Chapter 1: Peoples and Nations

> *"The pre-contact population of Alaska was divided into a large number of nations, or countries. These nations were tiny ones in terms of population, but they were nonetheless just as distinct from one another as Israel and Syria, or as Germany and Austria, are today. Each of these nations had dominion over a clearly delimited territory, and each of them was comprised of a clearly defined citizenry." Ernest Burch* [1]

> *"If we only had enough synchronous information from all parts of the state, we could compile a political map of mid-eighteenth-century Alaska reminiscent of a political map of, say, medieval Europe. The structure of the countries that would be represented on such a map was of course different from those in medieval Europe, but not as much so as most people think." Ernest Burch* [2]

> *"Although (Burch's) informants had not directly experienced the social history they described, they were masters of uqaluktuat, historical chronicles about "authentic incidents" going back two or three generations."* Ridington[3]

Who were Alaska's original inhabitants how did they organize themselves? The Alaska Native Languages map shows Alaska divided into areas occupied by peoples who speak related languages. What territories did these people occupy? How were they governed and organized, and how did they support themselves and conduct trade and other affairs with other Nations? Anthropologists, historians, oral historians, and Native intellectuals have worked to push back the frontiers of what we can know about Native Nations prior to incursions by the Russians, Europeans, and Americans.

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[1] Burch, "From Skeptic to Believer," 1991, in Burch, Ernest S., and Erica Hill. *Iñupiaq Ethnohistory: Selected Essays*. Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 2013.

[2] Burch essay and map, in Fitzhugh, William W., and Aron Crowell. *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.

[3] Robin Riddington, (UBC) Review Essay, Narrative Technology and Eskimo History Ethnohistory 47.3-4 (2000) 791-796

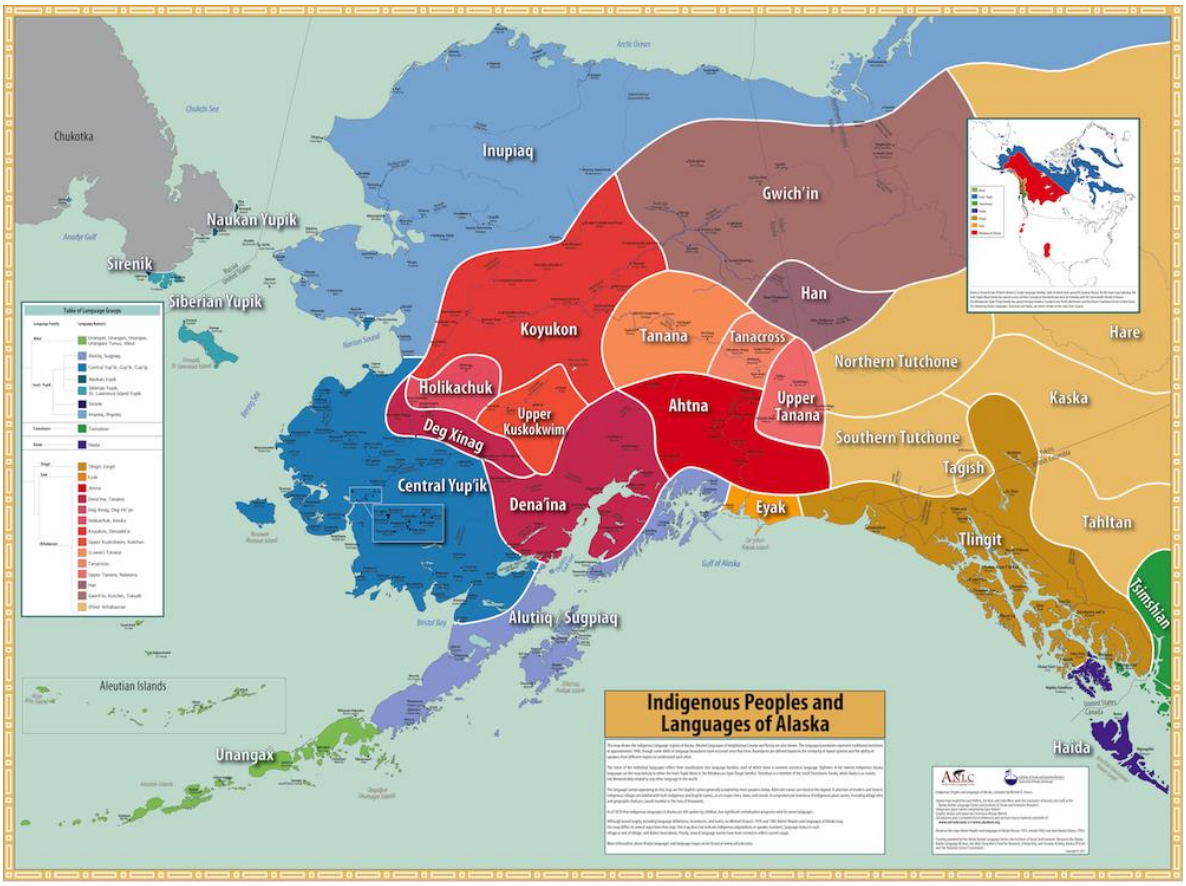

Figure 1 Alaska Native Languages Map. ANLC

Recent research has shown that while the people living in a certain area identified on the maps may speak a common language, within these larger areas, throughout all of Alaska, as late as the nineteenth century there existed multiple Nations, each occupying its own bounded territory, or estate, often with a unique dialect. And, these nations persist into the present day, now designated as Tribes.[4] The Tlingit people have been perhaps the most successful in maintaining these identities, first because they were never actually conquered by the Russians, and then, because of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood. They used the ANB and

[4] Under the administration of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Ada Deer, the Department determined that nearly all Alaska Native villages have the equivalent status to, and are entitled to the same benefits as Tribes in the lower 48.

ANS, seemingly formed as tools of assimilation to instead preserve and invoke traditional identities and political forms. (See Chapter 10-11)

However, there were indeed distinct Nations in the rest of the Alaska, even though this was denied for decades by most academics. Through extensive research with the Iñupiat and with assistance of Native historians, ethnohistorian Ernest S. "Tiger" Burch, Jr. unearthed the history of these Nations on the Northwest Coast, and the most definitive academic confirmation of their existence

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While Burch worked specifically in Northwest Alaska and identified specific Native Nations there, he asserted that if we could go back in time, all of Alaska was occupied by Native Nations who controlled specific bounded territories and the resources they contained. In southeast it is the Tlingit, and Haida clans who own, and control Southeast Alaska lands and resources.

This was a message to anthropologists, who had stubbornly clung to their vision of Iñupiaq and Athabascan bands as hunter gatherers, a term they themselves made up and defined. Burch's paper was twenty years post ANCSA settlement, a settlement that recognized the villages that were the modern tribal descendants of the nations.

How did anthropologists get it wrong? By the time anthropologists and others visited Central, Northern and Southwestern Alaska in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

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[5] Burch, "From Skeptic to Believer."

the former Nations had already been decimated by colonial conquest, invasions, and disease. While Tlingit and Haida Clans and their clan structures have persisted anthropologists largely seem to have seen these societies as exceptions that proved the rule that there was no similar structure elsewhere. These observers saw instead a multi-national population of refugees distributed over the land in family groups and in small villages. They inferred that they were seeing a timeless culture unchanged for centuries. They were wrong. Using words like 'occupied' or 'inhabited' further reinforced the idea that these were not political entities, but only disorganized cultural groups with no particular claim to the land.[6]

Indigenous scholars Adeline Peter Raboff (Gwich'in) and Miranda Wright (Koyukon) substantially agree with Burch. Raboff did not use the term Nations, but explained that Gwich'in tribes "regarded themselves as having… domain over separate territories, their citizens thought of themselves as being separate peoples and they engaged one another in war and trade" [7] Writing about the Koyukon in the early 19th century, Wright asserted that "Each Nation or Tribe controlled its own territory and hunting and fishing sites, and conducted trade, and sometimes warfare as part of their international affairs."[8]

While Burch's observations were specific to the Iñupiat, he also claimed that they can be extended to the whole of Alaska. "If we only had enough synchronous information from all parts of the state," he wrote, "we could compile a political map of mid-eighteenth-century Alaska reminiscent of a political map of, say, medieval Europe. The structure of the countries that would be represented on such a map was of course different from those in medieval Europe, but not as

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[6] See also Charles Mann *1491* who makes the same arguments about the limitations of the early anthropologists of Meso-America.

[7] Adeline Peter Raboff. *I'nuk'suk: Northern Koyukon, Gwich'in & Lower Tanana, 1800-1901*, Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 200, quoting Burch and Mishler article

[8] Miranda Wright, "The last great Indian War," Thesis, UAF 1995.

much so as most people think."[9] Continuing that thought, one can see that there is a vast difference between the way historians analyze medieval European political economies, on the one hand, versus the way anthropologists analyze Indigenous peoples, characterizing them as primitive societies to be understood through comparative cultural developments.

Burch actually did compile a map of Arctic Nations on both sides of the Bering Sea identifying ninety-one Nations.[10] These included some of the Koyukon and Gwich'in Athabaskans. While Burch's map did not extend over the whole of Alaska, we can fill in some of the gaps from other research.

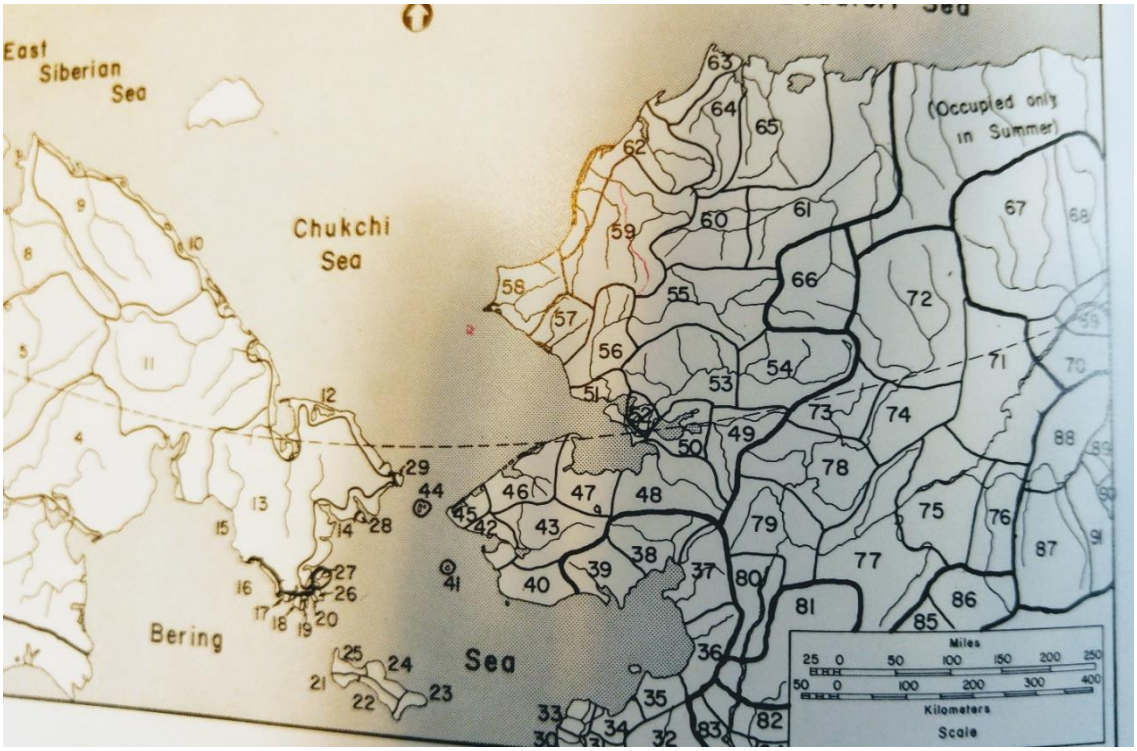

Figure 2 Ernest Burch Map of Native Nations from Crossroads of the Continents

Dorothy Jean Ray was the first western anthropologists to see that the Iñupiat were organized as Nations. By 1967 she had identified twenty-two autonomous local groups, or

[9] Burch essay and map, *Crossroads of the Continents*
[10] Burch essay and map, *Crossroads of the Continents*

Tribes, each centered in a main winter village, ranging up to sixty houses at Wales. Ray defined these entities as tribes consisting "of people with a common language and culture, living within well-defined boundaries recognized by themselves and contiguous tribes." Ray's ideas were not taken seriously by Western academics until Burch finally did enough research to corroborate the notion.

Iñupiaq scholars Simon *Paniaq* Paneak, Charlie *Sagaluuzaq* Jensen, Martha Swan, Robert Cleveland, and others guided Burch in the Arctic and on the Northwest coast for more than forty years. [11] They assisted him in traveling widely, visiting many different villages, and interviewing the most knowledgeable elders. Most of his fieldwork was conducted in the 1960s, when many elders were still alive who personally had talked to those who remembered events in the nineteenth century. Burch made an intensive effort to study the early nineteenth century, what he calls the "traditional period" prior to colonial disruption, and was able to interview recognized Iñupiaq historians from fourteen villages between 1960 and 1990.[12] His revelations were astonishing to traditional archeologists because they were so contrary to the popularly promoted image of 'Eskimos' as primitive peoples living in isolated hunting and gathering settlement.

Burch's fundamental insight that the Iñupiaq world was organized politically into a number of Native Nations reaffirmed what Ray had said but had still not been widely accepted in the academic world. Burch, and others, emphasize that all of the traditional Alaska Native societies had some form of internal political organization, and relations "between and among"

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[11] Erica Hill, "Introduction," in Burch, Ernest S., and Erica Hill. *Iñupiaq Ethnohistory: Selected Essays*. Fairbanks, U. of Alaska Press, 2013. Further detailed in Burch, *The Iñupiaq Eskimo Nations of Northwest Alaska*, Fairbanks: U. of Alaska. Press, 1998.

[12] Ernest Burch, *Alliance and Conflict: the world system of the Iñupiaq Eskimo*, Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2005:10, 48-50.

themselves and other Nations in their own regions. As Ray states, each tribe constituted a "well ordered society in which a chief and often a council played an important role. The influence of their government extended over a definitely bounded territory within which the inhabitants were directed by a system of rules and laws."[13]

Each Nation had leaders agreed upon by the citizens and respected because of their leadership acumen and abilities to begin hunting and gathering activates at the appropriate times and places, to make sure everyone had enough food, and to keep peace generally within the group. In some places, each Nation had a chief and council.

In sum, as Erica Hill, writes in her introduction to an anthology of Burch's essays, Burch's insights "helped correct the long-standing popular notion that all Eskimos were nomads with chaotic political and social systems."[14] Burch's work showed definitively that Northwest Alaska was far from an unpopulated wilderness, in fact it was "an enculturated landscape with a history of hundreds and perhaps thousands of years of human habitation."[15] These observations have now been shown to apply to the whole of Alaska.

Alaska, as experienced by its Native inhabitants prior to contact existed as "intensively used territories marked by national boundaries, seasonal camp sites, hunting blinds, and ancient trails." A corrective to the vision of an empty and trackless pristine wilderness. The Alaska Native Languages Map must be understood as an overview. Burch demonstrated the fallacy of the idea that "Iñupiaq society was a homogenous and monolithic entity, with little internal

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[13] Dorothy Jean Ray. "Land tenure and polity of the Bering Strait Eskimos." Journal of the West 6.3 (1967): 371-394, 1967, quoted in Burch.

[14] Erica Hill, Introduction, quoting Ray 1975: 103, n101

[15] Erica Hill, p. xviii

differentiation or regional variation." And by extension, his ideas must be applied to all of the Native Nations.[16]

So, to sum up, the language speaking areas on the ANLC map are geographic areas within which peoples speak related languages. Within these larger areas there existed multiple Nations. In the case of the Athabascans, these Nations speak separate languages. Each Nation occupied its own bounded territory, or estate, they regarded themselves as having "domain over separate territories, their citizens thought of themselves as being separate peoples and they engaged one another in war and trade.[17]

Warfare, Trade and International Relations

One way that the existence of these Nations is corroborated is through research and documentation of warfare between Nations. Nations fought each other to defend the boundaries of their territories, and to protect their control of resources, just as Nations in other parts of the world. For many years, anthropologists and historians doubted Native stories of warfare between Nations. While the history of warfare, battles, and enmities between Nations has never been a secret in Indigenous communities the idea did not fit with what anthropologists thought they knew about what they labeled and classified as primitive hunter gatherer societies.[18]

All of Burch's research allowed him to "connect the dots" – compare and corroborate stories told in one place with stories told in another, over a long period of work on his part. For instance, he first heard of an Indian raid on Pt. Hope, from an Iñupiaq historian on the Kobuk River who did not know the particulars of where the Indians had come from. Five years later he got another clue when he was doing place names research at Pt. Hope, and his informants

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[16] Erica Hill: Introduction, xviiii, quoting Kaye, 2006, and xix.
[17] Peter-Raboff quoting Burch and Mishler article
[18] See The myth of the peaceful Eskimo

identified a place called Indian Pass. Further questions elicited the information that the site indeed was where the Indians had come from on a fateful raid on an outlying Point Hope village, and that the Point Hopers had chased them back to the pass and killed a few Indians. In every case, Iñupiaq historians who told stories of long-ago warfare were corroborated by other historians or reports of early explorers who had seen evidence, like remains of battlefields, or heard stories from survivors, or children of participants. Some Iñupiaq historians Burch worked with had heard the stories from parents or grandparents who had been to the battlefields, or who had visited the battlefields themselves as children. Burch found that with the aid of these Native historians, history, the history of Native Nations, was knowable back into the early 19th century.[19]

[19] Burch 'From Skeptic to Believer.'

Since his work has been published, anthropologists and historians have extended his model into areas beyond Iñupiaq territory. Adeline Peter Raboff (Gwich'in) has pushed back our understanding of Koyukon and Gwich'in Athabascan history and band organization with realizations about their battles with Inland Iñupiat in the eastern Brooks Range, and life stories of individual chiefs from the early nineteenth century.[20] Working from an extensive collection of oral history tapes anthropologist Carolyn Funk added information on Native Nations involved in an extensive Bow and Arrow War in just a small area of the Yup'ik and Cup'ik world on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.[21] More recently traditional stories of warfare in Yup'ik territories have been collected and translated through the work of anthropologist Anne Fienup-Riordan and Yup'ik translator Alice Rearden and published by the Calista Corporation. The Bow and Arrow Wars have been shown to have continued for at least five hundred years and are also corroborated by recent archeological finds. (See more detail in chapter 3.)[22]

But the whole of the Yup'ik world had been involved in the Bow and Arrow Wars, and as one group displaced another, the ramifications extended into Alutiiq/Sugpiaq territory on the Alaska Peninsula, as explained by anthropologist Patricia Partnow.[23]

Trade and International Relations

[20] Raboff

[21] Caroline Funk, "Bow and Arrow Days," *Ethnohistory* 57:4 (Fall 2010)

[22] Fienup-Riordan, Ann and Alice Rearden, *Anguyiim Nalliini/Time of Warring, The History of Bow-and-Arrow Warfare in Southwest Alaska*, Fairbanks, UA Press, 2016.

[23] Fienup-Reardon, 2016, Partnow, Making History

Trade was a vital component of the Indigenous economic system in Alaska. Indigenous trade goods made their way from Nation to Nation, from Southeast Alaska all the way to the Arctic Coast. Traders travelled many, many, miles on trips of 250 to perhaps 1,000 miles, from Southeast into the Interior, east to west, west to east across the Interior, and from the Interior to the northern coast. Despite being enemies, the system of trade linked Nations who met at established and long running trade fairs: in the interior at *Nuchalawaya* at the meeting of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers, at *Sisualik,* on Kotzebue sound, at *Niġliq*, the mouth of the Colville River, and Barter Island on the northern coast. The principal trade was in furs and caribou skins for clothing from the Interior for high fat seal and whale oil from the coastal peoples. Interior peoples also had access to obsidian, chert, and jade important for tools.

Goods were also exchanged through a system of trading partners. Many such trading relationships are described in the literature.[24] This Indigenous system grew to tie together systems of international trade from the Indigenous Chukchi, in Siberia through Iñupiat, and east to Koyukon, Gwich'in, and Han, all the way to the Northwest Canadian posts of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Until the mid-17th century, there were only isolated Russian and Asian goods that had been traded hand to hand and tribe to tribe. By the mid-18th century, British and American trade goods made their way from the Tlingit on the coast through the Thaltan and Han to the Interior. Thus, Indigenous people had access to international trade goods long before they were exposed to actual European traders. After the Russians conquered Siberia, they made a concerted effort to establish trade with the Indigenous Chukchi, principally to obtain furs that could be then traded into the lucrative Chinese market. The Chukchi resisted Russian oppression, and were never

[24] examples

conquered by the Russians, but in the late 18th century they did establish formal trade, principally at the Ostrovnoe Fair, over 800 miles west from the Bering Sea Coast. After this time, many more Russian goods were traded into Alaskan markets in exchange for fox, martin, wolverine, wolf, beaver, muskrat and other furs desired by the Chinese. Thus, the Indigenous people on both sides of the Bering Sea were participating in international markets by the late 18th century. Researchers have theorized that the traditional trade fairs became more active after the Indigenous Nations in Alaska became involved in the world fur market, as European goods were integrated into already an existing Indigenous trade economy and networks.[25]

The first commercial whaling ship ventured north and entered Bering Sea in 1848 and confirmed the large population of bowhead whales. The Iñupiat could only watch from their *umiak* and the shores as up to 200 ships arrived in 1849 and 1850, killing 2,000 whales. Then in 1852, whalers killed 2,682.[26] There was nothing the Iñupiat could do as the whalers decimated their resource.

Along with the whalers, independent traders from many countries also discovered the fur trade in the Arctic. At first it seems, trading schooners from Hawaii arrived to service the whale ships, providing them with fresh provisions from the Islands. Then independent traders discovered that they could trade furs on their own account directly into Chinese markets.[27] Whereas the Russians, nominally in control of the territory, had given lip service to keeping alcohol out of the Iñupiat trade, the trade for furs with the Iñupiat was a free for all, and

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[25] Bockstoce, John R. *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North: The Contest Among Native and Foreign Nations for the Bering Strait Fur Trade*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009

[26] Murray Lundberg http://www.explorenorth.com/library/yafeatures/bl-whaling.htm
Graeme Wynn, Canada and Arctic North America: An Environmental History.

[27] Bockstoce, *Fur Frontiers*

completely unregulated. Both whalers and independent traders freely carried alcohol to the Iñupiat, and it became the trade item of choice.[28]

Conquest

In the early 15th century the Pope promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, giving Catholic Nations Spain and Portugal the right to claim by 'right of discovery' land belonging to infidels. This doctrine became, by default, international law, and was upheld in the 1830s by the Supreme Court of the United States.[29] It was under this international law that Russia claimed Alaska, and it was under the Doctrine of Discovery that the U.S. recognized Russian rights to Alaska that they then 'purchased.' Of course, this was a giant fiction, as the Russians had never really owned Alaska at all. In fact, they had maintained a colonial trading regime for less than 100 years. Aside from their trading posts in the Aleutians, and their administrative headquarters in Sitka, they had established only small number of isolated posts on the Southwest Coast and on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The British continued to trade in Southeast Alaska, and to operate their Hudson's Bay Post at Fort Yukon, well within what was supposedly Russian territory.

The fiction that the Indigenous people of Alaska were simply primitive isolated bands of hunter gatherers contributed to the fiction that their land was available to be claimed by colonial powers and put to a 'better and more productive use' in the name of progress. The same ideology about progress and the superiority of western civilization would convince the U.S. government to focus on assimilating Native Alaskans and turn the job over to Christian missionaries who would

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[28] Bockstoce, *Fur Frontiers*

[29] There is an extensive literature on the Doctrine of Discovery and the Marshall Decisions in the Supreme Court. See for example Robert A. Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993*.

also convert them, while mostly prohibiting them from speaking their Native languages, and practicing their traditional cultural rituals.

Corporations, Tribes and Villages: An Overview

Along with the Alaska Native Language Map, the delineation of the Native corporations, and their associated non-profits, provides another window into the peoples of Alaska. In 1971, Congress settled Alaska Native aboriginal land claims with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The detailed work involved in getting the settlement, and the settlement itself, will be discussed in later chapters. The idea that there are corporations instead of tribes as the organizations controlling Native land is highly controversial to this day. But the corporations are mapped onto the original ethnolinguistic areas. Each region also has a tribal government structure, or social services non-profit that proves services to the people of the region.

It is important to clarify the term Tribe which has come to have a specific meaning in Federal Indian Law. When the U.S. bought the rights to Alaska from Russia, Alaska Natives were generally classed with American Indians in Federal Indian Law. Some villages took advantage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 to organize an official Tribal government, or IRA council, even as late as 1971.[30] However, following the ANCSA settlement, their status was ambiguous until a court decision in 1991 forced the Department of the Interior to make a final determination. Under the administration of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Ada Deer, the Department determined that nearly all Alaska Native villages have the equivalent status to, and are entitled to the same benefits as Tribes in the lower 48.[31] So it is now the individual villages

[30] See for instance, the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, organized in 1971 as a consortium of the North Slope villages. http://www.inupiatgov.com/?page_id=63

[31] Gordon Pullar, Lisa Jaeger, course materials for "Federal Indian Law for Alaska Tribes" no longer available

that are separate Tribes, not the larger language groups, or the original bands. While Athabascan speaking Indigenous people in the Lower 48, including the Navajo and Apache, are generally considered Tribes, in Alaska, each village is a Tribe unto itself. And each Tribe or village has its own particular history. This is appropriate because the residents of each village really represent an ancient Nation, the people relocated to a modern village site in the early to mid-twentieth century after missionaries or the BIA located a school.

Today there are three Alaska Native Corporations owning Iñupiaq lands and controlling sub-surface resources. **NANA Regional Corporation**, headquartered in Kotzebue, is owned by the people of the Northwest coast and the Kobuk Valley region. **Maniilaq Inc**. serves the tribal Nations and social service needs of the area. **Arctic Slope Regional Corporation** (**ASRC**) headquartered in Barrow, controls lands on the North Slope from the Canadian Border to Point Hope, while **Arctic Slope Native Association** serves the social service needs. Rounding the coast to the Seward Peninsula, **Bering Straits Native Corporation**, and its shareholders own and control lands on the Seward Peninsula from headquarters in the old gold rush town of Nome. The associated non-profit, **Kawerak Inc**. serves the people of the region, from Inupiat communities of Shishmaref and Wales in the north and on King Island and Diomede Island, central Yup'ik in villages south of Unalakleet, and Siberian Yup'ik on St. Lawrence Island. As the Kawerak website explains, "Twenty tribal governments represent the twenty villages in the region."[32] In this region, the IRA councils are recognized as "the legal remnants of the Native traditional governments that provided social order prior to contact with non-Natives." As the site

[32] https://kawerak.org/

notes, “These governments were subsequently reorganized and recognized as tribal governments under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.”[33]

Athabascan speaking tribal Nations, also called *Déne*, speaking eleven different related languages occupy the vast Interior of Alaska. Evidence of their ancestors goes back some 13,000 years. Related to the Navajo and Hopi among others, but not to the Inupiat or Yupik, they can be referred to as Indians. Today the **Doyon Corporation** owns *Déne* lands in the Interior. This is an area the size of Europe. The **Tanana Chiefs Conference** represents the tribal interests of the Interior tribes and provides social services. But there are two other corporations controlling lands of Athabascan tribes: **Ahtna Incorporated**, and **CIRI**. **Ahtna** is the corporation for the Ahtna people of the Copper River Valley and Interior regions south of the Alaska Range. **Copper River Native Association** serves the people of the area**. Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI)** is the corporation formed for people centered around Cook Inlet. These include the Athabascan *Dena’ina* who were the original inhabitants of the area that is now Anchorage, and the Kenai Peninsula. However, at the time of the ANCSA settlement, eligible Native people could choose to become shareholders of their traditional regions, or the corporation where they lived, so many Native residents of Anchorage from nearly every other region in Alaska are also Cook Inlet shareholders. **The Cook Inlet Tribal Council** represents the Tribes in the area and also runs large health care and social service organizations for the growing Native population of the Anchorage area. Native Corporations were formed in response to the Land Claims settlement principally to own and control regional Native lands, in the case of Cook Inlet, there was very

[33] http://www.kawerak.org/tribalpages.html (Sept. 30. 2021)

little land in the region that was federally owned and available to be claimed so CIRI was allowed to select lands outside of their regional area.

Yup'ik people, now shareholders of **Calista Corporation**, (pronounced Chu-list-a) occupy the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. The Yup'ik tribal communities represent the largest concentration of Native people still speaking their native language. **The Association of Village Council Presidents** (AVCP) coordinates social services in the region. The AVCP grew from an original unincorporated organization formed in 1964, as the group explains, according to an article by Carl Jack the organization's first President, "in anticipation of the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, in the hope that this group would be qualified to administer that Act's proceeds."[34] Yup'ik also reside in the Bristol Bay area and coastal lands of Southwest Alaska and are shareholders of **Bristol Bay Native Corporation**, people of the Bristol Bay region are served by the **Bristol Bay Native Association**.

The *Unangan* were the original inhabitants of the isolated and windswept islands of the Aleutian Chain. They developed complex culture and technologies to survive and thrive using tidal resources and hunting sea mammals. They are now shareholders in the **Aleut Corporation**, the name a holdover from an earlier period, prior to the revival of the *Unangan* name. They are served by the **Aleutian Pribilof Island Association**. Meanwhile, the *Sugpiaq*, also known as Alutiiq, shareholders now of **Koniag, Incorporated**, occupied the Kodiak Island Archipelago and parts of Prince William Sound. They are served by the **Kodiak Area Native Association**.

A mix of peoples have occupied lands around Prince William Sound, including *Yup'ik, Sugpiaq*, and *Eyak*. **Chugach Alaska Corporation** owns and controls lands in the area, and **Chugach Native Association** coordinates services.

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[34] http://www.avcp.org/about-us/ (June 26, 2016)

Far to the Southeast, nearly 1,200 miles from the Arctic Coast, the highly organized clans of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples have occupied the northern rainforest of the island archipelago that is now Southeast Alaska for thousands of years. Today, the **Sealaska Corporation** owns the lands that the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian retain. The **Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska** is the official non-profit tribal government, representing 30,000 Tlingit and Haida, and coordinates social services. The region also supports **Sealaska Heritage Foundation** which has been a leader in cultural preservation and revival. The Tsimshian people are concentrated in Metlakatla, a town they settled in the 19th century after leaving Canada. Their history is unique and is recounted on their website.[35]

All of these Nations still exist, and still preserve and speak, to a greater or lesser extent their Native languages. Their Native place names are living guideposts to the land, and the people who have owned and controlled it for millennium.

[35] https://www.metlakatla.com/tribehistory.php