“Igyararmiunguunga”:
Qallemcìq Nunaka Man’ì Kuicaraami-llu

“I Belong to Igiugig”:
The Story of My Home on the Kvichak River

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Abstract

The Igyararmiut are a small group of predominately Yup’ik Eskimo people living in the southwest Alaskan village of Igiugig. This Senior Honors Thesis in Anthropology is a study of their changing relationship to the land under the impact of colonially imposed laws such as land allotment and incorporation. It also explores the changing sense of identity over the last two generations as these policies threaten the underlying structure that binds Igyararmiut identity with the landscape. It draws on in-depth interviews with five Igiugig elders, government documents, historical sources, and anthropological studies to reveal the roots of current conflicts and controversies in the community today.
For my ancestors, elders, and future generations of Igiugig Village.

And in honor of my father,

Daniel R. Salmon
08.04.58—02.27.08

The man who lived and died serving the Village of Igiugig.

You inspired my passion for tribal politics, education, and community service.

I follow your lead.
Acknowledgements

Quyanaqyaa!

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I came to Dartmouth to take advantage of the first-class Native American Studies Department and it has been an intellectually rewarding experience. For the first time I began to understand the federal-tribal-state relationship and how it evolved in Indian Country and Alaska. Professors Vera Palmer and Darren Ranco have helped this project grow from a simple recording of oral histories and place names into a senior honors thesis. The NAS faculty, the Native American Program and community at Dartmouth have been my home away from home for these past four years. The education, friendship, and support is priceless.

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On a personal note, I would like to acknowledge both of my grandmothers—my sources of wisdom and guidance. My Grandma Salmon from Penfield, NY is a genealogist and town historian who inspired my interest in recording oral histories and exploring my own heritage—“Write it down!” she would tell me. This got me constantly asking my Grandma Mary Olympic about “long time ago.” The opportunity to finally visit Kukaklek Lake, the land where she grew up, was an experience of a lifetime and has really brought us together in ways I would not have imagined.

Most importantly, I need to thank the people of Igiugig—both past and present—who have not only built a proud community, but continue to raise their youth in a positive environment. They have always supported my education, and their enthusiasm to contribute to this thesis and the wealth of knowledge they have yet to share, has made this work a lifelong endeavor. I cherish the stories and conversations we have had and this thesis is the beginning of an ever-continuing dialogue. It has asked more questions than I have attempted to answer and I look forward to bringing it home to be critiqued. Quyana cakneq.
## Contents

Abstract 3

Acknowledgements 7

Illustrations 11

1. **Introduction** 13
   - Leaving Home
   - Thesis Overview and Organization
   - Framing Indigenous Research: Fieldwork, Ethics, and Methodology
   - “I Belong to Igiugig”: The Story of My Home on the Kvichak River

2. **Yup’ik Roots** 29
   - A General Overview of the Yupiit
   - Group Identity and Territoriality
   - *Upagluteng*…Moving with the Seasons
   - Social Organization and Complex Relationships
   - The Yup’ik Worldview and “Native Law”
   - Conclusion

3. **Arrival of the Kass’akaat** 61
   - The Fur Trade
   - The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)
   - The Fishing Industry
   - *Qenarpaq*—The Great Sickness
   - Reindeer Herding: A Transition Economy
   - The Gregory Family and the Kukaklek Reindeer Station
   - Conclusion

4. **Building a Community** 113
   - Individual Land Ownership and Tribal Governance
   - The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (1971)
   - Putting it into Perspective: The Settlement of Igiugig Village
   - Complications with Allotment
   - Aftermath of ANCSA

5. **Contemporary Realities** 139
   - Subsistence Economy
   - Transfer Economy
   - Market Economy
6. Igyarirmiut, “Still Surviving” 155
From the Qasgiq to the Village Council
“What’s Coming Behind Us”: The Strategic Planning Meeting
Conclusion: Village Life

Endnotes 170

Bibliography 173
Illustrations

1. Airport Scene 27
2. Alaska Native Language Map; Map of Lake Iliamna Watershed 31
3. Subsistence: Beluga Hunting 39
4. Subsistence: Brown Bear 41
5. Subsistence: Salmon Racks 43
6. Russian Orthodox Traditions: Theophany on the Kvichak River 67
7. Map of salmon canneries on the lower Kvichak River 77
8. Commercial fishing on conversions: Nick G. Olympic 79
9. Historic photo of Qinuyang village 85
10. Nick Nowatak, his wife and daughter 87
11. Kukaklek Reindeer Station: Alexi and Marsha Gregory 95
12. Kukaklek Reindeer Station: Evan Apokedak and Mike Wassillie 101
13. Map of Kukaklek Lake 103
14. Map after era of land claims are settled 127
15. Regional Map of Bristol Bay Native Corporation 129
16. Aerial photo of Igiugig Village 157
17. “Village Life” photo of Aiden Wassillie at his Amau’s Fishcamp 167
INTRODUCTION

Leaving Home

Today is August 24, 2007. The thirty-five plus residents of Igiugig Village are gathered at the airport. It is Friday, which means that the community Post Office is open and the largest lodge on the Kvichak River (kwee-jack) is “changing out”: sport-fishing clients are departing after a week long luxury visit on the same plane that new clients arrive from Alaska’s largest city—Anchorage. The plane is a DC-3 operated by TransNorthern Air, the only DC-3 still in operation in North America. Igiugig is an isolated village accessible only by air; a roundtrip ticket to the city, 250 air-miles away, is more expensive than transportation out-of-state. Fortunately, the airplane was chartered by the wealthier lodges and there are four empty seats aboard, which means that four college students are paying extremely discounted airfare on their way to school. Two passengers are out-of-town friends and relatives that temporarily lived in Igiugig for lucrative job opportunities during the bustling summer season and are headed back to college. The other two are Igiugig’s recent high-school graduates Jonathan Salmon (my younger brother) and Mary Hostetter (my second cousin).
The DC-3 is scheduled to arrive at 12:30 PM; the Post Office is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon until the mail is sorted. The mail is carried by Peninsula Airways, “Pen-Air”, from the town of King Salmon with which we share zip codes. My brother Jonathan is anxious that Pen-Air, locally called “When-Air,” arrives with the mail before he departs because he is waiting for his paycheck from commercial salmon fishing in Bristol Bay. A decade ago, nearly every family in Igiugig owned a permit; however, due to the failing industry, Jonathan is one of the last owners of a limited entry drift-net permit. He fished from June 21 to July 23 with his younger brother and two others (including another permit holder) aboard his vessel. They had a high season with a net catch of 211,000 pounds of salmon. They fished four of five districts: Nushagak, Kvichak-Naknek, Ugashik, and Egegik working around the tides and openings. His paycheck is sufficient to cover his college tuition and expenses for the year, and he is desperately awaiting its arrival.

The airport is centrally located and the airplane hangar also serves as the headquarters of the tribal offices. Most residents can see the runway from their home windows, but airlines use VHF radios to notify the village when they approach ten minutes out. Whoever is monitoring their radio will answer the call, and then everyone gets on their four-wheeler for the one-minute drive to the Post-Office to visit while the mail gets sorted and to judge whether it is a “good mail-day” or “bad”. On bad days, Igiugig receives the mail-bag that is destined for another village and will have to wait another two days to send it back out—even if it is express mail. Or, a frozen food order for the local store will have melted en route. The summer months bring in an excess amount of bypass mail because all of the surrounding lodges have local mailboxes in Igiugig.
Planes begin circling overhead to land. The mail caravan lands first. I am at the Post Office getting the out-going mail ready. There are no customers because everyone has evacuated to the airport. I walk up to join the community and make small talk. As cargo is unloaded into the back of a 1985 Ford pick-up, I grab the mail bag and sift through it quickly until I find my brother’s envelope. The DC-3 has landed and all of the passengers deplaned. Their name-brand luggage and first-class fishing gear is off-loaded by the crew of lodge guides—many of whom return year after year and have formed friendships with locals. With more than seven local lodges, Igiugig residents are accustomed to tourists coming and going with minimal interaction. Many visitors come with pre-conceived notions of life in a stereotypical native village and prefer to stay within the “safety” of the lodge, located in the outlying pristine wilderness. Others will crowd along the river bank and fish while locals are at their fish camp splitting table, busily preparing hundreds of salmon for the long winter, just as they have done for thousands of years. Sport-fishermen pay up to $8,175 for a week-long quest to catch five species of salmon or “Trophy Rainbow Trout” that the Kvichak River is famous for. Included in this fee is the price lodge owners pay directly to the village for native land-use and land-fill fees, which make up a significant percentage of local revenue. In turn, the Native Corporation and Tribal Government use the income to partially fund education programs, shareholder dividends, and basic services.

Not long ago, however, these institutions—the local school, the Native Corporation and Tribal Government—did not even exist. The people of Igiugig lived in seasonal camps and moved frequently and freely. Over the last two centuries federal and state efforts meant to promote Alaska Native economic development and social welfare have facilitated a shift in the Native cultures from wholly self-sufficient ways of life to modern cultures increasingly integrated with the outside world and dependent on externally maintained economies (Haycox
Colonial policies, such as land incorporation, jurisdiction division and fish and game laws, have both eroded and promoted local control over land and resources. At times, these policies have conflicted with “traditional” Yup’ik principles of land use and connections to land and identity. That is what I explore in this thesis.

**Thesis Overview and Organization**

The Igyararmiut—people of Igiugig—are a small group of predominately Yup’ik Eskimo people living in Southwestern Alaska. The village is named for its location on the south bank of the Kvichak River as it empties from Lake Iliamna. This thesis explores the general question, “How have colonial land policies affected Igyararmiut interaction with their homelands?” I present the “traditional” relationship with the landscape and the cultural identity that is shaped by the subsistence way of life. I also examine the colonial views of that same landscape and the impact of the policies that these views engendered. I explore how these two views of the landscape conflict and how the people of Igiugig negotiate the conflicting demands in their behavior. I draw attention to points of change and continuity in order to show that not all changes result in disruptions. For example, the introduction of reindeer herding to provide a more reliable economy for rural Alaskan Natives did not result in a dramatic shift in lifestyle; instead, the change was absorbed into the subsistence lifestyle. Other changes, however, such as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (1971), created a situation in which traditional homelands were invested in corporate structures designed to favor resource development over subsistence.

Chapter 2, “Yup’ik Roots,” draws extensively upon anthropological literature on the Yupiit. Although the people of Igiugig do not claim an entirely Yup’ik identity, it is the language spoken; therefore, I present a reconstruction of the traditional Yup’ik way of life—subsistence,
language, social organization, and world view—but I use specific examples from the village of Igiugig. This way of life is inseparable from the land, and this chapter explores the landscape of the Yupiit and how they articulate a relationship to the land through the oral tradition. I explore how this interaction with the land shapes their cultural identity and the types of laws, beliefs and practices that inform a Yupiit sense of land ownership and use.

Chapter 3, “The First Kass’akaat” (white people), draws upon historical documents about first contact with the Lake Iliamna/Bristol Bay region during the Russian Period, through the Alaska Purchase, until about 1930. It traces the changes this contact brought to the southwestern Native Alaskans through the introduction of a new religion, Russian Orthodoxy, the fur trade, the salmon industry, the great sicknesses, and the reindeer-herding period. I use interviews to present a case study of the Gregory family, a family from the Lake Iliamna region that incorporated the fur trade, commercial fishing, and reindeer herding into a subsistence lifestyle in order to understand and gauge the level of impact these changes brought to rural Alaska.

Chapter 4, “Building a Community,” explores the sudden transition from a nomadic subsistence lifestyle to a settled community engaged in the market economy, and the colonial forces that facilitated this transition. When, why, and how did the village of Igiugig emerge? I provide a legal framework beginning with the Treaty of Cession between Russia and the United States: then the Alaska Native Allotment Act, which granted individual parcels of land: the Alaska Reorganization Act, which established tribal governments: and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which settled land claims without addressing issues of tribal sovereignty and subsistence. The second part draws upon the oral narratives of Igiugig’s elders to understand the
tensions these legal concepts of property have imposed upon cultural connections to particular landscapes and the relationship between tribal control of land and resources.

Chapter 5, “Contemporary Realities,” presents the challenges of being a rural Native Alaskan community within our contemporary economic reality. The people of Bristol Bay face large-scale natural resource development (oil, gas, and mineral mining), the loss of the salmon fisheries, and major out-migration from the region. Tribal leaders are well aware that any “economic development effort that transforms communities based on hunting, fishing, and gathering into wage-based communities could destroy exactly what they are meant to save” (Huskey 2004:461-2). They also realize that without a modern economy, the young generations may move away for better opportunities.

Despite these changes, the system of sharing and other cultural values remains undisturbed. Chapter 6, “Igyararmiut, “Still Surviving,” explores the factors which allow for these to be maintained. I conclude with lessons that we can learn from Igiugig’s elders and how their oral histories reinforce our collective quest to survive as a small community in rural Alaska. There is a reason these oral histories need to be told—they speak of the past in an effort to prepare for the future: “The grandpa’s and grandma’s spoke to us, what we got coming behind us…we can remember and we could pass it on, what’s coming behind us” (Mike Andrew, Sr.).

**Framing Indigenous Research: Fieldwork, Ethics, and Methodology**

Four years ago it was me departing Igiugig, waving my last goodbye to the village as I entered an airplane full of tourists. At Dartmouth College I pursued a double major in Native American Studies and Anthropology; I found that within these disciplines I could maintain a strong connection to home and keep up with current affairs by directly applying our situation to
concepts in the classroom. I decided that it may be a long time before I will return home to settle, and in the meantime I am missing out on learning about our history, traditions, and other cultural knowledge that would ordinarily take place if I were to spend my life in the village. In other words, I did not want to pursue post-secondary education at the expense of cultural knowledge so I found a way to combine the two.

I embarked on a journey to document our history, as told by the people themselves, for the benefit of future generations. Similar to Penobscot anthropologist Darren Ranco, anthropology offered an avenue for me to “help my community communicate our struggles for survival” (2005:61). I recognized that if I chose to absorb our cultural knowledge in a non-traditional fashion—that is, through the lens of “research”—then I have extra responsibilities. Firstly, the act of research itself must be thought of critically, “as part of the historical and colonial context of contemporary indigenous people” (Ranco 2005:61). Secondly, this thesis privileges local ways of knowing, local concerns, and practices, and it views the people of Igiugig as active agents in their own history. I do not trace the changes from our nomadic past to settled present, our transition from an entirely subsistence economy to involvement in the market sector, or our conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in an effort to document cultural assimilation, but to celebrate our survival as a distinct people. Anthropologist Shepard Krech points out that a key strand of ethnohistorical research also sees indigenous people as active agents in this kind of context: “Thus, the expansion of a capitalist market’s determinative influences are mediated and affected by indigenous people acting creatively and often resistively in the unfolding dialectic between world-systemic processes and local culture” (1991:359). I examine the social, economic and political context at local and regional levels in which Igiugig came into existence. My research is framed to accentuate the degree to which the modern-day village of Igiugig has
successfully retained cultural values and authenticity despite colonial policies that threaten our relationship to our homeland (Smith 1999:145).

The most important tool in framing a culturally distinctive sense of history is the use of oral histories and traditions. This involves another level of responsibility to treat these oral sources in a manner that preserves the original meaning, while at the same time conveying the impact of political, economic, and social events from a local perspective. The thesis supplements these oral sources with multiple other data types such as primary government documents, anthropological studies and historical accounts of the Bristol Bay region. Extensive anthropological studies have been done about the Yupiit people in general (e.g., Fienup-Riordan 1994, 2000, 2005), and historical studies have documented the people of Southwest Alaska (e.g. Branson 1996, 1998). In these studies, however, Igiugig is marginalized—if mentioned at all. My study is different in that it focuses on one community, draws extensively on oral histories, and is representative of all the families in the community. Igiugig lies between upper Lake Iliamna and Bristol Bay, two regional areas that are thoroughly documented. This ethnohistory is an attempt to fill the gap in the record.

Lastly, I wanted the research experience itself to be reciprocal, so that I was not doing all the taking, but offering something in return. The best gift that I could offer was to do as many in-situ interviews as possible because particular sites of importance have not been visited by elders in many decades. Over a period of two summers of field research in Igiugig, I collected data through interviews and historic photographs; often I used a digital recorder and/or a video camcorder. In the summer of 2005, I documented the Igyararmiut connections to Kukaklek Lake. This lake and surrounding shoreline were inhabited for thousands of years by our ancestors, and more recently by several of Igiugig’s elders during the short-lived reindeer herding era. Today,
several thousand acres of this land are owned by the tribe because of these significant historical connections. However, this history was never before documented, and I had the extraordinary opportunity to bring one elder, my grandmother, back to her homelands and to interview her at six important subsistence sites around the lake. The experience included two float-plane fly-outs, one hike, and a two day canoe trip, and I was able to travel the geographical extent that the Gregory family lived during the reindeer herding period.

In the summer of 2007, I extended this fieldwork to include a wider range of geographic spaces (i.e. subsistence sites, allotment lands) with which the elders in Igiugig maintain a relationship. Although I did not have the benefit of as many in-situ interviews, I conducted open-ended, conversational-style interviews in their homes. With permission and consent, I used a digital audio recorder for reference. These oral histories were collected with the idea that the life histories of Igiugig’s five elders would present a complementary perspective to other anthropological studies of the Yupiit, and would ground historical documents relating to the establishment of Igiugig Village.

The above fieldwork was conducted in a responsible manner in order to protect my participants, many of whom are family members and friends. Conducting community-based research requires a standard of respect that insures your continued lifelong relationship. All interviewees signed a Statement of Informed Consent, which detailed 1) how the collection will be managed, 2) the risks and benefits involved and 3) my contact information. They also signed a Release Form which granted permission for any audio/video/photographs made during this project to be used by the public for educational purposes. The greatest danger of research involving people is the risk of misrepresentation. In order to minimize misrepresentation, my participants were allowed to speak in whatever language they felt most comfortable: English or
Yup’ik. In translating the stories, I would read back my analyses and get their approval or have them correct any errors.

"Igyararmiunguunga": Qallemciq Nunaka Man’i Kuicaraami-llu
"I Belong to Igiugig": The Story of My Home on the Kvichak River

This title captures the theme and purpose of my thesis, which is to present a deep sense of place, identity, and way of life that has survived centuries of socio-economic and political change, but not without struggle. I chose a Yup’ik title and the thesis uses a variety of words from the Yup’ik language because there are some words and concepts that cannot be translated into English without losing their effectiveness. I use the word Igyararmiut, “people of Igiugig,” because it is more specific than “Aglurmiut” or “Kiatagmiut”—earlier anthropological labels that try to distinguish between different Yup’ik groups. Today, we are a settled people living in year-round communities. Therefore, the people of Igiugig are the Igyararmiut, and it reflects a community membership that is defined by the people themselves—not outsiders, nor blood quantum, nor institutional membership. It distinguishes our unique identity, history, stories and customs from even neighboring villages. Also, embodied in this name is our relationship to the land—we belong to “Igyaraq” the place where Lake Iliamna empties into the Kvichak River, “like water down the throat.” Our relationship to the land and how it has changed over time is a central theme of this thesis.

“I belong to Igiugig” is borrowed from a conversation between two elders: Mrs. Dolly Gust and Mary Olympic. During an interview, I asked what corporation they were enrolled in, and they answered by telling me where they chose their Native allotments, where their fishcamp was, and where they enrolled in a village corporation. Then they started to laugh saying that was not where they belonged! They belonged to the place where they were born and raised,
Newhalen and Kukaklek, and they made it very clear that they do not “belong” to a corporation. These elders, who have traveled the land extensively, and have lived at dozens of different locations throughout their lifetime, have never lost their innate sense of belonging.

Likewise, I belong to Igiugig. In using this first-person statement, I establish myself as an “insider,” but there are challenges associated with doing “insider research.” In fact, before I went out into the field, an advisor asked me how I was going to present myself as a professional. I thought about it, and realized that I could not. I had no control over how people responded to my questions, taking into consideration my family background, status, politics, age, and gender. I was raised by this community and share lifelong relationships with some of these elders. They are my grandma, my great-aunt and uncle, my godparents, my neighbors, and I cannot set myself apart even as an academic. The use of a recorder often made interviews more formal, but otherwise the interviews were simply visits. When it came time to write the thesis, however, I realized that I am partially an outsider because I am working from the institution of academia, and across age and gender boundaries (Smith 1999:5). I have had to think critically about my process because I have to return to Igiugig and present my thesis. There are life-long responsibilities associated with this research project, including bringing attention to the dangers in taking Native knowledge to the outside, passing down this knowledge to the future generations, bringing the research back to the community so that the people have an opportunity to define, legitimate, and discuss the “findings” (Ranco 2005:75).

“The Story of my Home” was specifically chosen to avoid using “history” or “ethno-history.” History, as a Western discipline, is assembled around a set of interconnected ideas that is not fitting for this thesis. This is not one large chronology with a beginning and an end; I do not want to stress how events are located at a point in time, rather, where they happened.
Furthermore, I want to avoid the notions of progress and development associated with “history”—that over time the people of Igiugig advanced from primitivism to a civilized society with complex and bureaucratic social structures (Smith 1999:30).

Instead, I use the word “story,” because it reflects the oral transmission of knowledge. When an elder wants to share knowledge from the past they do not say, “this is our history,” they simply say, “there is a story.” If I ask a question about starvation times, the reply would be, “Oh, Ap’a Puyurciraq has a good story about it,” and they would recount the story as it was told to them. Also, our histories are stored within different systems of knowledge: in place names, within genealogies, within personal Native names that are passed down through the generations. Linda Tuhiwai Smith identifies this same problem in the following way: “Many of [our] systems [of knowledge] have been classified as oral traditions rather than histories” when in our ways of knowing—they are histories (1999:33). Because I use storytelling as a main research tool, it is accurate to say that this is “the story of my home” because in this thesis, knowledge has been selected, arranged, and presented by me—the narrator of the story. In this manner, Igiugig becomes, as Russell Bishop states, “a story that is a collection of individual stories, ever unfolding through the lives of the people who share the life of that community” (Smith 1999:145).

“On the Kvichak River” anchors the story to place. Almost all Native Alaskan villages past and present are located within river systems and the Kvichak River has sustained the people since time immemorial. It is a source of food, transportation, and identity. The richness of the river is what attracted the commercial salmon fisheries and the sport-fishing tourism. Today, the people are concerned with maintaining the water quality of this river, especially with the prospects of a mining industry. This thesis is about change and continuity, and the river serves as
a metaphor because it is an agent of erosion and change, epitomizing at once: “all that is timeless and all that is ephemeral in the human existence” (Devy 2001).

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At the airport, the locals barely acknowledge the strange new-comers; their attention is focused on the four Igiugig passengers slowly making their way through the village crowd of hugs, kisses, silent tears, smiles, and laughter. Jonathan is on his way to Carroll College in Helena, Montana to study engineering, and Mary is on her way to Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff to study business and hotel management. These students are some of the first to leave the state to attend higher education, and if they graduate, they will become some of Igiugig’s first generation of college graduates. But will the village be a place these young generations will want to return? If it is not, the future of the village is threatened. The atmosphere is one of mixed emotion: a pride that the students are continuing their education, and a looming uncertainty about their return. Unspoken feelings echo the sentiments of a 2004 graduation card I received from an elder: “Please come back and help our village.”
All the kids in Igiugig Village run to send off their former classmate: 2005 graduate Tanya Salmon as she departs for college. Far right: tourists wait to be transported to a lodge.
In all aspects of a Yup’ik way of life—subsistence, language, social organization, and worldview—the people maintain a rich relationship with their environment. This relationship is articulated in their forms of oral histories: place names, personal names, and animal/human origin stories. The Yupiit distinguish themselves as –miut, people belonging to the land, and this suffix is most often preceded by the name of their river. Although the Yup’ik consider themselves as “belonging to the land,” this does not mean that they do not have a sense of land ownership and use. Yup’ik laws, beliefs, and practices informed land and resource ownership that emphasized respecting the land so it continues to provide for them.

The Igyararmiut, the people belonging to Igyaraq (the place where Lake Iliamna flows into the Kvichak River) live on the southwestern periphery of Yup’ik country. This location is at the confluence of the Yup’ik, Athabascan, and Alutiiq—all from whom Igiugig residents descend. Although the people do not claim an entirely Yup’ik identity, it is the language spoken by the people in the community. Thus, in this chapter I draw extensively upon anthropological literature to present a general overview of the Yup’ik people and the traditional way of life, but I draw upon specific examples of traditions from the village of Igiugig. The Yup’ik culture
developed complex traditions, laws, beliefs, and relationships to encourage values of sharing, cooperation, and respect for all of creation. A Yup’ik relationship to their land and resources transforms subsistence socially and spiritually into a way of life.

A General Overview of the Yupiit

The Yupiit (singular Yup’ik or Yupiaq), are an Inuit people who have lived in Western Alaska for the last 9,000 years, according to the most recent archaeological evidence. At the time of European contact, approximately twenty Central Yup’ik regional groups occupied a vast region extending from Norton Sound southward to Bristol Bay; however, the heart lay in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. Today, the total Yupiit population is about 21,000, and villages range from 25-1,000 residents with the majority in the 250-500 range (Morrow 2005:2223-2224).

The Yupiit are considered the most culturally-diverse Alaskan Natives due to the variety of distinct environments they have adapted to over millennia. Today, subsistence activities remain central to the Yupiit economy, with per capita harvests among the highest in Alaska (Morrow 2005:2223). Subsistence harvests vary according to whether the people live in riverine or marine environments, but extensive trading networks have allowed access to all resources. All Yupiit harvest a rich variety of migratory waterfowl, berries, and greens. Coastal Yupiit rely on walrus, bowhead whales, and seals. Riverine-based Yupiit harvest beluga whales and terrestrial mammals such as caribou and moose. Their staple food, however, is salmon; in fact, the Yup’ik word for “fish” [neqa-] is equivalent to that for “food” (Langdon 2002:43-49).
Above: Language map designed by Michael Krauss, courtesy of Alaska Native Language Center. I added a yellow box around the area which is featured below.

Below: Map of the Lake Iliamna Watershed, courtesy of multimap.com, highlighting the Alagnak, Kvichak, and part of the Nushagak Rivers. The villages that exist today are represented with a black square. The creeks—Kaskanak and Peck’s or Kusqarnak—are also outlined. The historic village of Qinuyang is represented with a red star; Qasgivik, a yellow; Alagnak, a green; and Koggiung, a pink.
The Yup’ik language belongs to the Eskimo-Aleut family of languages. The Eskimo branch includes three Yup’ik Eskimo languages: Siberian Yupik, Alutiiq, and Central Yup’ik, which is spoken in southwestern Alaska (the apostrophe in Yup’ik denotes a long ‘p’). There are five main dialects of the Central Yup’ik language: Norton Sound, Nunivak Island, Hooper Bay-Chvak, Egegik, and General Central Yup’ik, which is the most widespread dialect (Jacobson 1984:1). Today, of a total Yupiit population of 21,000, there are 10,000 fluent speakers of the Yup’ik language. It remains a first language in 17 of 68 Yup’ik villages (ANLC 2008). However, in the Lake Iliamna area, English is the dominant first language, and only older generations converse in Yup’ik.

The Yup’ik language is highly adapted to its environment. There are many examples that illustrate how it serves as a record of what the culture has “categorized in order to make sense of the world and to survive in a local ecosystem” (Nettle and Romaine 2000:60, 77). For instance, the name for blackfish is can’giiq. The word can’gek means blades of grass, and the postbase -iq means ‘animal that dwells in (noun)”; therefore can’giiq means a fish that dwells in grass. Additionally, can’giiq is related to the word cangarlak which means “bad season—time of famine”, and the root word cange- which means to catch fish or game. The name refers to the internal antifreeze in blackfish that allows it to live when frozen in ice, and, unlike other fish, it requires extremely limited amounts of oxygen, enabling it to survive in grassy, muddy ponds. It is one of the three “starvation fish”. Additionally, Yup’ik words for animals are often onomatopoeic. The name for the sandhill crane is qut’rauk, and robin is curcurliq.

**Group Identity and Territoriality**
Yup’ik group identity was traditionally formed through sharing language dialect, a common resource base, marriage ties, personal names, and political alliances. This makes the labeling of particular Yup’ik “tribes” problematic:

The practice of dividing the Yup’ik map between “tribes” is highly problematic, since “tribes” such as the “Kaialigumute” often did not correspond to actual political entities in any sense, were not in general kinship based, and in many cases were not discrete cultural, ethnic or economic subgroups either (Jacobson 1998:xii).

Regional groups were composed of one or more settlements linked by bilateral kinship ties. Ethnohistorical accounts and oral testimony conclude that in the early 1800s about fifteen thousand Yupiit inhabited the coast of western Alaska; this population was organized into about twelve sociopolitical units that were socially and territorially distinct (Fienup-Riordan 1990:148).

Regional groups often committed acts of aggression against each other. In the event that a war party was organized, “The object…was not to acquire booty, extend territory, or defend boundaries but to exterminate the enemy” (Fienup-Riordan 1990:157). Unlike the Inupiat, the Yupiit took women and children prisoners. This is similar to Aleut and Pacific Eskimo practices. Warfare was strictly a male activity, and young boys trained as both warriors and hunters. Weaponry was the same for both hunting and warring: bow, arrow, spear, knife, and club, except war arrowheads were more highly fractured so that they would shatter in the enemy’s body. The Yupiit engaged in bow and arrow warfare until the late 1800s. Warfare ceased after massive population decline—due to small-pox epidemics—and increased trading with Russians (Fienup-Riordan 1990:155-159).

Today, Lake Iliamna lies at the junction of three major Native Alaskan cultural groups whose territories converge at Lake Iliamna: Tanaina Athabascans, Kiatagmiut Yupiit, and Alutiiq. An oral tradition from Lake Iliamna recounts a time when battles were fought because
the northern Yup’ik people were starving and crossed territories while hunting for new resources.

They found food at a creek which they named *Talaariq*, after the enormous rainbow trout that inhabit it.

Everything gone. No more food, no berries—nothing for four, five summers. Five winters, nothing. Finally, they found food from Talarik Creek [*Talaariq* is lake trout; the creek flows into Lake Iliamna]. They said...only suckerfish don’t die and stickerfish, and black fish. Three fish, they all don’t die [during starvation times because they] eat mud. This is Ap’a Puyuqciraq story (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

It is said that the starving Yup’ik fought with their Athabascan neighbors for this land.

Their language Ken’ayuut. They called the lake [Iliamna] Nilavena. We called it Nanvarpak (Big Lake)...(This area was inhabited by the Ken’ayuut) long time ago. After starvation [the Northern Yup’ik moved down]. There was fighting by bow and arrow. [Then cirlak, sickness came and the fighting stopped]. (The Ken’ayuut were sick). No more fight, can’t win (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

Over time, the Yup’ik people who chose to stay in the new region settled along Lake Iliamna and the Kvichak River while the others returned to their relations in the North. One descendant group settled on the grassy bank of the Kvichak River, next to the creek Kusqarnak (today called Peck’s Creek). The *Kusqarnarmiut* named their village *Qasgivik*, place of the big *qasgïq* (community hall), about seven miles downriver from present day Igiugig. The people have a story explaining why *Qasgivik* and the surrounding area, including Igiugig, do not regularly get North wind. This ancient village had *angalkut*, or shamans. There are good and bad shamans—those that could heal and provide good weather and those that could hurt others with the power of a curse. One *angalk-uq* living in *Qasgivik* built a large windbreak for the area.

Tua-i qanemciq angalkut ukuk. Kusqarnarmiut. North wind-aq winter time non-stop always blow cold. Tuai-lu-gguq angalkut taquq. Qanemcïluteng “Arrsapak nengliirpaa! Asguluci. Taugaam ikaken. Qitngaurkun mountain. They call that Qitnguaq, that mountain over there, they name ’em Qitnguaq. Nighttime the angalkuq make a windbreak for Northwind. Tupagluq kuuneq. Nice and calm. Tam’ Northwind-aria calm-araqluni. Die-arluki. When I know now from here when I go up past the island out there, keep on wind from North all the way to Kokhanok. When we go down from here to Horseshoe...
Bend past, keep on wind from North, non-stop. Different. Asguilitanqerr tuqvaq. Wind break.

(Rough Translation: There is a story that there was a shaman among the people from Kusqarnaq. In the winter, the north wind was blowing non-stop and the people were freezing. The shaman exclaimed: “Arrsarpak nengllirpaal!” Our poor people are freezing! The cold wind was blowing from the North, from the mountain they named Qitnguaq. The shaman decided to make the wind stop. He waited until nighttime and built a big windbreak. The wind calmed down and died. From then on the North wind does not blow from Shoulder-Blade Island in Lake Iliamna to Horseshoe Bend downriver. Once you pass these areas, the north wind will be blowing) (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

Implicit in these stories is a Yup’ik sense of land ownership. Groups were compelled to move to different territories during times of resource scarcity or to escape warfare. If the new territory was inhabited, the weaker groups were pushed out. A relationship to the land was forged through the act of place-making and settlement—direct expressions of ownership. Anthropologist Patricia Partnow writes that “Through language, people achieve ownership at the same time they arrive at a sense of belonging to the place” (2003:xiii). The place-name records either the history of events that occurred there, a feature of the landscape, or the resources the place is renowned for. Place names, then, have an essential role in the oral history. Many oral histories are dated simply ak’a tamaani or long time ago, which makes chronological ordering difficult. The histories are not to be placed within a context of when an event happened but where. Arctic anthropologist Mark Nutall refers to the multi-dimensionality of place names as providing a “hidden meaning” that expresses itself in Inuit memory and in storytelling—transforming the landscape into a “memoryscape” (Collignon 2006:199). In recounting travel narratives and specific place names, the traveler is able to share the experience with others after returning home (Collignon 2006:200). In the storytelling experience, group identity and territoriality is legitimized and maintained over extensive land bases. Inuit identity shares a
dynamic relation to place such that they can redefine their identity and territory in the past, present, and future because,

What is important to them is not so much to have a place of their own but to have at their disposal a whole set of various places, with very different qualities, all connected together through the shared experiences of the various members of the community (Collignon 2006:204).

These oral histories endow community members with knowledge and testaments of prior use which translate into a powerful form of Yup’ik land and resource ownership. In turn, land ownership and rights to the resources are maintained through the subsistence way of life.

**Upagluteng…Moving with the Seasons**

Historically, the Yup’ik were highly mobile, following the food supply; a network of seasonal camps and villages consisting of extended families or small groups of families dotted the landscape. Villages and seasonal camps—both historic and contemporary—are always located along rivers, creeks, and lakes. The river systems provided the vital source of food and transportation. The major tributaries to the Kvichak River include the Alagnak, or “Branch River,” which winds its way from Kukaklek Lake. The nutrient-rich waters of Talarik Creek flow into Lake Iliamna. All the waters meet the ocean at Bristol Bay. The Bristol Bay watershed supports one of the world’s richest sockeye salmon runs, which has sustained the people for millennia.

Subsistence activities not only provide a crucial source of food and income, but the lifestyle is central to the identity of the people. Daily life and residence was determined by seasons and resource availability. Resources were harvested not only when available, but also when they were at a premium taste. When families were in outlying camps, they lived spread out (7-8 miles apart) so they could subsist without exhausting one central location. “You have to
keep moving when you are trapping. You can’t trap one [place] year after year. You have to 
move around” (Mike Andrew, Sr. 1995, Tape H95-24-2, Section 17, Project Jukebox). The act of 
moving to another camp was called Upagluteng, meaning to move to one’s place of residence. 
Upmerkami upagluteng, meant moving to spring camp, and Ukuarmi upagluteng meant moving 
to fall camp. One was always ready to upak, or move; this was the subsistence lifestyle. (Mary 
Olympic, 1995, Tape H95-33-1, Section 24, Project Jukebox).

**Spring and Summer Subsistence**

Early spring, such as May or early June, was the time to hunt beluga whales in Bristol 
Bay; on the Kvichak River beluga traveled as far upriver as the village of Levelock. Returning 
birds were also hunted and a variety of bird eggs—such as seagull, arctic tern, duck, and geese—
were gathered. Eggs could be preserved by first boiling them. The eggs that sunk were void of 
air and ready to be stored in animal grease to stay preserved for long periods of time. Wild 
vegetables such as celery and fiddle head ferns were also gathered.

When sockeye salmon started to run, people caught fish by the thousands for smoking, 
drying, and freezing; fish would be a staple food for both people and dogs over the long winter. 
Fish heads were even buried in underground pits to ferment—a local delicacy. A hole, about four 
feet wide, was dug into the permafrost and lined with grass. The fish heads would be covered 
tightly so that no insects or air would get trapped. The pit was opened around December month 
and the fish heads eaten. “They’re fresh; they’re just like you just put them in right today” (Mike 
Andrew Sr., 1995, Tape H95-25-1, Section 22, Project Jukebox). Berries were picked throughout 
the entire season: salmonberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, highbush and lowbush
cranberries. These were stored for winter and would be mixed with whipped animal fat to make another favorite dish—*akutaq*—or “Eskimo Ice Cream.”

Marsha Mary Wassillie-Gregory blows up a bear-gut to make a raincoat, *gaspeq*, at the headwaters of Battle River where the family had a fall fish camp (Photo courtesy of Dallia Gregory-Andrew).
During the summer families would often leave the village and move to their fish camps, where they would spend their days catching and drying salmon.

William Wassie Nickoli, son of Murphy Nickoli and Fewnia Gust, sits in the fish racks. The photo was taken around 1963 or 1964 at Dolly Gust’s fish camp, located about one mile downriver from present-day Igiugig.
Plants were also gathered for medicinal use. Sitka Spruce tree boughs were boiled and sipped to help cure arthritis, rheumatism, and skin irritations. Tundra tea made from the Labrador plant was used to cure dry throats and coughs by sucking on the buds. It was also burned in houses to take away evil and sickness. Caiggluk, or wormwood, was boiled and drunk for indigestion or used as a cleanser for minor cuts and sores. It could also be vaporized to aid in decongestion. Fiddleheads were boiled for an eye wash or drunk for kidney problems (Nelson 1988:21).

**Fall and Winter Subsistence**

In the fall, moose, caribou, and brown bear were hunted when the animals were rich in body fat from a long season of eating fresh plant foods. At this time they tasted the best. Bears were not hunted in the summer months because they tasted too fishy, but in the fall they ate more berries, and so their meat had a better flavor. Often, when a moose or bear was harvested, the hunter would use the fresh hide to construct a kayak or angyaq (boat) to transport the meat. Spawned out salmon were also harvested to make tamauneq. This is air-dried redfish that is eaten with bear fat or seal oil because in the spawned stage the fish is no longer rich in fat. Beach grass turns brown in the fall when it is time to pick them; bundles are hung in storage until there is time for making grass baskets. The dark and cold days of winter offer plenty of time for craft production.

During the winter months, animals such as mink, otter, marten, beaver, fox, wolf, lynx, wolverine, rabbit, weasel, and ground squirrel were trapped when their fur was thickest. These furs were used to make atkut (parkas), kameksiit (long boots), and other warm clothing. Ptarmigan were also hunted all winter-long. Dogsleds were used in the winter once lakes, ponds,
and rivers were frozen (Kedzie-Webb 2006:15-17). A successful trapper knew how to follow the animals and to read the ice.

When the river freezes over [like the first part of December] then we’d trap ‘til the animals start leaving the river, going back inland in the creeks. And then we move out, and start using dog teams. As soon as the river starts to freeze, like Alagnak River, the mink will leave the river…When it freezes over, it raises about eight feet or more of solid ice, slush. And then the water drains out from underneath and it leaves a lot of places really dangerous. It’s hollow some place[s]…In a lot of places it’s just thick ice with nothing underneath but dried up snow. And [you’ll] fall, sometime eight-ten feet down. It’s hard to get out…The mink and otter, they look for different areas too, like the little creeks where black fish and pike and grayling [are] holed up in the winter… (George Wilson, 1995, Tape H95-23-1, Section 18-20, Project Jukebox).

Other resources were not gathered because they were not preferred foods. However, starvation was a possibility, and these resources could sustain people throughout a long winter if other stores of food ran low. For example, white lichen is edible, but not preferred; but as a “starvation food” one should always keep in mind where to find it.

We gonna have lots of everything, a lot of fish coming back…anything’s gonna be more than they usually do. Then the starvation [will] come, [the] fish get lesser. Every year they go down. Maybe three years time, you have hard time [to] get fish. That’s the way they told us when starvation come. Even you hunt, lot of times you go all day, you [don’t] get [anything]. You don’t see [any] kind of animal.

They told us, if the starvation come, [a plant that] grows out of the ground (lichen)...you can eat that (Mike Andrew, 1995, Tape H95-26-1, Section 18, Project Jukebox). You get white moss from the tundra. A long time ago my mom remind[ed] us, “Some day we gonna be low on food. We just know where to find them, we have to spot them ahead of time. Because [starvation] year is coming someday.” So when we’re low on food, they pick ‘em, them white moss, put it in a sack. Then…you mix ‘em with salmon egg, boil it together with the white moss. That’s a food. You could survive on that, if you had nothing else to go by (1995: Tape H95-25-1, Section 27-28).

Everything is gonna be changed when starvation come. That’s what our folks told us. [Only this ling cod that eat the ground], suckerfish, and the little black fish that eat the ground. That’s what we gonna have when the starvation come. And they told us to spot, know where to get ‘em when the time come. ‘Cause we don’t know when it’s gonna happen, but we know they gonna come some time (1995: Tape H95-26-1, Section 18).
The unpredictability of starvation, the length of the winter season when food was more scarce, and surviving in the harsh Northern climate required a cooperative effort. Over time, the Yup’ik culture developed complex traditions and relationships to ensure that the people would always share, cooperate, and respect each other. It is easy to describe “subsistence” as merely the seasonal harvesting of resources, but to do so would be to neglect a Yup’ik relationship to their land and resources that transforms subsistence socially and spiritually into a way of life.

Social Organization and Complex Relationships

Although the Yupiit occupy a vast expanse of land, stretching across three major rivers (Kuskokwim, Yukon, and Nushagak) and four distinct dialects, they all share the same cultural values of mutual respect, sharing, and renewal of relationships that underlie their social organization. As highly mobile societies that fluctuated seasonally between community living and family camps, the Yup’ik people maintained social cohesion through developing complex relationships amongst kinship ties, and through leaders who encouraged values of respect, cooperation, and sharing of resources.

Traditionally, winter settlements were semi-permanent and averaged between 50 and 250 residents. Dwellings were drift-wood framed, sod-covered and semi-subterranean. Prior to contact, women maintained separate households and raised young children while men and older boys resided in a qasgiq (community hall) where they made tools, weapons, and ceremonial objects. During the summer season, smaller family groups dispersed into camps to harvest a variety of resources. Labor was typically divided by gender, but men and women often cooperated in a variety of tasks such as constructing boats. Parents arranged the marriages of
their children, but the children had the freedom to separate if the relationship was not working (Langdon 2002:43-49).

Social cohesion was maintained by choosing leaders who would instruct people in the proper way to live. In a traditional Yup’ik community, leadership was not held by a single individual, and there were different types of leaders such as warriors, wise elders, and healers. The Yupiit chose leaders who were teachers and eloquent speakers and were willing to lead by example:

They preferred those who were not quick tempered to be their leaders. But those who were easily irked, those whose composure breaks easily, and those who yell at someone easily, they do not prefer them at all (Fienup-Riordan 1990:201).

The story of how Singssiiyaq became Chief of Alagnak Village around the late 1800s reflects a Yup’ik sense of leadership. His Native name was Aiyaganiq, his church name was Evan Pupsugpak, but he was better known as Singsiiyaq Pacik or simply, “Ap’a” (Grandfather) because of his powerful position as chief. This is his story as told from the perspective of two elders: one living on the Alagnak (Mike Andrew Sr.) and one from Kukaklek (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

They got a good story when he had first church in Branch River (Alagnak). They said, they looking for chief. They said they gonna find good chief. Could help people good. Chief supposed to help the people. Not against. They said when he was fifteen years old, they put ’em in a chief. They said old people talk inside the *qasgiq*. I think *qasgiq* mean community hall, these days. They looking for lots of young one. Let ‘em stand up in a middle. Inside the *qasgiq* let ‘em stand up. They lookin’ for chief, good one. The one [that] wouldn’t [get] mad. The old man (Chief) touch the nose like that (motion: flip up nose, a sign of disrespect). Some young people run back up. Some of ’em just go down (motion: put head down). And my Ap’a, they said the[ir] gramma used to talk to them. Even somebody against you don’t try to be pay ’em back (don’t seek revenge). Just let ’em talk. The only one, my Ap’a, stand up. No more boys go back, [they were] embarrassed. [Singssiiyaq] never embarrassed, he just stay still. Even go like that (motion: flip nose). Qacungi-llu-gguq waten (to ridicule like this). Just stay still. They said when he done he take my Ap’a. Let ’em go around. He tell ’em:

“Wanigget tuyuraci cangiuurritelria yuungpingrani (ignore him). Tan’gurralugan niisnga qircetci (listen good to me).”
They said that’s the one he find for chief. They don’t mad. They don’t mad even somebody talk to ‘em. They make chief. He chief rest of his life. He tell me about even somebody talk to you funny, don’t listen, just keep on talk to him, don’t you ignore him. When somebody mad at ‘em, you have to apologize right away. When you get mad at somebody you have to apologize fast. Not next day. Not year. Right away. Go tell ‘em “I’m sorry”. He [was] hardly sick and got good mind. Have to listen [to] old people talk. It is right. He tell me not to steal, then when somebody talk about funny stuff, don’t listen, just leave it, that’s the way we supposed to stand up. That’s what my Ap’a stand up for people like that. He was die what ninety something, maybe one hundred years old. Never come off from chief. When they getting old they move up [to Kukaklek], my daddy’s [Alexi Gregory] godfather. That’s why he take care of him. When we eat, they tell us story (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

Singsiiyaq Pacik was a renowned chief of the old village of Alagnak, a village about forty miles downriver from Igiugig. The chief before him said that Singssiiyaq would know how to treat the people right. He would be fair, he would not lose his temper, and he would make a true Chief.

Singsiiyaq was about fifteen when he was chosen as chief, and he lived to be over one hundred years old. The Gregory family took care of many elderly people throughout their years at Kukaklek Lake. When Singsiiyaq Pacik started to get old, he wanted to move to Kukaklek and live with his godson Alexi Gregory. He told Mike Andrew Sr.’s mother, Matcungaq, that when he stops breathing, the flag at the new church would come down. They would know that Singssiiyaq died and that Eau Andrew was to become the next chief. One flat calm day in Branch River, the tall ship boom, to which the church flag was attached, fell down and broke into three pieces. The people of Branch River knew that their Chief had died, and they sent people to Kukaklek Lake to help bury him (Mike Andrew Sr.).

The story of Singsiiyaq also shows how people living in different communities maintained social connection with one another—in this story it was through godparent relations. However, Yup’ik people also share relationships and identities with each other through the act of naming. When a person died, the next newborn in that village or neighboring town was named in honor of that person. Namesakes are passed on through generations and between Yup’ik
communities, and this is another way that the Yup’ik people maintain social cohesion. The namesake is treated like family to relatives of the deceased—and a new relationship is formed. Yup’ik deliberately seek ways to unite the people, “building invisible networks of relationships” (Oleksa 2005:43). Everyone is related to each other somehow in the Yup’ik world, and one way that this is ensured is through the naming of children (Oleksa 2005:45). The dead were reborn through the gift of the name, and therefore, the possession of a name was as essential to life as one’s thought, breath, vision, voice, and visible image (Fienup-Riordan 2002:213). Ann Fienup-Riordan explains this concept further:

In the Yup’ik view of the world, procreation is not the addition of new persons to the inventory of the universe. Rather, it is the substitution of one for another. Some spiritual essence passes with the name, and in an important way the dead are believed to live again through their namesakes. With the gift of a name, one becomes more than a relative. One gains not only social connections but a distinct social identity, becoming a unique “real person”. Each ancestral name, passed on through generations of men and women, has a life of its own. Though human beings come and go, the names of the “real people” remain the same. The gift of a name following a human death insured human life in perpetuity…The death of an individual was an instance of cosmological reproduction (2002:191-192).

Martina John of Toksook Bay explains that “People are pulled closer to you through your name” (Fienup-Riordan 2002:202). Traditionally, this was how an extended family was created, which in turn was important for survival and even social cohesion: “People of one village lived as close relatives” (Kawagley 1995:11). These relationships were so important to traditional Yup’ik societies that they were given special names. For example, Paul John, also from Toksook Bay, explains the term Tuqluryaraq (the way of knowing who your relatives are), which was used by ancestors like the way hotel reservations are made today:

Knowing your kin and passing on the kinship terms to the following generations was very important to our ancestors. If you knew who your relatives were in other places, there would always be a place reserved for you to stay (Fienup-Riordan 2002:202).
In some villages, the newborn would be anointed with a name by pouring water into the mouth or sprinkling some on the head. A name could be passed on for endless generations. The Yup’ik language is gender neutral, and so is the practice of naming. This is the reason why Yup’ik speakers do not distinguish gender in third-person pronouns (“he/she”) when translating into English, but simply say, “e”. An important part of passing on a name is to tell the namesake stories about that person. For example, when acting/behaving like their namesake they are given special attention and often shown a sign of affection. The naming of children after their dead is one example of how the Yup’ik culture found a way to maintain social cohesion as well as impart a distinct social identity. A closer examination of Yup’ik naming provides insight into how the elaborate system of relationships reflects a Yup’ik worldview which persists in the 21st century despite radical cultural change.

The Yup’ik Worldview and “Native Law”

A popular oral tradition recounting the origin of human beings provides insight into the roots of the general Yup’ik worldview. Long ago, there were no people on earth. The first man burst forth from a beach-pea pod. Raven approached the full grown man, and standing before him, pushed his beak up, like a mask, to the top of its head. After doing so, Raven changed immediately into a man. Raven looked at Man in surprise—the stranger looked so much like himself! Then Raven created Woman as a companion for Man, but decided that if he did not create something to make Man afraid, Man would destroy everything else made to inhabit the earth. Thus Bear and other dangerous animals were also created. Raven introduced natural checks and balances into the universe which were designed to maintain cosmic order. The Yup’ik worldview, therefore, is founded on the fundamental principle of relationships and
reciprocity that needed to be maintained among humans, living and dead; between humans and other life forms; and between humans and the weather (Oleksa 1992:13-18).

The concept of death and rebirth of humans was the same for animals. In general, the Yup’ik believed that the living and dead existed in separate, but closely related worlds. Every living thing possessed an essential life force—a yua, which literally means “its person, its personality, its soul,” and this life force was the same for humans and other creatures. When the human or animal died, the life force separated from the physical body and journeyed underground to the land of the dead to await rebirth. This life force gave all persons “awareness”—an idea central to the Yup’ik culture and which governs their relations to the natural world (Fienup-Riordan 1994:211).

Therefore, for Yup’ik hunters, animals of the land, water, and sky allow themselves to be killed, trusting that the Yupiit will treat them respectfully and allow them to be reborn (Oleksa 1992:18). The idea of “awareness” was important to respect: because people have a sense of control over the destiny of other beings, they must respect their rights (Fienup-Riordan 1990:205). There is a word for when a Yup’ik child first gains “awareness” and that is ellanguq: to have one’s first experience which leaves a lasting memory. Children are not expected to participate in chores until they reach maturity (around ten years old), and then they are taught rules for the proper living of life.

Many oral traditions of the Yupiit reflect this fundamental principle of awareness, such as the story of “How the Blackfish Decides” (Fienup-Riordan 2001:21). A blackfish swimming upriver would almost enter a fish trap, but before doing so would examine the owner of the trap. If he or she looked or acted carelessly (for example, was sloppy, wore dirty clothes, or did not follow proper protocol such as taking care of bones), the blackfish would avoid the trap and enter
one that belonged to a thoughtful and respectful person. Such stories are told from the perspective of the animal, looking into the human world and deciding which fish trap, harpoon, or snare to give themselves to. The creature always chooses to give himself to that person who demonstrates a commitment to Yup’ik values. Once the creature has given itself, the proper treatment involves not wasting any part, following strict codes of conduct such as returning the bones to water, and sharing the catch. If these rules are followed carefully, the animal will return to prosper, thus increasing a hunter’s “luck” (Fienup-Riordan 2001:21).

It was a collective responsibility to maintain proper relationships with creation and any breach of protocol could endanger the group. Therefore, strict codes of conduct for each community member were incorporated into the culture. A wife’s or daughter’s behavior at home could influence a hunter’s success, so there were many rules to follow surrounding the home. Traditional Yup’ik houses were symbolically analogous to the female reproductive system: the skylight was likened to the umbilical cord leading to the Ellam Yua (universe), the interior to the womb, and the tunnel-like entrance to the birth canal (Lee and Reinhardt 2003:155). Directly derived from this concept are numerous ritual behaviors performed inside or outside the dwelling at various times and seasons (Oleksa 1992:19). In particular, there were a number of rules surrounding pregnancy that focused on a woman’s activity in relation to the house. Many of these traditions are still followed today, even though people live in modern houses. For example, upon waking each morning, a pregnant woman must quickly rise and exit from the house so that her unborn child would emerge in a similar manner from her body (Fienup-Riordan 1994:180).

Children also had rules to follow such as when they could play with particular toys. For example, young girls were only allowed to play with their dolls, tarunguaq, outdoors until the waterfowl flew south for the winter (Oleksa 1992:19). Thereafter, the dolls were put away for the
winter, and could be taken outside only when the sandhill crane, the *qut’rauk*, returned. This is the last bird to return for the spring.

When we mention the crane, that’s the last bird to come into Bristol Bay, [from] where they live in winter. When e have no more cold weather, the last birds to come over that’s when the old people tell us: “You could take your toys out, there’s no more cold.” When the crane come[s] over, there’s no more winter ‘til next year (Mike Andrew Sr.)

A child who broke this rule risked making the winter season longer. This seasonal tradition demonstrated that every winter there was gestation, and with every spring, a rebirth as represented by the appearance of the dolls (Oleksa 1992:19).

These rules of proper living are referred to as the “Native law,” and they stress principles of sharing, rebirth, renewal, and strength. “Long time ago, the Native had a law. But not written down, not on a paper. Everything they tell you, that’s their law. Native law, but it’s not written down” (Mike Andrew Sr.). “Native laws” also worked indirectly to minimize resource over-exploitation. These included not hunting during an animals’ mating or birthing season, not gathering bird eggs after a certain time period to allow them to hatch, and culturally defined time periods of “no hunting” (e.g., after a death and particular holidays). In a Yup’ik worldview, however, reproduction is not the addition of new persons/animals to the inventory of the universe, but a recycling of the set number of souls (Fienup-Riordan 1994:191). Therefore, in times of resource scarcity, hunters did not refrain from hunting because the idea of *not* hunting animals would result in a decrease in their population. Igiugig’s elders reflect this concept when they recount what their elders told them:

If we quit hunting ducks or moose, anything, they’re gonna come back they get lesser every year. That’s pretty true…Lot of time…we heard, “[You] take too much, [you] killing everything.” No, it’s not right. We understand. We [learned] from my folks, my mom, my grandpa—the animals we have to hunt ‘cause we, we survive, we eat. If we quit hunting it, it gonna be lesser, every year they’re lesser…The animal never get less as long as we can hunt it, year after year (Mike Andrew Sr., 1995, H95-25-2, Section 3, Project Jukebox).
In essence, it takes the death of an animal to bring new life; without death the rebirth cannot happen, which is why not hunting will result in a population decrease, rather than an increase.

This explains why an animal’s treatment after-death has real consequences for the future: it can choose not to return. Respectful treatment of animals extended far beyond the initial hunt. One important tradition is to give away a person’s first catch. For men, this would often be the first big animal killed such as a seal or caribou. For women, it would often be the first fish put up. Dallia Gregory-Andrew remembers her parents giving away the first salmon that she split, hung, and smoked:

Yeah long time ago they give ‘em away…first catch. First put up fish, they give ‘em to elders, whoever, so you could have good [luck]. Down below flats (on the Kvichak River) my Mom and Dad used to give ‘em guamcuaq, my whole line empty yet (laugh). Gee, I used to [be] stingy [and want to keep the fish] to myself, but that’s the way we [are] supposed to do. You have more luck, you have more catch if you give away (laugh).

The first catch is often shared with all members of the community, usually in a big celebration feast. Sharing, however, did not end with the first catch.

Whenever they catch something, like if you catch a caribou, you give the ribs and the brisket to whoever is the eldest in the village. Then you just have the plain meat to yourself. You know, you give the choicest parts of the meat to the elders (Annie Wilson, 1995,Tape H95-23-2, Section 29, Project Jukebox).

Showing respect to an animal included eating all of the meat off the bones. The bones were then returned to water so that the animal would return again. If one were to ask why these things were done, the answer might come in the form of a story, and although the story might be universal, it would be said to have happened in the particular village. For example, this is the version told to Mary Gregory-Olympic who lived next to Reindeer Lake:

A long time ago a man heard a baby crying. He followed the sound. When he found what was crying, it was not a baby, but a bone. A really, really dry bone. The bone was crying out, “I am thirsty!” and wanted water. The man picked up the bone, carried it to Reindeer
Lake and threw it in. The bone floated for a long ways and was happy. From then on, all animal bones are thrown in the water to keep from getting thirsty.

The story was told differently to Mike Andrew Sr., who grew up in Alagnak, or Branch River.

Long time ago, there was a moose skull...It was on land, dry land. Someone left it. It was hot, and the skull of our moose, he was just thirsty. And whoever hear[d] this one, he was hunting around, looking for game. He heard something, [a] noise someplace. So he stay[ed] quiet and listen[ed], “What was that?” [It] was crying, ‘cause [it] was thirsty. He spotted that moose skull there in the tundra, dry. He was really thirsty, he was crying. Whoever [found] that skull, he pick[ed] him up, threw it in the water. So [the skull] thank[ed] him. After that they get luck when they go and always caught something all the time. ‘Cause animal skulls give ‘em luck (1995, Tape H95-25-1, Section 24, Project Jukebox).

The relationship Yup’ik people share with their land is articulated in their forms of oral histories: place names, personal names, and animal/human origin stories. The Yup’ik people believed that humans and animals could communicate with each other. This allowed for humans to learn how animals got their name and their physical features, such as the “Story of Mink and Paluq.” These stories, although often humorous or seemingly pointless, actually stress the importance of all life forms.

The mink...he walk around the dry little creek, looking for food. Mink was hungry. Pretty soon he see something coming out of the creek. Little bit water was running downstream. Then he look, thinking “How [am I] gonna get them little fish?” They keep on, another one come by. Pretty soon he put his little mink tail right across the creek, right across the water. Soon as the little fish come over, he flip his tail and throw ‘em on the ground (laugh).

For [a] long time he [did] that. Then he [thought], “I should have [e]nough now. Maybe I got [e]nough for my dinner now.” So he look[ed] [behind him]. Oh boy! Lot of little fish [were] jumping all over. He said “That’s enough, I am gonna be full.” He [sat] down, start[ed] eating—boy he had nice little fresh fish.

Poor mink was so full he was happy. Then when he got full, he look around, where he’s gonna lay down settle his food. Soon he see little bank, [a] little sand hill. He look around, only good place to lay down, “Maybe I go up there, and sing a song when I get up there.” So little mink start[ed] walking up away from the creek. Then he lay down in the sand in the sun, relax, boy nice and warm. Then he [thought], “I [need a] song. I gotta make song.” He said, “Yeah I gonna do that.” So he’s singing:
“I was so hungry, and I sit down lay down rest my food, what I caught I was so hungry I
got lot of little fish with my tail. I couldn’t finish it, I go up the sandhill, lay down and
sing a song. That creek was so rich…”

Pretty soon he sing three times. Second time seems like he hear something above his
head. He was close his eyes. And third time, he said he open his eye one side little bit you
know, sing same time.

“Boy my creek is rich, make me full, I fish with my tail…”

Pretty soon something told him: “Yeah you will be hungry, your eyes gonna be way
down.” He was wondering, “How come, who’s around me?” He said, “Nobody’s around
here. I shouldn’t feel bad, lotta animal like me, maybe it’s not me.” So he try again. This
time he open his eye up little bit open, one side closed. Then he sing:

“My creek is rich, lot of fish, catch em with my tail. You see I am full this time.”

When he look[ed] down, before the end of his song, he recognize[d] that it was that Paluq
(a tree fungus). There was a paluq, chasing the mink. He said “If you hungry your eyes
gonna be way down” while [mink] was singing. Boy the mink got angry with em, he
chase em, jump up. You know them little mink got left handed too, so that paluq run
around but he jump up in the dry tree, stick (clap). That little mink run right up there,
kick em outta the dry tree, fall in the ground, grab em… “I am gonna throw you, let you
drift. I don’t need you!” So he took em off, throw em in the water. [Paluq] drifting along.
That paluq said, “Pick me up! Pick me up! Throw me back in the dry bush, young
generations gonna like me!” [Mink] said, “Nobody gonna like you, I let you drift!”
(laugh).

[Mink] felt sorry for him, he pick em up, throw em in the dry tree, where he was sticking
broad side. That’s why the paluq you always see one side kinda almost tan, that’s where
he stick long time ago, the mink turned him around when he throw him on the broad side.

This story explains how Paluq got its name. The root word palug- means to lay face-down; to be
put in such a way that the side which is usually upward is faced down (Jacobson, 1984: 279). It
communicates special knowledge of plants and animals, for example, that Mink is a left-handed
creature that likes to eat fish, and Paluq is the tree fungus that grows broad-sided (widest part
attached to the tree). The story teaches one not to quickly judge that “I don’t need you!” For
Paluq was right when he said the young generations would need him even though he seemed like
a useless tree fungus that deserved to be discarded. Paluq was used traditionally as an herbal
medicine and as a chewing tobacco. Perhaps most importantly, however, the story reinforces that although one might enjoy times of plenty, there is always a threat of starvation in the future. And this threat to survival insured that the people stayed committed to Yup’ik values of respect, sharing, and cooperation amongst all of creation.

Conclusion

The word Yup’ik means a “real genuine person.” The Real People distinguish inter-village identities by referencing the land to which they belong, for example, the Igyararmiut, “people of Igiugig.” They express a deep connection to their homeland through subsistence, language, social organization, and worldview. In English, there is no universal word that describes a connection to home or homeland. I brought an Igiugig elder, Mary Gregory-Olympic, to her homeland. Looking out over the entirety of Kukaklek Lake she exclaimed “My home, nunaka!” In Yup’ik, nuna means “land, place, soil, earth, village, country.” The suffix ‘-ka’ adds a possessive, “my one (noun)”. With the simple utterance “nunaka” the elder made a direct “physical and linguistic appropriation of the landscape” (Partnow 2003:xiii).

This relationship Yup’ik people share with their land is articulated in their forms of oral histories: place names, personal names, and animal/human origin stories. These stories endow community members with knowledge and testaments of prior use which translate into a powerful form of Yup’ik land and resource ownership. Anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan views this ownership as relational rather than possessive because of the Yup’ik laws, practices, and belief system that determine that the land continues to provide because of the proper attitude and action of the subsistence users. Therefore, rights to particular lands and resources belong to groups of
Yup’ik people because they have relied on them for generations “and have a social relationship, not to mention moral obligation to them” (1990:172, 183).

A person has a right to use a specific site and to harvest from it by virtue of that person’s relationship with previous generations of men and women who used the same site and, essentially, harvested the same animals. These animals, in turn, have returned year after year to specific sites in search of specific hunters...Rights to both the land and its resources are understood to be relational rather than possessive. As such, they cannot be sold or legitimately usurped by nonresidents otherwise uninvolved in this cycle of reciprocity. In this view, aboriginal use is conceived as far from unregulated. As prior use gives one knowledge, knowledge of fish and wildlife gives one rights to continue that reciprocal relationship (Fienup-Riordan 1990:183).

Their oral histories and traditions not only enlightened the Yup’ik people with detailed knowledge of their environment, history, cultural values and worldview, but often they foretold changes in the future. Some Yup’ik leaders, such as Singsiiyaq, prophesied that the people would one day be introduced to new people and technology that would test the rules and values that the Yup’ik people upheld.
Arrival of the *Kass’akaat*


The Yup’ik word for “white-men”, *kass’akaat*, was borrowed from the Russian word “Cossack”. The Russians were the first *Kass’akaat* to visit southwest Alaska. In 1741, Vitus Bering sailed along the Aleutian Islands and landed in Prince William Sound. Based on this “discovery” of the North American mainland, Russia claimed sovereignty over Alaska (Morseth 2003:27). The Russian period ended with the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867. Although it was relatively short-lived, Russian presence remains visible in southwest Alaska in the Russian Orthodox Church, remnants of the language, and certain traditions, such as the steam-bath.

The oral traditions foretold a day when homelands would be invaded by white men, *kass’akaat*. Our resources—furs, gold, fish—attracted them just like *neqcaq*, fish bait. As industries rose in importance, Native families were drawn into the economic centers, causing a shift in settlement patterns. This chapter draws upon historical documents about first European
contact with the Lake Iliamna/Bristol Bay region during the Russian Period, through the Alaska Purchase, until about 1930. It traces the changes this contact brought to the southwestern Native Alaskans through population devastation, and the introduction of Christianity, a market economy, and new technology such as firearms and mechanized transportation. A case study of the Gregory family that incorporated these changes into their seasonal subsistence activities reveals that the traditional system of land use remained clearly intact during this time period. Natives of the Lake Iliamna/Kvichak River region still claimed places as they followed changing patterns of subsistence. The time period 1741-1930, set the stage for the land claims era because only the land that Natives currently used—as fish camps, reindeer herding stations, and trapping areas—could be considered for ownership in a Western legal system.

The Fur Trade

On the basis of Bering’s “discovery,” the Russian empire under Czar Peter the Great claimed sovereignty over all of Alaska. Private entrepreneurs, or promyshlenniki, from Russia and Siberia stormed the Aleutian Chain in pursuit of sea otter, fur seal, and Arctic foxes. Often the promyshlenniki united to form a company. They dispatched vessels, carrying about fifty fur traders, to Alaska for as long as seven years. Two dominant companies were the Lebedev-Lastochkin Company and the Shelikov Company. Shelikov set up a system of trading outposts and artels, which are a Russian workers’ cooperative. The largest on the Alaskan Peninsula was the Katmai artel (1793). It became the center of trade, especially because the Yup’ik and Sugpiaq already had long established trade routes to the villages which thrived in the vicinity until the Novarupta volcanic eruption of 1912 (Morseth 2003:34).
Early Russian commercial activity not only established a claim of possession to the “discovered” land, but also transformed the way of life of the locals they encountered. The Unangan (Aleut), Sugpiaq (Alutiiq) and Yup’ik were impacted to varying degrees depending on their geographic location. Many “Peninsula Natives” (Unangan and Sugpiaq) were enslaved, resisters were persecuted or killed, children were often captured, and resources were over-exploited. In order to maximize fur production, villages were held hostage to a coercive system: an appointed Native leader in each village acted as an intermediary between the fur companies and Native providers to insure that furs, food, and clothing were being produced for Company employees (Morseth 2003:27-31). Further north on the peninsula, Yup’ik homelands were less affected because Bristol Bay waters did not have the sea otters that Russian promyshlenniki pursued (Morseth 2003:11). Instead, Bristol Bay and Bering Sea Natives were able to remain isolated from the cruel treatment and extreme social, economic, and cultural disruption that their southern neighbors endured. Rather, they were able to reap the benefits of trade through “middlemen,” Natives who strategically and lucratively positioned themselves in control of the flow of pelts and manufactured goods between Russians and more distant interior Natives. In return for pelts, they were able to obtain valuables such as steel knives and axes, firearms, metal cooking utensils, glass beads, and other goods. The new items sometimes replaced traditional ones, such as metal axes for stone ones; sometimes they simply supplemented existing items; and sometimes the new items were refashioned in traditional ways, for example metal saw blades were used to make the traditional knife, the uluaq, instead of slate (Calloway 2008:160-1).

In the later Russian period, however, fur resources approached exhaustion resulting in changes to company management and exploration efforts into the interior. Shelikov died in 1795, but under the supervision of his wife, the major companies consolidated into the Russian-
American Company (RAC) in 1799. The Russian Imperial Government granted the RAC a monopoly over trade, and although it never exercised judicial powers, the RAC became the *de facto* governing body of the American Territories (Morseth 2003:27-31). After the consolidation of the RAC, the new company administration under L.A. Hagemeister’s direction embarked on explorations, hoping to establish trading relationships and extend commercial interests into the interior.¹ In 1818, Petr Korsakovskii and Fedor Kolmakov, the manager of the company outpost and trading center at Katmai, traveled up Cook Inlet, portaged to Iliamna Lake, and proceeded down the Kvichak River to Bristol Bay. They also traveled along the coast of Bristol Bay to the mouth of the Nushagak River where Kolmakov built a fortified trading post known as Alexandrovskii Redoubt (Morseth 2003:39-40).

The establishment of Alexandrovskii Redoubt was the first Russian attempt to secure a profitable authority over Bristol Bay. One strategy used by Kolmakov was to Christianize the Natives in an effort to bind their labor to the trading/missionary post. In 1829, Father Veniaminov, the most revered church dignitary in Russian Alaska, visited Alexandrovskii Redoubt and initiated the establishment of an official Russian Orthodox Mission in 1841 (also known as the Nushagak mission) (Selkregg 1998:4-5). The following ten years saw the baptism of many Yup’ik employees of the RAC (Dumond and VanStone 1998:41). As the original goal of securing commercial interests in Bristol Bay continued to fade, the new religion quickly metamorphosed into an indigenous Native Alaskan religion.

**The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)**

The introduction of Russian Orthodoxy did not bring about a drastic shift in belief systems for the Yup’ik people of Bristol Bay, but the new religion was gradually incorporated
into local, religious beliefs. This process was assisted by the epidemics that ravaged the populations, by the willingness of ROC missionaries to speak the local language, and by the nature of the religious traditions—some of which enforced previously established Native traditions such as singing, gift distribution, and special relationships between people.

Russian Orthodoxy was introduced during a period of social disruption caused by epidemics. The first serious smallpox epidemic reached Bristol Bay in 1836 (Selkregg 1998:6). It is estimated that Native populations were reduced by as much as one-third, destroying families, communities, and leaving behind physically and emotionally scarred survivors:

Where populations were decimated, the epidemic left a demoralized people who had witnessed the failure of traditional healers’ shamanic powers to heal and maintain the natural balance of life. They were forced to question and confront their beliefs in traditional powers held by shamans, healers, elders, and the lifeway that was quickly disappearing (Morseth 2003:44-45).

The new religion was accessible to the survivors because Russian Orthodox missionaries and priests learned the local Native language and translated the Gospel, prayers, and songs of praise. Many traders and mission officials were creoles—of a mixed racial and cultural heritage. Most spoke Yup’ik and married local women (Fienup-Riordan 1994:30). By 1848 there were 1,080 parishioners in the Nushagak region and parishioners traveled great distances to attend services (Dumond and VanStone 1998:43). The growing importance of the Orthodox Church was reflected in the establishment of chapels complete with bells, icons, candles, and other church necessities in larger Native settlements, and prayer houses or outside lecterns for seasonal camps. Russian Orthodox priests were required to travel to all of the settlements annually, but parishioners also traveled great distances to attend church services (Morseth 2003:53).
The Russian Orthodox priest, Father David Askoak, visits Igiugig and the Kvichak River for Theophany (January 19), in commemoration of when Christ was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.
Fienup-Riordan (2000), Oleksa (1992), and Kan (1999) describe how the change in traditional belief systems to Russian Orthodoxy was not an abrupt shift, but a process of metaphoric incorporation. Different Alaskan Native groups—such as the Aleut, Yup’ik, and Tlingit—adopted the religion, but simultaneously maintained their own rituals and interpretations of Orthodoxy which lie outside of the Church’s official ideology (Kan 1999:367). Father Michael Oleksa explains the deep commitment to Orthodoxy as due to Orthodoxy becoming an indigenous Native Alaskan faith (1992:207). One example he uses to argue this point is the celebration of Selaviq—or Russian Christmas. It is believed that around 1905, Ukrainian missionary Father Iakov Korchinskii introduced the singing of Carpatho-Russian folk carols, koliady, when he served western Alaska. The Yup’ik already had traditions of feasting and gift distribution which took place during the winter, so the caroling customs were readily adopted. “In any case, the Yup’ik celebration of Selaviq, derived from the Slavonic “Slava” represents an obvious synthesis of Orthodox liturgical, Ukrainian folk, and ancient Eskimo traditions” (Oleksa 1992:186).

Selaviq is celebrated differently by region. In the Lake Iliamna area, the festivities begin on January 7 and the “Starring” continues until the eve of January 13, or Russian New Year. The village congregates at the church where songs are sung in Slavonic, English, and Yup’ik. The singers, following their village “star,” visit each Orthodox household in their own community. The “star” is a wooden star-framed creation that has an icon in the center and is elaborately decorated in tinsel and bright ornaments; it is fashioned in such a way that it can be held in one hand and twirled by the other—and the direction it is twirled changes depending on what song is being sung. The procession is ruled according to custom. The candle proceeds first, followed by an icon, and then the star; singers must never enter the building before them. If there is a resident
priest, his house is visited first, followed by the reader, the chief, and then everyone else. At each residence, the villagers sing a selection of songs and at the end, members of the family—followed by everyone else—venerate the icon, and a generous monetary donation is made “to the star”—to the parish. The family lines up to receive hugs, kisses, and a “Blasnigo!” (Merry Christmas). Then, the family offers a big feast and the singers are expected to either eat all of it, or to fill Ziplocs with the left-overs because it is a sign of disrespect to leave behind food. Sometimes gifts are given: new gloves, cigarettes, canned fish, dish towels, toys, etc.

The villages in the region: Newhalen, Iliamna, Nondalton, Kokhanok, Levelock, and Igiugig (sometimes South Naknek) coordinate a visitation system. The villagers travel by sled and snowmachine, and more recently by airplanes, to neighboring villages. “By visiting several hundred homes, the singers enjoy not only visiting their extended family and friends throughout the region, and consuming a substantial amount of traditional foods, but also raise thousands of dollars for the annual budget of their village church” (Oleksa 1992:190). Each village has a distinctively different singing style, and the villages with Athabascan relations often sing songs in the Dena’ina language. Selaviq is a good example of an indigenous Native Alaskan celebration because although the custom of the “star” originated in Europe, the feasting, gift-giving, and ritual constitute remnants of the ancient Yup’ik winter festivals (Oleksa 1992:192).

Another way Russian Orthodoxy has been adopted as an indigenous faith is in the relationship between godparents, or Kelussnaq and their godchild. Godparents are chosen specifically to develop strong relationships with a particular person and to be a guiding influence in the godchild’s life. This relationship extends beyond the realm of the church, especially because there are no regular church services in villages without a resident priest. The godchild is often adopted as a family member, acknowledging their Kelussnaq’s children as their god-
brothers and sisters. During Selaviq and major holidays, the godchild is included to stand with the family, and usually receives a special gift from their Kelussnaq. In church, this relationship is acknowledged during Holy Communion; every godchild—young and old—line up before their respective godparent and receives communion in order.

Also, Russian Orthodoxy did not disrupt the traditional system of Yup’ik naming but endowed members with a religious identity through assigning “church names”. At baptism, a baby is named after a Saint and people of the same name celebrate “name days” together. Often there is a celebratory potluck. The church also has a “name day”. Igiugig’s St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox parish name day celebration feast is usually on December 19. If there is a priest in town, students skip school for the morning service and, then, when the feast is ready around lunch time, the villagers gather to feast before returning back to school or work.

Today in the villages, both Russian Orthodox holidays and Western holidays are observed. There is a difference in the way the two holidays are celebrated, and this supports the idea that certain traditional cultural celebrations were subsumed under Russian Orthodoxy. Western holidays such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated by family. For example, the opening of gifts on Christmas morning is followed by a few relatives invited over for Christmas dinner; Easter eggs hidden in the house for Easter morning is followed by Easter dinner. Russian Orthodox holidays, however, are celebrated as an entire village—regardless of peoples’ religious denomination. Selaviq ends with a New Year’s bonfire where a variety of traditions are observed, such as burning “old” belongings, running around the fire three times for good luck, and trimming hair to throw in the fire. For Russian Easter, everyone decorates eggs together at the recreation hall. These eggs are then hidden in a defined area outdoors and a village hunt ensues. After all the eggs are found, villagers reconvene for a grand Easter potluck.
In the Lake Iliamna region, the Russian Orthodox faith is the greatest legacy of the Russian period. Alaska remained a Russian colony until 1867, and, despite efforts of the RAC and the Russian Orthodox Church, Bristol Bay and the interior southwest remained largely unexplored. Unlike the Unangan and Sugpiaq, the Natives living in the Lake Iliamna region enjoyed relative isolation from the harshest effects of the Russian era. They were able to involve themselves in the fur trade and benefit from the flow of new goods such as dry foods, guns, and beads while still in control of their way of life. The exposure to small pox had a devastating effect on the populations, but they recovered quickly. Their position on the periphery of trade was effectively ended, however, after the Alaska Purchase by the United States in 1867, when Bristol Bay became the center of economic activity.

The Fishing Industry

*It was fish that brought us here. All of us: Yup’iks, Aleuts, Norwegians, Swedes. They still do. There’s hardly anyone living here or visiting here who isn’t here to fish.* –Karen Roberts (Halliday 1998:94).

The Alaska Purchase of 1867 brought an abrupt end to the isolation of Bristol Bay’s Native inhabitants. Russia decided to sell the territory to the United States because profits from the fur trade continued to decline, and Russian sovereignty in Alaska was being contested by other countries, especially Britain (Selkregg 1998:5). Change took place immediately. The U.S. Government differed from the Russian Government in their extensive exploration and encouragement of Whites to settle the territory (Morseth 2003:49). At the same time the sea otter industry failed, the fishing industry continued rising in prominence, flooding the region with outsiders from all different ethnic backgrounds. New waves of epidemics devastated Native
populations, and the over-exploitation of salmon caused starvation to become a recurrent problem for the local villages (Morseth 2003:56-61).

Immediately after the American acquisition of Alaska, several expeditions explored the Bristol Bay region. The RAC holdings were sold to Hutchinson, Kohl and Company, which was taken over by the American Commercial Company (ACC) in 1872. The company was criticized by Orthodox priests as immoral for their practice of not distributing goods to Natives or granting food on credit for future animal catches. Furs brought to the store were bought with company checks that Natives could only cash at company stores (Morseth 2003:56-61). Although the sea otter industry was failing, the ACC continued to buy furs.

Economic activity did not end with the decline of the fur trade, however. The Alaska salmon-canning industry became the most important economic enterprise in the territory. Beginning in southeast Alaska, the industry started slowly in 1878, but quickly surpassed gold and copper mining, timber, and tourism in the value of the export, the number of people employed, and the scope of the industry (Crutchfield and Pontecorvo 1996:238). By 1890, more than twenty canneries operated in Alaska; by 1895, the number rose to thirty-seven. The increased competition led to the consolidation of canning companies, and the Alaska Packer’s Association (APA), established in 1893, emerged as the leader—controlling seventy percent of the salmon industry (Haycox 2002:240).

In southwest Alaska, the first salmon cannery was established on the lower Nushagak River in 1884 (Unrau 1998:83). This was followed by three more canneries on the Nushagak, salteries on the Naknek River, and four canneries on the lower Kvichak River: Lockanok, Graveyard, Koggiung, and Coffee Creek (Branson 1996:109). In 1900, the North Alaska Salmon Company built two canneries near the confluence of the Alagnak and Kvichak Rivers: Lockanok
and Hallerville (Kedzie-Webb 2006:19). In the Yup’ik language, *alagnak* means “making mistakes,” and it refers to the changing nature of the river channel which causes travelers to make mistakes and get lost. However, the first Euroamerican pronounced it Lockanok (Kedzie-Webb 2006:2). Today, it is known as “the Branch River” because every year it changes and branches. Hallerville was named after J.P. Haller, the president of North Alaska Salmon Company. In 1916, Libby, McNeil & Libby, a canning company giant in US packing trades, purchased the two canneries. Kvichak River erosion rendered both inoperable by 1936. The salvageable cannery lumber was transported to build homes in the surrounding Kvichak villages (Kedzie-Webb 2006:25).

As the commercial salmon industries rose in importance, hunters and their families were drawn into the economic centers. Canneries were located at river mouths, which is also where most villages or subsistence sites pre-existed. In the 1890s, summer settlements began to develop into year-round villages—some of which exist today (Morseth 2003:53). However, companies preferred to hire imported Chinese laborers for fishing crews and cannery operations (Selkregg 1998:8). A 1900 US Census for Koggiung included two counts, one for the Native Village (pop. 115) and one for the cannery settlement (pop. 199) and in addition, a total of 245 Orientals, Japanese and Chinese, between Koggiung and Naknek (US Census, 1900).

The fisheries industry rapidly expanded during World War I, and between 1915 and 1920, the number of canneries operating in Alaska increased from 86 to 143 (Crutchfield and Pontecorvo 1996:238). This created more employment opportunities for local Natives. However, before statehood, commercial fishing was a difficult enterprise. Salmon traps were used by those canneries with allotment sites and permits issued by the Army Corps of Engineers (Nicholson 1996:27). Fish traps were extremely efficient and very economical for canneries, but they were
despised by local fishermen who could not compete. A fish trap consisted of netting stretched from the surface of the ocean to the floor; these were placed near the mouths of streams. The net would catch nearly all of the fish from the stream mouth and, if operated continuously, had the potential to deplete the fishery in a few seasons (Haycox 2002:241). In Bristol Bay, however, the shallow water made drift gillnets preferable to the fish trap.

In the early period of canneries, motors were outlawed in an attempt to conserve the fish resource. Instead, fishermen fished in pairs from shallow-draft, double-ended Columbia River sailboats (Nicholson 1996:27). These boats had a centerboard and a spirit sail, and it took two men to handle the boat. They were about twenty-eight feet long by nine feet wide, planked with cedar or fir. The sail could be attached to a mast to propel the boat, or pitched as a tent to offer protection from the wind when it was time to brew coffee on a kerosene stove. The drift nets were hauled in over wooden rollers mounted mid-ship or on the corner of the stern. A crew could load their boat with as many as 3,000 fish—at their own risk because it was difficult to get to a cannery dock if the tide and wind were unfavorable. Many lives were lost to the twenty-two foot tides and the unpredictable currents of Bristol Bay. By 1910, tugs called “monkey boats” were used to anchor in deep off-shore water so that fishermen could deliver their catch even at low tide. (Alaska History and Cultural Studies 2008). Each cannery painted their fleet with a different color, and each boat had an identifying number. These boats died out with the change of regulations, which allowed the introduction of powerboats in 1951 (Morseth 2003:95).

The fishing industry was managed haphazardly because the massive salmon runs seemed inexhaustible. In 1919, over-fishing by canneries resulted in a near total failure of the red salmon run. The newly-established Bureau of Fisheries sought to remedy the situation by removing competition: bounties were issued on rainbow trout, Dolly Vaarden, and bald eagles because
these species preyed on salmon and their eggs and fry. Between 1917 and 1940 local Natives could exchange trout tails for a few cents each and a pair of bald eagle claws for about $2.50 (Branson 1996:108, n 185). At the same time that resources were being over-exploited, causing food shortages for local Natives, the US federal government began passing legislation to protect Native subsistence, such as the Allotment Act (1906). However, the people of the Kvichak River were preoccupied with the momentous change brought by the influx of foreigners to their region and the epidemics which devastated Native populations.
Canneries located on the lower Kvichak River (Anderson 1998:123).
In this photo Nick G. Olympic throws a rope from a cannery-owned sailboat to a “monkey boat” in the Naknek Bay. He fished for the Alaska Packer’s Company.
Qenarpaq—The Great Sickness

The fur trading, missionary work, scientific exploration, government activities, and commercial fishing brought extended contact between outsiders and Natives. The local Natives, exposed to new diseases to which they had no resistance, suffered waves of epidemics which devastated populations. The first serious smallpox epidemic occurred in 1836; in 1899 it was a combination of measles and influenza, but the most severe was the 1918-1919 worldwide influenza epidemic (Selkregg 1998:6-7).

The Spanish flu epidemic reached the Kvichak River when it was first noticed at Koggiung on May 23, 1919. Yaqulek was a young man working for the cannery at Koggiung when the flu hit. Mail was brought by ship to Koggiung once a year. There were a lot of people of different nationalities arriving to work at the canneries, and they brought the flu over. Cannery workers said not to let anyone visit the Kvichak River villages (Levelock, Qinuyang, etc.) or Branch River so that the flu would not spread. Once Yaqulek had to deliver food to Qinuyang, the village next to present-day Kaskanak Creek. Yaqulek paddled upriver. Then, before handing the packages over, he slightly burned the edges that were handled in order to prevent spreading the disease. Yaqulek caught the flu and lost a lot of weight. He was bed ridden and a Chinese man took care of him. He gave him whiskey mixed with water and it made Yaqulek throw up and, he believed, cleansed his insides. The Chinese man took care of him and saved him from dying (Mary Gregory-Olympic). But, survivors were rare. In Koggiung, the flu raged for a month, killing 39 people and leaving 16 orphans (Kedzie-Webb 2006:12). The orphans were picked up by a ship and brought to a government orphanage at Choggiung.

Scow go up to the old villages, can’t touch them anymore. Caved in the houses. Scow picked up the kids. Flu was just like a fog-gguq. Old Koggiung-gguq taiyucikik. Stop in the beach you walk up in the village, fall down ‘n die. Sick got ‘em pretty fast. Qenarpag-gguq e call ‘em. Camaani-gguq tua (Mary Gregory-Olympic).
Matrona Chukon-Wassillie, known in Igiugig as *Maaci* “Great Aunt”, was in Koggiung when the ship came to get the orphans. They were all loaded onto the big ship, all little faces and hands waving good-bye to the people on the shorelines. The orphaned children were taken to Kanaknak Hospital in Dillingham (called Choggiiung). Some kids were shipped to the Lower ’48 for lack of orphanage space. Matrona was taken in by her godparents, and did not have to join an orphanage (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

The disease killed hundreds of people. Entire families died. Survivors said that a person would be walking along—even smiling—and then just fall over dead. The old people say that the flu was just like a dense fog above the ground. The east wind kept it away from Lake Iliamna and so it never spread further than the Kvichak River. There were only three survivors from the village Qinuyang, today called “Old Igiugig.” Nick Nowatak was a survivor and was orphaned by the flu epidemic. He is listed as a fourteen year-old Nickolia Newatak in the 1920 U.S. Census of the Government Orphanage at Choggiiung Village, along with 125 other children (US Census 1920). His daughter, Elizabeth Nowatak-Hostetter, is a current resident of Igiugig. She recalls,

He just told me [he was born] near Peck’s Creek. He was really quiet about that place. Every time we’d try talking to him about it, he wouldn’t tell us. Too hard, he said. But I heard stories about what had happened. My dad went hunting, he was just a little kid, going out for a day and coming back and finding his mom and them dead. He had a younger brother. They said his younger brother was nursing on his mom.

Sounded like [Qinuyang] was a really big village. He had a lot of relatives there, but there were only three people that [survived]: Blind Gramma, my Dad, and Guliaq [Andrew Evon]. And then after that Dad was an orphan. Blind Gramma was married to my dad’s brother so she raised him for awhile. Then he was an orphan so he went up to Iliamna/Nondalton area. No one really liked him because he was an orphan, he was a so-called Nobody.
The other survivor from Qinuyang was Anuska Kasylie, remembered fondly as “Blind Gramma.” She escaped from “Old Igiugig” after the flu epidemic killed about two-hundred villagers, including her husband Peter and her daughter. She paddled downriver in a three-hole skin boat—a *biadarka*—with the other survivors: her baby daughter Stepanita and her nephews Andrew Evon “Quliaq” and Nick Nowatak. She made it to the village of Levelock, where her baby died. Today, Blind Gramma’s descendants live in Igiugig. Nick Nowatak married Mary Olympic (not to be confused with Mary Gregory-Olympic) and eventually settled in the village of Kokhanok. Elizabeth Nowatak-Hostetter is their youngest daughter, and she remembers spending a couple years in Igiugig to attend school.

We used to travel down the [Kvichak] river during fall time and we’d see the buildings or the old places [from Dad’s village] and we’d want to go and check it out. Mom would say no, the sick is still there it might come when you go and visit there. So we weren’t even allowed to go in buildings or near places because they were afraid the sick would come back.

After the villages were evacuated, cannery people came and took the belongings—including a totem pole that was on the bank of Igiugig’s ancestral village. The totem had a crow on top that faced the direction of the wind. All of the Native belongings were taken by the cannery workers and were sent to museums.

Qanganaat-gguq luki tauten kameksit-gguq tauten. Long kameksak... Before Nurileng, stop e somebody go out and tell ‘em to go back...Go up, try to looking for stuff. Not sickness up there. No sick. Tell ‘em to go back down. Ikikiika! Kameksiit, atkuut. tegulriik. From that village, people’s clothes and stuff. Ipuutet-gguq tauten! Wooden spoon.

(Rough translation: Ground squirrel parkas and long skin boots, they took them. They tried to go to Newhalen Village (a village on Lake Iliamna) looking for more Native belongings, but before they reached it, somebody stopped and told them to go back because there was no sickness up there. Shameful! They took those skin boots and parkas from the villages—people’s clothes and stuff. Even wooden spoons!)
One of the only photos that exists of Qinuyang, the old village located near Kaskanak Creek. It was abandoned in 1919. The photo was taken by George A. Parks sometime between 1913 and 1939 (State of Alaska Digital Archives).
Nick Nowatak was one of three survivors from “Old Igiugig”, Qinuyang, located on Kaskanak Creek about seven miles downriver from present-day Igiugig. He is pictured above with his wife, Mary Olympic-Nowatak and youngest daughter Elizabeth Nowatak-Hostetter. She was raised in Kokhanok, but currently lives in Igiugig Village.
The village of Qinuyang still sits on the bank of the Kvichak River, just above Kaskanak Creek. There are many pits—caches, large qasgiq (community hall), and houses—remnants of fish racks, and wooden crosses that are decaying. After epidemics, families dispersed, leaving villages such as Qinuyang abandoned. Former lands that were owned and inhabited as a group were left—not even to be visited again for fear of the return of the great sickness. Renewed connections to these lands were made during the reindeer herding era, when families spread across the landscape to manage their individually owned herds. Another layer of place names—Reindeer Valley, Reindeer Lake, Reindeer Bay—were added to the old “memoryscape.” This individual use and occupancy of particular areas, and the connections to land made during this next transitional period created the basis for individual land claims in the future. Lands formerly held in collective ownership by a group, decimated by epidemics, became available for individual claim.

Reindeer Herding: A Transition Economy

In the 1890s, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a commissioner for the U.S. federal Bureau of Education (BOE) with an interest in “civilizing” the Native population, noticed the impact whalers had in reducing the amount of food the northern Natives could harvest. In order to prevent their starvation due to the depletion of subsistence resources such as whale, walrus, seal and fish, Jackson arranged to import Siberian reindeer into Alaska to provide a reliable food source (Haycox 2002:194). Congress made the first federal reindeer appropriation in 1893 to eliminate the need for nomadic hunting and to establish Natives in a commercial enterprise (Case 2002:201). Biologically, reindeer are the same animal as the Alaskan caribou, but they are
domesticated, making them smaller, lighter in color, and more spotted than wild caribou (Stern, et al. 1980:4-5).

Reindeer were introduced to the Iliamna Lake area in 1904 by accident when the Norwegian Lapp, Hedley Redmyer, attempted to transport 300 deer and four herders from Bethel to Copper Center, a 600-mile trek that proved to be too long and difficult. Redmyer could not find the right mountain pass and eventually received permission from Jackson to settle at Kokhanok Bay and establish the Kokhanok Reindeer Station (Morseth 2003:98). Redmyer writes: “I made up my mind to return to Iliamna Lake, which is one of the finest reindeer countries I have seen in Alaska” (Unrau 1992:470). It is from this group that most Bristol Bay herds originated (Branson 1996:96, n 80). The salmon canneries operating along the Kvichak River and Bristol Bay created a market demand for reindeer meat to feed the workers. However, I am not sure of the scale of the industry. A 1938 source mentioned that the common price for deer meat was $0.10 per pound, and that the meat was mostly sold to the canneries (Unrau 1992:474). I could not find how much a skin sold for and who bought them.

By 1906 the Kokhanok Reindeer Station had 535 deer, all owned by the U.S. Government. Two Lapp and Finnish herders were employed to oversee the deer, and two Native boys were enrolled as government apprentice herders. At each reindeer station, the superintendent—often the teacher at the public school—selected promising Native apprentices for four-year terms. At the end of the first year, a worthy apprentice received six reindeer in payment; the second year, eight reindeer; the third year, 10; and fourth, 10 more reindeer. The apprentice was given the choice to kill his surplus male deer and sell the meat and skin, and encouraged to use his sled deer for transporting mail, passengers, and freight. At the end of the
contract, the apprentice assumed the role of chief herder, and in turn, hired more apprentices (Unrau 1992:470-1).

In this fashion, herds were often reorganized to create new reindeer stations across the region. In 1909 about 500 deer were driven to Koggiung at the mouth of the Kvichak River, and the Koggiung station was established. A 1910 US Census Record recorded a “Locknock Reindeer Station” (Alagnak) with twelve people. A 1920 count recorded 6,000 deer in the Bristol Bay reindeer district. By 1923 the number increased to 14,000. The following year [1925] there were six Native-owned reindeer herds in the Bristol Bay area, including the Kvichak River and Iliamna Lake (Morseth 2003:98). During the winter of 1929-30, seven men from Big Mountain removed 493 deer to Kaskanak on the Kvichak River (vicinity of “Old Igiugig” or Qinuyang). A 1930 US Census recorded twenty-four people living at Kaskanak Reindeer Station, including brothers Nick and Simeon Wassillie (Yaqulek’s sons) and their families. Five Native herders and one apprentice (4 Aleuts, 2 “Kenai”) established a new reindeer station at Big Mountain in June of 1930. They started with 282 deer, and butchering records reveal that reindeer meat was an important part of the local diet: over the year 26 were butchered for food and 22 of the skins were used for clothing (Unrau 1992:473-4).

The reindeer herding “industry” was introduced to prevent starvation and to involve Natives in a market economy. However, the new economies—fur trapping, commercial fishing, and reindeer herding—were all compatible with the subsistence way of life. Natives were able to continue moving seasonally, maintaining connection to their many subsistence sites, but also to their new reindeer herding lands. “Dwelling is said to consist in the multiple “lived relationships” that people maintain with places, for it is solely by virtue of these relationships that space acquires meaning” (Basso 1996:106). The places used, lived, and experienced during
the short-lived reindeer era took on another level of importance during the land claims era as descendants secured their families’ right to the land. For example, Mike Andrew Sr. was born and raised on the Branch River, but for a short period of time in the early 1900s, his parents herded reindeer on Big Mountain. His mother told him to claim the land where the family had a reindeer herding station:

We had reindeer herders up there long time ago. They [built a] fence, right North side of Big Mountain... The [reindeer would swim to] the Big Island [to] cool off in July. When e cool off, they swim back and go back to the fence. ‘Cause long time ago reindeer herders up there and Mom told me [to] claim that Big Mountain. We have 160 acres up there too, where we had [reindeer].

Because of the relationship formed with the land during the reindeer herding era, Mike Andrew Sr. owns his mother’s allotment on Big Mountain, even though he only shares in the experience through story. Instead Alagnak River is his home and where he chose his allotment lands. Today, Mike Andrew Sr. inherited his mother’s land on Big Mountain and he claimed his land along Alagnak River.

Mike Andrew Sr. was not involved in reindeer herding because he was born in 1935. The late 1930s saw the downfall of the reindeer herding industry in the Iliamna Lake region. This is evident in the observations by John G. Gordon, a teacher at the Newhalen Native school. In August 1937 he wrote:

The real problem is this: how are we going to make it worthwhile for the herder to stay with the herds? The herders are able to make eight to fourteen hundred dollars during the fishing season in Bristol Bay and that is more than enough for buying all their needs from the local trader. If they want fresh meat they go on a short hunt and get moose. In the fall and spring geese and ducks are plentiful in these parts and the natives manage to get all they need (Unrau 1992:474-475).

In January 1938, Gordon questioned the chief herder about the disappearance of the Newhalen herd: “He then related that several of the owners who still had deer demanded that they be transferred to the Kukaklek Lake herd where they would be better cared for. This they did early
last fall leaving a small herd of less than 150” (Unrau 1992:475). Due to the combined problems of overgrazing, diseases, poor marketing conditions, and predatory wolves, as well as the incentives offered by the commercial salmon canneries, reindeer in the Iliamna region either assimilated with the wild caribou herds or were transferred to other stations (Unrau 1992:476). One station in particular, the Kukaklek Reindeer Station, remained in operation until 1947. This was one of the last remaining reindeer stations in the Lake Iliamna area and it was owned by the Gregory family.

The Gregory Family and the Kukaklek Reindeer Station

A case study of the Gregory family and the Kukaklek Reindeer Station gives a detailed example of the level of movement and change as families incorporated fur trapping, commercial fishing, and reindeer herding into their subsistence way of life. It provides an example of how families maintained kinship relations and extended networks while they were living in family camps. It also gives an idea of how Natives lived an increasingly modernized life—enabled by involvement in the new cash economy.

The Gregory family has both Unangan (Aleut) and Yup’ik roots. A long time ago, presumably during the Russian invasion of the Aleutian chain, an Aleut moved up the peninsula and resettled in the Bristol Bay region after marrying a Yup’ik woman³ (Mary Olympic, 1995: Tape H95-33-1, Section 4, Project Jukebox). Their son, Gregory Tengcetaar’ married Iyakak, a Yup’ik woman from Alagnak. Their son, born on March 17, 1883 was named Alexi Gregory, and the original family name Tengcetaar’, meaning “Fair Wind”, was lost because it was too difficult for outsiders to pronounce and record.
Alexi Gregory (1883-1967) and his wife Marsha Mary Wassillie-Gregory (1897-1964) at Kukaklek Reindeer Station. Taken in the 1940’s, they are standing in front of their one bedroom log cabin, which is covered in tarpaper. Alexis is wearing a ground squirrel parka. The white areas are patches of reindeer calfskin, his collar is wolverine, the tassels are for decoration, and he is wearing a beaver fur hat. Often times his daughter Mary Gregory-Olympic would use his parka for her sleeping bag at night. His wife is wearing a reindeer skin parka, also with calfskin decoration and a wolf ruff.
The largest family living on the Kvichak River was the Yaqulek, a last name which means “bird/duck/fowl” in the Yup’ik language. Wassillie Yaqulek married Anna, and on April 1, 1897 they had their oldest daughter Marsha Mary Wassillie. The Yaqulek surname was dropped. She was born on the Alagnak, but she also lived in the old village of Igiugig known as Qinuyang. Marsha’s first arranged marriage was to Martin Zackar in Newhalen, which is where she was living when the flu of 1919 devastated the village of Qinuyang. The flu never traveled to Lake Iliamna. Her first husband died, and none of their five children survived, so that summer after the flu epidemic, Marsha reunited with her family in Koggiung. Koggiung consisted of two settlements, the “Indian Village” and the cannery town; the former was inhabited almost exclusively by Natives. Qinuyang, the village above Kaskanak Creek, existed no longer; the survivors sought refuge in other settlements. The Alaska Packers Association’s steamer *Kvichak* arrived in Koggiung to transport the orphaned children and bring them to Kanaknak Hospital on the Nushagak River (Unrau 1992:84).

The Gregory and the Wassillie family were both involved in commercial fishing and reindeer herding. At first, Alexi Gregory was not impressed with fishing because the pay was not worth the hard work. “We’ll be poor fishin’ down Naknek Bay” he told his daughter (Mary Olympic, 1995: Tape H95-33-1, Section 17, Project Jukebox). Also, in this early period, the canneries preferred Asian imported labor, and fishing from open 28-foot doubled-ended sailboats was dangerous.

Alexi Gregory became a Russian Orthodox Church Reader and learned how to read, write and speak in three languages: English, Yup’ik, and Slavic. He officially married Marsha Mary Wassillie on September 4, 1926. In 1931, they had their seventh child, Mary Ann Gregory; in 1942, Gabby Gregory; and 1943, Dallia Gregory. Interestingly, the family observed most
Western holidays, although at this time Mary did not realize that they were celebrations. Looking back, she realized that the big jackrabbit roasted once a year was for Thanksgiving, her parents singing in January was for Russian Christmas, or Selaviq, and that the big bonfire that they ran around was for New Years. The family held a reader’s service every Sunday, even while they were in seasonal camps. Every morning they would go outside, and facing east make the sign of the cross to thank God for the light, and every evening prayers were said in front of the icon. As a reader/lay priest, Alexi Gregory traveled to the surrounding villages extensively, and he was known as “Ap’arpak” (Big Grandfather).

Alexi Gregory’s descendants can only speculate about where he acquired his herd of reindeer; it could have come directly from the Kokhanok Reindeer Station or from Koggiung. After he acquired a reindeer herd, sometime around 1910, Alexi Gregory moved to Kukaklek where he established a winter settlement called Reindeer Village. He hauled supplies from the Koggiung cannery, and his house was complete with window-panes and a wind-operated battery unit for the radio (Mary Olympic, 1995, Tape H95-33-1, Section 1, Project Jukebox). It was called “Reindeer Village” because at one point in time, three families lived at Kukaklek, all helping with the Gregory reindeer herd and taking care of the 40+ sled dogs. The families of Johnny Mike, Zackar, and Paul Wassillie all lived at Kukaklek for a short time.

Kukaklek (Qukaqliq) means “middle one,” and it is named for its location between Lake Iliamna in the North, and Nonvianuk Lake in the South. Here, the Gregory family incorporated reindeer herding into their traditional subsistence lifestyle: the long summer months were spent at a fish camp on the East end of Kukaklek, the short fall months putting up redfish at Fall Fish Camp at the mouth of Battle River, and in October the family would move to their permanent winter settlement located two miles from the upper West Kukaklek shoreline at Reindeer
Village. The reindeer followed the same pattern of seasonal movement and did not hinder the subsistence lifestyle.

**Neqliyaraq: The Place to Put up Fish**

Around May or June of every year, the Gregory family moved to Summer Fish Camp where they lived in a “mudhouse” (semi-subterranean dwelling) until the snow all melted. Then, the canvas tents were set up and it was time to put up fish. Over 2,000 sockeye salmon were split and dried, including the eggs and backbone, to feed the dogs and family over the long winter. The net was set out at night, and pulled in first thing in the morning. The net was picked, and the fish were kept fresh in the water, inside a stone cage, made from the flat stones found at Nanguwutet Kuigat (Sharpening Stone Creek). These stones also came in handy for sharpening the uluaq (knife). First, the split fish were hung on the large fishracks to dry for about a day. It was Mary’s job to watch the fishracks from birds, which might peck at the fish. Afterward, the fish were taken inside the big smoke-house, which was made from a spruce-tree frame and covered with five-gallon gas cans that were flattened for their tin, and with doors of braided grass.

Adults were busy from morning until night, gathering food for the winter and watching the reindeer. Alexi and the boys took care of the reindeer every day. The reindeer were allowed to roam the mountainsides, eating brush leaves and lichen. During the hot days the reindeer would migrate towards the snow patches and lie in the snow to cool off and get away from the bloodthirsty insects: mosquitoes, sandflies, and no-see-ums. Mary had no chores until she was ten years old, but once in awhile she would accompany her dad up Cikirpaluq, “Ground Hog Mountain” to take care of the reindeer.
Summer Fish Camp is where Mary, ten years old, killed her first animal—a ground squirrel. She brought the squirrel home and proudly showed her mom. Her mom took the squirrel, threw it all around the ground and then fed it to the dogs. Mary cried and cried, but was told that it had to be done. The first time a person killed an animal it was supposed to be given away, it could not be kept, because it can bring bad luck later on. Since there were no other people living at Kukaklek, the squirrel was given to the dogs.

*Fall Fish Camp*

Around the middle of September the Gregory family would store their dried fish in the cache and pack their belongings in preparation to move to Fall Fish Camp. The dried fish would be picked up in the winter, after the lake froze. Fall Fish Camp was located about ten miles southeast of Summer Fish Camp. On moving day, the boys would leave first with the reindeer herd, and the women would walk with the dogs. They would live at Fall Fish Camp for about a month. About 100 male red salmon were speared; the females were left to spawn. The red fish were dried on racks to make *tamauneg*, ‘dried red fish,’ and this was eaten with bear fat. Dinners were mostly eaten outside: salmon or lake trout, moose meat, moose-fat, and ducks were put on sticks and cooked around the open fire pit; this is called *maniaq*. All the food was air dried before being stored to keep it from spoiling. When the family ran out of dry goods such as sugar, flour, salt, etc. Alexi would walk to the nearby village of Kokhanok and take a boat over to Severson’s Roadhouse in Iliamna. He bought goods with money he made by trapping. It is unclear if Alexi made money from reindeer herding.
This photo was taken at Reindeer Village at Kukaklek Lake, approximately 20 miles Southeast of Igiugig. The man on the left is Evan Apokedak and standing next to him is Mike Wassillie (son of Wassillie Yaqule), Mary Gregory-Olympic and Dallia Gregory-Andrew’s uncle.
The numbers correspond to all of the locations that the Gregory family used during their reindeer herding era (~1910-1947) at Kukaklek Lake. (Map courtesy of Project Jukebox: http://uaf-db.uaf.edu/Jukebox/Katmai/projects/Igiugig/maps/map.html)

1. Winter Camp/Reindeer Village
12. Summer Fish Camp
17. Fall Fish Camp
21. Trapping “mudhouse”
8. Trapping “mudhouse”
After enough red fish were caught, split, and hung, the Gregory family had to wait for the fish to dry. In the meantime, Marsha spent the days setting traps and snares in the mountains to catch ground squirrels. Ground squirrels were trapped in the spring and fall. Marsha would catch about 100 squirrels while waiting for the fish to finish drying, and the furs were used to make *atkut*, parkas. It took about fifty squirrels to make a man’s parka, and forty for a woman’s. Marsha always kept busy and sewed parkas for all of her children, brothers, and even their wives. She was the oldest and had four brothers ("the Wassillie brothers") who lived along the Kvichak River, and some herded reindeer around Kaskanak Creek. While Marsha trapped squirrels, Alexi hunted for brown bears since they were storing fat for winter. When a bear was killed, everything was used. The guts were blown up and dried out to make rain parkas. The bear skin was used to cover boats, and the meat was eaten. Before moving back to Winter Camp, Alexi would make an *anyaq*, a skin boat, using a wooden frame covered by bear skin. The *anyaq* was filled with gear and towed by a skiff with a 5-horsepower motor, back to winter camp at Reindeer Village. Then, Alexi would return to herd the reindeer to Winter Camp.

**Uksiyaraq: Winter Camp at Reindeer Village**

In mid to late October, after the red fish dried, the family moved to Winter Camp; they stayed there for eight months of the year, until May. Marsha would pick more berries for the long winter; gallons were stored in one of the two family caches—one for Native food, and one for "Kass’aq” food that Alexi hauled from trading posts in the nearby establishments of Igiugig (not a village yet), Koggiung, or Iliamna. Alexi would gather and chop piles of wood for the stove and steambath, which they lit every night. The steambath, or *maqay*, was borrowed from the Russians. It is a bathhouse consisting of a hot room and a cold room. A stove, often made from a 50-gallon oil drum, is covered with large stones, and a platform is made for the hot water
container. Bathers fill a basin and splash water on the stove. Often a *taariq*, or switch made from leafy tree branches, bird wing, or bundle of herbal plants *caiggluk*, is used to soothe aching bones or sore muscles.

Using a sled with a nine-dog team, Alexi spent the rest of the winter trapping. He had three “mudhouses” surrounding Kukaklek Lake for camping while trapping. He would trap a variety of animals: fox, otter, mink, wolf, wolverine, lynx, and beaver. In fact, Mary learned how to count by counting her father’s furs each morning. She remembers reaching one-hundred at the end of one season; these furs were brought to the Igiugig Trading Post and traded for food and money.

Although called “Winter Camp,” the establishment was more than a camp. The Gregory family had a house built from lumber, complete with window panes, a steambath, and two caches. There were also two other houses built in the same area that belonged to other families, which is why it was called “Reindeer Village.” From the time Mary can remember, no other families lived at Winter Camp. However, the Gregories adopted children and took in elders, so there were always more people around. The two adopted children were orphans Elia Eknaty and his older sister Annie. Their parents died in Igiugig. Elia was two years older than Mary, and he became her favorite playmate. When Annie was married to Gregory Zackar, “Apaniisaq”, they both lived at Kukaklek until the Gregory family moved away. The family also cared for elders. Mary remembers Sinsiiyaq Pacik, the Chief from Alagnak (Branch River), who came to live with his godson Alexi when he needed to be taken care of. He died and was buried at Winter Camp.

Wintertime was also a time for visiting. Marsha’s brothers Nick, Simeon, Ira, Mike—three of whom were Chiefs in neighboring villages—and their families would journey to Kukaklek and
visit for a couple days; sometimes there were so many in the house that there was no place to sleep!

Winter Camp was where Mary had her first encounter with a white man. Bill Hammersly, a prospector on Novianuk Lake and a fur trapper, came to visit Alexi one day, but he was not home. Marsha invited him to eat with the family, but they only had one little table (it sat under the icon) which could only fit two people; the family usually ate sitting on the floor. She told Mary to eat with Mr. Hammersly at the table, and Mary remembers the experience vividly, for he “sunk that pancake with sugar and syrup!”

Also, during the winter months Alexi Gregory would hire workers from the surrounding villages of Alagnak (Branch River) and Kokhanok to help with the reindeer herding, especially when he was busy trapping. One of his hired help was Evan Apokedak, the father of Igiugig elder Annie Apokedak-Wilson. Mr. Apokedak was born in Clarks Point on February 12, 1911 (Wilson 1989:16). As told to his grandson,

We moved this way to Diamond J [cannery on the Kvichak River]. From Diamond J, we go up to Reindeer Valley. We lived in a lot of different places. We moved in 1924 to Kaskanak and after that we used reindeer, no dog team. I never school, no place. One time we stayed at Kukaklek in 1930. We got no church when we stayed up at Reindeer Valley. So we couldn’t have holidays… Everybody all together got over a thousand [reindeer]…Sometimes the reindeer move around and we stay with them in a tent. Mostly we live in the tent, even in the wintertime. Usually three young men would herd the reindeer. The rest of the people and the families would stay in the village. We train them first, then let them pull. I watch them [his uncles] and that’s how I learned. First time I see reindeer I scared. The guys lassoed the reindeer and it charged this way and I go in the house. I figured it come right [in] the house after me. After a couple of days, I get use to it (Wilson 1989:17-18).

In order to break a reindeer for the sleigh, Mr. Apokedak would

Lasso first, tied them up to a tree, short like, not long. The next day make the line longer. If too long, he is going to run over himself, fall down and break his neck…We watch them reindeer night and day to protect the reindeer from wolves which started to come around in the 1930s. The wolves kill lots them, one night they kill thirty (Wilson 1989:18-19).
Mary Olympic vividly remembers the “wolf problem.” At about the age of thirteen, Mary and Elia became full-time reindeer herders. This required taking the reindeer to graze on the hills all day. They had to be watched carefully for predatory wolves; if a wolf was spotted, Elia and Mary would burn an entire spruce tree to scare it off.

We start build the Christmas tree fire. *Ekurpaq* (bonfire). That *avayaq* [light the dead tree branches] first and let ‘em light. Run to the Christmas tree, put ‘em under, let ‘em burn wintertime. *Ekurpalnguq!* When e wolf start howling around, let ‘em go, big fire, burn that Christmas tree! Whole thing…We don’t see caribou, once in while…Your Amau (great-grandfather) have to [kill] ‘em right away. ‘Cause they might make [the reindeer] wild, take ‘em away. Sometime three, four, [kill] ‘em all. We had lotsa meat (laugh) (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

Their reindeer herd—which served as a source of food, transportation and furs—had drastically shrunk by now. From the furs Marsha would make mattresses, sleeping bags, and *kameksit*, or skin boots. However, Mary regarded the reindeer as her “pets,” and her reindeer had a special “mark” which identified her pets. Branding the reindeer was known as marking, or *marggaluki*, and it was done to the ear of the reindeer:

Make *casguq* first—big fence with Christmas tree…My reindeer got a mark, like that (motion in air). *It’gaq.* [A Spade in cards] (laugh). My brother, just cut (draws straight line in air) (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

Mary’s most cherished memories of Kukaklek Lake are about playing out with the reindeer: sleighing down hills or trying to lasso reindeer for fun.

Me and Elia Eknaty used to be lasso little tiny kind, *nuriaq* [yearling caribou or reindeer calf]. They call ‘em *nuriaq. Lasso-artukut*. When we got ‘em, we take ‘em off. One time Elia Eknaty mistake with a big one (laughs hard). Mistake with a big one, we can’t handle ‘em. When he hold ‘em both of us drag around (laugh, shaking head). Can’t handle the big, big mama one. She got, some of ‘em fancy reindeer, spotted white, gray. That one, we got ‘em. Try to hold it but we can’t. Both of us hold ‘em, he dragging around (laughing). Can’t handle ‘em. Finally, Elia tell me, “*Malia Apatiiq aqvau!*” he tell me to “Mary go get Apatiiq!” That old man. I run down, it’s not far from you know that *lasso-ryaraq* I show you? I run down, go in there. Usually in a little bed in a low bed by the door. Go in there, Apatiiq lay down, relax. I didn’t tell my mom. I go in there:
“Apatiiq! Tai-tai!” (Apatiiq, come here).

“Ciin?” (why?)

“Tai-tai, ciin aptuq, tai-tai. Qanemciyugamken. I tell ‘em, “You come, I wanna tell you something outside.” (Laugh), He walk out. “Apatiiq, alartuq tuntumun. We mistake for a reindeer lassuarlluumgani, when we play lasso. Ikayuryugtukuk” (we want you to help us).

He not lazy. He go back in, put paallaguaq (fur hat) and coat and gloves. He walk with me. We walk up there. He take the lasso, he take ‘em... Tie ‘em around a tree, Christmas tree. Take ‘em (motion grab antlers) and let ‘em, let ‘em lie down, and take the lasso. Iiiiiiiii [Expression, in amazement]. We can’t. He tell us. After that he tell us, talk to us.

“Ukuuk lasso-nguarlangrilluk angtuane. Akngirciqaitkuk.”

They tell us to “Don’t lasso big one, we might hurt” (laugh). Boy lots of work to do when reindeer [herding]… (Mary Gregory-Olympic).

The reindeer economy began declining in 1930 mainly due to predator problems and poor marketing conditions caused by the Great Depression. Eventually, the reindeer herds of Bristol Bay were given up for the salmon fishery, which provided the first wage labor for the rural Natives. The Kukaklek herd was one of the last to disappear. In the 1940s Alexi and the boys would leave Kukaklek to commercial fish in Naknek for Red Salmon Cannery. Mary and Annie Eknaty-Zackar were left to care for the remaining reindeer. In 1947, at twelve years old, Mary’s younger brother Alix died. His death was so tragic for her parents that they released the twenty remaining reindeer and moved to Igiugig (Mary Olympic, 1995, Tape H95-33-1, Section 13, Project Jukebox). Out of the thirteen Gregory children, three are still alive today: Mary Gregory-Olympic, Gabby Gregory, and Dallia Gregory-Andrew. After the family left Kukaklek they lived in many places including Branch River and along the Kvichak River until eventually settling in Igiugig. Mary was arranged to marry John Olympic from the village of Kokhanok and raised four daughters in Igiugig; however, she still refers to all of Kukaklek Lake as “nunaka” (my land, my home). Her younger sister, Dallia Gregory-Andrew, was born at Kukaklek Lake, but raised
along the Kvichak River. She was arranged to marry Mike Andrew Sr. from Branch River; they raised three boys in Branch River and moved to Igiugig in the late 1960s after the school was built. Dallia and Gabby claimed their land along the Kvichak River.

**Conclusion**

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought drastic change for Lake Iliamna residents. The fur trade, missionary work, scientific exploration, government activities such as reindeer herding, and commercial fishing brought sustained contact between outsiders and Natives resulting in a blending of religion and lifestyles. However, the traditional form of land use and continuities of place-making continued uninterruptedly.

The commercial fishing industry had the most-sustained impact. Canneries were either intrusively established near Native villages, or they attracted Natives to move to new settlements for economic opportunities. Surnames were anglicized, which has made tracing genealogical lines difficult. For example, brothers Nickoli Tengcetaar’ (Dinstare) and Gregory Tengcetaar’ became the Nickoli family and the Gregory family. On the other hand, Wassillie Yaqulek had a large family and all of his children kept the surname “Wassillie”. Today, they are one of the largest families living in the Lake Iliamna area. The canneries also assigned common last names or new-comers intermarried, so Igiugig Village is populated by Andrews, Wilsons, and Nelsons. The original Native names did not disappear, however, due to the strong tradition of Yup’ik naming. Children today are still given Yup’ik names after their ancestors.

Moreover, the introduction of the fishing industry followed the traditional pattern of resource availability: “the timing of the activity meant that in only a month of each year, the Native was able to involve himself in the alien system for very large cash returns without having
to assimilate to a system of wage labor” (Petterson 1980:6). However, Natives became increasingly dependent on wages to purchase more store-bought goods such as coffee, tea, sugar, salt, gas and oil. Also, mechanized transportation, firearms, and steel traps, which increased a hunters’ efficiency, required money.

The epidemics devastated the people along the Kvichak River. To an immeasurable extent they paved the way for conversion to Christianity by undermining people’s faith in traditional healers. Shamans and the qasgiq disappeared, but other traditions were maintained within Russian Orthodoxy, making the religion an indigenous Native Alaskan religion. The increase in the foreign population, the new industries, and mechanized transportation and firearms intensified the harvesting of resources such as fur-bearing animals and salmon. Traditional rules for living were tested as Yup’ik people endured more frequent times of starvation because the salmon runs were depleted. Ideas of Christianity and Western resource management made the situation more complex, and people are still coming to terms with the changes. “In the hunting and processing of wild fish and game, Yup’iks actuate their relationship with the natural world. Some expressions of these relationships seem esoteric today, fractured and out of context, especially to youth” (Barker 1993:10). Still, in the village today there are people who continue to return bones to water, to wake up in the morning and go outside to give thanks for the daylight, or give away first catches while at the same time they follow state Fish and Game rules and regulations which conflict with traditional ideas of resource “management.”

The population devastation, followed by the reindeer herding era and commercial fishing industry resulted in a dramatic shifting of Native settlements.

The effects of the small-pox epidemic of 1838-39, combined with subsequent epidemics of influenza, produced not only a decline but also a dispersal and shift in the population. It undercut interregional social distinctions and left undefined the boundaries over which
the bow-and-arrow wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been fought (Fienup-Riordan 1994:29).

Interregional social distinctions were also undercut as local Natives congregated at economic centers, leaving behind seasonal camps.

By the end of this time period, the industry and villages that would survive into the twenty-first century had been established (Morseth 2003:53). Three particular forces—social, economic, and political—promoted the settlement of Igiugig Village. The elders of Igiugig—Mary Gregory-Olympic, Mike and Dallia Andrew, Gabriel Gust, George and Annie Wilson, and Alice Zackar—are the last generation of people who have lived both a traditional life and experienced the transition from traveling to settled life (Schneider 2002:118). On an individual level, present-day elders who were raised “out on the land” were about to involve themselves in an alien process of determining “ownership” that would freeze the landscape for generations to come. The connections to the places where they were born, subsisted, reindeer herded, or lived (even if temporarily) set the stage for the era of land claims when families chose allotments and villages chose corporation lands that reflected personal and family connections. This connection is articulated in oral histories that are the elders’ declaration of title:

Articulating past and present connections to place has taken on fresh importance during an era of protracted land claims negotiations. [Elders] speak of land in terms of travel and mobility, frequently constructing life stories as travel narratives. Their understanding of landownership rarely includes formal boundaries (Cruikshank 1998:16).

When these elders recount their past, they are telling more than stories about a vanished way of life, for “their telling is bound up in social-historical and power relations” (Cruikshank 1998:73).
Building a Community

Land is the gift of our ancestors and the guarantee of our right to continue our subsistence lifestyle. Land is the heart of our culture. Without land, we are nothing. –Harvey Samuelson

The Alaska Purchase of 1867, the introduction of commercial fisheries, and the Alaskan Gold Rush (1897-1912) resulted in thousands of travelers to the north. The United States Congress, aware of the new pressures on Native peoples in the north, enacted statutes which aimed to protect Alaskan Natives “in possession of any lands actually in their use or occupation” (Case 2002:6-7). These policies were enacted in fulfillment of the federal government’s “trust responsibility” to Alaskan Natives which is both land-related and to promote social welfare. It set a schedule for the civilizing mission: school, employment, and land ownership for Alaskan Natives. Land ownership was granted at both the individual level (allotment) and group level (village corporation land bases). However, land claims were settled without addressing sovereignty and subsistence rights, resulting in the potential for these policies to conflict with the system of land use and connections to land and identity that were already in place.

The elders of Igiugig are the last generation of people who have lived both a traditional life and experienced the transition to settled village life. In this chapter I examine the social,
economic, and political forces that promoted the settlement of people at Igiugig. I examine three ways that the implementation of colonial land policies has threatened the underlying structure that binds Igyararmiut identity with the landscape and the way that Igiugig Village tries to mitigate conflicting demands with institutions in the community.

**Individual Land Ownership and Tribal Governance**

The passage of the Alaska Native Allotment Act (1906) and the Alaska Reorganization Act (1936) made it clear that the United States federal government assumed specific land-related trust responsibilities in Alaska (Case 2002:97). The acts implied that Alaskan Natives, unlike other indigenous people in the United States and Canada, did not have claims of aboriginal title. According to the principles of federal Indian law, aboriginal title is the right of a group to exclusive occupancy of their land. Through these initial laws, Alaskan Native land claims were characterized as individual, and Natives were entitled only to land that was in their individual use and occupancy (Case 2002:7).

In 1906, the Alaskan Allotment Act was the first recognition of aboriginal title in Alaska. It permitted Alaskan Natives to acquire individual land bases under the same premise as the 1887 General Allotment (Dawes) Act passed in the Lower 48: individual ownership of land was seen as central to the schedule of “civilization” (Calloway 2008:378). However, there are vast differences in the effects of allotment in Alaska compared to Indian Country in Lower 48. The 1887 “Dawes Act” granted 160 acres of tribal land to Indian farmers, 80 to cattle ranchers, and 40 for all other heads of households. Surplus lands were sold to white settlers. The allotted lands were usually not ideal for economic activity nor did they possess great cultural value. Allotted land could be sold after twenty-five years, which is how many non-Natives acquired Indian land.
The result of the Dawes Act was a massive transfer of Indian land to white settlers; Native people were forced onto small, unproductive tracts of land; and as owners died, the division of land among heirs caused land bases to shrink even smaller (Deloria and Wilkins 1999:111).

In Alaska, allotment had a different effect. The purpose of allotment—to assimilate Native people into the western system of land ownership—was contradicted in Alaska by Congress’ attempt at protecting subsistence resources and places of use and occupancy from encroaching non-Natives. Congress believed that unless Alaskan Natives held legal title to the lands they used and occupied, then other non-Natives could trespass or gain legal title to their lands. Native heads of household or others older than twenty-one years of age could acquire “inalienable and nontaxable” homesteads by proving use and occupancy of unappropriated, nonmineral land (Case 2002:101-107). Alaskan Natives were also given the opportunity to divide their 160-acres into four separate lots to preserve different subsistence sites such as a summer and fall fish camp and a winter camp. Families in the past and present engage in subsistence activities together, and, for that reason, allotment actually granted family heads legal title to particular tracts of land that were already traditionally claimed by a family. Therefore, “individual ownership” of land translated into family ownership of sites that were highly valued for their rich resources or sentimental value. Furthermore, Alaskan Natives did not restrict their subsistence uses to these allotments, but continued utilizing their entire land base without interruption.

Therefore, in Alaska, individual Native land ownership was recognized before group ownership. The fact that allotment allowed for Alaskan Natives to divide their claims resulted in families securing outlying subsistence sites while owning private land within a village setting—a village that lacked a communal land base. The last major difference between the Alaskan Native
relationship to the federal government compared to that of Indian Country was enacted in 1936, when the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) extended federal protection to Alaskan Natives (Cohen 1988:402-5). The act was amended to account for the unique needs of Alaskan Natives to allow villages, rather than “tribes,” to organize and adopt constitutions, bylaws, and receive charters of incorporation if they had “a common bond of occupation, or association, or residence within a well-defined neighborhood, community, or rural district” (Case 2002:11). Tribal governance was established before the “tribe” had a defined land-base. It was not until oil was discovered on the North Slope of Alaska that it was realized that the entire state was subject to aboriginal title, and it had not been extinguished.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (1971)

After the Alaska Purchase (1867), the territory and Native inhabitants were subjected to congressional plenary authority,\(^8\) the “vacant” lands (99% of Alaska) became the public domain of the United States, and Alaskan Natives were considered wards of the federal government and subject to their laws and regulations. However, no treaties extinguishing aboriginal title were signed partly because there was so much land and a relatively low population (averaging one person per ten square miles) (Cohen 1988:403-407).

Alaska became a state in 1959. The state of Alaska recognized the preeminence of the federal government over Alaskan Native affairs in its founding constitution:

The State of Alaska and its people forever disclaim all right and title in or to any property belonging to the United States or subject to its disposition, and not granted or confirmed to the State or its political subdivisions, by or under the act admitting Alaska to the Union. The State and its people further disclaim all right or title in or to any property, including fishing rights, the right or title to which may be held by or for any Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, or community thereof, as that right or title is defined in the act of admission…(Alaska Constitution, Article XII, § 12).
However, when the state of Alaska began selecting “vacant, public lands” it did not recognize aboriginal title to Native lands. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) formed in 1966, to protest the state’s selections and to demand recognition of Alaskan Native aboriginal land rights. In 1966, Stewart Udall, US Secretary of the Interior, imposed a land freeze until the Native claims were resolved, which created the political pressure to pass the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, in order to open the North Slope for oil development (Case 2002:156).

The theme of the 1971 Alaska Federation of Natives convention—“In the white man’s society, we need white man’s tools”—accurately depicts the intentions of ANCSA, which was to transform a “culture of poverty” into that of capitalism (Berardi 1998:92). ANCSA attempted to achieve this by establishing land-owning Native corporations. ANCSA extinguished all aboriginal claims to Alaska in exchange for fee simple title to 44 million acres of land, and a settlement of 962.5 million dollars to be invested in state-chartered corporations. Twelve regional and 226 village for-profit corporations were established. Village corporations were granted surface rights of an area based on the number of residents. For example, if a 1970 census showed a village population of 25-99, then the village corporation would be entitled to 69,000 acres. The regional corporations were granted the subsurface (i.e. mineral) rights to all of the village corporation lands within its region. Alaskan Natives enrolled in village and regional corporations based upon their residence during the 1970 Census, and each received 100 shares of stock to both corporations.

Putting it into Perspective: the Settlement of Igiugig Village
Three particular forces—social, economic, and political—promoted the settlement of people at Igiugig. During the land claims era, “Igiugig” was a community of scattered fishcamps and family settlements. The highly mobile “residents”—the Apokedak, Wassillie, and Gust families—were the first to build houses in Igiugig, but they also had fish camps and family settlements at the mouths of Kaskanak Creek, Peck’s Creek, and on the Kvichak and Branch Rivers. These were occupied seasonally as summer fish camps or winter trapping cabins. Families maintained strong connections with their extended families living in the surrounding larger villages of Kokhanok, Newhalen, and Levelock, which had schools. Often, children from the smaller villages would temporarily move in with relatives to attend school. For example, Dallia Gregory-Andrew and Alice Zackar attended Kokhanok School; Martin Wassillie, Newhalen School; and Annie Apokedak-Wilson, Levelock School.

Igiugig was also occupied by non-Natives who homesteaded in the area. Igiugig Trading Post, built in 1922 by trapper and miner Bill Hammersly, was located directly across the river from the village. The post was managed by Jack and Ellen Mack, two Norwegians. The location of the post was advantageous because it was a key trading point between the Lake Iliamna area and Lower Kvichak River. Ole Wasenkari, another Norwegian homesteader living on “Ole Creek” was their good friend. The Mack family provided the first paid jobs for Igiugig youth. As a young girl who recently moved to the Kvichak River from Kukaklek Lake, Mary Gregory-Olympic remembers splitting fish for Ellen Mack for about one week: “When e give me money, five dollars, I thought I got lotsa money. First time I got money. I was so happy!” She spent this money at the post, buying an entire carton of cigarettes for her parents, candy, gum, and two little hats for her siblings. Similarly, Martin Wassillie remembers “One morning [Mr. Mack] told me, fill that box up [with] wood. Give me candy, whole box of candy for nothing!”
In 1947, the Mack’s sold the post to Gren Collins, a game warden. Gren Collins operated a bush pilot service and signed contracts with the Kvichak canneries to transport cannery workers. He also developed a close relationship with villagers and provided floatplane transportation in times of medical emergency. After Collins’ bought the post, he gathered eight friends from the West Coast and formed a fishing club called the Kvichak Club—and today the north bank of the Kvichak River is held in private property (Kent, pers. com, 3 July 2007).

_Social Forces_

By the early 1960s, Igiugig already had a landing strip, a St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, and postal service. The village did not have a school, however, and parents were wary of sending their children away for elementary education. In 1964, one Igiugig student attended second grade at Kokhanok School. She broke her leg sledding and was sent to the Anchorage Native Hospital where she ended up contracting tuberculosis and had to stay for six months. When she returned to Igiugig, her parents would not let her leave for school again. Villagers worked together to petition for a school. Finally, one was built in 1967 with seven students in attendance. This attracted families from outlying areas, such as the Andrew family living on Branch River with their three boys. In order to meet enrollment requirements, Igiugig often recruited relatives from other villages to attend school. The centralized education was the strongest settling force. “After start school, no more moving around. School hold us down (laugh)” one parent commented. But summer months were still spent at fish camps.

_Economic Forces_
Families were able to settle and have their children attend school full-time because the cash economy provided a source of income that sustained families for the year. The modernization of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery resulted in local commercial fishermen becoming more invested and dependent on the market. Motors were legalized in 1951, but fishermen predominantly used conversions, or converted sailboats. As a result of the poor fishing regulations and the cyclical fluctuations in the sockeye salmon population, the Bristol Bay fishery historically followed a boom-bust cycle. The year 1974 was declared a federal disaster, which occurs when projections of the salmon run are off, and the salmon return is so low that the value of the fishery drops, causing economic disaster for commercial fishermen who sustain uninsured losses (Smullen 1997). The disaster prompted three major actions to stabilize the cycle and improve the health of the Bristol Bay salmon fisheries: a 200-mile-limit, the Fish Pound Bill, and the Limited Entry Act (Nicholson 1996:30). The 200-mile-limit off of Alaska’s coastline eliminated most of the foreign fleets that would catch enormous quantities of Bristol Bay salmon using 20-mile long drift nets. The pound bill made fish buyers pay by the pound rather than per fish. The Limited Entry Act of 1974 limited the numbers of salmon drift and set net permit holders in Bristol Bay. The three actions modernized the Bristol Bay fishing industry and increased local fishermen’s investment. Many fishermen abandoned their conversions for more efficient 32-foot diesel powered vessels; in turn, the expensive vessels forced the fishermen to become more competitive to make boat payments (Nicholson 1996:30). Although the acts were designed to improve the salmon run, it resulted in local residents becoming more invested in and dependent upon the fishery.

The salmon fishery provided the only major market economy for rural Natives. Commercial fishing was attractive and lucrative because it followed a traditional pattern of
resource utilization. The timing of the activity meant that in a short window of time every year, fishermen could earn large cash returns without having to assimilate to a system of wage labor (Petterson 1980:6). Igiugig was a fishing community, and each family had either drift or set net permits or both. The captain of a boat, usually the permit-holder, hired relatives and family members for a crew, making commercial fishing a family affair with children raised “down in Bristol Bay.” Some family members, usually the women, would stay behind and put up fish to feed the dogs and family throughout the winter.

Political Forces

The political force—tribal governance and land claims settlements—formally established the village of Igiugig during the 1970s and 80s. The act creating tribal governments passed in 1936, but due to the highly mobile nature of the people living in and around Igiugig, the written record of an Igiugig Tribal Village Council began in the 1960’s, most likely when there were adult tribal members that had attended school and learned to write in English. Tribal membership included the people who lived and identified with the village. However, a base membership roll was established on October 12, 1989 in accordance with a federal policy that required actual documentation of tribal members for identification and tracking for purposes of health services, funding, and program eligibility (Alvarez, pers. com., 23, May 2008). Enrollment consists of base members, those listed on the first roll certified on October 12, 1989; community members, those living in Igiugig for six months with the intent of becoming permanent residents; recognized members, those recognized as a member by the tribe, but not on the roll. New members, with six months residence and of Alaskan Native descent, “shall be members of the Village with the same rights and privileges [e.g. voting] extended to members
established on the base roll” (IVC Constitution 1998:3). A written constitution was adopted and
approved on December 4, 1998.

The Igiugig Tribal Village Council is responsible for the day-to-day management of
Igiugig. Today, it operates a preschool program, a library and computer lab, the water/sewer
system, an environmental program, electric service, fuel services, and house rentals. The tribal
council is the largest employer in the village. In Alaska, however, tribal governments were not
granted a land base over which to exercise tribal sovereignty, because of ANCSA, and this is the
greatest difference between the federal-tribal relationship in Indian Country.

When ANCSA passed, Igiugig villagers adamantly wanted to secure their own village
corporation instead of merging with other village corporations, as was commonly done in other
rural areas. This is because the people of Igiugig wanted to directly control their land base: “We
don’t want to join anybody. We just want to be Igiugig Corporation the way it is” (Dallia
Gregory-Andrew). “They try to let us go merger, but we don’t wanna, we have our own, we stay
that way (laugh). We do it our own way. It is good” (Mike Andrew Sr.). The formation of
Igiugig Native Corporation (INC) secured 66,000 acres of homeland for the “Igiugig tribe.” The
genral understanding of a “village corporation” was that the people would own and therefore
exercise complete control over their homeland. This was not what ANCSA granted, however.
Village corporations were only given “surface rights” to their homelands, and “subsurface
rights” were granted to the regional corporations. The village of Igiugig, by signing on to the
 corporate model, was also designated under the auspices of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation
(BBNC). At 34 million acres, the land BBNC owns is larger than the state of Ohio, and it
includes three diverse Native cultural traditions: Yup’ik, Athabascan, and Alutiiq (BBNC, “Our
Land/Regional Maps”).

This layered corporate system automatically placed villages belonging
to the same regional corporation in a competitive relationship with each other because of limited resources and economic opportunities (Shockley 2006:122).

The people of Igiugig chose the lands they wanted and waited for their land selections to be conveyed and recognized. Establishing and maintaining a village corporation was a struggle. The Igiugig Native Corporation (INC) adopted bylaws on April 30, 1974, and by 1979 had already been dissolved and then reinstated as a corporation (INC Bylaws 1974:11). Board members, unable to read and write in English, failed to file corporate income tax returns, resulting in the corporation being involuntarily dissolved. The result was that INC almost lost its land because it was an asset of the corporation. The original board members of INC vividly recall the time they had to “fight to get the land back”; even though they did not understand the legal language, they knew what was at stake.

We had fifty-fifty chance to get the land back. We had to be [in Anchorage] for two weeks try to get our land back for all the family. Not only us, everybody in Igiugig. We wanna get it back… we had to hire two lawyers from Anchorage and one jet to help us get the land back and Igiugig Native Corporation so, it wasn’t easy. We travel we take care of our own them days. Pay our own fare out and back [to the city], so I’m happy we got our land back for all the family here in Igiugig. ‘Cause we had lot of ‘em kids, grandkids are coming up too. So e can be traveling, hunting one of these days you know. I’m happy we got our land back (Mike Andrew Sr.)

The firm that assumed the legal work for INC was Burr, Pease and Kurtz, Inc. Edward G. Burton became the “authorized officer” for INC, and after a long series of letter-writing he achieved reinstatement of the corporation. He notified the Internal Revenue Service that INC did not file tax returns for two main reasons: 1) INC did not have taxable income because the only source of revenue is interest on Alaska Native Fund monies (established by ANCSA) which is offset by overwhelming legal and accounting fees, and 2) Igiugig board members do not understand English well-enough to respond to corporate income tax questions. The following is text from his letter:
We trust that the Internal Revenue Service will join with us in the opinion that we need not fault Igiugig Native Corporation for its lack of command of the English language, provided they do not fault either of us for our lack of command of Yupik. We are taking steps slowly to bring some degree of order to affairs of our client. We have succeeded in straightening out matter of corporate franchise taxation, have succeeded in straightening out land matters to a great extent, and are expecting in the near future to assist our clients with obtaining professional consulting services in the areas of business and property management. While it is highly unlikely that the corporation will show taxable earnings anytime in the near future, we do hope that [their] business affairs will come to be managed in a way which permits a more normal relationship not only with the Internal Revenue Service, but with all others the corporation must deal with in its new business life (Letter to IRS from Edward G. Burton, March 26, 1980).

By April 11, 1979, all corporate taxes, penalties, and reinstatement fees were reconciled, and a month later the INC received a Certificate of Reinstatement (Webber 1979).

Today, Igiugig Native Corporation actively manages the surface of their land base. INC had the authority to issue shares of common stock to “shareholders”—people living in Igiugig at the time of enrollment. Dividend income is derived from land use fees paid by area lodges and sport-fishermen. Land is also leased exclusively to particular lodges. More importantly, the land base is used extensively for subsistence, which was the original intent and purpose of establishing the Igiugig Native Corporation.

During this era of rapid land settlement, Igiugig elders were driven to secure a land base both individually (allotment) and collectively (ANCSA), and thus preserve their ability to live a subsistence way of life. However, the legal process that was used to secure these lands contained foreign language and ideas. Although allotment passed in 1906, the Alaska Reorganization Act in 1936, and ANCSA in 1971, the people of Igiugig were still highly mobile, and therefore the impacts of these colonial land policies were not felt until people became more settled in recent years.
Complications with Allotment

As with all legislation involving aboriginal land claims, the allotment application process was bureaucratic and foreign to Native claimants; along the way, many applications were denied without hearings and removed from federal land records, permitting others to select and receive title to the same lands, and some cases are still pending today (Case 2002:101). Although it increased individual Alaskan Native land ownership by over 1.5 million acres, the potential still exists for future problems such as the sale of allotment lands to outsiders and divisions among heirs (Case 2002:148-150).

Allotment lands are individually owned and can be sold without the consent of the village to non-Natives. This has already occurred in many instances, especially allotment lands belonging to individuals who have moved away from Igiugig to settle in another village and no longer use the particular subsistence site. Or, particular individuals have fallen into economic hardship and because they have Native Corporation and public lands on which to subsist, they decide to sell a portion of their allotment. For example, lodges along the Kvichak River are built on allotment lands which have been either leased or sold—transferring Native property into the hands of outsiders who are in the business of bringing in more outsiders.

The types of lands chosen by Igiugig allottees included fish camps, house and waterfront property in the village, former reindeer herding stations, old village sites, and areas rich in subsistence resources such as good trapping or berry-picking land. The problem is that the village secured tribal lands after allotment, and the waterfront along which people live is mostly held in individual ownership rather than communally by the village. This has created a “land-lock” situation that causes difficulty for village expansion projects such as road construction, interest in building a community dock, and accessing other public land. Problems will continue
to unfold, or be made more difficult to overcome, as the original owners die and the allotments are divided among heirs who can either become co-owners of an undivided interest to the entire 160-acre allotment, or become individual owners of a partitioned allotment (Case 2002:148-150). Villagers, over time, have tried to work around these issues by allowing subsistence users to pass through private property as long as ownership is acknowledged and respected. There is also an informal expectation that if an owner of allotment land located within village premises would like to sell their property, the Village Council or Native Corporation has the first opportunity to purchase it. On the other hand, there is nothing villagers can do about allotment land that has been sold and turned into private property.

Aftermath of ANCSA

Okay, you wanna know how we get into this corporation? What we lost, we didn’t know it? — Mike Andrew Sr.

Alaskan Natives engaged in land claims understood the idea of property and individual ownership. For the most part, their system of land ownership and use was endorsed by allotment. However, when it came time to secure a village land base, the lands were invested in a corporate structure—an idea of land ownership that was completely incomprehensible, hence the quote “What we lost, we didn’t know it” (Mike Andrew, Sr.). Alaskan Natives, now living in settled communities within corporate boundaries, are finally beginning to realize what exactly they lost.

The problems with ANCSA are many, and they continue to unfold especially as the federal government continually reinterprets the goals and intent of the legislation (and they overlay the ones created by IRA and allotment). The main ways in which ANCSA interfered with an Igyararmiut relationship with their homeland include 1) separation of land and governance, 2) “tribal” membership and identity, and 3) a contradiction between development and subsistence.
The complex system of land division and ownership settled through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Most of the pink lands surrounding Igiugig belong to the Igiugig Native Corporation. (http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/planning/areaplans/bristol/pdf/bbap_map_o2.pdf).
The villages of Bristol Bay Native Corporation. I have added a yellow star around the vicinity of the proposed Pebble Mine discussed in Chapter 5 (http://www.bbnc.net/lands/maps.php).
Separation of Land and Governance

Although Native Alaskans were given fee simple title to more land than was held in trust for all Native Americans of the Lower 48 combined, the unusual separation of land ownership (native corporations) from tribal governance has impaired tribal rights to exercise control over land and resources (Berardi 1998:93, 97). The village land base was conveyed to state-chartered for-profit corporations that were imposed on the federally recognized tribal governments. This severed Native political rights from control of the land (Berardi 1998:93, 101). The previously established tribal governments were not designated as the owners of the land (Case 2002:387).

At a local level, the village of Igiugig has resolved the conflict between land-owning Native Corporations and tribal governance by keeping decision-making power local. In order to serve on either the Igiugig Native Corporation or Igiugig Tribal Village Council board, a member must live in the village (INC Bylaws 1974:7). This is different than other villages that opted to merge together instead of forming village corporations. For example, the Bristol Bay villages of Newhalen, Kokhanok, Port Heiden, Ugashik, and South Naknek merged under Alaska Peninsula Corporation. Furthermore, because of the low population of Igiugig Village and the fact that only resident shareholders can serve on the corporation board, many of the same people serve on both boards simultaneously, and thus it is easier for cooperation between the institutions.

The real problem lies at the regional level where powers over lands, resources, and government programs are widely dispersed among different levels of governments: tribes, corporations, municipalities, federal agencies, and other bodies. “Native communities wishing to take action on pressing problems often have to negotiate a maze of statutory de facto controls to get anything done” (Cornell et al. 1999:36). These overlapping jurisdictions have served to
fragment responsibility and power among many governing units such that control over resources is concentrated at regional and state levels. The external control over resources undermines rural development efforts. For example, when the village of Igiugig pursues road-building projects, they are required to pay their regional corporation, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, for the gravel because village corporations do not own subsurface rights. Currently, there is no way around this problem.

*Tribal v. Corporate Membership*

ANCSA not only created overlapping jurisdictions, but overlapping memberships. In 1971, at a time when over two-hundred village corporations and twelve regional corporations were being formed, Alaskan Natives were pressured to enroll in both; many Natives quickly enrolled in the nearest corporation in the rush to participate, not realizing that their decision would be final (Ongtooguk 1998). Because Native Alaskans often enrolled in a regional corporation based upon their residence during the 1970 Census, many shareholders did not live in their home region. For example, a Native from a Bristol Bay village who was living in Anchorage for whatever reason during the period of corporate formation could enroll in Cook Inlet Regional, Incorporated (CIRI), which contains Anchorage, and have voting power over land that is not their homeland. If people do not share a cultural connection to a landscape, they are more likely to favor resource development of corporation lands because that would mean a greater shareholder dividend. Also, shares pass to descendants of original shareholders who often live out-of-state. This is creating a situation today, with more people moving from the villages to the city, in which the people with power to make decisions regarding the land base are often the furthest removed from a traditional way of life and the most motivated to succeed in the market.
economy. Overall, the corporate structure tied the security of the land to the control of a board of directors and to the voting power of the shareholders (Colt 2005:158-9).

Before ANCSA, the people entitled to the land lived in the village and were thus tribal members. After ANCSA, people who became members of a village corporation became the legal land owners. They remained land-owning shareholders even if they moved away from the village permanently and lost tribal membership. In the past, if a villager moved away permanently (i.e. to another village), they and their descendants lost their right to the former village base. Today, Native villagers have three memberships. They are tribal members, village corporation members, and regional corporation members. As more time passes and shares are continually passed down, a person could become a shareholder of several corporations.

Many Igiugig Native Corporation members enrolled while living in Igiugig, but thereafter moved away permanently to other villages. This has created a situation in which the majority of our shareholders no longer live in the village, yet they receive dividends from our land use. Currently, this is not really recognized as a “problem” because boardmembers are local residents; they realize that the village corporation has a responsibility to all shareholders, but their primary concern is for current residents. Therefore, a certain percentage of corporate income is issued in dividends, but a lot of the money is funneled into village activities, such as funding educational programs.

Also, the traditional right to use land where one lives is still in place and is followed by all the neighboring villages. Even though a person owns a share in Igiugig’s land base, if they do not live in the village and are therefore not a tribal member, it is highly unlikely that they would come to Igiugig to hunt and subsist off of their corporation lands. They continue to hunt and subsist within the village where they reside. This is because the people of rural southwestern
Alaska still identify with a village before a corporation. Just as in traditional days, your claim to a land-base is based on occupancy and ancestral ties/knowledge of place. Even if I was a member of another village corporation, that does not necessarily mean I have the right to freely hunt and subsist on their land unless I had established a prior connection. There is a difference between owning shares in a land-base and actually belonging. When I interviewed two elders, Mrs. Gust and Mary Gregory-Olympic, I asked where they enrolled in corporations. They answered by telling me where they had Native allotments, where they built their fishcamps, and what village corporation they were enrolled, but they each made it very clear that they do not “belong” to a corporation. “[Mrs. Gust] said she’s not belong to Levelock [the village corporation in which she was enrolled], belong to Newhalen [the village where she was born and raised]. Like me, I’m live in…I belong to Kukaklek. Wiinga-llu Qukaqliq’mek” (Mary Gregory-Olympic). This was followed by laughter. These elders had every right to laugh; all they wanted was to secure a base from which to continue living the subsistence way of life and instead ended up with varying levels of land ownership and different types of “membership” which did not even accurately reflect where one belongs!

“Subsistence, what we really fought for”

For many Alaskan Natives, and definitely for Igiugig’s elders, the intent and purpose of signing onto the corporate model was to secure a land base so that future generations could subsist and survive first, and make a profit secondly. This is very evident in the conversation I had with Mike and Dallia Andrew, two Igiugig residents who “fought” to get the Igiugig Native Corporation—and thus the land—back. Today, they are frequent board members of both INC and the village council.
Dallia Andrew: “Before corporation run we don’t know anything about corporation. We just go anywhere we want to.”

AlexAnna Salmon: “So what did you think this corporation was all about?”

Dallia Andrew: “Corporation is for our land: pick berries, hunt. When you wanna go out camp…”

Mike Andrew: “We are happy. Cause right here we had everything right outdoors subsistence foods, everything. That’s why we had to fight. What we have coming back behind us. Them grandkids, you young ones nowadays they are here already right today. I’m happy with it. We have moose and caribou, fish, beaver, freshwater subsistence. Now that’s a good place to survive. That’s what really fight for. Yeah, it was good.”

The lands selected by the village corporations were chosen to preserve the best subsistence locations; therefore, most of the selections have a cultural value that is greater than any modern market value (Berardi 1998:97). As long as these people continue to serve on the board and pass these values onto the youth of Igiugig, then the people will continue to make land and resource decisions that protect the subsistence way of life. In fact, Igiugig Native Corporation not only restricts their lands from being sold or developed, but they even regulate the methods of subsistence. For example, there is a rule against using metal berry-pickers, which are proven to kill the tundra. Anyone who is caught using one on corporation lands is fined.

The fundamental problem is that ANCSA not only ignored subsistence rights and tribal sovereignty, but the language “aboriginal hunting or fishing rights that may exist, are hereby extinguished” counteracts what Natives are trying to achieve by participating in the corporations, namely, protecting their subsistence economy (Title 43: Chapter 33: § 1603 (b)). In recognizing ANCSA failed to protect Native subsistence rights, Congress passed the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980, “to protect and provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses on the public lands by Native and non-Native rural residents” (Peel 2001:269). The act had many other purposes: to designate and conserve public lands as national parks, refuges, forests, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness preservation systems; to enact legislative solutions to the unresolved issues of Native Alaskan land claims; to allow for
economic growth and transportation planning (ANILCA 1980). As a result of ANILCA, former homelands of Igiugig residents, specifically Kukaklek Lake and Alagnak River, were designated national parklands. Some of these places are still used for subsistence and those sites that were not claimed under allotment or ANCSA are open to the general public. As a result, former homelands, such as the Alagnak River, have become the most popular fly-in fishery in southwest Alaska.

Also, the addition of Native lands to the National Parks and Preserve system has brought certain aspects of the subsistence lifestyle, such as trapping and mechanized harvest activities, into conflict with the National Park Service’s preservation policies (Clemens and Norris 1999:ch.8). Villages, such as Igiugig, have been settled on the fringes of areas that are now encompassed and protected. A conversation with Igiugig elder George Wilson, Sr. reveals how this land settlement has served to undermine local economic and cultural needs in the name of “wilderness”. Before, the land was used freely, and elders, in being “raised off the land” utilized an enormous land base. For example, one elder’s trapline encompassed a 146 mile-long triangle (George Wilson Sr., 1995, H95-23-2, Section 10, Project Jukebox). After allotment, ANCSA, and ANILCA and all of the land divisions and regulations that continue to change and be redefined, it is harder to maintain this relationship to former homelands:

It’s getting harder and harder, you know, the [state and federal government are] trying to take most of the land and not use it for trapping and hunting, you know, the same land we grew up in and traveled on. You see it more and more, they’re closing out areas so the people can’t use it no more. And then they make parks out of it and then, pretty soon they got rules and all they want in there is the sportsman. He’s taking out everything from in there and the Native, and what our children, you know, have a right to use, keep on using…(1995, H95-23-2, Section 17, Project Jukebox).

As a result of colonial land policies, new boundaries and restrictions have been extended into our homeland. Today, villages are also settled on the fringes of areas that were sold to the
state and federal government and outsiders. Villagers have no control over what happens on these lands even though development can hinder their subsistence way of life. This binds local economic and cultural needs to the decisions made at the regional, state, and federal levels. The tensions result in large part from a fundamental difference in viewing the landscape from a Euro-American perspective and a Yup’ik perspective. One stresses the economic viability of a landscape by asking: How can this land be used commercially? Is the tourism, commercial fishing, or mining industry most profitable? The other view of the land settlement stresses preserving the subsistence resources so that Alaskan Natives can continue their way of life.

However, the subsistence way of life is no longer self-sufficient. Villagers cannot survive off of subsistence alone; their mechanized equipment for subsistence activity requires fuel; their houses, electricity and heating oil. They need to be involved in the market economy. But, as Glen Alsworth points out, it is difficult to establish an economy in villages which have been settled year-round and centralized around a school:

We are nomadic people, and Natives are some of the hardest-working people I’ve met. A lot of our villages exist where they do now simply because that’s where the school is, centralized out of convenience for the educational system. But, economically, it makes no sense. Unemployment is very high in the villages. What can 300 people do grouped around a school? (Halliday 1998:119).

On the same note, tribal leaders are well aware that any “economic development effort that transforms communities based on hunting, fishing, and gathering into wage-based communities could destroy exactly what they are meant to save” (Huskey 2004:461-2). Igiugig Native Corporation members, with only the surface right to 66,000 acres, have achieved their goal of providing a land base on which their future generations can subsist, but they also belong to a regional corporation which is compelled to achieve a sustainable economy, and what happens at the regional level or on state and federal lands can directly impact this way of life.
Contemporary Realities

In the last two centuries, the introduction of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery and colonial land policies such as allotment and incorporation have facilitated the establishment of modern Alaskan Native villages—forcing the merger of two very dissimilar cultures and economies: the traditional subsistence economy of Native Alaskans and the market-based economy (Northern Economics 1999:PS-4). Today, the welfare of rural Alaskan tribes depends on their access to the subsistence, transfer, and market economies, which are overwhelmingly dependent on natural resources (Huskey 2004:436, 456). This chapter poses the challenges of being a rural Native Alaskan community within the contemporary economic reality. For example, villagers are trying to understand the political structure imposed by ANCSA, and they face large-scale natural resource development (oil, gas, and mineral mining), the loss of the salmon fisheries, and major
out-migration from the region. How does this collective past influence the future of these rural villages? What kinds of decisions will villages like Igiugig face to ensure their survival?

Subsistence Economy

The culture that developed around subsistence before the Russians arrived established a solid system of wealth-sharing. The high cost of living in rural Alaska and a cultural geography that does not easily accommodate business ventures has allowed subsistence to remain central to the Native Alaskan cultures. Subsistence is more than an economy for the Alaskan Natives; it is a way of life (Berardi 1998:98). The controversial status of subsistence in Alaska makes this economy vulnerable. Subsistence uses do not receive protection in the development of state lands because Alaska’s Department of Natural Resources does not recognize this “way of life” as a type of land use (Wolfe and Walker 1987:68-9). Furthermore, economic development creates conditions that hinder subsistence activities, especially development requiring roads or settlement in rural areas (Wolfe and Walker 1987:68-9). In the 1980s, communities along the road network harvested 69% less subsistence foods than isolated villages, and harvest levels were highest in rural communities (Wolfe and Walker 1987:66). For example, an urban Anchorage resident consumes an average of 10 pounds of subsistence food per year, compared with Bristol Bay region residents at 626 pounds. Statistics also prove that as the non-Native population increases in a rural community, overall subsistence activity decreases due to more competition and habitat alteration (Wolfe and Walker 1987:56-66).

However, the once self-sufficient subsistence economy no longer operates independently of the commercial-wage sector:

…subsistence is no longer a phenomenon of the people’s own making…It depends decisively and unconditionally on monetary flows from the public and private sectors for
the acquisition of necessary capital…Changes in lifestyle including settlement patterns in the villages, improved safety, the availability of technology, and the desire for other market goods that reduce the time available for subsistence activities have contributed to the increasing importance of capital for conducting subsistence activities (Northern Economics 2002:3-17).

In the 21st century, villagers need to maintain their mechanized harvest activities and are thus dependent on cash and modern technology; this has caused the Native villagers to rely on both the unstable transfer economy and market economy (Huskey 2004:447).

Transfer Economy

Native Alaskans, as United States citizens with a special relationship with the federal government, qualify for “transfers,” which are money and services provided by the federal and state governments: welfare, pensions, unemployment benefits, corporation dividends, Alaska Permanent Fund Dividends, government jobs, and subsidized schools (Huskey 2004:436). Rural residents use the income to support subsistence and to offset the high costs of living in rural Alaska.

The transfer economy is harmful in the false sense of security it provides. It encourages return migration of people to villages, which increases a population beyond an economically practical level (Berardi 1998:97). It also creates dependency: “As transfers grow, decisions affecting village life are increasingly made outside the villages. Laws, regulations, and programs implemented at the state and federal level have important implications for village welfare, and villagers have little control over those decisions” (Huskey 2004:459). The transfer economy is transitory, and fiscal problems as well as political decisions at the federal and state level control the future of transfers in rural Alaska (Huskey 2004:454). These factors contribute to the unsustainability of the transfer economy which is dependent on state (oil) revenues; as revenues
decline, transfer programs are reduced or eliminated, which is why the welfare of rural Alaskan tribes also depends heavily on the market economy (Berardi 1998:97).

**Market Economy**

In the market economy, residents earn income by working for wages or by selling resources (Huskey 2004:436). Many rural residents depend on the market economy because ANCSA lands were selected for subsistence rather than economic development, the transfer economy alone is unsustainable, and the cost of living in the village is four times that of the city.

The market economy of Bristol Bay was founded on sockeye salmon. The region contains three of the state’s most important salmon fishing districts, and the commercial fishing industry produces 90% of all locally generated tax revenue for the Lake and Peninsula Borough. (The borough is a governing structure outlined in Alaska’s state constitution; it has the power to regulate lands outside of corporation lands). The external market, capital, and labor for the salmon industry have grown to dominate the self-reliant subsistence economy and rendered the Native community at high economic risk due to the nature of the resource (Northern Economics 1999b:1-1). The history of the Bristol Bay salmon industry demonstrates how this colonial enterprise has effectively subjected the Native villages of Bristol Bay to the economic and political judgments made by the absentee investors (Haycox 2002:xv).

**Bristol Bay Salmon Fishery**

Alaskan Natives living in the rural villages of Bristol Bay are not only more dependent on the fishery than outsiders, but they are competing with outsiders to whom they have a comparative disadvantage. Non-residents typically have much greater access to operating and
investment capital and year-round income sources that allow them to absorb losses in poor seasons (Northern Economics 1999a:PS-4). For example, in 2000 the average gross earnings of the local fishermen were $33,288 in comparison to the average $40,499 made by the non-resident (Carlson 2005:9). As a result, rural residents do not earn as much per permit as non-residents.

Under the Limited Entry permitting scheme (1974), applicants for fishing permits were ranked by points according to the relative hardship they would suffer if they did not initially receive a permit (Schelle, et. al 2004:ES-28). Points were awarded based upon the applicant’s years as a license-holder; thus, only one partner could receive a permit, and, if the partnership dissolved, only the permit-holder was guaranteed to continue fishing. Native-Alaskans had larger families, increasing the pressure for permits, yet a village survey (1979) showed that of the two-thirds of men aged 18-35 who fished in Bristol Bay, 72% had no permit (Koslow 1986:57-59). The ability to attain independent status within the fishery, and therefore earn points towards a permit, was closed to a large number of the rural fishing population. The free transferability of permits also drained local permits from the Bristol Bay area (Koslow 1986:57). The table below illustrates that from 1975-2004 local residents of Bristol Bay have lost 116 permits, whereas non-residents have gained 160 permits over that same time period. fished less permits and reflects the fact that 754 permits were issued to Alaska Rural Locals in 1975, and only 423 were issued in 2004, whereas Non-Residents have gained 112 permits over that same time period (Carlson 2005:9-13).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AK RURAL LOCAL PERMITS FISHED</th>
<th>NON-RESIDENT PERMITS FISHED</th>
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<tr>
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<td>458</td>
<td>576</td>
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<td>634</td>
<td>767</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>736</td>
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</tbody>
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* Alaska Rural Local is defined as a resident from Bristol Bay. A Non-Resident is defined as residents from other states than Alaska.


Natives have invested in the commercial fishing industry. Many that have been raised commercial fishing speak of their seasonal migration to Bristol Bay as “in the blood.” Because ANCSA and allotment lands were selected for subsistence rather than economic development, Alaskan Natives—in order to continue living in the village—are dependent on the market economy. They are also at high economic risk to the nature of the resource and industry. The federal fishing disasters of 1997 and 1998 and the economic recession it has caused for Bristol Bay reveals how economic factors weigh heavily in whether or not rural communities will continue to survive and the types of decisions villages are forced to make when times are hard.

1997 and 1998 were declared federal fishing disasters due to the poor salmon returns. Local governments—the Lake and Peninsula and Bristol Bay boroughs—suffered dramatic declines in revenues because of their dependence on the fisheries resources for their main income. For example, the Naknek-Kvichak Fishing District—belonging to the Bristol Bay Borough—had a sockeye salmon catch value of $3,166,342 in comparison to an annual average (1980-1996) of $55,935,295 (Bockhorst 2000:14). The boroughs develop their fiscal budgets
based on forecasted salmon returns, and in the 1997 and 1998 seasons, the actual returns fell devastatingly below forecasts (Northern Economics 1999a:2-2). The two borough governments are the largest employer for residents of Bristol Bay, so revenue shortfalls were critical (Northern Economics 1999a:ES-4).

The two consecutive fishing disasters had severe economic impacts on the Bristol Bay region. To compensate for losses, the Lake and Peninsula Borough reduced its General Fund Operating Budget by $1.1 million for FY 1997-2000 by eliminating contributions to the school scholarship fund and the endowment fund, eliminating funding for fisheries research, reducing its revenue sharing program for communities by 33% (which is used for basic public services such as fire, water, landfill, etc.), and cutting down on capital projects (Northern Economics 1999a:2-17).

In 1997 and 1998, most resident permit holders earned less than $20,000 after taxes from fishing, and many lost money after boat and permit payments, gear, and other supplies (Northern Economics 1999b:PS-1,2). Prices for sockeye salmon are typically higher than those paid for other species, making the Bristol Bay fishery one of the most valuable in Alaska. The total salmon return to Bristol Bay is strongly influenced by sockeye returns to the Kvichak River, perhaps the largest salmon producer in the world; however, the return is highly variable, and in year 2000 it was classified by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Fisheries as a “[salmon] stock of management concern” (Schelle et al. 2004:25). The Kvichak sockeye salmon run seems to follow a five-year cycle: after a peak-year returns drop for three years, then increase to a sub-peak year followed by a year of peak production. The reason for this five-year cycle is unknown.17 The average gross earnings per permit have fallen from $93,591 in 1999 to $25,989 in 2003, and the decline is due in part to a decline in harvest as well as a decline
in the ex-vessel price for Bristol Bay salmon (due to other sources, such as farmed fish) (Schelle, et al. 2004:33).

Because the region is so dependent on a single natural resource, the poor salmon runs and decreased market demands have economically depressed the region; the unemployment rate is 16.1% (Schelle, et al. 2004:51). The Lake and Peninsula Borough has experienced an out-migration rate of 8.7 people per 1,000 each year from 1991-1999, and as people abandon their homes in search of income, schools which cannot maintain the ten-student enrollment minimum are closing down (Schelle, et al. 2004:53). More alarmingly, the depression is resulting in the sale and permanent loss of locally-owned fishing permits to outsiders which has a dramatic impact on the local economy. In 1996 there were 196 residents of the Lake and Peninsula Borough communities with commercial salmon permits who together earned $15.56 million in gross revenues. These local fishermen spend their revenues in the boroughs on groceries, utilities, and local businesses; this money then circulates through the local economy (Northern Economics 1999a:4-15). The loss of permits is particularly prevalent in the Iliamna area. For example, Igiugig, a village located at the headwaters of the Kvichak River—hosting the largest return of sockeye salmon in the world, has only one remaining resident with a fishing permit. The Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program (CDQ), implemented in 1992 in order to extend economic opportunities of the fisheries to small, rural communities, excluded the villages around Lake Iliamna from participating in the benefits, and is therefore largely responsible for the loss of permits in this area (Northern Economics 2002:ES-1). Section 305(i)(l)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act excluded all of the communities beyond 50 nautical miles from the Bering Sea coast, even though the residents of Lake Iliamna conducted more than one-half of their commercial and subsistence effort in waters of the Bering Sea (Northern
Economics 2002:2-2). The CDQ program, operated through six non-profit corporations, benefits 65 communities; from 1992-2000, the CDQ program generated a net income of $116 million which was allocated to CDQ groups to make fisheries-related investments, and thus allowed rural Alaskan residents to compete in a fisheries industry dominated by large, Seattle-based companies (Northern Economics 2002:ES-1). Additionally, the CDQ program provides permit brokerage services to keep limited entry salmon permits in CDQ communities, provides a revolving loan program to help finance resident fishermen for necessary fishing equipment, as well as other educational opportunities (Northern Economics 2002:3-7). Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), which is responsible for all the eligible communities in the Lake and Peninsula Borough, provides venture capital and matching funds to assist with capital projects, such as infrastructure building (The Stadum Group 2004:64). Due to exclusion from the CDQ program, the Lake Iliamna area of Bristol Bay especially faces the greatest economic hardship.

**A New Economy: Pebble Mine**

Overall, the tribes and rural communities of Bristol Bay, Alaska, do not have sustainable economies. The Bristol Bay regional economy is characterized by a nearly total reliance on sockeye salmon to generate revenues, limited access to diversified economic centers and markets, and a relatively short history with market-based economies (Northern Economics 1999a:PS-5). In this ‘resource-limited’ world, the only ways for a Native village to prosper are either to discover and develop new resource extraction projects on their own lands or to involve themselves in existing markets (Colt 2005:164). The economic reality in Bristol Bay has villages on the verge of “collapse”. Unless villages can produce their own self-sustainable economy that
provides employment, then they are dependent on the development opportunities brought to the region. Economic development is positive in that it allows people to remain living in the villages, but it can impact subsistence and the level of social and cultural cohesion. The problem ANCSA has caused is that villages are limited and potentially powerless in the course of regional development.

In Bristol Bay, a new market is materializing in the form of the Pebble Project. It is potentially North America’s largest open pit mine; Northern Dynasty Mines proposes to make a $1.5 billion capital investment and provide over fifty years of economic development for the region (NDM Company Overview). The Pebble deposit—containing gold, copper, and molybdenum—was discovered by Cominco and in 2001 Northern Dynasty Mines (NDM) bought 100% interest in the 55,800 acres located on state land within the Lake and Peninsula Borough (NDM Project Information). Northern Dynasty, created for the sole purpose of advancing the “Pebble Project,” claims to be a mine development company based in Anchorage, Alaska; however, it is only a subsidiary of Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd.—a public company based in Vancouver, Canada (NDM Company Overview). In 2002 and 2003 Northern Dynasty explored the Pebble deposit, and in 2004 the project transitioned from an “Exploration” to a “Mine Development Project”. The company continues to conduct exploration, baseline environmental and socio-economic studies, and project engineering (NDM Project Information).

The company plans to defer feasibility study and permit applications until 2008 so they can further delineate the deposit. In the meantime, the company continues discussions with major mining companies regarding a partnership. Northern Dynasty also hosted four Community Leaders Meeting and three Regional Leaders Meetings by October 2006 (NDM Project Information). At these meetings, stakeholders were reassured of Northern Dynasty’s main
corporate policies: responsible mineral development, community outreach, subsistence, local hire, and no net loss. Under responsible mineral development, Northern Dynasty will “Develop and implement the best possible mine plan for the Pebble Project from an environmental, social and economic perspective” (NDM Corporate Policy). The company promises a continued commitment to working with the people from Bristol Bay to meet their needs. One local concern is the mine’s impact on the subsistence lifestyle. Northern Dynasty has prohibited all staff (except residents from Lake Iliamna communities) from any commercial, sport, or subsistence taking of fish and game resources; this policy is currently being reviewed by the community leaders and can be modified. According to the local hire policy, Northern Dynasty Mines Inc. will ensure that local people and businesses receive priority consideration for employment and contract opportunities, and will work with training institutions to assist local residents in accessing training and education programs necessary for future employment at the Pebble Project. The Pebble Project employed 457 Alaskans during 2005, 112 of whom were from local Bristol Bay communities. The company estimates that the construction of the Pebble Project mine facilities will create 2,000 full-time jobs for two years, and operations will create an additional 1,000 direct jobs over an expected mine life of 30-60 years (NDM Jobs and Business Opportunities). Lastly, under the “No Net Loss Policy,” Northern Dynasty has made a commitment that “no fishery in the region will be reduced as a result of the project—be it a commercial, sport or subsistence, harvest” (NDM Corporate Policy). However, this policy does not guarantee that there will be zero impact on fish or habitat. It means that the mine will be built and operated in a manner that will minimize direct and indirect effects on fish and fish habitat. “To the extent that any residual impacts on fish and fish habitat do occur, Northern Dynasty will add to natural fish productivity in the region to fully achieve its No Net Loss goal” (NDM
Corporate Policy). This commitment has been adopted independent of any state or federal requirement.

Despite these projections, it is not clear whether the benefits will outweigh the costs, and the Pebble Project is a subject of great controversy for all of Alaska and the local Bristol Bay communities and salmon industry especially. The tribes of Bristol Bay are in a vulnerable position: they stand to lose the most because their cultural livelihood hinges on a corporate structure designed to favor resource development over subsistence, and, because the mine will be developed on state land, their respective position within the decision-making process is questionable. First and foremost, the tribes fear for their waters, which since the beginning of time have been the lifeline of their subsistence way of life. A Dena’ina resident of Nondalton, June Balluta, commented that the land “Is our supermarket for us”. Balluta, whose community is one of the closest to Pebble, is “dead set against the mine”:

They always say reserve judgment, but I can’t reserve judgment because this [lifestyle and land] is something that is very, very precious to me and my family and the Dena’ina people. Whatever precious gold that they are digging out of that ground can’t be more precious than the lives of our Dena’ina people (Holter 2005).

Balluta views the mine as a threat to her culture and subsistence. The late former governor Jay Hammond also opposed the Pebble Project, but for different reasons:

If I were asked where in Alaska what I’d least rather see the largest open pit mine in the world I could think of no more less appropriate spot than the headwaters of the Talarik Creek and Koktuli –the drainages of two of the finest trout streams and salmon spawning there is in Alaska. But it does pose, in my view, monumental problems that may or may not be addressed… I assign to the Pebble Project the same criteria that when I was in office I tried to assure that all development projects lived up to. Those four criteria are 1) is it environmentally sound, 2) is it something the people want, 3) is it something that can pay its own way or will it simply benefit a select few at the expense of many, and 4) does it meet our Constitutions’ mandate that you manage the resources for the maximum benefit of the people? In my view, at least in this stage in time with the knowledge available, we don’t know whether it can be done in an environmentally sound manner; I seriously question that it can be done in such a manner...You may provide a few jobs and
the beneficial impact on the municipality, but the cost to the state may well offset that…(Holter 2005).

According to Hammond, these dilemmas must be considered carefully, “Otherwise, [Northern Dynasty Mines, Inc.] are going to just promote the mantra of politicians: create jobs, jobs, jobs…Jobs at what expense!? It could cost more for the state than what the job brings into the state if we are not careful” (Holter 2005). Hammond speaks not only from first-hand experience, but the facts support his argument in two regards: 1) the mining industry is the largest source of toxic releases in the US—in 2003 the industry generated 536.76 million pounds of toxic releases in Alaska alone, and 2) in 2002, the mining industry extracted $1 billion from Alaska and the state only received $5.8 million (Holter 2005).

There are, however, those local residents who need a new economy. For example, Michael Andrew of Igiugig has given up his career in fishing because of the decline of the industry. He needs stable employment, and currently in Igiugig, there is none for his line of work: “I have four kids and I need employment and higher wages. I want to support my family and not live off of free money” (Stuart 2006).

**Conclusion**

The failure to achieve a sustainable economy in Bristol Bay runs much deeper than the nature of the market economy to the fundamental contradiction between subsistence and development. The predicament that tribes face in the Bristol Bay region has stemmed from the contradiction ANCSA has created and the subsequent court rulings that have diminished tribal sovereignty and fractionalized jurisdiction over landholdings: “Without governmental control over their land and subsistence resources, Alaska Native tribal members cannot determine for themselves the course of their economic and cultural lives” (Berardi 1998:107). ANCSA has
effectively diminished tribal decision-making and made resource development the only practical solution to establishing a sustainable economy. However, two centuries of federal and state efforts to promote Alaska Native economic development have failed in effectively assimilating Native Alaskans, who still maintain a relationship with the land and the subsistence way of life. The Pebble Project and the decisions that villages face reveal their precarious position as a result of ANCSA. Tribal leaders are well aware that any “economic development effort that transforms communities based on hunting, fishing, and gathering into wage-based communities could destroy exactly what they are meant to save” (Huskey 2004:461-2). They also realize that without an economy, the young generations may move away for better opportunities.

Many Alaskan villages are experiencing a rapid rate of outmigration. A study done by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) shows a net out-migration rate of 2,700 people annually for the past two years from rural areas of Alaska in search of jobs and education; this is double the rate of the previous three years. Outmigration rates are higher for young women compared to men, perhaps due to men’s subsistence role, which is seen as more fulfilling, and because “hunting and fishing success depend on place-specific knowledge that does not easily transport to a new life” (Kizzia 2008). There are many other factors both economic and social that are contributing to the movement of people from the bush to urban areas. For example, the rising cost of energy also directly hinders mechanized subsistence activities, alcoholism is a problem, and access to healthcare is difficult.

These statistics do not take account of migration within rural regions, to hub communities in the Bush (Kizzia 2008). For example, in Bristol Bay many people have moved to Newhalen-Iliamna to work for Northern Dynasty Mines. This community has quickly grown into a hub and even has a sub-regional clinic and paved roads. For some individuals, especially young adults
who do not have families yet, the decision to move is made easier because of kinship relationships and friends in Newhalen-Iliamna. These hub communities offer the best of both rural and urban worlds: jobs, subsistence, and easy transportation to the city.

Individuals who leave the village in search of education or jobs are faced with the decision of whether or not to return. Similarly, villages are having to reevaluate to what extent they are willing to change their relationship to the land so that they can continue to overcome the challenges of surviving in a rural community. The village of Igiugig is not alone in its struggle to survive high costs of living and population fluctuation. But it is unique in its creative and community-oriented approach to achieving sustainability, while at the same time preparing for change that is beyond their control. They refuse to passively stand by and watch their world change. Instead, they exercise a form of self-determination that has existed since time immemorial: they meet to discuss plans of action. In coming together to actively shape their future, the Igyararmiut solidify their cultural identity and values, and reaffirm their relationships to each other, to their homeland, and to their subsistence way of life.
Igyararmiut, “Still Surviving”

The grandpa’s and grandma’s spoke to us, what we got coming behind us. Outdoors life… and everything. That’s [why they] give us story we can remember and we could pass it on, what’s coming behind us. –Mike Andrew Sr.

A century ago, the village of Igiugig did not exist. As a result of interactive social, political, and economic forces, it grew from a place name, Igyaraq, into a settled, year-round community. In today’s world, where the dominant society appropriates, assimilates, and represents Indigenous cultures, where the forces of globalization and modernization pervade the most rural of places, it is a challenge to demonstrate a sense of Native identity while recognizing the cultural adaptation that has taken place (Kidwell and Velie 2005:53). Today we have become the Igyararmiut—a distinct Native Alaskan community. Our history is one example of how culture is a dynamic process: “The Yup’ik present is no simple reflection of the past…It is just as problematic to say that the Yup’ik way of life survived as it is to say that it died…Like other indigenous peoples the world over, they are engaged in a complex process of invention, innovation, and encounter” (Fienup-Riordan 1990:231).

Our story has always been one of survival. Our ancestors had to be prepared to survive “starvation times” and waves of epidemics. Our elders had to be prepared for the era of land
claims so that we could survive as a distinct community on our homelands and continue our subsistence way of life. Today, we are still surviving the challenges of being a modern community in rural Alaska when economic realities threaten to force us out. We continue to survive because the relationship we share with our homeland has informed a deep sense of place, identity and way of life. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith attributes survival to the traditional social system:

I believe that our survival as peoples has come from our knowledge of our contexts, our environments…We had to know to survive. We had to work our ways of knowing, we had to predict, to learn and reflect, we had to preserve and protect, we had to defend and attack, we had to be mobile, we had to have social systems which enabled us to do these things. We still have to do these things (Smith 1999:12-13).

I conclude this thesis with the Igyararmiut “still surviving”. After ANCSA, a total of 226 village corporations were established. Each has their own story and distinct cultural identity, which is why I tell the story of the village of Igiugig. The factors that have promoted our success include maintaining a social system that values respect, sharing, and cooperation. The fact that the traditional social institutions have not disappeared, but have been necessarily modernized, has allowed residents of Igiugig Village, to live village life, to a certain extent, on their own terms.

**From the Qasgiq to the Village Council**

In a real sense, the *qasgiq*, or traditional Yup’ik community hall where tools were made, leaders elected, feasts and meetings held has modernized in the form of the village council headquarters. This is evident during meetings. On December 19, 2007 all of the community members gathered together for the annual Igiugig Tribal Village Council (ITVC) meeting. The meetings no longer take place in a circular semi-subterranean dwelling, but at the airport hangar—a multi-functional building that serves the same function as a *qasgiq*. 
Aerial photo of Igiugig Village (Photo courtesy of Igiugig Tribal Village Council).
The hangar is a large space capable of housing three bush planes. It is never locked because it serves as a community storage space and repair shop. If a villager needs heavy equipment, power tools, a warm building in which to repair vehicles or butcher a caribou, then they approach the village council about their needs and it is provided. There is even a refrigerator in the hangar where chicken eggs from the cooperatively operated chicken coop are brought for the community to access. The second half of the building is known as “The Office.” It includes the tribal hall and three offices: the tribal council, Igiugig Native Corporation, and the village owned company Iliamna Lake Contractors. The Office is especially busy in the summer, and the openness of the desk space (i.e. no cubicles or closed divisions) is conducive to visiting. The tribal council is the largest employer in the village, but only the Tribal Administrator, Accountant, and Secretary have desk jobs. They learn how to take care of paperwork and business amidst a constant flow of visitors coming to say “hello”, to use the fax or copy machines, or to access the satellite Internet. Also, kids arrive for after-school programs or to wait for their parents to finish with work. The meeting hall is an empty space outside the main offices. At one end sits a small display room for the gift shop. It sells a collection of Igiugig t-shirts, caps, fur hats, beaded jewelry, knitted gloves, wolverine or wolf furs, and handbags. At the other end is a slide-show projector and screen for community presentations. Often if someone has traveled abroad they are invited to share a presentation for community entertainment. The walls are lined with historic photos of the village and all of the families.

This informal, cultural space of exchange is not necessarily reflected in the “official” structures of village life. The system of tribal governance established by the Alaska Reorganization Act (1936) was modeled by the U.S. federal government as a unified parliamentary council, and elders have learned to follow the restrictions of a constitution and the
formalities of parliamentary procedure. However, although the structure of village meetings has changed, the process of tribal decision-making has stayed constant. Majority voting is done for the sake of meeting minutes and reports, but in practice, the community operates on consensus only. If the community is divided on an issue—as they are, for example, on whether or not to support the Pebble Mine—then ITVC issues a neutral position. When villagers voice their opinion on regional issues, they are expected to uphold respect for the community by making it clear whether they speak for themselves or on behalf of the village.

The village council also acts as the local law enforcement agency in a way that adheres to tradition. Occasionally a community member misbehaves and it usually involves some form of public intoxication. This is considered by the council, and an apology is expected at a council meeting. Once the member has apologized, the misdeed is forgiven. This form of punishment is more effective than calling in regional law enforcement officers. At the meeting, the ice is broken with the usual jovial joking and teasing that take place at community gatherings.

ITVC meetings are attended by the entire village—from crying, restless babies to students and parents and elders. There are monthly meetings, but they are not as well-attended as the annual meeting when door prizes are given away to many of those who show up. The monotony of meetings and serious business discussions is broken up with intermissions of door prize drawings for drums of heating oil, gallons of gas, flashlight sets, food, and toys. Drinks and refreshments are served, and a slide-show presentation of village highlights over the year provides entertainment.

The election of the council board members also follows a Native sense of leadership. The presidency is not a sought-after position of power; it is simply a position of service. Often, villagers are content with the status quo and vote to re-elect the same members to their former
positions. There are no political platforms or nominee speeches; the whole process is seen as rather cumbersome, and is over and done within minutes. The board is usually a representative mix of families and age groups from elders to anyone over age 18. At a given point in time nearly all community members will have served as a board member. All board members have to reside in the village. The style of meetings is the same for Igiugig Native Corporation meetings and often board members overlap. This promotes cooperation between the corporation and council, the local land-owners and the governing structure; they both work in conjunction for the benefit of people living in the village of Igiugig.

The village council and the village corporation are only concerned with the people who identify as Igyararmiut and the future generations that will live in the village. They are not concerned with other communities, or even shareholders and tribal members who no longer identify with the village. In cooperation, the two organizations work towards one goal—the survival of the community and their way of life—and that has bridged the separation of land and governance imposed by colonial land policies such as ANCSA. At a local level, the people of Igiugig have overcome the limitations of ANCSA by binding identity with place so that they can continue living life on their own terms. In maintaining this social system, the Igyararmiut are currently able to resist the colonial institutions and ideologies that underlie the imposed land ownership and resource use. The fact that the Igyararmiut practice a self-determined form of land use in spite of other forms of land ownership has enabled the subsistence way of life to flourish. This subsistence way of life is our relationship to the land. It is foundational to our social system and therefore the key to surviving as Igyararmiut. This way of life holds community and cultural values constant, while teaching the principle of upagluteng: in order to survive one must always be ready to move, ready for the seasons, and ready for change. Now that we are settled
communities with permanent land bases, we have to learn how to be ready for change that comes to us. And that is important because today, the people of Igiugig face another era of change on a scale they have never encountered before.

“What’s Coming Behind Us”: The Strategic Planning Meeting

The people of Igiugig are well aware of “what’s coming behind” and our meetings are an initial form of preparation—they also reveal how we make decisions to protect our way of life. On December 19, 2007, the Igiugig Tribal Village Council annual meeting was followed by a lengthy Strategic Planning Meeting. This is an envisioning meeting that takes place every ten years, 2007 being the 2nd occurrence. At the meeting, residents revised the village mission statement and established a priority list of projects that the village needs, and then a plan of action. The process is important because federal agencies, to whom the village applies for grant monies, want a detailed plan before they allocate funding. Igiugig strives to maintain a direct relationship with the federal government—despite state of Alaska efforts to promote regionalization. Regionalization is the attempt to funnel federal funds through regional organizations such as the Bristol Bay Native Corporation, instead of working directly with villages.

Envisioning meetings are especially important to the survival of Igiugig because they are acts of self-determination: “a strategy that asks the people to imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations…dream a new dream and set a new vision” (Smith 1999:152). This Strategic Planning Meeting from December of 2007, was unique in that people of all ages participated, pre-school through elders, and for the first time there was college student involvement. For a community the size of Igiugig, with a student enrollment so low that the
school struggles to stay open, these meetings are a time to discuss the future of the village. Is Igiugig a place to which students are going to return? What does the village council need to do to make Igiugig a place that the future generations will want to remain? The students discussed what the youths wanted to be when they grew up, where they wanted to live, things that they liked/disliked about Igiugig, what makes them proud of Igiugig, and what they worry about. The answers varied, but most wanted to live in Alaska. Students voiced their opinion on the village: they liked village activities, the security, the freedom, the education system, and the outdoors. They did not like the high cost of travel to and from the village and the narrow range of social activities. All of the students were proud of their school, most likely because they had recently been recognized as the top performing school in the entire state of Alaska for meeting requirements of reading, writing and math. Students were worried about the school closing, but the worries ranged from the “Native corporation selling off land to real estate [people]” to global warming.

The types of goals that the community brainstormed have not changed from earlier times. The people are still trying to “do it our own way” and building towards an independent community in control of its own land base (Mike Andrew, Sr.). “We just want to be Igiugig the way it is” (Dallia Gregory-Andrew). Toward this end, the village plans to achieve financial independence and a healthy, sustainable community. Specific projects include the creation of a community garden and greenhouse, changing the water source from underground to the river, and building a new powerhouse with high efficiency engines and the possibility of a river turbine, a new health clinic facility, six new houses, and a fitness center. The Strategic Planning Meeting was held at a crucial time of change especially with the concern for the development of Pebble Mine on Lake Iliamna. Questions were posed such as, “If it happens, will Igiugig be
willing to house 50-100 mine employees?” The theme of the meetings stressed being ready for change.

Our future survival in the village depends on how prepared we are for the changes to our region that we cannot stop, but we do have the power to control the affects. The people of Igiugig—in planning, preparing, and strengthening social cohesion—are mediating the influence of an expanding capitalist market (mining, gas and oil development), and actively shaping their collective future. The Strategic Planning Meeting is a powerful example of indigenous people “acting creatively and resistively in the unfolding dialectic between world-systemic processes and local culture.” (Krech 1991:359). One important way to prepare for change is to reflect on how we have adapted to changes in the past, which is why we consult our oral traditions:

Well I learn mostly [from] my Grandpa and Gramma. When he tell me a story I never sleep. Even late night, I never go to sleep. That’s how I learned them. Some evening I tell my Ap’ a “tell me story, Yup’ik, I’ll listen.” One story [lasts] sometimes one hour—the long ones you know. Then after one hour he check with me. “You up?” “I’m quite awake!” (laugh). I never sleep…The grandpa’s and grandma’s spoke to us, what we got coming behind us. Outdoors life…and everything. That’s how [they] give us story so we can remember and we could pass it on, what’s coming behind us. Right now even our grandkids, we pass ‘em down…That’s good (laugh)” (Mike Andrew Sr.).

Today “what’s coming behind us” is development on an unpredictable scale and it has forced the people of Igiugig and Bristol Bay region to plan for the future while drawing on their past.

**Conclusion: Village Life**

This thesis explores the general question, “How have colonial land policies affected Igyararmiut interaction with their homelands?” I have presented the “traditional” relationship with the landscape and the cultural identity that is shaped by the subsistence way of life in Chapter 2. I have also examined the colonial views of the same landscape that have caused a shift in Native cultures from wholly self-sufficient ways of life to modern cultures increasingly
dependent on externally maintained economies. I have explored how these two views of the landscape conflict and how the people of Igiugig negotiate the conflicting demands in their behavior. The Igyararmiut have to live with the system of land ownership that has been established through various laws and policies, but by founding their institutions—school, corporation, tribal government—on cultural values and Native principles they have actively and positively shaped what village life is today. Melanie Shockley, in her research on tribal resource management on the Yukon River, states that programs that embody Native principles are Native culture:

By embodying Native principles, these programs not only exist within Native culture, but they are Native culture. Embodying cultural values is key to expressing cultural sovereignty...These programs focus on daily, tangible goals like water quality monitoring and mapping, but they are also an active assertion of our cultural identity. This form of empowerment is not achieved in Washington, DC or in courtrooms. It happens at the center of our Native identity, which is in communities. It happens daily and without praise or recognition (Shockley 2006: 151).

In the village, a Native identity, connection to place, and way of life are expressed and authenticated on a daily basis. While I was in high school, the Alaska Federation of Natives—the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, originally organized on behalf of the Native population to settle land claims—issued a “village life” photo contest. The photo that captured the essence of “village life” would win $500. My younger sister and I immediately began hunting for “village life”. We did photo shoots of ourselves dressed in kuspuks (traditional dresses) and venturing over the tundra picking berries. We posed wearing traditional gear yet carrying paperwork as we entered the tribal office. We tried a variety of scenes but were dissatisfied and actually frustrated that we were unable to capture “village life.” As a last resort we rummaged through my mom’s photo albums because we were born and raised in the village,
so in theory, any childhood photo should portray it. We knew we found had the contest winner as soon as we came across it: the epitome of village life. We went screaming around the house that finally we found what “village life” looks like.

Village Life, our picture: the day was beautiful—sunny and calm, the perfect day for maniaq, eating outside over a fire. Unbeknownst to each other, every family packed a picnic and headed downriver. The first family stopped at the Kvichak Flats to build a fire. The next family passing by stopped to say “hello” but ended up staying to share picnic foods and company. In this manner, all the villagers ended up at the same picnic sharing moose and caribou meat, hotdogs, hamburgers, crackers, marshmallows, akutaq “berry desert”, dryfish, soda pop, etc. At a moment when no one was paying attention, my mom took a picture. It is a picture conveying a deep sense of identity, place, and connection to land that I tried to capture in my thesis, but there are some expressions that cannot be communicated in the written word.

No one was looking at the camera but everyone was sitting at a comfortable distance around the fire. Some kids were roasting marshmallows with long sharp maniaq sticks. One boy was trying to get his Aunty’s attention as he excitedly pointed to a moose that was far-off in the background. Two grandmas—mother-in-laws—were sitting next to each other: one raised along the Kvichak River and the other from San Diego, California. Another boy sits on the river bank in a wheelchair. He was paralyzed from the chest down in a tragic hunting accident. The village responded immediately by building elaborate ramp systems on all the houses and public buildings. They resourcefully found ways to get him in and out of airplanes, four-wheelers and boats so that nothing would hold him back.
Another photo that captures “village life.” Aiden Wassillie, two years old, visits his Amau’s (great-grandmother Mary Gregory-Olympic) fish camp to roast marshmallows over the smoke-house fire with a maniaq stick. Salmon strips hang in the background. Aiden carries the names of two of his ancestors: Yaqulek (Bird) and Tengecetaar’ (Fair Wind).
This picture of village life has helped me to understand why, in the Yup’ik language, the very word for happiness, nunaniq, is derived from nuna, the word for homeland. There is a smile on everyone’s faces. At that moment, no one is thinking about the hardships of the past or what to worry about in the future. They are not thinking about whether this picnic is taking place on someone’s allotment, corporation, state or federal lands. The elders who converse in Yup’ik are not thinking about the disappearance of their language. And for that moment, nothing has changed. The people of Igiugig are doing what their people have done since the beginning of time: living. They are living and enjoying each other’s company and the beautiful day in their homeland. The elders of Igiugig are the last generation to experience living on the land and settled life, but they fully intended for their future generations to share their same experience. This is what “they really fought for”: to secure through whatever means necessary—allotment, incorporation, village councils, etc.—our homeland so that we can continue living our way of life:

I grew up in this land…I been using it all my life and my dad has, you know, and my mother. And I want my children to keep on using that land the way it is; we’ve been, you know, from generation to generation. And they’re just starting [to] understand how we live and tak[e] care of ourself…and use the land, you know, freely. And that’s what I want my children to do. Just keep on where we left off. The feeling of, ah, just open, and you feel wonderful out there in that land (George Wilson Sr., 1995, H95-23-2, Section 16, Project Jukebox).

In my four years at Dartmouth College and during my travels, people who realize that I come from a village in rural Alaska with only thirty-plus people ask “Do you see yourself returning to Igiugig? Would you ever go back?” The expressions on their faces when they ask this question imply that they already know the answer: what for and why? Most people do not know that I have come to Dartmouth College with the intention of returning. “Yes” I tell them in all honesty. I cannot articulate the reasons why, other than “it is my home.” But if one could
fathom the experience of “village life” that is captured in the photo described above, one would understand. It is these memories of being raised by an extended family with strong cultural values and connection to place that makes me proud to say: *Igyararmiunguunga*. “I belong to the Village of Igiugig.” And my elders, in asking “Please come back and help our village” have passed on the responsibility of making sure that this way of life—this interaction with our homeland—is sustained in perpetuity.

ENDNOTES

1 This was not the first Russian exploration of the Lake Iliamna region. In 1798, Vasilii Medvednikov and Filip Kashevarov ventured into the Lake Iliamna region; it was the second trip for Medvednikov who had explored it in 1792 by biadarka. At the time the region was occupied by a Lebedev-Lastochkin crew who established an artel at Iliamna. Baranov was collecting intelligence about the Yup’ik people of the Bristol Bay area in preparation to take over the Lebedev-Lastochkin establishments (Black 2004:149). However, this artel at Iliamna was destroyed in 1799 by the Tanaina Athabascans (Townsend 1970:82).

2 Blind Gramma was arranged to marry Nickoli Tengcetaar’ (Dinstare) and moved to Branch River, where she had two boys named Timurphy and Wassillie. She outlived Nickoli and married John “Cliff” (his English last name) from Kokhanok and had another daughter: Alice Angqurak-Zackar. In addition to the flu epidemic, she also lived through a famine. No one knows for sure how she became blind, but it sent her on some adventures. One time an ice berg carried her downriver without her knowing about it!

3 The Aleut people have stories of colonizing the Alaska Peninsula and spreading eastward even beyond Cook Inlet. They made warlike expeditions up the coast, extending as far to the north as Naknek River; therefore, it was not uncommon for Aleut people to travel long distances (Lantis 1970:270).

4 Every house has a corner, usually located in the kitchen, where a house-framed structure is filled with icons. It is usually elaborately decorated and a candle hangs in front of it. When people enter the house they are supposed to face the icon and *maliss’* or make the sign of the cross.

5 These acts include the Organic Act of 1884 and the Homestead Act of 1898 (Case 2002:7).

6 The relationship is often called a “trust responsibility” but that mainly refers to the federal governments’ obligation to manage the legal interest in property for the benefit of the tribes (Case 2002: 3).

7 1926 Alaska Native Townsite Act (ANTA) provided an opportunity for individual Alaskan Natives to obtain title to lands in the public domain; however, although the act was designed to establish exclusively Native towns, in 1938, non-Natives were also permitted to get townsite deeds in Native villages (Case 2002:130). Like the allotment act, Alaskan Natives needed the permission of the Secretary of the Interior to alienate their townsite, and the property was protected from taxation and involuntary disposition (Case 2002:10). The procedure to file a Native townsite was incredibly complex and bureaucratic; I will not delve into details specifically because the village of Igiugig did not receive a townsite until ANCSA was passed. “Among other things, section 11(a)(1) of ANCSA automatically withdrew for ANCSA corporation selection all public lands within the core township(s) enclosing a

8 The Supreme Court ruled in Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock (1903) that the federal government, in order to fulfill its trust responsibility to tribes, exercises absolute plenary power over Indian lands (Deloria and Wilkins 1999:29). Plenary power is also derived from two provisions in the U.S. Constitution: the Indian Commerce Clause (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3) and the Supremacy Clause (Article VI, Clause 2). Plenary power means that Congress has complete power in federal-tribal relationship: “Among other things, this power has been used to prevent Natives from disposing of aboriginal lands without federal consent and to place the political relationship of Native communities to others under the sole authority of federal law” (Case 2002: 2).

9 Fee simple title is the most basic form of land ownership where the owner holds title and control of property and can make decisions regarding that property without government oversight (http://www.indianlandtenure.org/ILTFallotment/glossary/terms.htm#feesimple).

10 The severe decline in abundance of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon during the postwar period propelled the Territorial legislature to establish a Department of Fisheries in 1949, which began expanded programs of fisheries-biology research; Bristol Bay was divided into five fishery management districts: Egegik, Ugashik, Naknek-Kvichak, Nushagak, and Togiak. When Alaska became a state in 1959, the regulatory authority over the fisheries was transferred to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. However, just as before statehood, the Bristol Bay salmon fishery remained a race for fish, with the fastest and biggest boats catching a greater share of the resource, all other factors being equal (Northern Economics 1999b:1-2).

11 There are currently 8,003 residents in Bristol Bay; 7,800 are BBNC shareholders (BBNC Our Land/Regional Maps).

12 As of 2001, 897,853 acres in allotments have been conveyed; 256,662 acres were rejected; and 295,372 acres are still pending entitlement (Case 2002:109, n 53).

13 The federal government forced the state to comply with ANILCA or be denied control over subsistence hunting and fishing on federal public lands (Peel 2001:269). In 1989, McDowell v. Alaska determined that the State’s compliance with ANILCA violated section VIII of the Alaska constitution, which deems a subsistence preference unconstitutional (Peel 2001:270). The McDowell case highlights two legislative solutions to solving the subsistence debate: (1) amend the State Constitution or (2) have Congress change the ANILCA requirements (Peel 2001:270). In a landmark subsistence case, a Native grandmother named Katie John was denied subsistence fishing on a tributary of a river upon which commercial salmon fishing was allowed (Peel 2001:272). She filed her claim on the basis that the state of Alaska violated the priority subsistence right of ANILCA (Peel 2001:272). In short, Katie John v. United States determined that “public lands” in ANILCA included navigable waterways on federal land, which the federal government has a reserved water right (Peel 2001:264-5). The reserved water rights doctrine applies when the federal government removes lands from the public domain to be reserved for a federal purpose, they are implicitly reserved to “the extent needed to accomplish the purpose of the reservation” (Peel 2001:276). In the Katie John case, the state of Alaska was found out of compliance with ANILCA, and the federal government reconfirmed the importance of protecting Native subsistence rights by assuming control of subsistence hunting and fishing on federal land (Peel 2001:264-5). With the fishing industry so vital to the economic life of the state, as well as integral to the Native Alaskan cultures, it is easy to understand why this issue remains so controversial today (Peel 2001:266).

14 ANILCA increased the size of Katmai National Monument by one million, thirty-seven thousand acres; this established Kukaklek Lake as a Preserve, and the monument was redesignated as Katmai National Park (P.L. 96-487, §201[2]). Alagnak or “Branch River” was designated a Wild and Scenic River within the national park system (§601).

15 The expanding salmon industry also triggered the formation of the first borough in the state of Alaska. One governing structure outlined in the state constitution is the borough which conducts powers between municipal and state levels; boroughs have the power to regulate certain lands outside of towns and corporation lands, the power to tax, and the authority to administer state services, such as education, with minimal difficulty (Cornell et al. 1999:22-23). In 1962 the Bristol Bay Borough (BBB), the first in Alaska, was incorporated to serve the fishing communities of Naknek, South Naknek, and King Salmon (www.theborough.com). On April 24, 1989, the Lake and Peninsula Borough (LPB) was incorporated; it is a form of municipal government made up of elected residents of the region and has land use planning powers over a landbase the size of Ohio, including three national parks and two wildlife refuges. It serves 17 communities in Bristol Bay, and Native Alaskans comprise 80% of the total population, most of whom are enrolled in the Bristol Bay Native Corporation. In contrast with the LPB, the population of the BBB is predominantly non-Native. Historical ties are to the Aleut, Yup’ik Eskimo, and Athabaskan cultures, but the
outstanding commercial fishing opportunities have brought many non-Natives to the Borough. The two borough governments were never consolidated into one borough even though that may bring improved education and other services through greater economies of scale. The BBB controls the Naknek-Kvichak fishing district while the LPB manages the Ugashik and Egegik (The Stadium Group 2004:41).


17 As a result of this five year cycle, the number of salmon harvested in a season can vary extremely. For example, between 1900 and 2003, Bristol Bay’s sockeye salmon harvest varied from 1.5 million to 45 million fish with the average harvest at 15.6 million (Schelle, et al. 2004:ES-43).

18 The size of the Pebble deposit, as of February 2005, is estimated at 31.3 million ounces of gold, 18.8 billion pounds of copper, and 993 million pounds of molybdenum (NDM Project Information).
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