thus, for people educated in the names of the landscape and the stories associated with them, a place name can be a powerful metaphorical tool in their communications with each other.

The naming of places have prosaic value too, such as in providing navigational markers for moving across or talking about the landscape ("The moose I shot which I want you to go get is beside Mineral Lick Lake"), a topic which I have explored more fully in "*Getting to Know the Neighbourhood*" – *Upper Tanana Place Names and Navigation in the Scottie Creek Valley of the Yukon – Alaska Borderlands* (Appendix 16).

Over the years a number of researchers have compiled Upper Tanana place names for the region, including linguists John Ritter of the Yukon Native Language Centre in Whitehorse, Jim Kari of the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks, and myself. I have been compiling and field checking these names over the past several years, and developing a computer database and geographic information system representation of these data. There is considerably more work to be done on many of these place names in order to confirm their accuracy, pronunciation, and meaning, but the accompanying notes and maps do provide us with an initial appreciation of the depth and extent of Upper Tanana geographical place names in their homeland.

In this report, the Place Names Database itself is supplied as several Appendices bound separately, and in four formats on the accompanying CD-ROM:

- as a Filemaker format database – best for searching
- as a Postscript Document File (PDF) – best for proper representation of the Upper Tanana names in the Native language orthography
- as a limited MS-Excel file – best for inputting location data into a Geographical Information System, such as ArcView
- and as an OziExplorer file for use with the accompanying Oziexplorer program and maps.

CULTURE



Figure 34. Bessie John, Mary Tyone, and Jennie Sanford in Potlatch Regalia, Mentasta, 1971.
(from Tyone 1996:70)

INTRODUCTION

The culture of a people is comprised of their shared beliefs, values, and knowledge, which guide their personal and social action in the world. In this aspect, the Upper Tanana of the Chisana River basin share much in common with their other *Dineh* neighbours and cognates across the subarctic, a fact on which I will rely upon for my accounting of some features of their culture, as noted below.

The 19th and early 20th century society and culture of the Upper Tanana has been documented anthropologically in only a few cases, the earliest resulting from Robert McKennan's fieldwork in the area in 1929-30, which formed the basis for his ethnography *The Upper Tanana Indians*, published by Yale University Press in 1959. McKennan spent his first months in the region living at the Chisana village of the day (see Appendix 11 for full details). McKennan also served in Alaska in World War II, during which he had some opportunity to collect additional data, and subsequently returned to the Upper Tanana region several times in the 1950s and '60s to conduct further demographic, land use, and archaeological studies (McKennan 1964, 1969a, 1969b, 1981).

Since that time some additional ethnological work has been completed, notably Guedon's (1974) analysis of kinship and potlatch reciprocity in Tetlin and Northway, Vitt's (1971) study of hunting practices, Pitt's (1972) thesis on changing settlement patterns and housing types, and a series of resource exploitation and management studies (Haynes et al. 1984; Case 1984; Halpin 1987). A selection of Walter Northway's recollections on his long life (he was born about 1876 in Scottie Creek valley) was published in 1987 (Yarber et al. 1987). As well, considerable linguistic research, including place name and genealogical information, has been collected by John Ritter (YNLC), Jim Kari (ANLC), and myself. Much of this material remains unpublished, but see Tyone (1996), Kari (1997), and John (1994). Finally, in recent years, an increasing number of Aboriginal people have been recording stories of their Elders. Currently there is an Upper Tanana glossary in the Scottie Creek dialect (John 1997) with a specific volume on bird names and knowledge in production.

All of these efforts have contributed to our understanding of the past lifeways of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, yet there remains many significant gaps in the documentation of their culture and social history. This section presents my understanding of the society of the Chisana Basin *Dineh* from the late 19th through middle 20th century. It is necessarily incomplete since many of the members of that society have now walked their Trail to Heaven, but much can be ascertained specifically of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* from a compilation of the documentary sources, archival records, and oral history in conjunction with similar records from neighbouring Upper Tanana and Athapaskan-speaking groups.

The use of direct oral historical documentation by living Upper Tanana *Dineh* is not without question. Contemporary sources of oral history may differ in their remembrance of the past. The dating of events, in particular, between one recollection and another are often different. In addition, the primary actor(s) within a historical anecdote may change according to the teller and the locations of the historic action may shift across the landscape. Indeed such embellishment in storytelling is a highly regarded skill within *Dineh* culture. As McClellan and Denniston (1981:385-86) have observed for western subarctic *Dineh* generally, “a good raconteur was much appreciated, and creative variation was condoned. . . . but all oral traditions were believed to be basically true.”

These are common problems experienced by anyone working with memory and history, but they are not without solutions or at least accommodations (Vansina 1985; Portelli 1991). In

the end, such inconsistencies are less problematic than they seem, since it is the general flow of events that have historic value to both the Upper Tanana *Dineh* and our attempts to come to some understanding of their historic experience. In other words, despite differences in detail there remain many consistencies in general; it is less important, it seems to me, that we are able to determine whether it was person X or Y who was the central actor to the event, or whether the event took place in 1898 or 1902 or 1907, as much as the fact that the event occurred, to someone, somewhere, about that time, within their collective social past, and that the event retains historical and contemporary resonance to those that remember today.

In my view, history is not just in the details, but also emerges in retrospect, in recollection, telling, and interpretation. The social importance of recalled events, whether among *Dineh* around a campfire or among academic historians around a table, are still negotiated between them. From out of the myriad of specific events available for recall, individuals select meaningful occurrences for public discourse and construct a history, which makes sense of their experience for themselves, and, they hope, those with whom they are communicating. Since it is the history of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* that I am most concerned in recording here, in the end, I am less concerned with the absolute truth of their oral history than with whether or not my understanding and presentation of it retains meaningful resonance within their contemporary society.

Some of the material presented here is reconstruction based on the assumption that the documentation of traditional culture, which is available for the Upper Tanana generally, holds as well for the Chisana region specifically. This latter form of extrapolation seems entirely defensible, for, as Van Stone (1974) and others (McClellan 1964; Shinkwin and Aigner 1979, Shinkwin et al. 1979) have observed, the difference between northern *Dineh* were mainly a function of their specific environment - as in the case of the Tanana near Fairbanks exploiting salmon runs while the Upper Tanana relied more on mammal game and lake fish. Outside of these differences are found tremendous continuities between *Dineh* groups in world view (Nelson 1983), a base technology which relied more on artifice than artefacts (Ridington 1982, 1983), and an extensive cross-regional social network which circulated goods, people, and ideas (McClellan 1964), resulting, as we have seen with the Athapaskan language, in a general homogenization of many aspects of *Dineh* culture. McKennan (1969) described the result in the

western subarctic as a "a cultural continuum carried by a series of interlocking local bands whose microcultures differ in only small ways from those of their immediate neighbours" (p.98).

This section is organized into a series of sub-sections describing social organization and behaviours, which are derived from traditional anthropological categories. The categories themselves are, of course, false impositions; few *Dineh* I have met would distinguish, for example, between their methods of subsistence and their spirituality, or their political relationships and kinship. So I apologize to my *Dineh* readers for my disarticulation of their traditional culture. It is the *Noogli* way when we talk of these things, to break them down into smaller pieces so that we might understand, if only a little, something of the complexity of the *Dineh* way.

SUBSISTENCE – A LIFE OF RYTHMS

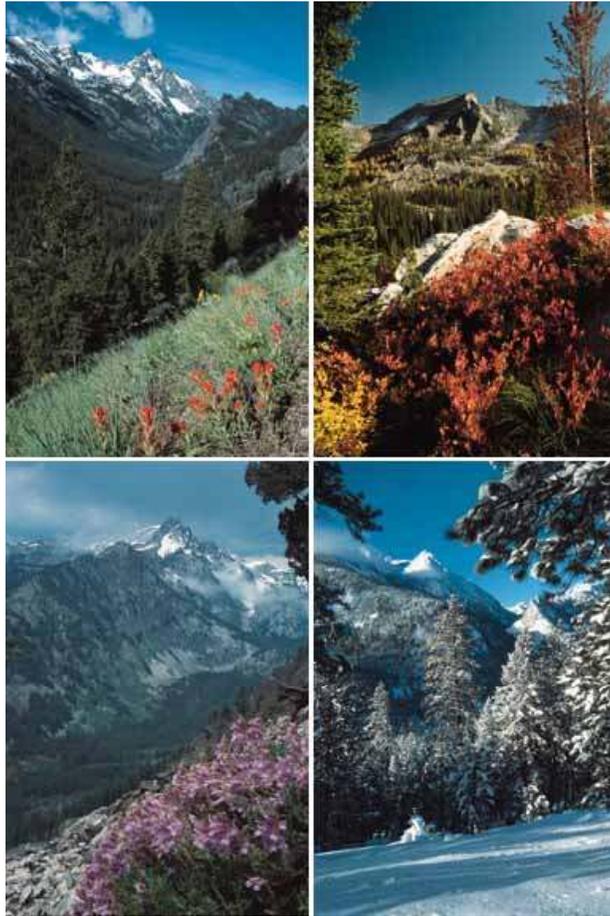


Figure 35. Seasonal Changes in the Chisana Basin.

(Grant Dunham)

Introduction

The northern *Dineh* traditionally practiced a hunting and gathering subsistence pattern, which made use of virtually every edible item in their environment. Though not as extensive or all-encompassing as in the past, this pattern continues in the present to a greater or lesser degree in most communities, in the form of caribou and moose hunts, snaring of small game, fishing and fowling, and collection of wild berries and herbs (Halpin 1987; Nadasdy 2003; Reckford 1983; Usher and Staples 1988).

An important and enduring feature of the hunting and gathering patterns of subsistence is "reciprocity" - the general sharing of food and resources with other members of one's living group, as well as one's in-law (affinal) and blood (consanguinal) relations residing in other areas.

In this way disparities in hunting success due to good fortune or greater skills and regional ecological diversity in subsistence resources were overcome to ensure that everyone received what they needed to survive.

Another feature of the Northern Athapaskan hunting and gathering adaptation was seasonal mobility between different micro-environments in order to take advantage of seasonal fluctuations in food and material resources, compounded by a careful assessment of the micro-environments renewable status (Nelson 1983). Subsequently, while we generally describe this mobility as a seasonal "round" it is important to realize that this does not imply the yearly return to a specific place on the landscape so much as the regular use of a similar micro-environment with the appropriate seasonal resources in exploitable condition.

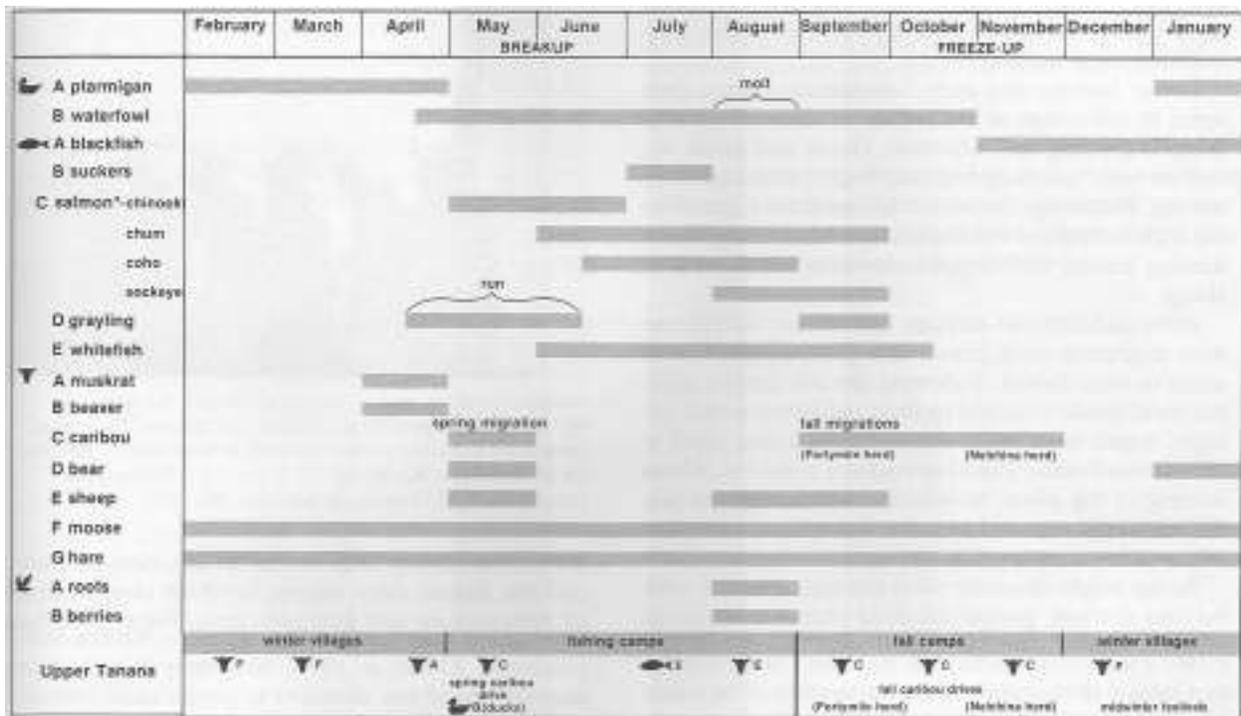


Figure 36. General Upper Tanana Annual Subsistence Round.

(adapted from Hosley 1981a:543)

While some areas, such as fishing sites, were so productive that they were returned to on a yearly basis, some seasonal camps might not be used for several years or more as the group allowed it to "lay fallow" and regenerate its resources, traveling to other similar environments within the region in the interim. Upper Tanana Elder Walter Northway's account of his ancestors and his own history with the landscape as presented in Appendix 2, is a good example of this lifestyle. The general pattern of the annual subsistence round for the Upper Tanana is graphically

represented in the figure above, while the figure below represents the specific Upper Nabesna / Upper Chisana seasonal round as documented by Guedon (1974).

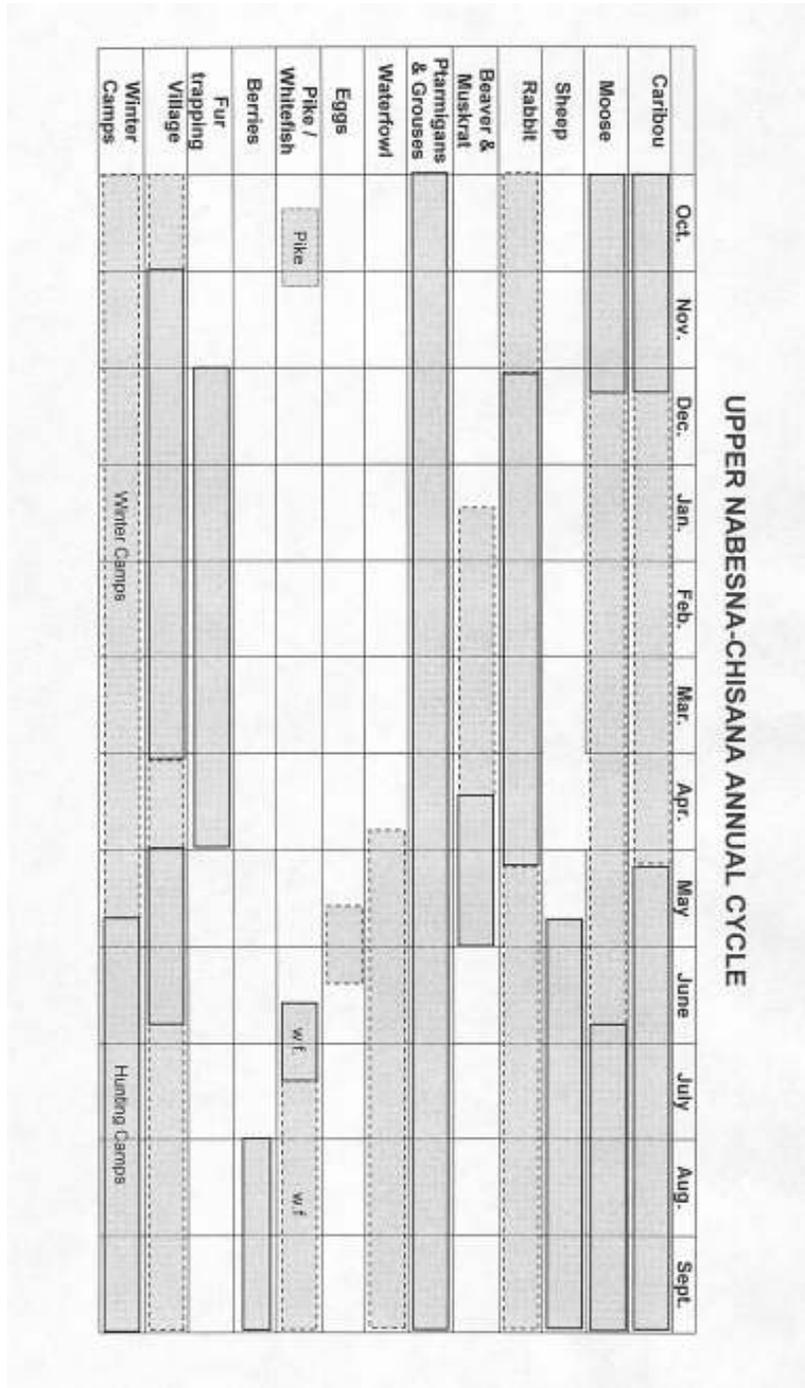


Figure 37. Upper Nabesna / Upper Chisana Annual Subsistence Cycle. (adapted from Guedon 1974).

Subsistence and Trapping Seasonal Rounds

Beginning in late August people would move into upland villages and smaller camps, comprised of skin-covered domed lodges,¹⁵ to hunt the southerly migrating caribou, most often through the construction of barriers or fences which would either concentrate a group of animals for easy dispatch or lead them into snares. The meat was dried and stored and formed the major part of their winter food, supplemented by fish, caught through the winter lake-ice, and moose. Caribou skins were used for clothing and shelter, and their bones for various implements, such as skin scrapers, needles, awls, and hunting points.

Thus, people from the lower Chisana River would move upstream to hunting camps in the mountains, such as at the mouth the Chisana River canyon (Upper Tanana – *Taacheeg* - “King City”) and the headwaters of the Beaver Creek, north of the Upper Chisana village site, or northwest to the caribou fences of the southern Dawson Range, such as Kechumstuck and the upper Forty-mile River, and perhaps the Upper Ladue drainage as well.¹⁶

In the spring, before the snow melt and the river breakup, people would move into the lowlands to favoured fishing sites, traveling by snowshoes made of birch and babiche and hauling sleds carrying their possessions. At the fish camps they would erect bark-covered huts, and prepare their dip-nets and canoes, continuing to hunt moose, as well as muskrat and beaver. With the end of breakup, stone and willow weirs were repaired or constructed and intensive fishing began, principally of several varieties of whitefish. Some of this catch would be stored in ground caches for use later in the summer.

In late July the fish camps would break up, most of the men moving back up into the mountains to hunt sheep with snare and bow for their meat, skins, and horns, while most of the women, children, and elderly would remain in the lowlands snaring the large arctic ground squirrel and marmots to eat and make blankets from their skins; during this phase of the seasons, both groups would generally occupy temporary double lean-tos. As the cooler weather began to descend in late August the people would reconvene in the uplands to meet the caribou and the cycle would be renewed (McKenna 1959, 1991).

¹⁵ The following section on Dwellings provides some illustrations of these different residence forms.

¹⁶ It is clear that some Upper Tanana exploited the Ladue River drainage but we have very little specific information on its use. Oral history accounts do indicate that people would travel there to hunt and trap; named individuals include Walter Northway and White River Johnny.

Upper Tanana Elder Andy Frank, described to me a very similar seasonal round which he practiced most of his life during the 20th century, which illustrates both the seasonal and longer term shifts in settlement patterns practiced by many Upper Tanana. During his early life he lived at a number of different village sites: *Ts'oogut Gaiy*, on Little Scottie Creek about the lakes just north of the intersection of the Alaska Highway with the international border, mentioned above; *Tayh Tsal T'aat* (High Cache), at the confluence of Desper Creek with Scottie Creek; *Theek'at*, "rock fishing place" (Scottie Creek Village in English), near the confluence of Scottie Creek with the Chisana River in Alaska; and *Kelt'uudn Mann'*, "water lily lake", and *Nahts ' Ts'ih-chuut*, "we grabbed wolverine" (Pepper or Paper Lake in English), located about 60 kilometres north of *Tsoogut Gaiy*, near the headwaters of Scottie Creek in Canada.

He and his family moved between these locations from year to year, and he recalled that the *Kelt'uudn Mann'* village was not used for many years after the early part of the century (this was also the site of the first trade post in the region, run by Bill Ruppe; see below). *Ts'oogut Gaiy* and *Theek'at* were principally spring / summer fishing villages; although they were occupied in winter as well by some people, it was during the fishing season that many other families would congregate here to fish.

Migrating caribou were taken at fences near *Kelt'uudn Mann'* before Andy Frank was born, as well as up the headwaters of the Chisana and White Rivers. During his lifetime, after the introduction of high caliber rifles, caribou fences declined in their use, since caribou could be hunted successfully without having to impound them.

The hills of the valley of Mirror Creek (a tributary of the Chisana through which the headwaters of the White River could be reached), and the higher ranges of the Nutzotin Mountains to the southwest were used to hunt sheep in the late summer. Through the myriad of lakes along the lower reaches of the Chisana River and Scottie Creek moose, beaver, muskrat, duck, as well as the occasional bear were hunted.

Through his life Andy Frank also periodically lived at a number of sites: at Snag village, on the middle White River in Canada, *Taatsan* village near the international border on Snag Creek, and Chisana for a winter. Yet Andy Frank primarily lived at *Tayh Tsal T'aat*, or High Cache as it is known in English, located at the confluence of Desper and Scottie creeks. Finally, in his old age, Andy lived at the contemporary village of Northway and the city of Fairbanks, Alaska.

TRAVEL



Figure 38. Upper Tanana Mooseskin Boat, Upper Nabesna River, 1929.

(Robert McKennan in Hosley 1981:539)

The Upper Tanana travelled extensively in their seasonal rounds as well as to visit relatives and attend potlatches in other settlements. As previously discussed, a labyrinth of trail systems, described above, tied villages and resource localities to each other. People generally travelled by walking, although a variety of aboriginal watercraft were also used. But it also can be said modern modes of transportation were quickly adopted by the Upper Tanana, beginning with the dogsled, canvas canoe, engine-driven plank vessel, automobile, and the snowmobile. However, there still remain many places yet in their landscape that are accessible only by foot in summer, and many people still walk considerable distances in order to hunt, collect berries and plants, or simply get out onto the land.

The *Dineh* made a number of aboriginal watercraft forms. Simply constructed rafts for crossing river channels and lakes, and travelling downstream were made by lashing together four or six logs with three- to five-ply mooseskin lines. “Cut two trees and halve them, and you’ve got a raft,” explained one of McClellan’s (1975:271) informants. Rafts were often abandoned at the end of their downstream course, the passengers returning to their origin by foot.

A second form of watercraft was the rawhide skin boat (see Figure, above). The skin most often used was moosehide. The details of the framework varied according to the available raw material, the need of the vessel, and the amount of time spent building it, but they generally all held a keel piece to which the ribs were lashed. Thus they ranged from small, hastily constructed craft to large (5 metre length) robust frames capable of carrying “six or seven people as well as heavy loads of meat” (McClellan and Denniston 1981:380). Yet even larger ones seldom took two people more than a day to build. The framework was often abandoned at a downstream destination, and the moosehide salvaged for other uses (McClellan 1975:269).

The third and most common type of watercraft were frame canoes hulled with birch bark. They were “the accepted mode of water travel,” although they tended to be quite small (12 to 16 feet in length) and shallow, holding two or perhaps three people. The bark was sewed to the frame with fine, split spruce roots, and the seams patched with prepared spruce pitch. McKennan (1959:92-93) provides some further detail to their construction (see also McClellan 1975:267-269). Of interest is McKennan’s note that “Although decking is described for most Athapaskan canoes, as a rule it covered only the forward end [while] the Upper Tanana use of fore and aft decking seems to distinguish their craft from those of their neighbors” (p. 93). Just such a craft was used by US Army surveyors of the Alaska Highway to cross Scottie Creek in 1943.

In general the upper Chisana River is unsuitable for watercraft of any sort due to the shallow water that typifies its upper course, except during spring freshet and at mid-day when glacial runoff was at its peak. Thus walking the trails in summer was the principal mode of transport from the lower to the upper Chisana. The walk from Big Scottie Creek to the edge of the Nutzotin mountains usually would take a long day, with the travellers leaving early in the morning, taking an extended rest through the mid-day heat, and carrying on to the base of the mountains in the late afternoon, arriving in the evening. Another day’s travel on foot would bring them to either the Upper Chisana or Upper Nabesna Native settlements, although active hunting along the way might delay the traveller by another day or two while they processed and cached their kill.

In winter hunters would still often walk, using snowshoes of the long, narrow sort typical of the western subarctic Dineh (McKennan 1959:90-91). An example of this form is shown below.



Figure 39. Titus John Modeling Snowshoe Frames for Robert McKennn at Chisana, 1929.
(from McKennan 1959)

The dogsled was introduced into the Upper Tanana region sometime in the middle to late 19th century and it is said to have been introduced by the whiteman, but was in common use by the time of McKennan's fieldwork (McKennan 1959:92). They are seldom used today, except in competitive racing, having been replaced by the snowmobile. However it is not unusual today to see dogs being used to pack supplies during bush hunts.

The gas-powered plank or fiberglass vessel, and the automobile are today ubiquitous throughout the villages of the Upper Tanana, and have been since their respective introduction. They are used for both gaining access to resources but, perhaps more importantly, also as the principal means of transportation for socializing with friends and relatives located in other regional villages. It is an unusual day indeed in which someone from Norway does not visit Beaver Creek and vice-versa, and an evening trip between Beaver Creek and Mentasta or Chistochina occurs every few days.

HUNTING



Figure 40. Caribou Migration

Hunting The *Dineh* Way

Like other northern Athapaskans, the Upper Tanana *Dineh* are predominantly a hunting people. As Nadasdy (2003:63) has observed for the neighbouring Kluane Lake Southern Tutchone *Dineh*, "hunting is life itself." On the surface of things such a statement might seem self-evident - in the cold northern forests, a geography incapable of sustained agriculture and low floral diversity of nutritional significance, indigenous people must rely on game animals in order to gain the sustenance they need to survive. Within the *Dineh* world, however, hunting is much more than a means to an end - it is an activity which reaches into practically every aspect of their biological, social, material, intellectual, and spiritual lives. Hunting is the defining aspect of *Dineh* personal identity, social relations, and moral values, in short of their Culture.

To fully appreciate the importance of hunting to *Dineh* culture, we must first understand that the act of hunting is not isolated from a continuum of cultural activities absolutely vital to the moment of the kill, without which *Dineh* hunting would not be possible. In the *Dineh* way it is difficult to separate any of the following: thinking and talking about hunting; keeping aware of the comings and goings and particular character of animals through observation of their environment and behaviour; going out into the bush, tracking, and killing an animal; butchering,

storing, sharing, cooking, and eating the animal; using its non-edible portions as a material resource in making additional objects, such as fleshers, clothing, and ornaments; ritually offering up portions of flesh or skeletal elements back to the bush; feeling full, content, and thankful at the end of the day; and dreaming of animals in one's sleep - all these comprise elements of *Dineh* hunting. This stands in sharp contrast to western categorizations which would normally separate most of these activities and feelings into something other than hunting; in the western view, hunting may be required to eat, but eating certainly is not hunting.

A second aspect of hunting, which arises from this integrative view, and is generally distinctive from western precepts, is that hunting cannot be isolated as a male gendered activity. In the contemporary world, and certainly in the historic past of the 20th century, are found many notable and skilled *Dineh* women who track and kill moose and caribou. To what extent this reflects a shift from pre-contact practices is difficult to say. Certainly it is clear that men predominated in this activity during precontact times, but I have heard accounts from descendants of Upper Tanana of *Dineh* women who hunted in the 19th century. Women certainly were engaged in intensive hunting of small game and fishing both in pre- and post-contact *Dineh* society. They played a role in butchering, storing, dividing, and cooking the meat.¹⁷ Women also promoted success in hunting by the observation of taboos against offending animals, such as touching a man's rifle, a practice thought to make the animal jealous and reject the hunters attempt to seduce it in a kill. As seamstresses, women were responsible for the skilled preparation of skins in ways which would please their animal owners. As Chaussonnet (1988: 212) has observed:

Animal skin, transformed into a second skin for humans by the work of the seamstresses, still maintained its animal identity. From the killing of an animal, through the tanning, cutting, and sewing of its skin into a piece of clothing, the qualities and characteristics attributed to it in life were maintained and passed on to the wearer of the finished garment. This important spiritual principle linked animals, hunters, and seamstresses together in an intricate and circular set of relationships. . . . [which] helped reconcile humans and animals. . . by reinforcing the transformational relationship between them in the clothing that she made.

¹⁷ McKennan (1959:45) notes that, "among the Upper Tanana the cooking was formerly done by the men...Today [1929] the former custom is falling into disuse, especially among the young people." It has generally been my observation over the past twelve years of fieldwork that men still do much of the cooking, both of country foods and store-bought foods, within village households I am familiar with.

Another means by which hunting permeates *Dineh* social life are the practices of reciprocity and demand sharing among relatives, co-residents (in the past generally the same people), and "hunting partners". In 1929 McKennan observed that the "slayer of a large animal such as a moose or caribou does not acquire the entire carcass but receives only a hind quarter. The ribs and hide go to his partner (*kla*), while the remainder of the animal is distributed among the other members of the camp" (McKennan 1959:50). This still remains a common and essential practice with many of the residents in the Upper Tanana communities of today.

For example, it is a rare moment when there is an abundance of meat at Mr. Joseph Johnny's borderline cabin although he is a skilled and very successful hunter. The meat of each moose carcass, averaging about 400 kilograms each, is largely distributed to others within a few days of each kill, at times leaving him with no meat at all in his camp. While the majority of the meat is taken by consanguinal relatives, some travelling from Whitehorse and Copper Centre (distances of 500 and 350 kilometres respectively), a notable proportion of about 20 percent is given to more distantly related Natives who visit his camp once word of the kill is transmitted.

At first Tommy explained his generosity as an expression of how the failure of others to obtain meat through their own efforts made him feel sorry for them - "Those guys down in Northway are starving, man. They don't get nothing." Later he expressed his sharing in metaphorical terms; "When I eat my own meat, it tastes funny, like rags, but when I eat someone else's, boy, that's good." Later, in the dark over tea one evening, he spoke at length on his relationship to the animals that he kills, how he dreams their presence and respects their offering to him by sharing the meat with others. "If you don't do that, they [animals] know. They're not gonna come back to you, boy, no way. If you don't share that'll be the last one you ever get."

This leads us to another essential component of *Dineh* hunting - the complex of paradoxical concepts regarding the active role hunter and prey take in the hunt (Hallowell 1960, Tanner 1979; Nelson 1983; Brightman 1993; Nadasdy 2003). Brightman has typified this as a paradox between a benefactive and adversarial model of the hunt.

On the one hand, *Dineh* conceive of a successful hunt to reflect the desire of the animal to give itself to a hunter who has shown the animal proper "respect" (a term itself laden with multiple meanings - see Nadasdy 2003:79-94), an act of reciprocal exchange - respect for meat. Animals also give themselves out of "pity" for the hunger of humans, as well as "love" for humans. These two impulses also imply a form of reciprocity. The poor hungry human is a

supplicant for a gift of meat from the animal. The would-be lover attempts to gain favour through gifts and compliments, including the wearing of beautiful articles of clothing prepared by women, and care and decoration of hunting implements. In addition, the killing of an animal simultaneously gives renewal to its life, as its spirit is reincarnated within the newborn. "Hunter and prey successively renew each other's lives," writes Brightman (1993:188), "and, indeed, each seems to realize its innate nature in the transaction, the hunter as supplicant and the animal as benefactor."

In addition, as Mauss (1967) notes in *The Gift*, every act of giving has an element of compulsion on the recipient to make a return gift. This is what Brightman (1993:189) refers to as innate "coercive and exploitative modalities that may be inimical to the creation of friendly feelings." The experience of skillful hunters failing to kill a prey demonstrates the animal's reluctance to die. The use of hunting fetishes, songs and spells, and divination of the whereabouts of animals, are actions independent of, and are attempting to dominate the animal's will. Alternatively, "animals that bite, struggle, and lead their hunters on exhausting chases cannot readily be defined as voluntary benefactors" (p.201).

These paradoxical ambiguities of killing animals reflect important concerns of *Dineh* thought-worlds. In some respect, their opposition is complimentary and mediated by the existence of contingent uncertainties in other aspects of life, such as evidence provided by dreams and myths which demonstrate the illusory nature of our external senses, which in turn informs and reflects similar paradoxes of *Dineh* conceptions of Self and Other, such as the limit of personal authority and control.

At this point I only hope to have exposed something of the complexities of "hunting" within Upper Tanana *Dineh* culture that extends it far beyond the mere provision of calories and raw materials for artefacts.

Hunting in the Chisana River Basin¹⁸

Caribou were formerly the predominant source of meat for the aboriginal people of the Chisana River basin, but their depletion and regulation throughout the 20th century has led them to be replaced by moose as the principal meat by both volume and choice. Fish, which will be

¹⁸ Besides components within other ethnographies of the *Dineh*, Ramon Vitt has produced a detailed study in his M.A. Thesis of hunting practices of the Upper Tanana Athapaskans (Vitt 1971).

discussed in the next section, are probably the second most important source of food. Important subsidiary meat was and is still obtained from sheep, porcupine, muskrat, rabbits, ducks, and grouse, and formerly bear and lynx as well.

McKenna noted at the time of his fieldwork, "the economic life of the Upper Tanana centers around the caribou. Not only does the animal constitute the source of food for the Natives and their dogs, but also it supplies the material for their clothing, shelters, and boats as well as netting for their snowshoes and babiche and sinew for their snares, cords, and lashing" (McKenna 1959:47). During his stay at Upper Nabesna village in November and December of 1959 he observed the passage of some sixty or seventy thousand caribou. McKenna's field diary records a number of individual and accompanied hunts, in every case using rifles.

This area is traversed by two distinctive caribou herds: the Nelcina and the Chisana. The latter was considerably reduced in the winter of 1913-14 during the occupation of miners engaged in the short-lived "Chisana Gold Rush" of that year. Before this time both herds were hunted all along the Chisana basin during its migrations in early winter and early summer, the principal aggregations occurring in late November and mid-May. Caribou were also hunted in their summer range in the valley of the White River watershed. Caribou were hunted by individual tracking, capture in surrounds, and snares along fences. Surrounds and fences required considerable labour to erect and maintain, and were the focal point for regular aggregations of normally separated residential groups on the Upper White River and the Yukon-Tanana Uplands. This technology was largely abandoned after the introduction of the high-powered rifle in the 1920s.¹⁹

Moose were hunted individually and with snares throughout the region and the year and were essential during the intervals between the end of the whitefish fishery and the arrival of the caribou in late summer/early fall. Moose was also important between the consumption of the last winter caribou and the possibility of hunting muskrat and duck in the spring. Similar to the caribou, non-edible portions of the moose was used for raw material for a variety of secondary artefacts.

¹⁹ Further dramatic declines in the 1970s and 80s had reduced the Chisana herd to about 250 members by the year 2000. Today the herd is subject to protection and efforts to increase its numbers through the Chisana Caribou Herd Recovery Project. The presence of moose in the region fares much better, at least on the Canadian side of the border, where the Scottie Creek valley has one of the most dense moose populations in the southern Yukon.

Mountain sheep were hunted in the summer and fall in the Upper Chisana basin, prior to the November rut and snowfall, which inhibited access to the hills. Snares were the principal means of capture before the rifle.

Bear meat and fat were more prized in the past than today, because it provided the major source of grease for consumption and other uses, such as preventing the rusting of guns and other metals. Bears were generally hunted in or near their dens along south-facing hillsides. Prior to the arrival of the rifle, killing a bear brought considerable prestige to a man for his bravery, since they were usually dispatched at close quarters with spear or club.

For much of the 20th century muskrat was hunted in the spring for both its meat and its fur, and quite likely this pattern extended into the pre-contact past as well. The myriad lakes of the lower Chisana basin provided an ideal environment for muskrat, as well as beaver, which was also trapped and shot for its fur.²⁰

Of the smaller animals, porcupine, with its thick layer of fat, seem most favoured, although rabbits and grouse made up more of the average diet. They were hunted and snared throughout the basin, throughout the year. The whistling marmot was a favoured food to be found in the foothills of the Nuztotin Mountains, along with Arctic Ground squirrel, which were snared. All of these animals might also be dispatched by throwing sticks.

The millions of migrating fowl which pass through the Shakwak Flyway, and those which settle on the lakes for the summer to breed were hunted by blunted arrows and sometimes nets placed at the end of the lake where they would be ensnared landing at dusk or taking off after being startled. Earlier I emphasized that the importance of the fowl resource is probably under-estimated in prehistoric subsistence and it remains a valued subsistence resource by many today.

²⁰ The anthropologist Walter Goldsmidt mapped several family trapping grounds during a short visit to the Upper Tanana area in 1946. His manuscript on Traditional Land Use is currently being edited for publication (Satler and Easton 2004). Unfortunately, he spent only one day at Northway, taking depositions on land use from about eight local residents, and thus did not collect a great deal of information regarding the Chisana Basin.

FISHING



Figure 41. Dipnet Fishing at Traditional Weir on Tetlin Lake.

(Robert McKennan Collection, Dartmouth College)

McKenna (1959) believed that fishing was of secondary importance to hunting, especially in view of a traditional lack of gill-net or handline technology by which they might practice below-ice winter fishing. However, once White traders introduced them, the Upper Tanana quickly adapted the new technology for winter use. This ready adoption may reflect the dramatic declines in big game that followed the Chisana Gold Rush, or a more prosaic recognition of the gill-nets efficacy and ease of use. Certainly fish are an important staple of the average Upper Tanana today.²¹

Prior to the widespread use of gillnets, the aboriginal method of fishing involved the use of conical fish traps and the construction of weirs across good spawning streams, the impounded fish being scooped out with willow-withe dipnets. Whitefish (*Coregonus spp.*), were the principal fishery, although grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), pike (*Esox lucius*), sucker (*Catostomus spp.*), and lingcod or burbot (*Lota lota*), were also caught.

²¹ The Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge is currently coordinating a three-year study on the aboriginal subsistence fishery in the region (Friend et al. 2005).

Salmon from the Yukon and Copper Rivers was also pursued as a valuable trade commodity or received as an act of reciprocity from Ahtna kin, both in the more recent past and the present; and it seems likely this exchange pattern extends into prehistory as well. Some fishing localities were very much seasonal camps with only temporary dwellings, as at the Alaskan Tswchamon Lakes, while others were more sedentary villages with more permanent architecture as at Big Scottie Creek. In June 1999 I was able to visit two traditional fishing sites in the southern Chisana Basin. The first was at High Cache on Desper Creek, just before its confluence with lower Scottie Creek. A wooden fish weir (in Upper Tanana called a *Kuudn*) was set here.²² Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny has seen some of the old stakes still in the mud of the bottom of the creek at low water. The second was at Big Scottie Creek village, at the confluence of Scottie Creek with the Chisana River proper. Its Upper Tanana name – *Thee Kut* – makes reference to the rock-based fish traps which were set along this section.

Mr. Johnny described the construction of the fish weir. Begin by crossing two willow poles together, like an X, and then lash them together with willow line and push them in the water, and then another and another, until the creek was crossed. You would then put willow trees up against the line of poles. It was easy to construct in plan, but hard work in fact, because often you had to often drag the trees some distance. It would take a day and a half to two days to construct. Then you put a platform in the middle, between four poles in a square, so that you can stand there and work the dip net. You walked out to it along the piled up willow brush. The High Cache weir was constructed in the mid-summer, say late July, and then in August month the fish would start coming downstream.

There were a lot of people who would come to High Cache to fish: Titus John, Bell John, Andy Frank, Maggie John, Bessie Mason, Shorty Frank, White River Johnny, Chief Johnson, Joe John, Ernest Scott, Frank Titus, all the people from around would come. People from Snag came here too.

"They come down here with gas boat, from Tetlin, Northway, they all come here. Boat just loaded with fish. They hunt moose up that way [to the south, across the flats of the lower Chisana River], all over. They dry meat here fall time. And they stay here year round, too. . . . They trap up in those hills. *Thaiy Shok* they're called."²³

²² See fieldtape # T1999-2A-133 (Easton, fieldnotes, n.d.).

²³ Easton, n.d., fieldnotes, Tape# T1999-2A-114.

Willow bark was the material used to construct the *uh*, or dip-net, used to catch fish in the small passageway at the middle of the weir. When asked how this was made, Mr. Johnny did not hesitate in showing us. He explained that first you have to find a good willow tree, one which is straight limbed and without branches along the trunk. Then you make a cut, about four centimeters wide, across the trunk, near the bottom, and pry this up a little with your knife. Then, grasping the cut bark firmly, you simply peel it away in as long a strip as you can before it breaks off the tree. Our efforts provided us with lengths of about a metre, but Mr. Johnny told us that better trees for this purpose are to be found up on the hillside, where a person would grab the cut bark and run away from the tree, stripping a length as high as the tree, of perhaps four or five metres. It is also best to collect this bark at just this time of year, after freezing but before it gets too hot.

Once you have gathered a bundle of these strips you must further prepare them by stripping the outer bark, which is done by running your knife along the outside while pulling the strip between the knife and a stabilizing surface, such as your leg or a log. You can also do this with your teeth. Then you are ready to begin tying the net together, which is done with the same knot which western fishermen use; you can gauge the size of the hole in the net to be as big or small as you please. A series of such knotted strips were then tied together, using the same knot, to form the entire net, which was then tied onto a hoop of willow with spruce root, which in turn was hafted onto a long pole, and the *uh* was ready for use.

Later, Mr. Johnny pointed out that such willow *uh* were stored after the fishing season by removing them from the hoop, rolling up the net, and wrapping the net in birchbark, which is then tied with willow. The net was then cached beneath some moss in some marked location. The following year it would be retrieved and set into the water to soak for about a week or ten days before it was sewed onto the hoop for use (T1999-2B-289). Summing up his instruction of weir and net construction, Mr. Johnny observed:

We got everything. We got house here. Nature has got everything out here, but people don't know how to use it. You can build a house here, make fish net, fish trap. You can make everything here. Nature has made it - people just don't know how to use it, don't know how to go about it. Native people lived here thousands of years; they didn't need help. (Easton, n.d. [JTJ, T1999-2A]).

There are two significant observations to be made of Mr. Johnny's description and demonstration of *uh* construction. The first is that dipnet construction and use was not

necessarily a gendered labour activity: since Mr. Johnny's intimate knowledge extended to the actual construction of the *uh*, a notion confirmed by a subsequent query of his older sister, Mrs. Bessie John, who indicated that she too had made such nets in the past. The second observation is that the storage method of the nets suggests that traditional forms may be found at such fishing sites beneath the moss if they are out of the way of traffic that might crush them. Continuing archaeological survey work at fish camps should thus include searching for such remains.²⁴

Scattered about such fish camps you will also find rectangular excavations, approximately 175 cm long, by 75 cm wide and 75 cm deep. Mr. Louis Frank identified this as a special kind of ground cache, which was used to ripen fish to improve their flavour and render their fat. Such a ground cache for fish is called *dinuh*.

Its construction is simple; dig the rectangular hole and line it with willow. Whitefish were then hung down into the hole on fireweed stalks and covered up for about thirty days to ripen them. After this time, they would cook it. They would do this all summer long. Ripening fish is old people's way, they like it, because it makes them greasier.

Mr. Frank recalled that such fish had a "good flavour. It smells but it's something good for them [old people]. . . . It's like what they do for salmon; they keep it in water for one week then they cook it off. That's the way you get salmon grease, you boil it off" (LF, T1999-2A).

A ground cache keeps everything cool. "You keep meat cool. I seen my dad and mom do that. You dig about six or four feet, then you hit permafrost. You clean it out and they line it with willow. You get branches and cover it up with branches and moss and it stays cool" (TJ, T1999-2A-260). A ground cache for meat is called *ch'el tha'*. Neither Mr. Johnny nor Mr. Frank was able to translate this term into English.

²⁴ In fact Mr. Johnny's younger brother, David Johnny, found just such a dipnet on his visit to a traditional fishing site in the upper Scottie Creek valley. It has been preserved and remains in the possession of the White River First Nation in Beaver Creek, Yukon.

COLLECTING



Figure 42. Lowbrush Cranberries, a Favoured Collected Berry.

The Upper Tanana made use of a wide variety of plants for food, technology, and medicine. Even today collecting plants to eat, to make herbs and teas for pleasure, to treat ailments, and to use in the continued manufacture of traditional crafts, is a regular occurrence in every community.

Spruce was the most important plant in terms of its overall use - it was a component of much of the traditional technology. The roots were used for lines in a variety of fashions, from sewing to net-making; the bark was used for siding and roofing of their habitations and to make containers; the inner cambium is chewed for medicine and food in times of shortage. The pitch is chewed as a form of gum; is used as an ointment for sores and cuts, and as a glue for canoes and arrows. Spruce boughs are used for bedding and spruce needles are burned to keep away mosquitoes; spruce wood is used to make, "weirs, fish traps, fish racks, fish rafts, and boat poles. Boats, boat paddles, shovels, skin stretchers, and wedges for chopping wood are also made out of

the wood" (P. Kari 1985:8). Most importantly, spruce provides a primary source of fuel to heat homes and bodies during the cold days and nights of winter and to fuel fires for cooking.

While plants do not regularly make up a large proportion of the Upper Tanana diet – meat, fish, and fowl dominate - they do provide additional nutrients and break up the monotony of the non-plant diet, especially a variety of berries. Many plants are used to treat ailments, usually in the form of a hot brew or poultice. At least 100 of the 300 or so vascular plants of the interior western subarctic have some documented use in Upper Tanana culture. Fuller documentation of native plant use can be found in Appendices 10 and 22.

DWELLINGS



Figure 43. Domed Mooseskin Tent on Middle Fork of the Fortymile River, 1901.

(University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, C. S. Farnsworth Collection, in Hosley 1981:541)

The Upper Tanana used a variety of house forms adapted to the circumstances of their residence. Roger Pitts produced a thesis on *The Changing Settlement Patterns and Housing Types of the Upper Tanana* in 1972, which provides considerable detail on these forms and their construction. In this section we will briefly illustrate this variety.

Pitts (1972:179-193) lists the following forms of structures:

1. Summer Bark House
2. Winter Semi-Subterranean Bark House
3. Winter Lodge-Pole House
4. Winter Semispherical Skin Tent
5. Conical Skin / Bark Tent
6. Lean-To and Emergency Shelters
7. High Caches
8. Log Cabins

Examples of the principal structures are provided below.

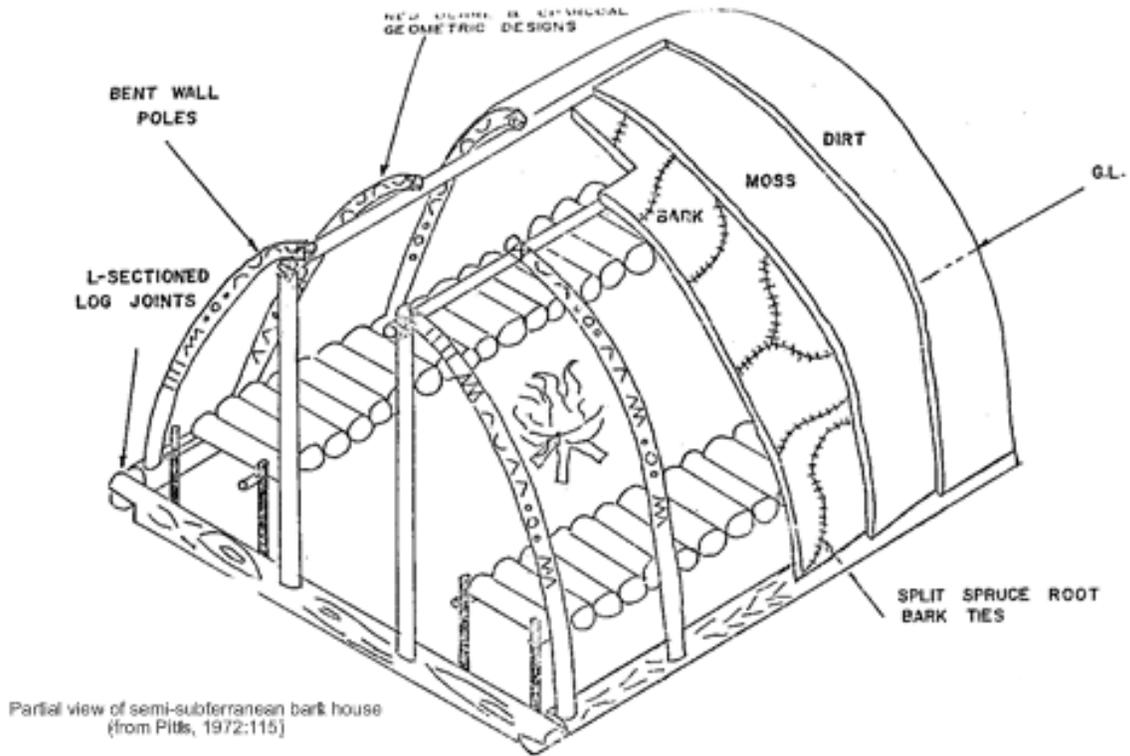


Figure 44. Section View of Upper Tanana Semi-subterranean Bark House
(from Pitts 1972:115)

According to Pitts (1972), the semi-subterranean bark house was built and occupied by the *Huske*, a man of respect and leadership whose authority was derived from his success at hunting, curing, and predicting the future. Sunk three to four feet into the ground, this dwelling could reach lengths of 20 to 40 feet and 10 to 25 feet in width. A sleeping quarter and sweathouse were located at one end and the entrance at the other. Most of the interior was used for gatherings for shamanic work, dancing, storytelling, and potlatching associated with the wintertime.

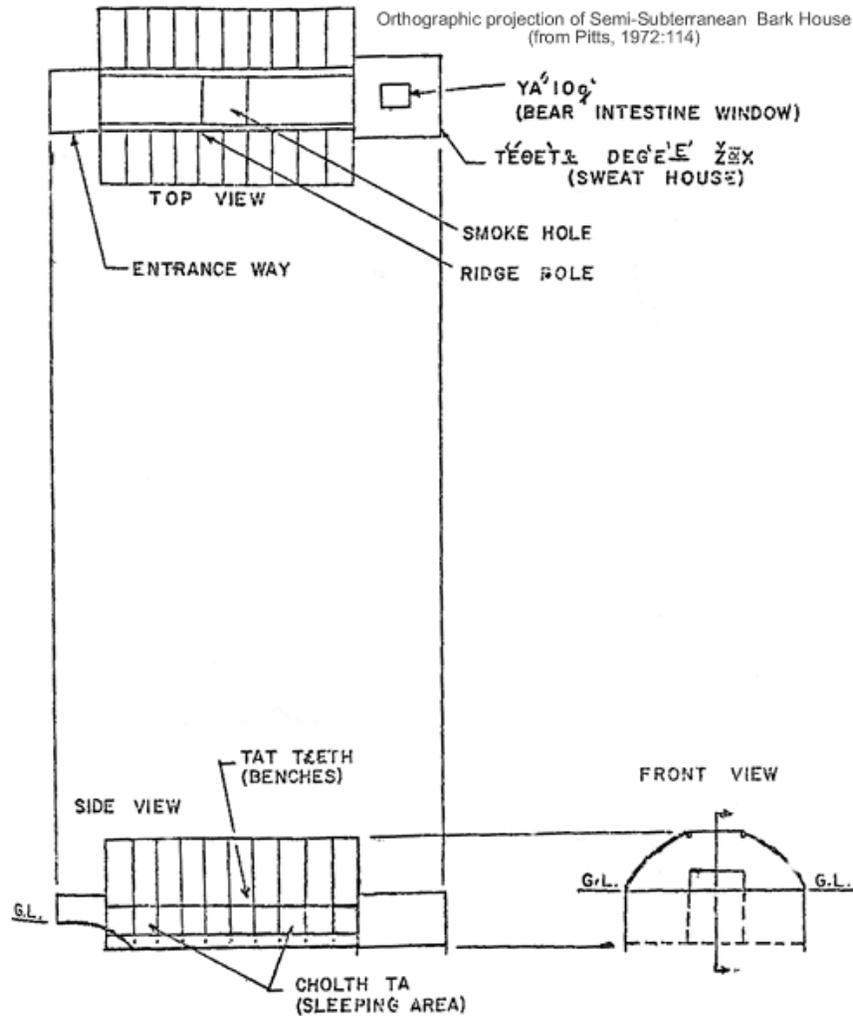


Figure 45. Upper Tanana Semi-subterranean Bark House

(from Pitts 1972:114)

A smaller, above ground structure, built similarly in other architectural aspects, was used by the general population and often housed two related families.

The domed skin tent was the form of structure used by families during periods of living at seasonal camps away from the winter village, particularly at winter hunting camps, but it could also be found within villages as well.

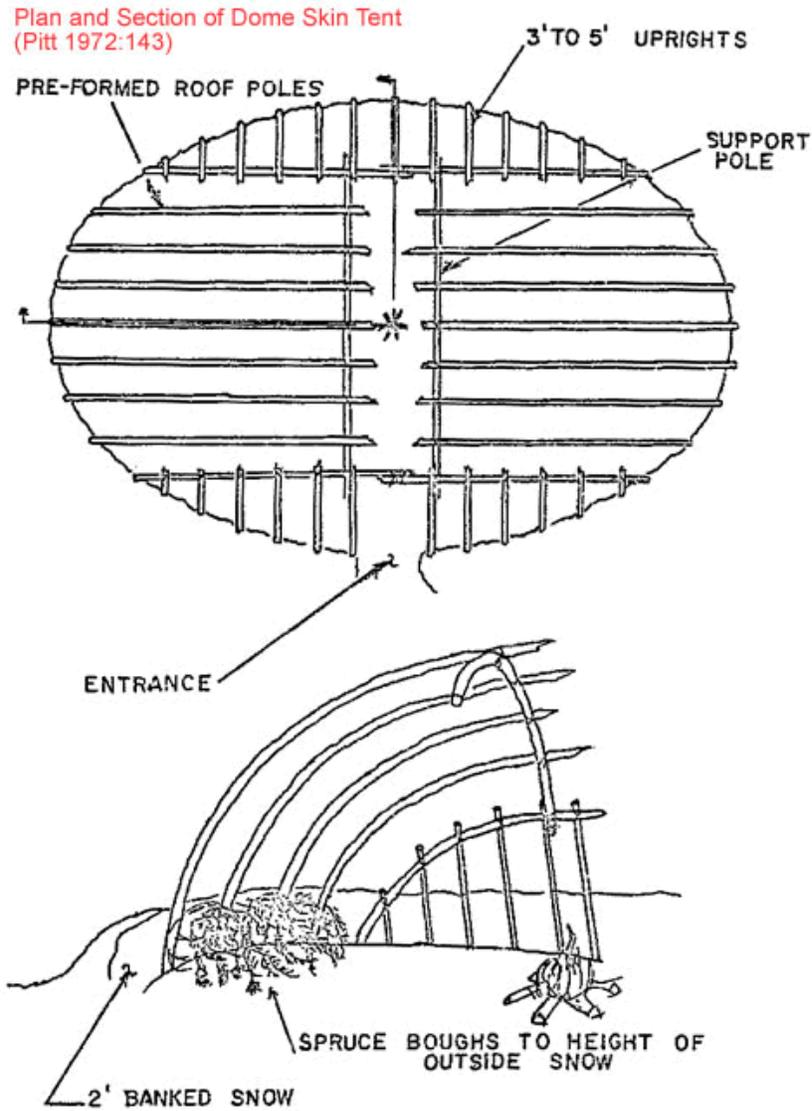
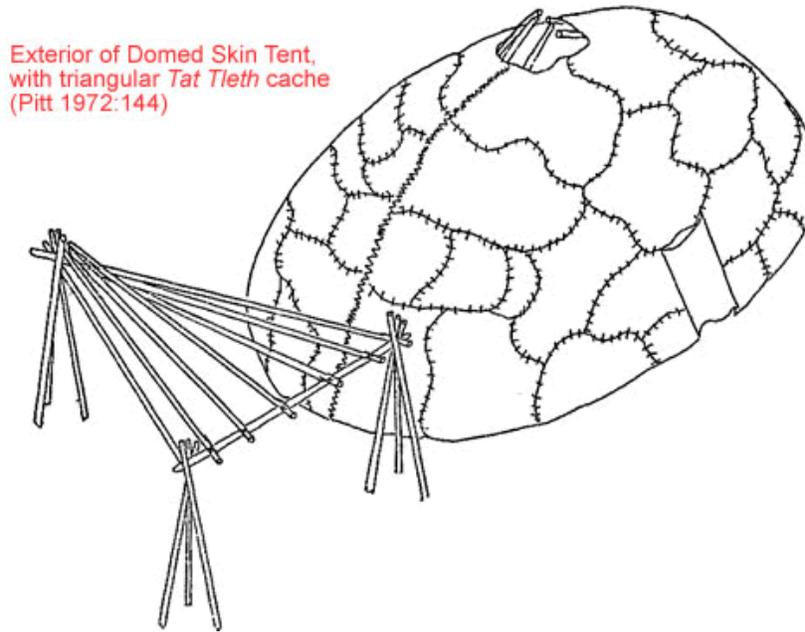


Figure 46. Plan and Section of Upper Tanana Dome Skin Tent

(from Pitts 1972:143)

One of these structures is pictured in the photograph, which begins this section, above. Pitts gives dimensions of 18 by 8 by 9 feet, while McKennan suggests they averaged about 14 feet in diameter, requiring some 15 to 20 moose skins to cover it. Two families would generally share a single dwelling, usually connected through the men's "hunting partner" relationship, or brothers-in-law, or a couple and their daughter's husband and family.



Exterior of Domed Skin Tent,
with triangular *Tat Tleth* cache
(Pitt 1972:144)

Figure 47. Upper Tanana Domed Skin Tent and High Cache

(from Pitt 1972:144)

Early in the 20th century, the skin-covered lodge was replaced by the rectangular canvas "wall tent", as typified in the photo below.



Figure 48. Canvas Wall Tent at Northway, 1943

(Duesenberg Archive Film)

Both Pitt and McKennan report on the construction of a log pole house of the type illustrated below.

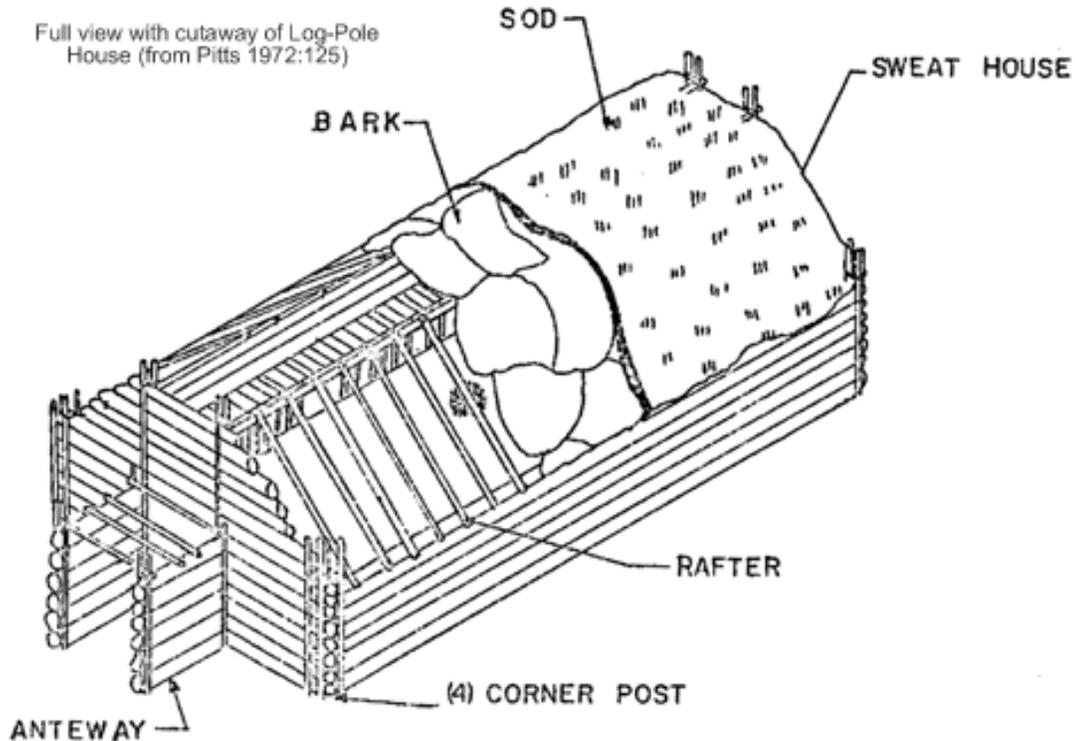


Figure 49. Upper Tanana Log Pole House

(from Pitts 1972:125)

Pitt and McKennan also suggest that this form is a late prehistoric development, likely as a diffused form (from the coast via the Copper River?) not long before European contact.

The notched corner log cabin style was introduced to the Scottie Creek drainage in 1902 by the prospector/trader Bill Rupe (see below) and by the 1940s most of the aboriginal forms had given way to the new style as new settlements were built and older, conservative members of the community who favoured the traditional style passed on. The log cabin style continues to dominate most Native villages in the region today, and are the most consistent architectural remains found during the course of archaeological survey in the Chisana Basin.

Reports on such features are available in survey reports by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for *Nach'etay Cheeg* – Cross Creek village on the Upper Chisana River (BIA 1993), *Tthiixaa' Cheeg* – Nabesna village (BIA 1996a), and *Dehsoon Cheeg* – Nabesna Bar village

(BIA 1996b), both on the upper Nabesna River. Similar remains have been found downstream at a number of locations, including Big Scottie Creek, High Cache, *Tsoogot Gaiy*, *Taiy Chi*, *Naagat Kaiy*, *Nii-ii*, and Snag village sites (Easton 2002a). At *Tsoogot Gaiy* and *Nii-ii* are also found round clearings identified as former locations of domed-skinned tents. The last known use of this traditional structure was by “Chief” Johnson at *Nii-ii* in the early 1940s (Easton, fieldnotes, n.d., 2002a).

Three other structural forms are worthy of note here. The first is a simple sweat bath, used for both physical and spiritual cleansing. The second is the “high cache”, a raised storage space traditionally placed in trees and historically built as a small cabin structure on poles. The last is the “ground cache” used for the storage of a variety of foodstuffs. All three of these features are commonly found at both historic and prehistoric sites throughout the region.

KINSHIP RELATIONS



Figure 50. Upper Tanana Family at Chisana, 1940.

(Ivan Thorall Collection, Chisana, Alaska)

Jack John Justin (third from left), Polly and Chisana Joe John / Justin (centre adults).

Introduction

Since the Upper Tanana bands are small, every member of the group normally enjoys at least one, and often several, relationships with each of the other members. . . . The present [1929] Upper Nabesna – Chisana band offers a splendid example of such interrelationship. The group consists of four families, those of Chisana Joe, Nabesna John, Scottie Creek Titus, and Andy Toby. Joe, John, and Corinne, the wife of Titus, are brothers and sister. Andy's dead father, Tobey Charley, was the maternal uncle of the three just named. Andy's wife is Corinne's daughter by a former marriage. Corinne's young son, Little Ed, is regarded as the future husband of Joe's little girl, Ed's cross-cousin. Thus each family is related to the other three; and Andy is related to his wife, whose mother is his paternal cross-cousin; Corinne's son is to marry her brother's daughter; and further to complicate the picture the band contains Old Mama, the mother of Joe, John, and Corinne, who is related by blood or marriage to everyone (McKenna 1959:121).

Like all other Dineh peoples, the aboriginal society of the Upper Tanana revolved around relations between kin. These relations between consanguines (relations by blood) and affines (relations by marriage) – were the primary mechanism by which most social relationships were organized and acted upon. This included primary socialization and education of children, the formation of domestic, local, and regional residential units, subsistence and other economic

activities including trade relations and potlatch ceremonies, and spiritualism. The dominance of these relations among *Dineh* is so strong that we may say that they live within a kin-based society. By this we mean that for nearly all people the family is the dominant arena of social relations throughout their lives. Yet the nature of the family among the Upper Tanana however, was quite a bit different family in contemporary North America.

The primary difference is cultural and is derived from a number of factors which are distinct from western cultural standards. Among the *Dineh* of the Chisana basin, these differences include:

- the assignment of descent based on one's mother (matrilineal descent);
- the existence of clans, phratries, and moieties;
- the primacy of the extended family, rather than the natal family, in the formation of the domestic economic unit of the household; and
- the equivalency of the domestic economy with the public economy, in so far as groups of related households which lived together (the band) co-operatively created both the personal subsistence and public political economies – indeed their categorical distinction makes little sense from the Native point of view.

Yet beyond these distinctions, the exact nature of the aboriginal kinship system of the Upper Tanana is impossible to specify. A number of factors account for this. Most importantly, the introduction of epidemic and endemic European diseases, such as measles and tuberculosis, effected a dramatic decline in the regional population. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people died, decimating villages, destroying whole families, and reducing some lineages and clans to unsustainable levels. The survivors were assumed into living families for the purposes of maintaining a social identity and role within this reconstituted society. A second factor is the general assimilation of Upper Tanana to western mores, particularly Christianity and western ideals of “love”, which further reduced understandings and familiarity with the aboriginal kinship system. As a result there is considerable range between individual accounts of the nature of kinship relations as a reading of the most comprehensive attempt to elucidate it does reveal (Guedon 1974). Nevertheless, we can describe briefly what seem to be enduring features of the kinship system agreed upon by most *Dineh*.

Matrilineal Descent

Matrilineal descent is the practice of tracing one's ancestry through the female line. Children look to their mother and her blood relatives as their consanguinal relations from whom they are descended and most closely related to. Yet not all *Dineh* observed matrilineal descent. In the Mackenzie district, for example, they are generally patrilineal and the northern Gwich'in follow bilateral descent, while most *Dineh* in Alaska and Yukon follow matrilineal lines.

Anthropologists have documented a number of correlates generally found accompanying matrilineal descent, some of which are found among the Upper Tanana. These include similarly structured terminologies for kin,²⁵ a preference for classificatory cross-cousin marriage, the sorrate and levirate, and special relationships between children and their maternal uncles and aunts (their mother's brothers and sisters) and their maternal cousins. It is important to emphasize, however, that matrilineal descent does not alienate fathers from their offspring. On the contrary, close, loving relationships between parents and children is the norm.

Clans, Phratries, and Moieties

Within most of the western subarctic *Dineh* communities', people were held to be related to one another less as individuals, and more as representatives of groups of kin variously organized as "clans", "phratries", and "moieties". Earlier we noted that the composition of these larger social categories has been obscured by demographic collapse due to epidemic death rates during much of the 19th and 20th centuries and that, as a result, it is difficult to reconstruct the aboriginal system in operation prior to contact due to these changes in population.²⁶ Evidence does seem to suggest that the aboriginal system was a Phratry organization of three Sibs (Guedon 1974), but today nearly everybody, even older *Dineh*, recognize two principal clans (comprised of a number of sub-clans) within a Moiety social organization. According to Roy Sam of Northway, there are

²⁵ The kinship terminology, "is bifurcate collateral for the parental generation. For ego's own generation siblings and parallel cousins were called by the same term, while cross-cousins were terminologically differentiated from siblings and parallel cousins, but not from each other - the so-called Iroquois system" McKennan 1981:572 & 574). The important feature is the distinction between maternal and paternal cousins from ego's perspective; the former being regarded as close "siblings," the latter as potential marriage partners.

²⁶ De Laguna (1975) in her summary examination of matrilineal kin groups across northwest America, suggests that rather easy and frequent clan re-alignments are a feature of matrilineal clans across the western subarctic as a whole.

currently eight clans among the Upper Tanana, divided into two moieties.²⁷ They are listed in Table V, below.

Table IV. Clans of the Upper Tanana according to Roy Sam

<i>CROW MOIETY</i>	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Association</u>
<i>Naltsiin</i>	(marten)
<i>Alts'a'dinee</i>	(crow)
<i>Niisuu</i>	(?)
<i>WOLF MOIETY</i>	
<i>Ts'ik'aayuu</i>	(cottonwood seed in air)
<i>Tisyuu</i>	(red ochre)
<i>Ch'ich'e yuu</i>	(fishtail)
<i>Ch'yaa</i>	(seagull)
<i>Udzih yuu</i>	(caribou)

Moiety systems composed of exogamous, matrilineal lineages are fairly common among many hunting and gathering peoples. Within such kinship systems it is an almost regular occurrence to find that one's preferred marriage mate is one's cross-cousin, that is one's father's sister's or mother's brother's child of the opposite sex, and this too is the case amongst the Upper Tanana (McKenna 1981). Parallel cousins (father's brother's or mother's sister's children) are forbidden marriage partners in a matrilineal descent system, for to do so would break the rule of clan exogamy since they would necessarily belong to the same clan. Alternatively, cross-cousins must perforce belong to the opposite moiety and are therefore eligible marriage partners.²⁸ A good number of theoretical explanations for the preference for cross-cousin marriages in such systems have been put forward over the years, but here we will just accept the fact that in smaller populations typical of foraging societies, marriage to a relative of some sort is inevitable, and to maintain moiety exogamy within a matrilineal descent system cross-cousin marriage is a viable option.

²⁷ Interview with N. A. Easton, 16 May 2004, Northway, AK.

Moieties also hold ritual reciprocal obligations to each other, most expressively manifest in the care of each other's dead and the Potlatch ceremony.

Kinship and the Domestic Household and Political Economies

The household economy of the *Dineh* was formed through the alliance of two or more related families who co-operated in the work required to sustain and reproduce this extended family household. Several such households living at the same locality formed a village, and several such villages whose members regularly worked with each other formed the band (to an important extent this is still true in the early 21st century).

The importance of the filial ties - affectionate relations between parents and children - within the immediate nuclear family are often noted, but it is also clear that the minimal domestic or co-residential unit was some form of extended family.

These seem to have taken three principal forms:

1. two adult siblings of the same or opposite sex and their families
2. parents and their married children
3. two hunting partners, who may be only distant classificatory kin

According to McClellan and Denniston (1981:384), "in the course of its existence, any nuclear family or any other segment of a domestic group might leave to join another household unit. The system was extremely flexible, and arrangements of many kinds were worked out in terms of general expedience and personal preference." This constant fission and fusion of local groups resulted in wide variation in the size of the group at any particular year or season, from a single extended family, to two or three camping and hunting together, to a hundred or more people gathering for summer fishing, fall caribou hunting, or the mid-winter potlatch and gambling season. These larger aggregations might be designated, "by the areas which they habitually exploited, for they were held together by their territorial as well as kinship ties," (p.384) such as the Scottie Creek, Nabesna, or Chisana 'bands' of the Upper Tanana. But their actual composition of specific people fluctuated widely according to choices of residence made by individuals in the course of their life history. A single Upper Tanana individual, for example,

²⁸ The breaking of this restriction in the modern age has also contributed to further social confusion regarding clan and moiety membership, particularly for children of same-moiety parents.

was a member of the Chisana 'band' in the 1920s, of the Scottie Creek 'band' in the 1930s, of the Snag 'band' in the 1940s, and of the Northway 'band' in the 1950s (Easton, fieldnotes, n.d.).²⁹

What endured was the territorial range used by those living at a particular village or camp location, even though the membership of the occupants of that location was in regular flux. Thus, to ask “Who were the Chisana People?” we are faced with a task which makes little sense within *Dineh* society. And although the territorial range was roughly coeval with a linguistic form (in the case above, a distinctive dialect, it could be a distinctive language as well such as Burwash Southern Tutchone), the existence of a multi-lingual norm by most individuals also served to facilitate "identity switching" as they moved about the landscape as circumstances and their personal proclivities ordained (Easton 2001).

Overlap between territories was everywhere acknowledged by reciprocal access for the purposes of subsistence, facilitated by clan, cognate, or affinal relationships. Nowhere, it seems, did "large social units predicated on formal territorial claims" exist.* Groups did recognize, "a commonality of linked dialects, shared customs, and contiguous territory, but it was the Whites who gave them the overall 'tribal' names" (McClellan and Denniston 1981:384; see also Nadasdy 2002).

Indeed, we need to recognize the formation of the tribe as one which emerged late in the historic period as a bureaucratic category of administrative convenience, whose function was to organize the extremely fluid on-the-ground reality of the politically egalitarian foraging *Dineh* into defined, circumscribed units for the purpose of their domination by the State. Subsequently, in the late 20th century, these "tribal" categories have become increasingly reified among the *Dineh* themselves, since they are the primary vector through which they negotiate their communal and personal relations with the encompassing State (Easton 2004; Nadasdy 2004).

At marriage a man would ideally live with his in-laws or affines for a period of a year or more, performing services for his parents-in-law to demonstrate his ability to care properly for their daughter and to meet his obligations to them as affines. However, McKennan observed that:

The Upper Tanana marry outside the band as often as they do within it, nor is there any marked tendency for a couple to settle in the district of the wife's band or vice versa. A tabulation of the present location of the couples of the Chisana – Nabesna, Lower Nabesna, Tetlin, and Last Tetling bands gives the following results:

²⁹ McKennan (1959:120) noted that, "the residence of none of these [married] couples is permanent, for a pair that wintered at the head of the Nabesna in 1929 might spend the following year at Scottie Creek or at Last Tetling."

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Alien husband and local wife	9	34.6
Local husband and alien wife	7	27.0
Local husband and local wife	5	19.2
Alien husband and local wife	5	19.2
	26	100.0

It should be remembered that the residence of none of these couples is permanent, for a pair that wintered at the head of the Nabesna in 1929 might spend the following year at Scottie Creek or at Last Tetling. The table, however, does illustrate the impermanence of matrilineal residence as well as the fluidity of the Upper Tanana bands (McKenna 1959: 119-120).

In the past a man might also marry more than one woman and when they did it was usually in the form of sororal polygyny - a man marrying two classificatory cross-cousin sisters. A particular polygamous marriage form documented in three examples in Upper Tanana genealogies is shown in the figure below. It is uncertain to what extent this form is normative as it may also be a response to the collapsing demographics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to increased mortality by epidemic diseases.

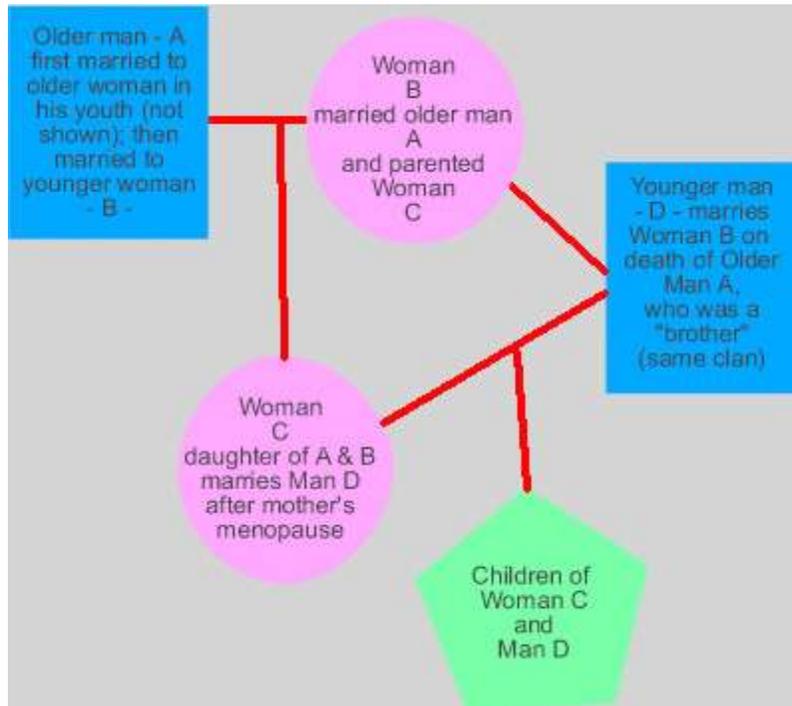


Figure 51. Upper Tanana Polygamous Marriage Form

(N. A. Easton)

As well, men often formed "partnerships" with the brother of their wife. Partners and their families often formed the nucleus of a local co-residential group, a grouping that was strengthened by the presence of "both sides" - both moieties - each of which had social, economic, and ritual obligations to each other. These included the sharing of game and other material resources and obligations to care for the dead of the opposite moiety. Forming bands, which combined affinal, partnership, and moiety obligations into the same unit served to consolidate reciprocity with people one was socially close to, and create a more resilient local social unit.

Genealogical records of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* provide examples of all of the above. Although polygyny is no longer practiced, I was told of several Chisana River basin men who had two wives earlier in the century. As well, even within the more concentrated sedentism of the contemporary villages of Beaver Creek and Northway cross-cousin marriage occurs and, although non-exogamous moiety marriage has increased dramatically, it is still frowned upon socially and most people believe it is best to marry into your father's clan.³⁰ At least two instances of the sororate, men marrying the widow of a close clan member were noted. And almost all community members we spoke to continue to trace their descent through their mothers' lineage, despite the imposition of a patrilineal descent system by the State for its own administrative purposes.

³⁰ To some extent, the exogamy rule seems to have been adapted to the sedentary nucleation of permanent villages in the 20th century through the practice of village exogamy in which people from Beaver Creek seek mates in other nearby communities, such as Northway or Mentasta and vice versa.

POTLATCH, RECIPROCITY, AND LEADERSHIP



Figure 52. Tanacross Potlatch Song

(N. A. Easton)

Dineh culture is rich in traditions of intense sociality, occasions on which kin and friend come together to share in singing, dancing, telling stories, and speechmaking. While these activities occur almost daily in less formal gatherings, the social ritual of these activities is most intense in the Potlatch, when people from all over the region will aggregate to provide social recognition of and support to their relatives and friends at times of celebration, such as graduations and marriage, and crisis, such as birth and death. Smaller social gatherings recognizing the coming of age of children, a brush with misfortune avoided, to honour a living spouse, and other reasons will bring together the local residents for an evening of feasting, singing, and dancing; such gatherings are often announced as “a tea” to distinguish it from the longer, usually three-day, Potlatch gathering.³¹

It is important to note that the social activity we know as Potlatch among the western interior *Dineh* is both similar to and different from the ritual known as Potlatch practiced on the

³¹ Besides McKennan’s (1959) notes on the subject, more extensive accounts of the *Dineh* Potlatch can be found in Guedon (1974) and Simeone (1995).

north Pacific coast. Both are occasions at which social status is enhanced by the generosity of the hosts to their guests, but the intensity of competition for self-aggrandizement is considerably reduced among the interior *Dineh*, being replaced with a sense of meeting one's social obligation to honour members of the opposite moiety for the services they have rendered your clan.

In this sense, the *Dineh* Potlatch is better understood within the over-arching moral value which *Dineh* place on generosity towards others as a measure of a person's good character and virtue, rather than the more competitive "fighting with property" subtext of the coastal Potlatch (Codere 1950). In this respect, Potlatch distributions are a component of the more general principal of Reciprocity, which structures much of their social relations on a day-to-day basis; this is as true today as it was in the past.

Two forms of reciprocity are commonly practiced within *Dineh* communities between *Dineh* and their friends: Generalized Reciprocity and Balanced Reciprocity. Generalized Reciprocity is characterized by the giving and taking of resources and services within a social group without any immediate expectation of return, but a general expectation that the giver will, in turn, sometime receive, from someone in the group, some thing or service they need. This is typified in the borrowing of tools, the sharing of food, and the assistance of labour in some task such as building a residence, and in local social gambling.³² Balanced Reciprocity is a more calculated exchange, in which the giver and the receiver keep a record (sometimes mental, today often written), of the nature of the gifts and recipients, and the giver can legitimately expect to receive an equivalent value from the receiver, immediately or in the future. This is typified by the exchanges which occur in the Potlatch ceremony.³³

It is important to note that not all aspects of these reciprocal exchanges are material but that they can be social or spiritual as well. In particular, respect and good feelings from the receiving member of the exchange group can be the only return a giver can expect; often it is the only return a giver desires, relying on her current generosity (particularly with food) to be

³² It was in a conversation with Paul Nadasdy that we recognized village gambling as a form of generalized reciprocity. Paul confirmed that in Burwash the attitude within the regular group of local players is one that what you lose, you eventually get back, and there are no hard feelings amongst the players whether they win or lose. The exception to this is the player who attends irregularly, wins, and does not return for some time - this is seen as greedy. For the regular gamblers, the poker game is only the social context for their sustained discussions on a wide variety of contemporary village issues.

³³ A third form of exchange – Negative Reciprocity, in which each side is attempting to get more value out of the exchange than they put in – is also practiced by *Dineh* in their commercial exchanges with merchants of the external capitalist economy, but we do not explore that here.

rewarded by Crow and the animal spirits through further successful hunting (Easton 2001). Alternatively, during Potlatch a guest may “give” his presence and perhaps also a dance performance or song as a measure of their respect to the host, for which he receives food, hospitality, and material items, such as blankets, gloves, or camp equipment.

The English word “respect” holds a number of connotations in *Dineh* culture. I discussed some of these meanings above in the section on *Hunting the Dineh Way*. Another use of the term is the feeling held for individuals who are granted leadership roles within the group. As is typical in many foraging societies, leadership is both contingent and transitory. It is given to individuals who demonstrate superior abilities in hunting, organizing communal activities, shamanic healing, generosity, historical and mythological knowledge, song and dance, and public oratory (see *Dineh Speech Forms*, below). Upper Tanana *Dineh* call such a person *Huskeh*. The Russian-derived term *Tyone* is also used, as well as the English language term *Chief*, however the latter does not carry with it the English notion of hereditary authority. The ability to host a large Potlatch is a public demonstration of these respected characteristics.

A *Huskeh*'s leadership is constrained to the role of advice and opinion, not control or coercion, although in social practice it is easy to perceive it differently without an understanding of the underlying social cultural values at play. In addition, *Huskeh* leadership is transitory, dependent on the continued social demonstration of leadership skills through acts of generosity and the other achievements listed above. And while people may regard a *Huskeh*'s brother or son as a potential leader, they must achieve the status in their own right as well. Abuse of authority was generally responded to by personal shunning, abandonment of the *Huskeh*'s local group, or, in rare cases which involve consistent “outrages to the public conscience” the response could be violence or even socially sanctioned assassination (McKenna 1959:131; Easton, fieldnotes, n.d.).

HISTORY



Figure 53. Chisana City Streetscape, 1914

(Geoffrey Bleakley Collection, Copper Center, Alaska)

INTRODUCTION

“For generation after generation, maybe for 300 years, the Indians have heard that a strange, new people were coming to kill the Indians and take away their hunting grounds. These new people would have yellow hair and pale skin. My father told me this story; his father told him; and his father told him.” Peter Albert, an Upper Tanana Elder, as recorded by Robert McKennan in 1929. (McKenna 1959:174).

As we have seen in the discussion of demography and disease, there were effects of the arrival of Europeans to North America experienced by the northwest interior Athapaskans long before any direct contact between the aboriginal and immigrant populations. These effects were transported along existing aboriginal trade networks and, though difficult to pinpoint in time their earliest occurrences, included the transmittal of material goods, such as metal and beads, disease, such as small pox and influenza, and ideas, such as the use of the orthodox and Roman Christian crosses, and with ground burial practices. At first these effects were introduced slowly and from afar, followed by an increase in volume as the coastal and interior fur trades escalated in intensity and

expanded geographically in the latter half of the 19th century (Van Stone 1974; Helm et al. 1975).

The physical penetration of the interior western subarctic by Europeans was much slower, hampered by the challenging environment of which they had little adaptive knowledge, and by shrewd Native groups who enjoyed and vigorously protected their monopoly position of mercantile middlemen in the fur trade. But by the end of the century the indigenous position had been eroded by a series of forays into the interior by traders, prospectors, and government sponsored exploration parties through much of the Yukon River drainage (Hosley 1981; McClellan 1981). Yet the territories of the Upper Tanana remained largely unexplored until the first decade of this century and access remained extremely difficult until the building of the Alaska Highway in 1943. As a result, with the exception of additional depopulation brought on by continued epidemic disease, the Upper Tanana and especially the eastern population of the borderlands, were not effected as much as other interior Athapaskans until the middle of the 20th century (McKenna 1981).

This is not to say there were no effects, nor that the ones they experienced were not significant. The imposition of the international border, the massive, though short-lived influx of prospectors and miners during the 1913-14 Chisana Gold Rush, the steady stream of new technology and commodities through trade networks, the introduction of new ideas associated with Christianity, and the educational efforts of the Alaska Native Service were all factors that directly contributed to changes in Upper Tanana culture and society. What is of interest here is the degree to which these foreign elements were adapted within the local *Dineh* culture as opposed to fundamentally altering it.

In the pages, which follow, I present an accounting of some of these events and their effects through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I begin with *Early Explorations* and the effects of the fur trade, followed by a discussion of the survey of the *International Boundary* along the southern portion of the 141st Meridian. A telling of the tale of *Bill Rupe*, the first co-resident whiteman of the Upper Tanana who established a trade post in the Scottie Creek valley in 1902 and intervened with the Border Survey crew on behalf of the borderland Natives, links to discussions of *Prospectors and the Chisana Gold Rush* and *Traders, Missionaries, and the State* through the middle of the 20th century. An account of the effects of the construction of the *Alaska Highway* precedes a final Concluding section of this ethnohistory.

THE EARLY PERIOD OF EUROPEAN TRADE

The early period of European trade is characterized by introduction of the effects of a European presence in the region without direct interpersonal contact. These effects moved along existing aboriginal trade networks, carrying along new commodities (such as beads and copper pots), new ideas (such as in-ground burial), and new diseases. Tracing the exact geographical and temporal vectors of these movements in the pre-contact period is difficult, but the material evidence generated by archaeological excavation of late pre-contact sites of the nineteenth century demonstrate its occurrence.

The movement of goods along the trade networks increasingly escalated during the 1800s, following the formation of the Russian American Company in 1799 and the arrival on the coast of British and American traders, and the inexorable penetration from the east of the Hudson's Bay Company in subsequent decades. Metal traps, axes, files, and nails (used for fishhooks), as well as guns received in exchange for furs altered some patterns of subsistence, but indigenous use of snares, fences, weirs, spears, and the bow and arrow continued, as did decorative arts on clothing, although the geometric designs of quillwork were supplanted by floral designs of beading (McClellan 1981b).

Oral history of the Borderland *Dineh* indicate that one of the principle localities for this trade was on an island on the upper White River, where Upper Tanana would meet with Tlingit people every two years, exchanging furs and copper for European trade goods and coastal resources, such as dried clams and dentalium shells. Brooks (1953:123) notes that "the Chilkats . . . appear to have been familiar with the copper deposits in the upper White River region. They called the White River the Irkhena, which means copper." Bessie John recalled stories of her grandfather trading at North Fork Island, bringing back the first copper pots, as well as tea and tobacco, to their village at *Taiy Chi* (Easton, n.d.).

In addition to the intensification of existing trade relations, enterprising Natives explored the establishment of new ones, as with the settlement of the interior Tlingit in the Tagish region of the southwest Yukon (McClellan 1975). This period may have also promoted a stronger sense of territorial boundaries between groups in competition for scarce European trade resources, if only within discrete areas of the trapping/trading economy. This certainly seems to have been the case in the eastern subarctic where family trapping territories became increasingly reified, to the

extent that some anthropologists believed they could document a well developed indigenous system of private property amongst the northern Algonquin at the beginning of this century (Speck 1935). Leacock (1954) and others (e.g. Tanner 1979) have argued, I believe convincingly, that Speck documented a post-contact phenomena stimulated by the mercantile fur-based economy, and one which did not prevent wider use of the landscape in more typical subarctic hunter-gatherer fashion into the present. Within the western subarctic there is little evidence for the establishment of family hunting or trapping territories prior to 20th century State regulation, and was explicitly denied within the Upper Tanana in the late 1920s (McKenna 1959:128). Brooks (1953:122) believed that the interior Alaskan Athapaskans maintained a usufructory right in which, "a visitor from a neighboring tribe might not catch fur-bearing animals except as food. He was privileged to kill any animal for food, but the pelt must be delivered to the tribe owning [i.e., occupying] the hunting ground."

Throughout this early period the Russian American Company was singularly unsuccessful in extending direct contact into the Tanana River country; a number of exploration parties undertaken between 1820 and 1850 were either turned back by Ahtna or Copper River Indians or, as in the case of the eleven Russians led by Rufus Sereberinikoff, never returned. The Chilkats on the passes to the south maintained a similarly successful blockade of British and American traders until the 1880s (Allen 1887; Brooks 1953; J. Kari 1986; McKenna 1959).

While the coastal Natives were successful in preventing the movement of European traders to the interior, and restricted the movement of interior people westward, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) entered the northwestern subarctic overland from the east in the 1840s, establishing Fort Yukon in 1847 and Fort Selkirk in 1848 (Campbell 1958). Given their geographical range of kinship ties and travel to visit affines it would seem likely that at least some Upper Tanana came into contact with H.B.Co. personnel, either at their trade posts or on their travels about the country, an assumption corroborated by Upper Tanana oral history. There is a rich account, for example, of the Borderlands *Huskeh Taiy Suul* traveling to Fort Selkirk to trade furs and returning with the first firearm – an old musket – seen in the Upper Tanana region. This would have occurred somewhere between 1848 and 1852. While doing archaeological survey at the location of one of *Taiy Suul's* principal encampments in the Scottie Creek valley in

2001, I recovered two lead shot musket balls, which provides material evidence in support of the oral history (Easton 2002b).³⁴

In terms of the expanding European fur trade, Brooks (1953:122) writes:

. . . when the Russians reached the coast and, half a century later, the Hudson Bay traders reached the Yukon . . . the natives immediately adjacent to the trading posts obtained many articles which they bartered with the more distant tribes. In time these distant natives visited the posts themselves and thus avoided the profits paid to the middlemen. Thus, even the Tanana natives used to congregate annually at the mouth of that river and barter their furs with the white traders. Those of the upper Tanana reached the Yukon and Fort Selkirk for the same purpose by a more direct route.

McKenna (1959:29) did not record any accounts of travel to Fort Selkirk during its brief existence (it was destroyed by Chilkat traders in 1852), rather many of the older people he interviewed in 1929 noted that the first white men they personally had contact with were the traders Leroy McQuesten and Joe Ladue in the 1870s and '80s. Instead, it seems, much of the early Upper Tanana trade was through the established intermediaries, in particular the Kluane to the east, Han to the north, and Copper River Ahtna Natives to the west and southwest.

Evidently the bulk of trade came from the Yukon rather than the Copper. Old Nicolai, however, who ranged from Taral to the head of the Nizina carried on some trade in beads and ammunition with the interior. He would leave his goods at his camp on the Chitstone, and the Tanana natives when they arrived would deposit furs in the proper amount. . . . Chisana Joe told me that many times he had made the trip and packed back powder, beads, tobacco and tea; and Frank Sam recalled that he had seen his first white man when he hiked with his father, Old Chief Sam, from the lower Nabesna to Dan Creek via the Skolai Pass (McKenna 1959:28).

The Alaska Commercial Company established trade posts at Fort Reliance in 1874, Belle Isle (across from present day Eagle) in 1880, Fort Nelson at the mouth of the Stewart River in 1886, and at Fortymile in 1887, and these posts were certainly subsequently visited by Upper Tanana Natives, as were the mining camps established in the mid-1880s at Franklin and Chicken

³⁴ Schwatka (1893:129), in reference to the Natives around Marsh Lake, speaks of "the stereotyped Hudson Bay Company flintlock smooth-bore musket, the only kind of gun, I believe, throwing a ball that this great trading company has ever issued since its foundation. They also sell a cheap variety of double-barreled percussion-capped shotgun, which the natives buy, and loading them with ball-being about No.12 or 14 gauge - find them superior to muskets. Singular as it may appear, these Indians...prefer the flintlock to teh percussion-cap gun, probably for the reason that the latter depends on three articles of trade - caps, powder, lead - while the former depends on but tow of these, and the chances of running short of ammunition when perhaps at a distance of many weeks' journey from these supplies, are thereby lessened. These old muskets are tolerably good at sixty to seventy yards, and even resonable dangerous at twice that distance. In all their huntings these Indians contrive by that tact perculiar to savages to get within this distance of a moose, black bear and caribou, and thus to earn a pretty fair subsistence the year round, having for summer a diet of salmon with a few berries and moose."

Creeks on the Fortymile River (McKenna 1981:567; Gates 1994). However, the first incursion of a trader into the Upper Tanana region itself seems to have not occurred until about 1900, when the prospector-turned-trader, Bill Rupe, settled into the Scottie Creek valley as described later.

EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORERS³⁵

Introduction

The Euro-American exploration of the Upper Tanana region began quite late, compared to much of the rest of the Northwest American subarctic, beginning in the 1880s. During his 1883 military expedition through the Yukon River basin, Frederick Schwatka was able to note that the Tanana River was, "the longest wholly unexplored river in the world, certainly the longest in the western continent" (Schwatka 1893:302).

McKenna (1959:25) writes "In all probability the first white men ever to be on the Tanana were the traders, Bates and Harper, who, leaving their post at Belle Isle [across from present day Eagle on the Yukon River] in the late seventies, made their way up the Fortymile and its tributaries, crossed the height of land, and then descended the Tanana by means of a skin boat." Schwatka recorded an account of this journey in his *A Summer in Alaska*, reproduced below.

Undoubtedly the most significant of the early explorations of the 1880s was Lt. Henry Allen's military expedition of 1885. Due to its rarity,³⁶ I have transcribed the account of the latter part of Lt. Allen's travels entering into and traversing the Upper Tanana valley, as well as his general notes on the distribution and customs of the Native people he encountered.

Alfred Brooks traversed the Upper Tanana in 1898 and recorded a short note on the Natives he encountered there. Fred Moffit and Adolph Knopf conducted geological reconnaissance in the region in 1908 and also recorded a few comments on the Natives, both of which I also provide below.

³⁵ G. T. Bleakley has produced a series of manuscripts for the National Parks Service which provide excellent summary accounts of the European exploration and development of the upper Copper and Chisana Rivers. These include *The Euro-American Exploration of Wrangell-St. Elias Mountain Region, 1796-1940*.

³⁶ I have only seen copies of the original publication twice: one at the National Archives, DC, and the other in a private collection in Whitehorse.

An Account of Harper and Bate's Tanana River Exploration

Physical exploration of the upper Tanana River by Europeans began serendipitously in 1875 when two prospectors and traders, Alfred Harper and "an Englishman named Bates," ascended the Fortymile River and crossed the divide to descend the Tanana River in a skin boat. Frederick Schwatka's *A Summer in Alaska* (1893:301-302), contains an account of their Tanana River journey as was told to him by one of the principals, "an old trader on the river, upon whose word I can rely."

With one white companion, and some Indians as packers, he crossed from the trading station at Belle Isle, near Johnny's village or Klat-ol-tin, in a southwest direction, over the hills that divide the Yukon and Tanana basins, ascending a tributary of the former and descending one of the latter, the journey occupying two or three weeks, after which the Indians were sent back. A boat was constructed from the hide of a moose, resembling the 'bull-boat' of the western frontiersmen, and in this they drifted to the river's mouth. At the point where the two travelers first sighted the Tanana, the trader estimated it to be about twelve hundred yards wide, or very nearly three quarters of a mile, and as they were floating fifteen or sixteen hours a day for ten days, on a current whose speed he estimated at six or seven miles an hour, it being much swifter than the Yukon at any point as high as Belle Isle, my informant computed his progress at from ninety to a hundred miles a day; or from nine hundred to a thousand miles along the Tanana. He estimates the whole length of the river by combining the result of his observation with Indian reports, at from ten to twelve hundred miles. Fear of the Tanana Indians appears to be the motive for the rapid rate of travel through their country, and although in general a very friendly tribe to encounter away from home, they have always opposed any exploration of their country.

The trader's companion had suggested and promoted the journey as a quasi scientific expedition, and he collected a few skulls of the natives and some botanical specimens, but no maps or notes were made of the trip, and it was afterward said by the Alaska Company's employees that the explorer was an envoy of the 'opposition' as the old traders called the new company, sent to obtain information regarding the country as a trading district."

In a footnote Schwatka writes

"I have since learned that Mr. Bates made a map and took notes," but these documents have never been located. Henry Allen's (1887:26) exploration account notes that he: traveled several days on the Yukon River with Mr. Harper and learned from him that his party had no instruments for determining positions while running down the Tanana. From his description of that part of the river first seen by it, and being informed by him that it was below the Bush-haired chief's (Kheeltat's), I am disposed to think that it was just below Cathedral Rapids, about 100 miles from the mouth of the Tetling River.

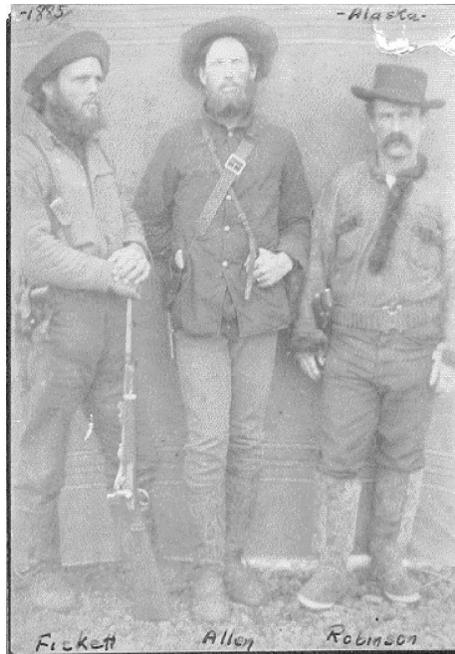


Figure 54. Allen's Exploration Team Prior to Departure at Valdez, 1885.

Henry Allen's Exploration of the Upper Copper and Tanana Valleys - 1885

Henry T. Allen was a US Army Captain who led a military survey into interior Alaska from Valdez in 1885. His route took him along through the Copper River Valley and over the Suslota Pass to the Upper Tanana valley, which he then descended to its mouth.

The first section of the following extracts speak generally to the Native occupants he encountered or heard of during his trip.

The second section provides extracts, which recount his travels through the region of the lower Copper River and down the Tanana River (see Allen 1887).

Section I - General Notes on Native Inhabitants

I met while in the territory several miners who had either started across from Fort Reliance for the Tanana or were going to start very soon. Up to the time I left that river none had ever reached its waters. The frequent visits of the Upper Tananatanas to the posts Fetulin and Fort Reliance, on the Yukon, called by them Tetatling and Sawchek, respectively, have awakened in many of the miners who annually cross from Chilcat to the Yukon a strong desire to visit the country of these people. It is not the difficulties of the trail so much as its length that has thus far deterred them. To carry supplies on the back for that distance, and at the same time prospect, is a difficult task even for miners, the most hardy and capable class of men for such work (p.25).

Tanana River natives What has been said of the Atnatanas will, in a large measure, apply to the natives of the Upper Tanana, though the frequency of the visits of these latter to the Yukon river has had considerable influence in modifying their customs and dress. They have almost entirely ceased to wear nose-rings, and but few wear ornaments in the ears. Opportunities for observing the customs of these people were not as favorable as were those for studying the Atnatanas, on account of the hurried manner in which we passed through the Territory. The natives of the Upper Tanana call that river Nabesna. For uniformity and by analogy to the term applied by Copper river natives to themselves, I have called them Nabesnatanas. For the same reason I have applied the term Tananatanas to all the natives of the river. The natives of the lower part, embracing two or three small tribes, each with a name, have for convenience been called Nukluktanas. The name suggests its applicability. These natives are not unlike those around Nuklukyet. Minook, the interpreter at Fort Reliance, gave me the following names for the tribes along the Tanana. I record them for what they are worth. This man was never on the Tanana River, though he is considered one of the best interpreters of the many dialects of the Tinneh language. These names are supposed to be the ones applied by the tribes to themselves. Beginning near the upper waters he says are the Nutzotin, including Nandell's and Tetling's following; after them, in order, are the Mantotin, Tolwatin, Clatchotin, and Huntlatin. The termination tin is but another form of the word representing "people." The termination words tena, tenna, tana, tinneh, tineh have all been used to mean the same, and the word Dene, applied to some of the people of the Hudson Bay country, is intended to represent the French phonetic for a native word meaning "people." The Tatlatans are not only in habitation an intermediate people between the Midnooskies and Nabesnatanas, but also in custom and language. There are some words common to all of them, though a marked difference in the accentuation is observed between that of those north of the range and that of those south of it. A peculiar drawling tone characterizes, in a marked degree, the Nabesnatanas, in a slight degree the Tatlatans, whilst the Midnooskies are distinguished by a most energetically accentuated language. These last converse with the Tatlatans with less ease than do the latter with the Nabesnatanas, who readily communicate with the natives around Fort Reliance and Fetutlin, on the Yukon. I estimate the entire population of the Tanana River and its tributaries to be between 550 and 600, though no very accurate idea can be formed of the number of a people living as they do, without visiting their settlements, very few of which are on the main river. Around Nandell's and Tetling's we counted 40 men, 32 women, and 25 children; around Kheeltat's, 28 men, 18 women, and 6 children; a total of 149. Between Kheeltat's and Toclat River there were but two camps, each containing about eight souls. Below Toclat we passed but one camp, that of Ivan, consisting of 31 men, 18 women, and 20 children. The entire number of natives seen on or near the Tanana was 232. Between Kheeltat's and Delta River, marked on the map as "head of navigation, the only indication of natives, save an occasional blazed tree, is the camping ground at the mouth of the Volkmar River. Below Delta River are frequent camps, many of which are doubtless used by natives during the salmon season.

Should the Nabesna descend the Tanana to its mouth for trading purposes, a return could not be made until the winter time; this journey, however, is not a necessity with them, on account of their ability to obtain ammunition from Fort Reliance or Fetutlin [the trade post across from Eagle, Alaska, on the Yukon River] by a portage of six days. It is not more probable that the Nukluktanas would permit them to pass through their territory than that they would those natives living between the Tanana and Kuskokwim Rivers, who must always trade through intermediate men. That salmon do not reach the upper waters of the Tanana is rather singular, and cannot, I think, be alone attributable to the rapids along its course. The absence of salmon causes the natives to depend for sustenance on the smaller fishes previously enumerated, and large game, much of which is caught in snares. It is a custom of theirs to have long lines of fencing, so built of brush and poles that caribou or moose cannot get through it. At intervals a gap is left, in which a rope snare is placed. By this means a large part of their subsistence stores is obtained. A miner informed me that while prospecting between the Yukon and Tanana Rivers he found a "game fence" 30 miles long. The Tanana natives have more beadwork and are perhaps more skilled in its manufacture than any people seen by us in the Territory. In general appearance and manner the natives of the Lower Tanana strongly resemble the Unakhotanas of the Yukon, especially those near Nuklukyet. It is said by the traders of the Yukon that the natives at Fort Reliance and of Nuklukyet understand each other, and also the Nukluktanas and Nabesnatanas, but none can understand the natives living in the vicinity of old Fort Yukon. This would seem to indicate that the Tanana River and the Yukon below the mouth of same were peopled from the upper waters of the Yukon, else the migration was up the Tanana, thence across to Fort Reliance, leaving the most northerly part of the Yukon River to be peopled by natives from the direction of the Hudson Bay territory. The Nabesnatanas, like the Yukon River natives, seldom use them otherwise than in sleds. These sleds are similar to those used on Copper River. Their dogs, however, are much larger than those of the country south of them, owing to the introduction of English breeds. These people, like all the natives of Alaska, are natural traders, as evidenced by the number of hands through which an article will pass before being rendered unfit for use. A shirt originally belonging to the Abercrombie party was obtained at Alaganik by a Copper River native, who traded it to one of his fellows. This one wore it as far as Batzunetas and there traded it to a native accompanying us, who carried it over Miles's Pass to Nandell's, and it was there again disposed of. In the mean time it had twice changed hands amongst the native members of our party. Had it not become worn out, it might have found its way to the Yukon. We saw at Tetling's house an ax with a Montreal brand on it, also a pair of sailor's trousers and a Thlinkit blanket, both of which doubtless came from Chilcat Inlet, the former primarily from the man-of-war stationed at Sitka. Should the natives of the Tanana or Copper River commit outrages upon the whites who may be making their way into the interior, of such a nature as to justify the intervention of the military, many difficulties would be encountered before redress could be obtained. To stop the sale of ammunition and arms would be a sad blow to them, but a decidedly negative retaliation. To get a force into the interior marching

would be necessary, and could be accomplished more easily that the party could be subsisted after its arrival at its field of action. To ascend either the Copper or Tanana by stream is out of the question. To reach Nandell's, on the north side, or Batzulnetas, on the south side, by cordelling up these rivers, would be to arrive at either place without subsistence stores. To set out from the mouth of either river when there was ice, with sleds well packed, would be to come to grief for want of food before these headwaters were reached, if an attempt were made to subsist entirely on the stores started with. This would be especially true in the case of the Tanana. The most feasible method would be to ascend the Yukon as far as Fort Reliance by steamboat, and to pack the stores across to the Tanana on the backs of men and dogs. Even after that river was reached by this method the stores would soon be exhausted unless frequent depots were made along the route and additional supplies sent forward continually. If the objective were the lower part of the Tanana River, a steamboat would solve the problem of transportation. If, however, it were the Copper River, the portage from Fort Reliance could be continued across the Alaskan Range. Once on the Copper, food in the form of salmon would be abundant, and patrolling the river, thus preventing, if possible, the natives from taking fish during the summer, could inflict a severe retaliation. By this means a large number of them would perish the following winter. From extensive observation and from conversation with men who have traveled extensively in the Territory, I am of the opinion that pack animals other than dogs or reindeer are not practicable anywhere in the interior save in an occasional locality, and then for a short distance, not exceeding a few miles. That other than these would die during the winter, unless special provisions were made, there can be no doubt. The footing in many places would render an ordinary mule pack train of as little or less value than a flotilla of small boats. Grass in these high latitudes has given place to a deep bed of moss and lichens, which it is hardly probable would subsist horses, mules, or oxen. Occasionally small sections of the Territory are seen where the growth of grass is luxuriant, yet the sight of marshes generally accompanies such an occurrence. It is a significant fact that the burning of the moss gives rise to a hardy growth of grass, which practice may in the future be advantageously used.

Strategically considered there are no people within the boundaries of the United States so favorably situated as the above-mentioned tribes of the Tinneh family. Gifted by nature with the skill and cunning of their southern relations, and inhabiting a much more inaccessible and foodless country, depredations and other crimes could be committed with correspondingly greater impunity (pp.136-40).

Section II - Narrative of Allen's Journey

On 2 June 1885, Allen and his party were within a few miles of the confluence of the Copper and Slana rivers.

After crossing the river our course lay NE. for about 5 miles, over a well-worn trail, a pleasant sight to us. When within a mile or two of the Tyone's we passed a collection of snowshoes and sleds placed in the branches of the trees. Why these

articles should usually be stored at a distance from the house I was unable to learn, but such is the custom with all of the Copper River natives. The cripple [Allen's native guide] had gone in advance to notify Batzulneta, for such was the name of the chieftain, of our approach. The usual salute with guns was exchanged, and we were met by thirty-one men, ten women, and fifteen children, the latter, of course, in the background. Of these natives, quite a number were from Tanana, and had gone into summer camp with Batzulneta, to be ready for the run of salmon. That the Tananatanas should come to the Copper River to fish was very significant. Here there was but one winter house, and that occupied by the Tyone and his immediate following, while the other natives were living in spruce-bough houses. Batzulneta, the largest native seen by us in the Territory, was 6 feet 4 inches high, and clad in a blouse of scarlet flannel, obtained from a trading station on the Yukon River, and a pair of native trousers, which included the footgear. His shirt of cotton cloth, and a black woolen hat with strips of red flannel, completed his costume. His hair hung down his back in a tangled roll 3 feet long, showing no signs of ever having had any attention. As a medicine man, he could neither have it cut nor combed. Over each ear hung two small braids, secured at the ends by beads and sinew. Altogether he was the most picturesque character we had met, yet his face neither showed courage nor cunning. His ascendancy had doubtless arisen from his position as medicine man, possibly from a superstition concerning his unusual stature. One of the natives from the Tanana made a map of the Yukon and Tanana, which is inserted to show how great is the geographical knowledge of these primitive people. He assured me he had been to the stations on the Yukon, at Fort Reliance and at Fetutlin [across from Eagle], the former kept by Mr. McQuesten, the latter by Mr. Harper, both of whom we afterwards met on the Yukon, below the mouth of the Tanana. He was entirely ignorant of their surnames, but spoke of "Jock." These natives, likewise those on the headwaters of the Tanana, call the Yukon River, Niga To; the White River, Natsina; the Tanana, Nabesna, and by such names we spoke of them to the natives until we were two-thirds of the way down the Tanana. . . . The natives were hourly expecting the salmon, and would frequently go to the small river bear by, and pit in the dip-net. Inspired by their hopes, June 3 was passed in waiting, on a diet of half-rotted salmon and a few rabbits, the moose meat having been exhausted. During the afternoon of our arrival all the males (eight) from Lake Suslota came to Batzulneta's, and in the evening had a grand orgy. . . . Four natives were employed to pack across the mountains for us, but not until the Tyone had been first rewarded, then the fathers of the young men, and finally a promise to pay the young men themselves for their services. The natives here differed not a great deal from those of Taral. Their language, however, was not readily intelligible to our Lower River natives, one of whom I used as interpreter. In some cases their words were entirely different, for example: a long distance by the Midnooskies was kutehit; by the Tatlatans, nijot (French j.). Just before leaving a series of shouts was heard, proclaiming the first salmon of the season. It was a rather small silver salmon, which was placed in a conspicuous place on one of the spruce-bough tepees, where all visited it with great singing and glee. Though aware that probably in a few days there would be hundreds of

these, the promise of honnai meat (caribou), at Lake Suslota, induced us to move on. Moreover, I knew that at most only two or three days' ration of fresh fish could be carried. The expedition left Batzulneta's camp for Lake Suslota, the source of a tributary of the Slana River, on the 4th day of June.

We reached Lake Suslota, at the foot of the pass, where we found one house and three or four families, consisting of eight men, six women, and nine children. Their main sustenance was a dried fish, much smaller in size than the salmon. The route from the headwaters of the Copper to the Upper Tanana, and the finding on both sides of natives who had been to the Yukon River to trade, settles the mooted question, "Do the Copper River natives visit the Yukon?" With regard to this matter the traders themselves were not confident, until a few questions were put, which brought forth the facts in the matter. Mr. McQuesten, trader of Fort Reliance, and Mr. La Due, a prospector, asserted that they had seen some Copper River natives at the post in 1883, and that a native on the north side of the mountains was used as a second interpreter to them.

June 9 we began our tramp about 2 p. m., and having been informed by the natives that by marching all night we could reach Nandell's we decided upon making an attempt to do so, provided we had no success at hunting. Two natives, sent in advance to shoot rabbits, were overtaken at 10 p.m. with one in their possession. This little animal was but a scanty exasperating taste for nine half-starved men. During the remainder of the march to Nandell's, so exhausted was the party that the slowest progress was barely possible.

At 3 a.m., June 10, the party was welcomed at Nandell's with a great firing of guns. Here there were forty men, twenty-eight women, and eighteen children assembled to gaze at a sight never before seen. Many of the men of this locality, in fact most of them, had made the tour one or more times to the Yukon for trading purposes, yet some of the men and most of the women and children had never seen a white man. Their clothing indicated more easy communication with a trading station than did that of the Atnatanas. We realized from their appearance that better times awaited us. A few of the boys, to their great pride and our surprise, repeated, with varying degrees of accuracy, the letters of the alphabet. They had received instruction on the Yukon from Mr. Simms, the zealous missionary sent out from England. He was highly esteemed by the natives, who were much benefited by his worthy example and instruction. This most excellent gentleman passed his last moments on Porcupine or Rat River, in the year 1884. Had the distance to Nandell's been 30 miles farther, and game equally scarce as on the trail traveled, the injury to the party from hunger would have been incalculable. The settlement of which Nandell was autocrat consisted of four houses situated on a small, clear stream, which helped connect the chain of lakes. After crossing the mountains a most decided change of landscape was presented us. Vegetation was more rank, and the temperature of the lake water was so high as to make it very disagreeable to drink. It seemed rather remarkable that the season should be far enough advanced (June 10) for the sun's heat to have caused the water to be not uncomfortable for bathing in these lakes. . . . The pycrometer was stolen before the temperature of the water had been obtained, and our barometer was so injured as to be of no future use to us. These incidents

came near being the cause of serious trouble. I knew well enough that the manifestation of any fear would place us completely in the power of the natives, to treat us as they should see fit. Efforts to recover the instrument, however, were of no avail, and we barely averted a struggle with these people. The country in the vicinity of the lakes was covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, and countless roses were in bloom. The trails round about bore evidence of having been much used, and altogether a more civilized appearance had not been seen since leaving Nuchek. The houses were large, and constructed without the use of bark. The absence of the attached sweat-room and of the “box” arrangement of the interior caused a marked difference in their appearance when compared with the typical Copper River house. To procure firewood even for cooking was not an easy task. The scarcity of timber showed that these grounds had been used many years. A very old native informed me that he had been born there’ that during the winter wood was hauled on sleds from the hills; that Nandell had obtained his supremacy by plunging a knife into his rival, son of my informant; that there were no salmon in the Tanana. I learned that there was a trail from Lake Mentasta to Nandell’s, and also on to the Tanana; that there were two routes to Fort Reliance – one entirely by foot, the other by portage to a tributary of the White River, then down the same, the White and the Yukon, in a skin boat. The return trip was always by the former route. The food of the natives at this season is chiefly fish, taken in this stream by means of a dip-net which just fills the channel, made narrow by means of small spruce piles driven side by side. Here there were several kinds of them, including pickerel, suckers, grayling, and two varieties of whitefish. The “catch” in the single dip-net supplied all, and from each fisherman Nandell exacted a royalty. Some one was on the fishing-stand with net in hand day and night. At Nandell’s was obtained the first pemmican that we had seen in the territory. Afterwards, however, some was obtained on a tributary of the Koyukuk. The inhabitants around these lakes, including Tetling’s following, were almost without exception suffering from severe coughs, and many showed unmistakable signs of pulmonary troubles. From Nandell’s, Lake Mentasta bore nearly due west. The canoes used here and at Kheeltat’s are the smallest I have ever known, an average one being 13 to 15 feet long, 21 to 24 inches of beam, and 11 to 12 inches across the bottom, and very shallow. At first a raft journey down the Tanana was contemplated, but the natives protested, saying that two moons would be required. Later developments showed conclusively that a raft would have been totally unfit to run rapids so strewn with timber in places that we could barely run our skin boats through. It was finally decided by a council that the Yukon (Niga To) could be reached in a skin boat in twenty days, but no Indians could be induced to assist us farther than the next settlement, two days distant by the river from Tetling’s. Nandell’s is in latitude 63 21’, and approximate longitude 143 28’. He had several “medicine men” in his following, one of whom accompanied us as far as Tetling’s, entreating us not to stop at Kheeltat’s, saying that all of us would certainly be killed. June 12 we left Nandell’s for Tetling’s, which bore NNE., and which is about 11 miles distant. The destruction of the natural carpeting of the earth by fire to kill the mosquitoes and gnats has caused a splendid growth of grass between the two points just named. The numerous lakes

on each side of the trail, the meadow-like appearance of parts of the land between, with groves of cottonwood interspersed with birch, was sufficient to recall scenes of much lower latitudes. Around these lakes the country seemed more pastoral in its nature than in any part of the Territory. A yet more pleasing fact was that there were few mosquitoes or gnats to harass us. We reached Tetling's in the afternoon, and had the construction of the baidarra immediately begun – that is, if the word “immediately” can ever be properly used with regard to fulfillment of agreements by these people. Only three caribou skins could be obtained for it, one each from Nandell and Tetling, and one from quite a distance. At Tetling's were six men who had greeted us at Nandell's, four women, and seven children, occupying two houses situated on a deep, clear stream, the outlet of a lake much larger than any we had passed – so said the natives. To obtain the positions of the lakes in the vicinity would have required a much more accurate survey than it was possible for us to make. Had there been food, I should have sent three of the party over the portage to the Yukon, and would have gone with the others to the source of the Tanana, which is indicated on the general chart in dotted lines. Insufficiency of food here as elsewhere was our greatest source of anxiety. The exhausted condition of the party caused me to start down the Tanana as soon as possible, vainly hoping that on reaching the Yukon our wants would be immediately supplied. We purchased all obtainable food at Nandell's and Tetling's, giving in exchange all the money that remained and every garment or article of any description that could be spared. The men of the party volunteered to give up everything in their possession, even to coats, shirts, pocketknives, etc. We paid dearly for every pound of food, yet we left the natives in a hungry state, with their sole dependence on fish, which at that season were not abundant. The absence of salmon in the Tanana caused me to suspect falls or severe rapids in the river, but these natives denied that such was the case, though flatly refusing to go to the Yukon with us, notwithstanding the greatest inducements. At this place I noticed that the severe hardships to which Bremner had so long been exposed were affecting both his mental and physical constitution. His ankle, sprained on the Chittystone, had assumed an unusual size, which was due, as we found later, to scurvy. For two weeks past the body of Sergeant Robertson had been covered with black spots, which developed later into another form of scurvy. We had carried a bottle of acetic acid, the best anti-scorbutic that could be obtained in Sitka and that could be transported. Its use was not effective, and I doubt whether any other acid would have been.

The baidarra having been completed, was launched by the native boys, given a trial trip, and found satisfactory. It did not differ materially from the one we had constructed and used on the Copper river. Instead of being constructed out of moose skins, those of the caribou were used, and it was by no means an easy task to secure even three in all that region. With two natives, our three pack-dogs, and a large supply of meat and fish we started down the stream at 6 a.m. on the 14th. There were six paddlers and one steersman. After a run of two and a half hours down the Tetling River, with its many windings and general course of N. by E., we reached the muddy Tanana, with its quick sands and boilings, sand-spits, and absence of rocks. . . . Heavy smoke caused by the extensive timber fires obscured

the sun the entire day, so that an observation was impossible. This smoke had originated from signal fires, which were intended to give warning of our presence in the country. When we first arrived at Nandell's there was only an occasional smoke around, but as his guests departed from their different habitations each marked his trail by a signal fire. . . . In answer to the fires on the south bank new ones were started on the north, so that for nearly two days we barely caught a glimpse of the sun. . . .

The signal smoke of Kheeltat, the bushy-headed Tyone, was sighted early in the middle of the afternoon [of the 15th], and at 6:30 we halted at some of his cache houses opposite the point on the left bank where the trail from Lake Mentasta reaches the Tanana. At this place, in accordance with my promise, I permitted the two natives to return to Nandell, which they intended to do by walking across the country. After a run down the river of 4 miles we halted for the night on the north bank, and about one-half mile above a tributary 30 yards wide with muddy water similar to the Tanana. . . . After we had been in camp about an hour we heard the firing of guns, to which we responded. Shortly afterwards three natives appeared in camp. They were runners from Kheeltat, whose house they said was "kootel-stee," a short distance. This was the place that Nandell, Tetling, and their "medicine men" had so frequently implored me not to visit, but to silently pass by. Unwilling to pass through the country without knowing the disposition of the natives, and realizing that the danger incurred by the visit was scarcely greater than those we were accustomed to meet and would probably in the future encounter, I resolved to see the warlike Tyone. The traders of the Yukon informed us in July that they supposed Kheeltat would be hostile to any whites invading his territory. The runners had descended Kheeltat River in two small canoes, which they said could be utilized by us. At 11 p.m. Fickett and myself started from Kheeltat's, having been carried to the right bank of the tributary in the canoes, and having the youngest of the three natives as a guide. At 1:30 a.m., June 16, after a forced march over country showing no signs of a trail, we walked into the miserable looking house of Kheeltat, very much fatigued. The accompanying picture represents Kheeltat, the bushy-haired Tyone, his son, and a sub-Tyone, Deshaddy, who had preceded us from Nandell's to give information of our arrival. It was taken when they were on a trading expedition to the Yukon, and consequently dressed in their finest. With less decoration and less modern clothes upon the persons it would be a fair picture of the Upper Tanana men. As we entered, a frown spread over Kheeltat's face and he would say nothing. The absence of the customary salute to welcome us was rather ominous, and his silence was yet more so. Shortly after our arrival a few shots were fired, not in honor of us, but to assemble the clans; couriers were also dispatched for the same purpose. Exhausted by working since 5 in the morning, Fickett and myself immediately fell asleep, to find on our awaking two hours later, twenty-six men and four squaws in the small house, all attired in their best. The chart was shown them and the object of my visit explained, all of which interested them but little. My reputation as a "medicine man" had preceded me, and when I produced my medicines, consisting of three kinds of pills, viz, quinine, and the usual Army purgative and ant-purgative pills, I immediately commanded their attention.

Nandell had informed me that there had been many deaths among these people, and as nearly as I could understand him he feared they might attribute them to our entrance into the country, and this may have been one of the causes of his warnings to us. The same warm lakes, the same general appearance here as at Nandell's characterized the country. The consumptive look and its accompanying cough were more marked here than at the former place, and doubtless cod-liver oil would have been a more suitable prescription than anything in my medicine chest. The pills were given indiscriminately, but seemed to satisfy the natives. I must correct this; there was some discrimination, for the chief received one of each kind, a minor chief one each of two kinds, and a man or woman a single pill. Efforts to get two natives to go a part or all of the way to the Yukon were of no avail. From them we learned that there were remarkable features in the Tanana River, either violent rapids or falls. . . . From Kheeltat's there is a portage over to the Yukon at Fetutlin – the station now occupied by Mr. Harper, which requires six days, one of which is by water. The bushy-haired chief and all his following went to the mouth of the stream (Kheeltat's River) with us, the former taking me in the canoe with him. Like all the natives we had thus far met, they insisted on selling us their few furs, and seemed surprised that we were not traders. On parting with this reputed warlike chief, he promised to meet me on the upper Yukon in July, when the steamboat would have arrived, and said he would carry me a piece of caribou. My plans were afterwards changed, and I have not since seen him. At 7:20 a.m. [17 June] we started again down the Tanana, much to the displeasure of the natives, who insisted on making an examination of our effects, which they could vaguely see in our skin boat. We now counted twenty-eight men, eighteen women, and six children, probably nearly all of Kheeltat's following." Allen continued down the Tanana, reaching its confluence with the Yukon River on 25 June. Along the way he noted a number of native settlements and fish camps, but saw few Indians. "Had we started down the Tanana two weeks earlier the probabilities are that we would not have seen a single native on the river. It must be remembered that Nandell's Tetling's, and Kheeltat's people live on small streams away from the river, as do probably all the inhabitants during the springtime (pp.67-86).

Alfred Brooks 1898 Geological Survey

In 1898 Alfred Hulse Brooks, a U.S. geologist, and W.J. Peters, a topographer, ascended the White River to cross over to the Tanana River by way of Snag and Mirror creeks, descending the Tanana to its confluence with the Yukon River, providing the first physical description of the furthest upper reaches of the Tanana River watershed (Brooks 1898). Of the Natives of the Upper Tanana Brooks (1953:118) recalled in his memoirs:

These [people] were essentially meat-eaters, their only fish diet being the Arctic trout, or grayling, and a small whitefish. These highlanders, as they might be called, were the last to come into contact with the whites and hence preserved

many of their original customs up to recent times. In 1898 and 1899 I found such men living on the upper Tanana who, except for their firearms, exhibited but little evidence of intercourse with the whites. Most of the men and some of the women were dressed entirely in buckskin, and their bedding was made of furs. Here I saw an Indian hunting with bow and arrow. His arrows were tipped with copper from the gravels of near-by streams. On this same stream, the Kletsandek, a tributary of the upper White River, I found a party of natives searching for the native copper pebbles in the gravels, their digging implements being caribou horns.

Moffit and Knopf's 1908 Geological Survey

Fred H. Moffit and Adolph Knopf in 1908 carried out in the a second geological survey (Moffit and Knopf 1910). Their route took them from Valdez, up the Copper River trail and then into "Sargent's Camp" on the upper Nabesna River, arriving on the 8th of July, where supplies had been cached in February. They were accompanied by Stephen R. Capps, another geologist, who after August 1st, moved on to mapping in the upper White River valley, and four other men acting as packers and assistants. Moffit and Knopf concentrated their efforts in the foothills between the Chisana and Nabesna Rivers, crossing Skolai Pass on 25th of August on their return to Valdez. During the course of their work they were assisted by a number of prospectors in the region, singling out R. H. Sargent and James Galen by name. References to Native people in the region are few. They note that local Natives are engaged in the fur trade, taking fox, lynx, martin, mink, and wolverine, "which they trade to the white men for provisions, clothing, and ammunition" (Moffit and Knopf 1910:15). In a short section entitled *Natives* they write:

The total native population of the area extending from the head of the Copper River to the White is probably not far from 45 or 50. The natives are divided between three villages, if such they may be called, one at Batzulnetas, on the Copper River; one on Nabesna River, at the mouth of Copper Creek; and a third on Cross Creek, opposite the mouth of Notch Creek, in the Chisana valley. The Batzulnetas and Nabesna natives rely on the white men for a considerable portion of their food, but the Chisana natives are more independent. Their more isolated position has brought them less contact with white men, and they have retained their own manner of living to a greater extent. They depend almost entirely on game for food and lay up a good supply each fall for the winter's needs. All the natives wear clothes obtained from white men, except moccasins, which they make themselves, but they prefer the white man's footwear. Under the influence of white men they have become inveterate beggars, always asking for tea or tobacco, for which, as well as for flour and cloth, they will trade meat or leather goods, when they have them (Moffit and Knopf 1910:15).

It is important to note that their observation of 'begging' by Natives of Whites may have been a cultural mis-interpretation; from the *Dineh* cultural perspective, this was likely more "demand sharing", typical of attempts to establish and maintain relationships of reciprocity which are central to *Dineh* social organization (Kelly 1995),

THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION SURVEY IN UPPER TANANA LAND



Figure 55. Surveyors of the 141st Meridian in the Nutzotin Mountains
(Geological Survey of Canada, National Archives of Canada)

Introduction

The establishment of the International Boundary along the 141st meridian was the first real incursion by the State into the lands and lives of the Upper Tanana and while at first this had only a minimal effect on their lives the existence of the border would come to have profound social, economic, and cultural effects later in the 20th century.

The choice of the 141st meridian as the international boundary between Alaska and Yukon was established through the terms of "The Treaty between Great Britain and Russia, signed at St. Petersburg, February 28/16, 1825," which also set out its demarcation through the coastal panhandle region (Green 1982: Appendix, contains the full text of the original treaty). The panhandle boundary identified in the treaty was, however, geographically vague, and the 141st meridian boundary was practically unenforceable for lack of any Russian presence within the interior. This led to a number of international disputes between the British and Russian and, after their purchase of Alaska in 1867, American governments. The most significant of these disputes - known variously as the "Dryad Affair" or "Stikine incident" - occurred in 1834 (Green

1982; Shelest 1990). Among other issues, its significance lay in identifying to both parties the practical imprecision of the 1825 Treaty's demarcation of the boundary within the coastal panhandle and the almost utter lack of topographic knowledge along the borderlands. Due to these ambiguities, different interpretations of the treaty text were possible and agreement on the precise position of the border along the coast remained unresolved for many years. This led to a number of additional incidents through the late 1800s and culminated in a treaty agreement to survey and establish the boundary in the panhandle in 1892 (Green 1982).

Although the border along the 141st meridian seemed more straightforward, the lack of surveys establishing the boundary led to disputes as well. Until 1871, when the region was incorporated into the Northwest Territories of the Dominion of Canada, the lands to the east of the boundary were granted by Britain to the exclusive use of the Hudson Bay Company. The company regularly transgressed into the territory claimed by Russia and subsequently sold to the United States, establishing Fort Yukon at the confluence of the Yukon and Porcupine rivers in 1847, and regularly carrying out trade in the lower reaches of the Tanana River. In 1869 an American military survey determined the company's illegal occupation within Alaska and deported their representatives upriver (Green 1982). This led to further recognition by the respective states of the need to permanently establish the location of the border in order to avoid future conflicts of this sort.

First Attempts to Establish the 141st Meridian

Initial work on determining the precise location of the 141st meridian began in 1887, with William Ogilvie's astronomic observations along the Yukon River in association with the Geological Survey of Canada's Yukon Expedition of the same year (Dawson 1888; see also Easton 1987). From 1889 to 1895 several additional surveys were made of the 141st meridian in the Klondyke region and in 1902 the line was extended south from the Yukon River to the headwaters of Scottie Creek (International Boundary Commission 1966); no mention is made in the reports of these surveys of any aboriginal inhabitants of the region.

From the south, in 1898 a U.S. Geological Survey party explored the Upper Tanana territories. Little is recorded on their non-geological observations, however a map provides some detail on their route and dates of passage through the area: 10 July at Snag, on the White River; 11 - 18 July along Snag creek to the 141st meridian; 19 - 21 July south of Mirror Creek; 1

August at the mouth of Mirror creek and Tanana River [sic] (United States Geological Survey 1899).³⁷

Again, no mention is made of any Native people, a curious absence, since the villages of *Nii-ii* and *Taatsant'o* lie within a mile or two north and south of their passage over the flatlands through which the middle Snag and upper Mirror Creeks run. However, August month is the time of fishcamp along Scottie Creek and may account for their absence. Another explanation is that these surveys, unlike those undertaken by George Dawson, were singularly uninterested in recording Native settlements or encounters. The fact that several field journals contain reference to Native encounters and villages elsewhere contradicts this assumption. Finally, we might surmise that the official reports neglected mention of Native people occupying the borderlands in order to avoid raising, at a bureaucratic state level, the presence of Native occupations (and perhaps rights which might flow from their occupation) along the borderlands.

In early June, 1900, W.F. King, Canada's chief astronomer, and O.H. Tittmann, superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, arrived in Skagway, Alaska to mark out the provisional boundary between Canada and the United States along the three main passes (the Chilkat, Chilkoot, and White passes) from the coast to the interior gold strikes in the Klondike. As they traversed the Chilkat valley, they were approached by a group of Tlingit Natives from the village of Klukwan, who "presented a petition to the commissioners asking that they be allowed to continue to hunt, fish, and trade across the new boundary line that sliced cross the Chilkat River valley about a mile north of their village. The commissioners agreed to forward the petition to the president and governor general respectively" (Green 1982:76; see also United States, 1903: case appendix). No official reply to the petition has been uncovered to date.

Official Accounts of the International Boundary Commission Survey

In 1903 the establishment of the Alaska Boundary Tribunal was agreed to by Britain and the United States to adjudicate the disputed boundary between Canada and Alaska along the coastal panhandle. While the treaty negotiations were riddled with intrigues against Canadian interests (see Penlington 1972; Green 1982), the final terms of the resulting Convention of 1906 initiated intensive surveying of the border, including determination of position by astronomical

³⁷ The identification of the Tanana River here is a geographical error; Mirror Creek runs into the Chisana River,

observations and triangulation, and the cutting of a twenty foot wide vista along the entire length of the established border by collaborating crews of the Canadian and American Geological Surveys. Fieldwork began in 1907 and continued until 1913 (International Boundary Commission 1918). The remainder of our narrative of the work of the International Boundary Commission survey will be restricted to that occurring in our principal area of interest, the territory occupied by the Upper Tanana.

The official accounts of the work of the boundary survey presents the following general chronology:

- in 1907, the several members of the survey projected a line from the Yukon River southwards 125 miles to a point near the crossing of Snag Creek;
- in 1908, this line was continued southward past the White River crossing of the border, triangulation was completed to about 75 miles south of the Sixty-mile River (near to the headwaters of Scottie Creek), topographic mapping and vista clearing undertaken to the Sixty-mile, and permanent monuments set through to the Ladue River;
- in 1909, over 50 men arrived at Canyon City on the White River in late spring (May 21st) to carry out the work of the survey; the majority proceeded up the White to work their way towards Mt. Natazhat in the Wrangell Mountains, while two smaller crews continued topographic surveys about the border to the north, meeting at Mirror Creek on August 24th; cutting of the vista was completed north from Mt. Natazhat to Mirror Creek;
- in 1910, the vista was completed between Mirror Creek and the Ladue River and monuments set from the Sixty-mile River to Mirror Creek;
- in 1911, all survey efforts were north of the Yukon River;

which in turn flows into the Nabesna River, which runs into the Tanana River further downstream.

- in 1912, additional triangulation was carried out along the upper reaches of the White River to the Skolai pass and into the Chitina watershed south of the Wrangell Mountains;
- in 1913, a final inspection of the boundary from the Yukon River south to Mt. Natazhat was conducted, checking and numbering monuments, thus completing the work of the International boundary survey along the 141st meridian (International Boundary Commission 1918).

This chronological account of the activities of the survey does not give full justice to the enormous undertaking, which was completed between 1907 and 1913. The final report of the commission cited above provides some anecdotal accounts of the challenges met by the surveyors, and Green (1982) expands on this with information gleaned from archival field books and personal logs. Within all of the officially published documentation, however, there are no accounts of encounters with, or observations of, the aboriginal inhabitants of the region between the Sixty-mile and White Rivers. Given the low population numbers of the area we might not find this too surprising, however my own research of the archival documents and the recording of oral history indicates that the survey did encounter Upper Tanana in the course of their work.

Archival research of the original logs of the survey was undertaken at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, the Rasmusson Archives, Fairbanks, and the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The research has allowed for a more detailed understanding of the routes and dates of passage through Upper Tanana territory during the course of the survey, including the winter ranges of packhorses within the White River valley, which were undoubtedly encountered by Upper Tanana hunting caribou at this location, and lists of men employed in the survey in supporting the work of the official survey members. The latter provides us with additional sources (in the form of journals, memoirs, and letters of the named participants) to attempt to document more fully the interactions of the survey members and the local inhabitants.

The final report of the International Boundary Commission (IBC 1918) gives an account of the "Chiefs of Parties and Assistants", which in 1909 numbered 14 surveyors and their assistants; the personal diary of F.H. Lambert, who acted as a Chief of party for the Crown, lists an additional 31 men by name hired by the Canadian survey to cut vistas, lay monuments, cook, and handle horses (Lambert 1909); the United States would have hired roughly the same amount,

suggesting a total contingent in the neighbourhood of 60 to 70 men active in the region through the late spring to late August of that year. To date, we have been unable to locate any additional archival material connected with these individuals, although additional searches are warranted

The accounts examined to date, principally official logs, and personal journals of Thomas C. Riggs, jr. and Fredrick H. Lambert, seconds in command of the American and Canadian surveys, respectively, make several references to the Native people of the Scottie Creek region.

The earliest reference is contained in G. Clyde Baldwin's report on his work during the field season of 1908. It is clear from the context of his report that he followed the established Native trail from the White River, up Katrina Creek, and over the watershed into the Scottie Creek valley:

Since for the next portion of our trip we must rely entirely upon our horses as the freight carriers when we failed to find part of them on the 6th [of July] (the day we intended starting overland) we necessarily remained until they were rounded up the next morning. Mr. Brabazon had not yet appeared upon the scene so I left one of the packers and three horses to bring him over to our boundary camp. The trail which we followed wound along through the timber in the bottom of the valley of Katrina Creek and was a gradual easy ascent most of the way until we reached the summit of the divide between the waters of Katrina and those of Scottie Creek on the west. Here it took a decided turn to the south but as we knew that it led eventually to Rupe's trading post somewhere in the valley before us we thought it better to continue following it rather than to strike off due west and cut a new trail through the timber. In the Scottie Creek flat we had some very swampy, soft traveling which was only ended after we had crossed the main stream. This creek at this point is composed of a series of small but deep lakes through which there is a very slow current in a southerly direction. Just before we reached the crossing place an Indian came hopping across the 'niggerhead' swamp from the direction of Rupe's cabin but his English proved to be rather limited so when we tried to make him understand that we needed a canoe to ferry our supplies across the stream he would only grunt and bob his head. As this was a rather unsatisfactory answer we did not wait for his canoe but proceeded to build a raft on which we ferried our outfit across in safety. About this time, however, several Indians arrived and one old man did actually come in a very small but well made birch-bark canoe. When our horses swam the stream these Indians thought it great sport and the shrill laughter of the women could be heard for some distance. Leaving Scottie Creek we encountered some bad travelling through fallen burned timber and on the 12th a steady rain kept us in camp all day. The 13th was spent in exploring the surrounding country and in locating station "O of the Boundary", none of the men with me at the time having seen it before. Then on the 14th we moved our camp to a small draw very close to the station and at last we were on working ground (Baldwin 1908:9-10).

The next day the camp was joined by Mr. Brabazon, while two of the men, with twelve horses, set off back to Katrina Creek to retrieve their cache. The boundary party continued their work in the area for another month, breaking camp on the 26th of August and setting out to cross the "Big Flat" through which the Snag and Beaver Creeks flow just east of the border. Their progress again shadows the traditional trail across these flats to the low hills south of Beaver Creek, which I have documented.

After crossing Snag Creek we pursued a south south-easterly course until we crossed Beaver Creek when we changed to a south south-westerly direction and kept along the edge of some level bench ground which parallels the latter stream until we finally reached the opening or canyon through which Beaver Creek emerges from the hills. Here we again crossed Beaver Creek and found a fairly well beaten trail along the south bank. This we followed as far as an old Indian camping place near the point of the hill which we knew station "T" of the Boundary" to be located (Baldwin 1908:14).

They set station "T" and quickly pushed on to soon meet up with members of party coming north from stations to the south, and were soon thereafter leaving the field for the season. However, Baldwin's 1908 report contains some additional notes on Native people in his summary comments.

During the early part of the season those of us who passed through the flat country saw practically no game of any size, which I think was due to the fact that the Indians keep this region pretty well hunted out. In the many small lakes of the vicinity fish are plentiful and form the chief summer food of the natives. All along the valley of the White River moose, caribou and bear are to be found while in the hills and mountains of the upper river the mountain sheep are very numerous. After reaching the higher hills we had all the fresh meat, which we needed for the balance of the season.

The natives of this country have already been mentioned several times but not as yet fully described. In appearance they resemble the Siwashes of the coast, they wear store clothes but continue to use moccasins for foot coverings. Through contact with traders and other white men they have acquired a smattering of English but in many cases their vocabulary is very limited. As in many other non-civilized or half civilized tribes or peoples the squaws do most of the hard work while the bucks do the necessary hunting. In our dealings with them they were perfectly honest but proved to be great beggars and had absolutely no sense of obligation for anything given to them or for any favors accorded them. They are very fond of the white man's food and especially of tea that even the small children will drink without either sugar or milk when as strong as it can be made. Next in value to tea as an article of trade comes tobacco and several times I saw men whose English was entirely limited to the two words "tea" and "chew". In general they know the value of money but prefer silver to any other medium of

exchange. This is illustrated by a case in which I paid one of them a silver dollar and a dollar bill for some little service, which he had performed for me, and upon the receipt of the money he immediately bought all the grubs that he could get for the bill although he kept the silver. Some of the squaws had their faces tattooed and I saw one at least with a ring of silver stuck in her nose. In summer they live in tents and in the open but I think most of them have cabins for winter habitations. The women, especially when excited, have very shrill piercing voices, which sound very much like those of small children (pp.23-4).

Rigg's journal for 1909 contains a single reference to encountering native people:

Rupe was not at his camp but about 30 Indians were camped there. I tried to take some pictures but desisted when a buck grabbed a gun and said "Indian shoot." They seem to have some sort of idea that a picture takes something out of a person that is not replaced (Riggs n.d.:July 1909).

Rigg's account places him in the upper Scottie Creek valley at the time, and the "camp" he refers to almost certainly is the village at *Kelt'uudn Mann'*, "water lily lake", or *Nahts ' Ts'ih-chuut*, "we grabbed wolverine" (Pepper or Paper Lake in English), where Bill Rupe had his trade store.

Oral History Accounts of the Border Survey

During the course of my fieldwork I often encountered reference to the ill effects of the international boundary on the lives of the Upper Tanana; it is generally regarded with bitterness. In particular, as these accounts reveal

Mrs. Bessie Johns' Account of the Border Survey

Oral historical accounts recorded in the course of this study and documented elsewhere (John-Penikett and Johns 1989) provides an important further elaboration on the encounter between the boundary survey people and the Upper Tanana. In it they document the actual division of *Tsoogut gaaiy* by the survey and recount the undertaking to the borderlands *Dineh* the right to continue to occupy and use the region as they had done so in the past.

The oral testimony of Mrs. Bessie Johns on the border survey through *Tsoogut gaaiy* has been recorded by this study in the field and in John-Penikett and Johns (1989); they differ only in a few elaborating, stylistic details.³⁸

³⁸ The occasion for this recollection by Mrs. Bessie Johns was the Yukon Historical and Museums Association's 1989 conference on Yukon Borderlands, held at Yukon College, 2-4 June. Her daughter, Lu Johns-Penikett, whose

MRS. JOHN:

Right now I'm going to tell you people about when the borderline go through there. There were two hundred in the village there, the place white people call Little Scottie Creek. There are lots of people buried there. All our people, things like that. At that time the borderline went through. That's the story I'm going to tell you guys right now.

This great story. My great grandpa, when that borderline go through ahead there. They got some, what they call, moose skin, caribou skin. That's the kind of tent he got right down there at customs with the borderline going through. They don't know at that time, these white people who come around the boundary line, so maybe that one guy who is the government boss, they hit my great grandfather's tent. They say, "Could you move?" He do that you see? [the surveyor waved his arm]. So, that government said, "Your tent gonna be cut. You gonna be Alaskan, you gonna be Yukon?" they tell my great grandfather, they say.

So, they make lots of moccasins to be used at that time by those boundary line people. I don't know how many wore those moccasins, but all say, "Make moccasin."

I don't know, but my mother and my great grandfather say "You know how many moose skin they need to keep warm, those Indian people?" Make moccasin, meat, everything.

After that, the government, they give all kinds of flour and rice, I guess. They don't know what's that, my great grandfather. That flour, he tried boiling all day, he said grandma. He tell his wife, he said, "That's sour water. You gonna die if you guys eat it." He boiled it all day, he said grandma. He boiled it all day and put moose fat - he throw it in there. He finished his fat piece, he said my great grandfather, my great

grandma. He stirred all day, and after that he got a stick spoon. They made it out of birch bark sometimes. You used a little bit, that's all. You were his kids, they say.

That's a long time ago they do that, and I'll talk to you about a story, you guys. The boundary line go through at that time. There were lots of people at Scottie Creek at that time - about two hundred. They buried fish [in ground caches], dry meat, everything. All that stuff was cached. They put fish in there, dry meat, everything. At that boundary line, he showed it to my great grandfather and that great grandma she carried that book around a long time. I'd like to know if that book is in Ottawa. They give my great grandma and great grandfather a red book a long time ago. "This is your book," they tell my great grandfather. They carry it around a long time - it must have been about 1911 when the boundary line went through. Lots of people all just dead now. The story just grow up to us. That's why I tell you guys special story about my great grandfather."

LJP:

So, mom, what happened when the boundary people asked him to move? Did he move or how long did they try and get him to move?

MRS. JOHN:

Long time. They stay there. He can't move his moose skin or caribou skin tent. That's right. They give him lots of food, they say. The government people. They stay there everyday. That's all, I think.

LJP:

So, did they move or what happened when the boundary survey . . .

MRS. JOHN:

They don't move! They belong to their village. The old borderline go through. They back and forth. They move all the way down to Big Scottie Creek, all the way down to the Yukon River.

That's the right way to Indian. They feed each other, you know. They don't know boundary between Yukon and Alaska. Right now, just everything happened. It was supposed to be that they feed each other, just one trail in this country. All our country. They help each other, you know, Indian people.

LJP:

Well, I thought you told me before that Stsii Stsool [*Tsaiy Tsuu*, Mrs. John's grandfather] didn't want to move. He didn't want to move but they kept asking him. So what happened? They got him to sign a piece of paper or something.

MRS. JOHN:

Yeah, that government they tell him to sign a piece of paper. So, he sign paper.

LJP:

And what did they say he was going to get from that?

MRS. JOHN:

"You gonna be Alaskan. You gonna be Alaskan. You gonna be Yukon. Two sides of the country, all you are from," they tell my great grandfather. After that they do a book, and my great grandmother she said, ". . . some kind of bible." They live to sign that, my great grandfather. He can't move his tent, that's why that government do that and he sign the paper. "Two sides of the country," he say. "All your family, they are all going to grow up on two side of the country." My great grandfather know all about our country here. That's why he signed that paper.

(John-Penikett and Johns, 1989:187-190)

Mr. Andy Frank's Account of the Border Survey

Andy Frank, who was a young boy at this time, shared his version of the arrival of the border survey crew at the village site of *Tsoogot Gaiy*:³⁹

Borderland chief [the survey chief], his name was Raeburn.

That's when he say [my grandfather] at the border that time. "Good people," he say, "what you do this, you cut the bush all the way in a line?"

"That boundary line. New law. There going to be law, nobody can't go across." That's what they [Raeburn] said, he said.

Grandpa, he said, "No," he said "I don't like that," he said. "Good people. White man good people, but tell 'em what I say," he say. "That we can go anywhere, where we got hunting ground, where we got property to get everything, we go there. You got to tell 'em," he said. "You're alright, good people, but me, I like to go anyplace where I got land," he said, my grandpa.

He like to hear our grandpa talk too, that people that time. Grandpa talk good. He called Border Chief. He got earring bead. "Why you do that?" he say that. Old time chief, borderland chief.⁴⁰

They call the Border People [the English surveyors], that's what my grandpa told me, a long time ago. He tell that people, the Boundary Line Chief [Raeburn], my grandpa he say "No, no, no us," he tell him. They put down [the line] all through. My grandpa he go Dawson, he make meeting. Grandpa he say "What they do down there?"

³⁹ Taped interview with Mr. Andy Frank, 4 July 1994 with N. A. Easton (SCCHP Tape #1994-2) and Easton (Fieldnotes, n.d).

⁴⁰ The Borderland Chief was who Andy Frank called, "My Grandfather" and probably *Chajakta*, *Huskeh* or a respected leader of the borderlands area at the turn of the century.

"They make boundary line. You can't go other side no more."

"No, not us," my grandpa say. He tell it true. He put down [Titus John?], he tell his dad, who he put down. "Us? No way! We got proper way, we got hunt, good place to hunt we use. We go anywhere. Not us," he say. I tell everybody. I go Fairbanks. I tell you too. That book, somewhere is that book.⁴¹

The Story of Bill Rupe

Throughout the history of contact between indigenous peoples and European explorers and settlers are found numerous stories of foreigners finding themselves in a strange land, lacking even the basic knowledge of survival. Many simply disappeared, dying in the "wilderness" they had entered with such ignorance. But the wilderness for the foreigner is a homeland for its indigenous occupants, who have learned to survive in their environment through the lessons of their ancestor's experience, which they have learned through the mastery of traditional knowledge and their own careful observation of the world in which they live. There are many instances in which the newcomer to a place, faced with death from his own ignorance, is saved by the intercession of locally adapted and informed indigenous peoples. The oral histories of the northern Athapaskans contain many such accounts; the tale of Bill Rupe is one of them.⁴²

During the latter part of the century, and particularly in the period between the Klondike and Chisana Gold Rushes, the *Dineh* helped many men who had become lost or run out of food on the trail. Andy Frank's father, who was married to the sister of the Scottie Creek headman, was very industrious and always had lots of food cached. As a result, he was able to help a lot of the lost and hungry people who passed through the country at that time. Early in the century, after the establishment of Dawson,⁴³ a young man named Bill Rupe appeared in the bush, lost and hungry. Andy's father took him in and fed him. Rupe stayed for awhile recovering and teaching Andy's father English. The two men decided to go into partnership together: Andy's

⁴¹ "That Book" is the red book in which Bill Rupe recorded the boundary agreement between Chajakta and Raeburn - referred to in Mrs. Johns' account above and Bill Rupe's story below.

⁴² There is a parallel structure to the stories of Indian's assistance to "starving prospectors" found in the tales told by prospector's themselves, in which the roles are reversed; prospector's accounts maintain the pathetic nature of the Indian and how through their actions and patronage Indians gained food, clothing, medical care, education, and, perhaps most importantly, a job or wage.

father would guide Rupe back to Dawson where he would pull together a trading outfit and then Andy's father would guide Rupe back to the village site at Pepper Lake where together they would open a store. The store was the first of its kind in the upper reaches of the Tanana watershed and proved a successful venture for both men.

Andy Frank spoke to me several times about the years of Rupe's residence [comments in square brackets are my own]:

My daddy and Bill Rupe used to haul freight over that way, from head of Ladue. Bill Rupe and my daddy had a boat, old time motorboat, I guess, bring stuff on it, so far as head of Ladue, I guess. Make cache, put it up. Got two horse there. My daddy use one horse there, Bill Rupe use one horse there, then haul the stuff over to the head of Pepper Lake. Lots of work, to do that, lots of work.

They got store there, they make store. They do good. Even lots of Tetlin, Tanacross people go over there. Go there, bring lots of fur. He doing pretty good, Bill Rupe.

[Did he share the money from that with your grandpa?]

Yup. It's my daddy, he work lots that time. He bring horse load, he got lots of stuff, he got traps, more stuff, more stuff, more stuff. They bring more stuff, guns, groceries, lots of blankets, tobacco, all stuff like that. The still bring lots of stuff, two horses, eh. Some old they buy fur, I remember. They're all full of fur in the cache. Fur high too that time, eh. A long time ago. Black fox high that time.

[Bill Rupe first, then Zeke?]

He [Zeke Mullin] come from Chisana. After the gold rush, he come down there make store. Then he made partner with my dad.

In another interview, Mr. Frank returned to the story of Bill Rupe:

My daddy had partner, Bill Rupe. No white man that time. My daddy's partner, Bill Rupe. First white man that time. He stay. My daddy just have girlfriend, that white man, he find white man. Young man. He stayed together. He no quit, no more. He see my daddy do good, so he stay around there, until my daddy show how to trap 'em, and that got lots of fur, so he tell my daddy teach him how to understand good, you know, teach a long time, teach my daddy how to talk English. So my daddy go Dawson, sell fur. He tell my dad how to do it, my daddy do it. Sell all fur, sell fur they go to Dawson, they buy boat, I guess. Come back to the Ladue, they bring stuff there. I don't know how they got those two horses there. Maybe bought from somebody, they bought from somebody. Then they started to haul freight over that high mountain.

⁴³ Possibly during the short "rush" to the White River District in 1902, stimulated by Jack Horsfeld's discovery of gold on Beaver Creek west of the Canadian border..

Oh, wagon, there was a wagon too, I don't know where that came from. all the way up to Dawson, high mountain, he come all the way up. I think he hit Bill Rupe's trail, he stay there, he got no place to go, too much nigger head. You know that old time horse wagon too? I ride that one too. Rough ride. That's a rough ride. . . . I'm six years old that time. I don't know how long, he keep me long time, then I get back my daddy, he give me back. That's why he named me, give me name Andy.

Rupe remained in partnership with Andy's father for about ten years, eventually settling with Annie John, with whom he had a baby girl called Margaret and popularly known by the *Dineh* as Maggie. Rupe taught Andy Frank english as he grew up as well. Rupe also began to record births and other important events in a book with red binding that was very smooth to touch.

In 1908 it was recorded that "W. S. Rupe has a trading post situated 40 miles due West from a point 60 miles up the White River. This post is situated on a branch of the Tanana River. He also trades with the Copper Indians as well as other Bands, who come a distance of 250 miles up the Tanana River."⁴⁴

In 1909 Rupe had some contact with the International Border survey, since it was "Rupe's" camp which Thomas Riggs recorded arriving at in July 1909 only to find that, "about 30 Indians were camped there" (Riggs, n.d.). They were probably Rupe's relatives - although it is uncertain if this was at the camp at Little Scottie Creek or Pepper/Paper lake.

1909 and 1910 were the years of greatest potential contact between the survey and the Upper Tanana people, as topographic survey and vista cutting were carried out within their territory. In 1910, the clearing crew worked from Mirror Creek northwards towards the Ladue River, a trajectory that brought them to the Little Scottie Creek village, which was arranged on the hill overlooking Little Scottie Creek. Not only did the boundary pass through the village, according to Upper Tanana oral history, the vista ran directly through a large bark-covered domed house structure. The structure belonged to Andy's father, who refused to allow them to move it.

There was considerable protest on the part of the field crew, who insisted that they would have to cut through the house if it would not be moved, and that the Indian's would have to decide whether they wished to live on the American or Canadian side of the border. Andy's

⁴⁴ Anon. "Notes made from an interview with Reverend Mr. O'Meara re Indians in the Yukon, July 1908." Yukon Archives. COR / 262 / f.7.

father asked for a meeting with the "Borderline Chief," the head of the survey crew, and called together the people to discuss the situation. W. B. Reaburn identified himself as the borderline chief and Andy's father negotiated. After several days of holding his ground, Andy's father finally received the assurance from Reaburn that the people of the village could continue to live there and signed a paper to that effect, and Andy's father relented to moving his house so the vista could be cleared. Rupe kept the paper in the Red Book. As he lay dying, Andy's father told the young boy, "Don't you forget that man's name, the borderline chief, Raeburn. You don't forget because one day it will be important."

After the border had come through, when Rupe's child Maggie was about 10 years old, Rupe left his wife and took his daughter to Dawson, where he enrolled her in St. Mary's catholic school run by the Sisters of St. Ann. It is said that her mother, Annie John, travelled to Dawson and appealed to the court there to have her daughter returned to her, but her request was refused.

The ultimate fate of Maggie Rupe remains a mystery. Some believed that she eventually married a police officer. and that later she had had several children in Dawson and then passed away. Bertha Demmit, one of Annie John's daughters with Scottie Creek Titus, worried until her death over the fate of John, and her sister Maggie and her four children. I was asked by several Elders, including Mrs. Demmit, to do what I could to find out what happened to Maggie, an instruction I followed with some interesting results.

Before Rupe left the community he gave the red book of records to Andy's father, who in turn passed it on to his son, reminding him to "never to forget that borderline chief, Reaburn." Mr. Frank kept the book for many years as he travelled over the country; about 1957 someone broke into his cache at the place called High Cache, just below the Alaska highway on Scottie Creek about 5 miles into Alaska, and stole his outfit of traps, guns, ammunition - and the red book.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ This is the same red book, which Mrs. Bessie John speaks of in her oral history of the border survey. Its theft was a common occurrence suffered by many natives once easy access to their cached (perceived as "abandoned") possessions was gained by tourists and government officials through improved transportation. Government employees flying through the area in tax-paid airplanes and helicopters, for example, pillaged caches at Fort Selkirk. They justified their theft by the notion that the stuff had been abandoned and would only be taken by tourists, while they would keep it in the territory and care for it as a historic object; of course, many of these people would eventually abandon the territory and take it away, as well.



Figure 56. Annie John, Titus John, and Steven Northway, Northway, 1943.
(Duesenberg Archive Film)



Figure 57. Margaret Rupe's Graduation Photo from Nursing School, Victoria, B. C., 1930.
(Sisters of St. Anne Archives, Victoria, B.C.)

Bill Rupe continued to live around Dawson, trapping and prospecting in Yukon, until his death there in 1937.⁴⁶ His daughter Margaret had left Dawson in 1927 for Victoria, BC where she graduated from St. Joseph's School of Nursing in 1930. She worked there until 1956, rising to oversee the nursing staff of the maternity ward. Margaret married an affluent man named Arthur and retired to live with him. For reasons which remain unclear, she had asked the sisters of St. Ann to maintain confidentiality of her married name and residence. It is presumed she has now passed on and is buried somewhere in southwestern British Columbia (Easton 2002d).

Bill Rupe had a profound effect on the eastern Upper Tanana *Dineh*. He was the first sustained contact they had with a non-Indian person. Not knowing who he was or where he came from, they nevertheless recognized his implicit humanness and extended to him all the generosity which any human being deserves when found in need. They gave him shelter, sustenance, and incorporated the stranger as kinsman. And while it is true that Rupe would eventually disappoint the *Dineh*, it is not acceptable to simply characterize Bill Rupe as another whiteman who came into Indian country to exploit them and then leave with their riches. Although he may have set the standard for White-Indian interaction, there are complex motivations discernable in his actions, which are not visible for much of the subsequent relations between representatives of the new nation-states and the Upper Tanana *Dineh*.

Nevertheless, when Rupe left with Annie John's daughter he committed a grievous affront to Upper Tanana matrilineal culture. By all local measures Maggie belonged, literally, to Annie John's lineage. Her failure to convince the state authorities in Dawson of this fact and retrieve her daughter from her father was the first open instance, and certainly not the last, of the capacity of the State to exercise irresistible force.

⁴⁶ "William Rupe, old-time trapper in the White River district, passed away yesterday at St. Mary's hospital after a prolonged illness. The deceased was born in Santa Rosa, California about seventy-one years ago. He is survived by one daughter, Margaret Rupe, now residing on the Pacific Coast." Dawson News, 31 July 1937.

Prospectors and the Chisana Gold Rush

Prospectors Prior to the Chisana Gold Rush

Bill Rupe was not the only prospector to travel into the Upper Tanana borderlands at the turn of the century. As noted earlier, it was quite likely Jack Horsfeld's 1902 discovery of gold on Beaver Creek, west of the border, which first brought Rupe into the Upper Tanana basin. Bleakley's (n.d.- a) history of mining in the Chisana district notes that even earlier, in 1898, Henry Bratnober prospected up the White River. That same year so did Jack Dalton, who built a cabin on upper Kletsan Creek. Bratnober and Dalton returned together to search for copper deposits on the upper Tanana River in 1903. In 1905, Henry Bratnober travelled up the Nabesna River in a gas-powered sternwheeler, establishing a winter camp for a small crew consisting of James L. Galen, Draper C. "Bud" Sargent, George C. Wilson, and Carl F. Whitlam. In 1906 Aaron Johnson and un-named partners prospected lower Chathenda Creek (which would become the principal drainage of gold production in the Chisana region), however they abandoned their efforts after a week of disappointing returns.

In 1912, William E. "Billy" James, Nels P. Nelson, and Fred W. Best began prospecting on the upper White River, establishing a base camp at the mouth of Beaver Creek. James was shown a quartz prospect on Chathenda Creek by Chisana Joe [Justin], but it was too late in the season to explore further and James' interest was in placer gold. James and Nelson returned to Chathenda Creek in 1913, and on May 13 staked their discovery claims. James returned to Dawson to register the claims and get further supplies; he also picked up Fred Best to share in their good fortune.⁴⁷ However, without additional collaboration, initial movement to the Chisana region was slow, that is until Best returned to Dawson for more supplies in August and reported average returns of nearly \$300.00 of gold a day. After this the Chisana Gold Rush was truly on.

⁴⁷ Knut Petersen (1977:23) relays that in appreciation Nelson registered the "Discovery" claim in Chisana Joe's name, but this does not seem to be otherwise documented.

The Chisana Gold Rush

The Chisana Gold Rush was the last big rush in the western subarctic, drawing several thousand miners and entrepreneurs to the valley from communities all over Alaska and Yukon, as well as from further afield.

Many were poorly prepared for journey. Thomas Riggs noted that “about 75 percent . . . were very inadequately equipped for a trip of this description, and . . . it became the duty of the survey to provide meals for them, to sell them what provisions could be spared, and even to provide clothing and shoes, in addition to furnishing minute directions as to how to get to the diggings.” Later, Riggs was to recall meeting one cheechacko heading for Chisana equipped with little more to eat than “ten pounds of raisins, having been informed that raisins were unusually efficacious in sustaining life in that country” (Riggs in Bleakley, n.d.-a).

Walter Northway recalled that this was the year that he saw his first White man:

I was fourteen when I saw my first white people. My dad and I were hunting ducks by the mouth of the Chisana River. We came to that point by moose-skin canoe from *K'ehthiign*. We were hunting with bow and arrows. My dad and I were on the bank roasting duck and making tea. I told my dad that I wanted to go for a walk. While walking down by the river, I heard voices, weird voices that didn't sound like us.

I ran back to my dad and told him I heard voices and they didn't sound like us. He told me to watch for them.

They came straight to us. Their clothes were ragged, shoes torn. They were starving. They came to where we were roasting ducks.

When they saw the ducks roasting, they asked for them. My dad clapped his hands over his ears, letting them know that he did not understand them. Then they pointed to the ducks and made motions that they were hungry. Dad split the ducks in half for them and gave them tea. When Dad gave them the ducks, they were very hot. The men dipped the ducks in a puddle of water nearby to cool them off so they could eat them fast.

After they were done, I took one of the men across the river in my canoe and came back for my dad and the other white man. Then Dad and the white men walked over to *K'ehthiign*. I traveled back by boat.

Kids all surrounded the men when they got to our camp. They stayed with us until they regained their strength. They worked and helped us. Then they asked my dad if anybody could lead them to the Chisana Gold Rush. Joe Demit's dad, *K'ost'un'*, and Chief Sam guided them. After these two, white men came like ants (Yarber and Madison, 1987:36-37).

Despite the difficulties which were faced on their arrival, by October of 1913 Chisana City “contained about two hundred cabins. Among other amenities, it boasted two streets, two grocery

stores, and the district's third recording office. It also possessed a post office, run by former steamboat captain Theodore Kettleon" (Bleakley, n.d.-a).⁴⁸ Although many left the region for the winter, the community continued to grow.⁴⁹ By December another two hundred cabins had been built and the "city" now had four grocery stores, two meat markets, two barber shops, two restaurants, a hotel, a boarding house, and a saloon called *The Miner's Home*, leading one newspaper to describe Chisana City as the "largest log cabin town in the world." Upstream at the mouth of Bonanza Creek next to the diggings was a second community, "made up mostly of tents. . . a few cabins, as well as four stores, two hotels, and a restaurant" (Bleakley, n.d.-a).

Gold production at the Chisana diggings never lived up to the expectations reflected in this building boom, however, as the Table VI, below, documents. Nineteen-fourteen was the zenith of production with 12,094 ounces recovered, worth a value of about \$250,000. Production declined from that point forward, with minor surges as particular claims peaked or new technology recovered additional placer deposits. By 1915 there were only about fifty people who remained in the community over the winter. The 1920 census recorded forty-three Whites and one hundred and five Natives in the Chisana district.⁵⁰ In 1924 the town site was described as consisting of "452 log cabins in which one man lives alone" (Bleakley, n.d. – a). By the year of McKennan's visit in 1929 "the resident population of Chisana . . . totaled six men and one woman" (McKenna 1959:26), one of whom died that winter.⁵¹ The white population of the upper Chisana basin never grew much larger in the years following.

⁴⁸ The townsite was originally christened Johnson City by the miner's committee which founded it on 9 September 1913; it was renamed Chisana by the postal service.

⁴⁹ Capps (1916:22) reports that only about two hundred people overwintered in 1913-14.

⁵⁰ They included seventeen placer miners, ten prospectors, the U.S. commissioner, two trappers, a trader, a merchant, a blacksmith, a cook, and six wives or children.

⁵¹ McKenna's fieldnotes and letters home during his stay at Chisana provide a vivid picture of life in the community from 22 September through to 22 November 1929, when he left the community to continue fieldwork in other Upper Tanana communities. Its original repository is in the Special Collections at Dartmouth College Library in Hanover, New Haven; A MS-Word transcription of the Chisana portion is provided for research purposes on the accompanying CD-ROM in Appendix 11.

Table V. Gold Production And Population Estimates (White) In The Chisana District, 1913 - 1942

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gold Production (in ounces)</i>	<i>Value (in dollars)</i>	<i>Active Claims</i>	<i>Population Estimates</i>
1913	1,935	40,000	-	2,000
1914	12,094	250,000	-	1,000?
1915	7,740	160,000	17	300
1916		40,000	12	40
1917	1,935	40,000	11	44
1918	726	15,000	-	-
1919	1,306	27,000	-	-
1920	968	20,000	8	43
1921	1,113	23,000	6	
1922	1,403	29,000	9	25
1923	-	23,000	9	22
1924	-	23,400	8	-
1925	-	24,000	6	-
1926	-	18,000	5	-
1927	-	15,000		-
1928	-	16,000	5	12
1929	-	7,000	5	7
1930	-	5,800		-
1931	-	3,000	5	12
1932	-	7,000		-
1933	-			20
1934	-	-	7	20
1935	-	21,000	10	20
1936	-	37,500	-	20
1937	-	30,000		-
1938	-	29,000		-
1939	-	20,000		-

1940	-	14,000		-
1941	-	14,000		-
1942	-	8,000		-

The reaction of the *Dineh* living in the area to the establishment of Chisana City seems mixed. Bleakley (n.d. – a) writes that “some of the Cross Creek Village’s twenty-five or so residents moved north or west to escape the unwelcomed impact of the gold discovery. Others, attracted by the stores and promise of cash labor, abandoned their traditional locale [at Cross Creek] and moved to Chisana City.” Presumably, those who moved “north” moved down the Chisana River to Scottie Creek and Northway, while those who moved “west” moved to the village on the Upper Nabesna River.

Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, an Episcopalian missionary of the day viewed the emergence of the settlement with moral alarm. “It seems altogether impossible that a tribe of Indians should live in the near neighborhood of a considerable town without suffering degradation,” he wrote. “There are always white men eager to associate with them to debauch the women and make a profit of the men; insensibly the native virtues are sapped. . . . the men grow shiftless and casual, picking up odd jobs around town and disdaining the hunting and fishing by which they used to live” (Stuck 1917:56-57).

Such disdain for hunting and fishing may have been more pragmatic than shiftlessness, since there is widespread agreement that one of the most immediate effects of the Chisana rush was a severe depletion of game in the region. Western store food was both scarce and expensive during the three boom years of 1913–15,⁵² and hungry prospectors hunted and trapped sheep, caribou, ptarmigan, hare, and other game to the extent the dall sheep population of the area was virtually eliminated and the Chisana caribou herd severely reduced (Capps 1916:21). In addition, many of the over-wintering miners attempted to supplement their income by trapping, reducing the population of fur-bearers as well. During his stay at Chisana in 1929, McKennan was told that prior to the gold rush “Chisana [was] the best all round hunting place in the old days [for] caribou, moose, and sheep.”⁵³ In his monograph he records that “the White River was practically unvisited by Indians whereas formerly it had been a popular hunting territory. The basins of the

⁵² Bleakley (n.d. – a) records prices of forty cents a pound for flour, fifty cents a pound for sugar, and twenty-five cents a pound for beans in the winter of 1914.

Beaver and the Chisana, formerly the best hunting territory in the area, also were much less frequented due to the depletion of the game following the Chisana stampede of 1913” (McKenna 1959:17).

Thus it seems that the *Dineh* of the upper Chisana area had really two choices – move out to better hunting territories on the Nabesna and lower Chisana Rivers, or seek wage labour to supplement their depleted subsistence resources with store-bought food. Though neither choice meant a complete degradation of their lifestyle as Archdeacon Stuck believed, they did necessitate a reasonable adaptation to these environmental changes.

Some also sought assistance from the White man’s government, as had been extended to their Copper River relatives in years previous.⁵⁴ In September 1914, William E. James, co-discoverer of Chisana gold, wrote to the Bureau of Indian Affairs regarding “destitution of about 15 natives in the Shushana region.”⁵⁵ Internally, Assistant Commissioner E. B. Merritt passed the note to his superior, Commissioner Philander P. Claxton, of BIA’s Bureau of Education: “Referred herewith is a letter, dated September 5, 1914, from William E. James, Shushana, Alaska, in regard to the issuance of rations to a number of Indians in his vicinity. In as much as this Bureau has no jurisdiction over the Indians of Alaska, the case is forwarded herewith for your consideration,”⁵⁶ a claim technically true, since Native affairs in Alaska were managed by the Alaska Native Service within the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Education, until their transfer to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1931.⁵⁷ No additional documentation on this matter is recorded within the BIA files I examined.

Reckord (1983:238) believes that the Cross Creek village “could have been abandoned as early as 1913 when the residents moved across the river to Chisana, to which they were attracted by the store and promise of cash labour. Some even tried their hand at gold panning.” She also notes that Chisana City “attracted the Native people from villages in the regions. From Cross

⁵³ Robert McKenna’s Fieldnotes, University of Fairbanks, S2/B15/F93.

⁵⁴ See US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs./ Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence./Box 4, 1908/Folder Copper Center, which documents the distribution of food to natives who have come to the Copper Center school “in groups from ten to fifteen, all clamoring for food.”

⁵⁵ US Archives, RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Preliminary Inventory 163/Entry 805, Indexes to General Correspondence, 1910 – 1930/Box 7, Correspondent, 1914 – 1915/HM 1995.

⁵⁶ US Archives, RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Entry 121, Central Classified Files (1940-1956)./Box 299 Folder 106415-1914-AK-255/Letter, E.B. Merritt, Assistant Commissioner, to Philander P. Claxton, Commissioner, Bureau of Education, Washington, D.C., 16 October 1914.

⁵⁷ I discuss the US Federal Government’s relationship with the Alaska *Dineh* below; see also Case (1984).

Creek, Scottie Creek, and Cooper Creek on the Nabesna they came to trade furs and buy supplies. They also provided services and labor. They were active in the freighting business. They delivered the mail from Chistochina by dog sled in the winter. They panned for gold on their own” (Reckord 1983:235; see also pp. 228-229).

Several of the immigrant miners who stayed in the region married into the *Dineh* community. James Galen married Ada, daughter of Walter Northway’s sister Elsie and Peter Albert. Pete Eikland, who began to work the Chisana diggings in 1921, would later marry a “niece” of Chisana Joe, Mary, daughter of *Tsaiy Suul* and sister to Lucy, wife of White River Johnny. (Old) William Blair married Tilly Enoch, with whom he sired Young Bill Blair, and later married Mary Tom Tom.

It is only about the mid-1930s that the historic record documents *Dineh* actually working claims. Chisana Joe, “worked the fraction between claim Nos. 3 and 4. . . . [while] an unidentified Native man worked the upper portion of Little Eldorado” in 1937 or ’38 (Bleakley n.d. – a).⁵⁸ A similar group of unidentified Native men mined a fraction on Bonanza in 1939 (Bleakley n.d. – a). Johnny Nicolai, who was raised by Chisana Joe’s brother (Chisana or Nabesna) John (Justin), believes it was 1937 when he moved over to Chisana, where “they got their own little mining camp . . . prospecting, pan-gold, slush box workers during the summer.” He recalled “quite a few older people there, his dad [referring to another person present at the interview] Jack, John and Chisana Joe, Chisana John and Chisana Billy, all them old, pretty old that time. Not very many kids that time.” It was here that he met his wife Cherry, daughter of Andy Toby. Mr. Nicolai also recalls others frequently coming from Scottie Creek and Northway on the lower Chisana River to visit and hunt, including White River Johnny, Bill John (Bell Gaiy), Titus John, Joe Mark, Shorty, Steven, and Harry Frank. Mr. Nicolai himself worked the diggings and trapped through the region from “head of Beaver Creek all the way through back into the Nabesna,” taking his fur for trade down to Slana.⁵⁹

Gold production practically stopped altogether during the Second World War, after which only a few claims were providing “meagre” returns (Bleakley, n.d. – a). Big game hunting took

⁵⁸ The manuscript is unclear on the exact year.

over as the principal economic activity in the upper Chisana River region in the late 1940s, and remains its mainstay today, although a few placer claims are still held and are intermittently worked.

The Nabesna Gold Mine

The *Dineh* communities of the upper Nabesna River were tied closely to those of the Chisana; indeed, most *Dineh* who lived at the one also spent a significant amount of time at the other, so much so that McKennan classed the two areal communities as a single Upper Tanana “band”, although, as we have seen, there were also intimate ties with the settlements of the lower reaches of both the Chisana (McKennan’s “Scottie Creek band”) and Nabesna (McKennan’s “Mouth of Nabesna band”, i.e., Northway) rivers. However, we should also point out that the upper Nabesna River “Upper Tanana” community maintained equally close ties to *Ahtna* speakers of the upper Copper River valley.

Considerable intercourse exists between the people of the upper Nabesna and those of the Copper River. Of the four families camped at the head of the Nabesna when I was there [in the winter of 1929], one woman, the wife of John, was from Mentasta on the Copper River, while John’s mother, the matriarch of all four families, was from Batzulnetas. On the other hand, at Batzulnetas there was a Nabesna man married to a local girl (McKennan 1959: 21-22).

There were at least four sequential villages on the upper Nabesna during the 19th and 20th centuries. The earliest known was reported to be at the mouth of Platinum Creek, called *Dit’aan Cheeg* / hawk [creek] mouth / in Athapaskan, and was certainly occupied in the late prehistoric period but abandoned at the beginning of the 20th century (c. 1901). According to Jack John Justin the village was used “way before white people came in. That’s old-timer people” (P. Kari 1985:63, in Bureau of Indian Affairs 1995b:4); it may be the “Indian house” Allen (1887:63) reported at the mouth of Platinum Creek. Mr. Justin recalls seeing the remains of this village in the early 1920s, which consisted of “housepits, underground caches, and sweat baths” (Reckord 1983:219). Several attempts to locate this village in the later 20th century have failed, and it is

⁵⁹ Interview with Johnny Nicolai, 24 May 2003, Easton, fieldnotes. Reckord (1983:230) notes that “in 1929 the trading post closed at Chisana and the people began to trade at Slana.” The trade store closed that year upon the

assumed that the village itself has been eroded away by stream action (McKenna 1959:18), although the remains of an associated cemetery have been located (BIA 1995b).

The second village site was known as *Daxuhtaa' Cheeg* / ? [creek] mouth / and was located upstream and across the Nabesna River on the left bank. Formerly a hunting camp (BIA 1996a:4), it was occupied for a short while after the abandonment of *Dit'aan Cheeg* village, but was in turn “abandoned after the death of a powerful shaman” (McKenna 1959:18). The third village site was further downstream, near the mouth of Cooper Creek, and was the village that was occupied when McKenna stayed there in 1929. Called *Nach'etay Cheeg* / Brain [creek] mouth / in Athapaskan, it was occupied from about, “1909 and continuously occupied until 1943-1945. It was later used as an overnight camp in connection with subsistence harvesting activities; this use continued through the mid-1950s” (BIA 1996a:16). Occupants at this village included its founder, identified as Charley Toby's great-great-grandfather (presumably in the late prehistoric period), Nabesna John, and “the ancestors of the Alberts and Franks of Northway, and the Sanfords and Justins of Nabesna Bar, Chistochina, and Mentasta” (Reckord 1983:225), the Jackson brothers, Nicholas, John, and Albert, and Oscar Jimmy of Northway (BIA 1996a:5).

The village was occupied during the onslaught of prospectors, miners, and entrepreneurs heading for the Chisana gold diggings, and its Native residents were involved in cash labour initially as freight haulers, then as miners and the sale of hand-hewn lumber, as well as continuing subsistence hunting and commercial fur trapping. White prospectors had discovered gold on the upper Nabesna River in 1899 and a small mine was established about 1908 upstream of the village. In the late 1920s, the mine was substantially expanded, employing some forty to sixty miners, and some *Dineh* assisted in grading an airstrip on nearby Nabesna Bar. The airstrip became an important commercial hub for the region until the construction of the “Abercrombie Trail”, a road extension from the Richardson Highway at Slana to the Nabesna mines (now known as the Nabesna Road) in 1934. Several Native families from the Cross Creek village moved to Nabesna Bar about this time.

Gold production continued at the minesite until it was banned at the beginning of World War Two due to it being deemed as competing with other industrial work directly related to the war effort, and the population of the area collapsed.

death of its owner/operator O. A. Simons. (McKenna, Field Journal).

People left the Nabesna and Chisana valleys to work on war-related jobs in Alaska such as the construction of highways and airfields. Some of the Indian inhabitants of Cooper Creek Village left and moved to Northway or the northern Copper River villages. A small group composed of women and older men remained behind, trapping and living off the land. Those who left Cooper Creek returned to the village when trapping, hunting, or traveling through the area (Reckord 1983:231).

While killing the mine, the war stimulated some economic activity in the area, as the airfield at Nabesna Bar was expanded to accommodate ferrying freight from the end of the Slana – Nabesna road for the construction of the Northway airport and service as an emergency landing for Lend-Lease aircraft being transported to Russia. When the airport was abandoned in 1944 as obsolete to the war effort the remaining occupants of the Cooper Creek village moved to occupy the buildings there and to erect new log cabins. In a sense this was a re-occupation for the *Dineh*, since Nabesna Bar had long been a traditional campsite, known as *Dehsoon' Cheeg* / [creek] mouth / in Athapaskan. Native occupants at this time included Nabesna John, his son, Jack John Justin, Lena Charley, Frank Sanford, Daisy Sanford, Johnny Nicolai, Glen Burrell, and Andy Toby, and their families. A cemetery was established at the site during its occupation; Nabesna John is buried there. People continued to stay for short periods at the Cooper Creek cabins until they were destroyed by a fire in the mid-1950s (BIA 1996b).

Similar to the Alaska Highway, the establishment and upgrading of the Nabesna Road had a profound effect on the lifestyle and settlement patterns of the upper Nabesna / Chisana *Dineh* occupants. “A trip between Valdez and Cooper Creek that had taken weeks in the first few decades of the century now took a morning” (Reckford 1983: 231), and residents shifted their orientation from the lower Nabesna River to the Copper River valley villages of Mentasta, Gulkana, and Chistochina, where food and supplies were more economically available.

The majority of people who lived in the Upper Nabesna/Chisana region had died or moved away by the late 1960s, although the Justin's continued to occupy the site until the 1990s (BIA 1996b:9-10). Jack John Justin and his stepbrothers (Wilson Justin and ?) ran a guide service for some years. Mr. Jack Justin, the last resident, moved to Chistochina in the mid-1990s due to failing health (BIA 1996b), although the area is still visited by *Dineh* today who come to hunt and, perhaps more importantly, savour the sense of their history which pervades their ancestral land.

MISSIONARIES, TRADERS, AND THE STATE IN THE CHISANA RIVER BASIN AFTER THE GOLD RUSH

Introduction

The winter of 1913 - 14 brought both the completion of the establishment of a permanently marked boundary along the 141st meridian and the Chisana Gold Rush to the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. While they seem to have had only a transitory effect on the lives of the *Dineh* at the time, both events presaged the future. Although the majority of the several thousands of white people attracted by the Chisana gold finds had left the region within the year, they introduced a pattern of territorial dispossession and competitive resource exploitation, which dramatically effected subsistence and settlement patterns in the upper Chisana Basin. The marking of the boundary declared the intent by the United States and Canada to assert two distinct administrative regimes over the territory of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. While both States were initially reluctant to establish a costly physical and controlling presence within the region, the American government did so much sooner than the Canadian.

The period between 1913-14 and the establishment of the Alaska Highway in 1942-43 was one in which a three pronged assault on the culture of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* was initiated and carried out with increasing vigor, in a clear attempt to degrade its relevancy to Native peoples and replace it with a culture of dependency originating within the State metropolis. The three elements of this strategy were agents of the fur trade involved in economic transformations, agents of Christianity involved in metaphysical transformations, and bureaucrats of the State involved in replacing the indigenous transmission of culture with a new model of social organization.

While for purposes of discussion I have divided these activities into separate elements, it is important to realize that they are articulated, overlapping, and interdependent - fur traders are Christians too, missionaries are capitalists as well, and bureaucrats can prove as zealous in their attempts at social engineering as the most dedicated missionary. But, it is just as important for us to appreciate that the actions of any particular agent need not necessarily be in congruence with the aims of another. Thus, there were moments of conflict and cross-purpose between these agents and their actions and some opportunity for the Upper Tanana *Dineh* to exploit these differences to suit their own purpose.

The period is notable for the increased nucleation of Upper Tanana *Dineh* nomadic band society into more permanent village settlements, as a result of adopting new architectural styles and a variety of western technologies. As well, there were important differences in the early attempts by the American State to institute planned assimilation to the Upper Tanana *Dineh* through the establishment of regional economic, religious, and education programs compared with that of Canada. Within the Canadian jurisdiction, the State displayed little interest in the lives of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, restricting its presence to the occasional police patrol and missionary excursion until the building of the Alaska Highway established efficient transportation access to their lands.

Undoubtedly, these differences between the two States was partly a function of the differences in geography and transportation infrastructure, which made it relatively easier for American State representatives to travel into the region. In Alaska, the Tanana River valley provided direct access to the region; it was possible for riverboats to ascend the stream as high as the Nabesna River. The Valdez to Eagle Trail was completed in 1903, with commercial transport from Valdez to Fairbanks initiated the following year; by 1923 it had been upgraded to carry automobiles, and renamed the Richardson Road from tidewater to Delta Junction, where it met the road on to Fairbanks and the Alaska Railway to Anchorage. As early as 1917 the Alaska Road Commission was also contributing to upkeep of several of the prospector routes (which generally followed well-worn Native trails) into the upper Nabesna and Chisana valleys, including the McCarthy – Chisana trail system, and the Slana – Nabesna trail, which it planned to upgrade to a road running further east to Chisana and then White River. Only the first portion of this road was completed by 1933, however. The ARC also upgraded the Big Delta – Tanana Crossing trail to wagon standards in 1923-24 (Bleakley, n.d.– c, d).

In the Yukon, the development of a transportation infrastructure focused on consolidating access to and from the goldfields at Dawson City, a more or less north-south vector which largely ignored the lands along the western borderlands (Duerden 1981). Although the Chisana Gold Rush stimulated the establishment of at least two routes into the Upper Tanana headwaters country – the Dry Creek Trail from the mouth of the Snag Creek on White River, and the Canyon City Trail from Burwash to the upper White River, both were left to decay after the short-lived rush.

Harold Innis (1950, 1972) has looked closely at the importance of communication in the establishment of an encapsulating State's hegemony over locally constituted social formations; what a government does not know a government cannot control, and thus communication infrastructures are essential to consolidation of State control over its hinterlands. Combining this insight with Innis' (1930) earlier developed "Staples Thesis," and the subsequent emergence of both Dependency Theory in the "development of underdevelopment" (Frank 1975), and "World Systems Theory" as articulated by Wallerstein (1975) and applied by Wolf (1982) to the contact between the Capitalist States and Indigenous peoples of the world, provides a reflective model of historical development in the Upper Tanana valley during this time. For it is during this period that the peripheral position of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* and their client status within the world capitalist system, was firmly established, or at least within the minds of State bureaucrats.

Yet as Stephenson (1991) points out in his study of Hutterite communities, since ethnic identity arises within civil society, shared values within an encapsulated culture can at times create their own hegemony within an ethnic group, distinct and separate from that of the dominant social formation. The shared values of Hutterites, for example, restrict the level of their articulation with and subservience to the principles of capitalism. Through the religious rituals and practical manners of everyday life their communal ideology and practice is affirmed and renewed, which has allowed them to exist as a culturally distinct enclave within a variety of state formations for nearly 500 years.

Within this period, then, while the State busied itself with the initial consolidation of its hold over the lands and economy of the Upper Tanana, the Native people, in turn, were involved in adjusting their social organization to enable the continued maintenance of their culture and identity as *Dineh*. Their historical experience cannot simply be told as a tale of imperialist subjugation but must reflect something of the dynamic interaction of competing and complimentary values, interests, and intents.

Traders and Trappers in the Chisana Basin

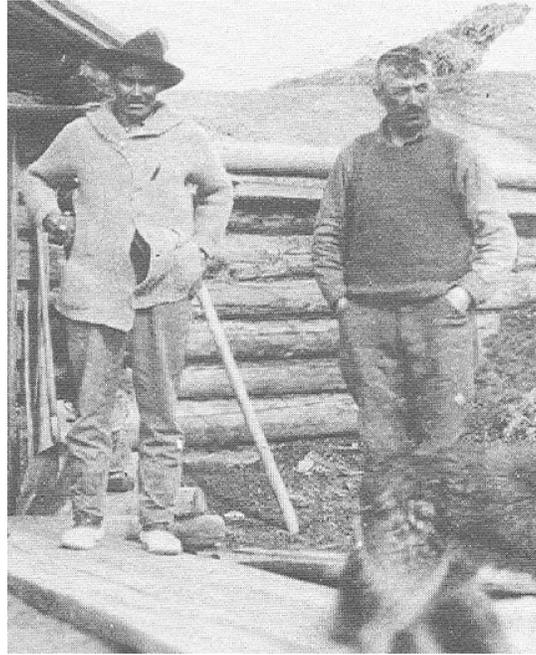


Figure 58. Chief Healy and John Hajdukovich.

(from Ferguson 2002)

The development of mining in the Chisana – Nabesna basin was accompanied by an expansion of trading establishments in the region, not just at the white communities of Chisana and Nabesna, as just described, but at other locations within the area as well. Unfortunately, beyond the general accounts given above, I have recovered no records of trading transactions at the Chisana store itself. However, we do know that it was short-lived (1914-1929) and we can reasonably assume that the type of trade, which occurred there was not unlike that undertaken on the lower Chisana River, as, described below.

In 1907 William Newton established a trade post at the mouth of the Healey River on the Tanana, In 1912 he extended his operations further upstream, establishing a post at Tanana Crossing and caches at Tetlin and the mouth of the Nabesna River; Newton sold these upstream operations to John Strelie and returned to Healy River in 1914 (Simeone 1995:28-29). Strelie worked in the region into the 1920s, traveling up as far as Chisana to trade.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ McKennen Collection, UAF Archives.

In 1908, Jack Dolan established a trade post at the mouth of the Snag River, which had become by then an active Native community after its abandonment after the Chisana Gold Rush, attracting Northern Tutchone *Dineh* and their families from the mouth of the Stewart River, Coffee Creek, and Wellesley Lake areas, and Upper Tanana *Dineh* from the Chisana River and Scottie Creek basins, including Bell and Laura John, Titus John, Andy Frank, and “Chief” Johnson and his wife Lakdu, and others. Jack Dolan would eventually “adopt” young Jimmy Enoch after the death of his father, and sponsored his schooling in Dawson City.⁶¹ Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny believes he continued to trade here until the late 1930s, when he sold out to (Old) Bill Blair. Dolan remained at Snag until his death in about 1947 and is buried at the cemetery there (Easton, n.d.).

In 1908 James A. Northway made his first ascent of the Tanana with a view to starting a trading post at the head of navigation, but only reached Tanana Crossing before freeze-up. He continued upstream the following summer, establishing a trade cache at Tetlin River. In 1910 he lost his trade outfit on his way back upstream, but he continued to return to the Upper Tanana to trade over the next few years.⁶² Walter Northway recalled that “the steamboat used to stop at the mouth of Moose Creek. I can remember seeing a lot of boats with a lot of men going up to the Chisana Gold Rush. We used to sell them moccasins and meat. Then we would buy tea, rice, tobacco, flour, and other things from them” (Yarber and Madison 1987:36). In 1913, James Northway’s experience allowed him to ferry prospectors and trade goods some twenty-five or thirty-five miles up the Nabesna River before grounding on a gravel bar (Brown 1984:43-44).

Another steamboat operator, C. D. Flannigan was more successful that year and “was the only steamboat pilot to complete the difficult and treacherous trip up the Nabesna river and was one of the few to reach Chisana” (Ferguson 2002:118). Flannigan later opened a trading operation at Tetlin, and caches at Tanacross and Northway, which he operated into the 1920s.⁶³

Healey’s move to Tanana Crossing was coincidental to the establishment of a mission station there by the Episcopal Church. Margaret Graves and Celia Wright were the first

⁶¹ McKennan Collection, UAF Archives, “Snag - History”.

⁶² This would have been about the time, which he met Walter Northway and his father, discussed above, when he bestowed the name Northway on Walter’s father; Walter Northway believed it to be “about 1908” (Yarber and Madison 1987:36).

⁶³ McKennan Collection, UAF Archives, S2/B21.

missionaries. They were followed by E. A. MacIntosh, who served at the mission from 1915 through 1924 and later again in the 1930s. Arthur Wright, a Tanana mixed blood, also served during this time, having been raised to be a missionary. In an attempt to curry their favour and interest the missionaries, particularly MacIntosh, seem to have carried on some trade with the Natives as well, although Mrs. Wright was later to recall that, “most of the families who lived at Tanana Crossing when she lived there had come from Lake Mansfield. The people from Nabesna, Tetling and other points of the Upper Tanana River visited there on special occasions but did not settle there.”⁶⁴

Herman Kessler was another prospector-turned-trader who operated in the Upper Tanana district perhaps as early as 1916 - 17,⁶⁵ and operated a trade post first “up at Chisana, close to Scottie Creek. Then, he built a cabin close to Nabesna village [Northway]. . . . Kessler traded with fifteen to twenty, maybe thirty people up there” (Hajdukovich in Ferguson 2002:74). Walter Northway recalled that “the first store here was built by Herman Kessler. He built his store at Stover [Stuiver] Creek up the Chisana River. First he started his store in a tent, then he built a store in the old village across the river [from present day Northway]” (Yarber and Madison 1987). He remained active, trading in Northway into the 1950s and was buried at his request in the Native graveyard at Northway.



Figure 59. Herman Kessler and Mail Carrier (possibly William Blair, Sr.), 1919.

(from Ferguson 2002)

⁶⁴ Undated mss., Interview with Mrs. Arthur Wright (Miss Myrtle Rose), p. 3, in Easton n.d. [WRFN A#DJ-013].

⁶⁵ Herman Kessler is listed as “miner, resident of Fairbanks in the 1915-16 edition of Polk’s Alaska Gazateer (p. 228); most sources agree that his operation predated Hajdukovich’s, which was started in 1919.

Mr. Louie Frank remembers both Dolan and Kessler, who would converge on the Scottie Creek and Chisana River trade from opposite directions. At the remains of his grandmother Bessie Mason's cabin at the High Cache village we found a "Yukon stove," which is rectangular in shape. "A lot of muskrat cooked in there," Louis recalled. The stove was bought from Jack Dolan, the trader at Snag. Such a stove then cost seven dollars. You could bake bread in it. When the top of the stove burned out, you could just turn it over and use it upside down. Dolan would come down to High Cache with a pack train of horses for trading. Herman Kessler, from Northway, would do the same. Kessler often camped at *They sh'ok* (the eastern point of the hills on the southern side of the Scottie/Desper Creek valley, just inside Canada) and then took the trail back over the border. Fred Demit, George Haley, and Bill (Mary Tyone's brother) would work for Kessler. Kessler sold round "Alaska stoves," while Dolan sold the rectangular "Yukon" stove.⁶⁶

Ezekial "Zeke" Mullett worked a claim and trapped on the upper White River in 1910 and 1911.⁶⁷ He was also reported to have worked at Chitina in 1911-12 and later in the Chisana district with his partner Percy Thornton at Skookum Creek in 1919 (Bleakley n.d.-b - Mullet). He subsequently set up a small fur trade post on the middle reach of the Scottie Creek valley on the shores of a lake which came to be known as *Ziik Mann'* in Upper Tanana, where the remains of his cabin which he operated off and on until the 1930s can be found (Easton, n.d.), although it seems that he worked it half-heartedly, preferring instead the more transient lifestyle of the *Dineh*. A 1929 RCMP report on a patrol to the region found him at Wellesley Lake (on the Canadian side) and noted:

Zeke Mullett, this white man has turned to be a regular Indian, traveling around the country with the Indians and living right with them all the time. [He] has been trying to marry a daughter of an Indian by the name of Copper Jack. This Indian girl is about fourteen years of age, but will not have anything to do with this man Mullet as he is getting pretty well along in years. Mullet has paid about \$400.00 to the father for this girl. Mullett in the meantime is living with Copper Jack and his family. This white man is following the Indian mode of living.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Easton, Fieldnotes. Interview with Mr. Louis Frank, 7 June 1999.

⁶⁷ Chitina Leader. UAF Archives. Lv12-AK Per / Non Circ / 10000640130. 10/01/10 and 04/01/11.

⁶⁸ RCMP 1929. Patrol Report. Re: Patrol from Dawson Y.T. to Coffee Creek, Wellesley Lake, Snag, International Boundary, and White River Districts and Return, 7 March 1929. Yukon Archives. GOV 2060. File #5. Pt. 9

Lawrence De Witt traded into the upper Ahtna country. Living around Tetlin, he would buy supplies from one of the Upper Tanana traders and then transport them up the Nabesna and on as far as Mentasta, exchanging commercial supplies for furs, which he would sell on his return to Northway to another of the traders (MacIntosh n.d.).

Finally, John Hajdukovich began his long association as a trader, prospector, roadhouse operator, big-game guide, and self-appointed guardian of the Upper Tanana in 1919. Several accounts of Hajdukovich's life in the region are available (Brown 1984 and 1999; Ferguson 2002), as well as substantial documentation available in the US National Archives, a special Hajdukovich collection at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Archives, and a large collection of correspondence in the Edward Mallinkrodt archives held by the Mallinkrodt Chemical Works of St. Louis, MI.

Hajdukovich initially established trade operations or caches at Tanana Crossing, Tetlin, and Northway and by 1926, with the assistance of Ted Lowell,

Their primary post was near the mouth of Healy River [and] they operated additional stores at Tetlin, Last Tetlin, Moose Creek, and near Gardiner Creek on the Chisana River. Each summer Hajdukovich and Lowell made six to twelve trips in freight boats to the Upper Tanana Indian villages. A trip might include a run up Healy River to trade with the Indians on Healy Lake; a brief stop at Tanana Crossing; an ascent of Tetlin River to Tetlin and Last Tetlin, and Nabesna River to Nabesna, and Chisana River to Scottie Creek (Brown 1984:61-62).

Hajdukovich also employed local Natives as freighters and traders. Walter Northway recalled:

John Hajdukovich and his brother Milo came and built a store. They built it on this side of the river before we built the village of Nabesna. The two storeowners didn't like each other. Teddy Lowell was the store manager. We used to trade fur and sewing things for groceries. Then I became fur buyer for John Hajdukovich and Teddy Lowell. I used to go with a freight sled full of groceries to Scottie Creek and all the way to Snag. Trading groceries for fur or just buying fur all the way. One of my sons was named after Teddy Lowell (Yarber and Madison 1987:43).

In the 1920s Hajdukovich began to lobby the Territorial and Federal governments to contribute money and resources to the development of the Upper Tanana region. He was particularly interested in further trail and road construction (for which he hoped to gain government contracts), the expansion of services to the Upper Tanana Indians, particularly in the

areas of health and education, and the establishment of regional economic development opportunities for the Natives through reindeer herding and fur farms. In these pursuits he found allies among a number of wealthy and influential Eastern Establishment big game hunting clients, in particular Edward Mallinkrodt Jr. and Wendell Endicott. These efforts had an important influence on the establishment of federal Bureau of Education schools at Tetlin in 1924, and later at Northway in the '30s, the introduction of a full-time traveling nurse to the region in the mid-1920s, and, perhaps most importantly, the establishment of the Tetlin Reserve by a Presidential Executive Order in 1930. As a result, despite souring of relations in the 1940s due to the establishment of Federally sponsored Native co-operative stores in the Upper Tanana villages – which effectively put his trading operations into bankruptcy – Hajdukovich is generally remembered fondly by Elders of the region. He passed away at Fairbanks in 1965.

Undoubtedly, one reason Hajdukovich is well remembered is for his refusal in all his years of trade to provide liquor. Indeed, up until the early 1930s, all of the Upper Tanana traders maintained an agreement of effective prohibition in the region. As Beck (1930:28-29) observed, “this is not without some personal interest in the matter. . . . a drunken native did not produce as much fur as the same native would if he were sober all the time.”

The fur trade through the middle of the 20th century was a period of record incomes for the *Dineh* in both Alaska and Yukon. The world market generally expanded and remained strong through this period, despite three short-term falters in 1921-22, 1931-32, and 1939-41, until a slow, inexorable decline began in 1947, which marked the beginning of the end of this way of life for most people (McCandless 1985, Coates 1991).

The Natives of the Upper Tanana trapped or hunted a wide variety of furbearers, including lynx, fox, beaver, marten, wolverine, rabbit, bear, mink, weasel, otter, coyote, and some wolf, but undoubtedly the mainstay of their fur production was the muskrat. Families would move onto traplines around November and stay out for three to six months. Some would go as individual families, while most consisted of two or more, the most common combination being the families of a man and his son-in-law, or two hunting “partners”. By the middle of the 20th century, each of these groups had, “a generally recognized right to certain territory or area for his or their trapline. These rights traditionally pass from father to son, but actually inheritance practices vary according to circumstances” including transfer to a son-in-law, a nephew, or a

daughter (Goldschmidt n.d.:62). It was also pointed out to Goldschmidt that trapping areas around the principal villages were reserved for the use of Elders who were no longer able to travel long distances. “We have to have long trap lines because we call in other Indians from the other villages to work with us. We have the old people use the short trap lines around the village. They go around the village with short trap lines because they are not able to walk and climb so far. . . . We don’t want whites trapping here too close” (Walter Isaac of Tanacross, in Goldschmidt, n.d.: 25-26).

The trapping group would set up a permanent seasonal base camp and then travel their traplines in rotation, usually with several separate lines radiating from the base. The length of these lines were variable, but could reach distances of seventy-five to a hundred miles, with small supporting cabins or tents along their transit. More plentiful game and fuel was to be found away from the principal village locations. All members of the family who were of age and health participated in the trapping (Burge 1938: 20-23; see also Goldschmidt n.d.).

“Ratting [muskrat] season” ran from March to May. Although they are easier to catch in the fall, the quality of their fur was less and maximizing the pelt value allowed for less to be taken for equivalent financial value, thereby contributing to muskrat conservation. This approach placed the Upper Tanana Native trapper at a competitive disadvantage with itinerant white trappers who would come through the region on occasion, or the efforts of over-wintering prospectors. Several documents attest to incursions of such men in the ‘20s and ‘30s. Burge (1938:23), for example, notes that “it is not unusual for white trappers to go into an area and use every means of getting the largest number of pelts possible in a short time, regardless of the effect this might have on the future production of the area. Since they have no interest in the continued use of the particular area in which they trap, they do not practice the conservation that is common among Indians.” He goes on to note that under this influence, “one year some of the Indians of the Upper Tanana were persuaded to kill muskrats in the fall. However this was stopped by the pressure of public opinion” (Burge 1938:23). In 1946 Walter Northway regretfully admitted the following to Goldschmidt (n.d.:77).

We take care of our rats until this spring. We take care that we don’t kill them all off. We let some of them remain so that there will be some of them next year. I know I hurt myself, but this year I cleaned out all the rats. I cleaned them out because the white man will get them anyhow. Then the army people have been

killing off the rats. The white people try to clean up all the game. . . . The Indian way is to leave something for next year and not to try to make everything at once. The white man does not care. He figures on getting rich right away. He doesn't have to live here next year.

The Chisana River basin was a part of this regional trapping economy since before the 1913 Chisana gold rush. “The natives take a quantity of furs each year – fox, lynx, marten, mink, and wolverine – which they trade to the white men for provisions, clothing, and ammunition,” reported Moffit and Knopf in 1910 (p.15). After the essential collapse of the Chisana Native village when the store at Chisana closed in 1929, trapping continued in the upper Chisana basin, primarily by residents of the upper Nabesna community, along with people at Northway and Scottie Creek, who also trapped the lower Chisana basin. As reported earlier, the upper Nabesna residents included Nabesna John and, “the ancestors of the Alberts and Franks of Northway, and the Sanfords and Justins of Nabesna Bar, Chistochina, and Mentasta” (Reckord 1983:225), as well as the Jackson brothers, Nicholas, John, and Albert, and Oscar Jimmy of Northway (BIA 1996a:5).

In 1938 Johnny Nicolai began trapping the region as well, running a line along the foothills of the Nutzotin Mountains from Nabesna to King City, on to Beaver Creek and its headwaters, and back over into the Upper Chisana River and Nabesna. Titus John and Bell Gaiy would spend the occasional season trapping in the foothills. They were “cousin-brothers” to the Justin brothers (i.e. their mother's were siblings). Joe and Martha Mark and their family continued to return to trap in the upper Chisana basin after they moved to Big Scottie Creek and Northway.⁶⁹ Oscar, Abraham, and Guines Albert, then residents of Northway, shared a trapline along Stuver Creek and the lower Chisana River. Oscar Albert also trapped along the Nutzotin foothills between the Nabesna and Chisana Rivers (Goldschmidt n.d.:66). Joe Demit and Andrew Jimmy Albert also hunted and trapped in this area (ibid.: 65). On the lower Chisana River residents of Big Scottie Creek and High Cache villages held traplines upstream to Wellesley lake, north into the Dawson Range foothills, and east up Scottie and Mirror Creeks (Easton n.d.).

⁶⁹ Easton, n.d. Interview with Mr. Johnny Nicolai, 24 May 2003.

In 1921-22, the Alaska Trust Fund reported the following fur prices of sale at Seattle on behalf of interior *Dineh*.⁷⁰

Fur Numbers	Lot Price	Average
3 white fox, 3 ermine	150.00	--
2 red fox, 1 mink, 1 lynx	86.00	--
77 red fox, 10 mink	1,339.00	--
95 white fox	2,721.46	28.65
13 white fox	380.83	29.29
379 muskrats	432.06	1.14
24 red fox	295.62	12.32
20 white fox	438.91	22.00

The general economic trends of the international fur market were ameliorated by specific conditions within the region however. In 1930 Beck (1930: 31) reports that “the winters catch for the season 1929-30 will not exceed \$20,000, as compared with \$40,000 and \$50,000 of former years.” MacIntosh (1938:14) notes that 1938 was a reasonable year for prices but “there was no caribou and trapping prospects were poor” in the Upper Tanana region. At the other extreme, spring sales in 1943 advanced “well above the ceiling with active buying,” and muskrat trapping was especially good. A lot of eleven thousand Upper Tanana muskrat skins transported to the Seattle market in late January 1943 was sold at an average of \$1.60 each. By June of that year the remaining spring catch (the numbers of which are not recorded) was sold to a trader at Tetlin for \$2.07 each.⁷¹

In 1938 Burge (1938:19) estimated annual family income from trapping among the Upper Tanana at about \$2,000 each. Hajdukovich reported that between 1921 and 1933 he had dispensed an annual average of \$80,000 in cash or goods in his operations, earning a profit for himself of about \$250,000 during this same period.⁷² In the same letter he also laments that much of the Upper Tanana's earnings were spent on potlatch gatherings and “squandered in manners too numerous to mention, with no thought of the future,” a curious misgiving for a trader who would profit from such squandering. However, this reflects Hajduckovich's complex personal

⁷⁰ US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs./Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence./Box 111 - 1921-22 (FY) Bureau of Efficiency - New Schools/Folder - Alaskan Trust Fund

⁷¹ US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Entry 121, 1940-56 / Box 16 / Folder 19251 – 1943 – AK – 032 / Reports – Louis C. Peters, Special Agent.

⁷² Nevertheless, due to the extension of credit he found himself at this time with a debt owed him by the natives of about \$25,000.00. Hajdukovich to Mallinkrodt, 8 August 1933. Mallinkrodt Archives.

relationship with the *Dineh* of the Upper Tanana, influenced by a paternalistic compassion for the people he had commerce with and a genuine admiration for their way of life.

An incomplete selection of Hajdukovich’s trade records is held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks’s Rasmussen Archives.⁷³ They contain transaction records of trade, credit, and fur bought at Tetlin, Nabesna, and Healy Lake. The earliest year seems to be 1922 and continues to 195(2?); the latter few years are restricted to hunting (guiding) and prospecting records. The forty-three journals do not constitute a full yearly series nor necessarily a full record for any one-year, but the material does give some sense of the types of items sought by Indians and the amount of fur they were bringing in. I have had the opportunity to examine only several years in any detail.

The 1922 ledger for Nabesna shows an fairly extensive and varied inventory, which included the following products:

Chewing Tobacco	Sugar	Flour	Tea	Coffee	Baking Powder
Butter	Rice	Apples	Raisins	Candy	Gum
Handkerchiefs	Shirts	Pants	Suspenders	Coat & Vest	Long-johns
Overalls	Socks	Undershirts	Underwear	Stocking Hose	Dresses
Towels	Ribbon	Calico	Thread	Needles	Soap
Candles	Windows	Nails	Knives	Files	Matches
Chain	Canvas tents	Axes	.22 long shells	.22 short shells	.30 - .30 shells

In July of 1922, credit was established at the Nabesna store by the Upper Tanana trappers through the exchange of nineteen mooseskins and eighty-six pounds of dry fish. In late November and early December Hajdukovich purchased 243 rat skins, three mink, and one each of moose and ermine, and 142 pounds of dry fish. Noted clients from the Chisana basin included Martha Mark, Polly, Little John, Big John, Andy Frank, *Lacho*, “Scottie Creek Bill” (who I take to be Bell Gaiy / Bill John). Of interest is that most of these people took little in merchandise that year. *Lacho* purchased soap and tobacco and took the remaining due in cash. Little John and Bell Gaiy wanted only rifle shells and cash. This could be a function of their commitment to traveling light or might reflect the fact that while they traded fur with Hajdukovich they bought their merchandise from another trader, perhaps closer to their home camps and villages in the Chisana basin? Certainly it has been noted by a number of contemporary observers that the competitive

⁷³ John Hajdukovich Papers, 1919 - 1963, Journals and Ledgers, 1922 - 1962, Accounts - Diary.

presence of at least six traders in the upper Tanana River region, as well as the existence of trade posts at Chicken, Salchaket, Tanana, Stewart River, Dawson, and Fort Selkirk,⁷⁴ allowed the *Dineh* to take “advantage of this proliferation of posts by trading wherever they could get the best price for their fur” (Simeone 1995:28). Perhaps not surprisingly, the records also show that the two people who made the most purchases of commercial goods were Walter Northway and Chief Sam, who were in rivalry for *Huskeh* status within the Northway village.⁷⁵

By 1942 the records show a marked increase in purchases by Chisana resident people. In that year, for example, Little John (White River Johnny) exchanged 60 muskrat pelts, valued by Hajdukovich at \$75.50 (average \$1.26 / pelt) for 50 lbs of flour, 11 lbs of Lipton tea, 40 lbs of rice, 30 lbs of sugar, 1 tin of baking powder, 2 lbs of sugar, 2 lbs of salt, 4 packages of pasta, 3 tins of fruit, 16 packs of gum, a jar of sweet pickles, a tin of Star Chew, 3 rolls of thread, a file, 3 packs of matches, a pair of wool socks, a wool shirt, 1 pair of pants, 1 pair of boy’s overalls, 1 carton of .22 long, 8 boxes of .30-.30 rifle shells, and \$11.75 in cash, from which he then drew \$1.75 to purchase a pen knife.

In that same year, Martha Mark exchanged 66 muskrat pelts, valued at \$87.00 (average 1.32 / pelt) for 50 lbs of flour, 20 lbs of sugar, 20 lbs of rice, 3 lbs of tea, 2 cans of lard, 2 tins of baking powder, a jar of sweet pickles, 3 packages of dried peaches, 2 tins of fruit, 1 tin of Star Chew, 6 soap bars, 1 file, 5 rolls of thread, 1 butcher knife, 2 boy’s underwear, 1 boy’s overall and shirt, a pair of socks and shoes, 1 pair of dress pants, 2 pair of women’s hose, 4 packs of matches, 2 boxes of .30-.30 shells, one towel, 6 yards of calico, and 3 yards of ribbon, a value of \$50.00.⁷⁶

In my discussions with various Upper Tanana *Dineh* regarding the period between the Gold Rush and the building of the Alaska Highway, it is clear that they are remembered as halcyon days. The trapping economy was an easy overlay onto their traditional subsistence economy. Unparalleled technological innovations were available to them from which they could pick and choose, adapt as they pleased, or pass over for more traditional ways – the bathtub, for example, never really caught on before modern water systems were introduced, and even today the sweat bath prevails still with many people of the region. “White people brought problems to

⁷⁴ Trade at Fort Selkirk was reopened in 1889 by Arthur Harper of the Alaska Commercial Company; records confirm trade here by Upper Tanana *Dineh* (Easton and Gotthardt 1987:15).

⁷⁵ John Hajdukovich Papers, 1919 - 1963, Journals and Ledgers, 1922 - 1962, Accounts - Diary. Box 1. These goods would be eventually used as gifts to others within a potlatch or distributed more generally.

us, but we sure were happy you brought those pots!” declared Bessie John, while another opined of her youth in the 1930s that, “I’m not going to say it wasn’t a hard life, but it was a good life” (Easton n.d.).⁷⁷

Rivals such as Walter Northway and Chief Sam held rich potlatches, while others were able to undertake less extravagant potlatch acknowledgements of their husbands, wives, children, and dogteams, in addition to fulfilling their traditional obligations to their departed kinsmen through funeral potlatches.⁷⁸ More prosaically, people remember White River Johnny’s cabins at Big Scottie Creek and *Taiy Chi* as the scene for near-nightly festive dances held around a Victorola phonograph, the few platters being played over and over again, pieces of which lie still on the ground outside the berm of his *Taiy Chi sha* today. Elders today recall with some amount of awe their first peach, tomato, or orange. They speak with satisfaction of their rifles and the increased certainty of their hunting, particularly women who for the first time could live without a man and survive, as Mary Eikland chose to do for many years between her two marriages.

But even with these technological advantages the old religious ideology held sway. People remained respectful of the natural world, carefully nurturing the viability of their traplines by avoiding over trapping. “The natives have their own rules and regulations with reference to conservation of the fur bearing animals,” reported Beck (1930:31). “When rats have been trapped heavily on one lake one spring, the following spring that area is closed.” Eight years later, Burge (1938:7) noted similarly that the Upper Tanana “practice a conservation of natural resources that is exemplary.”

The nightly jigs were interspersed with medicine songs and dances; McKennan’s (n.d.) 1929 field journals record a community dance/medicine meeting three times a week or more in the villages he stayed in. During his short visit to the Upper Tanana in 1938, Burge (1938:11) observed a number of these social gatherings which, “started after dinner and lasted into the early hours of the morning.”

⁷⁶ John Hajdukovich Papers, 1919 - 1963, Journals and Ledgers, 1922 - 1962, Accounts - Diary. Box 5.

⁷⁷ One old time Sourdough wrote that his, “long association among these people [the interior Athapaskans] compels me to admit (I used to be greatly prejudiced as are all who are not well acquainted with them) that their average mentality is fully equal to that of the whites. They show this in many ways. Noticeably in the canny way in which they weed out the customs of the white men. Adopting those which are practical and discarding those which are impractical.” Huntington, J. J. to Jonathan Wagner, Chief of Alaska Division, Seattle, 21 January 1927. U. S. Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806 / Box 161 1926-27 (FY) Monthly Reports / Folder Outside Relations – Favorable Comments from Outside.

⁷⁸ Accounts of a number of these potlatches can be found in MacIntosh (1919), Endicott (1928), Beck (1930), and McKennan (1959 and n.d.).

Rifles were endowed with spiritual power by their care and the addition of talismans, such as a feather, a marten tail, or a medicine bag. In 1938 “an old custom still adhered to in spite of modern influences is the holding of a communal feast after a successful hunt” (Burge 1938:12). Even today we find a strong psycho-spiritual attachment to “The *Dineh* Way,” reflecting the resiliency of *Dineh* ideology, its ability to adapt technology to its orientation, and the critical importance of these beliefs to their identity, a fact that became abundantly clear to every missionary endeavour undertaken in the region.

So, while many outside observers have maintained that the introduction of western technology and foodstuffs created a “dependency” on these goods which drew them further into the cash economy,⁷⁹ it is equivocal to what extent this was imposed and to what extent it was chosen and integrated in such a way as to minimize its potential transformative effect on the core beliefs of Upper Tanana *Dineh*.

Missionaries

Upper Tanana *Dineh* traveling to Dawson, Eagle, Tanana, or Fort Selkirk in the late 19th century would have been the first to encounter Christian missionaries stationed at these locations, and to have heard of their teachings from their relatives and friends there before families at home. Indeed, it is said that the *Huskeh* Isaac of Mansfield had been so impressed by the missionary stationed at Eagle that he traveled to Fairbanks in 1909 to petition the Episcopal Bishop Rowe to send a missionary to the Upper Tanana valley. The following year, Archdeacon Hudson Stuck traveled through the region and determined that the abandoned government buildings at Tanana Crossing would provide a suitable base for a mission. The church purchased these in 1912 with a gift from St. Timothy’s School and Miss Margaret Graves was assigned the task of bringing the Christian faith to the Upper Tanana. Accompanying her was Miss Celia Wright, of *Dineh* and European descent from the lower Tanana River, who could speak Athapaskan (MacIntosh n.d., Graves 1913).

⁷⁹ Writing of the aboriginal occupation of the upper Chisana after the gold rush, one BIA report states, “What did occur was a dependency upon Western-manufactured items and a preference for Westernized food items.” Interestingly the next sentence reads, “When Chisana’s store closed in 1929, the community’s Indian population moved back to their former settlements and reassumed a subsistence lifestyle” (BIA 1993b:20). The two statements seem contradictory, since a state of “dependency” suggests an inability to do without or otherwise.

By 1919, “about a dozen natives had cabins” at Tanacross; almost certainly these were exclusively Mansfield and Ketchumstuk people. The mission at Tanacross remained in continuous operation through to about 1923-24, when it was closed for lack of funds. Intermittent visits by Episcopalian pastors occurred through to 1931 and it was during this period that the missionary E. A. MacIntosh first ventured upriver to Tetlin and then to Nabesna / Northway. MacIntosh re-opened St. Timothy’s as a full-time operation in 1931 and remained there for the next decade, traveling to Tetlin and Northway to attempt conversions.

In his short memoir of these days, MacIntosh was decidedly ambivalent about the success of the missionary effort. His converts, “readily accepted the Christian religion outwardly, but still pinned their faith on the Medicine making of the old men. . . . It has been the constant effort of the missionary to try to draw them into the Christian way, watching lest they paganize it” (MacIntosh n.d.:7). Later he writes,

Religious progress with the Indian is quite slow, anyway, as they are a gregarious people. They are so closely bound together by customs and teachings of their fathers (some of which are a hindrance to the Christian life) that it is next to impossible to get one of them to cut loose and make an individual stand. The older ones are loath to give them up and have a tendency to hold the people to those things meanwhile professing Christianity. Some gradually sluff off those things but too many either draw back or become indifferent. . . (MacIntosh n.d.:14).



Figure 60. E. A. MacIntosh, Tanacross, 1939.

(from Ferguson 2002)

MacIntosh also grappled, albeit quite uncritically, with the effects of successful erosion of Native beliefs. “The younger people,” he wrote in 1938,

are becoming enlightened and having lost faith in the leadership of their elders are becoming confused They are coming more and more in contact with white people of various stages from being mildly interested in Christianity to those opposed to it which is also confusing. One of their greatest weaknesses is their desire to be a good sport and agreeable to those around them. Thus they are easy prey to those who have no scruples about making bad examples or spreading undesirable teaching (MacIntosh n.d.:14).

One of the great attractions for the Upper Tanana to the mission was the availability of instruction in western arts, particularly the English language as well as practical skills in math, gardening , and preparing the new foods. This desire is reflected in their petitioning for and eventually getting federal government-run schools at Tetlin (1925), Northway (part-time about 1926, full-time in 1940/41), and Tanacross (1931), although the latter school was delivered by the missionary E. A. MacIntosh’s wife when it was reopened that year until her replacement in 1938.

The combination of missionary preaching and western education seemed to have been regarded as a necessary evil by many of the Tanacross Natives, and certainly frowned on by the BIA Education office from the 1920s onwards. The combination was “in many ways unsatisfactory, for the educational program inevitably was strongly influenced by the policies of the mission,” Burge wrote (1938:15-16). In 1931, the field agent of the BIA’s Office of Education found that most Natives of Tanacross were desirous of having a school but not associated with mission work.

From what I could learn from the natives and others, it seems that they did not have much school when the mission was operating [in years earlier], only two or three days every month or two. . . . Those that did not want the mission returned frankly stated that they wanted their children to learn to read and write in preference to leaning so much about religion, as religion was not such an important thing with them as they had a good one of their own before the white men came to the country (Beck 1930:20-21).

Relations between the Episcopal missionaries and the traders were ambivalent. On the one hand, as Christians themselves, the traders had some appreciation for the positive contributions of missionary work, particularly in the areas of promoting literacy in English and providing medical care. On the other hand, villages with a mission tended to be more sedentary than those without one, and thus their hunting and fur trapping production were less. The

missionaries encouraged the women and children of families to stay home off the traplines, particularly during the worst of the winter months, which they viewed as an unnecessary hardship. However, families which stayed in the village were enticements for the men to “make constant trips to and from his trap line to carry meat and fuel to his family. This wastes time and inevitably results in a smaller crop” (Burge 1938:21). The traders and some others took a view contrary to the missionary’s.

There is no justification for the belief that any hardship is worked on these families [who go on the winter trapline]. . . Both the Indians with whom I talked and the field nurse at Tetlin definitely stated that the children return to the village after the trapping season in better health than at any other time of the year. It is true that extreme cold is experienced during the winter in this area, and fifty degrees below is not uncommon, but it is no colder in the hills than it is in the village, and the proximity of the fuel supply makes it easier for them to keep warm.

The introduction of state-sponsored schools and nursing care in the 1930s further eroded the missionary’s practical influence within the region. Indeed, by 1934 missionary proselytizing was contrary to BIA policy. Circular 2970 of that year, issued directly by BIA Commissioner Collier noted that same year:

There are Government schools into which no trace of Indian symbolism or art or craft expression has been permitted to enter. There are large numbers of Indians who believe that their native religious life and Indian culture are frowned on by Government, if not actually banned...[Accordingly]...No interference with Indian religious life or expression will hereafter be tolerated. The cultural history of Indians is in all respects to be considered equal to that of any non-Indian group. And it is desirable that Indians be bilingual, fluent and literate in the English language, and fluent in their vital, beautiful, and efficient native languages. . . . the Indian arts are to be prized, nourished, and honoured.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that Christianity was completely rejected by the Upper Tanana – you would be hard pressed to find an Upper Tanana person today who would say they are not a Christian - rather it was integrated within their indigenous world view, reflecting the tolerant pragmatism of Athapaskan spiritual beliefs generally.⁸¹ Many people I know attend what are still itinerant church services in their communities every month or so, although their indiscriminant attendance at Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Pentecostal, or “holy-

⁸⁰ US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Central Correspondence Files / Folder 65273 – 1938 – AK – 040.

roller” sideshows, demonstrates that these are regarded as much as social events as spiritual ones. Many read the bible and reflect on its stories with interest, however they often relate these biblical stories to one’s from their own mythological corpus.

Perhaps most importantly, however, is how many remain perplexed at the distance between the spiritual teachings of Whitemen and their behaviour, at how little the teachings of the bible seem to guide their actions, particularly in their relations with Indian people. “Indian people don’t tell white how to believe in god, how to pray,” Mrs. Bessie John once lamented to me in her smokehouse. “You guys shouldn’t tell us that either. I respect Jesus, Mary, and the Ghost. Why can’t whites respect us, our way?” (Easton 2002c). I couldn’t answer her. Another man is adamant that the Christian way is the White man’s way. “Some people say they are the same but the Indian way is different. We don’t kill for no reason and we know all life is sacred. It’s a serious business to kill something.” However, another *Dineh* teacher believed she had the answer. It is because white people are not fully formed, spiritually, due to a flaw in our history. “*Ts’awusha*, you know him?” she asked me. “He was the same guy as your Jesus, the same person. They say he left here and kept going west, all around the world, fixing things up in Russia, India, and then there in Israel. That’s where you guys killed him. You never let him fix your world there, you just killed him. That’s why I think white men are so different and sad” (Easton n.d.).

The State And The *Dineh* Of The Chisana Basin Between The Wars

Introduction

Earlier I described the initial explorations of the Chisana River Basin. Many of these were State-sponsored military and geological expeditions explicitly tasked with gathering intelligence on the lay of the land and nature of the aboriginal occupants in order to inform central federal policy decisions. Yet aside from these explorations and the development of a series of trail and road corridors, there was little direct State activity in the region until the 1930s. After this point there was an slow expansion of state power in the region, principally through the Alaska Native Service, until the sudden explosion of activities related to the building of the Northwest Staging Route and the Alaska highway.

⁸¹ Although this is not impossible. Two of my *Dineh* mentors in the region would avow they are not Christian but

The history of the relationship between Alaska Natives and the US government is well documented in Mitchell (1997, 2001) and Case (1984). The initial Federal–Native relationship in Alaska was ambiguous due to the distinction made in Article III of the 1867 Treaty of Purchase between “uncivilized tribes” and other “inhabitants of the ceded territory.” This resulted in “the impression that an indefinite number of Alaska Natives were not subject to the principles of federal Indian Law” (Case 1984:6). This was further complicated by the 1884 Organic Act and several subsequent statutes which stated that there was a federal obligation to protect Indian lands “actually in their use or occupation,” language which was taken to imply “that Alaska Natives, unlike other Native Americans, did not have claims of aboriginal title to vast tracts of tribal property” (Case p.6). The Organic Act of 1884 also required that Federal educational services be made available to Alaskan residents without regard to race and thus the education of Alaska Natives was assigned to the Federal Bureau of Education, which established the Alaska Native Service for this purpose. The absence of a Bureau of Indian Affairs Agency in Alaska led the solicitor for the Department of the Interior to the legal interpretation, “that Alaska Natives did not have the same relationship to the Federal government as other Native Americans (Case 1984:7). Until the influx of immigrants associated with the series of gold rushes at the turn of the century, there was little political impetus for federal intervention into Native affairs in interior Alaska.

Education and the provision of other services such as health in Alaska was segregated in practice, however. Within larger mixed communities, such as Juneau and Sitka, the white residents vigorously resisted integrated education and separate schools were set up, while schools in the outlying interior villages were perforce predominantly Native. Special programs within the Department of Education, such as the cultivation of reindeer herds initiated in 1894, were constructed specifically for application within Native communities. Thus, the passage of the 1905 Nelson Act, which specifically allowed for appropriations for the “education and support of the Eskimos, Indians, and other Natives of Alaska” and the independent funding of schools for white children upon petition, was merely a formal acknowledgement by Congress of “what had by that time become an accomplished fact – federal services provided to Alaska Natives because of their status as Natives,” separate from those provided Whites (Case 1984:8). The following year the Alaska Native Allotment Act extended the provisions of the 1887

practice their own Indian religion exclusively.

General Allotment (“Dawes”) Act to Alaska, that permitted individual Natives to receive up to 160 acres of land as an “inalienable and nontaxable” homestead (p.8). In 1931, the work of the Bureau of Education’s Alaska Native Service was transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, completing the formal federal recognition that “the Natives of Alaska, as referred to in the treaty of March 30, 1867, between the United States and Russia are entitled to the benefits of and are subject to the general laws and regulations governing the Indians of the United States” (BIA Solicitor’s opinion, quoted in Case 1984:10).

The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was amended in 1936 with specific provisions of application to Alaska, ending the allotment policy and putting in its place the ability for the Secretary of the Interior to designate lands actually occupied by Natives as new or additional reserve lands. It also provided revolving funds for economic development, permitted the establishment of federally chartered co-operatives and businesses, and promoted the formation of local Indian governments under a federal constitution. “The Department of the Interior immediately embarked on a drive to organize Alaska Native villages under IRA constitutions and business charters. By early 1941, thirty-eight Native Groups had organized under the Alaska amendments” (Case 1984:11), including the villages of Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway. The BIA also began to provide additional human services to Alaskan Natives under the authority of the Snyder Act in 1931, through which nursing and educational services were extended into the Upper Tanana region later that decade.

Finally, it is significant that the Federal–Native relationship in policy as well as legality in Alaska was not developed until the 20th century, after the passage of nearly 150 years of prior experience with “the Indian problem” in the lower forty-eight states. As a result, the orientation of many (though not all) of the federal policies implemented in Alaska were less orientated towards the assimilationist practices of the past and more directed at the maintenance of independence through the preservation of local subsistence economies and cultural traditions. Only one formal “Indian Reservation” of the sort established in the 19th century was authorized by Congress in Alaska⁸²; instead a series of Executive Order Reserves were established for the purposes of education and economic development (e.g., the reindeer forage grounds in northern Alaska). Congress prohibited the creation of additional reserves except by Congressional Act in 1919, however the Secretary of the Interior “circumvented the law by establishing several ‘public

⁸² The Metlakatla Indian Reserve on Annette Island in 1891.

purpose reserves' in Alaska that were *de facto* Native reserves," and it was under these provisions that the Tetlin Reserve, embracing some 768,000 acres, was established in 1930 (Norris 2002:6). Six "IRA Reserves" were established and numerous others proposed (including the extension of the Tetlin Reserve eastward to the Canadian border for the benefit of the Nabesna, Northway, and Chisana basin Natives) under the authority of the Indian Reorganization Act between 1943 and 1949, after which no further Native lands were designated until the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

The Bureau of Education

William James' 1914 letter regarding "destitution of about 15 natives in the Shushana region" is one of the earliest direct records within the Department of Interior Archives that reference the Chisana River basin.⁸³ The Department's non-committal response reflects the general neglect of the region at the time. The rather miniscule size of the Department's budget for a vast area, more pressing concerns elsewhere in areas of greater Indian-White contact, and the remoteness of the Upper Tanana seem to have been the principal motivations for this neglect. A 1919 report noted "There are some places in the District that are not reached by the Bureau of Education and some which are so scattered that it would be impossible to supply them with schools. The Tanana Crossing district is so remote and the people so scattered that a school there would be impractical."⁸⁴

Another of the founding prospectors at Chisana, A. F. Nelson, apparently took it upon himself to provide some education to the children resident in Chisana in the 1920s, but this was suspended as a result of an audit of the operations of the Seattle Office of the Department of Education - out of which ran the Alaska Native Service. The audit was extremely critical of the Seattle Office and its director Wagner, who was found to be incompetent in his job and lax in his duties and service, which was often in contradiction with many government regulations. Among the 115 recommendations for improvement or action there are two of interest:

That cognizance be taken of the fact that numerous teachers employed in the Alaskan Service do not appear advanced in education, based on mis-spellings,

⁸³ US Archives, RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Preliminary Inventory 163/Entry 805, Indexes to General Correspondence, 1910 – 1930/Box 7, Correspondent, 1914 – 1915/HM 1995

⁸⁴ Forbes, R. L. Superintendent's Annual Report, Upper Yukon District (1919). US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 102 1919-20 (FY) - Seqard Peninsula District – Hydaburg / Folder - Upper Yukon District, Reports of Superintendent

grammatical errors, and formation of sentences in their reports and communications.

A shipment of school supplies, valued at less than \$150.00, was made to A. F. Nelson, U. S. Commissioner at Shushana, in July of 1925, on the recommendation of Superintendent Ben Mozee. Mr. Nelson is said to be intending to teach the natives but he is not a teacher and may be a missionary. Government supplies cannot be used for sectarian purposes so this was wrong. A commissioner is not, strictly speaking, an employee of the government but receives a commission on fees and penalties collected in the enforcement of Federal regulations, such as game laws, prospecting licenses, and so on.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, downstream at Tanacross, lobby for a government school to replace the struggling Episcopal school began as early as 1922 when Galen Fry wrote his friend William Lopp, then Chief of the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Education. In his response Lopp noted that he had recommended opening a school at Ketchumstock in 1907, but the teacher chosen for this work was assigned to Tanana village on the lower river. Lopp went on to say that he is favourable of the idea of a school at Tanacross and found Fry's suggestion that he offer the teaching post to W. C. Denny, a trader at Tanacross, to be acceptable. Lopp wrote to Denny the same day offering him the position and inviting him to fill out and return the appropriate forms of employment,⁸⁶ however nothing seems to have come from this, or a subsequent recommendation, apparently approved by Superintendent Tigert in Washington, that a school be opened in the Tanacross vicinity.⁸⁷

It was primarily through the urging of the trader and area benefactor, John Hajdukovich, and the lobby of his wealthy and influential Eastern friends William Endicott and Edward Malinkrodt (both of whom had direct personal access to the Secretary of the Interior and the President) that federal government attention was drawn into the Upper Tanana basin, thereby creating the Tetlin Reserve and funding a school and medical supplies there, as discussed above and by Brown (1984 and 1999) and Ferguson (2002). The old time prospector John A. Singleton

⁸⁵ RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 154 - 1925-26 (FY), Reports and Exhibits with Reports by Inspector Trowbridge / Folder - Report by Inspector Trowbridge on Inspection of Seattle Office, 29 October 1925.

⁸⁶ Letter, W. T. Lopp, Chief, Alaska Division to Galen S. Fry, St. Timothy's, 17 January 1922; and Letter, W. T. Lopp, Chief, Alaska Division to W. C. Denny, Tanana Crossing, 17 January 1922.

US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 111 - 1921-22 (FY) Bureau of Efficiency - New Schools / Folder - New Schools

⁸⁷ Superintendent of Education of Natives of Alaska to Commissioner of Education, Washington, D.C., 2 August 1923. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 119 - 1922-23 (FY), Contract Files - Seattle Office, General / Folder - New Schools

was formally appointed to run the school in July 1924. He had been engaged for this at Hajdukovich's suggestion and Chief Peter Joe's request,⁸⁸ work which Singleton would officially continue until his forced retirement in 1933.⁸⁹ In its first year of operation the Tetlin school had an average daily attendance of 19.1 students, and operated on a little over \$50 worth of supplies.⁹⁰

There were several effects of the Tetlin schools' establishment on the *Dineh* further east on the Nabesna and Chisana Rivers. Just after opening, prior to 1930, a number of families moved to Tetlin for the school year in order to provide education for their children. Yet most people found this impractical and refused to return the following year. Subsequently, Singleton traveled to the lower Nabesna fish camp during its use in June and July and held a day school there. Some Scottie Creek/Chisana families sent their children to this enterprise, but petitions during the 1920s and '30s for a school at Northway were rejected by the government with the following justification:

Investigations show that due to the migratory habits of these people it would not justify the government to establish a school here. In the summer time there is nothing to hinder them from going to Tetlin to fish and they could send their children to school at the same time. They have done this one time in the past. When I informed them that I could not recommend a school for that place, they all decided to do the next best thing, and that was, to move to Tetlin during the summer months" (Beck 1930:43).

In 1934, Fred Dimler and his wife replaced Singleton. Dimler's Tetlin School reports record 12 elementary and 16 high school students in 1935/36 and 13 elementary and 15 high school students in 1936/37. Among the students were children of Elisha (Jackson) Demit and his wife Bertha (most of whom were born on the Upper Chisana), Stephen and Walter Northway, and Chief Sam, whose wife Bessie was born in the Chisana basin.⁹¹

⁸⁸ "At the earnest solicitation of their Chief, Peter Joe, I have agreed to teach a term here this summer and I am now endeavoring so to do. . . . I might also mention that I am [also] giving them instruction in gardening, etc., and that they are sawing the lumber to make benches and desks by hand." Singleton, J. A. to Sutherland, D. 11 June 1923. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806 / Box 128 / Folder – New Schools. Beck (1930:31) incorrectly asserts Singleton had been teaching for two or three years prior to the formal establishment of the school.

⁸⁹ US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 256 / Folder – Singleton, John A.

⁹⁰ RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 152 - Seattle, Reorganization of Office - Seattle Office, Financial / Folder - Seattle Office, General.

⁹¹ Annual School Census Report, 1937/38, Tetlin, Alaska. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. BIA Quarterly School Reports / Entry 818 / Box 2.

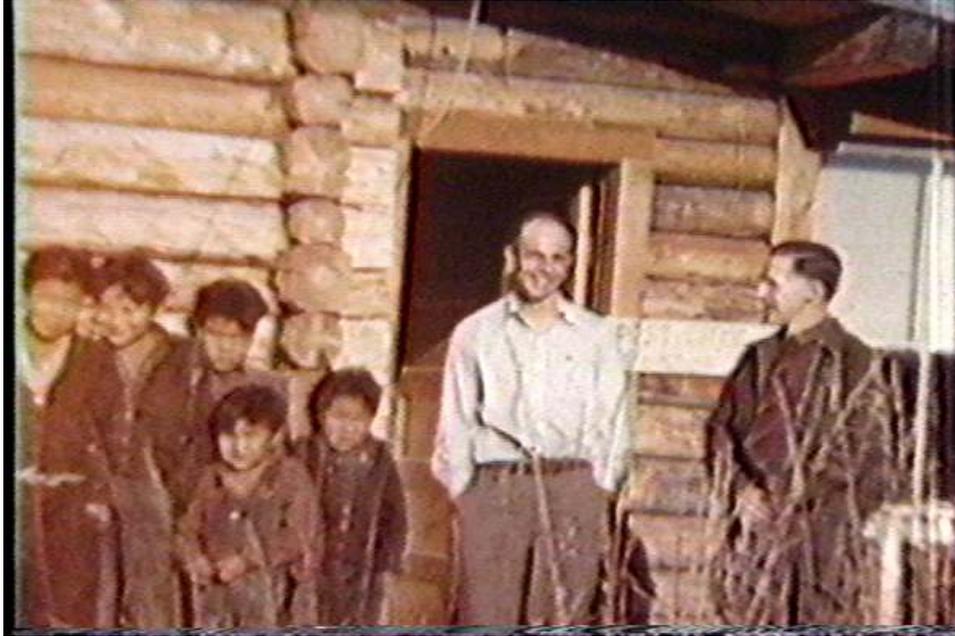


Figure 61. Fred Dimler and Students at Northway School, 1943.

(Dusenberg Film Archive)

Burge (1938:16) found twenty children from upriver attending school at Tetlin in 1938, though attendance had both economic and social consequences. “The journey is expensive and the accommodations at Tetlin are extremely limited. To bring many children and their parents is risking serious complications and disharmony there, as well as breaking down the community life at Nabesna” (Burge 1938:16). Ivar Skarland made a similar observation in 1939 when he noted that, “some of the Nabesna Indians have with great economic sacrifice spent the winter at Tetlin in order to give their children a chance to attend school there.”⁹²

Singleton’s teaching approach was an emphasis on “the three R’s as well as any and all work in the Manual Arts. He believe[d] the natives should be taught such things as will best fit him to his environment, and he is doing his best to do it” (Beck 1930:32). This approach was one of proclivity and pragmatism on Singleton’s part, but it was also in agreement with the general policy of the Office of Education.⁹³ Beck observed that:

⁹² Skarland, Ivar to Beatty, W. W. 11 September 1939. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, 1940 – 46 / Box 5 / Folder 29288 – 1940 – AK – 031.

⁹³ “Considerable effort is made to adapt the school program in Native schools to meet the needs and interests of the Native people served by these schools, thereby including many projects directly related to making a living in Native communities.” It was policy to schedule classes during times of greatest residency in the village, regardless of the time of year, allowing for participation in subsistence activities. Alaska Narrative, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1941. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Correspondence Files – 1940 – 1956 / Box 16 / Folder 00 – 1941 – AK – 032.

Mr. Singleton has day school for the children and night sessions for all. At the day sessions the Chief of the village is always present. He attends for two reasons; one because he is chief of the village and wants to have an important part in the matters pertaining to his people and the other is, because he wants to learn to do like the white people do. His wife attends every session of school to teach the girls to sew and make clothing. . . . I was glad to note that he had the cooperation of the entire village in every thing he attempted and that the school was the center of all activities and to which everything else was subordinated. On Sunday evenings he has them all gather at the school house and they sing church songs, tell folk tales and usually he makes a talk on cleanliness or some other subject of kindred nature (p.35).

In the winter of 1939/40 a day school was formally established at Nabesna/Northway, that drew 34 students - 18 boys and 16 girls between the ages of 5 and 24. In his first quarterly report, Dimler wrote “Nabesna is a village in which school has never been held before. . . . The children and their parents were eager for the school. The boys and girls met two evenings a week for gymnastics, games, & etc. The children had simple weaving in Arts and Crafts. Their final products were square baskets.”⁹⁴ By March enrollment had grown to 37 (20 boys and 17 girls), and the villagers had cut and hauled enough logs to construct a building specifically for the school. Three boys also made three pairs of skis.⁹⁵

As was typical throughout Alaska, the teacher provided a range of additional services to the community including special community meetings, adult classes in cooking and sewing, arts and crafts, social welfare, co-operative store and IRA-related actions, gardening, first aid, recreational activities, management of a community building shop, construction of a schoolhouse, and co-operation with other government agencies, including the census bureau, the Alaska Game Commission, and the Weather Bureau.⁹⁶ The net effect of these activities was to introduce and provide access to a range of government services previously unknown in the

⁹⁴ In a sense true, since prior to this the itinerant day school was held at fish camp upstream from the village during the summer

⁹⁵ Quarterly School Report – Tetlin – Nabesna Day School (2 January 1940 and 1 April 1940). US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Alaska Division / Quarterly School Reports – 1937 – 40 / Entry 818 / Box 4 / Folder P1-163.

⁹⁶ Teachers were also expected to provide information, as their duties permit, “of a medical, physiological, or anthropological character in regard to the natives,” for transmittal to the Smithsonian Institute, as requested by Ales Hrdlicka (Memo, Claxton to Employees of the Alaska Division, 12 January 1920. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806, Records of the Alaska Division, General Correspondence / Box 98 - 1919-1920 / (FY) - Natives - New Schools / Folder - Outside Relations, Miscellaneous). This directive was followed up in 1927 by a request to provide skeletal remains to the Smithsonian Institute, a practice which neither Singleton or Dimler, at least, assented to. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Index to General Correspondence, 1910 – 1930 / Box 1927 / #122, 29 July. Smithsonian Institute, re. their request to Alaskan teachers to send them skeletal remains.

region. The timing of the school's opening at Northway was also propitious. Within the year the region would experience the arrival of the builders of the Alaska Highway. Thus the schools and their teachers became important vectors for negotiating the new relationships which descended on the *Dineh* of the Upper Tanana with the building of the highway.

Through the 1920s, Singleton also provided limited, but often critical, medical care to the inhabitants of the region, until a government sponsored Nurse was stationed at Tetlin in 1932.

Beck (1930) notes that:

The medical work done by Mr. Singleton is by no means an unimportant one. He is very attentive to the natives in this respect and does everything possible to keep the well, well, and to cure the sick. . . . The Medicine Chest sent to these people each year by the Office of Education is a Godsend, not only for the Tetlin natives, but for villages fifty and a hundred miles away. . . . The villages of Tetlin, Tanana Crossing and Nabesna have no medical care whatsoever, other than that afforded by Mr. Singleton. If a native gets sick he must either do the best he can for himself or go to Fairbanks [273 miles away]. If he is very sick he will either be dead or well before he could get there in most cases. A nurse should be stationed at Tetlin. She could serve Nabesna and Tanana Crossing (p.36).

There was little that Singleton or the Nurse could do for tuberculosis - the major medical scourge of the *Dineh* in the region. In 1924, Singleton reported that “the natives are healthy.”⁹⁷ By the 1930s, a variety of tuberculosis strains had become endemic in the Upper Tanana *Dineh* population, causing great discomfort to many and death to others. MacIntosh (1938:15) observed that, “in 1915 tuberculosis was quite prevalent at Ketchemstock and there were only a very few cases here [in Tanacross] and practically none at Tetlin and Nabesna. Now it is as bad here as it was at Ketchemstock then and nearly as bad at Tetlin and Nabesna. Together with flu and tuberculosis there were 17 died here last year from a population of 135.” At Tetlin in 1930, Beck (1930:37) found “Edna Joseph, age fifteen, and a very bright girl is afflicted with tuberculosis of the throat. . . . Alfred John, a tubercular native in the last stages of the disease was the only other native in serious condition at the time of my visit. Nothing can be done for him and no doubt he is dead by this time.”

Writing of the Chisana community, Beck (1930:47) observes:

This village was the center of a gold stampede about fifteen years ago. As is the case with most stampedes, it left a group of sickly, dirty, tubercular and improvident group of beggars in its wake. Mr. Robert McKennan, anthropologist from Harvard University,

⁹⁷ Singleton, J. A. to Lopp, W. T. 6 April 1924. US Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806 / Box 128 / Folder – New Schools.

visited with these natives for a period of two months. He told me that he did not believe that there was a single individual in the entire village that was not afflicted with tuberculosis in some form. Attached is a list of the natives living at Chisana. Titus and Wife, 2 boys (7 -10), 1 girl (14), Chisana John and Wife, 1 boy (23), Chisana Joe and Wife, 2 boys (2 – 4), Andy Toby and Wife, 1 boy (3).

Paradoxically, Burge (1938:18) reported that “the health of the Indians of the Upper Tanana region is comparatively good and there is reason to believe that it will improve in the future”, while Ivar Skarland reported in 1939 that:

Tuberculosis has been and still is the main scourge among the natives of this region [the upper Tanana River]; but I believe that they are beginning to develop resistance to most of white man’s diseases. That they are holding their own is due to the high birth rate. . . . At present the medical needs are attended to at Tanana, several hundred miles away. . . . People from the Upper River, having no doctor and only one nurse, seldom go to the hospital before it is too late.⁹⁸

Land and Political Organization

In 1915, a group of Tanana River *Dineh Huskehs* met to discuss the effects of White immigration into the Alaskan interior and to bring their concerns forward to the State authorities. The Tanana Chief’s Conference of 1915 was held in Fairbanks to discuss land claims and educational and employment opportunities within the emerging State order. Foremost on the agenda of the representatives of the United States was the settling of the Tanana *Dineh* upon individual homesteads or collective reservations, under the terms of the 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act, a proposition largely rejected by the chiefs who maintained “we don’t want to go on a reservation. . . . We just want to be left alone. As the whole continent was made for you, God made Alaska for the Indian people, and all we hope is to be able to live here all the time” (Mitchell 1997:177-78; Patty 1970). Archival research has not identified any allotments under this act being granted within the upper Tanana River region.

With the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the Alaska Amendment of 1936, Alaska Division teachers were given the responsibility for organizing Native villages and co-operatives.⁹⁹ This was done in Tetlin in 1939 and 1942 in Northway, but no effort was

⁹⁸ Skarland, Ivar to Beatty, W. W. 11 September 1939. US Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, 1940 – 46 / Box 5 / Folder 29288 – 1940 – AK – 031.

⁹⁹ “Instructions for Organization in Alaska Under the Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, and the Alaska Act of May 1, 1936 and the Amendments Thereto.” U. S. Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Public Inventory 163 / Entry 803 Copies of letters and telegrams sent by the Chief, Alaska Section, BIA 1935-37 / Folder AK-28504-35-056-pt 2 to 63-37-066.

made to similarly organize the Scottie Creek villages which were considered too small. One of the first actions by the new Tetlin Council was to request to have their Reserve extended to the Canadian boundary. The Reserve extension was requested again in 1941, enlarged to include the lands associated with the villages of Healy Lake, Tanacross, Last Tetlin, Tetlin, Nabesna, and Scottie Creek. Meanwhile the newly organized Council at Northway sent a similar petition to the government for the establishment of a Nabesna Reserve from the Canadian border to the eastern boundaries of the Tetlin Reserve and from the top of the Nutzotin Mountains to the Ladue River (Brown 1984:147-51).

Although the extension of the reserve was one of Burge's major recommendations, and the American Association of Indian Affairs lobbied for its formation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was initially against the idea, sensing that the non-Native public would be opposed, and this proved to be the case. In the fall of 1941, The Alaska Territorial Legislature appealed to the federal government to review all public land withdrawals, revoke those deemed no longer necessary, and specifically requested the dissolution of the Tetlin Reserve, which it deemed would hinder development of the upper Tanana River region (Brown 1984:151-58). Faced with this request, the BIA began a formal investigation of the matter, sending several field agents and the anthropologist Walter Goldschmidt into the region over the next several years to determine the land use requirements of the Natives in the region. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior signed Public Land Order 386 on 31 July 1947, which withdrew from public use 208,000 acres around Northway and 282,000 acres around Tanacross "pending further study of the lands for designation as Indian reservations." With a change in BIA policy on the creation of new reservations, the withdrawals were revoked by Public Land Order 961, 10 May 1954 (Brown 1984:170-72). The federal recognition of the Native use and occupation of the eastern Upper Tanana *Dineh* of the Nabesna and Chisana River basins would have to wait until the settlement of the state-wide Native land claim by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

Conclusion

The *Dineh* of the Upper Tanana were in many respects fortunate to have considerable interest generated in their needs and difficulties during the interwar period as they prepared, albeit without certainty as to when, for the inevitable penetration of their lands by increasing numbers of white men. In 1923 Chief Peter Joe of Tetlin, for example, petitioned for a school at

the village in a letter to the Congressional Delegate from Alaska, in order to be able to survive the changes of the future. “I want my people to learn in school” he wrote, “. . . I don’t want my people to die. . . . That’s all I want. I want my people try to little learn. . . . By and by, no fur, no game this country and I afraid my people can’t live.”¹⁰⁰ Without the intercession of people like Hajdukovich, Endicott, and Malinkrodt, and the investigations by the American Association of Indian Affairs, which Malinkrodt sponsored, I suspect little in the way of government services beyond Tanacross would have been extended to the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, until the building of the Alaska Highway.

The establishment of the schools at Tetlin and Northway encouraged new migration and settlement patterns in the region and an increase in sedentary village nucleation. Increased sedentary village life by band organized hunters and gatherers in response to their interaction with state structures is well documented in the north and throughout the world (Acheson 1981; Asch 1988; Helm 1961; Olsen 1981). The two principle factors leading to this nucleation were initially the location of commercial trade posts and subsequently the provision of an increasing array of government services, initially education and health, followed by additional services, such as welfare and pensions.¹⁰¹ The general result of this nucleation in many northern groups was an increased use of industrially produced commodities, including foodstuffs, clothing, and housing structures, as well as the increased tendency for local and regional identities to become increasingly focused on settlements of occupation. The migration of most of the Upper Chisana residents to Big Scottie Creek and then Northway, or the upper Nabesna River communities and then the Copper Valley, due to these factors can be viewed as the final dissolution of that resident community, in the true sense of that word, although Chisana Joe continued to live in the upper Chisana village until his death in the early 1960s.

A final important effect of the new State order on the traditional culture of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* was the reification of band leadership. Formerly, band leadership emerged through

¹⁰⁰ Chief Peter Joe to Sutherland, D. 9 June 1923. US Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 806 / Box 128 / Folder – New Schools.

¹⁰¹ The first record I have found for government assistance in the upper Tanana region includes two residents at Nabesna Mines and ten families at Tetlin, four of whom were relocated Chisana River people in 1941. "Families to Whom Surplus Supplies Could be Sent, 1940-41." RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Classified Files (1940-1956) / Box 125 / Folder 53984-1941-AK-720. In 1941 the BIA also included monies for Tanacross and Tetlin for “relief of destitution.” "Report on Relief of Destitution for the Alaska Indian Service, as required by the Appropriation Act for Fiscal Year 1942." RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Classified Files (1940-1956) / Box 125 / Folder 53984-1941-AK-720.

the demonstration of personal ability in specific tasks and the more ambiguous display of personal spirit power, however the continued legitimacy of leadership was dependent on one's appropriate exercise of authority, relying on persuasion and good sense rather than coercion. Leadership could, and often did, fluctuate between individuals based on performance or the nature of the task at hand. Within Alaska, as early as 1906, contemporary band leaders were being recognized by the state as local and regional "chiefs" with considerable presumed political authority. The introduction to Alaska in 1936 of the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) coalesced further formal representative governance, establishing village Councils and elected Chiefs, a process completed in the Upper Tanana in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

THE ALASKA HIGHWAY AND THE CHISANA RIVER *DINEH*



Figure 62. Corporal Refine Sims (97th Engineers) Meets Private Alfred Jalufka (18th Engineers). *Ten miles south of Beaver Creek, Yukon, 25 October 1942, closing the last gap in the pioneer highway.* (Engineering News-Record, in Duesenberg 1994:97)

We were here, at *Nii-ii*, down below in the village. Chief Johnson, my dad, Lucy, Cecily, Bessie, *Lakduu*, me and some other kids. Me, I'm just a little kid, later they tell me, but I remember the noise coming through the trees. It's dark. We can see lights out there, where the noise is? Chief Johnson he go out to check it out and when he come back he put dirt from fire, you know charcoal, on his face like this, like that. His face all black. That's who's coming he tell us. They were driving the cats through the forest down below us, right there. You see those trees there? That's where they first come through, right there. I was scared. We all went up to Pepper Lake, and then down to Snag (Joseph Tommy Johnny, Easton n.d.).

Introduction

Although the upper Chisana River basin was still used seasonally for hunting and trapping, by 1940 most of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* had orientated themselves to the village settlements of the lower river (Big Scottie Creek, Northway, High Cache, *Taiy Chi*, and *Nii-ii*) or the upper Nabesna River village(s). Thus, the building of the Alaska Highway had an immediate and direct effect on the *Dineh* of the Chisana River.

The building of the Alaska Highway in 1942-43 was one of the great engineering and logistical accomplishments of the era. Built from Dawson City, British Columbia to Fairbanks,

Alaska in just over 8 months, the road was initially intended to provide staging support for airfields associated with the transportation of war supplies to Russia and as a supply route to the Northwest in defense of a possible Japanese invasion. Though the success of constructing the 3,000 kilometre road was a significant accomplishment, this was tempered with a considerable disregard for local and regional concerns. As noted by Yukon ethnohistorian Julie Cruikshank, "within a year and a half, a total of 34,637 men came to a relatively isolated part of the world where only a few thousand people made their homes" (1985:175).

The notion of an overland road to the northwestern subarctic was hardly new, having been proposed off and on since the time of the Klondike Gold Rush, but for a variety of reasons, principally related to international political relations, one never emerged (Remley 1985; Fisher 1985). Ironically, one reason put forward for the reluctance of the Canadian federal government to undertake the building of a road to its northwest territory was "a fear of American economic and military domination" (Remley 1985:1). The Canadian position was, however, eroded by the portrayed urgency of an overland route to Alaska in time of war, although historic documents clearly indicate that "as a strategic measure for the direct support of Alaska . . . the highways' impact was . . . virtually negligible . . . it was not needed for defense. The highway was built for other reasons" (Fisher 1985:33).

Whatever the motivation for the building of the highway the impact of an overland route through the far Northwest has been considerable. The immediate effect on the Upper Tanana was similar in kind to that documented for the Tutchone and Kaska Athapaskans to the southeast of them. The building of the road itself led to a noted increase in mortality and sickness within Native populations, particularly through dysentery, jaundice, whooping cough, mumps, meningitis, measles, and influenza. These last two diseases were particularly devastating, especially within areas outside of Whitehorse (Marchand 1943). Infant and youth mortality during construction were particularly high. The presence of military medical personnel along the route alleviated this impact somewhat, but the wide travel of the Native population and the epidemic nature of the diseases carried them much further afield than the highway corridor itself, and often medical attention was not accessible in the outlying areas (Coates 1985; Oland 1985). Thus actual mortality rates outside of the urban centres through the Northwest were probably even higher than the medical records indicate, a fact generally substantiated by oral history

accounts (Cruikshank 1985, Easton n.d.). In addition, liquor became more easily available and weakened the health of many families and communities.

The influx of tens of thousands of southern engineers, construction workers, and support personnel, combined with the mortality of the period, significantly altered the ethnic ratio of the region, transforming the Native population from the majority outside of the urban/village centres to a decided minority throughout much of the region.¹⁰² The resulting competition for and increased exploitation of game animals and fish resulted in a severe depletion of Native subsistence resources along the highway corridor, which itself often followed the traditional trail system. Many Natives recall with bitterness and incomprehension an apparent tendency for highway personnel to hunt for sport and leave game to spoil.¹⁰³ In addition, regulations concerning the destruction of highway-related materials and foods rather than their local distribution, in order to avoid "unfair competition" with commercial sources, contributed to further alienation between Natives and newcomers. "Indians recall 'potholes filled with hams,' 'bags of flour dumped in the garbage,' and so on. Such behaviour was repugnant to people who had always made maximum use of their environment. Such waste, which the older Indians have never forgotten, seemed a betrayal of man's obligation to share" (Cruikshank 1985:185). Besides food, new additional waste was deposited along the highway corridor in the form of sewage, petroleum, PCBs, and other defoliant chemicals, munitions, broken machinery, and general garbage, all of which introduced new environmental pollutants of danger to humans and animals alike.¹⁰⁴

The highway also significantly altered people's orientation to the landscape in several important ways. First, Natives were increasingly dispossessed from their landscape, which was in turn fundamentally altered by highway construction. The route taken by the highway, and the ancillary noise, destruction, and increased human activity disturbed local distribution of game (McCandless 1985:87). The highway placement also significantly altered the regional settlement

¹⁰² Alaska Census data holds the percentage of native people making up the resident population changed from 50.6% in 1929, to 44.8% in 1939, to 26.3% in 1950, to 18.8% in 1960. (Norris 2002:5, Table 1.1).

¹⁰³ There is an equivocal debate on this point. Most anthropological oral histories of the period suggest that game depletion and waste was significant (e.g., Cruikshank 1985, Easton n.d. & this volume); documentary histories tend to underplay the effect of hunting by highway personnel (see, e.g. McCandless 1985).

¹⁰⁴ The full extent of these polluting deposits will probably be never known, but recently the US Army has taken some responsibility for their presence, engaging in environmental cleanups about the airports at Northway and Tanacross for example, where significant levels of PCBs and other persistent pollutants were removed; the work remains ongoing (D. Corbert, personal communication, Easton, n.d.).

pattern, shifting demographic concentrations from villages away from the road to junctions and stations along it (Duerden 1981:33-35), a process which was apparent in the preceding period as people became orientated to trade post locations. The highway also redefined, accelerated, and consolidated this process of village nucleation and opened up the land to easy access by immigrant White settlers and migrant hunters. New hunting regulations and enforcement hampered and reduced Native subsistence hunting. Wage labour opportunities increased, but this in turn reduced both the time and need for subsistence efforts on the land. Another effect was to increase inter-community travel and communication by use of the new road system. The road was not merely a vector for the transportation of material goods, but also a line of communication to and from state metropolises, a mechanism for the consolidation of State control over this hinterland (Innis 1972, Cruikshank 1998). These effects contributed to a growing awareness of the need and responsibility of the encapsulating State to recognize and respond to requests for Aboriginal land claims.

The building of the Alaska Highway is often portrayed in histories as a "peaceful invasion" of the far Northwest. For the Aboriginal people of the Upper Tanana however, who had lived in a general condition of respectful co-existence with the various streams of traders and prospectors during much of the previous hundred years, it created a tumultuous redefinition of their society. As Bill Simeone has noted, "the construction of the road completely altered these existing relationships and recast Native people as strangers in their own land" (Simeone 1992:45). The character of Native-newcomer relationships were fundamentally altered from close and personal to distant and stereotyped. "Before the war Natives and Whites inhabited an overlapping universe of shared experiences based on life close to the land and characterized by personal relationships. After the war, this universe was fragmented, and Native people became socially, economically, and politically marginalized" (Simeone 1992:50).

The Construction of the Alaska Highway

The Alaska Road Commission was tasked to construct airfields in Alaska in the 1920s, one of which was built at Tanana Crossing and another at upper Nabesna, which we discussed earlier in the context of the Nabesna Mine. Later, in the 1930s there was an interest to extend North American air travel to the Orient via a Great Circle Route through Yukon and Alaska. In support of this, additional airstrips were constructed in 1940-41, consisting of airports, airstrips, and

navigation beacons stretching from Montana, through Alberta and Yukon, and finishing at Ladd Airforce Base outside of Fairbanks. Two new airstrips were built within the Upper Tanana region: at Snag, Yukon, and Northway, Alaska. A number of Upper Tanana men worked on the construction of these airports.

With the declaration of war by Japan in December 1941, and the extension of the Lend-Lease armament program by the United States to the Soviet Union, the airports, now collectively known as the Northwest Staging Route, became vital strategic elements in the United States' western theatre and a supply road in support of the airports was upgraded to a major thoroughfare. The effort was staged by a number of military and civilian construction crews working towards each other along the route.

The passage of the highway from Tanacross to Kluane Lake had been roughly surveyed and mapped in June of that year by Colonel Walter Hodge, guided by the Southern Tutchone Bobby Kane of Aishihik, and accompanied by a Captain Baker and Mr. McGilveray. The following extracts from Hodge's field diary records his travel through the Upper Tanana borderlands.

Thursday, June 11, 1942 - Spent day in reconnoitering for crossing at Snag. Found suitable one on Snag Creek about one mile downstream from junction of Beaver Creek. About one-half mile down farther downstream found a camp about two weeks old which had evidently been used by an army reconnaissance party.

Friday, June 12, 1942 - Crossed Canada - Alaska Boundary into Alaska at 6:32 pm, three-quarter mile north of International Boundary Commission Monument #165 at longitude 141.00 West, latitude 62.38.15 North. Passed Chief Johnson's cabin on Snag - Scottie Creek Trail and found note that Lt. Hammond, 29th Engrs. had been there May 21, 1942. Camped on border tonight next to Scottie Creek.

Saturday, June 13, 1942 - We travelled north along the Canada Alaska border for about five miles today from I.B.C. monument 165 to two miles beyond #164. Just before reaching Big Scottie Creek we came to an Indian village just a few feet over the border in Alaska. There we found six men, four women, a small boy, a small girl, and a baby boy living there. Chief Johnson was the headman. They understood and spoke very little English and did not speak the language of our guides. After a while, though, we did manage to get the information we wanted on how to get to Nabesna. We found Big Scottie Creek too deep to ford, so got Johnnie Little Joe [White River Johnny – Little John] at the village to ferry us across in his birch bark canoe. It took twelve trips to get all our equipment across and cost us \$5.00 which we paid for in food. Coffee at \$1.00 a pound and tea at \$1.50 a pound, which is standard trading post prices. We then swam the horses

across and finished the ferrying operation by 10:00 pm. These Indians were the first human beings we had seen since May 30th and in one hundred and fifty miles of travel.

The Canadian Border is a straight line cut through the wilderness about twelve feet wide along the 141st meridian west longitude. On prominent hilltops and in certain valleys and it is marked by nine copper or brass cone about two feet high set in concrete with a number on and Canada on one side and United States on the other.



Figure 63. U.S. Army Engineers Crossing Scottie Creek in White River Johnny's Birch bark Canoe, 13 June 1943.

(Walter Hodge Album, from Cole et al. 1992:46)

Walter Hodge crossing Big Scottie Creek in the traditional birchbark canoe typical of the Upper Tanana; across the creek stands "John Little Joe", i.e. White River Johnny, recognizable by his diminutive size, face, and famous hat (now curated at the White River First Nation). Mrs. Bessie John, recalled this event and believed it was one of the last birch bark canoes in use in the region as the use of canvas was more commonly used for covering frames since at least McKennan's 1929 visit.

Sunday June 15 , 1942 - Twenty miles today. Entered Tanana.

Monday June 16, 1942 - Headed Northwest all day. Crossed Gardiner Creek 2 pm. Beautiful ground and exposure ever since entering Chisana - Tanana Valley. Made about thirteen miles today. May make Northway day after tomorrow with luck. We see three to six planes passing daily overhead, but no one ever sees us. Urine still very dark and still feels bilious.

Tuesday June 17, 1942 - Followed ridge along right limit of Tanana all day and camped for night on Tanana just above point where Nabesna River flows into it. At Scottie Creek village Indians told us to build smoky fire and fire several shots. Then a boat would come and get us from Indian Village about seven miles up Nabesna. We did so, but no one came. We can hear planes of Northway seven miles away.

Wednesday June 18, 1942 - Evidently our shots were heard, because an Indian boy and man appeared at our camp at five am. They said they heard our shots and came over, thinking it was some Indian who was hungry. We invited them for breakfast then had Bobbie Cain our Indian Guide return with them to the native village to get a gas boat to ferry us across Tanana and up the Nabesna to Northway Airfield. The Indian with gas boat arrived at our camp on the Chisana River at eleven am, we loaded up and took off at two pm for Northway Airfield where we arrived about four-thirty pm. The charge for ferrying us up was \$20.00, which we paid for in rations, miscellaneous food, etc., worth \$10.00 and ten gallons of gas at \$1.00 per gallon. We saw our first white people today since leaving Burwash on May 30th.

The Alaska portion of the road from the Richardson Highway to the Canadian border was the responsibility of the 97th Engineer Regiment, an all-Black unit under the command of Colonels Stephen C. Whipple and Lionel E. Robinson.



Figure 64. Members of the 97th Engineers Regiment, 1942.

(from Duesenberg 1994)

The Regiment arrived at Valdez on the 29th of April 1942 and assisted the Alaska Road Commission on the Richardson Highway upgrade. On the 7th of June they began what would come to be known as the Slana Cutoff, a new road from Slana through Mentasta Pass to the

Tanana River, which they had completed by August 17th near the junction of the Tok and Tanana Rivers. This was twelve miles east of Tanacross village. They then crossed the Tanana River and pushed towards the border, which they reached on October 17th with the expectation of meeting the 18th Engineer Regiment coming north from Kluane Lake. Carrying on southeast, the two regiments met near Beaver Creek, Yukon on October 25th, completing the last gap of the pioneer road.¹⁰⁵ The 97th, along with several civilian contractors, were tasked to spend the winter extending and upgrading the pioneer road from the White River back through to Tanacross (Duesenberg 1994:24-28).

The 97th Engineers consisted of about 1200 enlisted men and 50 officers. By October, 1942, they were distributed at camps established at intervals along the highway, as detailed in Table VII, below.

Table VI. Winter Camps of the 97th Engineers, 1942 - '43.

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White River	1 Platoon Engineers	12 buildings	100 man rest camp
Beaver Creek	1 Platoon Engineers	12 buildings	100 man rest camp
Gardiner Creek	Battalion HQ & Support Co.	31 buildings	
Gordon Lake	Regimental HQ, Battalion HQ, & Support Co.	33 buildings	
Northway Junction	1 Company	18 buildings (incl. Field Hospital)	
Midway Lake	1 Platoon Engineers	12 buildings	100 man rest camp
Little Tok River	1 Platoon Engineers	5 buildings	

In addition, eighteen Iowa construction contractors, employing about 1,300 civilian workers joined the 97th in the Tanana valley in August of 1942. After a summer of “one exhausting move after another for . . . two and a half months; fifteen camps in all,” they too established semi-permanent camps at 30 locations between Big Delta and the White River, including Beaver Creek, Mirror Creek, Desper Creek, Gardiner Creek, Little Beaver Creek (just west of Northway Junction), Midway Lake, Tok Junction, and Tanacross (Duesenberg 1994:85). Finally, a variety of support and maintenance units of the War Department, Quartermasters,

¹⁰⁵ J. F. Doyle, Acting Adjunct, 97th Engineers to Headquarters, 97th Engineer Regiment. US Archives. RG 338 / Entry NWSC / Box 3 / Folder 314.7 – Military Histories 1943 Document, Canadian Activities of 255th Signal Construction Company.

¹⁰⁶ U. S. Archives. RG 94, Adjunct General’s Office. WW II Operation Reports 1940-48 American Theatre / Box 31 / Folder 91-DP1 0.1 Alaskan Department – History of the Whitehorse Sector of the Alcan Highway 1942-43.

Signal Corps, Airport and Medical Personnel, and so on, were present, mainly stationed at the Snag, Northway, and Tanacross airports. At Northway, similar to the other airports, the air and support staff base consisted of 57 buildings by 1944,¹⁰⁷ capable of housing 70 officers and 816 enlisted men.¹⁰⁸ Altogether then, the Upper Tanana region saw an influx of about 4,000 people in 1942–43, an unprecedented number who, unlike the immigrants of the Chisana Gold Rush, remained in the area for the next three years.

Social Relations with the Highway Builders

Serving as Lieutenant of A Company, 1st Battalion of the 97th was Walter E. Mason, who I spoke to by telephone in the spring of 1997. He recalled that there were tight restrictions on contact between the Black engineers and the local population, partly as a result of prejudicial assumptions.



Figure 65. Lt. Walter Mason, 97th Engineers.

(from Duesenberg 1992)

¹⁰⁷ Report of Excess Real Estate, Northway Airfield 13 October 1945. U. S. Archives. RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers / Entry Security Classified Subject Files 1940 – 45 / Box 602 / Folder 602 Northway Airport Alaska.

¹⁰⁸ U. S. Archives. RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers / Entry Security Classified Subject Files 1940 – 45 / Box 640 / Folder 600.1 Northwest Staging Command (2 of 4).

While the 97th was a segregated unit, formal military policy at the time was attempting to provide greater accommodation of Black Americans as integrated members of the army. This did not do away with latent and expressed racist attitudes within and without the armed forces, however. Major General Buckner of the Alaska Defense Command objected to being assigned the 97th, believing them unsuited to northern climes and a risk to the civilian, including Native, population of Alaska. He was sternly over-ruled by Brigadier General Studevant who noted that due to the distribution of personnel, “we have been forced to use two colored regiments and it seems unwise for diplomatic reasons to use them both in Canada, since the Canadians also prefer whites. I would hope, therefore, that you will not protest this action since I believe it would only cause delay and no different result. . . . They will be hard at work in two reliefs on a 20 hour schedule in out-of-the-way places and I cannot see how they can cause any great trouble.”¹⁰⁹ Another source noted that, “both Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command, and Gov. Ernest Gruening of Alaska informally opposed sending Negro troops to Alaska, with Governor Gruening stating that he felt the mixing of Negroes with the Native Indians and Eskimos would be highly undesirable. . . . Secretary Stinson made short shrift of the objections. Of Alaska . . . he commented, ‘Don’t yield’” (Lee 1966:429-30).

While there were undoubtedly racially motivated incidents, it seems Black soldiers were generally well received in Alaska. A petition requesting their removal from Alaska by Fairbanks residents garnered only fourteen signatures. A caustic denunciation of northern racism against the Black troops written by Department of the Interior Field Representative Ruth Gruber¹¹⁰ was based largely on hearsay it seems,¹¹¹ but led a leading historian in 1966 to inaccurately maintain that “many towns [refused] to admit them even to their streets and shops” (Lee 1966:439). Army Intelligence reports, however, indicated that the “merchants of Fairbanks have placed no restrictions on Negro trade. Restaurants, theaters, bars and nightclubs are all being patronized by the colored troops. . . . Statements frequently made during conversations concerning this subject would appear to reflect a rather tolerant and intelligent attitude. . . . As concerns the Negro soldier as an individual, it is recognized that the Negro is a United States soldier. . . . Local law

¹⁰⁹ C. L. Sturdevant, Brig. Gen. Asst. Chief of Eng. To Maj. Gen. S. B. Buckner, 2 April 1942. U. S. Archives. RG 77 / Accession # 72A3173 / Box 14 / Folder Storage 611 (Alcan Highway Part 1 March 42 – May 42).

¹¹⁰ Ruth Gruber to Secretary of the Interior, 11 June 1943. U. S. Archives. RG 165 / Entry 418 / Box 472 / Folder OPD 291.21 Section II (Cases 21-52).

¹¹¹ Memo for the Record, Negro Discrimination in Alaska and Along the Alaskan Highway, 17 June 1943. U. S. Archives. RG 165 / Entry 418 / Box 472 / Folder OPD 291.21 Section II (Cases 21-52).

enforcement agencies report that the conduct of the Negro soldier while in Fairbanks has been equally as good, if not superior, as that of the white soldier.”¹¹²

And although Lt. Mason was correct in his recollection that the troops of the 97th were to remain separate from the local population by policy, this was perhaps honoured more in the breach than in its application, at least according to the recollections of Upper Tanana *Dineh*. One Elder recalls selling moccasins to them, while another spoke approvingly of the long hours and hard work he witnessed them undertake (Easton n.d.).

Mrs. Laura Sanford spoke to me at length on the presence of the 97th Engineers in the Upper Tanana region. She began by noting that she first heard of them from a woman who walked down from Copper River to Tanacross. The woman told her and the group of girls she was with that men with black skin were coming and they should be afraid because, “they were gonna get them.”¹¹³ So when the 97th Engineers first arrived in Tanacross the girls ran and hid. But they turned out to be nice men, and soon they began to hold dances with them. Mrs. Sanford recalled that it was a lot of fun, with dancing and joking among the participants. The council members of Tanacross always chaperoned the dances and watched the girls carefully to make sure there was no fooling around. The men were courteous, kind, and good dancers.

Mrs. Sanford remembered that there was a White man who was in charge of the Blacks - their boss (presumably Lt. Mason). He would accompany them to the dance, but did not dance himself, although he made good friends with one of the Native men and would visit with him often. There was tension, however, between the Black and the White soldiers. She recalls several dances at which they both attended and how the White soldiers would call down the Blacks. Mrs. Sanford did not understand why they would call them names and treat them mean.

She remembered a specific incident in which a group was dancing and a White man jabbed a Black soldier with his elbow. The Black soldier was much smaller than the other man but he stood his ground. "Why do you treat me like that?" he asked the White man. "Uncle Sam sent me up here to fight the war just like you. I wear a uniform just like you. I am a soldier just like you. We're the same. You shouldn't treat me like that." The girls at the dance were afraid that a brawl was going to break out. The Whites and the Blacks separated, watching the exchange. There was a bit of a melee, in which the White man was knocked to the ground. Mrs.

¹¹² Annex No. 3 to G-2 Periodic Report No. 50. U. S. Archives. RG 94 / Entry 427 / Box 7 / Folder 91-DC1-2.1 Part 2.

Sanford thinks that this happened because the officer present had given his pistol to one of his men, who "cold-cocked" the white soldier. In any event, after this the Blacks left, while the White man was attended to and sent to the infirmary. When the White soldiers left they found a whole crowd of Blacks awaiting them on the other side of the bridge across the river. The council allowed no fighting on the village side, but in the bush they could not control them. Mrs. Sanford does not recall if they fought in the bush, but she thinks that the Blacks had greatly outnumbered the Whites and that there had not been any real fighting.¹¹⁴

Relations between *Dineh* and civilian contractors also seem to have been generally favourable. *Dineh* were frequent visitors to the contractor camps near Midway and Northway. *Dineh* women sold moccasins, gloves, and birchbark baskets to the workers as souvenirs and the men supplied some game meat and acted on guides on some hunts. White workers listened to myths and stories of *Dineh* history and *Dineh* joined them for dinner. "Workers recall that the natives developed a routine of appearing along the road at the same time every day to hitch a ride. . . . Art Bolton, Kaser construction foreman, remembers Chief Northway came practically every Sunday to his camp for dinner. 'He was particularly fond of our canned peaches,' says Art. 'We thought a lot of those people. The chief would often bring his attractive daughters who liked to dress in modern clothes. They were really nice people.'" (Duesenberg 1994:147).

Sexual liaisons between White men and *Dineh* women occurred. While some resulted in lasting relationships - the men staying on after their construction contract ran out or the women moving elsewhere with their White husbands - most were more ephemeral, with the White men leaving the region once their construction work was completed, often leaving one or several children behind with their abandoned "country wife". One *Dineh* woman who lived on the lower Chisana looked off wistfully into the distance when I asked her about the building of the Alaska Highway. "The highway," she sighed. "Lots of boyfriends then," she added with a laugh (Easton n.d.). Another married a contract worker, and then moved away from the region in order to place their children in a larger parochial school. One of these children moved back into Northway in her 40s. Simeone (1995:42) has generally observed that "liaisons between Native women and soldiers produced children who were often left behind after the war, and some Native women

¹¹³ Easton (n.d.). Interview with Mrs. Laura Sanford, 13 April, 1999, Whitehorse, Yukon.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

who married soldiers left the region forever.”¹¹⁵ Since the subject of illegitimacy is regarded in negative terms in White morality they are seldom identified as such in genealogical research. Instead, following *Dineh* social custom, most of these children were simply subsumed into the local community as the woman’s offspring and integrated into their subsequent Native marriages.¹¹⁶

Effects on Native Subsistence

Despite these relatively good relations between individuals, the building of the Alaska Highway also brought new difficulties to the *Dineh*. I noted above that there was some disagreement among historians of the effect of the building of the Alaska Highway on Native subsistence; however, whatever the debatable effects elsewhere, in the Upper Tanana region it seems to have been considerable.¹¹⁷ There were several reasons for this.

The first was the blandness of the construction worker’s diet. Rations for the 97th Engineers were particularly poor in 1942-’43, since fresh foods could not be shipped due to a lack of space and so “B-rations for frigid climates” were heavily used. A report noted that “while this food was undoubtedly nourishing its sameness and lack of variety soon palled on the appetite of all personnel. The troops in the field, working 10 to 16 hours a day, were forced to eat Vienna Sausage, chili con carne, and corned beef hash, at practically every meal, until, after a reasonable time, they began to throw it away untouched. The situation was later improved [in 1943] by the shipment of certain dehydrated foods.”¹¹⁸

The situation for the civilian contractors was little better. With the full contingent at Gulkana in July of 1942, the camp required sixty pounds of flour and ten dozen eggs to make a

¹¹⁵ Until at least the mid-1950s, official Army and Airforce policy was not to encourage or approve marriages of enlisted men in Alaska due to a lack of married quarters and low pay, a policy which led directly to Alaska Native women having children of servicemen and remaining single mothers. This caused some concern in the BIA due to the increase in welfare and other support payments to such families. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Classified Files (1940-1956) / Box 128 / Folder 9135-1948-AK-741.

¹¹⁶ McKenna (1959:117) records that “adoptions often take place, and the parents draw no distinction between their own and their adopted children. The latter are generally orphans or [children of single parents], although occasionally a man with no family will adopt the child of some relative who has more children than he can feed.”

¹¹⁷ Clarke (n.d.:33) “observed few signs of wild life destruction around army and construction camps,” during his biological survey of the Canadian portion of the highway corridor north to the White River in the summer of 1943. “Some bears had to be killed and we had evidence of game hunting by Army and Public Roads Personnel were made. In one place we saw evidence that sheep had been killed illegally. Army and construction men were too busy to hunt,” he concludes.

morning meal of pancakes and three hundred and twenty-five pounds of salmon for lunch, purchased from the Ahtna resident, Frank Ewan. As they moved into the Tanana valley supply lines became more tenuous and less-timely, resulting in loss of fresh foods, particularly meat. The men reacted predictably. “We have been without fresh meat nearly three weeks now, and beans were getting tiresome to most of us – yesterday afternoon the climax came; fresh meat was needed and the only answer was to go hunting. So the men leaving for the woods were bristling with rifles and wearing determined looks” (Duesenberg 1994:47).

Many workers also engaged in fishing and hunting as a source of recreation in the wilderness. The War Department encouraged this as a means to maintaining morale. “Owing to their location they have had no social or other contacts with civilization and only such recreation as could be obtained by hunting and fishing,” the Chief of Engineers was informed in August 1942,¹¹⁹ although without a hunting license this was technically against the law. The military subsequently sought and obtained the liberalization of the Yukon and Alaska game laws to allow hunting and fishing privileges for military personnel in Alaska and the Yukon. The Alaska Defense Command’s General Orders “enjoined every member of the military service in Alaska to not only conform to the letter and spirit of the game regulations but to conduct himself in a sportsman-like manner and avoid any act of thoughtlessness or greed that might brand him as a game hog or unworthy citizen.” In support of fishing as a recreational activity, fishing tackle was distributed “to enable 10 percent of personnel to go fishing at one time.”¹²⁰

Civilian workers also availed themselves of the opportunity to fish and hunt as recreation as well as providing supplementary food. Duesenberg quotes one worker gleefully reporting that “there is game galore around us – bear, deer, moose, caribou, beaver, mink, wolf, ducks, and geese.” He also presents a number of photographs of a day’s catch by some of the men; strings of fifty or more fish, smaller grayling, mid-sized whitefish, and thirty-pound lake trout, are proudly held (Duesenberg 1994:164-65).

In his 1946 ethnographic sketch of Northway, Goldschmidt records that, “During the recent war an air base was established at Northway with dire results to the village. The men of the post engaged in hunting of game, which resulted in a serious reduction of the wildlife

¹¹⁸ U. S. Archives. RG 94, Adjunct General’s Office. WW II Operation Reports 1940-48 American Theatre / Box 31 / Folder 91-DP1 0.1 Alaskan Department – History of the Whitehorse Sector of the Alcan Highway 1942-43.

¹¹⁹ Hoge to Chief of Engineers, Wa D.C., 29 August 1942. U. S. Archives. RG 77 ACC #72A3173 / Box 14 / Folder Storage 611 (Alcan Highway Part 1).

population. Natives whose very life depended upon the fur and meat animals were filled with resentment at soldiers who shot for mere pleasure, frequently not even picking up the carcasses of the animals so destroyed” (n.d.:57). Elsewhere in his report, Goldschmidt records Chief Isaac of Tanacross complaining that, “these army people have been killing off the rats. The White people try to clean up all the game” (p.26), an observation that suggests that some military personnel were also engaged in either for-profit-trapping or merely wanton killing of muskrat for recreational pleasure in a boring landscape.



Figure 66. Duesenberg Construction Workers with a Catch of Fish.

(from Duesenberg 1992)

Concerns over increased pressures on game stocks in Yukon led the Canadian government to set aside virtually all the land on the southern side of the highway from Haines Junction to the international border as a Game Sanctuary in December of 1942. Early the following year the Territorial Council, which held jurisdiction over hunting regulations, prohibited all hunting, even by Natives, within the preserve and for a mile on either side of the highway along its length. The conservationist ethic was stronger than the belated recognition that this would create hardships for the Native people of the Kluane Lake and borderlands region. Authorities sought to ameliorate their limited misgivings in the offering of some assistance to

¹²⁰ Annex No. 3 to G-2 Periodic Report No. 62 (24-31 July, 1943). RG 407 / Entry 427 / Box 7 / Folder 91-DC1/21

effected natives in the form of facilitating the marketing of muskrat pelts and the extension of welfare benefits along the northwest portion of the highway (McCandless 1985, Coates and Morrison 1988).

The opening of the Alaska Highway to civilian traffic and, in particular, the building of the Taylor Highway after the War, brought increasing numbers of non-resident hunters into the region. This further reduced the region's subsistence base, particularly the Forty-mile Caribou herd and other fur-bearers. In 1946, Goldschmidt (n.d.:26) heard repeated complaints, "that the Whites, who come into the area for the trapping season alone, would take all the rats from the lakes, and destroy hunting for several successive years." Goldschmidt wrote his wife that "The Indians are anxious for some protection against the encroachment of Whites, which take their cabins and their trap lines and threaten them with shooting, then kill out all the game."¹²¹ The situation was not much improved the following year when a BIA field agent visited the region to:

Ascertain how the livelihood of the natives of those villages is being affected by the increase in white settlers along the Alaska Highway. . . [and reported that] . . . all of the natives of all the villages except Tetlin. . . have been bothered considerably by white encroachments on their trapping areas, and particularly by transient muskrat hunters who camp along the road, clean out the muskrats, . . . and drive on.¹²²

Simeone (1992:49) notes similarly that along the Taylor Highway "some non-Native hunters lined the road waiting for the caribou to cross, taking animals primarily for their antlers." Pointing to the fact that the number of resident hunting licenses grew from about 9,000 in 1946 to 31,500 in 1955-56, stricter State game laws, which for the first time explicitly restricted Native subsistence hunting, became an inevitable response to increased competition over diminishing subsistence resources. "These regulations created an antagonism between Native and non-Native that is still apparent today in the debate over subsistence" (Simeone 1992:49).

Animals were not the only subsistence resource effected by the construction crews. Although plants were never a primary source of direct nutrition among the *Dineh*, they nevertheless were a critical component of the subsistence economy, specifically as a source of direct (in the heat and light of fires) and indirect (as insulating architectural components) *energy* required to survive the cold temperatures of the subarctic. The loss of easily accessible firewood

¹²¹ Walter Goldschmidt to Gale Goldschmidt, 11 July 1946. Personal collection of Walter Goldschmidt.

in the vicinity of the villages was previously noted above and could only have been exacerbated by the needs for both fuel and building material along the length of the highway corridor. The seemingly endless vista of a wilderness forest was in fact not endless. By May 1943 at Snag, for example, “the available supply of timber in the vicinity of the Airport has now run out and it will be necessary for Currie and Lundie to move their saw mill to the nearest available stand of timber, which is located about 25 miles from the airport.”¹²³ Mature spruce is still rare in the area today.

Wage Labour in a Hinterland Boom-Bust Economy

Another feature of highway construction which effected Dineh subsistence patterns was the availability of opportunities to exchange their time and labour for cash wages. While many *Dineh* took up some sort of wage labour during this period, it is uncertain to what extent it was pursued. Simeone (1992:46) writes that “some Tanacross people believe that during the highway construction the Native economy changed to approximately 50% wage labor. While hunting was still considered the “regular life,” almost everyone devoted at least half of their time earning cash to purchase food.” More specifically, Simeone (1996:41) notes that “Men worked as guides for survey crews or as construction workers, while women served as domestic help or made money selling mittens, moccasins, and beadwork to the workers.” Some men worked with John Hajdukovich operating a sawmill, which provided timber to the construction effort (Brown 1984) while others cleared brush for the extension of the airports at Tanacross, Northway, and Snag (Easton n.d).

The draw towards wage labour also motivated the abandonment of most of the villages which lay off the highway and promoted increased sedentarism in the villages along it. With rare exceptions, the residents of Big Scottie Creek, High Cache, and Scottie Creek moved to Northway and Snag. While people would continue to use the Chisana River basin for hunting and fishing, this became a seasonal, short-term use during the 1940s. A few families, notably the Justin brothers (Chisana Joe and Nabesna John), Bell and Laura John’s, White River Johnny’s,

¹²² Report of James B. Strong, Land Field Agent. U. S. Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121 Central Correspondence Files 1940-1956 Alaska / Box 16 / Folder 11267-1948-AK-032 Monthly Reports – ANS, Part 1.

¹²³ Memo to Commanding Officer, Alaskan Wing, Status of Construction, 11 May 1943. US Archives. RG 77 / Entry SCSF 1940-45 / Box 635 / Folder 600.914 Northwest Air Route (2 of 4).

Andy Frank, and Titus and Annie John, remained living “in the bush” of the basin, as these traditional areas away from the highway came to be called.

Many historians (e.g. Simeone 1996, Strong 1972, Brown 1984) maintain that the engagement in wage labour developed an increased dependency on western manufactured foods and material goods. To the extent that this is demonstrated by the use of wages to purchase such goods they are right, but I am not sure that “dependency” is the appropriate concept. Typical of Northern development projects, the building of the Alaska Highway and its ancillary roads produced a short-term *boom economy*, which was followed by an inevitable *bust* once the work was completed. As has been noted elsewhere, the federal government spent over a billion dollars in Alaska between 1941 and 1945. In 1943, there were about 152,000 armed forces personnel present, requiring support services from foodstuffs to entertainment. Between 1940 and 1950 the non-native population more than doubled from 40,000 to nearly 95,000. “In short, the war was the biggest boom Alaska ever experienced, bigger than any of the gold rushes of the past. Yet at the end of the war, with the curtailment of defense spending, Alaskans once again were confronted with the problems of a seasonal economy” (Naske and Slotnick 1987:131).

The reaction of Upper Tanana *Dineh* to the contraction of local wage labour at the completion of the building boom was varied. Some moved away to seek new wage labour on new highway projects, a few were able to pick up jobs associated with highway maintenance, while most tried to return to their mixed subsistence - trapping lifestyle of the previous decades. As noted above, however, the combination of increased White trappers reducing populations of local furbearers and the dropping of world market fur prices made this economic adaptation much less monetarily productive. Thus, after the construction boom, we find increased levels of cash transfer payments entering the region in the form of various government programs, such as pension, welfare, and unemployment benefits. What is important to note here, however, is that the subsistence - trapping lifestyle *did remain a viable way to make a living*, albeit a modest one, which compared to middle-class standards of living within the dominant consumer capitalist society was, and remains, at the “poverty level.”

However, whether this inability to be active participants in the full gluttony of consumer capitalism is best portrayed as “poverty”, and whether the economic integration of government transfer payments in order to supplement the subsistence lifestyle is indicative of “increased dependency” is a question of perspective. As citizens of the modern welfare state, *Dineh* have

every right to access these payments, as millions of others do without the stigma of *dependency*. As economic actors, doing so afforded many of them the capacity to continue a subsistence lifestyle that remained congruent with *Dineh* cultural values. Indeed, as studies in former foraging communities worldwide have demonstrated (e.g. Feit 1982, Petersen 1991, Lee 1992, Fiet 1999, Petersen 1999, Easton 2001, Nadasdy 2003), the provision and acceptance of state-sponsored capital has supported the ability to resist assimilation into the dominant consumer capitalist White culture, and promote the continued independence and vitality of a distinct *Dineh* culture and way of life, *The Dineh Way*.

Nicolas Petersen (1999) refers to this adaptation as the State's, "unwitting reproduction of indigenous social orders," and suggests:

. . . it can be argued that the major impact of the provision of the social benefits of citizenship for many . . . was not a welfare dependency but as William Arthur has so felicitously called it, a 'welfare autonomy.' . . . the receipt of full welfare payments in cash provided a more than adequate income for people to pursue indigenous agendas leaving people free to produce social and symbolic capital without the necessity for the great majority to be involved in any conventional productive activity. . . . a disengagement from [capitalist] material production in the wider economy and the selling of labour. This facilitated the reproduction of many aspects of indigenous social and cultural life which a fulltime engagement with the . . . economy would have made more difficult.

In social orders built around the urge to accumulated social capital, money and goods are valued subject to an interpersonal history of what Basil Sansom describes as help, helping, and helping out. . . . The power of cash and commoditisation to objectify and depersonalize social relations is subverted in such social orders and harnessed to internal purposes and the production and reproduction of social relations. In these contexts a great deal of the circulation of goods and money takes place through demand-sharing: people ask others for things not simply because they are needy but to test the state of a relationship in contexts where social relationships have to be constantly produced and maintained by social action, or because they want to assert a relationship or to substantiate an existing one. Such behaviour, so central to egalitarian social orders, detaches people from property and the inequalities which property can quickly produce (pp. Petersen 1999:852-853).

Such a perspective frequently emerges in discussions with Upper Tanana *Dineh* who continue to regard the subsistence lifestyle, even with its limited cash input, as the most appropriate way to live a good life and follow the *Dineh Way*. This does not imply that their society has entirely rejected the drastic changes introduced with the construction of the Alaska Highway. Rather, this also suggests that the intrusion of the capitalist economy and wage labour

system into *The Dineh Way* are not the only factors that have contributed to conditions of "dependency" or "impoverishment." We must also consider the incursion of one specific commodity – alcohol.

Effects On Native Health

Alcohol

Walter Goldschmidt summarized the health effects of the highway at Northway in 1946 as follows:

The story of Northway is indeed a sad one. It is the same story with native people throughout the nation, but it has been done in the 1940's rather than in the 1840's. The natives have been ransacked with disease, especially TB. Lately they have been getting dysentery from the water and dying of it. The whites complain that the natives haven't sense enough to boil their water. Yet it turns out that the Army built an air base upstream from the village and dumped its sewage in the river. One teacher – missionary is reputed to have pimped the native girls with the Army personnel, who probably required little of the go-between services. Liquor has come in and the old people are impatient and fearful in the face of it with their youngsters.¹²⁴

The widespread use of liquor in the Upper Tanana region had been effectively suppressed for many years by a "gentleman's agreement" among the traders not to import it, an agreement that began to break down in 1932 when, according to John Hajdukovich, Herman Kessler began to bring liquor and liquor-making materials into his store at Gardiner Creek. However, despite this, the effect of liquor on Native communities in the Upper Tanana seems to have been negligible through the 1930s. Burge was able to report that in August of 1938:

According to the local whites and the Indians themselves, there is very little whiskey consumed on the Upper Tanana. There have been cases of Indians obtaining whiskey from whites, and a few instances of home distilling, but there has been no widespread drinking. They do not apparently go to any great trouble to get liquor. . . . In general, there seems to be a strong public opinion against the introduction of liquor; during my stay, the Indians signed a petition requesting the authorities to prevent the issuance of a license for the sale of liquor to any traders operating in Tetlin, Tanana Crossing and Nabesna (p.15).

By the time Goldschmidt visited the Upper Tanana in 1946 liquor consumption patterns had changed enough to cause considerable stress to the local Native leadership. Walter Northway

¹²⁴ Walter Goldschmidt to Gale Goldschmidt, 11 July 1946. Walter Goldschmidt personal collection.

welcomed Goldschmidt to his community along with the following words: “I have tried to learn everything I can. My grandfather told me our way of doing things. He told me how to act. He told me not to use things too strong. Now the white man has brought us whiskey. Now I am losing all my own people. I am sorry about this white man business” (Goldschmidt n.d.:57-58). At Tetlin the liquor problem was considerably less. “Liquor was brought into the village for the first time this [spring], and there are just the beginnings of disaffection among the late teen and people in their early 20’s. The clans have seen what has happened at Northway and Tanacross and are hoping to avoid it.”¹²⁵ In another letter Goldschmidt writes that “I know that I sound like an old blue nose, but the problem of drinking in these places is a nasty one.”¹²⁶

The opening of the highway for civilian traffic and the development of Tok as a regional service center further entrenched liquor consumption and its related problems among the Upper Tanana, as roadhouses, cafes, and stores appeared all along the highway. As Simeone (1992:50) notes, with the building of the highway “Native people were exposed to alcohol on an unprecedented scale. Where alcohol had been relatively rare in the upper Tanana region before the War, it became commonplace afterward. Bars sprang up along the road, particularly at Tok. Alcohol became a health problem that has devastated Native communities over the fifty years since the highway was built.”

The litany of the specific effects of alcohol has been enumerated often: poverty, child neglect, spousal abuse, fighting, and accidental deaths. Two important Chisana area residents died at this time directly from alcohol. “Skookum” Lucy John, White River Johnny’s first wife, froze to death along the highway while drunk, while the wife of the recently deceased Chief Johnson, grief-struck and drunk, burned to death at Snag after inadvertently knocking over a candle in her cabin while falling into a deep sleep (Easton n.d.). However, perhaps the most recalled tragedy was the death of Jacob Isaac, a son of Chief Isaac of Tanacross. On September 8, 1945 he drowned while crossing the Tanana River from the Army field in a small boat in the company of a White soldier with whom he had been drinking.¹²⁷ Some members of the Council thought it might have been murder and met with the Commanding Officer to discuss it. "Sam had

¹²⁵ Walter Goldschmidt to Gale Goldschmidt, 20 July 1946. Personal collection of Walter Goldschmidt.

¹²⁶ Walter Goldschmidt to Gale Goldschmidt, 11 July 1946. Personal collection of Walter Goldschmidt.

¹²⁷ Letter from Sam Boyd, Postmaster, Tanacross to the US Marshall, Fairbanks, 11 Sept. 1945. U. S. Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Classified Files (1940-1956) / Box 125 / Folder Correspondence re. Tanacross.

asked the bar tenders in the Civilian Rec Hall not to sell liquor to our natives. He also asked the army not to sell beer to the natives. The White people criticized him for his discrimination...one councilman had taken a bag of beer away from Jacob earlier in the evening."¹²⁸ No charges were laid, but shortly thereafter the Native villages were placed off-limits to military personnel.

Disease and Illness

The influx of newcomers also brought a variety of illness and disease which were either previously unknown or in new strains to the *Dineh*, and many became sick and some died as a result of no immunity or low resistance. Measles, dysentery, jaundice, whooping cough, mumps, and meningitis appeared in the villages and during the winter of 1942-43 measles and influenza became epidemic all along the highway corridor in Native communities (Marchand 1943).

As we have seen, tuberculosis had already become endemic in the Upper Tanana region by the 1930s but the increased ease and speed of travelling among communities afforded by the highway embedded it further in nearly every village. Tubercular death rates for Alaskan Native people were dreadfully high, particularly when compared to the general American death rates, as shown in Table VII, below.

Table VII. Tubercular Death Rates per 100,000 1940-1945.

Year	Alaska Natives	All U.S.A.
1940	367.3	45.9
1941	426.5	44.6
1942	340.3	43.1
1943	346.2	42.6
1944	362.2	41.3
1945	359.1	40.1

By 1943, Alaskan Native health statistics showed grim life expectancy of morbidity and mortality for the average Native person, as revealed Table IX, below.

¹²⁸ Letter from Aida I. Boyd, Teacher, Tanacross, to Don Foster, General Superintendent, Alaska Native Service, 11 September 1945. U. S. Archives. RG 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Entry 121, Central Correspondence Files (1940-1956) / Box 125 / Folder Correspondence re. Tanacross.

Table VIII. Mortality Statistics, Alaska, 1943.¹²⁹

	All Alaskans	White Alaskans	Native Alaskans	United States
Infant Mortality 1943 (per 1000 live births)	119.6	37.9	180.3	40.4
Birth Rate per 1000	22.7	18.3	29.8	
Death Rate per 1000		13.3	24.0	
CAUSE OF DEATH				
General Mortality 1943	1,322	520	802	
TB	297	17	273	409.5
Heart Disease	170	134	36	234.4
Accidents (other than car)	127	79	48	174.1
Pneumonia	117	19	98	161.3
Whooping Cough	62	0	62	85.5

At particular risk from exposure to these illnesses were the young and the elderly, and many Upper Tanana *Dineh* of these ages died during the 1940s.

According to Walter Mason, officially Army medical personnel had no responsibility for the health of Native people along the highway. However, there are several accounts of their providing medical aid to Upper Tanana *Dineh* who became ill. Of particular note is the case of Joseph Tommy Johnny, a son of White River Johnny and his second wife Cecily. Mr. Johnny had contracted a particularly virulent form of tuberculosis of the skin and was believed to be dying by his parents when the Army arrived. The Army flew him out for treatment at the Native tuberculosis sanatorium at Sitka, where a series of operations and treatments cured him.¹³⁰

Another “hidden” activity of Army personnel was the disbursement of army rations and equipment to the *Dineh*. This was completely against all policy, however it is recalled by some Natives how boxes of food would “fall” off a truck while in transport; in actual fact some soldiers were deliberately dropping a case or two off their trucks along the highway for the

¹²⁹ Foster to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 11 January 1946, re. 1943 Statistics.

¹³⁰ Interviews with Joseph Tommy Johnny and Walter Mason (Easton n.d.).

express use of the *Dineh*. In addition to food, some *Dineh* received ammunition, which was in short supply commercially during the war. Finally, *Dineh* scavenged additional food or equipment from army and civilian dumps along the road.

In late 1943 the dumping of food and other stores along the White River in the vicinity of the highway was reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In bringing this to the attention of the War Department's Security and Intelligence Division (G-2) in December of '43, J. Edgar Hoover also noted he had been, "advised that many Indians in the vicinity of the White River have already removed a large supply of usable articles," including canned goods sufficient "to feed themselves and their sled dogs for two or three years."¹³¹

A subsequent investigation confirmed the existence and location of a cache, "two miles down the east bank of the White River from the junction of the river and the Alaska Highway." The cache had been observed in June of 1943 by a Utah Construction Co. worker and consisted of, "about two tons of canned Army meats such as Spam, Vienna sausage, meat and vegetable hash, pork luncheon meat, etc., all of this in apparent good condition and appearing as if it had been merely dumped off a truck in a haphazard fashion and not piled there." However, "upon arrival at the above described scene, it was discovered that subject cache had been removed by some unknown person and was no longer in evidence, with the exception of a few crushed cans of meat and vegetable hash of Quartermaster origin, and broken, empty boxes which had contained Army foodstuffs." In addition, during the course of their search, "three other food caches containing abandoned Army supplies and some valuable road construction equipment were discovered." The report concludes: "With regard to the mention in the basic letter of Indians obtaining large amounts of canned meats, it can be said that the local Indians had been previously offered Army foodstuffs that had become damaged in shipment and were not prone to accept them. This curious fact can be explained by the existence of much work, high wages, high fur prices and the difficulties of transporting any of the aforementioned foodstuffs. It is also notable that canned meats are not considered good fare for sled dogs and are too heavy to carry on long treks by dog team."¹³²

¹³¹ Hoover, J. E. to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, War Department, 4 December 1943. US Archives. RG319 / Entry 47 / Box 1155 / Folder 370.330 Alaska 461.

¹³² Whitham, S. E. to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, 22 January 1944. . RG319 / Entry 47 / Box 1155 / Folder 370.330 Alaska 461.

A tragic unintended consequence of this practice was the death of Chief Johnson, the *Dineh Huskeh* of the Lower Chisana Basin/Scottie Creek borderlands from about the 1920s until his death. Mrs. Bessie John recalled that he became terribly ill after eating a can of peaches he had gotten from an Army dump (along with a good pair of boots), and the description of his painful death at Snag corresponds well with that of contracting botulism (Easton n.d.).

A final, absurd action by the Army had a detrimental effect on some local *Dineh*. This was the destruction of the Native graveyard at Snag, which was bulldozed through during the construction of the road from the Alaska Highway down to the airport at Snag. The senselessness of this to the *Dineh* merely confirmed their worst perceptions of non-Native people. Such a disturbance of the resting place of their relatives, who in *Dineh* cultural belief were still alive in spirit form awaiting their opportunity for reincarnation, caused many considerable psychic pain. This act, combined with the tragic deaths of Chief Johnson and his wife *Lakduu*, symbolically presaged to many *Dineh* the great difficulties they were to face in the years to come with this new road of access to their homeland.

The Consolidation of State Authority in the Chisana River Basin

Judge Wickersham's 1915 prediction of the overwhelming of the Upper Tanana River basin was thirty years off the mark and was caused not by a railway but a highway. The building of the Alaska Highway transformed the borderlands region from one of difficult access to one of direct access and facilitated the further assumption of authority by the State over the lives of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*. In the case of Alaskan portion of the region this was actually an extension and acceleration of processes of State hegemony begun in the 1920s. In the case of the Yukon portion of the region this was really the first time since the year of the Chisana Gold Rush that Canadian authorities concerned with Aboriginal people turned their attention towards it. The road allowed more frequent visits by a variety of state representatives, including social workers, development officers, Indian Agents, medical personnel, and educators, as well as immigrant settlers, itinerant capitalists, and a variety of missionaries. This increased access resulted in new interference into and authority over the lives of the *Dineh* in the region. In turn, the Upper Tanana *Dineh* became increasingly aware of the need to react politically to, incorporate judiciously, and resist these attempts to assimilate their society into the encapsulating states of Canada and the United States.

I do not intend here to fully explore this later history of Native–White interaction, since the basic elements of this relationship were already established by the mid-1940s as we have discussed above. Rather I will merely identify some major defining events, which illustrate the expansion of this relationship during the latter half of the 20th century.

The concerns expressed by Walter Northway and other *Dineh* since the late 1930s regarding the need for some formal recognition of the Upper Tanana land rights became increasingly pressing. In 1947, a trip to Tanacross, Tetlin, Northway, and Mentasta Lake was made by J. B. Strong of the BIA in order “to ascertain how the livelihood of the natives of those villages is being affected by the increase in White settlers along the Alaska Highway. It was found that the natives of all the villages except Tetlin, which has a reservation, have been bothered considerably by White encroachments on their trapping areas, and particularly by transient muskrat hunters who camp along the road, clean out the muskrats which are the principal fur animal of the area, and drive on.” Strong also noted that there were two liquor dealers who had set up on or within the borders of the Tetlin Reserve in order to sell alcohol to the Natives.¹³³ This information, along with Walter Goldschmidt’s report and the lobbying efforts of the American Association of Indian Affairs did lead to a withdrawal order of nearly 208,000 acres around Northway that year, but the withdrawal was revoked in 1954 without any designation of reserve lands for the *Dineh* of the Alaska borderlands (Brown 1984:170-172).

The subsequent resolution of the Alaskan Indian lands question over the following twenty years was a complex battle waged between Alaskan Native organizations, their real and assumptive allies in a variety of lobby organizations in the lower '48, the Federal and State representative governments, a myriad of State and Federal bureaucracies, Alaskan, United States, and international commercial and conservation interests, and innumerable individuals, the full complexity of which will probably never be able to be realized. Volumes of histories and analyses have been offered thus far, with more surely to come, and I do not wish here to enter into that fray. Donald Mitchell’s two-volume history of “the story of Alaska Natives and their lands” (Mitchell 1997, 2001), written from the perspective of having served as general legal counsel to the Alaska Federation of Natives provides as good an initial guide to this historical labyrinth as any, to which I readily aver (but see also Case 1984 for a focus on the legal

¹³³ October 1947 Report. US Archives. RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / Central Correspondence Files 1940-1956 Alaska / Box 16 / Folder 11267-1948-AK-032 Monthly Reports – ANS, Part 1

implications). It is sufficient to say that President Nixon signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) into law in 1971. Under its provisions all aboriginal rights and land claims in Alaska were extinguished and replaced with specific lands, monetary compensation, and defined and limited aboriginal rights. Among other significant trade-offs, Alaska Natives gave up any aboriginal hunting and fishing rights and were subject to the hunting and fishing laws and regulations of general application.

Entrenchment for recognition of Native land rights in Yukon can be traced back as far as January 1902 when the Lake Laberge *Huskeh* Jim Boss, recognizing the lasting effect of the Klondike Gold Rush, wrote the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Canada to request compensation and lands set aside for the Natives of the Yukon. "Tell the King very hard," he wrote, "we want something for our Indians because they take our land." The Canadian Government's policy response for the next seventy years, with a few limited exceptions, was benign neglect of this and subsequent requests for negotiations on Yukon Native land claims.

In 1973 the Yukon Native Brotherhood published *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* and submitted it to the Trudeau government of the day as their opening position in the modern land claims process. This eventually led to the territory-wide Umbrella Final Agreement between the Government of Canada, the Council for Yukon Indians, and the Government of the Yukon in 1993. It stipulated the common principles for the negotiation of individual land and self-government agreements to be negotiated with the individual Indian Act Bands of the Yukon. Learning from the experience of their Alaskan cousins, the *Dineh* of the Yukon steadfastly insisted upon, and retained, their aboriginal hunting and fishing rights to take wild game at any time of the year, anywhere in the Yukon, for the purposes of subsistence.

The borderland *Dineh* of Canada, who are now politically organized under the White River First Nation, were not able to reach a satisfactory local agreement and refused to approve a proposed final agreement in 2004. In April of 2005 the Federal Parliament's approved mandate for negotiations of Native Land Claims in Yukon lapsed and formal negotiations have now ended. Thus the White River First Nation, who extended membership to many of their relatives resident in Alaska who themselves or whose ancestors had lived off the common lands of the borderlands in the past, remain without a land claim agreement and retain their constitutionally protected Aboriginal Rights and claim over the full extent of their traditional territory in Canada.

Returning to the immediate post-highway years, *Dineh* in the Yukon were also faced with new challenges of the post-highway world. One of the most influential on the lives of the children and their parents of that era was the unintended trauma associated with the extension of educational opportunities for the *Dineh* of the borderlands.

In 1947 the Catholic Oblate missionary order (OMI) began to operate an itinerant school at Snag village. So few attended that no federal assistance for the provision of education to Natives was sought. Nevertheless, in 1948 the Oblates established a church and school at Snag under the direction of Father P. Rigaud. The initial resistance of the children was overcome by providing candy to everyone who attended. "I remember very well the beginning of that school," Rigaud later recalled, "It was kind of funny."

First of all there was nobody. I rang the bell in the morning and nobody came. And then, after around eleven o'clock, I heard the screaming outside and I looked - it was Old Lucy Johnson that had Esther Tom Tom and was pushing her to the school. Finally, they reached the house and Lucy opened the door and pushed Esther in and closed the door behind. And I went to Esther and I told her, I said "Come on." But she held my hand and she bit me sound. But after a while, anyway, I gave her candy and she come down and in the meantime Lucy was getting another one. It was Agnes [Tom Tom].

[They were] the two that I started school with that morning. We didn't teach anything, but anyway I gave them candy and told them to bring the others in the afternoon. Finally, in the afternoon, the whole group came. Big boys, big girls, small boys, small girls. Everybody was coming. Then we started the school, you know, and I told them we would have some play and this and that and everybody seems to be happy. And, finally, the next day they were there and [we kept] on going like that. Especially the big girls, Alice, Bill, and Ida, they were quite helpful, I must say, taking care of the little ones and all that.

There were the big boys, there was Joe Jack, Walter too. Johnny Tom Tom was very smart at the time. He was a good kid, very smart. All of them were smart. I must say that those kids from Snag, in no time they learned how to read and their calculations, their arithmetic, addition, subtraction, in no time at all. They were very smart, I must say that. . . . [I] stayed two or three months with them.¹³⁴

In 1949 the school was held further south, at the Native fishing camp at Edith Creek, in order to accommodate students from both the Burwash and White River areas.

¹³⁴ Interview with Fa. Pierre Rigaud, OMI by Elizabeth Blair, 26 May, 1995, Whitehorse, Yukon.

In 1951, with federal funding, the Lower Post Indian Residential School was opened by the Oblates south of Watson Lake, in the far southwest Yukon. This ended the early era of local Native village schools, which in the case of the Upper Tanana and Stewart River *Dineh* was short indeed. Instead, a bus was sent up along the highway, collecting all the school-age children they could find. If parents would not release them they were told that it was the law to send their children to school and they could face fines if they did not release them; furthermore, federal legislation implementing Family Allowance Benefits, which had been extended to the Yukon borderland *Dineh* a few years earlier, were directly tied to school attendance by children. Authorities had the power to cut off payment of this small source of capital, which had become increasingly important with continuing collapse of the fur trade market thru the 1950s and the loss of subsistence hunting opportunities in the Kluane Game Sanctuary. They were promised that the children could return in the summer; what they were not told is that the parents would have to pay for their transportation to and from the school, nearly 1,200 kilometers away. When children could not return the following year due to the costs some *Dineh* parents of coming-of-school-age children decided to move – either over to Alaska where there were local schools or deep into the bush away from the highway in an attempt to avoid the Oblates. Several mixed race families, including Mary and Pete Eikland, moved to Haines Junction, where their children could attend the territorial school, but full-blood Natives were prohibited in Yukon's segregated territorial schools, a situation which would not change until the 1960s.

Ironically, as *Dineh* children were being taken from their parents in order to “civilize them through modern education,” a territorial school was opened in Beaver Creek in 1953 for children of highway maintenance workers stationed there, but it too was for White children only.¹³⁵ This situation effectively decimated the Yukon portion of the borderlands of young *Dineh*, many of whom were not to return until the 1960s, some of whom were never to return, leaving behind a clutch of elderly and a few holdouts, such as White River Johnny and his family, the elderly Enochs, and William Peter; Bell and Laura John, Andy Frank, and Titus and Annie John abandoned their sometimes residences at Snag and *Nii-ii* and took up permanent residence on the Alaskan side, although they continued to travel seasonally up Scottie Creek to hunt and fish.

It is almost impossible to imagine the challenges which the children sent to the Lower Post school faced. Many, now between their late 30s and early 60s, simply refuse to talk of their experience, the trauma too great even now to recall. Language use was punished, Native culture denigrated as savagery, and rote mechanical behaviour instilled through monotonous exercises and unforgiving discipline. Many who eventually returned to the borderlands still have an unconscious prohibition against using their Native language as adults, even though in safe eliciting environments, such as workshops at the Yukon Native Language Centre, they demonstrate they retain a full ability to do so. Others suffer from remorseful self-abuse through alcohol, drugs, or criminal behaviour, holding a deeply ingrained self-loathing for themselves and their Native culture.

I've seen X around Whitehorse off and on the last month or so and met him on Main Street in Whitehorse today. He told me he was doing some time up at the Salvation Army half-way house for breach of probation - drinking got him two months back in the penal home. Initially he was very comic about it, saying that "It's not such a bad life. They feed you and you got a nice bed and I can go out every day. Of course I have to be back by five o'clock, but that's dinner time anyways." It was the first time that X had admitted his troubles directly to me and he surprised me by continuing. He's in until the 5th of June, he told me.

"Well, that's not so bad," I offered, "you just don't want to make a career of it."

"Oh, I'll be back...there's no doubt about it," he replied. "It's my second home, jail. I'll always be back. I'll keep trying to stop drinking but I don't think I'll ever be able to, not completely. I've been trying different things, new ways of trying to deal with it. They've some new programs now that they've admitted they were wrong and I'll try them and see how I do. The best is still the bush, though, hunting, camping out. No booze out there and you're doing something important, you know it, you can feel it. But it's hard to get over it. I'm suing them, and I'll keep that up. If I win, well, at least I'll have some money."

I began to understand his oblique references to "they" and "them", but not wanting to pry and wishing to emphasize the positive I tried to steer the conversation away from the latent topic. "By the time you are out Shakwak should be started up. You should be able to get a job there pretty quick and put away some good cash." The Shakwak project was the name for the Alaska Highway realignment through the Shakwak Trench, from Whitehorse to the border, which had been under construction off and on over the past decade;

¹³⁵ Almstrom, Marjorie E. *A Century of Schooling: Education in the Yukon, 1861 - 1961*. Self-Published mss. (367 pp). Revised ed. (1991) Northern Studies Collection, Yukon College Library (LA 418.Y8 A45 1991) and Easton, n.d.

additional funding from the US government, which had financed eighty percent of the work to date had been announced last fall.

“I don't think so. Why work, when I've got such a good lifestyle already. Good food, warm bed. Work like that is just an excuse to drink. Up at the jail, there are three of us, all the same. The guard comes into our room and sees us sitting there, he says 'You guys got the cleanest room.' Of course we do, that's what they trained us for; you get up in the morning and you make your bed, tight as a board. At night, before you go to sleep, you tidy up your room, fold your clothes, put everything away. We all grown up now, but we still do it, like robots, every night and every morning. We're still scared, you see. That's why we all drink.”

I could not avoid the topic any longer. "You were at Lower Post," I said, referring to the Catholic-run federal residential school for Indians, which operated down south near Watson Lake from 1951 to the mid-60s.

“Yeah. And that's why I drink. I know it. See that guy?” He gestured his head to a fellow walking down the street. “He used to be a great basketball player. He was over at Courdecet Hall,” which was a non-denominational Indian residential school opened later in Whitehorse. “You couldn't touch him. The only way I could stop him was to trip him as he went by. That's cheating but you couldn't touch him otherwise. He hasn't played since he finished school. He's like us. I didn't see him for years. I thought he must be dead by now, but I met him last week again. "I thought you were dead," I told him. He gets out to Dawson or Pelly Crossing when he can, and takes some time off; that's why I haven't seen him. But he comes back, like the rest of us.”

“I'm a grown man now, on the outside. I got a six-year-old daughter. I was talking to my wife yesterday when it was raining. She said my daughter had gotten my big parka on. "What are you doing?" "I'm taking this to Daddy," she says, "he must be cold." She wanted to bring me my coat. Here I am in Whitehorse, in the rain, and she wants to take care of me.”¹³⁶

After the construction of the highway, the village at the mouth of Snag Creek became the principal Native settlement in the Yukon portion of the borderlands, having attracted a number of Upper Tanana-speaking *Dineh* from the lower Chisana River basin to the west and Northern Tutchone-speaking *Dineh* who exploited the area to the east and north of the White River. The extension of road access from Whitehorse to Mayo in 1950 led the Hudson's Bay Company to close its trading post at the mouth of the Stewart River and the Northern Tutchone *Dineh* who lived in that area moved en masse to take up residence along with other *Dineh* at Snag village, beginning the contemporary integration of these two language groups within a single

¹³⁶ Interview with Anonymous, 19 May 1999, Whitehorse. Easton n.d. For more detailed discussions of the Indian Residential School experience in Yukon see King 1967 and Coates 1984, 1987.

community. These people would eventually become the core ancestors of the modern Indian Act Band of the White River First Nation of Beaver Creek, but not before a twenty-five year period of forced assimilation with the Native settlement at Burwash in order to reduce the administrative costs of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs.¹³⁷ This experience was to have lasting effects on the internal social relationships between these *Dineh* and their external political relationships with the federal government (Easton 2004; Nadasdy 2004).

The highway also allowed for the regulation of border crossings for the first time. However, since the American customs was stationed at Tok and the Canadian station was on the highway about a mile south of the Snag Creek bridge, enforcement was intermittent until the establishment of the ALCAN border station on the 141st parallel in 1972. As a result, some *Dineh* continued to pass back and forth from the lower Chisana River basin up the Mirror and Scottie Creek tributaries to hunt and fish. But not all; visits by Customs agents were made to the villages to inform the residents that if they were living on one side or the other of the line they were not to cross it to trap or hunt, and many *Dineh* began to self-restrict their movements under the fear of being caught and punished. The Snag Customs station was close enough to the border for Canadian agents to patrol the actual border with regularity and prohibit cross-border entry of a variety of goods, including county foods and potlatch gifts (Easton n.d). This was a one-way prohibition, however; traditional Native commodities of truck and barter were allowed freely into the United States from Canada under a provision of the Treaty Amity and Commerce (The Jay Treaty), which the United States yet recognizes; Canada has always refused to recognize the application of the Jay Treaty provisions since its federation, maintaining its Parliament has never approved it, a technical point based on the fact the 1794 treaty was between the United States and Great Britain (Case 1984; Issac 1999).

Another serious effect of the increased accessibility of the borderlands by state representatives was the enforcement of new regulations to manage fur trapping and recreational, commercial, and subsistence hunting and fishing, a topic of enormous complexity and significant differences on either side of the border. In general however, the *Dineh* on both sides of the border felt similar effects.

¹³⁷ Draft Statement of Claim by the White River First Nation on “Wrongful Amalgamation” to the Government of Canada. White River First Nation, Beaver Creek. No date.

Subsistence hunting allowances for aboriginal people had been allowed in both jurisdictions during most of the 20th century, however the sale of wild game had been managed in Alaska since the first Alaska Game Act of 1902 and restricted to the periods of open season hunting specified in the Act's regulations. In Yukon there was little regulation of market hunting until its sudden prohibition in 1947, thereby ending a source of capital and goods for *Dineh* since the initiation of contact with Whites in the previous century. Trapping regulations and trapline registration were introduced earlier in Alaska (1920) and enforced with more vigour; in Canada little was done to interfere with the principal foundation of the Yukon Native's peripheral relationship with the external capitalist economy - the federal government position being that they were "best left as Indians" (Coates 1991) – until the introduction of trapline registration in 1949 and enforcement of additional trapping regulations in 1950. (Mitchell 1997: 179-192; McCandless 1985).

The post-highway restrictions of the game market were not entirely a conservationist reaction to over-hunting but had a commercial element embedded in it as well. The improvements in the efficient transport of foodstuffs, which the highway allowed, stimulated commercial interests in expanding commodity sales in the Yukon. Newly emergent notions of the superior sanitary and health benefits of industrially produced foods, lobbying by merchants, and conservation concerns enmeshed into an unrecognized collusion of interests in closing the wild game market in Yukon and combined with the new paternalism of actively working to change the life ways of Yukon Natives to more closely mimic that of the expanding post-war White community.

The recognition of traplines had been asked for by Native trappers for some years previous in an effort to protect their traditional fur harvest areas from encroachment by non-Native trappers. Its implementation, however, had precisely the opposite effect. Registration came with regulation, in particular annual registration fees to be paid and demonstration of continued use. Failure to meet these requirements would lead to the trapline being regarded as lapsed and open for registration to another interested party. Some traplines were lost when the Native users failed to register them, pay their fees, or provide evidence of use to the central bureaucrats in Whitehorse (Coates and Morrison 1988:266-268). Restrictions were also introduced to hunting, fishing, and trapping within the areas granted to commercial big-game

hunting operations, and the enforcement of provisions of international conservation treaties, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty, was expanded into the borderlands (McCandless 1985).

Several Upper Tanana *Dineh* recall the fear they held during their continued use and occupation of the lower Chisana River after increased enforcement of hunting regulations were made possible after the highway was built. They camouflaged the roof of the high cache at High Cache with branches, for fear that planes flying overhead were game wardens looking for Native hunting camps. Another said that for years he only ate moose meat in the bush and in the dark, since it had been obtained out of season and was illegal; he would cache it some distance from the village and sneak out at night to eat (Easton, n.d.).

Besides stricter hunting regulations of general application, the increased pressure brought to bear on wild game by non-Native transient hunters led to the establishment of parks, game preserves, and wildlife refuges during the subsequent decades. The Kluane Game Sanctuary southeast of the White River was converted into Kluane National Park in 1972, while the area to the northwest of the White to the international border remained designated a game sanctuary. The Wrangell – St. Elias National Park and Preserve, encompassing the upper course of the Chisana River, and the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, which embraces the lower course of the river, were established in 1980 with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), bringing land management of the entire Chisana River basin under the purview of the National Park Service and the National Wildlife Service in each respective area. Exceptions were Native Allotments and Native Corporation lands identified under ANCSA, and subsequently identified Native Historical Places and Cemeteries as required under that agreement. However these lands represent a paltry proportion of the total area (Bleakley 2002).

Title VIII of ANILCA provided for preferential subsistence hunting rights to be granted to “rural Alaska residents” on federal public lands in Alaska and required the State of Alaska to establish similar provisions on state and private lands if the state wished to assume authority for fish and game management on federal Alaskan lands. “In some sense ANILCA is a ‘settlement’ of Alaska Native fishing and hunting rights, because it affords the predominately Native population of rural Alaska a unique set of protections and preferences for off-reservation subsistence uses of wildlife. However, ANILCA is unique in the field of United States Indian legislation because it also extends these same protections to non-Native rural residents who participate in the predominately Native subsistence economy” (Case 1984:26). What ANILCA

did not anticipate was the near-impossibility of integrating this federal legislation with politically defined Alaska citizen interests as represented by the State of Alaska, a contest which remains unresolved to this day (Norris 2002). In sum, it is clear that the post-highway period introduced a wide variety of political, legal, social, and economic factors which combined to dramatically reduce the availability of wild game and fish in support of Native subsistence needs.

A final post-highway effect has been continued military activity in the area after the Second World War, as a variety of training ranges were established in “the wilds of Alaska.” This has led to a number of problems, including restricted access, regular large and small scale military exercises, the disposal of unused munitions and other harmful pollutants across the landscape, and affront to Native spiritualism in the case of exercises being held in areas of importance within clan mythologies. Recently, some effort has been made to address some of these issues by the American military (Diane Hansen, personal communication).

In conclusion, the building of the Alaska highway dramatically effected the lives of the Upper Tanana *Dineh*, not the least of which was the assumption of authority by the State over the lands of the Chisana River basin and the lives of its traditional inhabitants. Perhaps the most bitter recollection of the ability of the State to enforce its administrative authority is the failed potlatch for Mary Eikland in 1981, when hundreds of blankets and other potlatch goods were seized by Canadian Customs agents as illegal importations from American resident relatives and friends travelling to her funeral potlatch in Beaver Creek, Yukon. As a result the Upper Tanana have not held a proper potlatch ever since on the Canadian side, and a few elderly American *Dineh* never returned across the border again. The loss of one of the defining elements of their cultural identity as *Dineh* is heavily felt in Yukon. Fortunately, ever resourceful in developing the means to sustain, confirm, and celebrate their unity as a distinctive *Dineh* society and culture they have adapted to the new circumstances by holding this important ceremony for Canadian resident Upper Tanana *Dineh* in Northway or Tanacross, where the tradition continues to flourish.

CONCLUSION



Figure 67. *Nelna* - Mrs. Bessie John.

(Yukon Native Language Centre)

My people help each other. Someone there [in Alaska] wants to bring me fur coat, shirt, that's what I like. Rabbit skin, martin, potlatch food. They [customs] want tax. It hurts my heart. . . . Where do government people think I came from? A hole in the ground?. . . . Who is that Queen Elizabeth anyway? Who made her? We are Queen here, we all are Queens, Native people. (Bessie John, speaking to representatives of Canadian Customs in Beaver Creek).

The existence of the International Border of two different nation-states dividing the land and people of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* remains a vexing issue for the descendants of the Aboriginal occupants of the Chisana River basin. The resentment of the arbitrary imposition of the boundary between Canada and the United States upon the lands of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* is deep, separating as it did “Our Great People” from each other with different laws, education, and regulations over their activities. Today, many *Dineh* work hard to maintain their filial and clan relationships across the border, travelling or telephoning regularly between Beaver Creek,

Northway, Tanacross, Tetlin, Mentasta, Chitna, Whitehorse, Fairbanks, and other places where relatives and friends have settled, bringing gifts of the land, sharing memories and contemporary experience, and consolidating a continued ethnic identity as the *Dineh* of the borderlands, whose territory encompasses the Chisana River basin.

And while their dispersal from the Chisana River basin, by the variety of factors which I have described in this report, has resulted in a serious erosion of contemporary knowledge of the area's history, use, and potential among many younger *Dineh*, there remains considerable contemporary attachment to this land yet today. It is embodied in the practices of the *Dineh* who still live on and off the land in the area of the borderlands in order to "keep the land open," of parents who take their children regularly out to the borderlands for evening walks "just to look around," during which they are told their *Dineh* history and taught *The Dineh Way*. Much of this contemporary attachment and practice is invisible to the casual outside observer, non-Natives believing that the integration of television, automobiles, homeboy fashions, and hip-hop music demonstrates the final assimilation of the *Dineh* into western capitalist consumer culture. But the image is a chimera, unreflective of the social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs and practices which, though unarguably changed by history, remain unalterably *Dineh* in nature.

In July of 1994 I sat with Mrs. Bessie John outside her home in Beaver Creek, passing the afternoon working spruce root I had collected for her the day before into basketry thread in the old way, using knife, tooth, fingernail. Along the way we talked about the education of the young, although in retrospect I realize she was also talking about the education of people like me. Indian people need to teach their young themselves at home by talking their language and sharing their knowledge, she said. By way of example, she told me how the night before her granddaughter had come over to ask for some medicine for her mother. The young girl spoke to her in English. Bessie replied in Upper Tanana - "I don't understand you. Speak my language" - at which her granddaughter repeated her request in a halting Upper Tanana. Bessie then got up and hugged her and told her how good she was and got medicine for the mother.

"This is the way my great people taught their children. Grandma, grandfather, mother, father, all speak their language to their kids at home. They put them in bed early and tell them stories. If Indian people did that our children would be all right."

After a moment of silence, she said, "There is lots of White people who are dead in this land now," she said, meaning, I think, that the "English" were here to stay." There's two now,"

placing her hands together and then opening them and moving them a little away from each other, "Indian people and English," raising each hand in turn for emphasis and then laying them open, palm up on the table side by side. "Both together are here and our children need their ABC's from school and I teach my grandchildren here."

"Indian and White," she repeated, now holding her hands apart and then bringing them together to join as an intertwined clasping of her fingers, "both live here on this earth. We got to share with you this place here, for all people, Africans, Chinese, White, and Indian. We all work together for a good life here. My grandchildren go to White school, learn to read, math, and I tell them my life and then together we gonna make this world a beautiful, beautiful place. . . . Then I can go on my trail to heaven."

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List of Appendices

The Appendices to this document are of several sorts. Some are embedded in this document as simple text. A second set is provided as text files in accompanying print volumes, either because their nature is somewhat confidential or to include them in this volume would make it overwhelmingly large. Finally, a third set is provided as separate text or database files on the accompanying CD-ROM in order to allow their use within a variety of computer programmes.

The distribution and titles of the Appendices is follows:

Appendices Attached to this Document

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Appendix 23 - Geoffrey T. Bleakley’s Alphabetical Listing of Chisana Miners and Prospectors

Appendices Attached in this Document

Appendix 1 - Census Records of the Upper Tanana Basin

The geographic isolation of the Chisana basin through to the building of the Alaska Highway in the mid-1940s has left us with an imperfect accounting of the region's native population in the official censuses of the State. We are fortunate however in the fact that early explorers, missionaries, traders, and anthropologists conducted a variety of censuses through their time in the region.

The use of these records is not without problems, however. Among these are:

- The use of english equivalents of native names, or no name at all, such as recording simply “Wife”, “four children”, “Old Mama”, for examples.
- The use of different names for the same people or the same name for different people. Among the Upper Tanana Dineh any one individual was known by a variety of both personal names and nicknames. In addition, the appropriate name to call an individual was informed by the kinship relationships. A man might be called X by a younger man from another clan, Y by his maternal niece, and Z by his male cross-cousin of similar age with whom he hunts, for example. As well, many people were known by a variety of English names as well. The last resident Upper Tanana Dineh of the upper Chisana basin, for example, has been variously recorded as “Scottie Creek Joe”, “Chisana Joe”, “Joe Justin”, and “Joe Austin”.
- The recording of children as birth children of the person they are living with, rather than their adoptive status. At a social level this is not a particular problem, since adoption of orphaned children and the “giving” of an infant to childless couples or couples deemed more capable of raising the child in the case of young unwed mothers was a common social practice among the Upper Tanana and resulted in the creation of a fictive kinship linkage socially recognized as legitimate.
- Inconsistencies in date and place of birth. The inconsistencies in birthdate can be accounted for by the general disregard in recording precise numbers of years in Upper Tanana culture; people were infants, children, adults, and Elders, standing in relative

older or younger status with any other person. The inconsistencies in birthplace can be accounted for by a number of factors. A principal factor must be differences in place of birth and place of childhood and place of current residence. To ask the question “where are you from” of a nomadic people who live at many different places in the course of a year, let alone over the course of a lifetime, is extremely problematic. Another source is the lack of correspondence between English and Upper Tanana geography. For example, an individual may be identified as being born at “Scottie Creek” in one record and at “Chisana” in another. This might mean they were born at Big Scottie Creek village, which lies on Scottie Creek at its confluence with the Chisana River, or one of several camps or villages along the east side of the lower Chisana, or simply a difference between where one was born and where one was principally raised. Finally, as the mapping of primary villages shows, there were a number of villages along Scottie Creek, none of which would have an English name and thus all of these villages are possible candidates for actual location of birth.

Despite these problems the records do contain much that is surely accurate or relatively so and they are of considerable interest as a result.

1A - Census of Upper Tanana, Collected by Robert McKennan, winter of 1929/30¹³⁸

The McKennan Collection at the Rasmussen Library Archives consists of field notes, mostly torn out of a small flip book (approx. 7 by 3 1/2 inches), and cut or torn to be re-arranged in topical files, generated by his fieldwork in the region in the winter of 1929 - 30, and a second, shorter trip through the area in 1964, as well as letters and notes collected from other sources.

The following represents his record of census for the area, which he personally collected in 1929/30.

Upper Nabesna - Chisana

1. Old Mama
 2. Joe - Polly 2 small girls
 3. John - Lucy Jack = grown son
 4. Titus - Corrine Ed = 14 year old son Charley = grown son
 5. Andy - Lily Belle 2 small children, 1 male, 1 female
- Men = 6 Female = 5 Children = 5 Total = 16

Last Tetling

1. Old Albert
 2. Old Lucy Daughter, son
 3. Old Lady
 4. Chief Luke - Helen
 5. Alfred - Lucy one small boy
 6. Bill - Helen 5 children = 2 male, 3 female
- Men = 5 Women = 6 Children = 7 Total = 18

Tetling

1. Old Joseph 2 grown daughter 2 small daughters
 2. Martha Titus - grown son
 3. Andrew David and Lucy 3 children (2 female, 1 male)
 4. Walter David and Lena 1 child (male)
 5. Big John and Jessie 1 son
 6. Joe John and Jessie 2 children (female)
 7. Paul Joe and Annie 4 girls
 8. Chief Peter and Eva adopted boy
 9. Jimmie Joe and Jennie 1 child (female)
- Men = 9 Women = 10 Children = 15 Total = 34

Mouth of Nabesna

1. Old Lady grown daughter
2. Mrs. Northway Maggie (grown daughter) Lee Northway
3. Bill Northway and Liza 1 grown girl 1 adopted girl
4. Walter Northway and Lily 4 children (1 male, 3 female)
5. Steve Northway and Edna 2 children (female)
6. Chief Sam and Bessie 3 children (2 male, 1 female) Fred Sam
7. Frank Sam and Annie 3 children (2 male, 1 female)
8. Peter Albert and Elsie 6 children
9. Old Ada small son

¹³⁸ Source: Robert McKennan Collection, University of Alaska - Fairbanks Rasmussen Library Archives Series 2/Box 15/Folder 120.

10. Ketchumstock Charley 1 girl (grown) Esau 2 children (1 male, 1 female)
 11. Joe Charley and Laura 2 children (1 male, 1 female)
 12. Follet Isaac and Polly (no children)
 13. Elisha and Bertha (3 children (2 male, 1 female)
 14. Big Frank Joe Frank David Frank
- Totals Men = 16 Women = 16 Children = 27

Scottie Creek

1. Chief Johnson
 2. Billy [aka, Chisana Bill/Billy/ Bill Austin/Justin]
 3. Belkai
 4. Eenuk
- 6 families 23

[n.b. It is not clear why McKennan enumerates only four family heads but then notes 6 families. Does the note imply he could not record a further two family heads but knew of them, or that a further six families of unknown character were at Scottie Creek? Certainly at least three family heads who were often resident in the Scottie Creek area are missing from the list: Little John / White River Johnny and his wives (2) and family; Bessie Mason; and Andy Frank and his children.]

SUMMARY TOTALS

Chisana / Upper Nabesna = Men 6 Women 5 Children 5 Total = 16
Last Tetlin = Men 5 Women 5 Children 7 Total = 18
Tetlin = Men 9 Women 10 Children 15 Total = 34
Lower Nabesna = Men 16 Women 16 Children 27 Total = 59
Scottie Creek = 23 Total
Total Regional Population = 150

1B - List of Residents of Nabesna and Scottie Creek, 1937, by the Episcopal Church¹³⁹

This list of residents of Nabesna and Scottie Creek was compiled for the Episcopal church, quite likely by Miss Lucy Wright. It may be the basis of the census in McKennan's field archives, but it differs in both detail - listing specific children of parents, for example - and in facts (some people do not appear in both lists). Together the two provide a fairly comprehensive census of the region in the winter of 1937-38. The list of birthdays is from the same archival source.

<u>NABESNA</u>						
<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Albert	[Peter?]	1887(?)	Nab			
wife?	Elsie			Old Northway	Anna Northway	
Albert	Pauline	April, 1911	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Oscar	10-8-18	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Northway	1-10-20	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Ada	12-25-23	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	12-24-23, from Ada Gallon
	Daniel	12-10-25	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Abraham	12-10-25	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Alice	12-6-27	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Kenneth	9-6-29	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Jennie	8-15-33	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	Roger	4-1-37	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
	16 children	altogether	includes Lily	Dick, and others	from Ada G.	
Albert	Oscar	10-8-18	Nab	[Peter?] Albert	Elsie	
wife	Mary	Oct 1919	Last Tetlin	Dawson Luke	Lucy	
Albert	Mary Jean	4-4-37	Nab	Oscar Albert	Mary	
Demit	Elisha	1867 (?)	Kechemstuk	Jack Demit		
wife	Bertha	1897	Scottie Crk	John	Annie John	
Demit	Fred	9-1-24	Nab		Bertha	
Demit	Jessie	11-30-28	Nab	Elisha	Bertha	
Demit	Palace [Polly]	8-30-31	Nab	Elisha	Bertha	

¹³⁹ Source: Episcopal Diocese of Alaska, 1887; Subgroup III Parish Records, 1896 - ; St. Timothy's Mission Records, 1937 - 1976, Miscellaneous Records, 1937 – 1972. Series 2/Box 2/Folder 2 - Census, Upper Tanana River, St. Timothy's Mission, Tanacross Alaska, 1937 -1939.

Demit	Herbert Allen	9-5-35	Nab	Elisha	Bertha	
Demit	Doriss	11-2-36	Nab	Elisha	Bertha	
Demit	Esau	1912		Charlie Demit	Mary Sam	died 11-1-38
Demit	Joe Charlie	3-7-10	Nab	Charlie Demit	Mary Sam	
wife	Laura (Eliza)	1910	Last Tetlin	Old Northway	Anna Northway	
	Louise	2-4-28	Last Tetlin	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	
	James	2-3-30	Last Tetlin	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	
	Carl	3-15-32	Gardiner Crk	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	
	Carrie	1-19-35	Nab	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	
	Eula	11-23-37	Nab	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	died
	Joslyn	2-27-38	Nab	Joe Charlie Demit	Laura	
Isaac	Follet (Philp)		Mansfield	Chief Isaac		died 11-6-38
[wife?]	Pauline	April 1911	Nab	Peter Albert	Elsie Northway	
John	Annie	1862	Scottie Crk	John		
	Bertha Demit					
	Martha Demit					
	Pauline [Polly]					in Shushana with 2 children
Kye	Andrew		Scottie Crk	Bill Kye	Laura	
wife	Maggie	11-8-14	Nabesna	Old Northway	Anna John	
Kye	Dora	11-13-38	Nab	Andrew Kye	Maggie	
Mark	Joe		Mansfield	Big Mark	Agnes J.	
wife	Martha [John]		Scottie Crk	John	Annie	
Mark	Agnes	5-8-33	Chisana R.	Joe Mark	Martha	
Mark	John	12-17-36	Nabesna	Joe Mark	Martha	
Mark	Pauli Flushman Joe	12-8-38	Nabesna	Joe Mark	Martha	
Northway	Anna		Scottie Crk	John		
Northway	William			Old Northway	Anna [John]	

Northway	Walter			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
Northway	Stephen			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
Northway	Elsie			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
Northway	Laura Demit			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
Northway	Maggie Kye			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
Northway	William	1884	Nab	Old Northway	Anna [John]	
wife	Laura (Eliza)	1887	Tetlin	Big John	Jessie Tega	
	Sarah	Jan [?]				
Northway	Walter	1885		Old Northway	Anna [John]	
wife	Lily [John]		Scottie Crk	John		
Northway	Eva	6-6-19	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Celia	11-2-23	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Ena	7-10-25	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Harry	11-15-27	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	died 1938
Northway	Martha	Nov 1931	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Selina	2-6-33	Ladue Crk	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Theodore	10-26-35	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Lee	1-6-38	Nabesna	Walter N.	Lily	
Northway	Stephen			Old Northway	Anna [John]	
wife	Edna			B. Mark	Agnes	
Northway	Arthur	12-27-28	Nabesna	Stephan	Edna	
Northway	Alfred	2-7-30	Ladue Creek	Stephan	Edna	
Northway	Avis	2-12-31	Ladue Creek	Stephan	Edna	
Northway	Ester	12-13-23	Tanacross	Stephan	Edna	nurse
Northway	Aubrey	1-27-35	Nabesna	Stephan	Edna	
Northway	Harley	[no entry]				
Northway	Harold	5-5-37	Nabesna	Stephan	Edna	
Titus	Frank	1914	Scottie Crk	Titus	[no entry]	
wife	Emma	1914	Nab	Charlie D.	Mary Sam	
Titus	Bernice Pauline	6-12-36	Nab	[Frank] Titus	Emma	
Titus	Kathleen	25-8-37	[no entry]	[Frank] Titus	Emma	
John	Titus	about 60 [1877]	Scottie Crk	Titus	[no entry]	
wife	Lucy (dead)	1884	Nab	Albert	[no entry]	
br	Frank					see above
	Lena					

Titus	Lena	[n.e.]	Scottie Crk	Titus	Lucy Albert	
Titus	Albert	[n.e.]	Scottie Crk	Titus	Lucy Albert	
Titus	Laurence	[n.e.]	Scottie Crk	Titus	Lucy Albert	
Sam	Chief	1863	Nab			
1st wife	?	died 1937		Frank		
2nd wife	Bessie	about 38 [1900]	Scottie Crk			16 when married
Sam	Helen	11-21-18	Nab	Chief Sam	Bessie	
Sam	Mary	10-8-21	Nab	Chief Sam	Bessie	
Sam	Andrew	3-5-28	Nab	Chief Sam	Bessie	
Sam	Silas	2-11-31	Nab	Chief Sam	Bessie	
Sam	Frank	1885	Nab	Chief Sam	Bessie ^{140[1]}	
wife	Annie	c. 31 [1906]	Tetlin	Big John	Jessie Tega	
Sam	David	9-1-25	Nab	Frank Sam	Annie	
Sam	Susie	9-12-27	Nab	Frank Sam	Annie	
Sam	Julias	9-4-28	Gardiner Crk	Frank Sam	Annie	
Sam	Samuel	10-3-30	Nab			
Sam	Roy	6-1-34	Nab	Frank Sam	Annie	
Sam	Adam	12-23-36	Nab	Frank Sam	Annie	
Sam	Harry	1-7-39	Nab	Frank Sam	Annie	
Charlie	Peter		Mentasta	Mentasta Charlie	?	
wife	Mary	10-8-20		Chief Sam	Bessie	
	Alice Marie	10-26-38	Nab	Peter Charlie	Mary	
<u>SCOTTIE CREEK</u>						
Austin	Bill (Chisana)		Scottie Crk			
wife	Maggie		Scottie Crk			
	girl child	died 1938				
Frank	Andy		Scottie Crk	Frank	Sc. Crk	
wife	died					
Frank	Celia	1934	Scottie Crk	Andy Frank		
Frank	Alfred	1936	Scottie Crk	Andy Frank		
Kye	Bill	1895	Scottie Crk	Kye	--	
wife	Laura	1898	Scottie Crk	--	--	
	Andrew	1918	Scottie Crk	Bill Kye	Laura	
	Percy	1932	Scottie Crk	Bill Kye	Laura	
	Mary	1936	Scottie Crk	Bill Kye	Laura	
John	Little	1885	Scottie Crk	John		

^{140[1]} Frank Sam was son of Chief Sam’s first wife, not Bessie (Ruth Sam to N. A. Easton, 3 July 2003).

wife	Old Lucy	(1862)	Scottie Crk			
wife	Celia	1914	Scottie Crk	Old John	Lucy	2 children
John	Joe	1916	Scottie Crk	Little John	Lucy	died 1938
John	Bessie	1927	Scottie Crk	Little John	Lucy	
John	John	1937	Scottie Crk	Little John	Celia	

1C - Elder's Birthdays and Indian Names Collected by the Episcopal Church¹⁴¹

The following two tables were drawn up from handwritten letters found in this source from Miss Lucy Wright to Mrs. MacIntosh, wife of the Episcopalian missionary at Tanacross. The first provides a list of Elder's birthdays assembled to apply for Old Age Pensions; the second provides a list of Elder's Dineh language names. The comments column are my own.

- Letter to Mrs. McIntosh from Lucille Wright, Tanacross, 23 Nov 1937

[the letter is about the need to get information in order to apply for Old Age Pension for natives of the region]

“The following is a list of the ages as I have them on my census:”

<u>Name</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>[comments]</u>
Anna Northway	1857 ?	Scotty Creek	Scotty Creek	Scotty Creek	
Annie Johnie	1862	Nabesna	? Mrs.	Northway's	Sister ?
Old Joseph	1862	Last Tetlin	?	?	
Big John	1865	Tetlin	?	?	
Little John	1854	Last Tetlin	?	?	
Ada Paul (Sutah)	1857	Mentasta	?	?	
Chief Sam	died Oct 16				
Old Albert	1861	Tetlin			
Old Sam Thomas	1862	Mansfield	?	?	1859 older than Paul
Big Frank	1863	Minto	Minto	?	
Chief Henry	1872	Good Pastor	Good Pastor	?	older than big John
Gert Johnathan	?	Mansfield			oldest
Lucy John	1862	Mentasta			next to Gert
Old Paul	1859	Wood River			

¹⁴¹ Source: Episcopal Diocese of Alaska, 1887; Subgroup III Parish Records, 1896 - ; St. Timothy's Mission Records, 1937 - 1976, Miscellaneous Records, 1937 - 1972. Series 2/Box 2/Folder 2 - Census, Upper Tanana River, St. Timothy's Mission, Tanacross Alaska, 1937 -1939.

Julia Paul	1861	Mansfield			
Bessie Walters	1871	Mansfield			

- 4 or 5 years between Old Paul and Big Frank
- Old Laura older than ["henry" or "harry"] and Bessie Walter

- Letter to Mrs. McIntosh, from Lucille Wright, 15 Dec 1937
 "Chief Peter and Chief Luke have given me the names"

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Indian Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>[comments]</u>
Little John	Last Tetlin	Dah teel'	83	
Gert Tega Albert	Last Tetlin	O tes ' a	70	[Tabessa Jean (Titus David)]
Old Albert	Last Tetlin	Tul ' sno	76	
Ada Paul	Last Tetlin	Sutah '	80	[hu, died 1934 (TD)]
Joseph	Tetlin	Da gin ' di tahk	75	
Big John	Tetlin	Kay nish' sta ni	72	[see tape with TD]
Annie John	Nabesna	Tsay'ni gag 'a	75	
Anna Northway		Tsaw ' cheel '	80	
Big Frank	Tanacross	Tsay gay' tahk'	74	
Old Paul	Tanacross	stut ' tahk		
Julia Paul	Tanacross	Na to ' sie	76	[David Paul's mother (TD)]
Old Gert Johnathan		Sing Sang' (Cheth Tsing')		
Old Eva		Sing ta sah (Cheth tha')		
Sarah Bob		Chok ni'		
Old Lucy John		Tah tsis' nah'	75	
Bessie Walter		Te talse'		
Old Sam Thomas		Gehl' tahk	80	
Grandma Healy		Jah habe'ma		
Josie Healy		Hutnah	70	
Old Saline		Thek thas'		between 65 & 70
Blind Jim Healy		Je Thu'nth' ta		65 - 70
Little Old Whiteman		Na ji jah'		90 - 100
Bessie Thomas		Delth Thu ne' na		

Annie Thomas		The thus ka		
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[From Ada Gallon (15/11/97) to N. A. Easton:

Annie John and Anna Northway were sisters

Anna Northway was Ada's mom's mom, i.e., Ada's maternal grandmother.

Her name was Ts'ok klay]

1D: Census 1937-38 for Scottie Creek, Nabesna, Tetlin, and Last Tetlin, 1938¹⁴²

The following represents an unattributed record of census for the Upper Tanana area found in McKennan’s field notes, dated 1938. The census also records people from Tanacross, Sam Creek, and Healy River, however I did not collect this data in my 1997 visit to these archives.

Nabesna: Population = 79

Name	Birthdate	Mother	Father	Birthplace	[Comments]
Albert, Peter	1887	Anna Northway	Old Northway	Nabesna	
wife Elsie					
10 children	1911-37				
Albert, Oscar	1918		Old Albert	Nabesna	
wife Mary	1919	Lucy	Dawson Luke	Last Tetling	
1 child	1937			Nabesna	
Demit, Elisha	1867?		Jack Demit	Ketchumstock	
wife Berta	1897	Annie John	John	Scotty Creek	
5 children	? - 1936			Nabesna	
Fred John	1924		Nabesna		
Demit, Easu	1912	Mary Sam	Charlie Demit	Nabesna	
Demit, Joe Charlie	1910			Nabesna	
wife Laura Eliza	1910	Anna Northway	Old Northway	Last Tetling	
6 children	1928-38			L.Tetling 2, Gardener Crk 1, Nabesna 3	
Isaac, Follet			Chief Isaac	Mansfield Lake	
wife, Pauline	1911	Elsie Northway	Peter Albert	Nabesna	
John, Anne	1862		John	Scotty Creek	
3 children					
Bertha Demit					
Martha Demit					
Kye, Andrew		Laura	Bill Kye	Scotty Creek	
wife, Maggie	1913	Anna John	Old Northway	Nabesna	
1 child	1938			Nabesna	
Mark, Joe		Agnes J.	Big Mark	Mansfield Lake	
wife		Annie	John		

¹⁴² Source: Robert McKennan Collection, University of Alaska - Fairbanks Rasmussen Library Archives, Series 2 /Box 12 / Folder 2

Nabesna: Population = 79

Name	Birthdate	Mother	Father	Birthplace	[Comments]
Martha					
3 children	1933-38			Nabesna 2, Chisana R. 1	
Northway, Annie	1867			Scotty Creek	
6 children				Nabesna	
Northway, William	1884	Anna	Old Northway	Nabesna	
wife, Laura Eliza	1887	Jessie Tega	Big John	Tetlin	
1 child					
Northway, Walter	1885	Annie	Old Northway	Nabesna	
wife Lily			John	Scotty Creek	
8 children	1919-38			Nabesna	
Northway, Stephen	1906	Anna	Old Northway	Nabesna	
wife Edna			Big Mark	Mansfield Lake	
6 children	1928-1937		Tanacross 1, Ladue Crk 1, Nabesna 4		
Titus, Frank	1914		Titus	Scotty Creek	
wife Emma	1914	Mary Sam	Charlie Demit	Nabesna	
2 children	1936-38				
Titus, John	1880		Titus	Scotty Creek	
wife Lucy	1884		Albert	Nabesna	
3 children					
Sam, Chief	1863			Nabesna	
1st wife, Lou Frank					
2nd wi, Bessie	1897			Scotty Creek	
4 kids	1918-31			Nabesna	
Sam, Frank	1885	Bessie	Chief Sam	Nabesna	
wife Annie	1907	Jessie Tega	Big John	Tetlin	
6 children	1925-39			Nabesna	
Charlie, Peter				Mentasta Lake	
wife, Mary	1920	Bessie	Chief Sam	Nabesna	
Jackson, Elisha					
wife, Bertha Johnnie					
5 children	1928-36				

Scottie Creek: Population 14

Name	Birthdate	Mother	Father	Birthplace	[Comments]
Austin, Bill (Chisana)				Scotty Creek	
wife, Maggie					
Frank, Andy	(widower)			Scotty Creek	
2 children	1934-36				
Kye, Bill	1895			Scotty Creek	
wife Laura	1898			Scotty Creek	
3 children	1918-36			Snake Creek	?snake = snag?
wife Eliza	1910				
John, Little	1885			Scotty Creek	
wife, old Lucy					
3 children	1914-27				
2 grandchild	1937				

Tetlin: population 81 (including Last Tetling)

Name	Birthdate	Mother	Father	Birthplace	[Comments]
David, Martha	1893			Tetlin	
David, Titus	1909			Tetlin	
wife, Jessie	1909	Maggie Demit	Walter Isaac	Ketchumstuk	
4 children	1932-38			Tanacross, 3	
David, Andrew				Tetlin	
wife, Lucy	1896	Jessie Tega	Big John	Tetlin	
4 children	1926-38			Tetlin	
1 child	1917	Maggie Luke			
David, Lena	1913	Jessie Tega	Big John	Tetlin	widow of Walter David
2 children	1931-38			Tetlin	
David, Kitty		Gert Tega		Last Tetlin	widow of Peter David
2 children	1922-25			Tetlin	
David, Ada			Albert	widow of Charlie David	
1 child	1913				Tetlin
David, Helen	1925	Susie	Paul David	Chena	
David, Patrick	1932	Susie	Paul David	Chena	
John, Big	1865			Tetlin	
wife, Jessie Tega	1869			Chisana River	
6 children	1913-18			Tetlin	
Joe, Chief Peter	1876(?)			Copper River	
1st wife, Eva				Copper River	
Paul	1890	Eva	Peter Joe	Tetlin	
Lily	1915	Eva	Peter Joe	Tetlin	

Tetlin: population 81 (including Last Tetling)

Name	Birthdate	Mother	Father	Birthplace	[Comments]
2nd wife, Annie	1906			Last Tetlin	
6 children			Last Tetlin 2, Tetlin Lake 4		
Joe, Jimmy			Chief Joe	Tetlin	
wife Jenny		Chief David	Tetlin		
2 children	1924			Nabesna	
		1930			Tetlin
Joseph, Old	1862			Last Tetlin	
wife Mary					
2 children	? & 1923			Tetlin	
Mark, David	1912			Mansfield	
wife Jessie	1902(?)	Lucy	Dawson Luke	Last Tetlin	
2 children	1934-36			Nabesna	
Paul, Titus	1911	Julia	Old Paul	Mansfield	
wife Agnes Joseph	1915				
1 son	1937			Tetlin	
Joe, Paul					
wife Annie	1906				
5 children	1927-36			Tetlin	
LAST TETLIN					
Adams, Alfred	1895	Anna	Charlie Adams	Tetlin	
wife Lucy	1902	Helen	Chief Luke	Last Tetlin	
6 children	1922-38			Tetlin 1, Last Tetlin 5	
John, Little	1854			Last Tetlin	
2 children	1910 & ?				
Luke, Chief	1867			Mentasta Lake	
wife Helen	1882			Last Tetlin	
Paul, Little				Tetlin	
wife, Ellen				Last Tetlin	
7 children	1919-1932			Last Tetlin	
Paul, Ada	1857			Mentasta Lake	
Albert, Old				Tetlin	
wife, Gert Tega	1867	Tega		Chisana River	Mo may be "Lega"

Appendix 2 – Walter Northway’s Account of His Clan History

In recording his family's history as he knew it, Walter Northway identified the origins of several of the Upper Tanana *Dineh* sib or clan groupings. I include a copy of this section of his life history (from Yarbury and Madison 1987) as a separate Appendix for that reason. Additionally, I believe it is an excellent portrayal of the continuous movement of *Dineh* individuals and families, as they search for better subsistence opportunities, appropriate spouses to marry, the initiation of social relations with strangers and their maintenance with kin, and a general curiosity for the world external to their immediate experience (a curiosity which I believe is reflected in the *Dineh* interest in the supernatural world as well).

My [paternal] grandfather, *Natuu*, came from way up in Canada. The people had a talk among themselves to decide their clan name. They started in a place in Canada called *Xaagu_u_*. As they walked through the top of the Wrangell Mountains (we call them *Theetsaçaç T-̄&aat* ["copper (rock) headwaters"]), they stopped to build a fire on a small hill to have tea. A silver fox came running into camp where they were making tea. One of the men killed the fox.

After they killed the fox, my grandmother and great-grand mother asked for the tail of the silver fox to use as a swatter to keep the mosquitoes away. This is how my grandmother and great-grandmother's clan got their name, *Naagat Ts&aaçiyèy*, meaning Silver Fox.

They [another group, representing Walter's maternal grandfather] started off from a mountain in Canada that stands alone, *Shya& Naaltall-̄* [meaning "where the lice shoot down"- M. Tyone], located six miles from Burwash Landing Lake [Kluane Lake]. As they were walking, they picked up a half-eaten fish tail. They carried it around. This is how my grandmother's and great-grandmother's people got their real clan [moiety] name, *Ch&açaç* [meaning "clan"], which includes Wolf, Swan, and Sea Gull. [There are different kinds of *Ch&açaç*. *Ch&aça ch'&ikeemaanç* means outlying *Ch&açaç* clan. *Ch&açaç ch&itoonyaa* means middle or highest *Ch&açaç* clan -- M. Tyone.]

They left the place where they found the fish tail and went on to a place called *Niit_h&u_u_*, located farther down from *Shya& Naaltaa-̄*. As they were traveling from *Niit_h&uu*, they stopped to make a fire. Suddenly they heard voices coming down the river. Most of the men hid in the woods. My grandfather *Tsuu-̄ Ta&*, also known as *Stsaaiy Tsuu-̄*, was the only one that stayed by the fire. He heard the voices coming closer. Grandfather *Tsuu-̄ Ta&*, mother's father, went down to the river and saw *gahchaa&*, something like a piece of rabbit fur, floating down the river towards him. It looked like the cotton that floats on the river. There were voices talking and yelling inside the fur.

Grandfather *Tsuu* *Ta* cut down a branch and made a hook. As the *gahchaa* came closer to the bank, Grandfather hooked it and pulled it out. The voices stopped. Then he called for the rest of the people to come down to the riverbank. They started taking it apart. They cut and unwound it to take it apart. People that look like us came out of that piece of rabbit fur.

The *gaachaa* ["piece of rabbit-skin people"] were very mad and wanted to fight. Grandfather said to them, "Wait! We are few. Let us put our name together as one. We want to be as one family. That is why we pulled you ashore." That is how they got their name as one clan [moiety]. From there they left together and became one big clan.

They traveled and stayed with *Enoak*'s father in Canada. After leaving there, they came to a nice place to make a camp, called *T_heck* *&at*. After they stayed for a while, some of the people moved and made camp farther down near a creek. They sent word back that there were a lot of fish in the creek. Men started gathering rocks and took them down into the creek to make a rock fence or fishing weir. Meanwhile the women started pulling roots to make a fishnet. This is how that place became known as *T_heck* *&at*, meaning rock fishing place. In our language *&kat* means "fish trap." You may know this place today as Scottie Creek Village. And the creek *T_heck* *&at* *Niign*, where they built the *&kat*, is half of Scottie Creek. They also made another camp, known as *Ts* *&oogu* *t* *Gaaiy*, meaning "little twisted spruce tree," the name for Little Scottie Creek located near the Canadian border. Not too far from this place is another camp, called *Ts* *&oogu* *t* *Choh*, meaning "big twisted spruce tree," or Big Scottie Creek as you know it. Some families stayed at *Ts* *&oogu* *t* *Choh*, while the rest went on to *Ts* *&oogu* *t* *Gaaiy*. My [maternal] grandfather went to a place called *Lièè* *T_hi* *&* *T_h* *&an* *Nah* *&* *Iièièh*, meaning "looking at the dog's skull or head bone." They made camp there for a while. Then they went on and made a camp called *Kelt* *&* *uudn* *Mann* *&*, meaning "water Lily lake." Another name for the lake is *Nahtsièaç* *&* *Ts* *&* *ih* *-chuut*, meaning "we grabbed wolverine." This is the lake in Canada known as Paper Lake.

As my grandparents were coming down towards Northway, my grandmother gave birth to my mother and her brothers and sisters. She named mother *Ta* *&* *att* *-eegn*, later known as Anna. . . .

Andy Frank and Bill John's fathers were from a place near Tanacross called *Dihthaadn*, meaning Mansfield. They moved to Canada, where they married and built their homes. They became the *Tsisyuu* clan.

My dad, *T* *&* *aaiy* *Ta* *&*, and his older brother went up into Canada to visit relatives. *T* *&* *aaiy* *Ta* *&* found a girl whose name was *Ta* *&* *att* *-eegn*. He told his dad, "I found a girlfriend in Canada who wants me for her husband."

He stayed with his dad for a while, then decided to go back to Canada. Grandfather *Natuu* told my dad, "I want you to watch her and see how well she can work. See how well she can do everything."

My dad then went back and lived near her family. He did all the work for her family and kept an eye on her for almost one year. Grandfather wanted to know how well she worked before he would let my dad marry *Ts&att-eegn*.

Dad went home and told my grandfather, "She is a good worker. She doesn't do anything wrong, she sews a lot, and she weaves snowshoes."

My grandfather was satisfied. They were ready for marriage.

My dad went to Canada and brought her back to his village. Mom and Dad moved to *K&eht_hiign*, the old-time village at fish camp where she gave birth to Bill, Lee, Walter, Elsie, Danny, Laura, Stephen, and Maggie. These are our English names we received later.

K&eht_hiign, meaning "lake or stream outlet" and the name of the creek between Charlieskin Creek and Moose Creek, was not originally our village. It was the village of lots of old people. *Tsee K'&ee Keltseh* was our village, but Jimmie Joe and those old people all moved to different locations from *K&eht_hiign*. Then my dad and others moved in and became the second generation there.

My uncle got married and moved to a place called *Xaal*. This was located near the Moose Creek bridge near fish camp. He moved there and made a village because there were a lot of fish. From there they moved to *K&eht_hiign*. Then to *K&aaçiy& Daat_hiign*, the place that Charlieskin Creek, Moose Creek, and *K&eht_hiign* come together. They also moved to *Chaçaç-aiy*, known now as Charlieskin. My father then moved to Charlieskin, too. This is when my mother and her relatives of the clan *Ch&açaç* were marrying my dad's relatives.

T_heetsaçç T-⁻aat, meaning "rocky area" ["copper headwaters"], is the name of the Wrangell Mountains. This was my grandfathers' name, or the name that has come down from my grandfather.

My dad's two nephews got married up in Nabesna area. They were told who to marry. The women were not their choice. From there *Jisht&iin* married my dad's niece. They had two children. Of his sons, two of them lived in the Copper area near the Wrangell Range, where my uncle Alfred stayed. He was Bertha Demit's dad. He had a daughter, who had Mary, who later married Huston Sanford. They had two children who now live in Mentasta. This is how we started scattering out from *Naateel* at the head of Copper River and on. An old woman named *Ch&ihihjee* lives there. Also another old lady, named *T-⁻&a& Suus*. These were their old-time Indian names. This is how my mom's clan mixed with their clan up in Nabesna.

From there along the mountain were *Huh Shii Ta&* and his dad. There were four families. Then on along the mountains is a place called *Thaht_h&aiy*, meaning "lots of wood or dry wood sticking up in a lake or river." From that area they are intermixed with my mom's clan and Lilly Northway's clan. Their names intermixed with each other and they were adopted as one clan [moiety].

My grandma and my mother and other women went to the upper Chisana or *T_hheetsaçaç & T_haat*. They were all dressed up and had on dentalia shells. They were dressed very well. People in that area did not like them showing off with their best. This was against their custom. Because of this, the women were punished. The people got together to poke a copper awl through the earlobes of the women that dressed up, as a punishment.

From there one of the clan's grandchildren moved to the Dot Lake area with my grandma's clan name. From there my grandpa, nicknamed *K_host_hun* [meaning "short neck": his real Indian name was *Ts_hisdaales*, meaning "carry rocks" - M. Tyone], traveled on to Eagle and no one knew which way he traveled. He ended up in Mentasta and settled there, making a village. From surrounding areas they joined him. The Elders told him, "If they ask you what your clan name is, you tell them *Ts_hexaatneeiy*, meaning "we settled down at a place." His uncle gave him this name representing them.

My grandpa's niece is Katie John's mother. She had Katie and from there Mentasta grew again. In the Copper area, from the same family, they are growing again stronger. They are intermingled with *Ts_hisyuu* [*Ch_hicheel* is another name for the same clan - M. Tyone] from his dad and his relative Katie John. *Baak'_haa_hnakaah Ta_h* and his brother *Ts_hildiil Ta_h* were among the old people who left *K_heht_hhiign* and went towards Valdez. *Baak'_haa_hnakaah Ta_h* was the leader of the people who moved to Mentasta.

The youngest brother went to Tazlina. His name was Douglas. Then between those two brothers was a brother named *Di_hts_hI_h Ta_h* who used to stay in Gulkana.

One brother stayed in Tetlin. This was Chief Peter's dad. *Kost_hun 's* son *Yiikaa_hta*, is from Dot Lake. His son is *Xaal Ta_h*. Someone set fire to his cache, so he moved to Tanacross. After this, they all moved to different locations, and Chief Isaac moved into Dot Lake.

Three places are known for Chief Isaac, *Teegu_hcheegn* [Kechumstuk], Dot Lake, and *Dihthaadn* [Lake Mansfield]. His mom's clan and his dad's clan from that area are still strong. The other clans from before are not strong there anymore.

Chief David's father moved to Tetlin from *Nat_haa_hYaat*, the mountain up on the other side of Chisana. That is how Tetlin became Chief David's home.

My uncle's nephew was married into Dawson. Somehow from there came Alfred Adam.

Then they intermixed into clans, which made the clans stronger. No one can say that they are stronger than us. Dawson, Yukon, Tanacross, Dot Lake, Mentasta, Tetlin, and through Copper Center to Valdez. All from one family - *Natuu* and my grandmother *Ts_hist_he_h Dishin* [meaning "old woman medicine person" - M. Tyonel]. The clan mixed from Yukon to Northway, Dot Lake to Mentasta through

Copper area. The highest person, recognized as the chief, stayed at Moose Creek, which is Northway.

After everyone scattered from Grandfather and Grandmother, many stayed in *K&eht_hiign* near Northway Village of today. Many years later many of the people had died. The village again started up by only eight adults and I don't know how many children. The adults were my mom and dad [*T&aaiy Ta&* and Anna], my brother Bill Northway, my sister Elsie Albert, Chief Sam's sister, Chief Sam, Frank Sam, and me.

Bill Northway married Eliza John. They had children, but only Sarah Gabriel is alive today. They were traveling to Dawson, only one day away, when they lost their little boy. They brought him back to Northway to bury him.

I married Lilly John. From there the village grew again. I was born June 10, 1876, near Moose Creek, where we call it *K&eht_hiign*. I was the third child out of eight. I had three sisters, Elsie, Laura, and Maggie. I had four brothers, Bill, Lee, Danny and Stephen. My grandmother was *Ts&ist&e&*, meaning "Old Medicine Woman." My father was *T&aaiy Ta&*, meaning "Strongman." Later he was called Northway. My mother was *Ts&att-eeegn*, a nickname meaning "funny blanket," because when she was born they wrapped her in a ragged blanket. Her real name was *Ts&atch&iil*. Later she was known as Anna.

(From Yarbury and Madison 1987:29 - 36.)

Appendix 3 – Selected Extracts from Knut Petersen’s Alaskan Memoir

Knut Peterson was an immigrant from Denmark, who arrived in Alaska in 1923 and subsequently spent most of the rest of his life prospecting, goldmining, and trapping in the Alaska interior. He spent a number of years at Chisana, where he met and worked for Nels Peter Nelson, one of the discoverers of the Chisana gold deposits, and met and knew others from the Chisana Gold Rush days. He recalls some of their stories and his own in *When Alaska was Free*, his Alaskan memoir, published in 1977 by Ashley Books of Port Washington, New York, from which the following extract retelling the story of the Chisana discovery as told to him by Nelson is taken.

3A - An Account of the Discovery of Gold at Chisana, 1913

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“In the afternoon of May 13, 1913, a cold breeze and a drizzly rain was sweeping down what was soon to be known as Bonanza Creek, near the headwaters of the Chisana River in Alaska. At the mouth of the creek, three men had a big campfire going, cooking tea and having lunch. They were William James, Nels Peter Nelson, and Indian Joe. James and Nelson had come down from Dawson in the Canadian Yukon Territory to the headwaters of the White River (on the Alaska side of the line) to prospect for copper deposits. They also had a sharp eye for any valuable minerals, such as placer gold.

They had been on the White the previous fall. It was there they had met Indian Joe when he was on his way back to his home on the Chisana River after a visit with some Canadian Indians. They were both experienced placer miners and prospectors, and they asked Indian Joe if he knew of any place where they could find copper or gold.

Joe said, “Well, I know one place. Big hill, funny looking rock.”

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And he explained to them about a big, yellow dike. He told them it was about 50 miles from where they were on the White.

But it was too late to make the trip that fall. They had to get back to Dawson, a distance of 150 miles,, before the snow caught them. Joe promised to meet them on the White River next spring, and, true to his word, he was there waiting to guide them to the yellow dike. That was how the three men came to be around the big campfire on that cold, wet day.

Luck had been against James and Nelson the last three or four years. They were each nearly five thousand dollars in debt, which was almost a fortune at that time. They were beginning to wonder if their kind of life was worthwhile. They planned on building a new cabin in the Fortymile River country on the American side, that coming fall, where there were lots of moose. With a cache full of fat moose meat, it wouldn't cost much to live through the winter.

They stood there tired, wet and cold, bending over the flames, trying to get their clothes dry. They could not possibly know then that instead of cutting wood and eating moose next winter, they would be living in the best hotel in San Francisco, having an awful time learning how to order and eat meals in a high-class dining room.

When they had satisfied their hunger, and their clothes were partly dry, it was agreed that Nelson and Joe would make some sort of a shelter for the night and cut some wood. James climbed up the hillside to bring down some samples of the yellow dike, which was located right there at the mouth of the stream they were on.

James was well schooled on hard rock, and he spent

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quite a long time on the hillside. It was a big, wide, sulfur stained dike, and he wanted to examine it all the way across.

When Nelson and Joe got through putting a small canvas roof on some leaning poles, and making a windbreak with spruce boughs, Nelson let Joe cut the wood (they only had one axe) and took a shovel, pick and gold pan, and walked up stream about a quarter of a mile. There was a low bench, or gravel bar, on the left limit of the stream. It was a natural place to take a pan. The bedrock was about three feet above the water, and covered with about three feet of stream gravel. In other words, it was the old streambed, left high and dry.

After shoveling off some gravel, he got his first pan right on bedrock, and it had about a dollar's worth of gold in it. When he saw the result he looked up the hillside to where James was still picking away and breaking rocks, and he let out a whoop as loud as he could, trying to draw James's attention. James didn't hear him but he happened to look down and he saw Nelson throw his hat up in the air, pick it up and throw it again. Then he threw the gold pan up, and caught it as it came down.

James came down to the camp where Joe kept the fire going, and had another cup of tea. By the time James and Joe got up to him, Nelson had over half an ounce of gold lying on a flat rock, and this was the mouth of the creek. Holy cats! What would it be farther upstream?

They named it Bonanza Creek, and the next few days they were busy staking claims. Indian Joe got the first claim, named "Discovery." Upstream two

and a half miles was a small tributary, the rich baby, shallow ground and lots of gold. They named it “Little Eldorado.” Nineteen hundred and thirteen was the year that James and Nelson changed their luck!

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James went with Indian Joe to the village where Joe was the Chief, about fifteen miles from the mouth of Bonanza. It was his plan to try and get some of the young, husky Indians to whipsaw some lumber for sluice boxes. They had whipsaws in the village, but luck hit again.

Bonanza Creek flows into what is now known as Johnson Creek, which, in turn, flows into the Chisana River. Following Johnson Creek down towards the river, they crossed a small stream about three miles below Bonanza. There they found that somebody had tried sluicing a few years before. But it evidently didn't pay, as they had left and didn't come back. There were lots of good sluice boxes, shovels, picks, a whipsaw, and a lot of other tools. So James hired a bunch of the young native boys to pack the boxes up to the little Eldorado.

In the meantime, Nelson had gone back to Dawson to get canvas, lead, and hose, and hire a bunch of men to shovel into the boxes. He also hired a man with a string of packhorses to bring in all the gear.

They had staked all the claims, which the law allowed, and of course, when Nelson came back from Dawson, the stampede was on. For the next two or three years, thousands of men came from all directions, but about the only pay dirt worthwhile was right along Bonanza Creek, and it never got to be a big camp like Dawson, or what is better known as the Klondyke.

Nobody knows, and most likely never will know, how much gold they took out in the short time they mined that first summer. There was no red tape to bother with in those days. They took off to San Francisco that fall, stopping first at Cordova, where they deposited the gold in the bank, wrote out checks amounting to almost \$10,000 to pay off

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their debts, and then boarded the first steamboat to Seattle.

I got well acquainted with both of them years later, especially Nelson, who lived to be almost a hundred. I worked for him in Chisana on a high bench on No. 5 on Bonanza in the 1930s, where he was still mining. I often tried to find out how much they took out that first summer but all he would ever say was: “Well, if I told you, I doubt that you would believe it. And if you did, you would most likely ask me what the hell did you do with all the money? It was really a lot of fun,” he said, “ and believe me, we had some high class dinners out there in San Francisco. But I never did feel at home in them big, classy dining rooms. Regardless of how classy and good the food was, and wearing the fancy clothes, I always felt out of place. Many times when I was eating, I thought about the cabin

we intended to build on the bank of the Fortymile River, and either coming home from a trip on snowshoes, or coming out of a prospect hole after digging all day, hungry as a wolf, and coming into a nice warm cabin with the old dutch oven plumb full of fat moose meat.”

I said, “You must be kidding. Do you mean to tell me that you would rather sit in a little old cabin up here in Alaska, eating moose meat, than to have dinner out there in one of those first class eating places on the Pacific Coast?”

“Well,” he said, “here is the way I feel about it. I am a big man, but when I get out there in one of them big, classy dining rooms. I don’t feel big at all. In fact, I feel small, and when I look at that great big hotel, I realize that I am small. But when I come home to my log cabin here on Bonanza, or downtown Chisana, that’s my cabin, and regardless of whether I am rich or poor, big, or little, I feel big. And, by God, I am big!”

3B – General Observations on Dineh of the Upper Tanana

Peterson also had a number of observations and recollections of the Alaska Native people. Below are selected extracts from Chapter 12 of his memoir, entitled *Alaska Indians*.

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“I got well acquainted with a lot of the Indians on the Upper Copper river and the Upper Tanana River. I soon noticed that here was a race of people in the wilderness living a free life. Nobody tried to outdo anyone else or dominate each other. Nobody worried about getting ahead in this world. Nobody was concerned about what might happen tomorrow, next day, next month, next year, or ten years from now. Do what must be done today, they believed.

They helped each other when necessary and were a jolly, social, and friendly race of people scattered throughout Alaska in small and big villages. They were good hunters, trappers and fishermen. Their main purpose in life? To be free. To do as they pleased, and make today the most important day of all.

They loved and enjoyed their way of life. But alas! It was soon to be changed, supposedly for the better. But I doubt that they’ll ever be as happy and free as they were. One day I had a long talk with one of the chiefs,

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Chief Long. He was very bright, and could speak fairly good English. I asked him if he was boss in the village.

He said, “Yes, and no. Everybody is free to live their own way. That’s our main aim in life. But in case of dispute we must have a chief and other officers. It’s very seldom that we have any trouble, but when we do, we decide who is right and who is wrong, and our decision is always respected. Then, if any of the parties concerned wish to move to some other village, arrangements will be made for them to do so.

“We all like to hunt and fish. We help each other to dry cure meat and fish, and gather other food, like pea vine roots and berries, to be stored for winter. The chief don’t sit on a high seat with a crown on his head and look wise. He helps with everything like all the rest. We visit each other a lot, and have much fun. We go visit other villages when we can, and they come see us too. Everybody loves the children, and helps raise them and learn them how to do things. When meat is scarce, everybody hunt. If one gets meat, we all have meat, and then we keep hunting until we feel we can relax again.

“Quite often we have to move camp to where the game is more plentiful. If we get seriously short on meat, we always know where we can go and get fish, and as a rule, we have a lot of dried meat and fish stored away for emergency. So we don’t worry. We are usually too busy living today to be concerned about tomorrow. We have no strict rules or laws, as there is no need for it.

“We live in villages and hunting camps, and everybody is eager to contribute all they can towards keeping the village supplied. We don’t have any money, and yet nobody is broke because the whole village is our bank. We are all

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shareholders. Trapping season we scatter in all directions, and most of the women and older people look after the village, and take care of the children. Well, my friend, we had a long visit. I have to go now. I see you sometime.”

I thanked him, and after he left, I wrote down what he had been telling me. This was more of a free life than anything I had ever seen anywhere. Everybody seemed to be well contented, healthy and strong. Cabins, tents, wood, meat fish, and fur were their main concern. They respected each other as equals. Nobody tried to keep up, or get ahead of anyone else. There was no sign of greed. A village was more like a big family. If one of the men decided to go hunting, he just let the village know about where he intended to hunt, so that in case he didn’t come back within a reasonable length of time, a search would be made for him.

If he got a moose, he would bring home the liver, explain where the meat could be found, and soon a big bunch of men, women, boys, girls, and a few dogs, would be on their way to take care of the meat and bring it home.

During the 1920s, and most of the 1930s, the natives made good money on fur, and fairly good from then until almost 1950. But after that, the prices dropped and dropped. It would be hopeless for a native today to even think of supporting his family by trapping and hunting. The game laws forbid him to kill meat out of season. Besides that, Alaska is now overcrowded with big game guides, so the hunting ground has been turned over to the sportsmen. The days of the Alaskan Indians’ wilderness freedom have long since come to an end.”