Reindeer Bridge of Beringia Project
A Combined Report
through March 31, 2008.

This report is chronological within each section. It relies heavily on the work journals of project director Faith Fjeld and is thus written mostly in the first person. We have retained this journal style in this report to make it enjoyable reading. Where presentations were mixed with oral contacts we have reported these under "Oral Contacts with Elders and Descendents". We have reported on activities of the first and second quarter, but also included record keeping about the activities which occurred in the summer of 2007 in Nome that are also relevant to the Reindeer Bridge Project.

I. RESEARCH AND ARCHIVES

Organized an office and research library where people will feel welcome and have easy access to our photographs, maps and genealogical information.

Visited archives, including:

--Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum: Renewed acquaintance with museum directors Bev Gelzer and Laura Samuelson and looked at their collection of reindeer photos.

--Kawerak Eskimo Heritage Program: Met with director Diane Schaeffer Okleasik and archivist Eva Menadelook. Looked through their collection of Inupiaq elder interviews that refer to the Saami and reindeer herding. Discovered two excellent in depth interviews conducted in 1982 with Mary Bahr and Andrew Bangs (the last full blooded Saami from the Reindeer Project in Unalakleet) and filled out the paperwork to get copies for our library. Discussed the use of the Past Perfect data processing program to organize our information and received a list of all the printed material in their archives.

Organized the growing collection of photographs and other information into notebooks that can be taken along to the presentations.

In preparation for presentations in Teller, Brevig Mission and Shishmaref visited Rev. John Littau (the Lutheran minister in Nome and formerly in Teller) and contacted the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Paul, MN). The three communities were founded as Lutheran missions/reindeer stations in the 1890s. The archives sent me a DVD of some film footage relating to the founding of the three missions from the missionary perspective.

Reindeer Bridge Project team members: researchers Nathan Muus and Ruthanne Cecil prepared invaluable research. The short form of Ruthanne's Alaska Saami family biographical information for elders — along with pertinent passages from the Sheldon Jackson reports, are given to elders. Team member Nathan Muus prepared a Chronology which I printed up and made available to people in the villages I visited. It was also read by many of the visitors to the Nome office and copies were printed out for several of the members of the ungulate husbandry

class I audited at the University of Alaska Nome campus. Photos from his collection were used in various slide shows — including the one at Beringia Days.

Updating files, and organizing research material collected during the summer in Nome.
After the move of the Saami Báiki Office from Nome to Fairbanks, information and photographs collected during the summer were organized and made available to the academic community.

It would be impossible to put together our "Reindeer Bridge of Beringia" programs without the research of Ruthanne Cecil, who took the extensive Reindeer Project information that has come into the Báiki Office in many different forms and organized this material into an indexed "Reindeer Project Family Genealogy Notebook" of more than 500 pages. This is a useful reference book for visitors who come to our office. Moreover, condensed versions of the Genealogy Notebook have accompanied all of my "Reindeer Bridge of Beringia" presentations on the Seward Peninsula and Chukotka so that people who attend can have easy access to this information as well. As new information comes in, Ruthanne painstakingly revises and updates her work. In this way we have been able to share valuable family information that has reconnected many long-lost relatives in Alaska and in the Nordic countries. I believe that these connections could have not been made without this research. I am fortunate to have Ruthanne as my colleague and am very grateful to her.

II. PUBLICITY AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Designed and printed a three-fold illustrated informational pamphlet called "The Reindeer Bridge and the Saami Báiki Office in Nome."

KNOM Radio: Was interviewed by news director Jesse Zink who will splice updates from summer 2007 Reindeer Bridge activities into the Reindeer Project background information that he and I recorded last year.

Nome Nugget: Was interviewed by staff writer Laurie McNicholas for a feature article in the June 14th, 2007 issue.

Calendar listings: Submitted information for the Nome Visitors Center "Summer Schedule 2007 Calendar of Events," and the "Nome Midnight Sun Festival Events Calendar."

June 14, Nome Nugget feature article:
"NPS Funds Reindeer Bridge Project," by Laurie McNicholas, resulted in a number of phone calls to the Reindeer Bridge Office. I was able to meet and interview these callers during my visits.

January - February 2008:

Preparation and mailing of Winter Issue #29, Báiki: the International Sami Journal and beginning work on Summer Issue #30.

March 2008
During the Alaska Sami Family Reunion in Kautokeino I was privileged to stay at the home of Philip Burgess, who interviewed me for the International Center for Reindeer Husbandry website, Boazolihkku [Reindeer Luck]. The ICRH has close working relationships with reindeer herders around the Arctic Circle, and especially in Chukotka. I thank Philip and his wife Rauna Kuokkanen, Ph.D., for their hospitality.

III. ORAL CONTACTS WITH ELDERS

In Nome useful information and contacts with elders will come from many sources in many places. All I have to do is mention reindeer or pull out some pictures to start up a conversation. I jot down what I hear on whatever is available to write on and then I transfer my notes when I get back to the office.

Meeting elders:

Bida Slowook and Lucy Oseuk, Siberian Yup'ik elders from Gambell, and Savoonga, St. Lawrence Island. (XYZ Senior Center lunchtime conversations.) Their grand parents worked with the Nils Persen Sara family when reindeer were introduced on their island. According to Bida, the Saras went by the name of "Sutka." She heard them yoik the reindeer and she knows about the "sod igloo" they built at Camp Tapok (Lady Lagoon) near Gambell. Lucy said that Jonathon Annigoyuk from Savoonga knows a lot about the Saami herders. St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik are directly related to the Siberian Yup'ik People of Chukotka.

Pete Larsen, Jr., Inupiat / Saami descendant of Saami herder Fred Larsen, Sr. He granted me permission to use a photograph of his grand father on the cover of the informational pamphlet. I brought Pete a Xeroxed copy of Sheldon Jackson's description of his grandfather's 1894 arrival at Teller Reindeer Station as an 18 year-old boy.

Eileen Norbert, Inupiat Senior Planner for Kawerak Eskimo Heritage Program. Discussed oral history interview techniques in Alaska.

Preparing for village presentations and home visits to elders:

Organized the growing collection of photographs and other information into notebooks that can be taken along to the presentations.

Designed a flier to be emailed to each participating village prior to the presentation.

Began work on a 20-minute DVD (using Macintosh iMovie) that introduces Native audiences to the multi-cultural history of reindeer husbandry in Alaska from the Indigenous perspective. Most people on the Seward Peninsula know very little about how reindeer came to their area, and almost nothing about the Sami.

First Village Presentation, Teller, Alaska (pop. 265)

When: May 30, 2007
Where: community bingo hall
Attendance: 41 men, women and children
What: See attached flier for a description of the event

Interviewing elders:

Dan Karmun (Nome), grandson of the Kahmana family from the Tunguse (Evenk) area of Siberia. His family established a large herd at Deering and they still herd today. Until he was 80, he had no idea he was Evenk until his older brother finally told him. "In the 1960s I went to Siberia to study reindeer feed techniques with a team from UAF and Sápmi (Lapland) who were working with Evenk herders. I was right in the middle of the place where my grand parents were born but I didn't find out I was Evenk for 40 more years!"

Ethel Geffe (Kotzebue) A phone call from Bobby Jo Itta took an interesting turn. He was calling on behalf of his mother Ethel, who is trying to trace the origins of her Saami great grandmother Ethel Siquvoruq (Siqviin) who is said to have walked from Canada to Alaska where she met and married an Inupiat man. Next month when I do my presentations in Kotzebue we will meet.

Ellen Binder (Inuvik, N. T., Canada), daughter of Mikkel Pulk, one of the three Canadian Sami herders who worked with reindeer brought from Alaska to Canada on the Great Trek. Her Inuvialuit/Sami family still herds today. I called her in Canada and asked if she had heard the story but she hadn't. As we spoke, we discussed the fact that the Canadian Sami and the story of the Great Trek need to be acknowledged. By the time our conversation ended, Ellen and I had started to plan an exhibit for the museum in Yellow Knife next year. When I asked her about the Sami on the Seward Peninsula being given Inupiat names, she said, "The Sami are survivors. They wanted to keep their identity quiet. It was easier to join the group and take an Inupiat name.". Then she added: "But you can never become what you're not."

By popular demand, I have also frequently given out patterns for making Sami skaller (curled-toe ski boots).

Village presentations and interviews

July 3 — 5, Brevig Mission (pop. 324):
A short talk on the Reindeer Project at the Fourth of July community feast was followed by a discussion with a group of elders. Interviews followed in several private homes.

(From the Báiki Guest Book): "My Grandpa was a reindeer herder and I'm always interested in the stories and people who share or have shared their lives with us from Brevig Mission. Thank you for coming." — Grace Olanna, Brevig, granddaughter of William and Alice Attatayuk who lived and herded with the Sami at Brevig Mission in the early 1900s.

July 6 — 15, Kotzebue (pop. 3082):
Two Saturday afternoon presentations at the Western Arctic National Parklands Innaigvik Visitors' Center were attended by a total of fifteen people. "The Reindeer People of Alaska"

exhibit from the summer of 2006 was once again installed in the Center's gallery. Other events in Kotzebue gave me many opportunities to speak with elders and youth (see below).
(From the Guest Book) "It really interested me to know what similarity our Peoples went through! I think what you bring out is really important — especially to make it known publicly…Indoctrination from the majority was the norm during that time, something similar to Manifest Destiny the majority in America embraced, back in that time." — Edward S. Olanna, Shishmaref.

July 25 — 27, Shishmaref (pop. 562):
A Reindeer Bridge open house at the Shishmaref Friendship Center was attended by seventeen people. Most of them were elders. Pathfinder was taped for airing on the Shishmaref scanner channel, as was a DVD from the Lutheran Church that documents the coming of missionaries to the area. I also conducted interviews in private homes.
(From the Guest Book) "I'm glad to meet you in person. I enjoyed the article in the Nome Nugget about your coming to our region to meet our people and the Saami descendants. I'll be glad to share my research with you, as you were one of my resources. Thanks for coming to Shishmaref to share your knowledge of your people." — Darlene Turner, Shishmaref. She is writing her dissertation on Alaska reindeer history.

August 13 — 30:
I packed up the books and files for shipment to Fairbanks and scheduled visits with Rev. Brian Crockett of Brevig Mission, Andy Miller, jr. of Nome, and Reindeer Project elders Pete Larsen, jr. and Dan Karmun who also live in Nome.

September 1 — 4:
I stayed at the Anchorage home of Reindeer Project elder Lois Stover, and we visited another Reindeer Project elder Marita Snodgrass. Our conversations included the possibility of making a documentary about the Reindeer Project and the forthcoming spring reunion of Reindeer Project descendants in Kautokeino , Norway.

IV. CULTURAL NETWORK BUILDING

Community contacts:

Tourism in Nome: Meeting in NPS Superintendent Tom Heinlein's office with Richard Beneville (Nome Visitors Bureau, host of "Hello Central" TV program) and Mitch Erikson (President Nome Chamber of Commerce). A film crew may be filming a promotional video, "There's No Place Like Nome," in Nome in mid-July and I hope our project will be mentioned. They are promoting off road bicycle tours and extreme skiing.

Chukchi in Nome and Chukotka: Leon Boardway, Nome historian and bar tender, (Board of Trade Bar) gave me a set of photographs of Chukchi herders in Alaska to copy for our files. He told me that the famous Balcutha that sits in San Francisco Bay began life as The Star of Alaska and sailed here. He is thinking of organizing sailing excursions to the Bering Sea

Teller / Wales Reindeer Relief Expedition to Point Barrow: Cussy Kauer, Nome historian (Chateau de Cape Nome Bed and Breakfast, Nome Clerk and Recorders Office) invited me to her house to take notes from Report on the Cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear and the Overland Expedition for the Relief of Whalers on the Arctic Ocean, a U.S. government report published in 1899. The expedition included Dr. Kittleson, Mikkel Nakilla (Saami), Ootenna, Kivyearzruk, Sokweena, Keuk, and Ituk (all Inupiaq) and Rev. Wm. T. Lopp.

Beringia Museum of Culture and Science: I was invited to attend a four-hour meeting of the Beringia Museum Project Leadership Team. I have more than 100 pages of information from this meeting and will be attending future meetings all summer. The Saami will now be included in their planning. It was suggested that we become an Affiliate of the Leadership Team, and there will be much more about this later.

Classes, Conferences, Planning Sessions, and Workshops

June 19 — 22: Alaskan Ungulate Husbandry Class, UAF — Northwest Campus, Nome.

July 6: "Emerging Inuit Leaders — Igniting a Language Movement," workshop on language immersion, Kotzebue Middle High School, Kotzebue.

July 8 — 11: "Architects of Change: Taking Responsibility for Our Future," Arctic Economic Development Summit, Kotzebue Middle High School, Kotzebue.

July 19 — 23: "From Here We Can See Tomorrow," Wales Writing and Artist Workshop, Wales.

(From the Guest Book) "I am a reindeer herder since the early 1970s. I enjoy being a part of the reindeer industry and meeting people with knowledge of reindeer. My enjoyment is tied to the land and its people. Nice to meet you. Stop by any time to Lopp Lagoon corral, two miles north of Wales. I am also a Kingikmuit drummer and singer." — Coy Ongtowasruk. This summer Coy produced a video of the Ongtowasruk extended family's reindeer-herding activities.

July 30: Beringia Museum of Culture and Science work session, Nome. The next meeting will be August 21.

September 5 — 14:
This week was spent driving to Fairbanks in a U-Haul with the help of my son, and settling in and organizing the Báiki Office. Friday, September 14, was spent with Paul Atkinson, GIS specialist at the Fairbanks National Park Service headquarters, preparing my slide presentation for Beringia Days 2007.

September 26 — October 9:

During these two weeks I paid introductory visits to key individuals at the University of Alaska (UAF). These included Ray Barnhardt (director of the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies), Bill Schneider (curator of Oral History, Polar Research Archives), Sean Topkok (Alaska Native Knowledge Network) and Greg Finstad (Reindeer Research Program, College of Rural

Development). These meetings were to announce the arrival of the Báiki Office in Fairbanks and to establish working relationships with UAF.

Conferences, Planning Sessions, and Presentations

August 21:

I attended an all-day planning session in Nome for the forthcoming Beringia Museum of Culture and Science.

September 21—22

I presented a slide show, "The Reindeer Bridge of Beringia," at the Beringia Days Conference in Anadyr, Chukotka, Russian Federation. Afterwards, several conference participants from Chukotka came up to discuss their family's reindeer connections with Alaska. One of them, Omrypkir Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, who is President of the Association of the Russian Federation North, Siberia and Far East Indigenous Peoples' Organization, asked me for a copy of the slides, which I gave him. He and other Chukchi herders work closely with members of the International Center for Reindeer Husbandry in Kautokeino, Norway. The ICRH members are all descendants of the Sami herders who came to Alaska.
During the two-day period I also discussed with Igor Zagrebin, Director of the Provideniya Museum in Chukotka, the possibility of a "Reindeer Bridge of Beringia" exhibit there within the next two years.

October 22 — 25:

I attended the Alaska Federation of Natives Annual conference, which included a Youth and Elders meeting and the Arts and Crafts Fair. This is where major networking is done in the Native community and it was an excellent way to speak with many of the people I have met in my work, and share updates about our various projects.

October 26 — 27:

I participated in the Indigenous Ph.D. Program Planning Conference sponsored by the UAF Cross-Cultural Studies Department.

November 28:

I met at the Swedish Consulate in San Francisco with Swedish Consul General Barbro Osher and Kjellhaug Myhre, Norwegian Vice Consul, and gave them updates on the work of the Báiki Office in Alaska and the Reindeer Bridge Project.

November 30, December 1:

I organized a Sami exhibit and information table at the Annual SWEA Christmas Fair sponsored by the Swedish Women's Educational Association. During the Fair I showed a Sami DVD "Birch the Provider," and presented a half-hour program on the Sami culture to an audience of 300. This included yoiking by Nathan Muus.

V. PRESENTATIONS, EVENTS AND OUTREACH

Visitors to the Reindeer Bridge Office and Library in Nome during the summer included:

• Peter Richter and D'Anne Hamilton (Shared Beringian Heritage Project), Nichole Andler and Thomas Heinlein (Western Arctic National Park Lands), Mitch Erikson (Nome Chamber of Commerce), Kaci Fullwood (director, Beringia Museum Project), Rose Fosdick (officer, Kawerak Reindeer Herder's Association)

• Rotary Club of Nome: Gave a 30-minute talk at their noon luncheon on how reindeer formed a cultural bridge on the Seward Peninsula.

• The staff of the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve's Nome Office; • Mary Jane Litchard (Inupiaq artist from Shishmaref); • Lucy Oseuk (Siberian Yup'ik elder from Gambell, St. Lawrence Island); • Andy Miller, Jr. (grandson of Saami reindeer herder Mike Nilluka); and • Mille Porsild (member of the Polar Husky Arctic research team and granddaughter of an organizer of the Great Trek).

This part of my report covers a seven-week period during which I made visits to the villages where reindeer herding took place on the Bering Sea coast of Alaska. It also covers my week in Kotzebue. Prior to my arrival each presentation was advertised on the local radio and television station, and flyers were emailed to the communities to be printed out and distributed.

I took with me a notebook that contained photographs, maps and other information specific to the reindeer history of each of the villages. This included the Nathan Muus Reindeer Project chronology and Ruthanne Cecil's Alaska Saami biographical information.

During the presentations I displayed items connected with the Sami herders. These included a pair of curled-toe ski boots with Sami trim, a pair of Sami-style curled-toe ski boots with Inupiat trim, a lasso, a photo of a pulka (Sami sled) and a chart of Alaska reindeer ear marks.

I also took along a Guest Book for people to sign, which is my way of remembering who attended the presentations and recording their comments. In all there are 102 entries in the Guest Book from the period covered by this report. The positive remarks indicate the beginning of ongoing Beringia connections as do the various classes, conferences, planning sessions, and workshops.

• Alaskan Ungulate Husbandry Class lecture:
I presented an evening slide show and lecture on the history of reindeer herding in Alaska to the ten class members of the course offered by the UAF-Northwest campus.

• Reindeer Bridge Office open house:
During Nome's annual Midsummer Festival this two-day open house attracted 26 visitors, most of whom had family connections with reindeer herding. "True Stories from the Reindeer Project" were told throughout the open house.

• Nome Youth Authority video:

A video of the Academy Award-nominated Sami film Pathfinder was preceded by a short presentation on the Sami culture. The functions of the curled-toe ski boots and the Drum as seen in the film were explained. The audience was made up of fifteen at-risk teenagers and two adult staff members.

• National Park Service Junior Rangers class of 23 kids, age 7 to 15. I brought along some of the equipment used in reindeer herding and told stories about how the articles were used. I also gave to each young person a little booklet with illustrations of reindeer herding copied from "The People of the Eight Seasons" by Ernst Manker.

Visitors to the Saami Báiki Office in Fairbanks included:

• Jan Henry Keskitalo, governor of the University of the Arctic and department head of Sami University College in Kautokeino, Norway came for lunch and a visit to our library. There, in the Alaska Sami family research information organized by Ruthanne Cecil, he was able to find information about his grandfather who came to Alaska in 1898 with the Sami herders. We also discussed the Reindeer Bridge Project and its Russian connection.

• Stacey Carkhuff, a former exchange student at the University of Lapland, visited the library, having been referred by her professor, Bill Schneider. She videotaped an interview with me about Sami politics; the following week she presented this material to her class. Stacey will be returning to Rovaniemi, Finland next year and I was able to offer suggestions for her course work on the Sami. These two visits, among others, indicate that our office can be of help to the academic community in many ways.

• Pekka Sammallahti, Professor of Sami Language and Culture at the University of Oulu, Finland and his wife Inger came to the Báiki Office for lunch .

Events coordination in Fairbanks included:

• Sami Pre-SASS Dialogue, Fairbanks, AK: The Báiki Office made all the arrangements for a one-day gathering of Sami scholars from Sápmi and North America to be held in March. This included arranging to have the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies at UAF sponsor the event, reserving the Alaska Native student lounge in Brooks Hall for the morning session, and making lunch and dinner reservations for the group at local restaurants. The Sami Pre-SASS Dialogue preceded the two-day conference in March of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies (SASS) that this year was held in Fairbanks.

• Alaska Sami Family Reunion, Kautokeino, Norway: The Baiki Office served as the means of communication between the Alaska participants in this reunion and their relatives in Norway prior to the March event.

• Finnfest 2008, Duluth, MN: The Báiki Office has been asked to prepare two presentations for this July event. These include: a. a panel discussion on "Living in Two Worlds" by five people who have mixed Finnish ancestry, and b. a slide show chronicling the reawakening of Sami consciousness in North America.

• Sami Pre-SASS Dialogue, Fairbanks, AK: There were 13 participants in the morning dialogue. Dr. Oscar Kawagley, Yup'ik scholar and professor of Cross-cultural Studies at UAF, was the guest of honor. Our discussion centered on establishing better connections between Sami Studies and Native American and Alaska Native Studies. Bryan Brayboy, Cross-Cultural Studies, gave an update on the proposed Indigenous Ph.D. program at UAF.

• Saami Baiki Office Open House, Fairbanks, AK: This was an opportunity to introduce the Báiki Office and library to participants in the Sami Pre-Sass conference. Representatives from the Polar Research Archives, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network and the Cross-Cultural Studies departments also attended.

• Alaska Sami Family Reunion, Easter Week, Kautokeino, Norway: New connections were made between the Báiki Office and Sápmi. Scheduled events included three family reunion dinners, the Sami Grand Prix Yoik Contest, reindeer races and weddings. A group excursion to Karasjok included a visit to the Samiske Samelinger (Sami Museum), and the Samediggi (Sami Parliament) where we had lunch with President Egil Olli.

• Fourth World Reindeer Herders Congress 2009: I visited the International Center for Reindeer Husbandry in Kautokeino and met with Anders Oskal, President, and Johan Mathis Turi, Chairman of the Board. They have asked Báiki to bring "The Sami: Reindeer People of Alaska" to Kautokeino next Easter, 2009, to be featured at the Fourth World Reindeer Herders Congress there, April 12 - 19, 2009. Anders Oskal sees our exhibit as a story of traditional knowledge. He told me that the ICRH is the only state entity in the world that has the specific task of promoting TEK. "Reindeer keep our contact with Nature," he said. It is hoped that the exhibit can travel to other venues in Sápmi and Chukotka as well.

Additional ongoing work:

VI. BOOK PREPARATION, including an exhibit catalogue, is an ongoing production.
VII. EXHIBITION PREPARATION, including archival management and preparation and development of new exhibit opportunities, is also ongoing

Photo captions for attached pdf and jpg files:

Photo 1 – "Faith Fjeld in the Reindeer Bridge Office in Nome, 2007"
Photo 2 - "This two-age feature in the Nome Nugget generated a great deal of public interest in the Reindeer Bridge project."
Photo 3 - "One of our workshops at the Friendship Center in Shishmaref. Many people whose families have herded reindeer looked at our collection of photographs and shared their stories."
Photo 4 -- "A picnic on the Chukchi tundra during Beringia Days brought SBH participants from Alaska and Chukotka together."
Photo 5 -- "Sami scholars hold up the Sami flag during a gathering prior to the Society for the Advancement of Sami Studies conference in Fairbanks. They were interested to hear about the Reindeer Bridge of Beringia project."

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