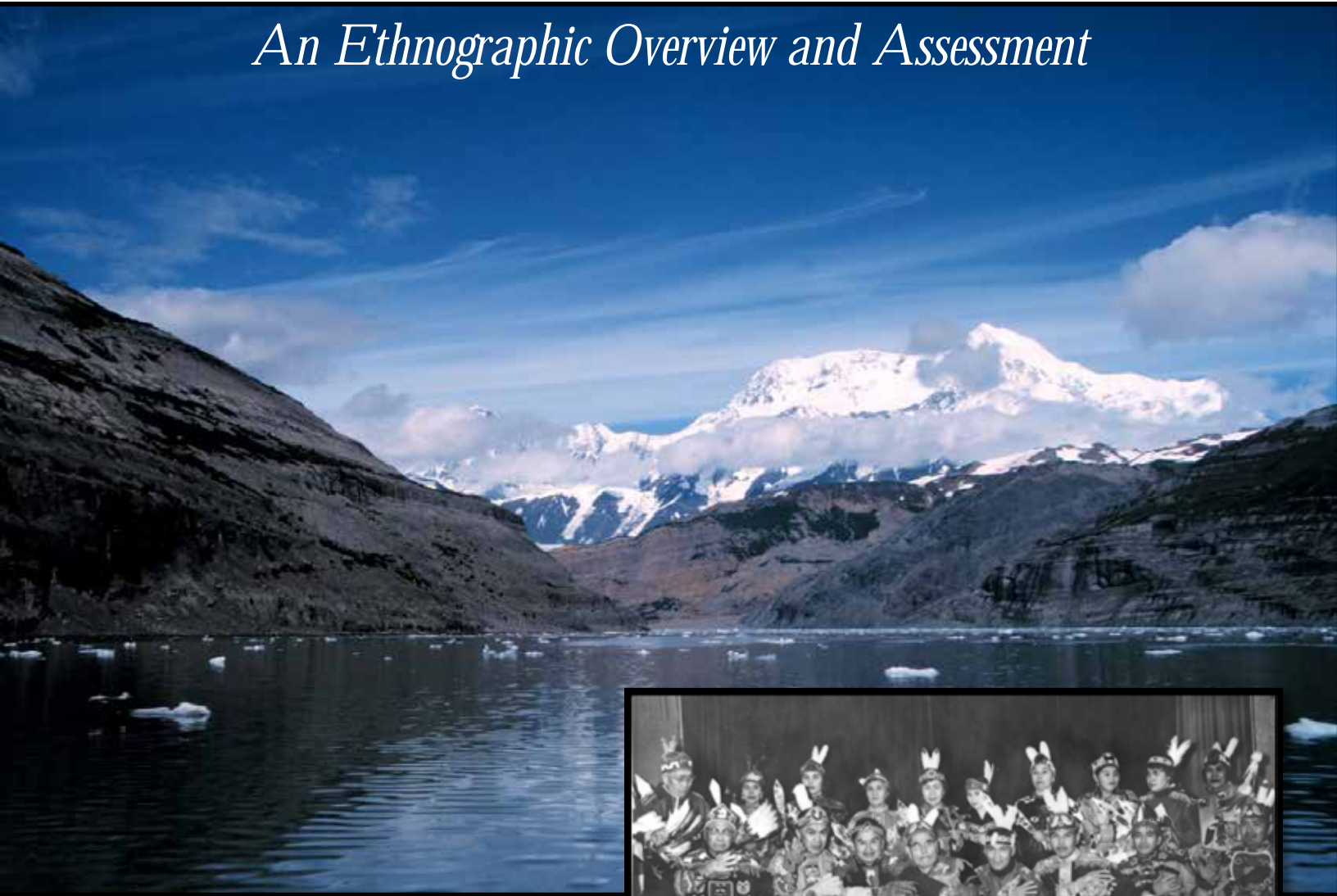




Yakutat Tlingit and Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve: *An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment*



Douglas Deur, Ph.D.
Thomas Thornton, Ph.D.
Rachel Lahoff, M.A.
Jamie Hebert, M.A.

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Mount St. Elias Dancers (courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe / Bert Adams Sr.)

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Douglas Deur, Thomas Thornton, Rachel Lahoff, and Jamie Hebert
Portland State University Department of Anthropology



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
PO Box 439/Mile 106.8 Richardson Highway
Copper Center AK 99573
www.nps.gov/wrst

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LIST of ACRONYMS

ADF&G: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR: Alaska Department of Natural Resources
ANB: Alaska Native Brotherhood
ANCSA: Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
ANBANSGC: Alaska Native Brotherhood Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp
ANILCA: Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ANS: Alaska Native Sisterhood
CAC: The Chugach Alaska Corporation
CBY: City and Borough of Yakutat
CCC: Cordova Chamber of Commerce
CCTHITA: Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
CESU: Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit
EO&A: Ethnographic Overview and Assessment
GLBA: Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
GIS: Geographical Information Systems
HAL: Haa Aani, LLC (
IRA: Indian Reorganization Act
NPS: National Park Service
NVE: Native Village of Eyak
NVETC: Native Village of Eyak Traditional Council
PSU: Portland State University
TEK: Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TCP: Traditional Cultural Property
THPO: Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
USDAFS: United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
USDOIFWS: United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
USDOINPS: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service
USDSOH: United States Department of State, Office of the Historian
USNARA: US National Archives and Records Administration
WRST: Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
YCC: Yakutat Chamber of Commerce
YTK: Yak-Tat Kwaan
YTT: Yakutat Tlingit Tribe

Introduction

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, a unit of the National Park Service, is a place of sprawling superlatives. The largest national park in the United States, it encompasses some 20,587 square miles, or more than 13 million acres of land in southcentral Alaska (see Map 1). Sitting at a point where North American and Pacific tectonic plates collide at a wrenched right angle, the landscape of Wrangell-St. Elias ranges from the sea to the lofty summit of Mount St. Elias—at 18,008 feet, the second tallest peak in Alaska and the fourth tallest in North America. Indeed, fourteen of the twenty tallest peaks in North America are found in the Wrangell and St. Elias Mountain Ranges intersecting in the park. This unit of the National Park Service (NPS) also contains the most extensive array of glaciers and ice fields on the planet outside of polar regions. Indeed, the southern portion of the park, the study area of this document, is home to Hubbard Glacier, the world’s longest tidewater glacier, and Malaspina Glacier, the world’s largest piedmont glacier. Established in 1980 under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, much of the park consists of formally designated wilderness, representing the largest such wilderness area in the United States. Together with Canada’s contiguous Kluane National Park, Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park and the United States’ Glacier Bay National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias is part of UNESCO’s Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek World Heritage Site—one of the largest terrestrial protected areas on Earth.

Simultaneously, it is clear that the reputation of Wrangell-St. Elias as a “wilderness” is not entirely consistent with the park’s ground truth. The lands and resources within this park have long been home to myriad Alaska Native communities—from the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak to the south to Ahtna and Upper Tanana Athabaskan peoples of the interior. Certain Native communities descend from former park inhabitants. Indeed, some trace their very origins as a people to events, still described in their oral traditions, that took place on what are now park lands. Archaeological evidence suggests thousands of years of human history in or near what is today the park, even if the changing landscape, including the advance and retreat of the park’s many glaciers, has sometimes obscured this deeper history. The diverse resources of the park—its fish, game, and plants—have long sustained human communities. Copper objects gathered within today’s park boundaries were once centerpieces of traditional social, economic and ceremonial life, not just locally but to a network of Native communities extending across Alaska and well beyond. Even into the present day, certain Native communities subsist in part on resources obtained within the boundaries of the preserve. Many landmarks within the park are still revered or held to be sacred; some are invoked in ceremony, stories, songs, and regalia, in an acknowledgement of their role in clan origins and traditional ownership of these prominent places. In this sense, the park is anything but the “wilderness” that many visitors assume it to be. The northwestern

shorelines of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays, specifically, are said to abound in “sacred places.” This point remains only partially explored in this document, but deserves greater attention in future consultation and research relating to Wrangell-St. Elias.

As steward of this sprawling park, the National Park Service has a mandate to document this human heritage. Guided by many federal laws, policies, and regulations, the NPS is required to manage and interpret the landscape with due attention to its human history and to the interests of human communities that still use and revere this unique place into present day. Compliance, specifically in regards to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is essential to agency operations and to the upholding of federal obligations to Alaska Native communities. Section 106 deals directly with requirements surrounding NPS consultation with Native American tribes. Compliance is not always an easy task. In order to meet their responsibilities, NPS staff must sort through the sometimes complex history and territorial ties of numerous modern Alaska Native communities. This requires a review of the historical and ethnographic record as well as direct communication with Alaska Native communities regarding places and resources of interest to them. The current document represents one component of this much larger effort.

Guided by this mandate, the National Park Service initiated a series of studies, working in collaboration with park-associated Native communities, to provide basic documentation of the nature of Alaska Native ties to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The current study represents one of a series of baseline reports on Alaska Native ties to the park. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve includes parts of the traditional territories of three general Alaska Native groups—the Upper Tanana and Ahtna Athabascans and the Yakutat Tlingit. Prior to the current effort, the park completed ethnographic overviews and assessments in the upper Tanana and Ahtna regions, which are located in the central and northern parts of the park. However, the southern coastal region of the park, in the traditional lands of the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak communities of the Gulf of Alaska, had not been the focus of even basic, systematic documentation by the NPS. The Tlingit people have traditionally occupied and used that part of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in the vicinity of Icy Bay and Disenchantment Bay, the Malaspina Glacier and Forelands, and the present-day community of Yakutat, but have a deeper history that includes other portions of what is today the park. The absence of even baseline NPS documentation of their ties to lands within the park remained a significant gap.

To address this gap in documentation, the NPS initiated the current “ethnographic overview and assessment.” An ethnographic overview and assessment (EO&A) is the most basic and fundamental anthropological research report that can be undertaken by the NPS. An EO&A is commonly used by the NPS to identify park-associated groups who view park lands and resources as culturally and historically significant, as well as

to illuminate basic patterns in their use and valuation of such lands and resources. As such, an EO&A is typically the first ethnographic report a NPS unit will undertake for a park unit, and may serve as a foundation for later, more detailed investigations of certain topics through other types of studies and reports. A brief description of this report type is provided in Chapter 2 of the NPS Cultural Resource Management Guidelines (NPS-28), and this chapter can be accessed online.¹ As per the guidance in NPS-28, an ethnographic overview and assessment involves the following:

“This basic report emphasizes the review and analysis of accessible archival and documentary data on park ethnographic resources and the groups who traditionally define such cultural and natural features as significant to their ethnic heritage and cultural viability. Limited interviews and discussions occur with the traditionally associated people in order to supplement and assess the documentary evidence and identify gaps in the available data” (USDOINPS 1998b).

Thus, an ethnographic overview and assessment consists principally of literature review and modest archival research, focusing especially on materials that have already been recorded for a particular study area. While the knowledge and perspectives of living people from traditionally-associated communities are included, EO&A studies tend to accentuate the written record available in existing ethnographic and historical sources. Studies that more clearly accentuate contemporary Alaska Native perspectives, and systematically document these perspectives ethnographically, are also possible as a future outcome of this study. Indeed, the reconnaissance interviews conducted as part of the current study were highly informative, suggesting that expanded future studies would be well advised in collaboration with the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak communities. Such spinoff efforts are proposed in the conclusion to this report.

The main product of this research is the summary report that follows, synthesizing prior ethnographic literature and related materials into a narrative that, while meeting academic standards, is meant to be understandable to park managers and the interested public. The document that follows presents basic information regarding Yakutat Tlingit culture and history, specifically focusing on the Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan clans, which may be salient to future interpretation and management relating to Wrangell-St. Elias.² The research was initiated to illuminate the interests of the Yakutat Tlingit, who are the emphasis of this document. Yet, the document also incorporates select material on the Eyak community of Cordova, specifically the Native community of Katalla, at the request of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribal Council—reflecting the longstanding connections between the two communities and of segments of the Eyak community to the region encompassed by this study. Cumulatively, this research has sought to illuminate ties between these communities and lands in the park that may serve as a background reference for tribal and agency staff, alike, as they seek to

understand the park’s Alaska Native history and to protect cultural resources of mutual concern. In this light, the investigation has maintained a special emphasis on traditional land and resource use in the Yakutat and Eyak traditional territories—especially as those practices relate to the lands and resources of Wrangell-St. Elias since the time of European contact.

This research involved the systematic review and integration of existing documentation—reviewing published sources (such as the vast collections on Yakutat Tlingit culture by Frederica de Laguna) thoroughly, while also consulting a wide range of lesser known and often unpublished sources. The PI, Co-PI, and the project’s research assistants identified recurring themes in those sources, then filled gaps in the existing documentation through original archival research, as well as interviews with Yakutat Tlingit consultants. Topics that were particularly sought out in the course of this research included, but were not limited to:

- Oral traditions regarding the significance of particular lands or resources within Wrangell-St. Elias within Yakutat Tlingit history and culture
- Traditional Yakutat Tlingit use or occupation of particular lands within Wrangell-St. Elias
- Traditional Yakutat uses, perceptions, and values relating to specific natural resources of cultural significance within Wrangell-St. Elias
- Changes in land and resource use patterns emanating from historical developments
- Enduring interests and concerns of Yakutat Tlingit people regarding Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources of cultural and historical significance.

Organizing the outcomes of this research thematically, the document provides a compendium of information assembled to assist agency staff and Alaska Native representatives in the consultation process regarding these Alaska Native communities. This information has been organized into three primary sections: 1) a “Foundations” section that focuses on cultural practices of the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak that were well established at the time of European contact and have direct bearing on park lands and resources; 2) A “Transitions” section that discusses the many historical forces that affected life for the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak, and outlines some of the implications of those changes as they relate to the park; 3) A “Modern Connections” section that discusses enduring Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak connections to lands and resources in Wrangell-St. Elias since roughly the time of park creation. A conclusion section summarizes findings, but also points in the direction of additional research questions and needs for the future.

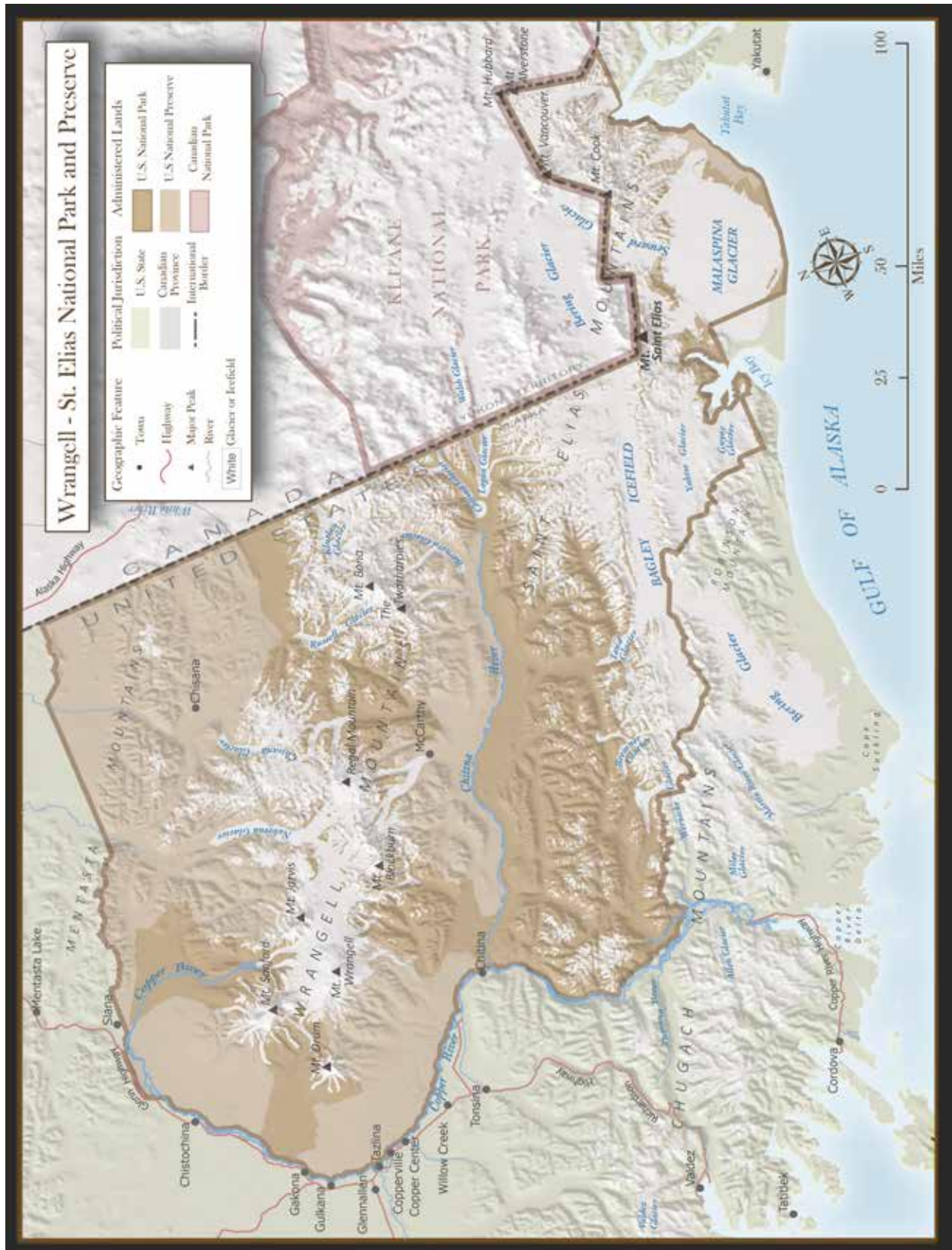
The collected information can be used to help inform park management decisions, to orient new park staff to the cultural context of the park, and provide interpretive

materials for use by the NPS and by the Alaska Native institutions of Yakutat and Cordova. In time, this information might also be used to guide management plans for places and resources of particular importance to peoples traditionally associated with the southern flank of Wrangell-St. Elias; to provide documentation of the cultural significance of certain sites, structures or natural areas for such purposes as National Register nominations; to understand and protect traditional subsistence practices in a larger cultural context; to help facilitate working relationships between the NPS and area Native organizations and governments; to facilitate park-tribe collaboration in interpretive programs; and to provide recommendations and direction for future research, as well as a general context for developing specialized ethnographic studies. An associated Annotated Bibliography, available as a separate document, identifies certain materials relating to these themes within Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak traditional territories. We hope this annotated bibliography will be a resource of enduring value to Alaska Native readers, the NPS, scholars, and the general public as they seek additional information on the history and culture of this unique place. Additionally, a parallel study of the Dry Bay area clans is underway at the time of this writing, directed by authors Deur and Thornton, working in collaboration with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

As the subjects of this study are multifaceted, the research involved a multifaceted team. The Principal Investigator, Dr. Douglas Deur (Portland State University Department of Anthropology) and the Co-Principal Investigator, Dr. Thomas Thornton (University of Oxford School of Geography and the Environment) collaborated in the identification and analysis of existing literatures, as well as interviews with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe members. Both are specialists in Northwest Coast traditional land and resource knowledge. Between them, they have decades' worth of experience working with Tlingit communities and on National Park Service ethnographic research projects. Along with anthropology research assistants Rachel Lahoff and Jamie Hebert, they produced the current report on the basis of their research findings. In these tasks, the team worked closely with PSU cartographer Gabriel Rousseau, to insure the fidelity of maps to the content and spirit of their original sources. This project was accomplished through a cooperative agreement between the NPS and Portland State University, with Wrangell-St. Elias cultural anthropologist Dr. Barbara Cellarius, who oversaw the project on behalf of the park and participated in a variety of research tasks. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe provided considerable oversight in the original development of the project proposal. At the onset of this research, the research team returned to Yakutat to meet Yakutat Tlingit Tribes representatives to ascertain their needs and interests. These interactions helped shape the content and configuration of the report in a variety of ways.

This document is in no way assumed to be the “final word” on Alaska Native relationships with Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources, but to be a useful tool in understanding the larger context of these relationships. Many of the document's

findings may be familiar to readers already familiar with Yakutat and Cordova culture and history. We hope that the report will provide information gathered in a useful format as a sort of introductory reference work, and will serve to confirm and expand existing knowledge of the topic. For less seasoned cultural resource managers, or resource managers from other fields attempting to comprehend Alaska Native ties to lands and resources, hopefully this document will provide a useful orientation to the rich human history of what is today Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. So too, we hope the document will be of value to the younger generations of Yakutat Tlingits as they explore their rich culture and history, on the basis of both written records and the oral traditions of their people. We wish the Yakutat Tlingit tribe every success in documenting and protecting their cultural legacy in the region and hope the materials in this report will be of value to those efforts. These goals are at the heart of the current study, and are reflected in the content of the document that follows.



Map 1

Methods

The current study represents efforts to illuminate patterns of use and occupation of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve by the Yakutat Tlingit, relying especially on the methods of ethnography and ethnohistory. As such, this research involved a broad review of historical and ethnographic information on these themes, drawn from local, regional, and national sources, as well as interviews with Alaska Native representatives and considerable information provided by tribal and agency representatives.

This research was not the work of a single individual, but of a multidisciplinary research team with a diverse range of skills. Drs. Douglas Deur and Thomas Thornton served as lead authors for the report that follows; they directed all research tasks, taking a lead role in literature review and archival research, as well as jointly carrying out all project interviews in the course of three separate trips to Yakutat. Rachel Lahoff and Jamie Hebert, of the Portland State University Department of Anthropology's Office of Applied Anthropological Research, contributed significantly to this work as well. Both are research assistants with masters' degrees, experience in ethnographic research, and research specialties relating to US national parks and Tlingit resource practices respectively. Gabriel Rousseau (PSU Department of Geography) provided mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) support. Yakutat Tlingit Tribe representatives played an important role in the development and refinement of project goals; a few, including (but not limited to) Elaine Abraham, Judy Ramos and Walter Porter provided useful general advice early in the project that shaped the general direction of the project in various ways. Bert Adams Sr. served as the formal liaison and Research Associate for the project, and organized all project interviews as well as providing materials and insights relating to the history of Yakutat. LaRue Barnes of the Ilanka Cultural Institute provided guidance on the availability of Eyak materials. Each of the interviewees, identified in the "Sources" section at the end of this document, also contributed considerable expertise to the document and are cited where appropriate. Agency staff also played a critical role—especially Dr. Barbara Cellarius, Wrangell-St. Elias Cultural Anthropologist, who helped to initiate, design, and execute the research project. She participated in certain research tasks and oversaw tribal consultation regarding the project, including direct meetings with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. Michele Jespersen and Mary Beth Moss of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve also contributed their perspectives and guidance to the current effort. The resulting report is truly a group effort, and the individuals listed here all deserve recognition for their contributions.

Prior to the initiation of this project, Barbara Cellarius of Wrangell-St. Elias initiated consultation with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribal Council regarding the planned research. These exchanges helped to refine the focus of the current project. Yakutat participants in

the project encouraged emphases that complemented existing research by the park and tribe, as well as the addition of an interview component. All of these suggestions were ultimately built into the research design. Cellarius then initiated a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) Task Agreement between the National Park Service (NPS) and Portland State University (PSU)—where Deur and Thornton are both affiliated as faculty.

At the onset of research, Drs. Deur and Thornton met with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT) representatives and Wrangell-St. Elias staff to discuss project objectives as well as tribal and agency needs. The needs shared in these exchanges were key to the development of the project work plan. Deur and Thornton invited the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe to provide any materials they viewed as pertinent to the study area and objectives; Wrangell-St. Elias staff were also invited to contribute agency documents from their collections. Both Yakutat Tlingit and NPS representatives expressed interest in a document that, while staying within the limited scope of an EO&A report, would illuminate specific Yakutat connections with lands and resources now under the management of Wrangell-St. Elias, while also setting these connections within an historical context. The YTT council also requested that Eyak information be included where appropriate in the project report, including certain details relating to the separate Native community of Katalla (Cordova area), due to the longstanding connections between Tlingit and Eyak within the study area. Community interest in having Deur and Thornton conduct interviews with knowledgeable members of the Yakutat Tlingit community was also reaffirmed. (Carrying out parallel interviews with Cordova residents was initially discussed, however funding limitations and other obstacles resulted in the deferment of a Cordova interview component.) YTT representatives also asserted that the research needed to have outcomes that might aid in the education of tribal youth. Each of these research objectives was embodied in a project work plan, which was developed by Deur and Thornton and approved by Wrangell-St. Elias staff. These initial exchanges with YTT and Wrangell-St. Elias staff were helpful in identifying data gaps within existing documentation, and Yakutat individuals shared knowledge and perspectives that are reflected in the current report.

The research that followed involved a review of existing published documentation, including a synthesis of the historical literature relating to the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak areas of interest, as well as ethnographic writings relating to these communities. The initial literature research was conducted principally in the library collections of the University of Washington, Portland State University, and remotely accessible collections of the University of Alaska system. The research team also reviewed key sources identified in various on-line research collections. The research team identified major published and unpublished sources of information regarding Tlingit and Eyak history and culture that might relate to the study area in the course of this initial investigation. On the basis of this initial review, and existing literature review documents within NPS files, the team developed an annotated bibliography of key

sources, which is available as a separate document. This annotated bibliography served as a guide for the research that followed, but is also a standalone product. It is meant to be a resource for agency and tribal representatives, or any other individual wishing to navigate the sources pertaining to the study area. The materials listed in this annotated bibliography were reviewed for specific references to the study area, but were also consulted in the development of general narratives regarding the cultural and historical context of Yakutat Tlingit connections to lands and resources within what is today Wrangell-St. Elias.

In addition, this research involved a detailed review of archival materials relating to the study's themes in local, regional, and national collections. The current project did not include in its scope or budget significant accommodation for travel relating to archival research, aside from travels incidental to fieldwork. However, the research team made an effort to consult a wide range of archival or "gray literature" – academic, government or business documents that are not commercially published – media that were remotely accessible in either digital form or through interlibrary loan. The research team then reviewed pertinent materials with collections housed in a number of repositories, directly when possible in the course of visits to Yakutat, Juneau and Anchorage, but more often remotely through downloaded reports and data requests to specific repositories. Accessed collections included but were not limited to the following:

Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission
Alaska State Archives, Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums
Alaska State Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries
Alaska State Department of Fish and Game, Subsistence Division
Alaska State Department of Fish and Game, Yakutat Regional Planning Team
Alaska State Historical Library
Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp
Bryn Mawr College, Special Collections
Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
The Chugach Alaska Corporation
Chugachmiut, Inc.
City and Borough of Yakutat
City of Cordova
Copper River Knowledge System, Ecotrust
Cordova Chamber of Commerce
Cordova Historical Society
The Eyak Corporation
Ilanka Cultural Center, Native Village of Eyak
Native Village of Eyak
Province of British Columbia, Archives and Records Service
Sealaska Heritage Institute

Sheldon Jackson Museum
Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives
Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority
US Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Office
US Census Bureau
US National Archives and Records Administration (various record groups)
US National Park Service, Alaska System Support Office
US National Park Service, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
US National Park Service, National NAGPRA Program
US National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit
US National Park Service, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
University of Alaska, Fairbanks Oral History Program, Project Jukebox
University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, History Collection
Yak-Tat Kwaan
Yakutat Tlingit Tribe
Yakutat Chamber of Commerce

The research team consulted a wide range of other repositories of archival or gray literature beyond those included on this list, but most not as regularly or consequentially. In addition, Deur and Thornton reviewed their own field notebooks from past Tlingit research to seek information directly relevant to the project and the Wrangell-St. Elias study area. So too, residents of Yakutat kindly opened their personal collections of notes and photos for the benefit of this study. Some of those materials found their way into the current report.

Compiling the information gathered from published, archival, and gray literature sources, the researchers analyzed these items for recurring themes relating to Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources, and their broader cultural and historical context. We also identified inconsistencies and data gaps, and sought to remedy these, initially, through follow-up literature review.

In truth, the Yakutat Tlingit study area is somewhat unique in terms of available documentation. In many respects, the challenge facing the research team, in light of the limited scope of the EO&A, was not so much a scarcity of information, but a veritable glut—a situation requiring the research team to find ways of summarizing existing sources rather than assembling an exhaustive recounting of all references to Yakutat Tlingit ties to the area. Coverage of the study area in published sources and widely available gray literatures is robust.³ This is due especially to the lifetime of research and publication by anthropologist Frederica de Laguna. By 1949, de Laguna began a lifetime’s work on Yakutat Tlingit culture and history that proved to be definitive. This work was manifested in her *magnum opus*, “Under Mount Saint Elias” – a three-volume set that embodied most of her own research, while also summarizing and integrating

most of the relevant accounts of explorers, historians, and anthropologists that had preceded her (de Laguna 1972). Her other works significantly developed the themes presented in that book, presenting the bulk of her research findings in published form (see reviews in de Laguna 1990a, 1990b).

In the wake of de Laguna's work, there have been a number of key researchers who have advanced Yakutat Tlingit research into recent times, such as Julie Cruikshank and Aron Crowell, who have expanded in various ways on de Laguna's momentum and legacy. The presence of a number of skilled professional researchers and educators within the Yakutat Tlingit community—such as Judy Ramos, Elaine Abraham, Bert Adams Sr., and George Ramos Sr., to name a few—as well as the prominence of Tlingit researchers of Yakutat heritage such as Nora Dauenhauer, also contributes significantly to the growing literature on Yakutat.⁴ The community of Yakutat is somewhat famous in the historical literatures pertaining to the Russian occupation of Alaska and Northwest Coast maritime history, as well as the field of glaciology, and those sources make frequent mention of relevant details, large and small. Add to that a growing gray literature relating to subsistence, commercial fisheries, and the public lands flanking Yakutat, and one sees that conventional “gaps in the literature” are relatively few. In this respect, the Yakutat region stands in sharp contrast to other portions of Wrangell-St. Elias, or other NPS units elsewhere in Alaska or beyond.

Still, gaps remain. No prior source has organized references to Wrangell-St. Elias specifically, of course, but that may be the lesser of the gaps identified. More critically, it is clear that much knowledge of the study area still resides largely in the recollections of contemporary Alaska Native people. As certain practices have declined and fewer people occupy lands or use resources in Wrangell-St. Elias, this knowledge is a valuable and increasingly rare asset. With this in mind, all parties agreed that this EO&A, more than many, should elicit and illuminate the knowledge and perspectives of Yakutat Tlingit people through a reconnaissance interviewing effort. In developing this report, we were responding to comments such as those of George Ramos Sr., that there is a vast amount of knowledge in the Yakutat community that has gone unheeded and unrecorded: “there are a lot of stories out there and they never get heard” (GR). With this lesson in mind, the researchers conducted ethnographic interviews with individuals who were knowledgeable of, or have personal, family, and community (*k'wáan*) ties to lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias.

The literature review in de Laguna's works was, for all practical purposes, comprehensive at the time of her writing – especially her overview in “Under Mount Saint Elias” (1972), but also in her two contributions to the *Handbook of North American Indians* (de Laguna 1990a, 1990b) and others. These monumental thematic overviews already being complete, there was little incentive in the current project to reinvent those widely known overview statements. In this light, the authors instead were able to produce a general narrative that relates to the culture and history of Yakutat Tlingit

specifically as it relates to Wrangell-St. Elias, as well as to bring the work of de Laguna and her contemporaries up-to-date by discussing changing relationships to Wrangell-St. Elias in the last half century – up to and including the period of NPS management. In this respect, the current study does not solely tread the ground ordinarily covered by a conventional “Ethnographic Overview and Assessment,” but has incorporated – thematically and methodologically – elements of other NPS ethnography program report types, including the Ethnohistory (focusing on historical changes within the community and their ties to the land) and the Traditional Use Study (focusing on the documentation of contemporary peoples’ practices, values and perspectives).

In order to illuminate these themes, interviews were essential. Some effort was made to interview a cross-section of the community of Yakutat Tlingit knowledge holders, in the course of two separate rounds of interviews. These included clan leaders who possess the right to share clan knowledge regarding their origins and ancestral migrations through what is now the park. Deur and Thornton interviewed other cultural specialists; they also sought out elderly resource harvesters who have witnessed significant changes in use of and access to the park, and younger people who have grown up largely within the period of NPS management. All interviewees were chosen and recruited by Yakutat Tlingit Tribe elder, Bert Adams Sr., who served as the YTT liaison and Research Associate for the current research, as well as other NPS research underway in the community. Following Tlingit protocols, Adams organized interviews so that clan leaders and historians were the first to be interviewed, followed by other members of the community—principally but not exclusively drawn from the clan associated with what is today Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. In sum, formal interviews were conducted with 14 individuals, while this report also quotes or paraphrases three additional “informal interviewees” using transcripts and recordings from prior studies. Interviewees’ initials are used within in-line citations in the text of this report, while a key to these initials is included in the “Sources” section at the end of this document. A number of other individuals provided valuable information and perspectives, but did not choose to be formally interviewed. These “informal interviewees” are not quoted directly in the text, though some of the most informative are identified at the end of this document, also in the Sources section.

Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times and locations. After being informed about the project goals and the potential uses of the results, interviewees were asked if they wished to participate. Interviews, as well as other activities of the research team, were carried out in a manner consistent with the ethical guidelines established by the American Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology.⁵ All formal interviewees participated in an informed consent process and signed a PSU consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the research. Interviews were inductive, being structured but open-ended. Questions invited interviewees to contribute any observations they might wish to share regarding cultural sites and practices known to be associated with Wrangell-St. Elias. Recognizing that the range of

resources and Tlingit associations are numerous and diverse, and that each interviewee spoke from his or her area of expertise, researchers found it best to “cast the net broadly” in interviews rather than provide rigidly predetermined topics and questions to interviewees. Thus, questions focused on areas of topical specialty for the interviewees. Clan leaders were asked to discuss the deeper meanings of Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources to their clan based on ancient oral traditions and Tlingit land ownership conventions, for example, while subsistence or commercial fishermen might be asked about the locations, frequency, and methods of fishing along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast in recent decades. Outcomes of these interviews, as well as literature review and other project tasks, were compiled and analyzed for recurring themes. On the basis of this analysis, we have developed the current thematic report, using concepts and terms understandable by anthropological non-specialists, for use by the Superintendent and resource management staff of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, and also for the Tlingit and Eyak people of Yakutat and Cordova.⁶

Based on formal reconnaissance interviews, informal interviews with many others, as well as a concise literature review, the researchers have developed the following thematic summary of past and present ties of Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak people to lands and resources now within Wrangell-St. Elias. This thematic summary addresses the origins of particular clans, their journeys through what is today the park by ancestors, and the enduring relevance of landmarks associated with those journeys; it addresses historical patterns of resource use in what is today the park and preserve; it addresses the general history of Yakutat people insofar as it has a bearing on relationships with Wrangell-St. Elias; it addresses changing uses and views of lands within Wrangell-St. Elias within living memory. Together, these accounts suggest a deep and enduring relationship between Yakutat Tlingit people and Wrangell-St. Elias, and point toward many possible avenues of future investigation.

We hope that this rich history, illuminated by many quotations from contemporary knowledge-holders, will be of use to readers who wish to follow up on specific themes in the future. In light of the tremendous breadth and diversity of materials consulted over the course of this project, with the intent of addressing the interests of Alaska Native communities over large areas and large swaths of time, this document has, by necessity, summarized the outcomes of this research and only presents fine-grained details on certain topics where such detail seems warranted. An exhaustive treatment of the cultural heritage, Native and non-Native histories, and enduring ties to lands and resources that converge at Wrangell-St. Elias would represent a monumental work, indeed. The complexity of the region’s history ensures that perhaps no one account can tell the whole story to the satisfaction of all parties with a stake in that history. Certain gaps in the current document are inevitable and should be acknowledged in advance. In no way should this document be assumed to represent “the final word” on Yakutat Tlingit ties to Wrangell-St. Elias. There are many more topics to be investigated, and the history of Yakutat Tlingit use of these lands and resources will continue to unfold over

time. In the interim, the sources listed in the bibliography and cited throughout should be consulted by anyone wishing to develop a more detailed understanding of the rich cultural traditions and history of this place.

Foundations

YAKUTAT TLINGIT AND WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS: AN INTRODUCTION

The lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve encompass portions of the largest boreal forest ecosystem in the world, containing spruce, aspen and balsam poplar trees, muskeg, and a variety of habitats—coastal, riverine and montane. The environment of Wrangell-St. Elias is the product of dynamic geological processes over millions of years, forming some of the world’s tallest mountain peaks meeting in four convergent mountain ranges (Wrangell, St. Elias and Chugach Mountains, and the Alaska Range), seven fragmented terranes, thousands of lava flows that make up the Wrangell Volcanic Field, and North America’s largest glacial system. These dramatic landforms have been transected by watersheds large and small, including powerful, glacier-fed rivers—often heavy with sediment—that traverse the park. Wrangell-St. Elias boundaries encompass two major watersheds: the Yukon River drainage and the Copper River drainage. The Copper River begins on Mount Wrangell rising out of the Copper Glacier and flows 280 miles to the Copper River Delta near Cordova. The delta is a diverse region, including large areas of intertidal and freshwater wetlands, marshes, tidal channels, sedge meadows, ponds, estuarine mudflats, and delta and barrier islands near the mouth of the Copper River.

Three climactic zones can be found within Wrangell-St. Elias: maritime, transitional and interior. And within these zones are approximately five ecoregions: lowlands, wetlands, uplands, sub-alpine and alpine. The presence of permafrost (permanently frozen ground) greatly affects the vegetation within these ecoregions. The lowlands support black spruce, muskeg, mosses and understory shrubs (alder, dwarf birch, crowberry, willows, Labrador tea and blueberry) in basins where north facing slopes are underlain by permafrost. In the Copper and Chitina River basins and along the coast, wetlands are prominent. These are characterized by sedges, mosses, grasses, forbs and scattered shrubs (horsetails, spike rush and buckbean). The uplands are rivers where soil is well irrigated and suited for the growth of trees like white spruce, paper birch and aspen. In the drier, southern uplands, aspen trees dominate, along with more woodland and dry steppe species (grasses, sagebrush, juniper, herbaceous perennials), while the sub-alpine ecoregion varies according to the tree line of each forest. Above this line, spruce trees become sparse, and tundra shrubs dominate. Characteristics of the alpine ecoregion are variable depending upon geographic location and soil composition. The more protected northern slopes support low shrub communities of dwarf birch, willows, alder, mountain avens, spring beauty, mountain sorrel, buttercups, club moss and grasses. Permanent ice and snow fields, rock outcrop and rubbly colluvium – a result of extensive glaciations – are unique features of the park. Other categorizations of the region, such as the Level III ecoregions maps of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provide a relatively simplified picture of ecological zones (see Map 2). Still,



Map 2

each of these regional characterizations confirms the generalization that the outermost coast is occupied by forest, while much of the landscape and all of the interior is relatively un-vegetated, rocky, and icebound.

Each of these ecoregions support abundant wildlife, including birds (shorebirds, swans, geese, ducks, warblers, thrushes, sparrows, rock ptarmigan, spruce grouse, great horned owls, northern hawk owls, woodpeckers, gray jay, raven, black billed magpie, American robin, murrelets and the dark eyed junco, to name a few), fish (steelhead, lake, cutthroat and rainbow trout, sockeye, coho, Chinook, humpback and pink salmon, burbot and round whitefish), land mammals (Dall sheep, mountain goats, caribou, wolves, bison, black and brown bears, lynx, wolverine, beaver, marten, porcupine, fox, coyotes, marmots, river otters, ground squirrels, pikas and voles), and marine mammals (sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters, porpoises and whales).

In addition to these ecoregions, Wrangell-St. Elias encompasses over 122 miles of coastline and over 1,000 miles of intertidal areas. Icy and Disenchantment Bay and the Malaspina Forelands are the only areas of respite in a coastline that claims some of the highest mountains and largest ice fields in North America, rising to the fourth highest peak in North America – Mount St. Elias (18,009 feet) – and containing the largest tidewater glacier, Hubbard Glacier. Glaciers extend from the mountains almost to the tidewaters, producing steep cliffs that rise abruptly from the ocean, creating an intricate topography of deep, narrow channels carved by glacial and geographic dynamism. Weather often confounds the nautical traveler. The coast, when not encased in fog and clouds, is often an exposed front for forceful winter storms. Add to this the silt that erupts from the many rivers and streams dispensing churning water into the ocean, shifting and recreating the shoreline from one year to the next, and the coast becomes a dangerous, magnificent place where one can witness the turbulent intersection of environmental forces. This dynamic landscape is part of the traditional homeland of many Alaska Native people, especially its southern coast, which remains a cornerstone of the Yakutat Tlingit homeland. Its environments are dynamic, its deglaciaded margins affording a modest but growing foothold as exposed rock gives way to scrub and forest over time (Map 2).

On maps, Yakutat proper is defined by city limits and borough boundaries, yet for the Yakutat Tlingit, “Yakutat,” or *Yaakwdáat*, is an entire region, a homeland that expands beyond standard cartography and incorporates three territories and three cultures from Copper River to Lituya Bay. It includes land now confined by the Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve, where the ancestors left miles of footsteps over generations of human history. Some report that at one time, Yakutat Tlingit were asked to define a reservation, and they “asked for everything from Icy Bay to Lituya Bay,” reflecting their association with this entire, sprawling territory (GR). Victoria Demmert explains the significance of the Yakutat as a homeland:

“[W]hen we say ‘Yakutat,’ Yakutat is you know, up to Strawberry Point [on the Copper River Delta] all the way to Lituya Bay. That’s the area of importance to us. That’s a place to us. So Yakutat to us is the whole area. ...It’s all important” (VD).

This report takes an historical and cultural-ecological view of the ties of coastal Gulf of Alaska peoples (specifically Yakutat Tlingit and less prominently Eyak) to landscapes and places in Wrangell-St. Elias. Landscape and place-making are co-evolutionary processes between people and land—including upland, intertidal and subtidal lands—that inhabitants, along with other species and geological processes, conceptualize, utilize, cultivate, and thus shape over time (Thornton and Deur 2015). These interactions are critical to creating and maintaining the vital material, social and symbolic dimensions of place that define landscapes in human thought and practice.

The Wrangell-St Elias mountains and Yakutat Forelands represent some of the most rugged and dynamic landscapes anywhere in the world, having been subject to major tectonic shifts, glaciations and deglaciations, high magnitude floods, vegetative successions and alterations, and other dramatic environmental changes. It is not a coincidence then that Yakutat territory, particularly its most dynamic landscapes, such as the Dry Bay-Elsek River, Yakutat Bay-Russell Fiord, Icy Bay, Bering Glacier and Bagley Ice Field, Cape Yakataga and Kaliakh River and Controller Bay regions are associated with major indigenous environmental change narratives and the activities of the great Transformer-Trickster, Raven (de Laguna 1972).⁷ For these landscapes are also the sites of great social change, particularly of clan migrations, settlements, displacements and other social-ecological transformations, all of which are documented in clan histories. All of these events—from those that Yakutat Tlingit associate with Raven in mythic time, to those linked to clan migrations and settlements in deep historical time, to the contemporary memories of living inhabitants of these places—are part of the biography and character of the landscape, and for Tlingit, the landscape incorporates the spiritual dimension, as well as the land, sea and sky (JR).⁸

In *Being and Place among the Tlingit*, Thornton (2008) proposes a general framework for an anthropological analysis of landscape and place making, focusing on four key cultural structures that are fundamental in mediating human relationships to place. These are: (1) social organization, which groups and distributes people on the landscape and helps to coordinate their spatial world and interactions with place; (2) language and cognitive structures, which shape how places are perceived and conceptualized; (3) material production, particularly subsistence production, which informs how places are used to sustain human life; and (4) ritual processes, which serve to symbolize, sanctify, condense, connect, transform and transcend various dimensions of time, space and place in ways that profoundly shape human place consciousness, identity and experience. Each of these cultural structures is at once a response to the physical

environment and a constitutive process in the making of landscapes. Collectively, they are fundamental to understanding the relationship between people and places across cultures.

These four cultural structures are useful as anthropological frames of analysis of place-making processes – means by which humans define their environment, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by it. More significantly, however, the four cultural structures are the main means through which

“Tlingits themselves ‘reciprocally appropriate’ the landscape, to borrow Scott Momaday’s (1974:80) felicitous phrase. It is through these processes that Tlingits ‘invest themselves in the landscape,’ and at the same time, ‘incorporate’ the landscape into their ‘most fundamental experience (80)’” (Thornton 2008:8).

Changes in language and expressive culture, land rights and use, social organization and ceremonial life have affected both the quantity and quality of Tlingit interactions with their traditional territories, particularly in the post-contact era since 1800. Yet, as this report makes clear, ties to land are still strong among contemporary Yakutat Tlingit, many of whom continue to reckon ties to these landscapes through one or more of these enduring cultural structures. This is true despite the fact that many of the landscapes, for example Icy Bay and Tsiu River, are quite distant from the contemporary settlement at Yakutat.

The phenomenal experience of place [i.e. experiencing place through the senses] reinforces these complex symbolic and material relationships with landscape. These complex relationships can be understood not only by examining key cultural structures that forge them but also through the uniquely expressive cultural forms, or “genres” of place, that represent them. In fact, Tlingit have a term for genres of place that take on sacred status as possessions: *at.óow* (literally “owned things” or “sacred possessions”). *At.óow* include not only geographic sites themselves, but material and symbolic resources that Tlingit matrilineages identify as emblematic and constituent of their being and relations to specific landscapes. *At.óow* are multimedia in form, and are deployed most poignantly in ritual, to bolster individual and collective claims about identity, being, place and other prerogatives. *At.óow* are both representations and tools of emplacement. In the absence of being there, they give to place a sense of tangibility through their immediacy and multimediacy. For example, settlement is prohibited on most federal lands, including National Park Service and Tongass National Forest lands, which together make up more than three quarters of the land base in Southeast Alaska. Within parks and other public lands, hunting, fishing, gathering and other activities are variously regulated and may be limited or banned. These constraints, too, have contributed to alienation of Tlingits from landscapes they historically inhabited and

utilized throughout their traditional areas of interest. The loss of connection to places through dwelling has made it more incumbent on people to continue their identification with lands through symbolic means such as *at.óow*.

According to the late Angoon elder Lydia George (see Thornton 2008), the places Tlingit hold sacred tend to have four components: a name, a story, a song (typically accompanied by a dance) and a design (or crest). Each of these components is itself an *at.óow*, a chronotope (a fusion of time-space and event) and a genre of place. Together they constitute a cultural nexus of sacredness that endow places, and the people who possess them, with profound significance. In the context of ritual, *at.óow* may take on a spiritual agency such that participants sense they have been literally transported to ancestral places (see Thornton 2008; chapter 5).

Stories and songs are components of oral tradition, which may contain just about any enduring notion, belief or narrative of place that is consciously transmitted from one generation to the next. Through the plots and settings of story and song, societies define themselves in time and space. While not all myths are explicitly explanatory or didactic in nature, through their settings, characters and tropes these narratives chronicle human relations with the landscape over time. When discussing native place-names in an area, Tlingits often make the general comment that “all these places have stories behind them,” the implication being that vital parts of Tlingit history, and thus their own history and identity, are tied to these places.

Because place is so central to oral tradition, place-names are often key elements of narrative and history. But they also stand on their own as a domain of knowledge, identity and *at.óow*, and therefore as a genre of place. As linguistic artefacts on the land, geographic names function not only to define places but also to re-present them in human knowledge, thought and speech. Naming, of course, is a ubiquitous cultural trait born of the need to communicate distinctions between persons, places and things. Place naming in particular is motivated by the desire to distinguish meaningful spaces from space in general. As icons, indexes and symbols of place phenomena, place-names have enormous referential power. They evoke not only material aspects of the landscape but also human tasks, events, emotions and other mental associations tied to those locales. As Lèvi-Strauss observes, “Space is a society of named places, just as people are landmarks within the group (1966:168).” Thus, “both are designated by proper names, which can be substituted for each other in many circumstances common to many societies.” This pattern is strongly evident in Tlingit naming.

Movements of Clans and Cultures into the Yakutat Region

In the Yakutat region prior to contact with Euro-Americans, the Tlingit and the Proto-Athabaskan-speaking Eyak were in the process of melding two distinct cultures creating the Yakutat Tlingit, combining both Athabaskan and Tlingit identities with Tlingit language and largely Tlingit social organization. The close relationship with the Eyak is reflected in the name “Yakutat,” itself. The name is Tlingit, *Yaakwdáat* (“the place where canoes rest”), but originally derives from an Eyak name *Diya’quda’t*, or *Ya.gada.at* (“A lagoon is forming” [from the glacier’s retreat]; see Cruikshank 2005:31), and was influenced by the Tlingit word *yaakw* (“canoe, boat”). The intersection and ultimate integration of these two groups is the result of a northward expansion by the Tlingit into the Yakutat area, which had previously been settled by a southerly migrating Eyak. As de Laguna recounts, there was a

“northwestward expansion of Tlingit from what the Yakutat people call ‘the Southeast of Alaska,’ some coming on foot along the shore or over the glacier highways, or going inland over the Chilkat Pass and down the Alsek River to Dry Bay, while others paddled their canoes up from Cross Sound or farther south” (de Laguna 1972:17).

The Tlingit pressed northward from Dry Bay, expanding into the Yakutat region prior to the arrival of Europeans in Alaska. This northward expansion has conventionally been believed to date to the 18th century, but recent archaeological investigations suggest the possibility of much earlier dates (JR). Thus, the NPS has acknowledged that the Tlingit “ultimately occup[ie]d the coast as far as Cape Yakataga. Most of those who used the present park lived around Yakutat Bay” (Bleakley 2002: 2). One summary pronouncement by de Laguna reads, “The territory of the Yakutat tribe extends along the Gulf of Alaska from Icy Bay to Dry Bay, inclusive” (de Laguna 1949: 1).

When the Tlingit arrived in the area from the Itilio River, east of Yakutat, and westward to Cape Suckling, they found it already inhabited by the Eyak (de Laguna 1990). Like the clans of the Yakutat Tlingit, “The Eyak emanated from an interior group...They apparently moved down the Copper River to its mouth, then southeastward across the Bering Glacier to occupy the coast between Yakataga and Cape Fairweather” (Bleakley 2002: 2).⁹ The Eyak are linguistically related to the Athabaskan people who also traveled from the interior through Copper River Delta and Wrangell-St. Elias territory to the Yakutat area.¹⁰

By the late eighteenth century, the Tlingit had come to dominate the Eyak. Some Eyak were pushed northward, settling especially in areas just west of the Copper River Delta, in the villages of Eyak and Alaganik near present-day Cordova, while those remaining



Map 3

in Yakutat became “Tlingitized,” absorbed into the Tlingit culture, adopting Tlingit language and social structure.

Within traditional Tlingit social structure, the clan has served as the primary unit of government, as well as a means by which to organize social and economic relations. Traditionally, chiefs are the headmen of the clans or lineages, and the clan possessed the most substantial power. The matrilineal clan (related through the maternal line) is the oldest and most basic unit of Tlingit social structure and the foundation of both individual and group identity. Tlingits consider a person to be of the mother's clan, a child of the father's clan, and a grandchild of other clans. Traditionally, this identity formed the basis for nearly all social action (Thornton 2002:171). As will be discussed throughout this document, this clan identity also formed the basis for diverse associations with traditional clan territories, including special connections to landmarks, and special claims on natural resources.

Over time, prolonged contact in the Yakutat area through intermarriage, trade and warfare formally united Eyak and Tlingit. The Eyak were adopted through intermarriage into the Tlingit's clan-based social structure with some ease. As de Laguna summarizes,

“According to tradition, the village [at Knight Island] was founded by the chief of the Kwashkakwan (Hump-backed Salmon People), a local Raven clan, and by his brother-in-law, a chief of the Teqweydi, an Eagle clan from southeastern Alaska. The latter are supposed to have been responsible for the introduction of the Tlingit clan system and Tlingit language into this formerly Eyak-speaking area” (de Laguna 1949: 2).¹¹

In order to best understand the Tlingit clan system and the integration of Tlingit and Eyak, it is important to introduce the concept of moieties. The Tlingit, like the Eyak, recognize two exogamous – meaning outmarrying – moieties, Raven and Eagle.¹² Rather than functioning as socio-political units, these two moieties organized individuals into opposite groups (*ḡune`tkama`jji*) that intermarried. As such, the two moieties were a means of regulating marriage among the Tlingit clans, while at the same time incorporating Eyak into the social structure. Raven (sometimes mentioned as “Crow”) and Eagle made integration of Eyak into the Tlingit social structure fairly simple. It was this process of emersion that produced the Yakutat Tlingit group, by and large, as they exist today. De Laguna clarifies that,

“Absorption of Eyak speakers from Italio River to Icy Bay in the late eighteenth and beginning nineteenth centuries produces a second Tlingit tribe, the Yakutat, with whom the Dry Bay merged about 1910” (de Laguna 1990: 203).

While widely accepted as “Tlingit,” the people of Yakutat still stand apart culturally.¹³ Not only have the Tlingit of Yakutat manifested many Athabaskan influences, but the Eyak of the Cordova region showed strong Tlingit ties and influences as well—some sources suggesting Tlingit living in the Eyak communities as far west as the Copper River seasonally.¹⁴ The Athabaskan admixture has been cited as a source of various minor departures from Tlingit conventions, such as dialect distinctions from other Tlingit speakers, stylistic distinctions in their artwork (Oberg 1973: 15), a slightly more “egalitarian” quality to potlatches and other events (Kan 1989: 235-360), slight differences in mortuary customs and the like (Krause 1956: 66, 158-60; Swanton 1908: 398). Various historical sources make passing reference to the ongoing sharing of songs and other ceremonial property between the Tlingit and their kin and neighbors at the mouth of the Copper River well into modern times (e.g., Kan 1999: 147-48). Efforts to differentiate these two groups are common, and yet yield sometimes complex and contradictory outcomes; the maps of the Smithsonian’s Handbook of North American Indians series, for example, showing a sort of overlapping area of interest between the two groups that contains much of their cumulative territory and includes lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias (see Map 3).

Migration Narratives of Yakutat Clans

Yakutat Tlingit maintain detailed oral traditions, from the perspectives of both Tlingit and Athabaskan ancestors, regarding the joining of Tlingit people and the Athabaskans who migrated through what is now Wrangell-St. Elias, into a single entity at Yakutat where they shared the Tlingit language and social organization.¹⁵ According to Tlingit oral tradition from the Dry Bay area, the original explorer of this country on behalf of the Tlingit was a man named Kaakeix’wtí (also known as “the man who killed his sleep”), a *Xakwnukweidí* (person of the people from Sandbar Fort), from the settlement of *Xakwnoowú* in Dundas Bay near Glacier Bay in Cross Sound. Kaakeix’wtí struck out on an epic quest to the interior after killing his sleep, which appeared to him in the form of a bird. Looking for seals, he canoed into Cross Sound, moving west toward a place called *Nagukhéen* (Rolling Creek, a small sockeye system at Cape Spencer). After rounding Cape Spencer (*Nagukyada*), he headed inland on foot to Mount Fairweather (*Tsalxaan*, “Land of the Ground Squirrels”) and then returned to the coast, emerging near Lituya Bay at a place called *Yakwdeiyí* (Canoe Road, inside Cape Fairweather) near *Lak’ásgí X’aayí* (Seaweed Point). He continued his journey north to Dry Bay (*Gunaaxoo*, “Among the Athabascans”) and then navigated up the Alsek (*Aalseix’*, “[Resting Place?]”) and Copper (*Eekhéeni*, “Copper River”) rivers to the interior, where he lived among the Athabaskans for two years, teaching them how to trap and prepare certain fish and animals efficiently and in quantity. After two years, Kaakeix’wtí packed his belongings and returned with some Athabaskans to Glacier Bay. Re-entering Tlingit country, they reached the coast at *Chookanhéeni* (Grass Creek), home of the *Chookaneidí*

(People of *Chookanhéeni*) clan; but the Chookaneidí told the visitors to head across the bay to *L'eiwshashakee Áan* (Glacial Sand Hill Town) at Bartlett Cove. Here they encountered the *Xakwnukweidí* group that would later become the Kaagwaantaan (Thornton 2008).

After the Little Ice Age glacial advance pushed the Tlingit out of Glacier Bay (see Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987:245–92; Glacier Bay National Park official map, post 2012), *Kaakeix'wtí* and his group moved with the Kaagwaantaan to *Lulxágu* (Fireweed Pebble Beach), where they built several large houses and a fort (*Kax'noowú*, “Female Grouse Fort”) and sponsored lavish potlatches with their newfound wealth from the interior trade. Timbers for one of these houses were damaged by fire, and, consequently, the dwelling earned the name *Kaawagaani Hít*, or “Charred House.” It is for this house and the events surrounding it that the Kaagwaantaan are named. Afterward some of the Kaagwaantaan moved to Sitka. As Deikeenaak'w (Swanton's consultant [1909:346]) put it, emphasizing ancestral ties to the landscape: “Because we are their descendants we [the Sitka Kaagwaantaan] are here also. They continue to be here because we occupy their places.”

Though this is a migration narrative related specifically to the discovery of Dry Bay, in essence, these versions of the movement of *Kaakeix'wtí* tell the history of Tlingit discovery and inhabitation of the Gulf of Alaska, which became a vanguard of Tlingit culture spreading northwestwardly from Southeast Alaska's Alexander Archipelago, described below, and of Eyak and Athabaskan culture spreading southeastwardly from the interior via the Copper River and Alsek River valleys. *Kaakeix'wtí* is a key figure who linked Eyak, Athabaskan and Tlingit people, and who paved the way for trade, intermarriage and cohabitation among these people in what is now Yakutat territory between Controller Bay and Lituya Bay.¹⁶ Thus, the greater Wrangell-St. Elias area was also a great cultural mixing zone.

The Migration of the *Galyáx*-Kaagwaantaan Clan

Each of the clans that inhabit the Yakutat area possess oral migration stories reflecting their different journeys through the landscape, including portions of Wrangell-St. Elias (see Map 4). These oral traditions not only set the foundation for understanding clan oral traditions, crests and other traditional properties, but also left placenames tied to the land, often relating to the migrations and early history of the clans; those placenames or their locations are sometimes referenced by numbers that are keyed to a placename map (see Map 5) and table (Table 1) that follow. The general subject of placenames will be discussed in more detail in later sections.



Map 4

Ted Valle spoke to the research team about the origins, migration and settlements of his clan, the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, as told to him in part by his mother. Valle's account is as follows:

“And in the beginning my mother was telling me how we got to where we are was sometime a long time ago, and nobody knows. We didn't have calendars, we didn't have watches or anything then, but our people slowly moved sometime during a flood because our people were floating around in the ocean. Nobody knows how long we floated around, but when we were heading [our leader] told the people, 'Wherever's there's logs, there's got to be rivers, so we'll go over there.' And we went there. And the river that we came into and went into was what the Caucasian people today called Kaliakh, but our name for it was Galyáx. So that's where we first went in and we started to build a village there. And I don't know exactly where it was but it's on Kaliakh River somewhere. ...I don't know how many years passed, passed, passed, and our people started to spread out in both directions. Some were going up toward [Bering River] and that's as far as they got” (TV).¹⁷

The Kaagwaantaan settled for a time in the Bering River tributary. According to Valle,

“We started here. Some people settled there also. Basically some [at] Kaliakh and [Strawberry] Point to Bering [River]. And they went up to Bering...there's a tributary there...the one by Haines and Klukwan.

“And we were starting to get worried because we were—[who] were we going to marry with us? We're going to start disappearing. ...That's what we were thinking, the people were thinking. But then they come across some Eyaks...And we, eventually we [ended] up intermarrying with them.

“...Then we built them houses up there on the Bering [River] and then another group had gone down toward Yakataga, the other way, and they built more little villages in Kaliakh of course, that was the main village. And in Tsiu they built a small village. And actually it's around Tsiu...the next river from Kaliakh was the Duktoth. And I can't remember a Tlingit name or Eyak name for it either, but the people call it Daktaal [from the Eyak for “cooked”, #31; see Map 5]. We didn't build a village there or anything, but we moved on down to Yakataga [#32; see Map 5]. And pretty much that was the extent of our first branch” (TV).

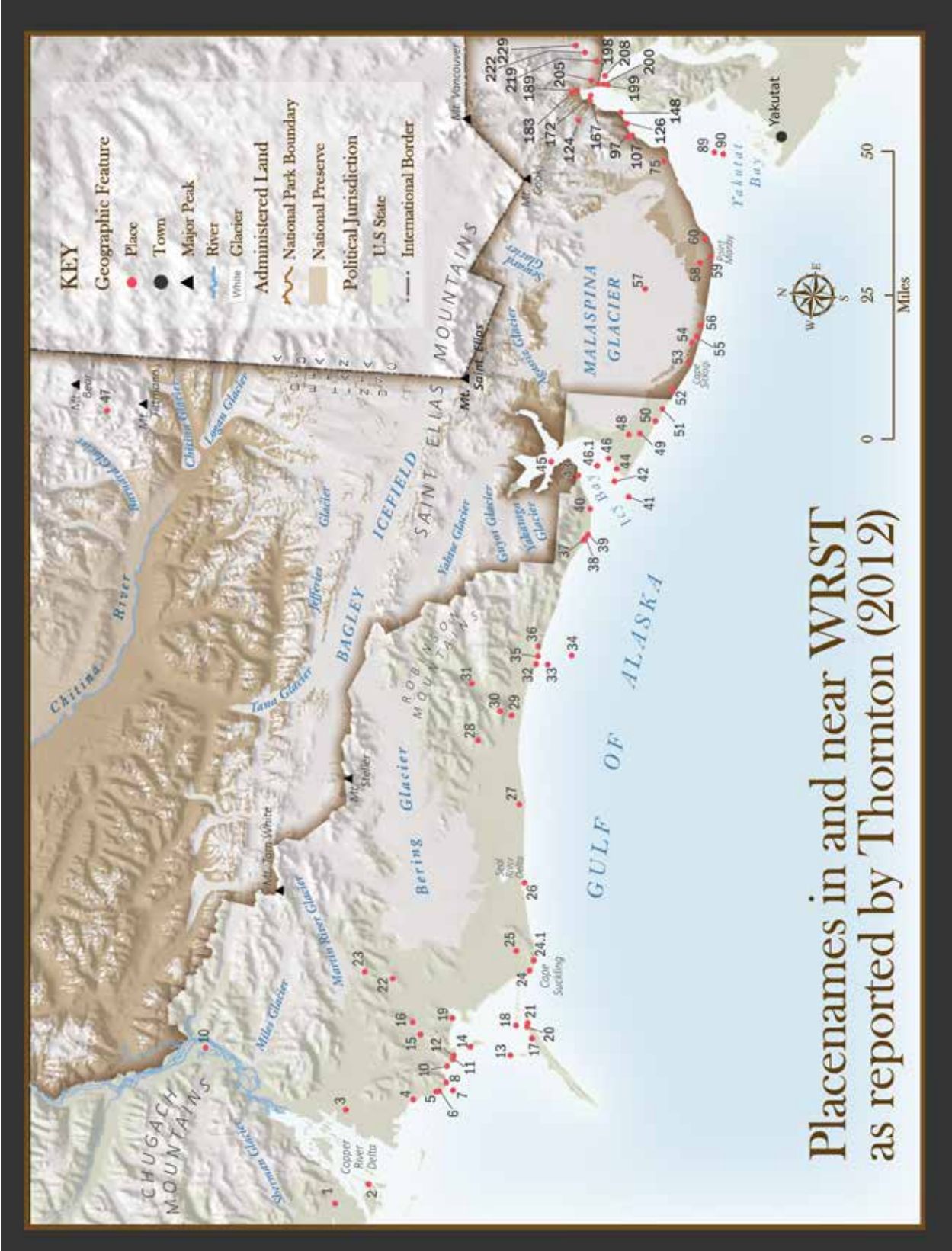
Valle's account of the migration of the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan conforms well with de Laguna's (1972:101) account of the migration recorded over a half-century ago, demonstrating the robustness of enduring oral tradition on this point:

“It was here [Kaliakh River] that the Kagwantan came, drifting in canoes, during the Flood, and landed because they were attracted by the beautiful mountain above the river. This is Kulthieth or ‘Robin’ (?) Mountain, called TcAwaf [Ch'awáax' ‘Robin Mountain,’ from Eyak, #30; see Map 5] which was described as striped with all pretty colors (banded sedimentary rocks?), as if it had been painted, and was bright where the water ran down. There was formerly a village, Gi^liyA or GatyAX> [Gilyáx or Galyáx, #29 = river; see Map 5] on the Kaliakh River near this mountain...Harrington gives kalyAx as the Eyak name for the river. According to Krauss, galyAx means ‘the lowest’ of a series. One of my informants who had visited this area as a boy in 1900 saw the remains of a large old-style house on the west side of the river. This was the Beaver House of the [Galyáx Kaagwaantaan], and the village their ‘capital town,’ where they defended themselves against an Aleut attack. The famous Teqwedi [Teikweidí] from Yakutat, Xatgawet, is said to have fought beside the local chief, his father-in-law. The Kwackqwan [Kwask] also lived here.”

De Laguna notes that some informants linked this group to the Sitka Kaagwaantaan, but the link is not obvious, except that the Sitka Kaagwaantaan originated at Glacier Bay, from whence the proto-Kaagwaantaan's “Man Who Killed His Sleep,” Kaakeix'wtí, made his famous trip to Copper River to trade and intermarry with the Athabaskans. De Laguna suggests that the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan moved originally from Copper River, perhaps as a result of the Flood or a dispute, and became lost in the fog as they moved south, before finding the coast again at Kaliakh River.

The Migration of the Kwáashk'ikwáan Clan

De Laguna (1972:231ff) recorded several versions of the Kwáashk'ikwáan migration narrative, which followed the movements of this clan from the Chitina Valley where their settlement was said to be on the Little Bremner River (Ginéix). The research team heard several abbreviated versions of this story, which were said to have been learned from Harry Bremner, one of de Laguna's primary consultants.¹⁸ The migration route, which de Laguna thought probably “followed the route up the Tana Glacier, over the Bering Glacier, and down the Duktoth River” (1972:101; see Map 4), forms a sacred trail and traditional cultural property to the clan. It is also of broader historical significance to Alaska and United States history, as it details the original settlement of parts of



Placenames in and near WRST
as reported by Thornton (2012)

Map 5

Table 1: Placenames identified by Thornton (2012), keyed to Map 5

	<i>Tlingit Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Location</i>
1	Anaxaná <u>k</u>	Mistake (Wrong Turn) (from Eyak, originally Alutiiq)	Western branch of Copper River
2	K'aagán Héenák'u	Stickleback Creek	Mouth of Copper River
3	<u>K</u> aa Yahaayí	Ghosts	Near Copper River
4	T'sá'diq*	On the Place of [Frequently Absent*] Mud Flats (from Eyak, Ts'a'diq)	Camp on Martin River
5	<u>K</u> aataanáa	--* (from Eyak, Qa:ta:lah)	Katalla settlement
6	Saaxw T'áak	Behind the Cockles	Village on Softuk Lagoon
7	Gixdá <u>k</u> [X'áat'i]	--* (from Eyak, originally Alutiiq, Qikertaq) [Island]	Fox or Kiktak Island
8	K'ixóoliyaa	Teeth (from Eyak, K'uxu:hiyah)	River between Katalla and Cape Martin
9	Ee <u>k</u> Héeni	Copper River	Copper River
10	Gixdá <u>k</u> lak	Behind Gixdá <u>k</u> (#7)	Village at Cape Martin
11	Gixdá <u>k</u> [X'aa]	Gixdá <u>k</u> (#7) [Point]	Strawberry Point
12	<u>X</u> aat Áa Duls'el' Yé	Where They Dig Spruce Roots	Cordova
13	Thaatt'áat*	Small Kayak* (from Eyak or Athabaskan)	Wingham Island
14	Giná <u>k</u>	Egg Island (from Eyak, originally Alutiiq)	Kanak Island
15	Kanaltalgi X'áat'x'i Sáani Dax Nalháshch*	Spongy Islands Are Floating*	Bering River Delta
16	<u>K</u> aasheishxáaw Áa	Dragonfly Lake	Bering Lake
17	Yáay Ká	On the Humpback Whale	Kayak Island
18	Yéil Xákwlli	Raven's Harpoon Line	Okalee Spit
19	Jilkáat	Cache (from Eyak)	Below Cordova
20	S'igeekáawu Hídi	Dead Person House	Cave on Kayak Island
21	Yáay Shaayí	Whale Head	Lemesurier Point on northeast end of Kayak Island

	<i>Tlingit Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Location</i>
22	Anakéi	*	South side of lake near Bering River
23	Uk ^w yanta*	*	Mountain above Bering River
24	Yéil Katsees	Raven's Float	Between base of Kalee Spit and Cape Suckling
21.4	Yéil Hit	Raven's House	Cave at Cape Suckling
25	A _x da _l ée	Place with Lots of Whales (from Eyak, A: _x dalih, originally Alutiiq, Arwertuli)	Settlement at Okalee River
26	She-ta-ha-na-ta*	Northward (upstream) He Lives*	Seal River area
27	Ts'iyuh*	Black Bear (from Eyak)	Tsiu River
28	Dju _l é*	--* (from Eyak)	Stream entering Kaliakh River
29	Galyáx	The Lowermost (from Eyak, Galyáx)	Kaliakh River
30	Ch'awáax'	Robin Mountain	Robinson Mountain
31	Daktáat* (Gexta'ał*)	Cooked* (from Eyak, Daqta:ł)	Duktoth River
32	Yéil X'us.eetí	Raven's Footprints	Cape Yakataga
33	Tayeesk'*	Little Adze*	Cape Yakataga
34	Yéil (Yeil) T'ooch'	Black Raven	Gulf of Alaska (Pacific Ocean)
35	Yakwdeiyí	Canoe Road	Inside Cape Yakataga
36	Yéil Naasa.áayi*	Raven's Bentwood Box*	Cape Yakataga
37	GùtSáxw*	Muddy Water (from Eyak)	White River
38	Héen Tlein	Big Creek	Big River
39	Teey Aaní* (Was'ei Dak)	Yellow Cedar Bark Town (Outside of Was'ei [#45])	West of Icy Bay
40	Ligaasi Áa	Tabooed Lake	Icy Bay
41	Ts'ootsxán Y'aayí	Tsimshian Point	Point Riou
42	Ts'ootsxán Geeyí	Tsimshian Bay	Riou Bay
43	Ana.óot Gíl'i	Aleut Bluff	Icy Bay
44	Sít' Kaxóowu	Piles of Rock on the Glacier	Icy Bay

	<i>Tlingit Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Location</i>
45	Was'ei (Yas'ei) Yík	Inside of Was'ei/Yas'ei (see #48)	Icy Bay
46	Geesh K'ishuwanyee	Place below the End of the Edge of the Base of the Kelp	Halibut fishing bank, Icy Bay
46.1	K'wát' X'áat'i	Bird Egg Island	Gull Island, Icy Bay
47	Was'ei Tashaa (Shaa Tlein)	Mountain Inland of Was'ei (#45) (Big Mountain)	Mount St. Elias
48	Yas'ei* Héen	Swampy* Creek	Yahtse River
49	Ligaasi Héen	Tabooed Creek	Yana Stream
50	<u>G</u> algot* (<u>G</u> alyáx)	Muddy*	Yahtse River tributary
51	Nasaaxix*	*	Malaspina Glacier
52	Kwalaxuk'w*	Dry Up Water [Little One]*	Malaspina Glacier
53	Sít' X'aayí	Glacier Point	Front of Malaspina Glacier
54	Sít' Tlein Shaa Ká	On the Mountain of the Big Glacier	Sitkagi Bluffs
55	Taan Teiyí	Sea Lion Rock	At Sitkagi Bluffs
56	Sít' Lutú	Glacier Point (nostril)	Malaspina Glacier, beach in front
57	Sít' Tlein	Big Glacier	Malaspina Glacier
58	Kík*	*	Manby Stream or Kwik Stream
59	Yaat'áak* (Yatak*)	*	Point Manby
60	Shaanáx Héen	Valley Creek	Creek behind Point Manby
75	Tsaa Héeni	Seal Creek	Grand Wash
89	Yaakwdáat <u>G</u> eeyí	Canoe Rebounded Bay	Yakutat Bay
90	Laaxaa	Near the Glacier (from Eyak, Ła'xa')	Yakutat area
97	Ch'áak' Aaní	Eagle Town	Yakutat Bay
107	Yat'a S'é.aa* (Yata-sé'a, Yàtà-sí'à')*	Beside the Face of the Muddy Lagoon *	Esker Creek Estuary
124	Sít' Kusá	Narrow Glacier	Turner Glacier
126	X'aa Yayee	Below the Point	Yakutat Bay
148	<u>G</u> íl' Shakee Aan	Village on Top of the Cliff	Bancas Point

	<i>Tlingit Name</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Location</i>
167	L'éiw <u>G</u> eeeyí	Sand [Beach] Bay	Beach at head of Disenchantment Bay
172	At'éik*	Behind It*	Disenchantment Bay
183	L'éiw Kunageiyí	Sand Little Bay	Yakutat Bay*
189	Wéinaa Tá*	Head of Gypsum [Bay]	Bay at west end of Russell Fiord
198	Sít' Lutú	Glacier Point	Part of Hubbard Glacier that sticks out into Russell Fiord
199	Néix Áa Daak Kawdzikugu Yé	Where Marble Rock Fell Down	Point opposite Hubbard Glacier
200	T'ix' Ka Séet	Ice Overturning Strait	Passage from Disenchantment Bay to Nunatak Fiord
205	Taasaa* Sít'	----- * Glacier	Hubbard Glacier
208	K'wát' X'áat'ik'átsk'u	Little Bird Egg Island	Osier Island in Russell Fiord
219	K'wát' Aaní	Bird (seagull) Egg Land	Eastern moraine, Hubbard Glacier
222	Sít' T'ooch'	Black Glacier	Moraine of Hubbard Glacier
229	Sít' Tlein	Big Glacier	Hubbard Glacier

* Indicates an uncertain, unconfirmed, or partial placename.

Galyáx-Kwáan and Yakutat Kwáan after the last ice age. The Ginéix Kwáan/Kwáashk'ikwáan endured great hardship and deprivation as they made their way toward Kaliakh River, where they encountered the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan. When they finally arrived at the shores of Icy Bay, there was a point, but “no bay at all,” due to the glacier. At Yakutat Bay, there was a glacier stretching from Point Manby to Krutoi [“Head”] Island. Glaciers also blocked the head of Russell Fiord, forming Situk Lake and draining into what is the Situk River.

This information was supplemented by our interviews with Elaine Abraham (EA), Victoria Demmert (VD), Lena Farkus (LF), Judy Ramos (JR) and Ray Sensmeier (RS). The migration story as told by Elaine Abraham begins at the Red River in Chitina:

“Ah, the migration story. There’s a Red River in Chitina area and now more entered the Canada area and north of Chitina...that we were little people you know, we weren’t very tall. And they were different Athabaskans, so they weren’t quite that big with the original Athabaskan people. But they were so many. So many that when they went through the river bank to challenge the other Athabaskan, the bank would just start sliding into Copper River. ...They had swords and long spears and they would challenge across the river, the other Athabaskan people. They fought for their land in that whole area...

“They came to, the Yakutat area. And you know they starved, half of them died along the way, or even more. But they finally decided to follow what they thought was a rabbit. And it turned out to be Mount St. Elias” (EA).

Ray Sensmeier identifies the Bremner River as the migratory path: “I talked to an elder up there and he said he knew about our migration and he said we migrated along this Bremner River” (RS). Sensmeier also describes the conflict that caused the Ravens to leave Chitina and settle in Icy Bay:

“So it started out in Chitina with the Head Man, we didn’t have chiefs, we had a spokesman for different houses. Like I come from the House of the Half-Moon People. There’s many of them under Kwáashk’ikwáan and then there’s a spokesman for all of them, which for us is, my clan is Byron Mallott. And it starts—that man who is the Head Man had two sons and they had a—whoever’s the Head Man had a large moose horn antler dish that was embedded with I guess, nowadays they call them precious or pretty stones, that represented his authority. And then when he got old and was, I think he got sick and he died there were—he had two sons, one younger one and one older one. And the younger one thought that he was going to be the next in line and the people, they choose whoever they want to follow you know, the one that’s the best one. ...Anyway, they gave that moose horn antler dish to the older brother. So the younger brother, he really got angry. ...We lived there for thirty or forty years and the reason the migration started was because something that we don’t believe in and that’s anger” (RS).¹⁹

Gunéit Kwáan’ descendant, Lena Farkus, recounts the migration out of Chitina using the Copper River:

“So they started from Copper River migrating down south. And so eventually they made him the leader of that group that was migrating.

Another brother went with him and they started walking toward the snow. No snowmobiles and stuff. They started down south and they would stop after they'd run out of food you know. And they would stop in a place where they saw some different kind of animals and location so they'd camp put some more food up, and then move on" (LF).²⁰

Elaine Abraham continues the story of the migration, saying,

"Upon reaching the 'ear of the rabbit,' the Ginéix Kwáan turned toward the Bagley Ice Field where they found both warmth and resources. They decided to settle there and remained there for a several years. ...We actually lived in an area that Bagley Glacier. Apparently they were where it was warm...and they had resources to eat. ...They lived in that Bagley Glacier area for a long time" (EA).²¹

Elaine Abraham describes the general area that was occupied by the Ginéix Kwáan while living in the Bagley Ice Field:

"[Valerie and Turner glaciers are the] ones that I call the old woman and the younger woman. ...That's Bagley and then Turner is...one word that's old, 'The First Wife' and 'The Second Wife.' ... And these glaciers were bigger than they are [now] at that time they were there. ...But Valerie was the one that was a young female that first decided to take these people in that were wandering around on their land from Bagley. ...So the two women glaciers had a lot to do with the spiritual inception and guidance of these foreigners" (EA).

After they left Bagley Ice Field, they made their way towards Icy Bay, then on to Yakutat. Prior to arriving in Yakutat, they first settled in Icy Bay:

"So they kept moving down and moving down and one day they were getting low on food again and so the leader told two young men to go down and check around to where there's some animals and fish. So they went and they saw some blood on the ice on the glacier. I always think it's probably Malaspina [Glacier]. That's what I always think. And anyway, they saw blood on there and they said, 'There must be people about.' They went back and told their leader. So he told them to go on down and check down further and you know, hunt for food if they saw any kind of animal or fish. So they were gone for a while and came back and on this one lake, Taboo Lake [Ligaasi Áa, #40; see Map 5] they call it in English. And they

saw some canoes there and some people but they were kind of not sure if they should just go there and say hi you know, 'How are you?' They just kind of stayed around that area and finally they just got friendly with them and found out who they were. And these people hunted a fur seal. ... It's the kind of seals you hunt in the ice. So they made this boat [*gudiyé*], canoe so that they could hunt in the ice for seals.

"...And so they kind of stayed in that, where Mount St. Elias is area by Icy Bay. And that's where they lived for a while. ...And when they stopped by Icy Bay by Mount St. Elias, they were just getting to be more people and more people that they couldn't live in one long house anymore. So they moved, they built a house a long house, and the leader said, 'I'm going to give myself the name "Shaadaa" because I'm going to live by the mountain,' Shaa yadaa ["Around the face of the mountain"] and off the mountain area. That name's been in my family all these years on down" (LF).

Ray Sensmeier confirms this name for Mount St. Elias given by Farkus:

"Prior to that they saw the top of Mount St. Elias and it looked like a seagull. That's all they could see of it so they went toward that...Mount St. Elias was you know where they—that's the only thing they could see and they went toward that. And the common name in Yakutat used to be Shaada. Shaa is 'Mountain' and Shaadaa is 'Around the Mountain'" (RS).

In the Icy Bay area, according to Farkus: "They build houses at the foothills of Mount St. Elias—Moon House, Mountain House. They stayed because there was lots of game" (LF).²² Lena Farkus (2012) recounted that after the Gunéit *Kwáan*/ *Kwáashk'ikwáan* crossed Malaspina Glacier upon leaving Icy Bay, they eventually came to Yakutat Bay and settled at Knight Island.²³ Here they intermarried with the Teikweidí in addition to the *Galyáx*-Kaagwaantaan. A prominent Teikweidí leader, *Xatgaawéit*, married two *Kwáashk'ikwáan* sisters. His brothers-in-law went to get fish at Humpback (Humpy) Creek but the local owners of the creek broke up their canoes. When they went back to Knight Island, the brothers-in-law told the people what had happened. *Xatgaawéit* had copper from Copper River, so he bought Humpback Creek from the owners for his brothers-in-law. This is when the Gunéit *Kwáan* became *Kwáashk'ikwáan*, being named for that Humpback Creek. Eventually the *Kwáashk'ikwáan* consolidated their territory from just west of Icy Bay to Lost River, east of Yakutat Bay, leading de Laguna to conclude that "No other sib [clan or house group] along the Gulf Coast controlled such a wealth of natural resources, except possibly the [*Galyáx*-Kaagwaantaan]..." (de Laguna 1972:465). *Kwáashk' Héeni* (Humpy Creek) similarly became an *at.óow* or sacred possession of the clan.

Like the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan survival of the Flood, the Kwáashk'ikwáan migration to Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan constitutes an epic. Their journey to the coast was a multi-year struggle for survival, involving a long period of settlement on the Bagley Ice Field. As with the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, the Kwáashk'ikwáan were without their opposite moiety, and thus their ability to legitimately procreate was put at risk. It was thus fortuitous that these two clans, one Raven and the other Eagle, found each other at Icy Bay on what is still today known as the “Lost Coast.”²⁴ Like the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, the Kwáashk'ikwáan also took a mountain, in this case Mount St. Elias, as a crest, because these mountains “saved them,” just as the female glaciers, similarly conceptualized as living beings (Cruikshank 2005) “took them in” in Elaine Abraham’s words. So too each clan took several animals they encountered along the way to their eventual settlement in Icy Bay and later Yakutat Bay. Finally, both clans showed great adaptive capacity and resilience in accommodating to the rugged conditions and alternative resources afforded by the glaciated landscapes in Galyáx-Kwáan. Eventually both groups became quite rich: For this reason these migration stories have the status of *at.óow* (sacred possessions) and *shagóon* (heritage and destiny) and continue to bind modern Yakutat Tlingits to these landscapes.²⁵

In summarizing the multiple and complex relations that exist between Yakutat clans and landscapes within and adjacent to Wrangell-St. Elias, it is clear that there are numerous clan territories, migration routes, refuges, settlements, subsistence locales, landmarks and other sacred sites that are worthy of national interest and conservation.²⁶ The migration and settlement stories of the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan and Gunéit Kwáan/ Kwáashk'ikwáan are nothing less than heroic, and exemplify in many ways the means by which Tlingits and Eyaks traditionally appropriate places as part of their clan identity, and come to feel that they *belong to places* as much as *places belong to them*. Biography, history and geography, as de Laguna suggests, are fused in the ancestral landscapes of the “Lost Coast,” where both tribes were “lost” but became pioneers of new settlements, and eventually great wealth. The rich and potent associations with these landscapes are kept alive through continued use of placenames, stories, songs, dances and crests, and through hunting, fishing and gathering at key sites. These connections extend not only from the coast to the interior but also from the Gulf of Alaska coast down to Southeast Alaska, from whence, according to Tlingit oral narratives, the sleepless hero, Kaakeix'wtí, first made his epic journey among the Athabaskans.

This multimediacy of memory, realized through multiple cultural structures, the “poetics of dwelling” and the “re-membering” of selves in ancestral places, has served well the collective memory and being of the Eyak, Tlingit and Athabaskan descendants of these landscapes. When the Yakutat Tlingit went to visit their interior relatives some thirty years ago at a special ceremony hosted by the Eyak Corporation to recognize the historical connections between the groups, they were struck by the commonality of

memory and culture. Elaine Abraham met a local elder there, “pretty well in age. And it was really interesting to listen to him tell the people about the [people that left them, including her clan ancestors] and their—he told our migration story just the way we tell it (EA).” Judy Ramos also remembers this ceremony. She was struck by the similarities between the hosts’ dances and songs and those of her own Yakutat group: “[W]hen I watched the...dancers dance a song, it was the same song we sing...Mentasta Dancers too, the way they dance it is the way we dance it” (JR). Bert Adams Sr. has also observed these similarities in the dance regalia, reporting that when “[we] went over to Mentasta about ... two, three years ago, and they had their dancers come and perform for us...Judy and I was amazed at how similar it was to Yakutat, you know. And the regalia was pretty much the same as well. So you know, we’re pretty close (BA).” This closeness reveals the power of place and shared history to remain resonant in memory and oral history, and the unique expressive power of various genres of place among the cultures inhabiting Wrangell-St. Elias and its environs.

Yakutat Tlingit Clan Organization

As will be discussed throughout this document, Yakutat Tlingit clan identity formed the basis for diverse associations with traditional clan territories, including special connections to landmarks, and special claims on natural resources. When mapped based on Yakutat Tlingit knowledge and tradition, these associations differ substantially from outside definitions of tribal territory. These mapping efforts can reveal the locations of the constituent clans of the Yaakwdáat Kwáan (see Map 6), but also to show how the aggregated communities’ territories – such as those of the larger Laaxaayíx Kwáan – are juxtaposed with those of other aggregated communities (see Map 7). These Yakutat Tlingit definitions of territory lend significant clarity to claims made by Yakutat Tlingit, past and present, on lands and resources within Wrangell-St. Elias and beyond.

There are five major clans within the traditional Tlingit territory in the Yakutat area: Teikweidí; Shunkukeidi; Galix Kaagwaantaan; L’unax.ádi; and Kwáashk’ikwáan. The Teikweidí, Shunkukeidi and Galix Kaagwaantaan clans are of the Eagle moiety, and the L’unax.ádi and Kwáashk’ikwáan clans are of the Raven moiety.²⁷ These five clans migrated to the Yakutat Bay region in the pre-contact era. Upon arrival in Yakutat, they continued to operate as independent clans, but took on an increasingly shared identity as members of the Laaxaayíx Kwáan (*Glacier Inside People*) – also known as Yaakwdáat Kwáan (*Lagoon is forming People*—from the Eyak term *Diya’quda’t*), hinting at the unique geological condition of Yakutat Bay, where the vast glaciers were retreating to reveal new waterways. The five Yakutat clans were then subdivided into lineages or house groups.²⁸



Map 6

Together, the clan and house group (a sublineage of the clan) claim material and symbolic property—*at.óow*—as part of their ancestry, heritage, and their destiny— *shuká* (literally “that which lies before us”). This property includes geographic sites, such as salmon streams, halibut banks, shellfish beds, fort sites and prominent mountains—as in the case of Robin (or Kulthieth) Mountain for the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan—as well as symbolic capital, such as ceremonial regalia, stories, songs, spirits and names. As with *shuká*, there is a collective and individual element to *at.óow*. The sum total of a person’s *at.óow* serves to mark that individual as a distinct member of the community and constitutes a pillar and line of personal identity within a meshwork of social, historical and geographical ties to land. In summing up the foundational role that these possessions play in identity and being, both past and future, Lukaax.ádi elder Emma Marks, originally from Dry Bay, declared, “Our *at.óow* are our life” (in Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994:v).

Another important means by which symbolic connections of Tlingit clans to place are reproduced is through *shagóon*. This term, also subsidiary to *shuká*, may be translated as “heritage” or “destiny,” and is often used to reference the collective ancestry, history and geography of a clan. According to de Laguna (1972, 2:813), *shagóon* means or implies “the destiny of a people (or individual), established in the past by the ancestors and extending to the descendants. It is one way of expressing ‘the way things are.’” The concept is especially important in ritual, where a clan’s history and prerogatives, including territorial rights, are negotiated and validated by the opposite moiety. *Shagóon* also is embodied in Tlingit naming practices. Clans are named for ancestral territories, and individuals are named after clan ancestors.²⁹ In these and other ways the concept of *shagóon* merges place and being. Thus, as one elder put it, “if you sell our land, you sell our ancestors.” Even Alaska Native Corporations, including the Eyak and Yak-Tat Kwaan village corporations, despite having fee simple ownership (i.e., with the right to sell) of large tracts of land, have opted overwhelmingly to retain their land rather than alienate it through sale.

Iconography, a visual representation of *at.óow*, comprises another important expressive medium through which people represent sacred relationships to place. Tlingit icons and motifs in visual art function on a number of different levels. They reference events, emotions, kin, places and other themes that are fundamental to individual and social group identity. The most sacred icons are clan crests—manifestations of animals, places and other entities—that are incorporated into artistic designs, regalia and other cultural forms:

“In addition to crests derived from totemic animals, there are those which symbolize places. The most prominent of these are the two mountains, Saint Elias and Fairweather, of the K^wackqwan and Tl’uknaxadi [and Takdeintaan] respectively” (de Laguna 1972:456).³⁰



Traditional Lands of the Tlingit
 As Depicted By
 The Traditional Tlingit Map & Tribal List Project

Map 7

Mount St. Elias (Was'ei Tashaa, #47; see Map 5), the tallest mountain on the coast, served as a beacon for seafaring mariners and for land travellers traversing the Bering and Tana glaciers between the Interior and the coast. The Kwáashk'ikwáan hold Mount St. Elias as a sacred crest and symbolize it on *at.óow*, such as ceremonial regalia (see de Laguna 1972, pl. 152). Thus, Kaagwaantaan possesses crests for Mount St. Elias as well as for the Robinson Mountains – another key landmark in their migration narrative and early history (TV).³¹ Many of the names of the clans and their houses reveal distinctive geographical or geological features, such as *Shaa Hít* (Mount St. Elias House).³² For more examples, see Table 2 below. Crests, and therefore territories, can be transferred in ownership by purchase or sale, or taken by force as the result of war.

Crests, observed de Laguna (1972, 1:451), “are, from the native point of view, the most important feature of the matrilineal sib or lineage, acquired in the remote past by the ancestors and determining the nature and destiny of their descendants.” This combination of heritage and destiny, or *shagóon*, is believed to be embodied in the sacred property of the matrilineage and also in the social group members themselves. Each crest, too, has a story “behind it” that evokes elements of the present landscape in relation to the distant past. Animals were taken as crests typically because of specific events that occurred at particular places involving them and members of the social group. In other cases geographic places, themselves animate, were adopted as crests. When a place was appropriated as a crest, its image served to link indelibly particular social groups to particular terrains. In many cases social groups actually derive their names from these locales, and thus the crests serve to fuse members’ identities, origins and history. This is the case for the two major clans with origins in Wrangell-St. Elias, the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, deriving its name from the Kaliakh River (Galyáx), and the Ginéix Kwáan (some of whom became Kwáashk'ikwáan in Yakutat), deriving its name from a small humpback salmon stream in Yakutat Bay.

In this way, crests and other visual art, as representations of places, endow portions of the landscape with multiple layers of meaning and identify them as the property and heritage of specific social groups, and the landscape itself is continuously defined and redefined through iconography.³³ Thus, although Tlingit art differs markedly in style from most Euro-American landscape art, both constitute genres of place because they explicitly appropriate and idealize places, and therefore shape the perception and experience of those landscapes.

Names, stories, songs and crests represent genres of place that have been ritually sanctified as *at.óow*. They are, as Feld and Basso (1998:6) suggest, ethnographic evocations [of place] with local theories of dwelling—*which is not just living in place but also encompasses ways of fusing setting to situation, locality to life-world ...* [and serve to] locate the intricate strengths and fragilities that connect places to social imagination and practice, to memory and desire, to dwelling and movement. Even material technologies, designed or evolved for specific locales, can come to serve as powerful genres of place,

coming not only to symbolize the place itself, but also serving as a means of sensing, experiencing and relating to place. What is more, objects of material culture take on enplaced “biographies” within communities, as they are passed from generation to generation. For this reason, material culture provides an ideal frame for evaluating what Peter Jordan (2003:306) terms “landscape enculturation,” because it is through the manufacture, use, transmission and deposition of material artefacts that “communities bring rich symbolic meanings to the landscapes they inhabit, and at the same time, transform the physical terrain.”

In sum, Tlingit places are not merely physical locales or geographic givens, but rather phenomenal and cultural processes consisting of three elemental dimensions—space, time and experience. These dimensions are culturally and environmentally mediated and exist in interdependent webs of interanimation, manifest in a variety of cultural forms—such as *at.óow* and *shagóon*—and genres—such as the *gudiyé*—that are inherently relational in linking and accommodating people to places and places to people through the exigencies and poetics of dwelling. Tlingit history and geography respect these links as ongoing aspects of individual and social biography as well as rights and prerogatives, as exemplified in sociogeographic concepts such as *kwáan* (dwelling place), *at.óow* and *shagóon*. A holistic anthropological perspective of place contributes to the knowledge of both culture and geography and the dynamic, organic ties that link them. Through such a perspective, a foundation is laid for understanding and respecting Tlingits’ senses of place and being as a set of cultural processes, and as a geography of respect.

As will be suggested in later sections of this document, clan or house leaders (*hit s’áati*) are the “trustees and administrators of their group’s property” (Thornton 2001: 213), responsible for managing a diverse range of activities, including but not limited to trade, resource production, land tenure and relations with neighboring groups. Elaine Abraham explains: “The clans owned the territory and the streams and the house leaders together with the men and women council, according to their status in the clan” (EA).

Matrilineal clans are cohesive socio-political units consisting of multiple families, who not only share a cultural identity, but who work and live together in a clan house or “*hít*.” As edited by de Laguna, Emmons (1991: 25-27) observed:

“Each sib [i.e., clan (*naa*) or its sublineage, the house (*hít*)] is composed of people who consider themselves brothers and sisters. ...All are bound together by the possession of important prerogatives; a common name, a body of historical and mythological traditions, possession of territories for hunting, fishing and berrying. The clan is made up of households, consisting of closely related families living together under one roof, numbering sometimes fifty.”

Yakutat elder Olaf Abraham echoed this description of Tlingit clan houses, saying,

“Each Tlingit clan had their own land with large community houses. These community of clan houses were large enough to house fifty or more people, large enough so the individuals living within did not feel crowded. ...Inside were many totem screens and totem poles. The corner house posts were also carved. On top of these corner poles were beams which make the skeleton of the house. No nails were used. They knew how to construct these buildings without the use of nails Nevertheless they had huge buildings. In such buildings they lived” (Abraham 1973:4).

Clan houses are traditionally places of winter lodging as the Tlingit return from semi-permanent sites or camps strategically situated across the landscape to optimize seasonal resource use. As de Laguna describes, “In each Tlingit tribal area there was at least one principal village, occupied in winter but usually deserted in summer when families scattered to the fishing and hunting camps” (1990: 206).

During the winter, the Tlingit would gather at these established village sites that were defined by *kwáan* affiliation and structured by the rules and prerogatives of that particular *kwáan*. A *kwáan* was once best defined as a seasonal aggregate of clans occupying the same geographic area.³⁴ Writing in the 1880s, Aurel Krause suggested,

“The entire Tlingit people are divided into a number of distinct tribes, called ‘kon,’ [*kwáan*] each of which has its permanent village and its hunting and fishing grounds. These tribes were called after the river of the bay upon which their villages were situated, as the Chilkat-kon and the Yakutat-kon, or after the islands on which they lived, as the Sitka-kon” (Kraus 1956: 65).

Within each village and even within individual houses there were different strata of society represented, including a leadership class of nobles, commenters and slaves. Being raided or acquired by trade from outside the community, slaves were responsible for a number of tasks, including many labor-intensive forms of resource procurement.

Table 2: The Clans and Houses of Yakutat

LAAXAAYÍK KWÁAN: YAKUTAT AREA

Glacier Inside People

or

YAAKWDÁAT KWÁAN

Lagoon is forming [From Diya'quda't (Eyak)]

RAVEN MOIETY		
Clan	House	House Translation
L'uknax.ádi (Children of L'ukanax)	Shaa Hít	Mountain House—and for Mount Fairweather
	Daginaa Hít	Far out in the Sea House
	Eech Hít 1	Reef House 1
	Eech Hít 2	Reef House 2—located at Situk River
Kwáashk'ikwáan (Ginéix Kwáan) (People of Kwáashk', Humpback Creek, [from Eyak], or People of Ginéix [Little Bremner River?])	Aanyuwaa Hít	In Front of Town House
	Tsisk'w Hít	Owl House
	Dís Hít	Moon House
	Yéil S'aagi Hít	Raven's Bones House
	Noow Hít	Fort House
	Shaa Hít	Mountain House—for Mount St. Elias

WOLF/EAGLE MOIETY		
Clan	House	House Translation
Kaagwaantaan (Charred House People)	Gooch Xaay Hít	Wolf Steam Bath House
Lkuweidí (? People)	Unknown	Unknown
Teikweidí (People of Teik [a bay])	Xeitl Hít	Thunderbird House 2
	Gijook Hít	Golden Eagle House
	Gaaw Hít	Drum House
	K'atxään Hít	Man who Acted Like a Woman House
	Tóos' Hít	Shark House
	Xóots Hít	Brown Bear House
Dagisdinaa ("People of Dagis" or Dageis [a river or channel])	Xeitl Hít	Thunderbird House 1

GALYÁX KWÁAN: YAKATAGA-CONTROLLER BAY AREA³⁵

People of the Kaliakh River (Galyáx)

RAVEN MOIETY*	
<i>Clan</i>	<i>Clan Translation</i>
<u>G</u> aanax.ádi	Children of <u>G</u> anaax [Port Stewart, a bay]
<u>K</u> oosk'eidí	Children of <u>K</u> oosk'
Kwáashk'i <u>K</u> wáan or Ginéix <u>K</u> wáan	People of Kwáashk' (Humpback Creek, from Eyak) or People of Ginéix

WOLF/EAGLE MOIETY*	
<i>Clan</i>	<i>Clan Translation</i>
Kaagwaantaan	Charred House People
Jishkweidí	Red Paint People

*Abbreviated list without houses shown.

The Yaakwdáat Kwáan and Their Lands

The Yakutat (Yaakwdáat) Kwáan is among those *kwáans* that took shape from the constituent five clans that converged at Yakutat Bay. It is a geographically defined polity of independent clan units that originally gathered only during the winter months, but increasingly came to live together year-round in the pre-contact era, as they congregated on the less rugged and dynamic southeast coast of the Bay. Post-contact, they were also brought together as missionaries and economic development facilitated community consolidation and other transformations of community life. In spite of their relocation, “each one of the tribes knows what area he comes from and the history of that area” (GR). Yaakwdáat Kwáan embraces the area roughly from Malaspina Glacier above Yakutat Bay to the Akwe River in Dry Bay. Yakutat Bay (Laaxaayík “Inside Laaxaa [from Eyak, ‘Near the Glacier’],” #61; see Map 5), especially the eastern shores and islands, were among the most important habitation and resource use areas within Yaakwdáat Kwáan. Not surprisingly, it is here that we find the highest density of Native placenames (see Thornton 2012; de Laguna 1972), most of which were recorded by Harrington (n.d.) and de Laguna (1972:58ff.). The present city of Yakutat is located at Monti Bay and incorporates the traditional Native village called Kaa Gatsx'áak Aan. Another permanent settlement was located at Port Mulgrave on the southwest end of Khantaak Island. East of Khantaak Island is an important travel route, settlement and resource harvest area known as Canoe Pass (Dakde Séet “Channel on the Way to Place Behind”). At one time, there was a village here spanning both sides of the channel that was “so huge that ravens trying to fly overhead would be overcome by smoke from the

houses” (Yeil Aa Daak Wudzigidi Ye, meaning “Place Where Raven Fell Down”) (de Laguna 1972:64).

Like all Tlingit winter village sites, the Yakutat *kwáan* was composed of multiple, well-built longhouses adorned with historically and culturally significant carvings and painted clan crests (de Laguna 1972). These houses were lined up strategically in sheltered bays that had sandy beaches for landing canoes, close proximity to desirable resources such as salmon streams, hunting grounds and berry patches, and provided an unobstructed view of approaching newcomers.

Predominantly, Eyak villages were constructed in a similar fashion at the time of contact. According to de Laguna,

“Each village had a fort or palisaded enclosure around some or all the houses. Every important village also had a potlatch house for each moiety, with carved post (of Eagle or Raven moiety) in front. ...These houses were equivalent to the Tlingit lineage or chiefs’ houses” (1990: 190).

Traditionally, Eyak clans were loosely defined by proximity, usually identified as belonging to a prominent chief. At one time, there were four regional Eyak groups: the Eyak “proper,” who inhabited the Cordova-Copper River Delta, a group at Controller Bay sometimes referred to as the Chilkat, a group on the coast of the Gulf of Alaska sometimes called the Yakatags, and a fourth group that lived around Yakutat Bay and have been fully absorbed by the Tlingit (de Laguna 1990).³⁶

Again, over time, villages of Tlingit and Eyak blur together, so that those of the Copper River/Cordova region became principally Eyak with significant Tlingit social and economic influence. The Yakutat groups became significantly Eyak but culturally predominantly Tlingit. The southern Yakutat groups became largely Tlingit but living “among the Athabaskans” as the name of the southern Yakutat clans, *Gunaḡoo Kwáan*, suggests.

In addition to the permanent villages, the Tlingit constructed complex intertribal trade networks and maintained regular use of clan territories some distance from Yakutat, traveling long distances in traditional dugout canoes during the summer months. According to de Laguna, in

“June and July, months of calm water and most favorable winds, formerly saw fleets of canoes from Hoonah, Sitka and Chilkat country going to Yakutat to trade, while the Yakutat Tlingit might cross the Gulf to trade with the Ahtna or visit the Russian posts in Prince William Sound (Nuchek) or at Sitka” (1990:206).



Figure 1 – The village of S'oooska, or Port Mulgrave, across the water from the modern Yakutat shoreline. This village served as the winter settlement for Yaakwdáat Kwáan prior to the consolidation of settlement in the village of Yakutat in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

Oral traditions mention various trails along the shore and up the stream drainages of the south shore of what is Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. However, canoe travel was far easier than travel by foot along the rugged coastal strip where “the mainland from tidewater to lofty mountains [is] nowhere more than 30 miles wide,” and often considerably narrower, punctuated by glaciers and mountains (de Laguna 1990: 205). Yet canoe travel was still treacherous, fraught with unpredictable weather and challenging terrain. As de Laguna notes,

“Canoe travel was dangerous except in the shelter of offshore bars; safe landing places could be found only in the mouths of rivers or behind the islands of Yakutat and Controller bays. Sudden squalls, strong winds, fog, and rain, with heavy winter snows demanded human adaptation to damp and cold, but not to severe freezing” (de Laguna 1990:190).

The various canoe models found in Yakutat were adapted to fit various functions.³⁷ The most common canoe was the “spruce” or *si't*. A heavy-prow canoe was needed for seal hunting in icy waters. Both the heavy-prow and more graceful-prow canoe indicate Eyak influence (de Laguna 1990). According to de Laguna,

“The oldest known type of Tlingit canoe had a protruding planklike prow and stern, pierced with holes. These were seen at Lituya Bay in 1786, and at Yakutat Bay in 1788 and 1794” (1990: 208).

The most sought after canoes were not of Yakutat Tlingit origin. It was the Haida who manufactured these canoes—massive, crafted of red cedar, and up to 60 feet long, with two masts and sails. These canoes were most advantageous as modes of transport for trade goods, able to carry six to ten tons of freight (de Laguna 1990). They were highly desirable and traded all the way to Yakutat.

Trade, an important factor in uniting the Tlingit and Eyak, was also significant for sustaining the economy and social structure of the Tlingit. Trading and exchange of goods between the Tlingit was highly regulated. Gift exchanges were restricted to members of different clans in the same moiety, or between “brothers-in-law” (members of opposite moieties) or “fathers- and sons-in-law” (de Laguna 1990). These stringent trading regulations were applied to trade with the Eyak and Athabaskans as well. In this way, clan leaders organized and monopolized trade and transport of goods into the interior, but also facilitated the integration of the Eyak into the socio-political network of clan-based trade and ownership.³⁸

The Eyak at one time may have controlled large areas of what is today Yakutat territory (Controller Bay to Itilio River, perhaps, according to de Laguna 1990), but were increasingly encroached upon by Tlingits moving up from the southeast, as is discussed above. Tlingit culture largely subsumed Eyak culture at Yakutat Bay, yet there is a transition zone between Yakutat and Cape Suckling. Thus, while both Eyak and Tlingit placenames are presented in Yakutat, as one moves northwest up the coast, one sees that Eyak placenames increasingly predominate. In some cases, Tlingits appear to have adopted or hybridized the Eyak names for features of the landscape rather than (or in addition to) applying a new Tlingit name. As a result, many places have more than one Native name and sometimes as many as four (Tlingit, Eyak, Chugach and Ahtna, not to mention English and Russian), as Tebenkov observed (Davidson 1901b:44; de Laguna 1972). Tlingitization of other indigenous placenames and cultural elements has also taken place. Sorting this out can be difficult, but it also contributes to the richness of the cultural landscapes.

Yakutat Tlingit have long associated with the dynamic landscape encompassing the southern coast of Alaska, including portions of Wrangell-St. Elias. This is evidenced not only in the archaeological record of the region, but in the placenames within the area, reflecting this deep human history: “Eyak, Athapaskan, and Tlingit placenames encapsulate ecological information now rendered invisible by English names” (Cruikshank 2001: 380). In collaboration with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Thornton (2012) documented more than three hundred placenames in this region based on a review of

the previous literature (especially de Laguna 1972) and additional interviews with elders, including Elaine Abraham, Bert Adams Sr., Lorraine Adams, Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Sally Edwards, Sig Edwards, Lena Farkus, Emma Marks, George Ramos Sr., Judy Ramos, Ben Valle, Fred White and others. This information has been supplemented below with additional interviews from this project and those conducted by Judy Ramos (2003) as part of the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) study “Mapping the Traditional Subsistence Territories of Yakutat Forelands,” which served to document additional geographic names and cultural associations with particular landscapes in and around Wrangell-St. Elias. The outcomes of these efforts are reflected in the contents of Map 5 and Table 1. De Laguna provides several examples of Tlingit placenames within and around the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias (see Map 5 for locations and Table 1 for spellings in the modern, popular orthography):

“The Yahtse River is known to the Tlingit as Ƴásé hín. The first word is now often pronounced watsé, as one of my informants observed. Topham (1889) translates ‘Yahtsé’ as ‘swampy, or muddy ground,’ suggesting that it may be derived from s̄A, ‘clay.’ Icy Bay is Ƴáséyík (Harrington, yaas̄eeyíik) and Mount Saint Elias, towering above, is Ƴáséʔa cà, ‘Mountain at the Head of [behind] Icy Bay.’ It is also called ‘[the] Big Mountain,’ Cà t̄én, and is one of the most important crests of the Kwackqwan because its snowy triangular peak, 18,000 feet high, served to guide them on their journey across the ice from Copper River” (1972:95).

The Tlingit clans, themselves, were named after some of these significant placenames, including Kwáashk'ikwáan:

“The famous Humpback Salmon Creek (lat. 59°39'N.) is called Kwacḱ h́ini; kwacḱ being the Eyak word for ‘humpback salmon,’ and h́ini the Tlingit word for ‘stream of.’ A place on the lake which it drains is called Naxt̄laxAk-ʔakA. Although informants disagree as to who were the original owners of this stream, all concur that it was purchased by the Ḡnexqwan immigrants from the Copper River, who thereby acquired their present name Kwacḱqwan from the stream” (de Laguna 1972:65).

During the full history of human occupation, the south shore of what is now Wrangell-St. Elias has been a rapidly changing landscape. During the “Little Ice Age,” Yakutat Bay was fully concealed by ice, the front of the glacier running from modern Yakutat to Point Manby—its maximum advance at roughly 1,100 A.D. The terminal moraine of that glacier still forms a submarine ridge across the mouth of Yakutat Bay, arcing to Point Manby. Physical evidence of early occupation of Yakutat Bay is understandably limited due to the subsequent advance and retreat of the vast glacier that occupied the

entire basin, destroying all evidence of past human occupation. Memories of the Little Ice Age, the depopulation of the coast and its reoccupation over time, are all kept alive in the oral and ritual traditions of Yakutat Tlingit (Cruikshank 2005). Some investigators (de Laguna 1972; Krauss 1982) argue that the Tlingit presence north of Yakutat Bay is comparatively recent, perhaps within the last several centuries. This evidence is based primarily on oral traditions and the distribution of Native placenames. Archaeological evidence is limited due to the dynamic glacial and seismic activities occurring in the region, which destroy material that could potentially speak to earlier origins of Tlingit habitation. Studies of cultural and human remains recently exposed by melting glacial ice, including DNA, cloth and digestive samples taken from Kwady Dan Ts'inchí (Southern Tutchone for "Long Ago Person Found"), the 550-660 year old aboriginal man unearthed in 1999 in the Interior ice fields east of Yakutat (see Cruikshank 2005), suggest a continuity of human habitation in this region perhaps over many hundreds of years, if not millennia. The name Yakutat is sometimes said to imply the presence of a "lagoon"—reflecting oral tradition of a lagoon forming amid receding ice at this place, as the ancestors of Yakutat Tlingit arrived on the scene.³⁹ Cruikshank summarizes ice fluctuation in the area over time, including the Little Ice Age, saying,

“Glacial activity has severely eroded the archaeological record in the Gulf of Alaska. Human habitation was possible by 9000 B.P...but any record of human history was erased 3000 – 5000 years ago by readvancing glaciers. A subsequent recession 2000 years ago...was reversed within a millennium: an enlarged and combined Malaspina and Hubbard Glacier, joined by lesser glaciers, descended slowly and continuously from Mount Saint Elias, filling Icy Bay and Yakutat Bay a thousand years ago. Swelling into tidewater beyond the present-day mouths of these two bays, these glaciers created a continuous wall of ice some 1000 m thick extending northwest of Yakutat Bay for at least 120 km. Another recession 600 years ago caused ice to waste behind present-day limits” (Cruikshank 2001: 381).⁴⁰

When present and not fractured with deep crevasses, the glaciers and ice fields were transportation corridors long ago. Bagley Ice Field is said by some to be “a natural highway” without crevasses in its midline. Yahtse Glacier was once a smooth flat ice surface leading from Bagley Ice Field to Icy Bay, providing linkages between the interior and the coast. In this light, the Kwáashk'ikwáan migration narratives fit neatly into the known topographies of Wrangell-St. Elias.

Since roughly 1400 A.D., the retreat of Hubbard Glacier has exposed much of Disenchantment Bay, the constituent glaciers of the mighty glacial complex advancing and retreating in the centuries that followed—retreating in the aggregate, but not without cataclysmic surges reshaping the land and temporarily reoccupying portions of

the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. During the early occupation of Yakutat, much of the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline was below receding walls of ice.

Certainly, there were settlements, large and small, within what now constitutes the south shore of Wrangell-St. Elias. As mentioned, more than one clan origin narrative alludes to the establishment of a founding settlement in Icy Bay: “The first one was in Icy Bay at the foot hills in Mount St. Elias” (LF). Icy Bay (Was'ei Yík, “Inside of Was'ei,” or Yas'ei Yík, “Inside of Yas'ei” [Yahtse River], #45; see Map 5) was claimed by the Kwáashk'ikwáan and served as a boundary between Galyáx-Kwáan and Yaakwdáat Kwáan. It is one of the most diverse areas of the coastline, being marked by some of the most rugged features in Tlingit country, including the largest glacier, Bering Glacier, and the highest coastal mountains. This dramatic landscape, with its exposure to the powerful Gulf of Alaska (Yeil T'ooch', “Black Raven,” #34; see Map 5), has earned the area above Icy Bay the nickname “The Lost Coast.” Despite the forbidding terrain, there were numerous habitation sites along the coastline. Icy Bay was an important refuge and settlement that lay in the shadow of Mount St. Elias (Was'ei Tashaa, “Mountain Inland of Was'ei,” #47; see Map 5), and the mountain is named for it. The name for Icy Bay itself, according to de Laguna (1972:95), may derive from the toponym for Yahtse River, (Yas'ei* Heen, “Swampy* Creek,” #48; see Map 5), which may reference the glacial clay (*s'ê*) produced by the active glaciers at the head of this watershed. George Ramos (see Thornton 2012) notes that at one time glaciers extended out into the Gulf of Alaska, and tells of stories of a low island, called Grass Island, near the mouth of the bay where hunters used to rest and make camp. This bay was used extensively by Yakutat Tlingit for resource procurement, which will be discussed in the following section.

Icy Bay also holds special significance for certain clans, such as the Kwáashk'ikwáan, in that their ancestors, the Ginéix Kwáan, settled just west of Icy Bay at Was'ei Dak, building a camp out of bark that they named Teey Aani* (Yellow Cedar Bark Town, #39; see Map 5). The camp was overrun by a glacier (Judy Ramos, pers. comm.). As a consequence, they continued their southeastwardly migration to Icy Bay, where they met and intermarried with the Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan who were hunting seal in the bay.⁴¹ Icy Bay is key to the genesis of these clans, who share stories of arriving there on their first entry into the Yakutat region.

Again, these glacial landscapes threatened, if not always precluded, human settlement along the north shore of Yakutat Bay, creating hazards that had broad environmental, demographic and spiritual consequences for Yakutat Tlingit. Cataclysms involving these glacial landscapes have often been noted in Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition. As Harold Topham was told by one of the Yakutat chiefs,

“There is a tradition amongst his people that formerly there was a large bay running up from the sea to the very foot of St. Elias; that there was a

village at the head of that bay; that all around the village was swampy or muddy (Yahtsé) ground; that the mountain was therefore called Yahtsé-tah-shah, *tah* meaning harbor, and *shah* meaning peak; that a river flowed into the bay from the northwest, where were large glaciers; that the east of the bay was all ice but the west, sand and trees; that at the mouth of the bay dwelt some Indians, and that one day an Indian came rushing home crying 'Quick, quick the ice is coming,' pointing to the river down which the ice was seen to be rapidly advancing. The Indians escaped along the shore. The ice came on right across the bay till it struck the opposite shore, when it turned and continued down the bay to the sea, swallowing the village in its course" (Topham 1889:432-33).

On the basis of such oral traditions, it is widely known that Icy Bay and other places along the north shore once had settlements that were historically obliterated by advancing and retreating ice: "that Icy Bay was destroyed by glacial advance is indicated by the testimony of Yakutat natives" (Tarr and Martin 1914:47). De Laguna also refers to the destruction of certain settlements:

"After the ice had retreated, some settlements were established which tradition reports were later overwhelmed by a second advance. One of these was in Icy Bay (Topham, 1889), and another was somewhere on the coast south of Dry Bay, where the Kagwantan had built Shadow House with wealth obtained by trading with the Dry Bay Athabaskans" (de Laguna 1972:26).

Reports mention other villages on the coast, such as the community known by the name of Yaktag, for which Cape Yakataga is said to have been named, which is sometimes associated with this turbulent coast⁴²; an 1880 census recorded a "Yaktag village at the foot of Mt. St. Elias with one hundred and fifty inhabitants" (Krause 1956:66).

This ongoing disruption of human settlement continued to be a formidable issue well into the American period, compromising efforts to maintain permanent settlements on the north shore of Yakutat Bay and beyond. As de Laguna observed,

"The most catastrophic event of recent years which may have obliterated former [habitation] sites was the earthquake of September, 1899. This produced uplifts up to 15 feet and local subsidences up to 7 feet along the central part of the habitable eastern shore of Yakutat Bay; greater changes occurred in the uninhabitable northern parts of the bay. This earthquake was accompanied by tidal waves and by waves produced by falling

masses of glacial ice which washed out habitation areas as far south as the vicinity of Yakutat village itself” (1949:1-2).

During a 1905 expedition to Yakutat Bay, geographers Ralph Tarr and Lawrence Martin recorded “three small hanging glaciers in steep valleys on the west side of Disenchantment Bay, south of Turner Glacier.” During their visit, the southernmost glacier collapsed into Disenchantment Bay, creating “a series of waves which rose on the shore fifteen to twenty feet vertically and continued for nearly half an hour,” creating damage as much as 115 feet up the side of Haenke Island. On the basis of discussions with Yakutat Tlingit, they wrote,

“The Indians report that this same glacier slid out of its valley sixty years ago and killed a hundred Indians; but fortunately the Indians had left their summer sealing camp before July 4th, 1905, and no one was on Disenchantment Bay, otherwise there would certainly have been destruction of life” (Tarr and Martin 1906:153).

In the early 20th century, the rapid retreat of Guyot Glacier left the modern shoreline of Icy Bay in its wake, revealing lands used and occupied by Yakutat Tlingit long before the glacier’s advance (similar geological forces affected inland Athabaskan communities as well).⁴³ While retreating glaciers could certainly bring destruction, they sometimes brought wealth and power to Yakutat Tlingit as well, both before and during European contact. The Yakutat Tlingit’s traditional wealth comes from copper exposed by retreating glaciers, and from seal and sea otter drawn to channels awash in tidewater glacier ice. Even today, this wealth sustains Yakutat in many ways.

Indeed, based on their knowledge of this turbulent geological history, Yakutat Tlingit have long contributed to discussions of glacial advancement and retreat along the coastline, verifying and building on what is recorded geologically (Cruikshank 2005; Tarr and Martin 1906). In recent times, the surging of the glaciers has even created jurisdictional issues, as they move between NPS lands, US Forest Service lands and other jurisdictions—sometimes requiring determinations as to which agency bears responsibility for hazard management and other activities (Bleakley 2002:167-69).

Yet despite cataclysms that have occurred over time, almost every locality with fresh water and secure, dry land was an appealing spot for resource encampments. Historically, most localities housed Yakutat Tlingit for a time. Anthropological accounts of people hunting or fishing along this coast mention that they “had log cabins along the way,” especially at all of the major streams (de Laguna 1972:97). As noted later in this document, interviewees for the current project describe similar geographical patterns in the placement of 20th century subsistence cabins.

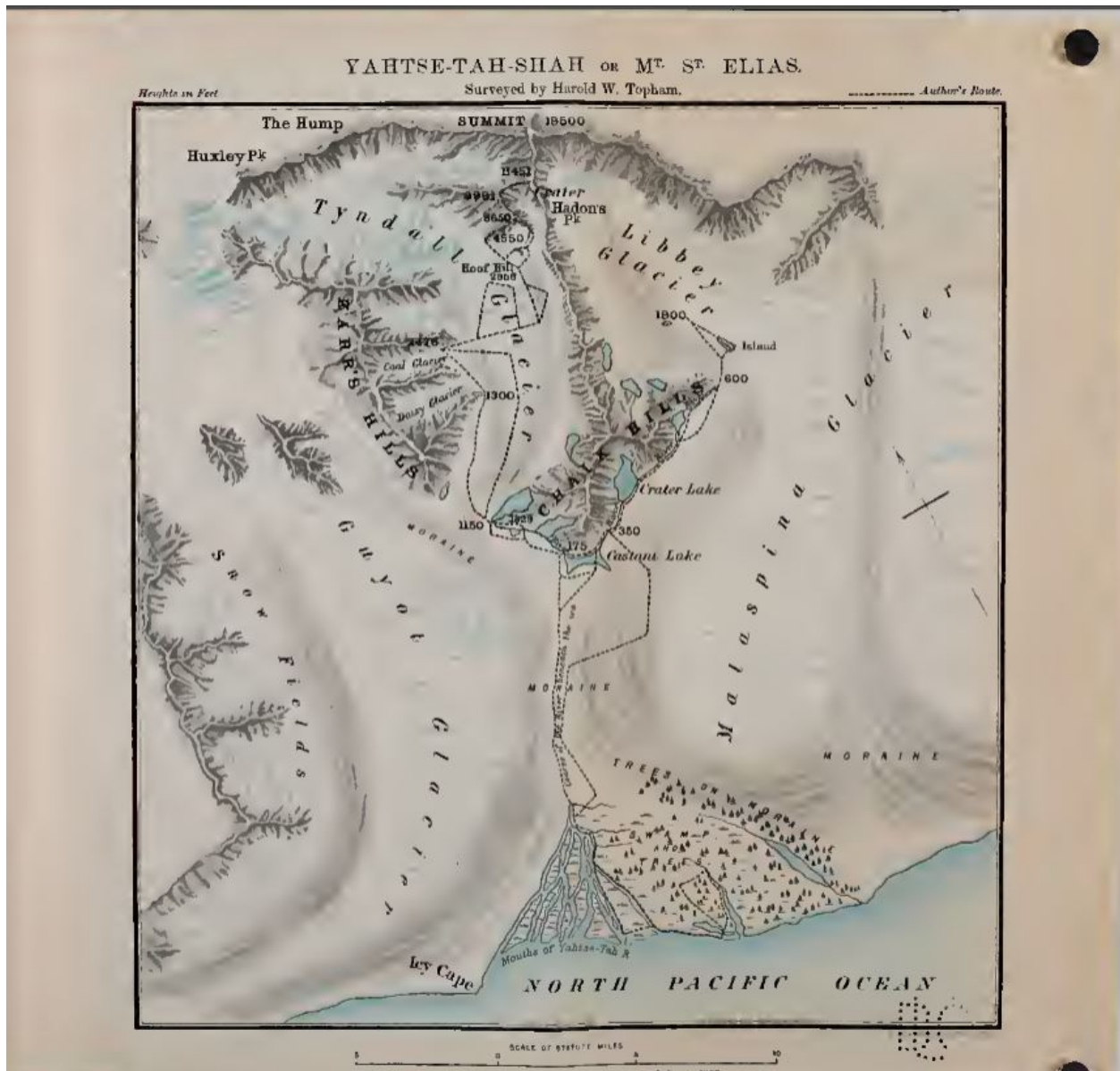


Figure 2 – The 1880s survey of Harold Topham showed Icy Bay completely submerged below a wall of ice, fed largely by Guyot Glacier. The bay had been settled prior to the glacial advance, former settlements being obliterated as the ice south into Yakutat Bay. Yakutat Tlingit resource harvesters soon reoccupied the bay as the ice retreated through the 20th century. From Topham 1889.

In addition to having desirable qualities for resource procurement, the entire north shore has continued to be held as a place of cosmological power and potential. The Tlingit regard the land as imbued with sentience.⁴⁴ As Ted Valle explains,

“All things have a spirit. All things that move...glaciers...even rocks, which do move [but] slower than us...when you do anything – hunt, fish,

gather anything – you give a prayer asking for forgiveness...giving thanks” (TV).

The landmarks of Wrangell-St. Elias stand prominent in Yakutat Tlingit history and culture. Perhaps most prominent among those landmarks is Mount St. Elias, *Waas'ei Ta Shaa*.⁴⁵ Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition speaks of Mount St. Elias and Mount Fairweather staying above the water during the “great flood” that encompassed the Earth during formative times, proving a foothold for humans as well as plant and animal life (TV).⁴⁶ The Mount St. Elias summit serves as a pivot-point of oral traditions and ancestral geographies, seen as a distant seagull in one account, as the ears of a rabbit in another, until clans approach and come to appreciate its full scale—episodes that will be addressed in the section that follows. There are also accounts of Yakutat Tlingit acknowledging that Mount St. Elias—and indeed other mountains—were once humans.⁴⁷ The mountain served as a navigational landmark, drawing Yakutat ancestors to the lands appearing from beneath the ice. It is mentioned in some way in the oral traditions of all five clans. These oral traditions are still a centerpiece of Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition and clan identity today, giving this landmark a kind of sacredness befitting its awesome topographic provenience. It is a locus of spiritual powers, invoked by shamanic healers traditionally, and helping steer disoriented Yakutat people home on rough seas. As de Laguna describes:

“The Yakutat people orient themselves primarily with reference to known, named, landmarks. Of these the most important are the two great peaks. Mounts Fairweather and Saint Elias” (de Laguna 1972:797).

In addition to using Mount St. Elias as a navigational landmark, the mountain was also highly significant to Yakutat Tlingit because they used the mountain to predict weather:

“The most common method of foretelling the weather was to watch the clouds on the mountains, especially on Mount Saint Elias and on Mount Fairweather. One evening when I commented on a flat cloud that was streaming from the top of Mount Saint Elias, I was told: ‘In the old days they used to tell the weather from it. Sometimes it puts on a sou'wester [rainhat] and then it means a bad storm. Sometimes the cloud is sidewise, as it is tonight, and then it means a westerly wind, good weather.’ ‘They tell the weather from Mount Saint Elias. My father learned it from his father's father who can read it. My father's grandfather was Yaxodaqet. My sister now can tell the weather the same way. She learned from my father. She looks at the mountain and says what the weather will be from the cloud on it. I never heard that pointing at certain mountains causes bad weather (HB)’” (de Laguna 1972:803).



Figure 3 – View of Mount St. Elias and the Yahtse Glacier from Icy Bay. Photo by Captain Budd Christman, NOAA Corps, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Department of Commerce.

That Yakutat Tlingit chose, in their most bold expression of 20th century cultural revival, to name their traditional dance society the “Mount St. Elias Dancers” was no simple contrivance; the mountain is potent, and is the landmark around which Yakutat Tlingit culture can orient and reorient, just as it helped their ancestors orient themselves in those distant and formative times.⁴⁸ Even today, members of the community note that, “when you see that mountain...it feels like home” (YB).

Landforms are historically significant, but also spiritually powerful. Certain glaciers, such as Valerie Glacier, are said to be of unique spiritual importance—reflecting not only their role in clan migration narratives, but their intrinsic powers and potentials (EA). They are also traditionally understood as possessing a type of sentience—much like mountains—requiring certain protocols of Yakutat Tlingit traveling among them.⁴⁹ As Cruikshank suggests, “Glaciers...are themselves equipped with sense of hearing, sight, and smell, and are quick to respond to any careless indiscretions” (Cruikshank 2005:229). It is inappropriate to behave or speak rudely around them, to make jokes in their presence, to subject them to disrespectful attention, cook food near them, and a variety of other actions that might convey “disrespect.” De Laguna discusses an example of the destructive consequences of disrespecting glaciers:

“Glaciers, like other spirits, were apparently very sensitive to what people said. When one wished to pass them safely, it was formerly the custom to speak to them, but I did not learn what words were used. The advance of the glacier in Icy Bay which overwhelmed a village was ascribed to the playful invitation given by some young men to the glacier to eat the king salmon which they were cooking” (de Laguna 1972:818).

The negative outcomes of such disrespect are clearly encoded in Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition, which contains many references to rapid glacial advances and other destructive outcomes.⁵⁰ Oral tradition also describes the retreating of glaciers due to disrespectful human behavior.⁵¹ Hunters, in particular, needed to show respect towards glaciers when in their presence. As Ted Valle and other reported, when men hunt near the glaciers, they “try to show respect to the glaciers...their spirit” so that hunters are safe traveling through the ice. Harrington found Yakutat Tlingit of the 1930s describing glaciers of the area, disapproving of disrespectful attention and generating bad weather so that they might turn back scientific expeditions meant to scrutinize them with such disrespect (cited in de Laguna 1972:819).

Demonstrations of respect, and assiduous avoidance of disrespect, are consistently depicted by Yakutat Tlingit as essential to maintaining reciprocal relationships between what might be termed the spiritual forces embedded in the landscape (its flora, fauna, mountains and glaciers) and humans who dwell or visit the landscape.⁵² For example, a place or landmark traditionally used for healing that has been “disrespected” too frequently or severely by human visitors may lose its potential (or will) to aid in the healing of individuals who follow, even if they are individually blameless. Accordingly, many Yakutat Tlingit returning to the north shore of Yakutat Bay, for example, make efforts to demonstrate respect to the landscape, in order to insure the maintenance of positive relations with the place and with powers residing there. This involves proscriptions on destructive exploitation or certain types of rude behaviors, as well as ceremonial activities of various kinds. For example, interviewees describe “first fish ceremonies” or “give aways” (such as one’s first Dry Bay king salmon), traditionally undertaken to demonstrate their respect for salmon in particular, and acknowledging their sacrifice. If done properly, this was said to help ensure that the fish would return abundantly in years to come. Interviewees also sometimes mentioned what might be called traditional “streamscaping,” removing obstacles to fish passage in spawning areas and making other changes that were said to demonstrate this respect and maintain salmon stock health (Thornton, Deur and Kitka 2015). This point will be addressed in greater detail in later sections relating to resource harvests within Wrangell-St. Elias.

In light of the potentials and dangers of places of spiritual significance along the shore, rivers and especially the tidewater glaciers and certain peaks, Tlingit people continue

the tradition of seeking to demonstrate respect towards these places. (There is even evidence of possible avoidance of Mount St. Elias, with Yakutat Tlingit turning back, expressing some level of discomfort when asked to help ascend the mountain with non-Native explorers in the late 19th century [e.g., Topham 1889:429]). In spite of myriad social and cultural changes, traditional beliefs, values, and practices—such as the demonstration of respect towards the landscape—persist today. Yakutat Tlingit traveling to Wrangell-St. Elias with tribal youth often seek to impart some of these skills by example, by sharing stories of the costs and benefits of respectful and disrespectful behavior, and by instruction on the methods of resource harvest, and by the informal regulation of harvest quantities.

The Wrangell-St. Elias coastline was generally too rugged and dynamic for extensive, uninterrupted human settlement, and formidable social and economic pressures would contribute to its further depopulation after European contact. However, even as its residents increasingly concentrated in the Yakutat area, the Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan homelands – including much of what is today the south Wrangell-St. Elias coastline – remained a place potent in historical and ceremonial associations for those two clans who traversed, occupied, and claimed these lands during their original journeys to Yakutat Bay. In spite of their gradual movement, the coast was still critical for traditional resource harvests too, reflecting the enduring associations and resource tenure claims on those lands. It is to this topic that our narrative now turns.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND TRADITIONAL HARVESTS ON THE SOUTH COAST OF WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS

Culturally significant natural resources have always been a part of the Yakutat relationship to the lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Wrangell-St. Elias is said to be “important to our people because this is where our food has come from” (LF). That relationship is not just practical, but implies multigenerational connections reaching back into distant times, and equally enduring connections to the lands and living things found there. For a number of contemporary Yakutat Tlingit, the harvest of these natural resources has been a primary impetus for visiting Wrangell-St. Elias, especially its southern coast, and the primary mode for engaging its landscapes and seascapes. Fishers, certain hunters, and other resource users continue to hold unique associations with, and knowledge of, landscapes within Wrangell-St. Elias – especially along its southern coast. Here, we describe resource use traditions practiced in the area as they were reported for the period preceding European contact; yet, these practices persisted into the Russian and early American periods, only modestly changed by outside influences and the dynamic glacial landscape. As such, they can be seen as a basis for understanding resource use as it existed until the early 20th century – and the unique significance of these resources within the Yakutat community. The following synthesis is drawn especially from classic ethnographic literature, but also from project interviews and recent gray literature. In the chapters that follow we outline changes in these practices over historical time, in the years before and after park creation.

Interviewees and written sources make it clear that, from pre-contact to modern times, the traditional homeland of the Yakutat Tlingit, including both Yakutat and Icy Bays as well as surrounding streams and mountains, offered a distinctive wealth of resources – reflecting in part the environmental dynamism of this coastline. De Laguna’s account of the great resource wealth of Kwáashk’ikwáan territory illustrates this point:

“The territory of the Kwáashk’ikwáan, which extended from just west of Icy Bay to the middle of the Lost River area near the present airfield, included the sea otter grounds of Icy Bay, the Disenchantment Bay, the goat and bear hunting areas on the mountains above, rich salmon streams, especially in the Ankau lagoon region, and numerous berrying patches, including the strawberries of Point Manby. No other sib along the Gulf Coast controlled such a wealth of natural resources, except possibly the Galyix-Kagwantan of Kaliakh River and Controller Bay” (de Laguna 1972:465).

In turn, it is clear that the profound abundance of resources within the homelands of the Yakutat *kwáan* and its constituent clans helped to elevate the status of these clans, their leaders, and the community as a whole. Continuing with de Laguna's account of Kwáashk'ikwáan territory,

“For this reason, the chiefs of Yakutat, Yaxodaqet of Raven's Bones House, had great economic power. Informants stressed however, the wisdom with which the chiefs of this name exercised their authority for the benefit of all the people in the Yakutat area” (de Laguna 1972:465).

In the past, the people of Yakutat have taken advantage of the abundant resources available to them along this coast, and in spite of many historical changes they continue to do so today. Here, we seek to illuminate some of the fundamentals of these practices, setting the stage for historical discussions to follow. The original sources we consult are sometimes vague on the specifics of clan associations with, and ownership of, the resources enumerated here – often lumping together references to all Yakutat people when it would be more appropriate to speak of Ginéix Kwáan or Kaagwaantaan territories, practices and resources, for example. For this reason, the narrative below errs on the side of “Yakutat” generalities too. However, it should be understood that all the practices outlined here traditionally operate within the context of traditional Tlingit social organization and clan property rights, as suggested by the preceding sections of this document. In each case, the clans' claims of the territories and resources gave their members unique access, while the chiefs of these clans possessed the profound right, and responsibility, of regulating harvests and ensuring the judicious distribution of harvested resources within their clan, within the larger Yakutat community, and beyond.

While the authors of the present study did not encounter an exhaustive review of species gathered for traditional purposes by Yakutat residents in the past and in recent decades, it is possible to assemble a list of species reported in interviews and written sources for Tlingit communities more generally. Certain key cultural foods harvested by northern Tlingit communities in environments like those found along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline are listed in Table 3 below.

Resources that might be added to this list pending further interviews with Yakutat representatives include: Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), from which Tlingits commonly gather sap, wood, bark, roots, and other materials, and into which they sometimes inscribed cultural markers; a number of intertidal invertebrates (other chiton, clams, crabs, mussels, and the like); and a variety of plants and sea vegetables (including, for example, other species of *Vaccinium*, some of which are known locally as blueberries). Even minerals could be considered potentially harvested natural resources in the study area, including copper and gold.

Table 3: Shoreline Resources Traditionally Gathered by Northern Tlingit Communities

Resource	Tlingit Name	Scientific Name	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
FISH						
Cod, black	Ishkeen	<i>Anoplopoma fimbria</i>	X	X	x	X
Cod, ling	X'áax'w	<i>Ophiodum elongatus</i>		X	x	
Cod, Pacific	S'áax'	<i>Gadus macrocephalus</i>	X		x	X
Eulachon		<i>Thaleichthys pacificus</i>	X			X
Halibut	Cháatl	<i>Hippoglossus stenolepis</i>	X	X	x	X
Herring eggs		<i>Clupea pallasii</i>	X			
Red snapper	Léik'w	<i>Sebastes ruberrimus</i>	X	X	x	x
Salmon eggs	Kaháakw	All salmon species		X	x	
Salmon, chum	Téel'	<i>Oncorhynchus keta</i>		X	x	
Salmon, coho	L'ook	<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>		X	x	
Salmon, king	T'á	<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>	X	X	x	x
Salmon, pink	Cháas'	<i>Oncorhynchus gorbushka</i>		X		
Salmon, red	Gaat	<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>	X	X	x	
LAND MAMMALS						
Beaver		<i>Castor canadensis</i>	X		X	
Black bear	S'EEK	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	X		X	x
Brown bear	Xóots	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	X		X	x
Deer, Sitka Black Tail (transplanted)	Guwakaan	<i>Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis</i>		X	X	x
Mountain goat	Jánwu	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>	X	X	x	X
Porcupine	Xhalak'ách'	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	X	X	X	X
Squirrel, red	Tsálk	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>	X	X	X	X
Wolf	Gooch	<i>Canis lupus</i>	X		x	X
MARINE MAMMALS						
Seal, harbor	Tsaa	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	X	x	X	x

Resource	Tlingit Name	Scientific Name	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Sea lion (whiskers, flipper)	Taan	<i>Eumetopias jubata</i>	X		X	x
BIRDS & EGGS						
Bird eggs (esp. gulls, but also goose, puffin, tern and oystercatcher)	K'wát'	esp. <i>Larus spp.</i>	X			
Ducks	Gáaxw	various	X		x	
Grouse, Spruce	Káax' (female), Núkt	<i>Canachites canadensis</i>	X	x	x	X
Ptarmigan, Willow	X'eis'awáa	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	X	x	x	X
INTERTIDAL RESOURCES						
Clams	Gáal (butter clams)	<i>Saxidomus giganteus and various</i>	X	x	X	X
Chitons (Gumboots)	Shaaw	<i>Katherina tunicata</i>	X	x	X	X
Crab, Dungeness	S'áaww	<i>Cancer magister</i>	X	x	X	X
Crab, King	X'éix	<i>Parlithodes camschatica</i>	X	x	X	X
Mussels (Pacific)	Yaak	<i>Mytilus trossulus</i>	X	x	X	X
Sea ribbon	K'aach'	<i>Rhodymenia pacmata (Palmeria palmata)</i>	X			
Sea cucumber, yane		<i>Stichopus californicus</i>	X	X	x	
Seaweed, black	Laak'ásk	<i>Porphyra spp.</i>	X			
Shrimp	S'éex'át	<i>Pandalus spp.</i>	X	x	x	
TREES & SHRUBS						
Alder, beach or Sitka	Keishísh	<i>Alnus viridus spp. sinuata</i>				
Hemlock (sap, bark, branches)	Yán (sáx = sap')	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>	X			
Willow	Ch'áal'	<i>Salix myrtillifolia</i>	X	X		
PLANTS & BERRIES						
Beach asparagus	Sukkaadzi	<i>Salicornia virginica</i>	X	X		

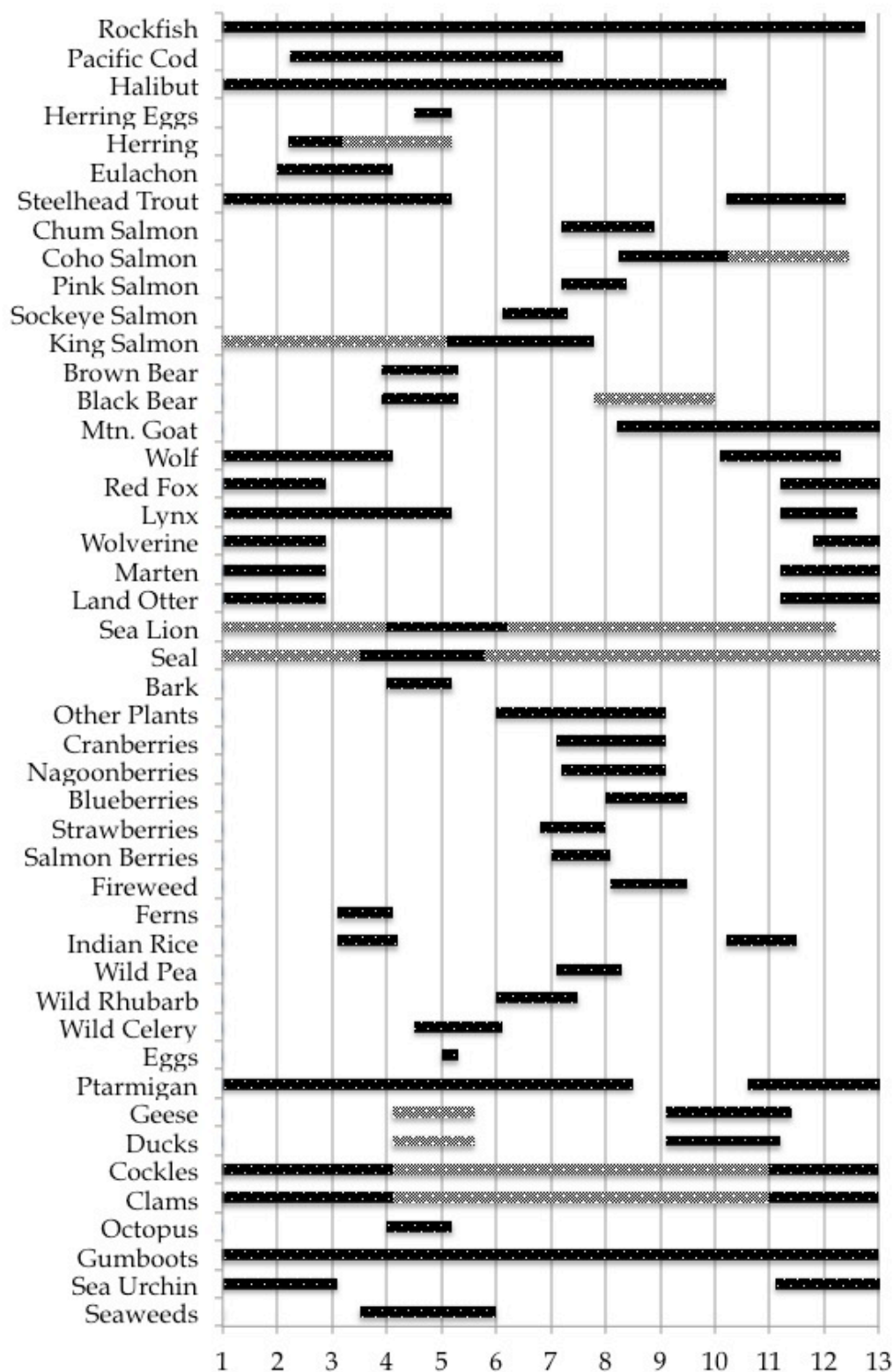
Resource	Tlingit Name	Scientific Name	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Chocolate lily (Indian rice)	Kóox	<i>Fritillaria camschatcensis</i>	X			
Devil's club	S'áxt'	<i>Oplopanax horridus</i>	x	x	x	X
Goose tongue	Suktéitl'	<i>Plantago maritime</i>	X			
Highbush cranberry		<i>Viburnum edule</i>		X	x	
Wild rhubarb	Tl'aak'wách'	<i>Polygonum alaskanum</i>	X	X		
Wild sweet potato (sweet vetch)	Tséit	<i>Hedysarum alpinuum</i>	X	X		
Bearberries (a.k.a. Kinnikinnick)	Tínx	<i>Arctostaphylos uva- ursi</i>		X	x	
Currant, gray	Shaax	<i>Ribes bracteosum</i>		X	x	
Huckleberry, red	Tleikatánk	<i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i>		X		
Nagoonberry	Neigóon	<i>Rubus arcticus</i>		X		
Salmonberry	Was'x'aan tléigu	<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>		X		
Soapberry	Xákwl'i	<i>Shepherdia Canadensis</i>		X		
Strawberry	Shákw	<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>		X		
Wild celery		<i>Vallisneria americana</i>	X			

X = primary season; x = secondary season.

Sources: Schroeder and Kookesh (1988); Thornton (2008); Mathews et al. 1990; Deur and Thornton (2015), and interviews.

Traditionally, in order to make the most of available resources, the Yakutat Tlingit followed a seasonal round between resource harvesting areas, reflecting the seasonal availability of each resource. One effort to document and summarize the Yakutat seasonal round at the time of European contact is reflected in Table 4 below. These seasonal resource harvests were not merely economic activities, but were also valued cultural events, bringing together families and communities on the land, and coordinating peoples' sense of time and place in relation to the annual cycle. They have remained a cornerstone of community life into recent times. The pages that follow provide a broad overview of the traditional resource procurement activities—from hunting to fishing to gathering—of the Yakutat Tlingit from the pre-contact era to today, drawing particular attention to places and resources that now sit within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias.

Table 4: Seasonal Round (adapted from Davis 1996:140)



Dark Shading: Primary Harvest Period
 Light Shading: Secondary Harvest Period

Marine Mammals

Harbor Seal

Marine mammals have long played a central role in the traditional subsistence of Yakutat Tlingit. The unique ecology of their traditional lands lent itself to productive breeding grounds for certain key species, and the abundance of these animals led to their prominence in the Yakutat diet, as well as material culture. The Yakutat hunted such mammals in the seas, lower rivers and estuaries within their territory. Harbor seals and sea otter, in particular, are marine mammals whose importance in Yakutat Tlingit life goes back to their beginnings as a maritime people.

Of all of the sea mammals traditionally hunted by the Yakutat, one stood above the rest in terms of value to the community: the harbor seal. Throughout Tlingit country and beyond, the icy waters of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays have long been famous as prime sealing grounds.⁵³ According to de Laguna,

“The most common and most important sea mammal in Yakutat waters is the Pacific harbor seal, *Phoca vitulina richardii*. This animal was the best represented of any species in the middens at the site on Knight Island. Seals breed particularly on the floating ice in Disenchantment and Icy Bays” (de Laguna 1972:41).

The richness of Yakutat Bay, Disenchantment Bay, and Icy Bay was well known throughout the region, encouraging not just Yakutat sealers, but other communities to sometimes – with the involvement or consent of the chief of resident *k̄wáans* – to seek out seals or obtain seal products in the Yakutat homeland:

“With its glacier-fed, ice-filled waters, Disenchantment Bay was famous as a harbor-seal haulout and rookery. Natives from as far away as Sheet’ká (Sitka) and Jilkáat (Chilkat) *k̄wáans* came here to obtain seal oil and other products through trade and kin networks” (Thornton 2007:6).

The seal harvested in these places was a dietary staple. It was also of much broader social, economic, and cultural significance. Interestingly, the harbor seal was not represented on the Yakutat clans’ crests; however, its importance is reflected in the oral traditions, material culture and, especially later, the economic value of seal meat and seal bounties.⁵⁴ Seal meat and its redistribution have also been very important in helping to reinforce community bonds and in events that are critical to Yakutat social life.⁵⁵ . Yakutat remains among the highest seal harvesting communities in the region today (Davis 1999).

Prior to the contact era and the Yakutat's integration into the cash economy, the Yakutat hunted seals for traditional subsistence purposes only, and each part of the seal was used. As Davis (1996:141) explains,

“All of the seal was utilized. Blubber was rendered for its oil, flippers (which taste like pigs' feet) were cooked and peeled to eat, and even the head was boiled and the scrape meat and brains were eaten. The oil was used as a medicine and as a preservative for meat and berries.”

Collecting seal oil was among the primary reasons for hunting seals in the Yakutat tradition. According to Judy Ramos (2014), “seal oil is very important, and the main reason we got the seal was we need the sea oil for preservatives. But the other parts were also important. The hide and the meat were very important.” Sealing camps often contained huts made partially of sealskin. Seal meat played an important role in the Yakutat Tlingit diet, particularly before the migration of harvestable populations of moose and deer into the homeland of the Yakutat. As Ramos explains about seal,

“In the past, it was much more important, because moose and deer are new to Yakutat area. So in the past, we didn't have that meat source. We didn't have moose. That's new. And we didn't have deer. That's new. So harbor seal played a very much more important part of our diet in the past” (Ramos 2014).

While seals were available elsewhere on the coastal portions of southeastern Alaska, interviewees note that this part of the Yakutat homeland is uniquely appealing for harbor seal, in part because it is traditionally recognized as having the “best” seals. Indeed, places close to the base of the tidewater glaciers were especially popular for sealing, and the sea ice at the base of the tidewater glaciers is said to have the very tastiest seals in the region. Most interviewees for the current project suggested that this was due to their life cycle spent among the icebergs and ice floes of the tidewater glaciers that emanate from Wrangell-St. Elias. Their unique quality was said to be due to a variety of factors, such as colder temperatures, which promote fat production in seals, and the uniquely “pristine” ecological conditions of the glacial environs. De Laguna also encountered these references to Yakutat's superior seals, as well as additional explanations for their quality:

“The superiority of Yakutat food to that of other areas was often cited. ‘Even the seals don't taste good in southeastern Alaska.’ This is because the seals of Yakutat and Icy Bay are believed to get so much more fish to eat than those of southeastern Alaska or Prince William Sound. In other

places they eat mostly ‘beach foods’ and so do not have as good a flavor, it is said” (de Laguna 1972:392; quotes are from de Laguna’s informants).

Being such a key subsistence resource, Pacific harbor seal was said to be a cornerstone of the Yakutat seasonal round, bringing hunters and their families to places very near, and sometimes within, what is today Wrangell-St. Elias. According to Davis (1996:154),

“The most important marine mammal was the harbor seal, and it would be taken whenever the opportunity presented itself. The most productive time was during the early spring when the seals congregated to give birth on floating ice near the calving glacial terminus in Yakutat Bay and Icy Bay, and later as ice retreated, in Disenchantment Bay and Russell Fiord” (Davis 1996:154).



Figure 4 – A seal camp fronting Yakutat Bay, early 20th century. During the seal hunting season, large numbers of people from Yakutat converged along the southeast side of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays at these camps in Kwáashk’ikwáan territory, which together formed sizeable but diffuse seasonal settlements of distinctive cultural, social, and economic importance to that clan and other Yakutat Tlingit. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

Minnie Johnson, de Laguna's informant, also discussed the seasonal traditional subsistence patterns of the Yakutat, saying that in winter, the Yakutat constructed sealskin boots and, at times, hunted for the seals. Yakutat sealers also hunted during the spring season at Icy Bay and on ocean beaches in the vicinity of Yakutat Bay. During summer months, Yakutat seals traveled to sealing camps throughout their territory (de Laguna 1972:360). Many of the individuals interviewed for the current project also spoke of the importance of seal hunting along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, following a seasonal routine. According to the interviewees, the seal-hunting season began as early as March and continued through September when the seals were plentiful (SJ).

Again, the coastline of Wrangell-St. Elias is widely regarded throughout Tlingit and Eyak communities as a center of traditional sealing. Yet, on this dynamic coastline, the best sealing areas were clearly moving over time, as the ice retreated up the bays. These hunting areas are traditionally accessed by seal camps, which also migrated slowly with time, following the edge of the ice. By no later than the late 18th century, most of these camps were established opposite Yakutat Bay from what are today Wrangell-St. Elias lands at the head of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays. Seal camps established on Disenchantment Bay in the 19th century as the ice retreated from that area continue to be used into modern times.⁵⁶

Beyond Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays, the coastline of Icy Bay is recognized as a traditional, if somewhat secondary, center for seal hunting too. Icy Bay is widely reported to have unique geological and ecological conditions that render the bay conducive to Pacific harbor seal breeding:

“It will be remembered that the Kwackqwan of Yakutat claim Icy Bay as part of their territory...At the head of the bay, Tyndall Glacier on the east and Guyot Glacier on the west, both arms of the huge Malaspina-Bering Glacier system, discharge their ice into the water, making this, like Disenchantment Bay, an excellent breeding place for seals” (de Laguna 1972:95).

Traditionally, the inhabitants of Yakutat used a “special sealing canoe (*gudiyÉ* or *gudiyí*), designed for hunting among the ice floes at the heads of Yakutat and Icy Bays, and apparently made nowhere else in Alaska” (de Laguna 1972:339). Interviewees for the current project described these canoes in detail, but also spoke of other, more recent types of craft designed for use in the hunt – a point to be discussed later in this document. As one of de Laguna's consultants reported,

“the sealing canoe was first built only by the original inhabitants of Icy Bay, who kept their canoes hidden in ‘Tabooed Lake’ because they did not want others to learn about them. The ancestors of the Kwackqwan,

however, coming to the coast, eventually discovered the secret, although the local people fought them” (de Laguna 1972:340).

In addition to specialized canoes, sealing required a unique skill set, and Yakutat hunters had particular methods of sealing in the waters of their territory. According to George Ramos Sr.:

“when you have a herd of seal, when they’re on land or on the reef, and you could hear them [makes seal noise]. And that’s when [my uncle] used to call them. And I used to watch him then. He’d make the motion of the seal on the rock. And he said in olden days, they took the hide of the seal and put it over them, imitate a seal. And sometimes you turn sideways like that you know. And then if you see a seal way out, they’d imitate the call of the seal, he would start coming toward them. And he would tell me, ‘Don’t let it get you too close though, because if it gets too close it’s going to look at you from underneath the water and recognize you and leave’” (GR).

Ramos also describes how Tlingit hunters communicated silently while hunting,

“When you hunt, the man in front and the man in back, and when they’re traveling even along the cove, moving along the cove, you never talked when you were hunting. And what you do is you just kind of shake the boat and the man in front will look completely, all the way around. And if he doesn’t see anything that he thinks that you noticed well then he’d look back over his shoulder. You move really slow when you hunt. You don’t move anything. You move real slow and look at him and he’ll tell you what direction that the deer you know, or bear, seal...” (GR).

Traditional sealing required patience as well as a considerable amount of ecological knowledge about the animal’s behavior. Yakutat Tlingit hunters, with a long history of sealing in the waters in and around Yakutat Bay, were uniquely poised for success in their seal hunts.

In addition, it is important to note that Eyak also report independent traditions of sea mammal hunting along this coast. The traditional Eyak territory, located along the coast in the vicinity of the Chugach Mountains, involved a balanced economy that relied on the exploitation of both interior and coastal resources in their homeland (Dumond 1980:37). As such, both marine and terrestrial life served important roles in the diet of the people; the Wrangell-St. Elias coast was distant from those lands occupied by

predominantly Eyak communities at contact, yet there was still a clear Eyak presence. Birket-Smith and de Laguna (1938:107) report Eyak hunting of sea otters as well as harbor or hair seals (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:107). Seals were most often hunted in the summer on the river bars where they gathered in groups – especially along Copper River.⁵⁷ Eyak rarely hunted for seals in the open ocean or on ice, preferring the rivers, though they did occasionally hunt seals on ice in the winter and spring when they were basking in these settings, using harpoons. On what is today the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, Eyak utilized “a small heavy-prowed canoe with a ram” when hunting seals in Yakutat and Icy bays (de Laguna 1990:191). According to de Laguna (1964:17), Eyak placenames are found among the seal camps, reflecting the Eyak admixture within Yakutat but possibly also the presence of Eyak hunting parties,

“The natives told us that before they had guns (which they did not acquire until the end of the 18th century), they were unable to camp above Point Latouche [at the southern end of Disenchantment Bay] because of the floating ice. The main sealing camp was then 3 miles south of the point, at a place called Tlaxata, an Eyak word referring to the proximity of the glacier [presumably Malaspina].”

Literature specifically addressing the Eyak notes that seal hunting and consumption practices among the Eyak were similar to practices noted here for Yakutat Tlingit.⁵⁸



Figure 5 – Drying sealskins create a temporary structure at seal camp on Yakutat Bay, early 20th century. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

The practice of using the entirety of the seal has been an important part of Yakutat tradition. Interviewees for the current study often spoke of traditional protocols to ensure the full use of seal, and efforts to reduce wasteful use of portions of the seal – a tradition reflected in the activities of modern Yakutat hunters, cooks, and craftspeople alike. As stewards of the land before the park was created, Yakutat Tlingit explain that have traditionally observed a number of self-imposed rules and regulations regarding the seal hunt – especially involving rules regarding when seals could be hunted and with what type of hunting implements (de Laguna 1972:374; Abraham 1973:5-6).⁵⁹ The restrictions were designed primarily to protect seals during the critical birthing period, which, if prematurely or overly disturbed, could cause abandonment of the breeding area.

An informant of de Laguna tells a story regarding traditional restrictions surrounding seal hunting practices, particularly related to building fires near seal colonies:

“Yaxodaqet [the Kwackqwan chief at the time of the Russians] used to give the word when the people could go to sealing camp. They didn’t hunt seals until they could see the baby seals on the ice. He would send his nephews up to look, and when they reported that there were young seals, he would send up five or six canoes to hunt seals. He would feast his people, and send word to Situk, Itelio (and Akwe?) Rivers that the season was open and they could come to hunt...Some of the people might be waiting at New Chicago [Eleanor Cove] to move to sealing camp. They would be catching halibut. The ice would be floating down to New Chicago and gradually would move north. But till they could hunt above Egg [Haenke] Island, he would not allow anyone to build a fire on Egg Island. The north wind would blow the smoke down and frighten away the seals.

“Once he gave the order that no one was to make a fire on Egg Island, and that they were to report to him if there was any violation. Then somebody came and told him that someone had made a fire on Egg Island. They said that ‘AndAlstin [*sic*] had built a fire.

“So Yaxodaqet called ‘AndAltsin and asked him if he had broken the law. ‘AndAltsin said Yes, he had made a small fire down by the edge of the water to cook seagull eggs.

“Because you have broken my law, you are going to be anchored at the bottom of the bay with a big stone tied around your neck. And your partner, too. But because you told the truth, you are excused. Don’t do it again!

“Yaxodaqet never made a mistake. He was always right. It wasn’t for himself, but for all his people, everybody, that he made that law” (de Laguna 1972:374-375).

Yakutat Tlingit recognized that the restrictions regarding seal hunting maintained a sort of “balance” with the seals and that, over time, these had positive outcomes for the community of Yakutat and the community of seals alike. They guided traditional sealing practices and arguably ensured the viability of the seal harvest over long periods of time. The power of these traditional regulations is evident in that they are known, and in some cases still observed, by Yakutat hunters into modern times.

Sea Otter

The sea otter, like the harbor seal, was an extremely important traditional resource for the people of Yakutat. As with seal, Yakutat Bay, Disenchantment Bay, Icy Bay, and areas just to the west of the Wrangell-St. Elias coast hold a unique reputation within Tlingit and Eyak territory for sea otter productivity, and as traditional hunting areas for otter. The hunting of otter in these places arguably intensified after European contact and, in spite of this, the area maintained a comparatively robust otter population much later than other parts of the Alaska coast. Only the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention of 1911, which included provisions forbidding sea otter hunting, brought an end to significant hunting along this coast – one of the very few places where sea otter hunting was still commonplace by that time.⁶⁰

Sea otter skins were highly valued by the Yakutat Tlingit for clothing, bedding, and other purposes, and the lands around the Yakutat’s territory were prime sea otter hunting grounds. (Food use was uncommon, but not unheard of: “In historic times the natives sold the pelts and sometimes ate the flesh” [de Laguna 1972:40]). Prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans in the region (and after), the sea otter pelt was the most valued of the furs, and sea otter pelts were highly prized by Alaska Natives from throughout the region (Gibson 1992; Langdon and Worl 1981:83). As such, the pelts were used in economic and political transactions between communities. Efforts to access the sea otter were even instrumental in the formation of Yakutat social relationships, including the unification of the Tlingit and Eyak:

“According to the Tlingit of Yakutat, in the extreme northwest limits of their territory at the time of white contact, the Eyaks and Athabascans who had formerly lived there had been ‘organized’—as they put it—by the Tlingit chief Xatgawet of Dry Bay. Sometime during the 17th or 18th century this chief had made it his business to marry the daughters of wealthy men all along the Gulf of Alaska so that he could capitalize on the raw copper and sea otter and other land furs which he would receive outright or else be allowed to catch in his role as son-in-law or brother-in-law. But note that informants said that the women he married already had matrilineal reckoning. All that Xatgawet did was to endow his wives and their families with Tlingit sib names and crests” (McClellan 1964:8).

By and large, the traditional Yakutat Tlingit sea otter hunt was structured seasonally, allowing access to the otters when they were most available while minimizing conflicts with major subsistence activities centered on other resources such as salmon and seals. The sea otter hunts typically began during the early spring months of April and May, when young male hunters pursued sea otters at the mouth of Yakutat Bay or Icy Bay (Davis 1996:143; de Laguna 1972:360). Especially in inclement weather, the otters sought the shelter of bays and other nearshore waters, making them easy to hunt at those times. In calmer weather, otters often dispersed to relatively open water, where hunting was sometimes undertaken diffusely by ocean-going canoes.

Icy Bay, in particular, is widely celebrated as an important traditional sea otter hunting area. As Olaf Abraham noted,

“[Yakutat people hunted] the sea otter, at a place called by the white man, ‘Icy Bay’, and we call it in Tlingit, ‘Waza yik’ (Inside Mt. St. Elias). Now they brought forth their good canoes that they had dug out of good trees, the reason why they had such strict rules regarding the areas where good trees grew. This is the place (Icy Bay) that they hunted sea otters...Since this was before the time of rifles, they used their bows and arrows, and spears” (Abraham 1973:6).

De Laguna’s interviewees also spoke of hunting for sea otter in Icy Bay. One woman, in particular, discussed how her father camped on the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline on the western shores of Yakutat Bay, before walking the length of the coastline to Icy Bay. In the process, he crossed the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline including Point Manby and the Sitkagi Bluffs:

“A Yakutat man told me how his Kwáckqwan father used to go to hunt at Icy Bay. He had a camp on the west shore of Yakutat Bay ‘across from Point Latouche’ where he would leave his canoe, and from here he would walk along the beach to Icy Bay, past the 80-mile front of Malaspina Glacier. ‘Glacier Point,’ or Sitkagi Bluffs, where the Malaspina reaches the beach to form a cliff about 5 miles long, is also called ‘Glacier Nose’...The river beyond this was QwáLaxuk (or qwátLahaq), probably Fountain Stream. The next river was Nasaxix...probably Yana Stream. Beyond this was LígàSA hín, ‘Tabooed River.’ My informant’s father ‘had log cabins along the way. It took him 6 days to get from the camp near Point Latouche to LígàSA hín. Lígàs means ‘against nature.’ They used to call it LígàSA ‘á, ‘Bad Luck [or ‘Tabooed’] Lake.’ There wasn’t a river there then. First there was a lake. And you had to be quiet as you go by it. That was when people hunted big sea otters from a boat. You couldn’t say a word. You just have to keep quiet. Then the lake broke open.’ This was before

the informant's birth in 1911. The location which he indicated, about longitude 141 °12' W., is at the chain of lagoons, lakes and small streams near the former outlet of the Yahtse River, (East Yahtse River of the chart). Tebenkov's map vii of 1849 shows 'Shoal Lake' at this location, close to Point Riou or 'Shoal Point'" (de Laguna 1972:97).

As the quotations above suggest, Yakutat Tlingit relied on bows, arrows, and spears to hunt sea otters. While other groups (notably the Russians and their conscripts) used guns during the early contact period, Yakutat Tlingit felt that the noise from a gun disrupted the hunt, startling the otters and eliminating the chance for a second shot.⁶¹ De Laguna's informant, Minnie Johnson, also describes how the Yakutat traditionally hunted for sea otters in their territory, prior to the usage of guns:

"So the Yakutat people is ready to go to Yakategy and Icy Bay. In the springtime they go there to hunt sea otter. They went as far as Yakategy. They were hunting for sea otter.

"You know, long time ago there is no such a thing as gun or revolver here in Yakutat. They use bow and arrow and they go up sea-otter hunting with it. But these Tsimshians got all kinds of guns, revolvers, and big guns, and all that...The Yakutat people has to load shells themselves, and use tcùnét [bow and arrow], and get after the sea otter until it is short winded, and that is the way they kill it...

"So they went out together to kill those sea otters. The Yakutat people know how to hunt sea otter. They get after the sea otter until it gets short winded. It's easy to hit them with bow and arrow...The canoe is chasing from one end of the water to the other. Sometimes it goes way out of sight of shore" (quoted in de Laguna 1972:285).

Sea otter hunting is also mentioned as a critical cultural activity in some sources, serving as a venue for multi-generational training of young boys from Yakutat in hunting skills, resource management traditions, and navigation by canoe. Icy Bay has been mentioned frequently in this regard.⁶²

Because of the importance of the sea otter to Yakutat Tlingit, be it for their social, political or economic value, the Yakutat observed strict regulations when hunting for this animal (Stanton 1999:13; de Laguna 1972:379-380).⁶³ The practice of strictly regulating sea otter hunts mirrors that of the seal hunts, and interviewees assert that regulatory practices such as this helped to maintain sustainable sea otter levels over long periods of time.

Other Marine Mammal Hunting Traditions

Other marine mammals were traditionally hunted in similar locations, using similar technologies and protocols. While seals and sea otter were the primary marine mammals the Yakutat hunted in waters along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, a number of other marine mammals were utilized for traditional subsistence purposes:

“Other sea mammals taken included sea lions and porpoise. Sea lion are taken at rookeries and haul-out areas along islands and beaches. Porpoises, which also congregate near glaciers, were hunted with a harpoon similar to harpoons used to take seal and sea lion (detachable harpoon head with line through a hole and a trailing bladder float). Porpoises were hunted mainly for their fine sinew; their meat is very strong-tasting, and was regarded as poor-man’s food” (de Laguna 1972:41).

Some contemporary interviewees mention beluga occasionally being sighted near the glaciers, but the authors encountered no specific references to a regular beluga hunt. It is likely that these animals may have been hunted opportunistically as they appeared along the tidewater glaciers’ margins.

Fish and Shellfish

The waters within and around Yakutat Tlingit territory have provided an abundance of fish since the beginning of remembered time, providing a cornerstone to community sustenance and cultural life. While Yakutat Tlingit fished for a variety of types, salmon was most important to the people. As de Laguna reports,

“Fish are the staff of life for the Tlingit, and of all kinds the salmon (*xat*) is what is meant when the Tlingit speaks of fish. The largest and earliest to spawn is the king, spring, or chinook salmon, *Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*, (*t’a*). Then come the red or sockeye, *O. nerka*, (*gât*); humpback or pink, *O. gorbuscha* (*tcas*); coho or silver *O. kisutch*, (*tl’uk*); and the chum or dog salmon, *O. keta* (*titl’*)” (de Laguna 1972:51).

Salmon played—and continue to play—a fundamental role in the traditional subsistence of Yakutat peoples. All five species of salmon, humpback, coho, king, sockeye and dog, are traditionally fished and consumed as a staple by the Yakutat. Ramos and Mason (2004:17) suggest that before people were able to freeze or jar

salmon, humpback and coho were the key staple salmon species at Yakutat. Of Humpback salmon, de Laguna writes:

“Spawning runs last from late June to September, with the most in July and early August. Of all the streams in the Yakutat area, Humpback Creek (*kwack hini*) is the most important for this fish, and also for the Raven sib that owns this stream and claims the Humpback Salmon as a crest. This fish is known at Yakutat by its Eyak name (*kwack*) as much as by the Tlingit word (*tcas*)” (de Laguna 1972:51).

Coho was of similar importance. It was prized for its ability to dry well, and it, like the humpback, was also represented on the crest of a Raven sib (de Laguna 1972:51).⁶⁴

King salmon was also widely available in Yakutat Tlingit territory, primarily in the larger rivers and in the bays. As de Laguna reports,

“King salmon usually breed only in the larger rivers, such as the Alsek or Copper River, although they have been seen in the Ankau, Situk, Ahrnklin, Italio, and Ustay Rivers. Spawning runs begin about the last of April and may continue until the fall (when the king salmon are particularly fat), which was when the natives formerly caught them. While still in salt water the king salmon usually stays close to shore and may be taken by trolling, but this method was not employed until modern times. Sometimes king salmon appear in Yakutat Bay as early as February, according to one informant” (de Laguna 1972:51).

Comparably, sockeye salmon was also widely available. According to de Laguna, “Almost all of the streams southeast of Yakutat have sockeyes, from the Ankau-Lost River system to the Alsek, except for Dangerous River” (1972:51). Dog salmon, on the other hand, was not as highly valued by Yakutat Tlingit as other available species.⁶⁵

There were a variety of fall, spring and summer fishing camps set up around the Yakutat Tlingit’s territory. For example, in the fall, people fished for pink “humpy” salmon at Humpy Creek, located proximate to Knight Island on the eastern side of Yakutat Bay. Both Yakutat Bay and Russell Fiord were important locations for fishing king salmon. On the southeastern side of Yakutat Bay, opposite the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline, the Yakutat fished Ankau and Ophir Creek for coho in the fall (Ramos and Mason 2004:18). There were a variety of other fishing camps set up in the area, both west and east of Yakutat Bay.

The streams along the southern shore of Wrangell-St. Elias have also widely been appreciated as productive for coho and sockeye salmon. These include Esker, Sudden, Kame, Osar, Manby (sometimes written “Mamby”) Alder, Fountain, and a number of other, mostly smaller streams.⁶⁶ Still, habitat conditions are widely (and even wildly) variable in this turbulent glacial environment:

“Recent advances and retreats of the Malaspina and Guyot Glaciers have affected both the terrestrial and aquatic environments. Lakes and streams are sometimes clear and turn glacial, or vice versa...With changing glacial conditions, new lakes are formed in potholes in the glacial ice, while old lakes drain and disappear” (ADF&G 1984: 71).

Sometimes these have been prime fishing areas, and at other times their productivity has been depressed by natural processes operating at a geologic scale. Families have fished these streams since the most recent glacial retreat and there are oral traditions suggesting fishing during periods prior to historical glacial advances. In recent times, most have fished in the rivers with gillnets and other gear, but shoreline and offshore surf fisheries also have involved set nets and trolling from small boats.

There is a significant complex of traditional activities and beliefs relating to “showing respect” to fish species, especially salmon. Tlingit and Eyak people often discuss the “respect” they seek to demonstrate toward the fish, as well as both ceremonial and tangible actions undertaken to ensure a balanced relationship with the fish that utilize waterways within Yakutat traditional lands. These include active stream monitoring, systems of stream tenure, prohibitions on overharvest, and a variety of other interventions (Thornton, Deur and Kitka 2015; Brock and Coiley-Kenner 2009; Ramos and Mason 2004). To coordinate these activities, salmon fishing is traditionally guided by the “chief” [*Heen S’áati*, “Stream Master;” see Thornton 2008] with ownership rights to the waterway, insuring that labor could be organized and mobilized, and that traditional prescriptions would be followed. The practices Davis (1996:135) explains in relation to the Situk River were likely applied to waterways in and immediately around Wrangell-St. Elias historically:

“All fishing was controlled by the chief, and no fishing began until his permission was given. Early in the spring, long before the salmon began to run, the Situk [River] was prepared for the spawning salmon. Members of the sib would travel upstream to remove any debris from the stream that might hinder the migrating salmon. They usually combined this clean-up operation with the spring bear hunt.”

Similar to practices that fully utilized seal and sea otter, Yakutat Tlingit were careful when harvesting salmon to limit the amount of waste from caught fish, using the bulk of the fish for food. To waste salmon, like any other animal, was taboo and diligently avoided. As Ramos and Mason state, “Tlingits were careful not to waste any part of the salmon. They tried to dry everything but the fins and entrails. When the flesh was eaten, they burned the bones” (2004:30). This represents one of Yakutat’s locally-distinctive traditions as, in other Tlingit communities, fish remains were often placed directly in the water instead. This practice, as with the other Yakutat Tlingit practices discussed above, likely reflects community responses to local environmental conditions (Thornton, Deur and Kitka 2015).

Other Fish and Fish Products

In addition to salmon, the Yakutat had an abundance of other fish in their streams, rivers and seas that they utilized for traditional subsistence purposes. While salmon played a tremendous role in Yakutat traditional subsistence, various sources also discuss the harvest of halibut, rockfish and lingcod, eulachon (or “hooligan”), Dolly Varden char, cutthroat trout, Arctic grayling (in rare locations), herring and other species.

Eulachon is traditionally harvested for oil or smoked. During the late winter and early spring, Yakutat Tlingit fished for eulachon in a variety of locations: the Situk River and Dry Bay are widely documented, but interviewees sometimes referenced possible eulachon fishing on Yakutat Bay. As summarized by Davis,

“Beginning in late February and extending into early March, eulachon start their runs...These fish were and are highly prized by the Yakutat Natives for their rich oil. Pre-1900, eulachon oil was one of the most important trade items along the coast and with the interior natives. Netting of fish could be undertaken with little effort near the Winter Villages located on or near spawning rivers like the Situk” (Davis 1996:139).

Also during the spring season, many Yakutat families traveled up Yakutat Bay to their spring camps, located near Knight Island and Eleanor Cove, where they fished for halibut (de Laguna 1972:360). Herring spawn was also mentioned as a resource traditionally harvested in Yakutat Bay. From as early as March but typically not until May, Yakutat Tlingit gathered Pacific herring eggs in the intertidal zone of Yakutat Bay. Once the herring matured, Yakutat people fished for the adult fish using dip nets, traps, or rakes in the open water areas. During this time, they continued to fish in-between the

harvest of staples for a range of secondary fish species, as well as for marine bottom fish, including halibut (Davis 1996:142-146).

Shellfish

Shellfish have played an important role in traditional Yakutat subsistence since the earliest remembered times, and are also evidenced in the archaeological record. Significantly, Yakutat Tlingit have a long history of harvesting various shellfish in the waters fronting Wrangell-St. Elias, and sometimes along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. According to Davis, “the tidal areas surrounding the islands of Yakutat Bay, as well as the Ankau lagoon system, have always been a storehouse of a dependable variety of intertidal resources, available throughout the year” (1996:139). Some of the key invertebrate species the Yakutat harvested include: blue mussels, black katy chitons, giant chitons, limpets, barnacles, burrowing clams such as the butter or smooth Washington clam, Pacific littleneck, gaper or horse clam, and Nuttall’s or basket cockle. Yakutat Tlingit also traditionally harvest Tanner and Dungeness crabs by spearing them in the shallow waters throughout the summer months. In addition, razor clams could be found in the long, sandy beaches fronting the open ocean coastline within Yakutat Tlingit territories, and are traditionally harvested where available (Davis 1996: 146-51). Yakutat Tlingit also traditionally harvested octopus in the spring, collecting it at low tide. During the summer, Yakutat Tlingit traditionally were at their peak harvesting season, fishing a variety of salmon, hunting, and collecting various plants along Yakutat Bay and beyond.

Gathering shellfish and other intertidal species was an important community activity. As Davis reports, “shellfish resources permitted even the old or enfeebled members, or the very young, of past communities to harvest or have access to food resources, even in times when few other resources were available” (1996:47). Oftentimes, intertidal species would be collected coincidentally with the harvest of other staple species, such as salmon. For example, Minnie Johnson, an interviewee of de Laguna’s, spoke of gathering both salmon and cockles from Humpback Creek, on the eastern side of Yakutat Bay: “Minnie Johnson remembers stopping in spring at the stream [Humpback Creek] to get salmon and big cockles. The latter were 6 inches long and had to be speared because the tide did not go out far enough to uncover them” (de Laguna 1972:65). This matches the descriptions of interviewees consulted in the course of the current study. Their accounts suggest that, in many cases, people did not necessarily harvest shellfish along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline as a standalone activity, but carried out shellfish harvests nonetheless in the course of subsistence salmon fishing, seal hunting, or sea otter hunting historically; in later times, these harvests were often coincident with commercial fishing on the northwestern shore of Yakutat Bay.

Eyak Fishing Traditions

The territory of the Eyak was similarly rich in terms of river and coastal subsistence resources, and fishing has always been a crucial part of traditional Eyak life. Yet, among those communities without significant Tlingit influence, there were noticeable departures from the Tlingit pattern. In particular, according to Workman et al., “there were no exclusive property rights by family, village, or moiety over fish camps or streams” (1974:5-6). While a variety of fish were available for use by the Eyak, traditionally, salmon served as the most important staple, and Copper River has always been the heart of the Eyak salmon fishery. As Workman et al. describe,

“Salmon were the staff of life for the Eyak. Five species were available in the Prince William Sound, and three—King, Silver, and Red—entered the Copper River. The abundance of these fish made it possible to catch an entire year’s supply early in the spring, using dip nets, stone corrals, and scaffolds from which the fish could be speared” (1974:5-6).

Famously large runs of King (Chinook), red (sockeye) and coho (silver) salmon all travel through the waters of the Copper River Delta. The largest salmon runs through the Copper River Delta occur primarily from the start of May through the end of September, with king salmon appearing first, followed by red salmon, and ending with Coho salmon. The Eyak also fished for pink (humpback) and chum (dog) salmon in the Prince William Sound and its tributary streams (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:113-114). The use of the Wrangell-St. Elias coast for fishing by Eyak was relatively minor, with the exception of those who were integral to the Yakutat community, or visiting as guests or kin of Yakutat Tlingit families.

In addition to the five varieties of salmon, the Eyak also fished for trout and whitefish in clear lakes within the region. Eulachon, cod, herring and halibut were all taken from Prince William Sound. Trout, whitefish, cod and halibut were traditionally fished with a hook and line, while salmon and eulachon were fished using a variety of methods, including traps, dip nets and spears. During the winter, from February to April, eulachon was fished from the Copper River and its tributaries at night, and young men also fished for halibut during the wintertime. Eyak sometimes set fish traps under the ice during the winter. In the spring and summer, herring were fished and herring spawn was collected (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:121; de Laguna 1990:190-191; USDOINPS 1998a:44; Workman et al. 1974:5-6).

In addition to relying on fish for subsistence, Eyak harvested a variety of shellfish, including razor clams, cockles, littleneck (butter) clams and mussels. Eyak not only ate the shellfish they collected from the littoral zone, but also used the shells in a variety of ways, including utilizing clamshells as knives or scrapers for removing hair from skins.

Clams were traditionally dried on strings and stored in boxes of oil to preserve them for the fall (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:122; de Laguna 1964:104; 1972:55; 1990:190; USDOINPS 1998a:44).

Terrestrial Animals

In addition to hunting seals and sea otter in the bays and along the shoreline, Yakutat Tlingit traditionally hunted a number of terrestrial animals in and around what is today Wrangell-St. Elias. Various game animals were available in the Yakutat territory. In spite of (and perhaps because of) the dynamism of the glacial landscape in the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias, the area has been recognized as having a rich and varied range of terrestrial animals – a point made by Yakutat Tlingit, but also by some of the earliest non-Native writers describing this area.⁶⁷ The relative abundance of terrestrial game in this area meant that these land-going animals played an important, if sometimes secondary, role in traditional Yakutat Tlingit subsistence practices associated with Wrangell-St. Elias in the community's early history. What follows is an overview of some of the principal species mentioned in reference to this early period.

Mountain Goat

Yakutat Tlingit have a long history of hunting for mountain goats in the rugged landscape of the Yakutat region. Mountain goat meat and tallow were among the objectives of these hunts, but the wool of the goats is also a highly prized traditional product in Tlingit communities, being used in woven blankets, regalia, and other items. Ted Valle comments on the use of goat wool, saying, “another thing we had a lot of was goats, goat wool, because there's goats all over the place. So we had a lot of that” (TV).

In addition to eating the meat and utilizing the hide, interviewees for the current study mention that mountain goat fat that they obtained at Wrangell-St. Elias had a particular property that kept hunters warm while on the move:

“We used to use goat fat, mountain goat....when you take and open it up, you have to take the whole hide really tight and then take a sharp knife and just barely cut the skin because if you took and got your knife into the fat, it would stick...Then when we'd go hunting, we'd take one of those or part of it you know, and put it on the outside pocket. And then when we were in the ice hunting because you'd get cold in the ice sometimes, really cold, even dressed you know. Take a little bit of that mountain goat fat... put it in your mouth, take about a minute, two minutes: warm. Just like I

don't know, indescribable how warm you just feel, and comfortable, and you'd feel comfortable" (SJ).

Mountain goats, like other animals used by Yakutat Tlingit for traditional subsistence, were processed in such a way that various parts of the animal were used for a range of purposes, including not only the meat and tallow but also the horns and wool, thereby rendering the goat valuable in more ways than one.

Mountain goat hunts, similar to marine mammals and fish, were the focus of a specialized seasonal harvest that historically involved large numbers of the men from the community. In this case, the goats were pursued most often during the late summer, when snowmelt allowed hunters to travel into high-elevation areas and goats were readily seen grazing on middle-elevation slopes; they were also hunted into the autumn, when snows sometimes pushed the mountain goats to even lower grazing areas. Occasionally, in especially heavy snows, mountain goats could be found along the beaches.⁶⁸ Both the Chaix Hills and the Karr Hills within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias are noted to be locations where mountain goats were traditionally hunted. According to de Laguna,

“On the eastern shore, above the sheltered waters of the Riou Bay, is a low island, ‘Egg Island,’ beyond which are the present mouths of the Yahtse and Caetani Rivers, both emerging from beneath the Malaspina ice field. To the north, beyond the head of the bay, lie the Chaix Hills and the Karr Hills, where mountain goat are hunted and where bear and ptarmigan may also be encountered” (de Laguna 1972:95).

Interviewees for the current project describe a generally “opportunistic” pattern of mountain goat hunting, involving a variety of rocky areas known to be good hunting areas along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast – including, but certainly not limited to, Chaix and Karr Hills. They also note that goat hunting locations have changed, and generally become more numerous as the ice has retreated along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. This was said to be true at Icy Bay, a very popular hunting area for goat in recent generations, in addition to Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays.

Mountain goat hunting was widely appreciated to be a dangerous activity (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:100). As such, there were specific techniques utilized to pursue the goats, often involving struggle with the goats in close quarters and on steep, rocky slopes. Not surprisingly, dogs were often used as part of these hunts. De Laguna discusses how Yakutat used dogs to hunt for mountain goats in and around Icy Bay:

“The mountainside where one hunts goats is called ‘place where one chases things’ (‘a’At dAketl xeye). Such places are across Nunatak Fjord from Shagg Cuff, Mud Bay by Hidden Glacier in Russell Fiord, Flat Mountain (LAGut) at the head of the Ahrnklin, Icy Bay, and ‘way behind the mountains’ behind Icy Bay.

“‘Dry Bay,’ Antlen, Situk, and here [Yakutat]—each got their own territory [for hunting mountain goats]. When they meet they try to beat one another.’ This may happen when two parties each start the same goat and their dogs are chasing it. ‘They know how their own dogs bark. Then both sides start running.’ Such encounters might lead to trouble” (de Laguna 1972:366; quotes are from an interviewee of de Laguna).

Unlike their conventions relating to sea otter hunting, Yakutat goat hunters quickly embraced the use of guns for mountain goat. As Thornton (2007:4) explains,

“This bay [Icy Bay] was prized especially for its concentrations of mountain goat and seal. In the spring, mountain goats would present themselves on the cliffs above the northwest shore of the bay in such a way that, when shot, they tumbled right down to the water for easy retrieval.”

Similar mountain goat hunting techniques are widely reported in other Tlingit communities and, indeed, in many other portions of the Northwest Coast (Deur and Thornton 2015).

Other Terrestrial Mammal Hunting and Trapping

Yakutat Tlingit also traditionally harvest a range of other terrestrial mammals in and around what is today Wrangell-St. Elias. Commonly reported species include bears, fox, and beaver. Bears are often noted for their role in the traditional subsistence of Yakutat Tlingit, in addition to being significant as a clan crest and in Yakutat oral tradition. Yakutat Tlingit have a long history of hunting bears, both black and brown. Bears were particularly important in the Yakutat diet prior to the introduction of moose into the area. Traditionally, bears were widely available in the Yakutat’s homeland, inhabiting the coniferous forests on the Yakutat foreland, as well as the foothills of the mountains, and along the southeastern shore of Yakutat Bay as well as Russell Fjord. Bear hunting was also reported in the Wrangell-St. Elias area – the Malaspina Glacier area being said to be an especially good place to hunt Dall brown bear.⁶⁹ Springtime is often reported as the prime time for bear hunting – allowing hunting of shoreline bears that have been fattening up on browse along the strand but have not yet started eating

fish, which affects their flavor. Yakutat Tlingit also sometimes hunted for hibernating bears during wintertime (de Laguna 1972:360). In literature specifically addressing the Eyak, similar hunting practices are noted.⁷⁰

Yakutat Tlingit have also traditionally hunted, trapped and traded in beaver pelts. In addition to using beaver fur for clothing, Yakutat Tlingit traditionally use beaver teeth for other items, such as ornamentation and in the construction of woodworking tools. Traditional Yakutat Tlingit territories in the Wrangell-St. Elias region, particularly the area west of Icy Bay, were said to have had abundant beaver populations. According to de Laguna,

“The Galyix-Kagwantan lands west of Icy Bay were traditionally rich in beaver, and Yakutat Indians visiting their relatives at Kaliakh River or Controller Bay might trap them. The Yakutat also used to buy beaver pelts at settlements near the mouth of the Copper River or at Nuchek in Prince William Sound to sell to their southern relatives or to the fur traders. It is probably significant that it was the Galyix-Kagwantan who had the Beaver as a crest” (de Laguna 1972:38).

De Laguna also discusses different clans' use of the coastal area just south and west of Wrangell-St. Elias for hunting, beaver and sea otter, in particular:

“This area [around the Kaliakh River, west of Cape Yakataga] is traditionally rich in furs, especially beaver and sea otter, but was too small to support a large population. In consequence, the Tcicqedi (Eagles), ‘cousins’ of the Kagwantan, who had followed them, had to live ‘farther west in the swampy place.’ Later, when the Kagwantan multiplied and spread into Controller Bay and to Bering River, they continued to use the Kaliakh country for hunting” (de Laguna 1972:101).

Fox are also present in the region and are traditionally hunted or trapped for their furs along the margins of Yakutat Bay. As de Laguna noted,

“Foxes have been taken to some of the islands in Yakutat Bay both by natives and Whites for fur-farming ventures, yet the fox must be much older here than these imported animals. Our informants spoke of trapping and snaring them at Dry Bay and at Yakutat, and described the aboriginal devices used to take them, mentioning clothing made of the pelts and robes of fox paws. There was even a taboo against giving the tails to dogs, suggesting an ancient acquaintance with the fox. Israel Russell noticed the tracks of foxes, as well as of bears, wolves, and

mountain goats, on the Malaspina Glacier. Natives told Goldschmidt and Haas about trapping foxes near Dry Bay, Italio River, Point Manby, and Katalla” (de Laguna 1972:37).

Yakutat people also hunted for fox along the margins of the Gulf of Alaska, at least as far west as the village of Jilkáat, located below Katalla at the mouth of the Bering River where it enters Controller Bay (Thornton 2007:5).

In addition to the animals discussed above, there were various other terrestrial fur-bearing animals that Yakutat Tlingit harvested traditionally. Animals often mentioned include wolf, pine marten, wolverine, ground squirrel, weasel, gopher and mink among others. These species were primarily trapped during the wintertime (Davis 1996:147). Each species’ furs were valued differently:

“The most valued furs for clothing in the old days were sea otter, wolf, and beaver, while ‘marten is the highest class of fur,’ used for clothing by the rich and noble. Other valuable furs were those of the ground squirrel or gopher (tsAlk), obtained from the interior. Mink is a ‘low class skin,’ because the mink is associated with the evil land otter, and some informants even denied that mink was worn in the old days. However, an elderly man mentioned jackets and caps of mink fur, and one woman said she had even made such a cap for her 6-months old son” (de Laguna 1972:436).

Martens, weasels, ermine and mink were reportedly trapped along the coastal areas, including at Yakutat and Dry Bay, as well as the area between Point Manby and Esker Creek (de Laguna 1972:38, 59). Before contact, these furs were important in both local use and in intertribal trade; following Russian contact, they would be key to early Yakutat Tlingit entry into the non-Native cash economy.

Birds and Bird Eggs

While birds provide less caloric value than mammals, their meat nevertheless played a role in Yakutat traditional subsistence, and the meat and eggs also have a variety of cultural and ceremonial values for Yakutat Tlingit that persist in various ways into the present day. In the fall, typically from September to October, Yakutat Tlingit have traditionally hunted for an assortment of birds, including waterfowl and other migratory birds that used the western flyway to migrate south for the winter. The most frequently hunted birds include Canada geese, White-fronted geese, sandhill cranes and

several species of duck, including: green-winged teal, mallard, pintail, goldeneye, and scaup (Davis 1996:146). Different varieties of birds are typically hunted in different parts of the Yakutat Tlingit territory:

“Birds were hunted along the ponds and streams of the wetlands within the muskeg and coastal meadows of the foreland. Ptarmigan were hunted in the summer and early fall within the treeline and alpine tundra areas and later along the glacial margins, outwash plains, and river banks of the coastal meadows. Waterfowl were hunted near and on ocean sloughs, lakes, protected open ocean waters, and along the open flats near the mouths of rivers” (Davis 1996:153).

The rocky cliffs on Haenke Island, just across Disenchantment Bay from the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline, were another popular location to hunt for birds such as gulls, Arctic terns and kittiwakes. The Yakutat also carefully monitored these birds so they could collect their eggs along the beaches, typically in May (Davis 1996:143).

Indeed, seagull eggs long served as a seasonal staple food for many Yakutat Tlingit. With the return of spring and the arrival of warmer weather, comes the anticipation of fresh seagull eggs. Interviewee Skip Johnson describes the ‘Egg Weather’ that signifies the beginning of the egg harvest, usually in May:

“What happens is the seagull lays eggs, and I don’t know whether the weather causes the seagulls to lay eggs or what. But the seagull is called Kéitladi[?] [a Tlingit term] that means ‘Egg Weather.’ And...the reason that it’s called ‘Egg Weather,’ is because when the seagulls lay eggs, this time of year it’s almost always the same weather. It rains a little bit and then it sunshines, then a little bit of rain, then it sunshines” (SJ).

Traditionally, Gull Island in Icy Bay and Egg Island in Disenchantment Bay are both considered highly desirable areas for egg collecting (SJ; VD). Lena Farkus also spoke of an adjacent island called, “The Women’s Egg Island,” saying,

“at Egg Island had another little island next to it, you know connected and they called that ‘The Women’s Egg Island.’ Wouldn’t let the women go up on the high one...They would say, Shaw-ud-ka-dee [Shaawu Kadee]” (LF).

While the islands in Icy and Disenchantment Bays have been the most popular locations to gather seagull eggs, Yakutat Tlingit also collected the eggs on glacial moraines

around Yakutat Bay, within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias, where gulls often nest. As de Laguna reports, “People used to gather sea gull eggs from the eastern, moraine-covered part of Hubbard Glacier, ‘Black Glacier’...This nesting place was called ‘Eggs’ Town” (de Laguna 1972:69).⁷¹ These gathering areas likely changed over time, reflecting the sometimes ephemeral and transitory nature of moraines along the north shore of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays generally.

There is significant documentation of conservation practices employed over generations in the course of seagull egg gathering (Hunn et al. 2002; 2003). While specific conventions may have varied between families and individuals, interviewees suggest that the fundamental concepts of foregoing egg harvests to ensure continuity of the gull population is nearly universal. Gull egg harvesting, meanwhile, is understood to keep the gull populations at a steady and sustainable level. Interviewees, especially Mary Ann Porter, noted Yakutat Tlingit oral traditions of burning or otherwise clearing vegetation from gull nesting islands near the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, which was said to enhance gull and egg numbers, in part by reducing predation by Eagles and other perching birds of prey which might inhabit mature trees on nesting site (MP).

The Yakutat Tlingit continued to hunt for birds and harvest seagull eggs after contact with Euro-Americans:

“In the early historic period...waterfowl were taken on their spring migration north to breed and raise their young through the long summers along the northern tundra regions of Alaska. They were also hunted as they headed south to winter. Gulls, Arctic terns, and the kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla pollicaris*) nest along the rock cliffs of small islands, mainly on Haenke Islands, and on the beaches of the area, where their eggs were/are collected” (Davis 1996:143).

Certainly seagull egg gathering was an important part of traditional Yakutat life in the pre-contact period, and it is a practice that has continued into modern times, as will be discussed in a latter part of this document. Seagull egg harvesting was a community activity that brought people together, and sharing the eggs within and between households was—and is—a large part of the tradition. Similar hunting and harvesting practices have been noted in literature specifically addressing the Eyak.⁷²

Plant Foods

In addition to having a wealth of marine and terrestrial animals, fish and birds for sustenance, Yakutat Tlingit territory possesses a dynamic and diverse assortment of

plants that are also integral to uses of lands now in Wrangell-St. Elias. The retreating glaciers of the Wrangell-St. Elias coast provided a range of successional environments, from lichen-covered bedrock to dense forests characteristic of the larger Northwest Coast region. As de Laguna notes, “The vegetation along the edge of the Malaspina Glacier in the Icy Bay area formed a dense forest of spruce, alders, cottonwood, salmonberries, huckleberries, devilclub, and ferns (mostly *Asplenium*)” (de Laguna 1972:98).

Berry picking has been a significant resource harvest tradition in Tlingit communities generally, and Yakutat is no exception. Interviewees speak of a diverse range of berries sought along the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline: strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, nagoon berries, soapberries, salmon berries, huckleberries, cloudberries and others. Berry picking was said to be concentrated at key places and reflected seasonal availability, with the summer being the most plentiful season:

“The summer months were the most active for the inhabitants of the Yakutat area. By this time, most of the people had left their Winter Villages and were now living in summer subsistence camps dispersed within their individual sib territories. Most of their activities revolved around the harvesting of salmon and the collecting of berries and other edible plants. Division of labor placed women with the responsibility for the collection of edible plants and berries. Berries and other plant resources could be collected either alone or in a cooperative venture by many members of a family unit” (Davis 1996:145).

Strawberries, in particular, were a traditional seasonal staple for the Yakutat Tlingit and grow well on the shorelines and recently established herbaceous plant communities of the deglaciaded coast. Yakutat interviewees and non-Native observers alike report rich strawberry patches in what is today Wrangell-St. Elias, which are traditionally utilized by the people of Yakutat. Interviewees for the current project, as well as those who spoke with de Laguna, mention that the shoreline of the Wrangell-St. Elias coast included a number of good gathering areas, including Point Manby. During Russell’s 1893 expedition to the Chaix Hills, too, he noted strawberry patches on the beaches in proximity to the Yahtse River:

“In July and August it is one great strawberry meadow, where luscious berries may be gathered by the bushel. The Yakutat Indians visit this natural garden in summer and they have temporary houses near at hand in which they live during the strawberry season. Bears, too, are fond of the fruit, and their trails were seen everywhere through the berry covered plain and along the adjacent shore” (quoted in de Laguna 1972:98).

Strawberries grow in other portions of the Yakutat Bay shoreline. Indeed, they figure prominently in Kaagwaantaan narratives regarding the clan's first arrival on Yakutat Bay, in which Knight Island is described as "just a big strawberry patch" where the arriving Kaagwaantaan chief's family is not allowed to pick berries until the island is duly purchased with Copper River coppers.⁷³

Seaweed, both black and ribbon varieties, is another resource traditionally harvested along the shoreline of Yakutat Bay, and presumably within Wrangell-St. Elias. Like many other resources, seaweed was not the focus of independent resource harvesting trips, but was often gathered as part of fishing excursions. While details were sparse, it is clear that the broader range of plant materials traditionally harvested by Yakutat Tlingit and enumerated in Table 3 have long been harvested coincidental with other activities in what is today Wrangell-St. Elias: these would include chocolate lily, devil's club, willow, goose tongue, and many others. Trees, too, were sometimes peeled for bark (in the case of yellow cedar) or for edible cambium (in the case of W. hemlock) or sap (especially spruce), practices likely employed in this area.⁷⁴ Similar practices are reported in those literatures specifically addressing the Eyak.⁷⁵

Specialized wood gathering was another important traditional resource harvest activity, integral to other resource procurements such as hunting, requiring, for example, arrows that were typically constructed of wood. The lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias are widely acknowledged to possess unique wood resources, especially the yellow cedar groves on Icy Bay, which are sometimes visited specifically to obtain materials for traditional tools and crafts: "The arrow (tcunét; Boas, 1917, p. 126, tcùnét) was of local spruce or of yellow cedar obtained at Icy Bay or, less often, of red cedar imported from Prince Rupert" (de Laguna 1972:368).⁷⁶ Not only is Icy Bay cedar durable and readily workable, but it also floats – a critical attribute for people who required arrows for hunting on the ocean, rivers, and estuaries. According to de Laguna, the arrow used to hunt for sea otter was the same used to hunt terrestrial animals, though the wood shaft was selected because of its flotation ability:

"The harpoon arrow had a shaft about 3 feet long, preferably of red cedar because this is said to float best. This wood had to be imported from southeastern Alaska or even from Prince Rupert, we were told, but sometimes yellow cedar from Icy Bay or local spruce was used" (de Laguna 1972:381).⁷⁷

The Yakutat area is very highly regarded in the Tlingit and Eyak worlds as a place ideal for gathering materials for baskets and other traditional crafts. In the uniquely sandy outwash plains and beaches of both the Yakutat forelands and the Yakutat Bay shoreline, spruce roots are said to grow long and straight, making them ideal for use in the making of basketry, hats, mats, and many other items. Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition

suggests that the Tlingit practice of using spruce roots in baskets may have first originated in the Yakutat area (MP). So too, sedges and other “grassy” species grow in abundance in the wetlands within this sandy soil matrix, especially on dunal lakes and lagoons, also facilitating the growth of long, straight roots that have been used in this way.

Similar to regulations placed on the harvest of animal resources, the Yakutat Tlingit placed restrictions on the harvest of some plant types, including certain trees on their lands. As Olaf Abraham describes, a sense of respect guided Tlingit regulations regarding these non-animal resources:

“They lived in respect also to the land they lived on...What was on their land was taken care of and protected. A tree was taken care of according to their rules, where there were good trees these were especially protected. These good trees were used for canoes and their homes. If a man was caught taking a tree from the special areas he was punished by the house chief and his council by taking from him all of his hunting equipment” (Abraham 1973:45).

Strict regulations with severe consequences, such as is described by Abraham above, helped to ensure that protective practices regarding flora and fauna were observed by all members of the community.

Minerals, Rocks and Shells

Copper

Among the many resources that the Yakutat Tlingit possessed in unique abundance, copper stood apart. Like seals and sea otter, access to copper has been key to the prominence and wealth of the Ginéix Kwáan or Kaagwaantaan, as well as the larger Yakutat community of which they are a part. Traditionally, the Yakutat Tlingit highly valued copper as both a ceremonial item, as well as an important item for trade. As Emmons notes,

“Before the coming of the white man, when the natives had no iron, the Chilkat and Hoon-ah made long canoe trips each summer to Yakutat, to trade with the Thlar-har-yeek [Laaxaayík] for copper, which was fashioned into knives, spears, ornaments, and tinneh, and which again were exchanged with the more southern tribes for cedar canoes, chests, food boxes, and dishes” (Emmons 1911:297).

Various sources suggest even broader use of copper in ceremonial regalia, in arrowheads, and for other purposes.⁷⁸

Tinneh or “coppers”—stylized shields made of copper—were among the most important items to result in the trade in copper by the Yakutat Tlingit. These shields are of great traditional importance along much of the Northwest Coast. Being crafted meticulously from a relatively rare metal, understood traditionally to be spiritually potent, they were (and still are) of extraordinary value, being used in ceremonies and economic transactions wherever they were found. These coppers were often made from copper found in and around Wrangell-St. Elias by the communities of the region, and appear in the oral traditions of Yakutat, Cordova, and beyond (e.g., de Laguna 1972:899–900; Swanton 1909:347–68). Copper was also widely reported to be worn by the people of these villages, especially by people who were “rich and noble,” both as ornamentation and to confer “good luck” (de Laguna 1972:445, 664; cf. Cooper 2011).

There are traditional copper mining areas reported just beyond the southern boundary of the park and west of Icy Bay, controlled by the Kaagwaantaan (TV). Smaller copper sources were suggested within what is today the south coast portion of Wrangell-St. Elias, though these quarries were depicted as largely small and ephemeral. Yet, the people of Yakutat, by virtue of their unique connections with the Athabaskan-speaking peoples of the interior, were well-situated to be the middlemen in a trade of copper from the north to eager “buyers” from the entire Northwest Coast region to the south. A large proportion of the native copper that passed through Yakutat came from trade with the Ahtna groups from the Chitina Basin, who were actively quarrying copper in lands now within the park.⁷⁹ In return, the people of Yakutat provided items that were relatively rare in the interior. According to Pratt,

“the Ahtna are believed to have obtained sealskins, seal oil, dried seaweed, and cakes of dried strawberries from the Tlingit in exchange for copper, tanned moose and caribou skins, furs, porcupine quill work, and spruce gum” (Pratt 1998:82-84).

As discussed elsewhere, the importance of copper to the Yakutat Tlingit is suggested in origin accounts of their clan ancestors using copper from the interior to first acquire the rights to claim and occupy lands on Yakutat Bay. De Laguna describes the worth of copper in trading for property in and around Yakutat Bay:

“Rights to the Humpback Salmon Stream [Humpback Creek] were purchased by the ancestors of the Kwackqwan with sea otter furs and coppers or with a large canoe hung with seven coppers on each side, each copper worth 10 slaves. Swanton’s informant had them buy the land with only one copper, worth 10 slaves. The Drum House Teqwedi bought their

lands at Ahrnklin River with one copper, as long as from the finger tips to the chin, worth 10 slaves” (de Laguna 1972:354).⁸⁰

Likewise, as Pratt notes,

“Copper’s importance to the Tlingit is perhaps best expressed by the report that Ahtna who relocated from the Chitina River to the Yakutat area purchased land along Yakutat Bay in return for copper” (Pratt 1998:84).

The name *Ginéix Kwáan*, used as a synonym for *Kwáashk’ikwáan*, implies the people who have or acquire copper, attesting to this origin and its deeper historical significance. Other metals, such as iron, would later take on significance within the Yakutat Tlingit, but copper’s importance has been culturally and economically singular.⁸¹

Pigments and Stones

The Yakutat traditionally gathered clays, ochre and other types of pigments within the boundaries of what is today Wrangell-St. Elias. These materials were so important to Yakutat Tlingit, that they are sometimes referenced in Tlingit placenames. For example, according to de Laguna,

“The huge Hubbard Glacier, Second Glacier...that thrusts its ‘nose’...into the elbow bend at the junction of Disenchantment Bay and Russell Fiord, is usually known simply as the ‘Big Glacier’...the bay at its west end is *Wéyna ta*, named for the white clay (*wéyna*; Harrington: *wénaa*), that is found here. This is ‘something that grows on the rocks. They use it for paint,’ Harrington was told. The name of the bay is literally ‘gypsum-inside-place’ (Harrington: *wéenna-atthAh*)” (de Laguna 1972:69).

Red paint (*léx^w*), made of both hematite and red ochre, could be found at various locations around the Yakutat Tlingit territory, including locations at the head of Disenchantment Bay, and at other locations around the perimeter of Yakutat Bay. A location between Turner and Hubbard Glaciers was especially mentioned as a source of paint for ceremonial face painting.⁸² Paints were also employed by the Tlingit to protect their faces from harsh sun or mosquitos. The Yakutat have a longstanding tradition of using both these face paints and protective paints, as is evidenced by archaeological sites, such as those in the Yakutat Bay area (de Laguna 1964:116-117).

The Yakutat Tlingit also traditionally collected different types of rocks as part of their resource harvests, using them in the construction of a variety of tools such as pestles, hammers, or whetstones.⁸³ Yakutat Tlingit traditionally utilized a variety of rocks, including but not limited to: chert, marble, sandstone, claystone, white quartz, mica, and rock crystal (de Laguna 1972:413). These were often obtained from glacial moraines in and around what is today Wrangell-St. Elias, with various precautions to demonstrate “respect” (*yáa at wunei*, in Tlingit) for the glaciers and their associated landforms. According to de Laguna,

“Greenstone and green chert were used especially for adz blades. Another name for such rocks was ‘weight on the glacier’ (*sitka xuwu* or *xuwu*, literally ‘pin or peg on the glacier’). Supernatural precautions had to be observed when obtaining pieces of these rocks, although I did not learn exactly what they were, and my informants at times seemed to confuse the hard greenstone with a soft greenish shale used for whetstones. Probably both occurred as morainic materials and both required special observances. They were found in Icy Bay, and probably also in Disenchantment Bay. When taking the rock, one had to ‘trade for it’ or ‘borrow it,’ presumably leaving some gift in its place, or else ‘steal’ or ‘hide it away’— ‘otherwise, it’s bad for you. I don’t know why.’ The penalty was, I believe, bad weather” (de Laguna 1972:413-14).

Accounts specifically referencing Eyak resource harvests provide a similar picture of both the traditional uses of copper and other mineral resources; references to mineral extraction within the study area are largely absent.⁸⁴

Traditional Yakutat Tlingit Stewardship of Natural Resources

As the preceding pages sometimes note, the Yakutat Tlingit have not only occupied and utilized the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline for many generations, but harvested resources in a way that contemporary interviewees assert were “sustainable” and allowed for the resiliency of human, animal, and plant communities alike. Moreover, some note that their ancestors have actively managed resources and even played a role in shaping ecological processes along this coast. Interviewees note that human effects on the biota of the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline have been evident for a very long time, even if they are often eclipsed by the monumental geological forces that continuously reshape this coast. While human use can certainly negatively impact the ecology of an area, many Tlingit interviewees report that their ancestors were ecological stewards in their own right, creating and maintaining habitat conditions for key species abundance and

sustainment, and that traditional resource harvesting can and should play a role in ecosystem maintenance and conservation (Thornton, Deur and Kitka 2015; Ramos and Mason 2004).

According to traditional Tlingit cosmology, all living things are considered to possess a spirit, and conservation practices are a means to express respect for the spirit and sentience of all harvested resources. By showing “respect” in various ways, material and immaterial, human communities were able to maintain positive and mutually-sustaining relationships with plants, animals, and fish species. In some cases, this involved basic efforts to avoid overexploitation. Moreover, as stewards of the landscape with specific obligations to the clan and community, chiefs and others were compelled to make resource harvest decisions that considered long time horizons, and the well-being of future generations of descendants that would depend directly upon the same resources and resource territories. Interviewees report that this practice of harvesting only what was necessary—either for oneself or a shared group—helped to maintain sustainable harvests in the Yakutat homelands. Thus, interviewees note that Yakutat Tlingit traditional subsistence hunters, fishers and gatherers have been acutely aware of the interdependency of environmental elements of which they are active participants. As such, their ancestors developed traditional ecological knowledge and conservative harvest methods to foster the long-term integrity of the natural resources on which they depend. By their accounts, these conservative practices developed as a means to both respect these resources, and to protect the productivity of the resources for Tlingit consumption. In turn, they suggest, animal populations, such as salmon, seagulls, seals, sea lions and many shellfish species, have come to partially depend upon traditional Tlingit harvest methods to remain healthy—or, at least, to reach some sort of population equilibrium.

In addition to general practices surrounding the regulation of quantities of harvests, Yakutat Tlingit also employed more specialized conservation measures, as was discussed above. For example, the selective harvesting of seagull eggs, interviewees maintain, helped to control the gull populations to keep them at sustainable levels. Similarly, the regulations regarding the limiting of the sealing season, also discussed above, were believed by interviewees to help maintain sustainable seal populations. The Yakutat Tlingit traditionally maintained strict proscriptions on hunting at inappropriate times, in a manner that both demonstrated respect to the seals but also ensured their continuous presence along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. Stories of punishments doled out by Tlingit leaders to members of their clan for disregarding sealing regulations were widespread among the Yakutat and helped to reinforce these regulations. Similarly, as de Laguna reported, chief-imposed regulations regarding sea otter hunting also limited the hunting season and the number of animals Yakutat could take in one season. Even plant harvests were managed by these principles, such as the protection of certain trees from harvest. These types of self-imposed regulations regarding the harvesting of wildlife, interviewees maintain, were a way to keep

harvests sustainable and demonstrate what the Yakutat Tlingit view as their cultural predispositions and capacities toward stewardship and “taking care” of their traditional lands. While this theme is not explored in detail within the current report, it is certainly a topic that has been receiving growing attention by the National Park Service (e.g., Ramos and Mason 2004) and deserves additional attention in future NPS research.

Transitions

EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND THE “REDISCOVERY” OF YAKUTAT

The transitions experienced by the people of Yakutat from the time of European contact to the time of park creation were profound, transforming not only Yakutat Tlingit society but also the community’s relationships with the lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.⁸⁵ Situated at a continental pivot point, with the tremendous navigational landmark of Mount St. Elias as its beacon and anchor, the Yakutat Bay area became a stopover of colonial explorers, a place where international interests competed for supremacy, and where the famously bountiful sea otter colonies of the Yakutat coastline captured the attention of fur traders from Russia, Spain, England and beyond. The first century of that exchange marked a period of intermittent Russian influence—in which the Russians occupied Yakutat but were soon repulsed, leaving Yakutat with a degree of enduring autonomy that was uncommon in many other Tlingit communities. Yet, this period would witness the shift from what has been called “non-directed acculturation”—the exchange of ideas, goods, and other things between cultures, to “directed acculturation” in which the outside world began to actively seek to reshape Yakutat Tlingit cultural values and practices for many reasons—economic, religious, and strategic. This distinction is very useful for understanding the different kinds of effects that the non-Native world had on Yakutat Tlingit during successive phases of Yakutat history. When missions arrived in the late 19th century, with the industrialists quick at their heels, Yakutat Tlingit were forced to adapt and to conceal many aspects of their culture from the outside world. Each step in this history, spanning in this section from Russian contact to the mid-20th century, brought with it a change in the Yakutat Tlingit relationship with lands and resources now within Wrangell-St. Elias.

The history of the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak was shaped in no small part by the territorial ambitions of vast empires, situated on the opposite side of the globe. At a pivotal moment in world history, this part of the Alaska coastline became a contested place, where these empires vied for territorial control of the north Pacific. Occurring at the peak of the European “Enlightenment,” their claims were asserted through a combination of ambitious exploration and mapping, scientific documentation, and efforts to forge an economic presence within Native communities that had access to furs and other commodities of value to the European world. In time, these practices allowed a non-Native foothold and ultimately the hegemony of the non-Native world along this coastline. These forces so shaped life and patterns of land and resource use in Yakutat and beyond that they must be considered in any complete account of Alaska Native ties to what is today Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

In many respects it was the Russians who first brought Enlightenment-era exploration to the North Pacific. As Spanish explorers found their way to southwestern North

America, so Russian explorers found their way across Siberia, edging toward the Northwest Coast from the distant northeast. Following furs, the Russian Empire founded remote outposts in the Siberian Far East by the 1600s. Before the century was over, the Russians and other colonizers edging into the North Pacific came to recognize the unique potentials of sea otter fur. A sea otter pelt might contain 250,000 to a million hairs per square inch, allowing the otter to spend most of its life submerged in the cold waters of the North Pacific in the absence of blubber or other special protection. Their coats were found to be unimaginably dense, silky, and warm, giving them unparalleled status among fur bearers sought by the trade empires of Europe (Gibson 1992; Vaughan 1982). In this respect, the reputed abundance of otter within the Yakutat region generally, and along the shoreline of Wrangell-St. Elias in particular, was certain to draw the attention of the agents of empire in time.

By the early 1700s, under the charismatic leadership and expansionist vision of Peter the Great, Russia began to thoroughly explore and occupy the Russian Pacific coast, lured by the prospect of cornering the fur markets of Europe and Asia.⁸⁶ By the late 1720s, sea otter hunting posts were well established in the Kuril Islands, and the Russians were eager to expand their claim on the North Pacific. Under the command of Danish explorer and Russian Navy officer Vitus Bering, Russian expeditions explored the coast of Kamchatka, and what is today the coast of Alaska, in the course of two voyages (1732–30 and 1738–41). As early as July of 1741, Vitus Bering viewed Mount St. Elias and briefly anchored somewhere near its base. While geographical details of their visit are not easily discerned on the basis of Bering's account, Yakutat Bay was often identified by later travelers as a place "discovered" by Bering and was called "Bering Bay" by these travelers before the current name was institutionalized in non-Native discourse; however, many have asserted on the basis of a careful review of Bering's notes and charts, that "Bering was never in or near this bay" (Lauridsen 1889:145). Matters of his landfall placement aside, Bering's explorations were hugely influential, setting the stage for Russian occupation of Alaska, while expedition maps and the placenames assigned to Alaskan topographic features—including those in the Yakutat region—bolstered Russian claims for territorial advancement. The sea otter pelts brought back from these expeditions helped launch interest in the development of what, in time, became a robust Russian–American fur trade (Deur 2015; Gibson 1992, 1976; Tikhmenev 1978; Fisher 1977; Bancroft 1886).

By 1776, as the Americans declared independence from Britain, the Russians prepared for an organized occupation of northwestern North America. In that year, Kamchatka's fur trading posts bustled with traffic in sea otter pelts, and enterprising Russian fur traders lobbied in earnest for new posts in Alaska. Propelled by this foment, the colorful, Siberian-born Russian explorer Gerasim Grigoriev Izmailov led an expedition into Russian waters in that year, returning with a shipload of otter pelts and solid confirmation of Alaska's sea otter wealth. By 1783, with the backing of wealthy Russian merchants, Shelikov established a fur trading post on Kodiak Island. Naming the bay

after his ship, Shelikov established the first permanent Russian settlement in Alaska's Three Saints Bay, constructing what was the first permanent European settlement on the Northwest Coast. As he returned to Kamchatka with his first shipment of sea otter pelts from Kodiak, Shelikov petitioned the Russian crown for a corporation that could develop and monopolize the sea otter trade of Alaska. His petition was approved, allowing Shelikov to establish a company that would in 1799 become the Russian-American Company, the corporation that developed Alaska's fur trade and defined the economic and social landscape of Alaska's Russian period. Although Kodiak Island was far from Russian or even Asian markets, Shelikov's move was extraordinarily well-timed. Almost everywhere the sea otter was hunted, its populations were almost obliterated in time, and the Russian waters were no exception. As the Russians began to extirpate commercially viable sea otter population from the Kuril Islands and Kamchatka Peninsula through the 1780s and 1790s, the entire Russian Pacific fur trade began to shift its center of gravity into Alaskan waters. They built small forts that supported Shelikov's operations and transferred materials and men already well-seasoned in Russia's sea otter trade, gradually moving eastward and southward into the waters of Alaska. Native labor, especially the Unangax of the Aleutian Islands and the Koniags of Kodiak Island were conscripted, often with brute force or the threat of it, to become the principal hunters supporting the new operations (Gibson 1992, 1976).

It was the arrival of a ship under the command of Shelikov's employee Gerasim Grigoriev Izmailov that marked the beginnings of regular and direct contact with the non-Native world. Prior to his arrival at Yakutat, Izmailov had advanced Russian fur trading interests and expanded the reach of Russian geographical knowledge and power into the broader Alaskan coastline. (While in Unalaska, he crossed paths with James Cook, the two navigators engaging in a congenial exchange in which they swapped maps, letters of introduction, and other items of mutual interest.) In 1788, Izmailov, along with Russian Imperial Navy navigator, Dmitri Bocharov, embarked on a circuit of the Alaskan coastline aboard the *Tri Sviatitelia* (*Three Saints*), exploring the Gulf of Alaska region for new fur trading post sites, erecting crosses to claim the lands for Russia, and compiling information on the presence of sea otters for future commercial exploitation. Izmailov made landfall in Yakutat—the first Russian explorer to record detailed accounts of interaction with Yakutat Tlingit. While there, he traded for furs; he also presented Yakutat chiefs with a portrait of Czar Paul and buried copper plates to mark the Russian landfall. The people of Yakutat were already familiar with many of the trade goods aboard their ship, but this direct contact presented new opportunities and challenges—at once opening up new and direct access to the goods of Russia while also initiating what became a rising tide of Russian influence within their homeland.

News of the Russians' movement into North America was particularly alarming to the Spanish Empire, which then claimed the whole western coast of North America. Spain's growing awareness of their strategic vulnerabilities on the North Pacific prompted the

construction of a large and centralized naval station at San Blas, a short distance from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in 1768. Through events more than 3,000 miles from Yakutat, the naval station had tremendous implications for Alaska Native residents and the larger history of the Northwest Coast. From the San Blas station, the Spanish launched a series of expeditions along the Northwest Coast, asserting their national claims and interests in unprecedented ways. In 1774, explorer Juan Perez sailed northward on the *Santiago*, making the first of what would be many Spanish expeditions to the region.⁸⁷ A year after Perez's voyage, the San Blas station outfitted the *Santiago* for a second Northwest coast expedition under the command of Spanish Basque explorer Bruno de Heceta—beginning a series of ocean voyages under different Spanish captains that sometimes ventured as far north as the Alaska coast.

Simultaneously, all of the activity in the North Pacific by the Russians and Spanish drew the attention of the powerful seafaring nations of Europe, France and England in particular. Though they lacked seaside colonial footholds on the Pacific comparable to those of Russia and Spain, both were growing and relatively nimble empires, eager to establish their own presence upon the vast and largely uncharted Pacific region. Ambitiously expansionist, England found itself more ready than ever to enter the scramble for territorial claims and fur trade wealth on the North Pacific. With significant involvement of Captain James Cook, the British Navy made great technological strides that allowed them to sail over vast oceanic distances, including a new understanding of scurvy's causes and prevention and instruments such as the chronometer, a precise clock that allowed mariners to establish their longitude with pinpoint accuracy. With these and other tools at their disposal, a cartographic revolution took place concurrent with British exploration of the globe, producing maps of unprecedented precision that supported British claims of discovery and future navigation efforts. This revolution was advanced in many respects by Cook and significantly honed by his former midshipman, Captain George Vancouver, who later commanded some of the most historically significant early mapping expeditions on the Northwest Coast.

Armed with these technological advances, the British crown eagerly recruited and outfitted Cook, already a celebrated veteran of two prior global journeys of exploration, to spearhead exploration into the Pacific. The Northwest coast of North America was one of several places around the Pacific to be visited in the course of this journey, which would also serve to support British claims to Australia and New Zealand. Arriving on the western coast of North America in 1778, Cook operated under formal instructions to use the maps of Drake, the Spanish, and others to determine whether a fabled Northwest Passage might exist, thus providing a sea route between the European nations of the Atlantic and the Asian nations of the Pacific. This aspect of the mission was arguably secondary, however. Through Cook's third voyage, the British hoped to usurp thin Spanish (and perhaps Russian) claims to the Northwest coast and, through the process of discovery, stake claims for a British foothold in the newly contested land.

Cook made landfall on Nootka Sound, on the west coast of what is today Vancouver Island. There, Cook and his crew found the Mowachat Nuu-chah-nulth (or Nootka) living at the village of Yuquot to be eager traders in furs, especially those of the sea otter. Satisfied with his experiences with Yuquot's inhabitants, Cook referred to the village as "Friendly Cove" in his journals, while designating Nootka Sound "King George's Sound." His writings so fixed this place in the minds of Europeans that Nootka Sound became a key geographical locus of European maritime exploration and fur trade. Beyond Nootka, Cook and his crew ventured past Yakutat Bay. On May 4, 1778, Cook observed Mount St. Elias and noted the large bay below as being "Bering Bay," where he believed Vitus Bering had landed some 37 years earlier. Venturing west and north, Cook and his crew entered the Bering Strait and encountered solid sea ice off of Alaska's west coast. Seeing no evidence of a Northwest Passage, they turned south, ultimately landing in Hawaii. Here, in a conflict with Native Hawaiians on the western shores of the big island, Cook was killed. Resolving to return home through the Indian Ocean, his crew sailed on to China, where they found that the sea otter pelts from Nootka Sound commanded unimaginably high prices.

When the ships returned to England, the journals from Cook's third and final voyage were promptly published, spreading news of Cook's demise and of peoples and lands around the Pacific, but also of the tremendous commercial opportunities of trade in sea otter furs. In the published edition of Cook's journals, his second-in-command, James King, provided prospective traders with fine-grained details about Asian markets for sea otter pelts. So, too, preface author Dr. James Douglas made a clarion call to the British and other empires to use exploration, mapping, and the other tools of the age to build European commercial dominance on the North Pacific, based in no small part on the trade in furs: "Every nation that sends a ship to sea will partake of the benefit; but Great Britain herself, whose commerce is boundless, must take the lead in reaping the full advantage of her own discoveries" (in Cook and King 1784:xliv). By no later than 1785, a steady procession of English ships was en route to the Northwest coast. There, the British maintained a lively trade with Native hunters encountered along the outer coast, providing these peoples with metal, tools, and other goods that would revolutionize those societies and rearrange traditional social relationships in myriad ways.

The British were not alone in their response to the Cook journals. The French, too, reviewing accounts of Cook's voyages, were eager to participate in the exploration and the assertion of territorial claims along the Northwest coast. King Louis XVI hastily commissioned a vast, if somewhat secretive, expedition to the North Pacific in 1785, under the command of Jean-François de Galaup, the Count of LaPérouse. LaPérouse traveled to Alaska, where he and his crew visited Yakutat Bay, where they took notes on the Native community there. Also recorded in *The Journal of Jean-François de Galaup de la Pérouse, 1785-1788* are the crew's first impressions of Mount St. Elias:

“We identified Bering’s Mount St Elias, its peak visible above the clouds ... The sight of land, which ordinarily makes such a pleasing impression after a long navigation, did not have that effect on us. The eye rested painfully upon all this snow covering a sterile and treeless land ... a rocky plateau a hundred and fifty or two hundred *toises* in height, black as though burned by fire, lacking trees and greenery of any kind” (LaPérouse in Dunmore 2006:204).

He and his crew then ventured to Lituya Bay in what is today Glacier Bay National Park, where they gathered extensive information on the coast from a temporary base constructed there. Upon crossing the mouth of that bay to return home and report their findings, the expedition lost two longboats and 21 members of their crew, with the survivors promptly retreating to Spanish territories in California. Though LaPérouse gave the French king some basis for territorial claims on the North Pacific, the French Revolution brought an effective end to these explorations, turning national attention inward and scuttling the grand vision of the French royalty for a fur trade empire on the Pacific (Inglis 1997).

The accelerating geopolitical conflict on the north Pacific was soon felt in the lands of the Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak, who witnessed a succession of ships arriving under a variety of flags. In May of 1787, the British ship *Queen Charlotte*, arrived at Point Mulgrave on Yakutat Bay, anchoring immediately opposite the village at Yakutat—the first unambiguously documented European landfall at this place. The ship sailed under the command of George Dixon, a Cook protégé who had sailed aboard the *Resolution* on Cook’s third voyage. Staying at Port Mulgrave for two weeks, his crew traded with the residents of Yakutat, finding them already familiar with, and in possession of, European manufactured goods including Russian beads. The people of Yakutat were well familiar with trade and exchanged pelts of sea otter, marmot, and beaver until they had nearly exhausted their stores. Dixon circumnavigated the interior of Yakutat Bay, finding it “thinly peopled,” especially on its icy and rugged northwest shore (Bancroft 1886). His crew observed “several huts scattered here and there in various parts of the sound,” though most (perhaps all) of these seem to have been on the southern shore. Descriptions of the Wrangell-St. Elias side are at best ambiguous. The crew admired “the construction of their canoes, which were altogether of wood, neatly finished, and in shape not very much unlike our whale-boats,” and the crew obtained at least one for curation in England (William Beresford in Dixon 1789:167-69). Other British ships would arrive the following the year—the *Iphagenia* under Captain William Douglas and the *Prince of Wales* under Captain James Colnett both visited Yakutat Bay in 1788 as part of vast trading circuits that included Hawaii and the west coast of Vancouver Island. Both traded with, and reported on, the resident people of Yakutat Bay.

Growing ever more concerned about Russian, British, French and American exploration, the Spanish sent a series of expeditions to further document and assert claims to the North Pacific coast under some of the most skilled commanders in the Spanish Navy: Ignacio de Arteaga and Bodega y Quadra (1779, 1785), Esteban Jose Martinez and Gonzalo Lopez de Haro (1788), Salvador Fidalgo and Manuel Quimper (1790), Francisco de Eliza and Alejandro Malaspina (1791), and Dionisio Galiano and Cayetano Valde y Flores (1792), among others. Boldly, during several of these voyages, the Spanish repeatedly ventured into Russian-occupied Alaska, seeking to reassert claims to the region and undermine Russian fur trade monopolies by instigating their own trade with Native peoples. Beginning in 1790, the Spanish also attempted to build a permanent base on Nootka Sound as a base of operations on the Northwest coast, supplied and supported as a distant outpost of the San Blas naval station in Mexico. There, they sought to portray themselves to the rising tide of visiting ships—British, Russian, and even Swedish and Portuguese—as the rightful colonial authorities in the Northwest. Moreover, the Spanish brought their own naturalists to begin documenting flora, fauna and Native peoples (Moziño 1991; Pethick 1980). Many of these Spanish voyages were modeled somewhat on the Cook voyages in scale and scientific scope. In this respect, the voyages of Malaspina stood apart, taking him around the Pacific, accompanied by his second in command, José de Bustamante y Guerra, the two captains sailing aboard the *Descubierta* and *Atrevida* respectively. By June of 1791, the two ships had arrived on Yakutat Bay. Assuming, as Cook had, that this was the landing place reported by Bering, Malaspina recorded the name of the place as “Bering Bay.” Staying there for a month, Malaspina and his crew recorded considerable detail on the lives of the Yakutat Tlingit. Tomás de Suría was assigned by the viceroy to accompany Malaspina on his voyage to the Northwest Coast as a painter. He maintained his own journal during the journey and made these observations regarding their arrival in Puerto de Mulgrave, known today as Yakutat Bay:

“The 27th dawned cloudy and rainy. At 7 in the morning we found ourselves at the mouth of the bay of the Puerto de Mulgrave [Yakutat Bay]. This port had a very wide entrance. On the port side the coast continues with a range of mountains, very steep and rough, and black from the foot halfway up. This with the contrast of the snow and the summits and some gorges above make a beautiful sight, although wild and uncommon...

“In a little while we saw coming towards us at great speed two canoes of Indians which shortly arrived alongside. The first view, when they were near, was one of great astonishment, both for the Indians and for us; for the Indians did not cease looking at the ships, although they advised us and we soon verified it, that these were not the first that they had seen...” (Wagner 1936:247).

Alongside the other voyagers' accounts mentioned here, Malaspina's journals continue to be among the more useful sources of historical documentation from this phase of colonial exploration and can be used to augment what is known from Yakutat oral tradition regarding the period.⁸⁸ Ironically, Malaspina fell into disfavor with senior Spanish officials and was imprisoned upon his return to Spain, leaving most of his accounts of Yakutat unknown to the seafaring world until more than a half century later, in 1849, when his diaries were finally published. (It would only be in the 1870s, as a commemorative act by prominent naturalist William Healey Dall, that Malaspina's name was given to a vast glacier descending to the Gulf of Alaska—Malaspina Glacier, now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.)⁸⁹

Not surprisingly, there are a variety of Yakutat Tlingit oral traditions relating to this fleeting and tentative period of European contact (de Laguna 1972; Emmons 1911). One widely-known account mentions a shipwreck near Malaspina Glacier, often presumed by Yakutat residents to be Russian, which left a single survivor who married into the community. The story centers on a Kaagwaantaan hunting party traveling the coast below the glacier. As Ted Valle recalls,

“our people...they naturally we're exploring the cove right? And we send a couple men down...and they found a shipwreck: sailboat, two boats. And they went down to look there was a woman aboard: a red-headed woman, white woman, first white person they'd ever seen. And using sign language, she finally conveyed to our two men that there's two men up there but they went up on the glacier. So they went to follow them and they found where they had fallen in a vast crevasse [in the glacier]. So they went back and convinced her to go with them and they showed her where they had fallen. So she agreed that she would go back to the village with them... And before they went, she wanted to take [things from the ship]. She gave them rifles. They didn't know what they were. And gave them black powder which they thought was tea. So they brewed some up!...[makes a disgusted face] And another item that she gave them was rice. And they didn't want to eat that because it looked like maggots. Anyway, after they got back to the village, they start taking these rifles apart because the stocks are nice and hard wood you know, they didn't have hard wood to make things out of. And they start putting the barrels into the fire, heat, making spirit points and arrowheads and knives. And she all the sudden said, 'Hey, what are you guys doing?' So she showed them how to fire a rifle, and that was the first time they'd gotten rifles. So that is the beginning of how we got [those things]... This was even before Russian encounter [or occupation]. And she lived with one of those, she married one of those young men that found her, but she never ever had any children. She lived into her nineties and died” (TV).⁹⁰

Exploration of this coast would soon shape Native lives in other, more profound ways. On the eve of Russian occupation, a growing number of ships were finding their way to the shores of Yakutat, and the waters of Yakutat Bay. Shipborne colonial efforts to document of this coast reach their zenith in some respects with the arrival of George Vancouver's expedition in 1794. The most detailed mapping that had yet been attempted on the Northwest Coast, Vancouver's expedition sought to transform what were to the European mind "unknown lands" into lands that were inventoried, known, renamed and prepared for reoccupation. Dispatching a crew aboard the *Chatham*, Vancouver's surveyors sailed into Yakutat Bay under the command of Lieutenant Peter Puget (for whom Puget Sound is named), mapping and even naming features of the landscape. In the course of this journey, Vancouver's crew assigned new names to such features as Point Manby, named for Thomas Manby, a member of their crew, who later achieved fame as a British officer in the Napoleonic wars. This, plus repeat Russian incursions, would finally and fully bring the Yakutat area to the attention of the colonial world and foster its gradual integration into that world, bringing a crescendo of changes to Yakutat Tlingit and the landscapes of their homeland.

This moment was pivotal in other respects. The Russians had begun moving more aggressively into the waters off Yakutat, hunting otters without meaningfully engaging the Yakutat Tlingit—the first step in the gradual erosion of Yakutat sovereignty over their lands and resources in the Wrangell-St. Elias region. On board the *Chatham*, Vancouver's crew was able to witness the Russian American Company expedition, led by Captains Purtov and Kulikalov, making their first significant venture into Yakutat territory. According to Puget, the Yakutat leader present at these meetings

“exerted his utmost eloquence to point out the extent of their territories, and the injustice of the Russians in killing and taking away their sea otters, without making them the smallest recompence” (Vancouver 1984: 234).

An exchange of a sea otter pelt at the end of this meeting, followed by cheers and singing on all sides, was perhaps understood by the Yakutat Tlingit as formal acknowledgement by the Russians that they had been educated in Tlingit ownership protocols and had accepted its terms. It appears almost certain that the Russians saw the exchange in quite a different light (de Laguna 1972:156).

THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF YAKUTAT

Between 1784 and 1786, G.I. Shelikhov had established the first permanent Russian settlement in Alaska on Kodiak Island, and from that foothold was preparing to advance Russian colonization of Alaska's coastline. To support their growing company operations, Shelikhov was intent on establishing outposts of settlers and *promyshlenniki* (hunters of fur-bearing animals) throughout southeast Alaska and beyond to capitalize on the burgeoning fur trade in the region (Grinev 1989:444). While Shelikhov died prior to the founding of the colony at Yakutat in 1795, it was due to his desire for a settlement located on mainland Alaska south of the Kenai Peninsula that the site was chosen for the future colony of "*Slavorossiia*" or "*Novo Rossiysk*" at the site of Yakutat (de Laguna 1972:166).⁹¹

Shelikhov's influence on the history of the Russian settlement at Yakutat extended well past his death, as it was Shelikhov's decision to appoint Alexander Andreyevich Baranov as the manager of the Alaskan posts of his company, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company (de Laguna 1972:158).⁹² Ultimately, it was Baranov who selected Yakutat as the location for the colony of *Novo Rossiysk* (alternatively spelled *Novorossiisk*). Baranov chose Yakutat, in accordance with Shelikhov's wishes, because it would serve as a strategic location from which to outcompete the rival Lebedev Company. Choosing Yakutat was also a political move, as British traders had already begun to infiltrate that area (Grinev 2013:450-451).

With the site chosen, the plan for the future colony of *Novo Rossiysk* moved forward. Baranov led an expedition to Yakutat in the summer of 1795 to further investigate the area. He planned to bring twenty *promyshlenniki* with him aboard the *Ol'ga* and meet a second ship at Yakutat, the *Tri Ierarkha*, which carried the future leader of the colony, Polomoshnoi, as well as a group of settlers (*posel'shchiki*).⁹³ Baranov's ship arrived as planned on August eighth. To his surprise, the *Tre Ierarkha* had not arrived. This second ship had, in fact, stopped en route and returned to Kodiak, when Polomoshnoi and the ship's navigator, G.L. Pribylov, heard rumors of aggressively hostile local Indians, Yakutat Tlingit. Polomoshnoi and Pribylov decided not to travel to Yakutat, but to remain in Kodiak for the remainder of the winter. It is worth mention here that the winter Polomoshnoi spent in Kodiak was plagued with feuds between him and those settlers originally bound for Yakutat. The conflicts at Kodiak were a harbinger of later issues to arise at the future colony of *Novo Rossiysk* (Grinev 2013:452).

Despite the *Tri Ierarkha* never arriving at Yakutat as planned, Baranov followed detailed instructions left by the late Shelikhov regarding a ceremonial procession on the lands of what was to be *Novo Rossiysk*.⁹⁴ The fort established, non-Native people had unprecedented access to the Yakutat region and to the lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. As Bleakley notes,

“The Shelikhov Company... wanted the area explored. After establishing a post at Yakutat Bay in 1796, it dispatched Dmitri Tarkhanov to locate long-rumored copper deposits on the upper Copper River. While Tarkhanov examined the coast between Yakutat and the Copper Delta and may have ascended the lower river, the full extent of his journey remains unclear” (Bleakley 2002:2).

In an interview, the late Olaf Abraham, a Tlingit elder born in Yakutat in the late nineteenth century, corroborates the story that Russian presence in the area was initially accepted by the Yakutat Tlingit. According to Abraham,

“One day they saw a ship, the Tlingit name for the ship was “Un” ([Aan], Land) travelling of the sea. They watched as they came ashore. They welcomed these first white people that came. Later they gave them land to fish on, they also were good to the people” (1973:6-7).

Indeed, Yakutat oral traditions suggest that one of the clan leaders offered the Russians the use of a small piece of land for the construction of a temporary fort—something the Russians seemingly interpreted more broadly as an invitation to move freely and occupy lands widely within Yakutat Bay and beyond (de Laguna 1972:164, 259).

After the initial expedition to Yakutat was complete, Baranov returned to Kodiak, displeased that Polomoshnyi and the majority of the settlers had not made the trek, but ready to move forward with the creation of the colony. The following spring, 1796, a fort was constructed at Yakutat, and the settlement of *Novo Rossiysk* was officially established (de Laguna 1972:167; Grinev 2013:453). The fort became a significant hub of fur trading along the southcentral Alaskan coast, while also supporting company efforts in other ways; fort employees even had shipbuilding facilities for a time, constructing the *Yermak* and the *Rostislaf*, at the Yakutat fort (Andrews 1916). Ted Valle, a Yakutat Tlingit elder, describes the arrival of the Russians and the formation of a tenuous relationship with the newcomers:

“Along came the first group of Russians. And they wanted a piece of land to settle on. And our people thought about it. ‘We’re not going to sell you land. We’re not going to give you land. We’re going to make you use it, but you’ve got to give us something in return...’ [The Tlingit and the Russians settled on an exchange of goods]: ‘We’ll give you knives, pots...’ Never did get it. But they built a fort there and it was a two-walled fort: hard to get into... [That] was probably their first mistake, building that fort and not allowing Native people to go in there” (TV).

The successful creation of the new colony was soon put to the test. On September 2, 1796, just months into the construction of the colony, Baranov departed for Kodiak, leaving 21 settlers and their families in Yakutat for the winter. The winter of 1796-1797 proved to be particularly harsh for the new settlers in Russian America. For one, the hunters (under Stepan Larionov) and the settlers (under Polomoshnoi) were feuding with one another, and the settlers revolted against Polomoshnoi. As mentioned previously, Polomoshnoi first encountered opposition from his settlers in Kodiak, and tensions only increased that winter at the new colony, as Polomoshnoi proved himself to be both deceitful and, at times, brutal (de Laguna 1972:167; Grinev 1989:456-457). In addition to Polomoshnoi's abysmal leadership, the housing as well as the provisions proved too scarce to accommodate the residents of the colony through the bitter season (de Laguna 1972:168). Ultimately, thirty members of the colony died of scurvy in that winter alone, thirteen of which were hunters, seven were settlers, and 10 of the victims were women and children (de Laguna 1972:168).

In the summer of 1797, in an attempt to strengthen *Novo Rossiysk*, Baranov ordered forty Koniag (friendly Alutiiqs from Kodiak Island) to Yakutat upon their return from a hunting expedition in the straits of the Alexander Archipelago (Grinev 2013:455). Baranov himself was delayed in visiting the colony until the summer of 1799, when he stopped in Yakutat while en route to Sitka to establish a new settlement. In his absence, the fledgling colony was failing under the direction of Polomoshnoi, who was proving abhorrent to the Russian settlers and the local indigenous population. There was an increasing concern by the Yakutat Tlingit regarding the treatment of their women and children by the Russians at the fort.⁹⁵ Valle makes these assertions:

“Well, then they started beating our women. They start taking our women and when they're through, they throw them back out. And then they started taking our children. And they said, 'We're going to take your children to Russia and get them educated, then they can come back.' So they kept taking our children and none of them was coming back” (TV).

Another Yakutat Tlingit interviewee, Lena Farkus, also describes the disappearance of Tlingit women and children in close association with the Russians: “They started taking the women and kids and they'd take them over there so they could clean fish and do things and they'd never see them again” (LF).

Upon his arrival at *Novo Rossiysk* in June, Baranov quickly realized just how tenuous the leadership at the colony had become and was forced to replace the Polomoshnoi with a Kursk merchant named Nikolai Mukhin (Grinev 2013:457). After replacing Polomoshnoi, Baranov left Yakutat for Sitka, hoping in vain that the situation at *Novo Rossiysk* would improve. This was not the case. Though the much-hated Polomoshnoi was relieved of his duties in 1799, the damage done by his leadership of the colony had

a lasting effect on the relations between the Russians and the local Tlingit. According to de Laguna, “Polomoshnoi, was...in charge of the whole establishment, and also aroused such hatred among the natives that, even after his removal in 1799, good feeling was never restored” (1972:168).

Olaf Abraham, the Yakutat elder, relates a story about how the relationship between the Russians and the Tlingit disintegrated in less than half a decade. According to Abraham,

“Then gradually as they stayed longer they began to change. One day as the [Tlingit] families moved to their dry fish camps they had to go through the Russian camp. They were stopped without explanation. From three years on up their children were taken from them and sent to Kodiak. The young men and their wives were taken to work at the Russian fort. With sad hearts the men came to their fish camps without the help of his family. Things were very difficult for them. Tlingit People did not understand why they (the Russians) did this because they had tried to be kind. One day they blocked the route at Ankau River, the passage to their fish camp. They placed a huge door there and they cleared land and packed their belongings over land to get to their fish camp. The Tlingit were beginning to be very angry about all this. Because of the way the Russians were threatening them” (Abraham 1973:7).

Tlingit elder Ted Valle adds to this story, telling how Tanuk the Tlingit leader began to formulate a plan that to overtake the Russian fort. According to Valle,

“They were abusing our women, they were taking our children and the other thing they did that really hurt our people is that they pulled a dam across [the Ankau River] and wouldn’t let the fish go up... This is when our leader named *Tanuk* stated, ‘We gotta do something about these people.’ He said, ‘They’re abusing our women. They’re taking our children. They’re not coming back. They’re trying to stop the fish from coming up to our smoke houses.’ He said, ‘We gotta do something.’ That’s when they started planning the battle” (TV).

The relationship between the Russians and the Tlingit of Yakutat only deteriorated further, and the settlers became increasingly discontented about the situation at *Novo Rossiysk*.⁹⁶ The agricultural capacity of Yakutat was so minimal that all agricultural food items needed to be shipped to the colony from Kodiak. Additionally, because agricultural subsistence was not feasible at Yakutat, the company had to leave a

significant contingent of Native hunters at the colony for the winter, in order to prepare the fish that the settlers had come to rely on for food.

The dependency upon Kodiak for food and supplies also opened up opportunities for communication between the Yakutat Tlingit and the Kodiak hunters stationed at *Novo Rossiysk* for the winter. Increasing distrust among the Tlingit deepened with the information that Tlingit children taken by the Russians under the premise and promise of an education in Russia and ultimate return to Yakutat, was in fact, false. The children were being exported to Kodiak to work as laborers for the Russians. Ted Valle explains further:

“Then came the second group of Russians [led by Baranov]. By this time the Russians had pretty much depleted sea otters on the Aleutians in Kodiak. So they brought down the Kodiak, they called themselves Yupik, came down with the Russians to Yakutat. And the Russian fort was already there. They had a Yupik man ask our men, he said, ‘Do you know where are your children, what’s happened to your children?’ They said, ‘The Russians are taking them to Russia to educate them. Then they’ll come back.’ And this Yupik man said, ‘No, they’re using them for slaves in Kodiak’” (TV).

This information only served to fuel the angry rumblings that continued to grow among the Yakutat Tlingit.⁹⁷

Elsewhere in southeastern Alaska, Baranov was making moves to reinforce Russian presence and stability in the region. In May of 1803, the governor of Russian America ordered the naval vessel *Sv. Aleksandr Nevskii* to Yakutat and soon followed it there aboard the *Ol’ga*. His intent was to build Russian forces at the Yakutat colony for an expedition to the straits of the Alexander Archipelago to confront the defiant Tlingit population. Having landed in Yakutat, Baranov requested that Kuskov, newly back from a hunting expedition, join his party. After discussing the prospect, it was decided that Baranov did not have enough military strength to engage with the Tlingit and so the expedition was halted. However, Baranov requested that Kuskov stay and oversee the colony and also reinforced the colony by fortifying the garrison at the fort and settlement. Additionally, settlers at Yakutat began the building of two new ships, *Ermak* and the *Rotislav*, with the intent to finish them the following spring to further strengthen the colony. While Kuskov literally held down the fort at Yakutat, Baranov sailed on to Kodiak (Grinev 1989:459).

In the spring of the following year, 1804, Baranov returned to Yakutat aboard the *Ol’ga*. Upon arriving, the *Ol’ga* was salvaged for parts for the two new ships at Yakutat, *Ermak*

and *Rotislav*. With these ships now complete, *Ermak* was to become the primary vessel for Baranov's campaign against the hostile Tlingits (Grinev 1989:459).⁹⁸

The period of Russian fortune proved to be short lived, however, as the summer of 1805 brought disaster to *Novo Rossiysk*. In August, the local Tlingit launched a successful attack on the colony, completely destroying both the fort and the settlement. Guided by Takuk, a leader in the Tekweidi clan, the Tlingit watched and waited for an opportunity to overthrow the Russian forces at *Novo Rossiysk*. When Baranov left Yakutat for Beaver Bay, it was for the last time. According to Farkus:

“[Tanuk] just got tired of the Russians taking some of the ladies with their children over there to work for them. And so him and another man went over there. The Russian ship had gone back to Kodiak so there was just a few men there watching the fort” (LF).

Seeing that the fort was now vulnerable, the Yakutat Tlingit began formulating a plan to overtake the Russians remaining within. Ted Valle abbreviates the sequence of events on that fateful day:

“And there was a little boy... This little boy said, ‘I can get into the fort.’ ‘Oh, how can you? You’re just a kid.’ He said, ‘Well I’m friends with gate keeper. And I know he likes berries.’ And I figure this took place during the summer because he said, ‘I’m going to go pick some salmon berries, take them to him and he’ll let me in.’ So the kid went and picked salmon berries. Knocked on the gate and the gate keeper figured it was just a kid right? Let him in. And the kid told him, he says, ‘Why don’t you sit down and eat these berries that I picked for you. And while you’re eating berries, I’ll chop wood for you?’ ‘Ok,’ so the guy sat down, started eating the berries. He picked up the ax and chopped his head off and opened the gates and in went the warriors. Killed them all off. ... That’s the short version” (TV).

Lena Farkus concludes the story:

“They went in and just killed the other—there was just a few men—this is what I was told—and burned the fort down. Well one Russian got away. He hid. And so when the Russian ship came, he ran down and told them that the savages had burned down their fort. And so they left” (LF).⁹⁹

As was true elsewhere in the Russian-occupied Tlingit lands, the scale and organization of Tlingit communities, and the formidable force of their reprisals, took the Russians off guard. Overextended on the fringes of their imperial claim, the Russians were in many respects unprepared for the scale of the Tlingit resistance and the outright “fear that the fierce, well-organized, and well-armed Tlingit warriors instilled in the Russians and their Native allies” (Kan 1999:48). Indeed, in this attack, as well as the attacks on Russian interests at nearby Dry Bay and at Sitka, there is evidence of Tlingit clans from multiple villages choreographing the details of the attack in ways that would have baffled and probably overwhelmed even a well-prepared Russian force much larger than what was then present in Yakutat.¹⁰⁰ Reflecting continuing international tensions over claims to the Yakutat region, and wishing to save face, the official Russian reports conveyed seemingly erroneous claims that the Yakutat siege had only been successful due to American traders providing the Yakutat people with guns—a “foreign conspiracy” carried out by enterprising “Bostonians” with competing designs on Yakutat’s sea otter wealth (Kan 1999:67; Emmons 1991; Kushner 1975; de Laguna 1960).

According to a document dated February 15, 1806, Shelikhov’s successor Nikolai Rezanov wrote,

“The ‘Juno’ brought us very bad news from Kadiak: At Three Saints Bay they heard from Pavloffsky harbor that the Kolosh had butchered all the Russians at Yakoutat, numbering some 40 persons, counting in women and children, and captured our fort, in which they found two 3-lb. brass guns, two iron 1-lb. guns and one ½ lb. iron gun, with a supply of ammunition and five pounds of powder, and that with those arms they were already threatening the Gulfs of Chugatz and Kenai [Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet]. As soon as Agent Banner [deputy commander at St. Paul Harbor, Kodiak] had received this news in a bidarka he immediately sent word to all the settlements on the island of Kadiak to be on their guard, but to Chugatz he sent a bidar with ten men. Banner did all he could, but what does such a reinforcement amount to, which may only increase the number of victims?” (Tikhmenev 1863 in de Laguna 1972:174).¹⁰¹

Eventually, those Russians being held by Tlingit safely reached Fort Konstantinovskii (Grinev 2013:461). In addition to these thirteen individuals, between three and six Chugach had also escaped *Novo Rossiysk* during the Tlingit attack and reached Fort Konstantinovskii safely prior to the arrival of the ransomed Russians. Four more individuals from the Yakutat colony were later saved after Baranov secured the services of an American skipper, Oliver Kimball, who captured and exchanged an influential Tlingit chief for a female settler, a locksmith and a Koniag couple. In March of 1808, there was a failed expedition to secure the remaining Yakutat settlers being held by the

Tlingit; however, Baranov rescued several more settlers, according to a report sent to the emperor in November of 1809. Much information regarding the remaining Russian captives at Yakutat was lost, including Baranov's archives from this time period. It is clear, however, that while some settlers were returned to Russian care, some remained with the Tlingit, either by choice or force (Grinev 2013:462).

In the years that followed, the Yakutat area became a backwater of the Russian colonial project—its settlements avoided relative to Tlingit communities of comparable size.¹⁰² Yet, the famously abundant furs of the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline brought a steady succession of ships in the decades following Russian expulsion, some seeking trade with Yakutat residents and many others—the Russians in particular—simply hunting these portions of Yakutat Tlingit territory without contact or compensation. This frequent presence of ships from outside the region with limited enduring Russian presence, had a range of effects, bringing a steady succession of trade goods but also allowing Yakutat residents to maintain many of their cultural practices with limited outside interference.

If there was one especially negative consequence of their position, it was the introduction of new infectious diseases. Bouts with smallpox are suggested by various sources, arriving by shipborne trade or indirectly through trade networks by 1770, or perhaps even earlier. A succession of epidemic diseases followed, reflecting the rising traffic in fur trade traffic along the coast. Still, the smallpox epidemic of 1835-40 was said to be distinctive for the northern Tlingit, significantly depopulating entire villages, bringing about the consolidation of communities at that time and resulting in the transition of many nearly permanent settlements into seasonal resource outposts (Emmons 1991:19; Boyd 1999; Fortuine 1989; Gibson 1982). Interviewees for this project recalled oral traditions of these epidemics, and especially of the smallpox epidemic of the mid-19th century having devastating effects in the Yakutat area. While details are thin, it appears that the scale of use and occupation along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast noticeably contracted at this time.

The Yakutat expulsion of the Russians still stands out in the history of southeast Alaska, and is often mentioned alongside the battles of Sitka as definitive moments in Tlingit-Russian history (Dauenhauer et al. 2008; de Laguna 1972; Jones 1914:113). Clearly, the Russian settlement at Yakutat was anything but a success for the Shelikhov-Golikov Company. From the beginning, it lacked the necessary resources for the settlers of *Novo Rossiysk* to create a self-sufficient colony, much less flourish as a significant outpost in Russian America. In addition, the Yakutat Tlingit were never fully subdued by the Russian command, and relations between the Tlingit and the settlers only deteriorated, as Russian presence became more and more of a burden on the local people. These developments also significantly stalled Euro-American activities and expansion into the Wrangell-St. Elias region. As Bleakley noted, “[the exploration of] Alaska's eastern interior ended abruptly in 1805 when a Tlingit/Eyak coalition destroyed the Russian

colony at Yakutat” (Bleakley 2002:2). The non-Native presence in this area would remain tenuous at most for the remainder of the Russian period, and there is ample evidence that many places now within Wrangell-St. Elias remained largely unknown to the outside world until well into the American period.¹⁰³

If the Russians were close by, they nonetheless made some apparent effort to avoid economic or social entanglements with Yakutat. Many Russian institutions, while they certainly did affect life at Yakutat in many ways, did not flourish here as they did in other parts of Alaska. Even the Russian Orthodox Church had limited sway in the community, a fact reflected somewhat by the religious diversity of modern Yakutat families.¹⁰⁴

In many respects, the decisive expulsion of the Russians had allowed Yakutat to stand alone, and for its social institutions to endure with only modest outside interference until the late 19th century. In many ways, the fundamental Tlingit and Eyak institutions had endured.

THE AMERICAN REOCCUPATION

On March 30, 1867 President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty purchasing Alaska from Russia who sought to relinquish the territory as a military tactic, fearing that it might be seized if a war broke out with Britain. The United States considered the purchase of Alaska as a progression toward Manifest Destiny.¹⁰⁵

This new territory was designated the “Department of Alaska” and assigned to the US Army on October 18, 1867 to “assert national sovereignty, assume civil powers and enforce laws” (Cloe 2003:1). Major General Jefferson C. Davis assumed command of the Department of Alaska beginning a decade of military control. At the time of acquisition there were 23 Russian trading posts strategically placed throughout the territory and along key oceanic routes to facilitate the storage and transfer of furs. It was estimated that 10,000 people, both Russian and Alaskan Native, were governed by these posts and that 50,000 Alaskan Natives lived remotely. Major General Davis’s orders were to provide “protection to American citizens, Russian subjects, and the aboriginal tribes... ‘protecting them from abuse, and regulating their trade and intercourse with our own people’” (Arnold 1978).

The sale of Alaska by the Russians to the United States was met with objection from the Tlingit. The Tlingit had allowed Russians to inhabit their homeland “for mutual benefit,” namely trade opportunities, in no way transferring ownership. The sale of Alaskan territory, the homeland of the Native Tlingit and Eyak, shook the native population to the core, rousing distrust and feelings of uncertainty and betrayal. Matters became worse as military personnel entered the territory and interactions became increasingly hostile.

“Historians from H.H. Bancroft to Ernest Gruening agree that the Army's influence over the decade of its rule was not only demoralizing for the Tlingits, but that the Army was largely responsible for the incidents of violence which occurred” (Arnold 1978).

Army governance of the District of Alaska under Major General Davis was characterized by overall turmoil and strife between military personnel and the Native peoples, though much of the recorded conflict was in areas of Sitka and Kake without specific reference to the Yakutat region. The Department of Alaska was transferred to the US Department of the Treasury in 1877 and to the US Navy in 1879 and then reclaimed and renamed the “District of Alaska” by the federal government in 1884.¹⁰⁶

It was the discovery of gold in Alaska and the Yukon Territory of Canada that instigated the first significant migration of non-Native people into the region during the

American period. The gold rush flooded all areas of Alaska with fortune seekers including the Yakutat area. Gold was first discovered in southeast Alaska near Sitka in 1873, sparking further exploration northward. In the early 1900s, around 250 miners were exploring for gold at Cape Yakataga. The potential for mining the black sand along the Yakutat region coastline was recognized during these exploratory journeys away from the primary gold fields. These darkly colored sands consisted of deposits of comparatively heavy minerals deposited on the glacial outwash plains of the Yakutat area.¹⁰⁷

Between 1883 and 1886, gold miners mobilized on the prospective mining of the black sands of Khantaak Island and the ocean beach near Yakutat, representing the first significant non-Native presence in Yakutat since the expulsion of the Russians eight decades earlier (Krause 1956:65). The Yakutat community was exposed to a temporary rush of largely American men—mostly young and rootless—reminiscent of the Russian traders, but often more reckless and less dependent on, or concerned about, positive relationships with local Tlingit. The beginning of the American period, some interviewees suggest, gave a worrisome portent of things to come. Yet, the methods of gold extraction were laborious and profits were small, insuring that this gold rush was brief.¹⁰⁸

Almost immediately after mining activity subsided, another wave of American settlers arrived—this time, with the expressed intention of reshaping Yakutat Tlingit culture, religion and society to an American model. This charge was led by the arrival of a mission led by the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Church—an institution arriving in 1888 and continuing to actively reshape community life until roughly 1930. In zeal and influence, this effort eclipsed the effects of the Russians, whose interests in Yakutat were fleeting, and more commercial than religious. The mission was led by missionary Karl Johan Hendrickson who first arrived in Yakutat on July 4, 1888. On May 11, 1889, Reverend Albin Johnson arrived and the Mission Covenant of Sweden transferred the mission in Yakutat into the care and maintenance of the Swedish Mission Covenant of America. Ironically, it was this move that finally prompted the Russian Orthodox Church to establish a chapel in Yakutat. Associations with the two churches were, in some cases, about religious devotion. Yet for many families and individuals, the association was loose and symbolic. As Sergei Kan notes, “According to Fr. Kashevaroff, who visited Yakutat in 1906, a number of local people still considered themselves Orthodox, but had a very vague idea of what that meant” (Kan 1999:347).

The Swedish Mission, in particular, brought a multitude of changes to the Tlingit families living in Yakutat—effects that were amplified by the parallel and sometimes competing mission activities of the Orthodox chapel. The Swedish Mission Covenant constructed the Yakutat Mission, consisting originally of a primary facility at the “Old Village,” and later added an auxiliary site in Dry Bay. The Mission also developed the Yakutat Children’s Home and a sawmill that proved instrumental in the impending

arrival of the railroad, construction of docks and cannery (Mills and Firman 1986:40). (In 1930, the mission also provided the means to acquire a 50-horse power diesel engine, bringing electricity to the community.)



Figure 6 – Students at the Swedish Covenant Mission, early 20th century. The mission required the abandonment of Yakutat Tlingit language, dress, and custom in favor of the Euro-American conventions of the day. The mission also pressured residents of outlying communities, including settlements in Wrangell-St. Elias, to relocate to Yakutat through the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

The mission became the nucleus of village life. Now referred to as the “Old Village,” many Yakutat Tlingit chose to live in a community adjacent to the mission as a permanent, year-round settlement altogether different from their traditional seasonal communities of the area. Several interviewees noted that the missionaries were significantly involved with the depopulation of outlying villages in the Kwáashk’ikwáan territories and beyond, as they sought to concentrate the five clans into this single community. People continued to live in villages along the northwest shore of Yakutat Bay, but “the missionaries arrived from the south and told people they needed to move across the water to Yakutat” (LF). Some suggest that these developments marked the end of significant settlements along the north shore, other than seasonal resource encampments. Former village sites became encampments and stopover points within a much changed seasonal round.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as noted in a community history compiled by the City and Borough of Yakutat,

“Besides attracting Yakutat area residents to the present ‘Old Village’ site, the mission exercised a strong influence over the lives of people in the community. This influence extended as far as banning fishing on Sundays,

encouraging households to follow the western style nuclear family, and discouraging the use of the traditional Tlingit language” (CBY 2010: 19).

However, the Swedish Mission introduced more than industry and simple structures on the landscape. The Mission was instrumental in reshaping the sociopolitical structure and cultural practices of the Tlingit people. As part of the missionization process, children were forbidden from using their native language and were taught that traditional practices were inferior. As Lena Farkus explains,

“The kids used to be raised with their grandparents, who taught them how to live...that stopped....people started going to church and school, then there was the alcohol...it made people ashamed of themselves, of who they were” (LF).

Tlingit families were encouraged to discard restrictions of marriage based on moiety and to set up nuclear households, breaking up the Native community, the traditional household structure, and many of the underpinnings of traditional leadership.¹¹⁰ Through this process, missionization by the Swedish Mission in particular brought a sudden and unprecedented surge of “directed acculturation.” New pressures were directed at the transformation of Tlingit sociopolitical structure and traditional cultural practices, bringing about religious conversions, increasing fragmentation of the community into nuclear family households, and the undermining of traditional forms of leadership, belief and religious expression. Many traditional practices effectively went “underground” at this time. As interviewees often noted, the transmission of cultural knowledge increasingly took place “out on the land,” away from the scrutiny of the mission and non-Native residents of Yakutat, instead of in more conventional village venues. Traditional ceremonial and social practices, such as the immensely important potlatch ceremony, were increasingly depicted as “parties” (and are still called that today) to render them innocuous to missionaries. The Tlingit potlatch was banned as a matter of law in the first years of the 1900s; the last public potlatch was reported to have occurred in roughly 1904 in Sitka, and the ceremony was illegal by 1909, the ban not being lifted until 1934.

The Swedish Mission brought about an economic conversion of the community as well. Through what appear to have been personal connections between the mission and Seattle industrialists, the rich fish and timber resources of Yakutat began to draw the attention of outside economic interests in the decade following the mission’s founding. By 1900, plans were underway to construct fish canneries and salteries on the Yakutat waterfront.¹¹¹ Though a number of small operations appeared in Yakutat at this time, it was the companies owned by the Stimson family of the Seattle area that most transformed the community. This included Fred Spenser Stimson, partial-owner of the

Stimson Mill Company in Ballard, Washington – supported by Charles Terry Scurry, a descendant of the Terry family, famous Seattle industrialists, and J.T. Robinson, a Seattle mill owner. The following year, with financial aid from a land grant in accordance with the 1899 Railroad Act, a ten mile stretch between Yakutat and the Situk River was completed as was the survey of a 60-acre cannery site at Monti Bay on what is today the Yakutat waterfront. In 1903, construction on the Yakutat & Southern Railroad commenced with financing made possible by the Yakutat & Southern Railroad Corporation which was founded by Stimson, Scurry, and Robinson. The railroad and sawmill were built first and used to haul timber to build the cannery, wharves and other structures including a general store. Once the cannery began operating, the sawmill turned to producing wooden crates for cannery products. Many Tlingit found work at these salteries and cannery—especially as fishermen rather than processors, though some men and women eventually worked as processors too. Some Yakutat Tlingit families came to rely on the railroad for transportation along its length too.

During these early years, commercial fishing was largely unregulated, and commercial fishermen and processors reaped great benefits, while a number of subsistence fishing rivers suffered. It would not be until 1924 with the passage of the White Act that Alaska was divided into fishery districts with specific fishing regulations (Ramos and Mason 2004). The economic boom brought by the canneries and fish processing carried with it increased Yakutat Tlingit and Eyak concentration on the Yakutat waterfront, resulting in a significant depopulation of outlying villages, as well as scheduling conflicts with a growing number of traditional subsistence activities. According to Mills and Firman (1986):

“The late 1800s and early 1900s were considered prosperous times around Yakutat when commercial fishing began and salmon stocks were abundant. By the end of World War I salmon populations were very low and sea otter was nearly extinct. Most of the outlying people had congregated at present day Yakutat and the population reached its lowest recorded level, 165 people in the 1920 US Census” (Mills and Firman 1986:27).

Likewise, as noted by the Yakutat Comprehensive Plan’s historical overview,

“By 1920, most families in the area had built permanent homes near the cannery. This area remains the center of activity in Yakutat today and is home to most of the community’s non-natives” (CBY 2010:20).

As part of these early cannery operations, Stimson developed the Yakutat & Southern Railroad constructed—one of Alaska’s first railroads. It was unique in that it was not

constructed in response to mining industry. Its main purpose was to transport salmon for three months in the summer during the commercial fishing season. The first survey for the train was done in 1901 with plans to connect Monti Bay, the port at Yakutat and the Alsek River at Dry Bay. A second railway was constructed from the Akwe River to Dry Bay. This operation was less successful, but briefly brought the Dry Bay Tlingit community into the economic orbit of Yakutat in novel ways.¹¹² As George Ramos Sr. recalls:

“I was born in Yakutat during the Depression and Yakutat was a small, sleepy little town at that time. But the cannery was going already in this area and the train was hauling fish, and they had two big boats that were hauling fish from the Dry Bay area” (GR).



Figure 7 – The waterfront of Yakutat, as it appeared in the early 20th century. Much of the shoreline was occupied by structures associated with the cannery and other Stimson operations. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

In 1930, The New England Fish Company started business in Yakutat and became profitable selling salmon for 32 cents a pound. Unfortunately, selling prices plummeted drastically to 4.5 cents a pound for salmon only two years later in 1932 as the Great Depression wreaked havoc around the nation. According to Mills and Firman (1985):

“Fishing was poor in the late 1930s and early 1940s. River courses were continually changing and this often affected the productivity of the salmon fishery” (Mills and Firman 1985:37).

The Civil Works Administration provided financial assistance to seasonal workers during the winter of 1932 and in 1933 as fisherman struggled to find fish to feed the processing plants. During this time, “relief work” kept Yakutat residents employed building streets and completing other city beautification projects.

The changes the Yakutat & Southern Railroad and cannery brought to Yakutat were immediate and lasting. By the 1920s, many Tlingit families had relocated, at least temporarily, to reside near the cannery at Monti Bay as a source of income. Coupled with the effects of missionization, Yakutat became the sole nucleus for Yakutat Tlingit society. Yakutat was largely solidified as a city as the result of railroad operations that began in the early 1900s:

“Residential areas are concentrated near the head of Monti Bay, with other sites scattered along parts of the road system. Commercial and industrial activities are centered near the Monti Bay waterfront” (ADNR 1995:180).

Even before the cannery filed for bankruptcy in 1971, the railroad ceased operating. In its heyday, however, the little railroad and the system of fishing operations that it linked were transformative. Its reshaping of the geography of community life cannot be overstated, nor the way it spurred the economic growth and development of the town of Yakutat, Alaska.

Included in this transformation was also the railroad system to Cordova and copper mining areas on the Copper River, which brought economic and social effects that rippled out to Yakutat and beyond—affecting Yakutat Tlingit, Eyak families and others. Though the region of Copper River is largely peripheral to our study area, its impact on the Yakutat Tlingit of the wider area was significant.

“The 1898 Gold Rush in the Yukon and discovery by 1900 of major copper deposits in Kennecott brought droves of prospectors and major expeditions to the region. By 1911, a railroad reached from Cordova to the mines of McCarthy, to be mined until the deposits disappeared in the 1930’s. The copper deposits in this area were among the richest the world has ever seen...These rail tracks opened up the entire area to prospecting, homesteading and exploration. Over 725 mining claims or abandoned mining areas exist in Wrangell-St. Elias today. This also transformed the

regional trading hub of Cordova, the terminus of the Copper River Railroad, into a destination of world renown” (NVE 2009:14).¹¹³

Yakutat Tlingit Responses and Early Revivals

Tlingit and Eyak responded to these growing outside pressures in myriad ways. Generally speaking, the Tlingit have long possessed an acute political awareness, rooted in and evolving from leadership traditions well established before European contact. The general response to European intrusion involved a series of adaptations that reflected an expanding Tlingit understanding of the new sociopolitical structures and economic forces introduced from without.

One response, at the start of the twentieth century, was the aligning of the Tlingit to form a revitalization movement. This movement, known as the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB), was formed on November 5, 1912 by eleven Alaskan Native men and one Alaskan Native woman.¹¹⁴ According to the ANB’s website,

“The ANB focused its energies on promoting Native solidarity, achieving U.S. citizenship, abolishing racial prejudice, and securing economic equality through the recognition of Indian land title and mineral rights, as well as the preservation of salmon stocks” (ANBANSGC n.d.).

With the formation of the ANB, the founding members sought to strengthen the political power of the disparate Alaskan Native clans and tribes under a central authority.

The organization of Tlingit into brotherhoods was partly in response to the Russian Orthodox missionaries’ attempts, in the 1890s and early 1900s, to convert Tlingit to Christianity. According to Kan (1985):

“Although the native leaders seemed to be interested in having their children learn the ways of the powerful newcomers (especially reading and writing), they were unwilling to abandon many of the fundamental indigenous beliefs and practices attacked by the American reformers...” (Kan 1985:199).

The Tlingit generally, and Yakutat Tlingit specifically, embraced education as a means to orient them within the new sociopolitical order, but still maintained a resilient Tlingit identity. The formation of brotherhoods of Tlingit native leaders, often within the

framework of the Russian Orthodox Church, became influential in the balance of political power and the resistance of acculturation (Kan 1999, 1988, 1985). As Sergei Kan explains:

“Brotherhoods gave the Tlingit a much stronger voice in parish affairs, and paved the way for the native takeover, when the Russian-Creole population became assimilated into the American society and left the church. These organizations also helped strengthen social ties in native communities at a time of increased sociocultural change. Native brotherhoods and the Russian Church, as a whole, served as a powerful conservative force that slowed the pace of Tlingit Americanization. No wonder that many of the more traditionalist elders today are, or used to be, Orthodox. At the same time, brotherhoods were respectable religious organizations that enabled the Indians to improve their status in communities dominated by Euro-Americans, who perceived native sodalities as indicators of Tlingit ‘progress’” (Kan 1985:215).

The early ANB, in particular, had a complex relationship with Tlingit traditionalists and with traditional cultural practices. Seeking to modernize and to supplant many of the old ways, the ANB constitution specifically called for the suppression of certain traditions as part of a quest to help elevate Native societies to a level on par with the “civilized [i.e., White] race.” As pressures for change mounted over time, the values and perspectives of “traditionalists” and “progressives” sometimes diverged – a fact that has continue to shape tribal political and social realities into the present day. Yet, ANB halls often served as a venue for the sharing of cultural knowledge for which other venues were sometimes lacking. As Kan (1999:506) notes, “Sometimes a traditionalist would bring an *at.óow* [clan property, such as clan songs, crests or stories] of his matrilineal group out into an ANB meeting on purpose—he expected to be fined and thus to contribute toward the organization’s treasury.”

In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was passed, essentially serving to “to set a standard for the federal government to recognize tribes in the Lower 48” (CCTHITA n.d.). After the ANB petitioned Congress to extend the act to Alaska, it was amended to incorporate the state in May of 1936 (49 Stat. 1250; Thornton 2002:181). One of the results of the IRA, which helped to lay the foundation for the Yak-Tat Kwaan that came decades later, was that

“Indian groups residing on the same reservation (in Alaska's case, in a ‘well-defined neighborhood, community, or rural district,’ since reservations were largely absent) received the right to organize tribal governments to provide for their own welfare in which were vested specific sovereign rights and powers over tribal lands and other assets and

to negotiate with federal, state, and local governments” (Thornton 2002: 182).

The ANB was also petitioning Congress to recognize the Alaskan Natives of Southeast Alaska as a tribe so that they could move forward with a land claim against the US government. In June of 1935, this was granted when Congress passed the Tlingit and Haida Jurisdictional Act, which recognized the Tlingit and the Haida people as a single tribe (ANBANSGC n.d.; CCTHITA n.d.). This same year, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) was created under the supervision of the Department of the Interior in order to manage the lawsuit that the Tlingit and Haida planned to file to obtain compensation for the abolishment of their aboriginal land titles. The CCTHITA was comprised of delegates from all of the principal IRA tribal territories (Thornton 2002:183).

The ANB has been an integral organization in negotiating land claims and fishing disputes. One of the most important legal authorities that ANB procured for Alaska Natives was the enactment of the federal Jurisdictional Act of June 15, 1935 (Worl 1990). This opened up the opportunity to bring suit for claims against the United States for the return of Native lands in the form of formal title. The ANB initiated an early claim filed against the United States that joined the Five Chiefs of Yakutat clans, the Stikine Hoonah chiefs and the Tlingit and Haida in one suit known as *The Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska v. The United States*.

Local chapters of the ANB have been active in these areas as well. The Yakutat Alaska Native Brotherhood actively disputed fishing traps on the Situk River. Ramos and Mason (2004) describe the concerns of this group:

“The Yakutat Alaska Native Brotherhood minutes show their concerns about fish traps, staking fishing locations on the Situk, the Situk weir, policies toward independent fishermen, the fishermen’s union, and interactions with non-resident fishermen” (Ramos and Mason 2004:52).

In the 1940s, the Colorado Oil Company sought to drill exploratory wells in the Icy Bay area. At this time, five area sibs formed what is known as the Five Chiefs of Yakutat, which then entered into a financial agreement with the oil company in exchange for allowing them use of the land (YTK 2013).

In 1959, Alaska became the forty-ninth state. At that point, the federal government retained control of about sixty percent of the new state’s land, while Alaska earned title to around thirty percent. With Alaska as a newly minted US state, the federal government saw an increasing need to settle outstanding Native land claims. When, in

1968, oil was discovered on Alaska's North Slope, this need to settle became increasingly imperative. That same year, the CCTHITA's land claim suit was settled with the Alaskan Natives awarded \$7,546,053.80 for their lands (Thornton 2002:183-184).

The ANB hall has increasingly served as "combined social and ceremonial space," like the longhouses of an earlier generation. Even today, the ANB hall of Yakutat is where potlatch "parties" and other key cultural events take place.



Figure 8 – The Mount St. Elias Dancers, as they appeared in the 1950s. Serving as an organized forum for the preservation, teaching, and sharing of traditional clan songs, regalia, and oral tradition, the group is widely credited with sparking the cultural revitalization of Yakutat Tlingit long before many other Alaska Native communities had embarked on such efforts. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

Alongside the early Tlingit revivalist movements, the ANB halls sometimes became the venue of traditional dances meant to simultaneously honor people of community importance who had recently died, for example, and to display clan properties and prerogatives. As Kan notes,

“To insure that these performances were authentic, dance groups were formed in the 1950s and 1960s in Yakutat, Sitka, Juneau and several other communities.... Once the old *at.óow* and the songs and dances that went with them were brought back into the open (even if for fund raising or entertainment purposes), traditionalists became encouraged to be more open about potlatching and to increase the scale of the *koo.éex'* [mortuary potlatch]” (Kan 1999:506).

Among the earliest, and most widely celebrated of these, was the Mount St. Elias Dancers—named after the prominent landmark that was not only a navigational landmark, but a cultural cornerstone of the *kwáan* and its constituent clans. The group benefitted significantly from Yakutat’s relatively conservative Tlingit traditions, reflecting its distance from Russian influence, as well as from the knowledge of elders still living at its inception who could recall life before active missionization (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1997). According to Ted Valle, “They started in the early 1950s, having the elders teach the young people their dances and songs...I think their first public performance was in 1955” (TV). Bert Adams Sr. goes on to say ““They brought our culture and history back to Yakutat...in the 1950s...they said ‘enough is enough’ of the government trying to take away our culture” (BA).

In recent years, the Mount St. Elias Dancers have been highly visible and active, participating within the community but also in larger Tlingit venues. Their performances remain a highlight of Celebration, a biennial event in Juneau that brings together Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian communities for several days of cultural celebrations. Initiated by Sealaska Heritage in 1982, these events provide a powerful demonstration of the persistence and growth of Native cultural identity into the present (Christianson 1992).

WORLD WAR II AND THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN YAKUTAT

Prior to the official start of World War II, both American and Japanese forces recognized the potential significance that the North Pacific region could have in the war effort. The Aleutian Islands, in particular, were viewed as strategically important, because they could serve as staging areas along a naval invasion route from the United States into northern Japan or vice versa (Farley 1997:2-3). Appreciating the potential impact of a Japanese seizure of the Aleutian Islands, the US military responded by militarizing Yakutat, as well as a number of other coastal towns in Alaska, including Seward, Cordova and Gustavus (Bennett et al 1979:168). The construction of supporting military outposts, or staging fields at Metlakatla, Cordova and Yakutat, that would coordinate efforts with the Anchorage base were proposed in 1939 and already under construction in 1940.¹¹⁵

The first step in the militarization of Yakutat was the construction of the Yakutat Air Base, beginning on October 10, 1940 (Miller n.d.).¹¹⁶ The air component of the military defense program in Yakutat was crucial, because the United States had initiated a triangular air defense plan that included Alaska, Panama and Hawaii, should the Pacific theater be pulled into the war (CBY 2010:20).



Figure 9 – Military aircraft used the Yakutat Air Base as an important staging area and stopover point through World War II, radically transforming the community in ways that are still felt today – including the enduring presence of a major regional airport. Surplus military vehicles at the end of the War were used extensively in the harvest of resources at what is now Wrangell-St. Elias and elsewhere in the Yakutat region. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

Following the creation of the air base, the military completed a paved airfield four miles east of Yakutat and brought in approximately 10,000 troops to be housed at the new airfield in 1941 (Mills and Firman 1986:27). The Yakutat Army Airfield was activated on March 1, 1942 primarily as a landing field for transport aircraft between Washington State and Elmendorf. The first bomber landed at the airfield in May of that year, and the large aircraft hangar built during this time is still standing in its original location (Alaska Channel n.d.; Leonard's Landing Lodge n.d.). During the course of the war, the air base housed the 406th Bombardment Squadron (28th BG), fighter squadrons, and a detachment of Navy bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. At the peak of the war, there were between 15,000 and 20,000 troops stationed in the area, while local men were recruited to serve in civilian support roles. The Yakutat Air Base also served as an important landing and refueling site for the Lend-Lease program, an initiative proposed by President Roosevelt on December 17, 1940, which allowed the United States to lend supplies to Great Britain and other allied forces without having to officially join the war (Miller n.d.; USDSOH n.d.).

The Yakutat Army Airfield formally closed in 1945 and fell under the delegation of the War Assets Administration in 1946. By 1949, the airport was declared surplus and sold into private ownership. During the years of operation, the airport provided employment opportunities for the local Yakutat community, so when it closed in 1945, many were left without income. According to de Laguna,

“perhaps the cruelest stroke of fate was the building of a large airfield 4 miles east of Yakutat and the quartering of some thousands of soldiers in the vicinity during World War II. Although a number of Yakutat men served with distinction during the war, we need not be surprised at the demoralization which these changes brought. With the ending of wartime jobs, with the dwindling salmon runs which forced the closing of the cannery in which native women worked and for which the men fished, hard times returned again. Many young people now find that they must leave to seek a living elsewhere and old people live for their pension checks” (de Laguna 1972:18).

The immediate effect of the closure of the airbase was detrimental to the economic welfare of the Yakutat people. However, the infrastructure that was established—airstrips and other facilities—now support the heavily utilized Yakutat Airport which has become a regional hub among Alaska flights. Likewise, it is a major source of revenue contributing to the seafood sales and marketing businesses of Yakutat (including that of Yak-Tat Kwaan), as well as the development of local tourism, rapid emergency response capabilities, and other services that support community life in contemporary Yakutat.

In addition to the air base, the US military fortified Yakutat with naval and army facilities during the war. Cannon Beach, now a US Forest Service day-use area, is located six miles from Yakutat and is so named for the two cannons still visible today (USDA n.d.).¹¹⁷ The cannons were part of a larger complex of armament fortifications constructed on the bluffs along the seaside shoreline and facing the mouth of Yakutat Bay along the northwestern shoreline. The roughly 10,000 troops brought into Yakutat to defend the Alaskan coastline were primarily stationed on the edge of the peninsula, facing towards to bay.

Cannon Beach and the fortifications along the bluffs were connected to the main village and the airfield through a network of camouflaged roads that snaked for miles around the village (Mills and Firman 1986:143). Portions of the Lost River Road, which connects Yakutat to the Situk River fishing grounds, were part of this network of roads constructed during the war, as was the Ocean Cape or “Ankau” Road (CBY 2006:157-158). There was also a bridge constructed during this time that crossed Ankau Creek and a road that traversed Phipps Peninsula. The creation of these roads significantly impacted the Yakutat Tlingit, as the military regulations surrounding the usage of these roads denied the Tlingit access to their traditional fishing grounds during the war (de Laguna 1972:73; 544). After World War II, salmon runs progressively diminished, which intensified pressure on Native subsistence fishing practices (Mills and Firman 1986:27).

World War II affected the daily lives of Yakutat Tlingit in other ways, as well. For instance, the Coast Guard Station had an unexpected impact on subsistence strawberry picking along that region of the coastline. Construction and maintenance of the station required the land to be cleared of larger vegetation such as trees that overshadow and inhibit berry growth. The result was a prime spot to gather strawberries, one that Yakutat Tlingit families took advantage of each year. Yvonne Baker remembers how dense the strawberry patches used to be out by the Coast Guard Station:

“[T]hat’s one of the greatest places to pick strawberries used to be out at Coast Guard. But they kept it mowed there. They would mow it back and when they quit you can, the trees are almost entirely overgrown in that area now. We used to be able to—so many families could go out there and pick because there was so much area, but I don’t know if that you can even really get that much out there anymore” (YB).

As the Coast Guard station has fallen out of use and the surrounding area is no longer maintained, the area is no longer ideal for berries and is no longer a seasonal gathering spot.

As part of the war effort, many outlying Tlingit were relocated to the city of Yakutat for the purported purpose of public safety. The drastic change toward a sedentary lifestyle and the associated modification in diet away from subsistence foods caused the health of many Tlingit elders to suffer. Lorraine Adams, a Yakutat Tlingit explained the resultant malaise in this way:

“[T]hey [government officials] brought them in ... from all around Yakutat, and just stayed in Yakutat. And so the old-timers, I don't know, they seemed to have died off after they were brought in here” (LA).

For some outlying communities, such as Dry Bay, these forced relocations effectively marked the end of generations of occupation.

Despite the many obstacles the Yakutat community faced throughout the war period, there were some Tlingit members who managed to make the best of these circumstances. According to a 1995 interview with Yakutat Native, Nellie Lord, when the soldiers started arriving in Yakutat, the Tlingit women began to sell their craftwork, such as moccasins, to the troops. Some carvers also sold totem poles to the troops. At one point during the war, there was at least one Yakutat school, which taught children woodworking skills to create totem poles, possibly for sale to the troops. This was a way for the Tlingit, and the women in particular, to make money during the war.

These changes in traditional Tlingit practices as a result of World War II militarization are prominent in the photographic record. A number of Yakutat residents discussed the important role of photographer, Seiki Kayamori, who captured images of Yakutat Tlingit life throughout the early 20th century (Pegues 2014). Born in what is today Fuji City, Japan in 1877, Kayamori emigrated to the United States at the age of 25 and moved to Yakutat by 1912. He became highly popular in the village, being called “Picture Man” by the local community as he photographed many aspects of Yakutat village life—Yakutat Tlingit life in particular—developing photos in his home darkroom and sharing them within the community. In October 1940, a letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover identified Kayamori as a person of interest for “custodial detention.” He was suspected of being a spy. Additional correspondence called into question his production of panoramic views of the Alaskan coastline “from Yakutat to Cape Spencer.” After the bombing on Pearl Harbor, Kayamori became the target of retaliation, suffering bodily harm on December 7, 1941. Sadly, on December 9, he was found to have perished in his home. Those closest to him suggested he was unwilling to suffer internment and therefore took his own life (Pegues 2014). Yet nearly 700 negatives produced by Seiki Kayamori were rescued from a church mission house slated for demolition. These negatives and prints are now housed at the Alaska State Historical Library in Juneau with another set of prints on display at the Yakutat City Hall. In the 1970s, the city of Yakutat and the library worked together with Yakutat

community members to identify people and places in the photographs. These pictures are especially significant as a visual record of the cultural transitions that were underway at the time, with many traditional practices facing pressure from outside influences and technology.

Many of these outside influences introduced as a result of the militarization of Yakutat and the surrounding coastline can be observed in the introduction of mechanized equipment, including jeeps and halftracks with surplus vehicles (CBY 2010). Much of this equipment was made available to the public, including the Yakutat Tlingit, once decommissioned for military purposes.¹¹⁸ The new equipment had a variety of consequences for the residents of Yakutat. In particular, it was mobilized within the commercial and subsistence fisheries; as described elsewhere in this document, troop carriers and even tanks were transported to the shoreline of Wrangell-St. Elias, where they served in this capacity prior to park creation. The military legacy had tremendous effects on many aspects of Yakutat life, as the airstrip was retrofitted for civilian uses and abandoned facilities created new environmental hazards—themes addressed later in this document.

ON THE EVE OF PARK CREATION: YAKUTAT TLINGIT USES OF WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS FROM WORLD WAR II TO ANILCA

World War II and the militarization of the area had a significant impact on the residents of Yakutat. The influx of people and technology resulting from coastline fortifications brought a variety of changes to the resource procurement traditions of Yakutat Tlingit residents. Many of these effects were positive: cheap and reliable gas boats allowed fishers and subsistence hunters to travel to what is now the Wrangell-St. Elias coast and beyond with unprecedented ease from the consolidated settlements of Yakutat. So too, in the years following World War II, the rapid proliferation of light airplanes allowed hunting in these areas. Additionally, World War II surplus vehicles, made available at the end of the war, proved transformative, providing many families with their first powerful off-road vehicles. In some ways, the post-War period brought a brief renaissance, allowing for an elaboration of preexisting subsistence practices. While the hinterland was effectively depopulated by the events of World War II, the end of the war brought a period of mobility and modernization that allowed families in Yakutat to access traditional clan lands and resources more regularly.¹¹⁹

Among the places eagerly sought out were the shorelines of what is today Wrangell-St. Elias, as well as the nearby shoreline of Icy Bay. These remained places of unique historical and cultural connections for Kaagwaantaan and Ginéix Kwáan families, but were also understood to be places of pronounced resource abundance. Ray Sensmeier's comments on Icy Bay reflect the mood of the times:

“There was everything that you could want there; there was halibut, there was crab, there was fish, lots of seals. There was seven thousand seals, approximately, that live there now, making it the largest rookery in the world” (RS).

With safe and relatively speedy access to these places from Yakutat, incentives to return to these parts of the Yakutat Tlingit homeland multiplied, as did incentives to continue and even expand patterns of use that were generations old.

During this time, resource sharing continued to be a robust part of the traditional resource harvest. Interviewees note that this sharing was an important part of Yakutat Tlingit identity, helping Yakutat Tlingit to assert their traditions and distinguish themselves from non-Native people during a period of rapid change. The practice also assisted less fortunate or mobile members of the community, and helped families deal with the uncertainties and transitions involved with incremental movements from non-

traditional subsistence economy to cash economy during the mid-20th century. As Lena Farkus notes,

“It was always known that you just take enough for yourself unless you want to share it... if a relative in town needed food too, it was always shared. And not everybody had a boat to go up there to hunt seal and seagull eggs or whatever seafood, so they would share. And then when the outboard motors came along, then the people would like give you maybe a couple dollars if you gave them some fish and seal meat. ‘Just for gas,’ they’d say you know. And so our people always shared, they were never stingy” (LF).

As the second half of the twentieth century progressed, certain traditional procurement activities underwent a sort of “renaissance” in terms of how resources were harvested and utilized in the post-war economy of the region as it related to Yakutat Tlingit. The following sections provide a brief overview of some of the resources and resource procurement traditions that evolved in the second half of the twentieth century.

Seals and Sealing

In the period during and after World War II, Yakutat Tlingit continued to utilize traditional hunting grounds along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast for sealing, but the uses of the seals and the role of seal hunting diversified significantly. Increasingly, seals were hunted for commercial purposes, and for state-sponsored bounty programs meant to bolster fish production by reducing seal populations.

As before, this hunting was concentrated in certain productive places where tidewater glaciers punctuated the coast, within and immediately adjacent to what is now Wrangell-St. Elias. Locations within Disenchantment Bay, including places such as Egg Island, continued to prove highly fruitful for sealing during this period, as seals continued to birth their young and gather on the ice floating in the bays:¹²⁰

“The hair seals give birth to their young on the ice floes in Disenchantment and Icy Bays, where the bears cannot reach them. They remain here during the early part of summer, when they can be seen in large numbers basking on the floating ice (July 26, 1952). ‘How is it the hair seals make the ice gather together?’” (de Laguna 1972:374; quotes from de Laguna’s interviewees).

Similarly, Icy Bay remained a significant center of sealing activity. Based on the accounts of her interviewees in the late 1940s and 1950s, de Laguna reported that “Icy Bay is still a favorite seal hunting area, and some of the Yakutat men make regular excursions here, before or after the fishing season” (1972:98).¹²¹ Over the course of fifty years, Skip Johnson hunted seal in Icy Bay with various hunting companions. He was able to point out the location of his seal camp on a map of Icy Bay:

“I seal hunted for all the way through the sixties pretty much in Icy Bay. ...I hunted with my uncle Barney and Jerry Nelson, Joe Nelson, Walter Johnson, my brother Sam, and I hunted up there, Sam Johnson...we hunted seals up there for fifty years. I stayed up there one year we hunted, March we went up there early. And I was there all the way from March until September...It was in the sixties, I can’t recall what year it was, maybe sixty-six or something” (SJ).

While sealing continued in some of the traditional locations, the reason for sealing in these and other areas was no longer limited to traditional subsistence purposes. For example, sealing intensity reached new heights when, in the 1950s and 1960s, the State of Alaska sponsored bounty programs for seals. Generally seal hunting and commercial fishing were the most profitable activities, while trapping brought in money during the winter months (Mills and Firman 1986). Seal hunting in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, however, became even more profitable of a venture for many Tlingit hunters, when the “Federal Government put a \$3.00 bounty on seals since they were a major natural predator of salmon” (Mills and Firman 1986: 36). Skip Johnson recalls the time when the Yakutat participated in these state-sponsored programs that provided a bounty on the delivery of the seal noses and skins:

“[W]e hunted seals commercially. Well, for subsistence because we ate seals for years and years you know, that was what we primarily went for seals. The State of Alaska paid three dollars per nose you know, a bounty they called it. We had to cut the nose off, kind of right around here you know. That was the proof” (SJ).

Driven by state bounty initiatives, seal hunting became a significant source of income in the 1950s and 1960s.¹²² Some hunters took advantage of the program during the winter, to supplement their incomes in a way that capitalized on what were ancient and well-honed Yakutat Tlingit hunting skills. During the bounty era, some men sold seal pelts as well. Skip Johnson recalls that he soaked seal skins in brine and rolled them for shipping, earning \$5 per pelt in the 1960s. In this way, traditional Tlingit hunting skills, long used for traditional resource procurement, were employed to allow Tlingit participation in the cash economy. Yet, like many aspects of Tlingit economic life,

commercial and traditional harvests were combined in myriad ways. Certain traditional practices, such as the complete use of the seal, were set aside—some say temporarily—to accommodate these new activities, while hunting and navigation skills honed over centuries were applied to new economic pursuits. De Laguna discussed some of the waste, which resulted from this new economic venture:

“The harbor or hair seal is hunted in Disenchantment and Icy Bays where these animals breed. Organized parties as well as small groups or single hunters kill seals in April and May, before the commercial fishing season starts, and also after it ends. Seals may be shot whenever they are encountered. Seals are valued for the \$3 bounty paid for each nose (by the Federal Government in 1954), and also for the skins which are made up into moccasins or other articles for sale. Although seal meat and seal oil are relished, at least by the older people, most of the meat is wasted on the large hunts, and even the skins were not saved on all the hunts. For example, in August 1952, on one trip, organized by a native with a small motor boat, about 100 seals were shot, the seagulls stole some of the noses, and the party threw away most of the meat and skins because they could take less than 12 carcasses in their boat. Another man with a large motorboat killed 300 seals in Icy Bay in 1953, but attempted to save all the skins which were to be sent away to be commercially tanned. On a later trip the same year, he returned with 100 carcasses which it took 5 women 3 days to skin. Most of the meat and blubber was wasted. The following spring, he organized a similar hunt to Icy Bay, on which over 400 seals were brought to Yakutat. Some of the whole animals, minus the noses which the hunter always keeps, were sold for \$2 apiece (the baby seals for \$1). Many of the animals could not be flensed, and about 100 were washed away by the tide. At that time the raw skins were worth about \$2 each, and a dressed skin about \$10 or more.

“A White resident of Yakutat who spends the summers hunting seals in Icy Bay wrote me that in 1964, ‘Seal skins are very high now. I bought and shipped 3,300. My profit made me a good season’” (de Laguna 1972:373-374).

New Responses to the Challenges of Sealing in Icy Waters

With the profit margin of sealing for commercial purposes high, the impetus for remaining competitive in the sealing industry could be felt by Yakutat Tlingit hunters. This meant, in some cases, adopting new technologies to facilitate sealing in traditional and often dangerous waters.

Seal hunting on a canoe and navigating between large ice floes always included a significant element of danger. Yet with a growing abundance of gas-powered engines and introduced materials, Yakutat Tlingit hunters were able to reduce risks significantly. Skip Johnson hunted with his father in Icy Bay and Disenchantment Bay. He describes how they were always mindful of the weather while hunting. An approaching north wind could press down from the mountains and create a dangerous environment on the water:

“The hazardous part of the ice is the big icebergs. You had to watch very careful for the big icebergs because if the wind happened to come up and the wind can come up in the ice in about five minutes it’ll go from just hardly any wind at all to about twenty knot wind. It don’t take long, that north wind when it comes down. And the way you know when the north wind, like down in Disenchantment Bay, when the north wind comes down, there are two mountains up there you watch all the time and you watch those peaks. If they start smoking, it’s time to get out because it won’t be long that north wind will be coming down. The north wind can take the big icebergs and the wind will come behind it and in the front of the bergs, ice as big as this table like would just throw the ice out just like that. And those big bergs will go by and if you’re in a canoe in front of it you can’t get out of the way in time. It’ll get you. So you have to watch for the big bergs you know. And the big bergs also can turn over. And when they turn over, you know you don’t want to be close to them” (SJ).

De Laguna also spoke of the acute danger icebergs could present for people navigating Disenchantment Bay:

“Although more quiet water is usually found within Disenchantment Bay [than in Eleanor Cove], the south shore of Haenke Island is sometimes pounded by waves. Here, however, the principal danger to navigation comes from the masses of ice that continually fall from the glaciers with rolling thunder like an artillery barrage. Not only does ice frequently block progress by boat above Haenke Island, especially in spring and early summer, but even when winds have cleared a passage along the eastern shore, there is danger from the waves thrown up by calving bergs” (de Laguna 1972:23).

There were, and still are, tremendous navigational challenges created by calving ice at the base of the glaciers:

“My uncle used to tell me about Icy Bay. And he used to tell me that in Icy Bay they have ice floating around icebergs about as big as the ANB Hall. And I couldn’t image when I was a boy because the ice and just up the bay here, going out there, there were big icebergs some of them, but not as big as the ANB Hall. And I always used to wonder about that” (GR).

Due to the severe threat icebergs could pose to individual boats in sealing waters like Disenchantment Bay, interviewees spoke of the importance of possessing acumen regarding sealing in those waters. Skip Johnson describes the precautions needed during seal hunting:

“See I had to hunt for many years before I was allowed to go in my canoe. Yeah, that’s dangerous. It’s just—people don’t realize how hazardous it is. So many things to learn you know. And I shudder when I hear people say they’re going to go up to the ice and they’re going to hunt. And it scares me because it’s too—there’s so many things to know. So many things to learn. And it’s hazardous and the ice is just absolutely treacherous. But anyhow... So they wouldn’t let me hunt alone. I had to learn all those things” (SJ).

In response to challenges presented by dangerous sealing waters, Yakutat Tlingit long built traditional ice canoes for sealing and other activities in icy waters. Stable, and with thick hulls, they allowed relatively smooth passage through the icebergs of the Wrangell-St. Elias area. During her research among the Yakutat Tlingit in the 1940s and 1950s, de Laguna learned of these traditional sealing canoes and even obtained a model made in 1954:

“Even more distinctive was the special sealing canoe (*gudiyé* or *gudiyí*), designed for hunting among the ice floes at the heads of Yakutat and Icy Bays, and apparently made nowhere else in Alaska...

“This sealing canoe was described as a small dugout, ‘two or two and half fathoms’ or 12 to 15 feet long, and ‘six spans’ or 3 ½ to 4 feet wide, and was intended for one or two hunters. The stern had the same elegant shape as that of the *tcÀyác*, while the bow was broad, ‘low in front, like a spoon,’ and very thick, to withstand floating ice. Projecting from it was a short round post like a bowsprit, carved in one piece with the body of the canoe, the function of which was to fend off icebergs. On the inside of the prow was carved a small shelf, not made of a separate piece as in other canoes. There were two thwarts” (de Laguna 1972:339).



Figure 10 – An example of a Yakutat seal hunting boat, as they appeared in the mid-20th century. Made of planks, these boats were heavily reinforced with extra planks, tires, and other items to reduce damage to the hull from floating ice. Photo courtesy of Skip Johnson.

Canoes such as the model described above were still being utilized to some extent to hunt seal for commercial (and non-commercial) purposes in 1960s. Skip Johnson recalls that he was the last one to make an ice canoe in 1970. He used the canoe to hunt seal during his hunting trips in Icy Bay:

“Dan Henry actually built the last traditional ice canoe for his brother Paul, but I don’t know that he used it in hunting seals or not. But it’s still sitting up there, but I built the last hunting canoe that actually hunted...actually I built this [canoe] in 1970” (SJ).

As the Yakutat by and large stopped constructing traditional sealing canoes, they replaced traditional materials with new materials readily available in the area. Johnson describes the plank canoes used to hunt seal in Icy Bay in the latter twentieth century,

and how these canoes were constructed by hand, using heavy planks that contributed stability and durability to the craft:

“Well, the canoes that we used, yeah they were plank. They were plank canoes. The canoes were built by the New England method of building boats. There were three planks on the bottom, two planks on each side and then they have a pretty heavy bow stem. The bow stems we liked were gumwood, if we could find gumwood. And then the sterns...some [were] very narrow, very small sterns and the boats were almost flat on the bottom. They would come up maybe an inch in the bow and maybe about three-quarter inch in the stern” (SJ).

To buffer the hull from damaging collisions with ice, boat builders of the period used discarded tires and rubber belts from the cannery.¹²³ De Laguna witnessed some of these “plank canoes” used for sealing during her research in 1949:

“In 1949 there were a few ‘canoes’ used on the narrow sloughs and streams. These were small, narrow, flatbottomed boats made of planks and were paddled like canoes. They could carry three, or possibly four persons; William Irving, Edward Malin and I were loaned one to explore Diyaguna 'Et on Lost River” (de Laguna 1972:345).

Small outboards, three to seven horsepower engines, could also be attached to these plank canoes. Again, according to Johnson:

“Small outboards [were used]. You could put fifty-horse on there, it don't make no difference, it still wouldn't go any faster. So we usually used three-horse to I think the biggest outboard was seven-horse, seven and a half-horse power I think, seven and half, somebody had one. But yeah, it was just small motors and mostly all Johnson [and] Evinrude and we carried a lot of shear pins!” (SJ).

In addition to the plank canoes, de Laguna noted that “ordinary skiffs” with motors were also being used for navigating the waters around Yakutat, including for fishing purposes:

“Instead of dugouts the Yakutat people now use ordinary skiffs with outboard motors. Some men are skilled in making the large skiffs used for lifting gillnets. These have to be rowed because the stern is equipped with a roller for hauling in the net” (de Laguna 1972:344).

Boats, regardless of whether they were the traditional dugout canoes or more modern skiffs with outboards, were an essential part of sealing in the mid to late twentieth century, so evolving techniques surrounding boat construction were often essential in allowing Yakutat Tlingit hunters to participate in the commercial sealing industry.¹²⁴ While commercial sealing, as is described above, was an important part of Yakutat Tlingit life in the twentieth century, non-commercial sealing continued to play a role in Yakutat Tlingit life.

Though commercial hunting for seals, particularly bounty hunts, resulted in wasteful practices, in twentieth-century seal hunting trips for non-commercial purposes, waste was carefully avoided—though these excursions tended to be much more modest than commercial hauls. According to Johnson:

“When we’d go up to the ice and get seals, and we’d come down with maybe a half a dozen seals to—and usually—ten is the most I can remember bringing down, because ten seals is a lot of seals you know. We had a couple boats we could bring. But mostly, two or three or whatever. And we’d come down to the village, and then we’d take the seals and take them out of the boat and pull them up the beach, and by nightfall, there wouldn’t be nothing. The ladies would all go down to the beach, and then they would take a seal and they’d all be used. All the meat would be used. All the hides were all fleshed out” (SJ).

Stories and recalled memories, as well as actual hunting experiences, helped relay to younger generations traditional seal-hunting practices and knowledge. Skip Johnson recalls his father taking him seal hunting in Icy Bay and Disenchantment Bay. The route he and his father traversed while hunting seal was guided by his father’s extensive knowledge of the landscape:

“[T]here’s two mountains up there in Disenchantment Bay...I used to know their Tlingit names. I feel real dumb sometimes because my dad took me up to the head of the bay and we went up, went up Chicago Harbor, went up to the ice, went past the glacier, went up to the head of the bay, then we came back, then we went up Nunatak and then back, and all the way up, from all the way from town dad was telling me the Tlingit names for every—there were names for every place. And he told me all the names” (SJ).

The hunting of seals in this area has been guided by traditional ecological knowledge of considerable depth, not only related to when and where the seals were hunted, but also how they were hunted. A successful seal hunt in Icy Bay required an intimate

knowledge of seal behavior. Skip Johnson describes how, using plank canoes, they would come upon seals gathered on the flat ice and after careful observation, target the seal “watchman”:

“we hunt seals on way back deep in the ice and try to hunt seals on the flat ice because there would be sometimes, oh anywhere two or three, sometimes a dozen and sometimes twenty seals on one ice. ...We’d try to shoot the watchman because...they always have one watchman that looks around. And the watchman looks around and then when he goes down, another one takes his place. So if we could stand off a little bit, maybe seventy-five yards off and we used .222 Remington, that’s what I used a .222 Remington all the time. Or the old rifles were .218B, or .219 Zipper, .22 Hornet, .220 Swift. But then we’d shoot the watchman. The watchman would go down and if it was a good kill, you’d only shoot them in the head anyhow, but if it was a good kill the other seals wouldn’t jump off. Another one would take his place and he became the watchman because they notice you know, one would go down, so they would go up and then we’d kill the watchman. We could [keep this up] until somebody kind of wounded one or they made a noise and everybody would go off the ice. Then we used long poles, we had twenty-foot poles with hooks and spears on the end, and those would be in the canoe because you didn’t get off, get on the ice. That was a no-no. That was one of the bad things to do is get off on the ice because ice can roll over. So we used the long hooks with lines on the end. Reach out with the long hooks and then hook the seals and pull them into the canoe. That’s how we got them off the ice. Anyhow, that’s how we hunted” (SJ).¹²⁵

Lena Farkus remembers hunting seal at Egg Island with her father and describes the method by which they were taken, including the traditional regulations surrounding the hunting of female seals:

“My father used to take a couple bags like a sack of coal bags and have Nelly and I jump on the beach there, ‘Waa! Waa!,’ little seal baby, seal. And he’d shoot a couple so our mother could...sew around a moccasin...But they’d never take a whole lot and this time of the year, other people needed fresh food and fish and seal and they’d go up there hunting but they never killed the female because they were in birth and just get the male seals. But if they accidentally shot one, then they’d take the baby too because those babies just perished. They don’t get adopted by another mother” (LF).



Figure 11 – Drying seal hides at seal camp in the mid-20th century. Seals from the tidewater glaciers at Disenchantment Bay and Icy Bay were the cornerstone of this enduring traditional practice. Photo courtesy of Skip Johnson.

Elders from Yakutat remember either hunting in pairs or alone. As Johnson explains, there were one or two individuals in each canoe during seal hunting expeditions:

“One in the bow hunting, you know shooting and then one running motor. Or just one in the canoe. I was in my own canoe and Jerry would go out. So everybody would go out in their own canoes. Just one” (SJ).

Ray Sensmeier explains a seal hunting method that required the teamwork of the older riflemen who would shoot the seal and the younger men who would retrieve them:

“Ok. There’s one other hunting—the old people, when they asked the old to hunt they would take them out...I don’t know if you’ve been out there, and there’s a big bluff there. And then there’s these rocks and all these big waves. When the seals came back from eating eulachons in the springtime, they liked to play in that surf there. I watched them. ...They’d take the old men up there and they would talk with one another...they’d turn black in the sun. But they had rifles and they could shoot seal from up there. And there was a sandy beach a short ways away and the seals would come up there the very next morning and the young men would run down and retrieve them. So...the old people still hunted and that’s how they did it” (RS).

Most hunting on land requires stealth and silence. But when seal hunting from a canoe, the constant movement of the ice conceals not only the sound of the movement of the hunters on the water, but the gunshot as well. Bert Adams Sr. describes the sound of the ice movement, saying it “sounds like [the cereal] Rice Krispies” (BA). Skip Johnson also discusses the noise of moving ice, saying:

“Well, the ice makes a lot of noise. Ice is very loud. The seals would never hear the gunshot...because the ice is constantly (imitates noise). You hear it all the time. The ice is moving up against each other. It’s very loud out on the ice. But the difficulty factor in the hunting is the big icebergs” (SJ).

Seals that were shot in the water needed to be pulled aboard the hunting boats so they would not sink. During her research, de Laguna observed how Yakutat Tlingit hunters retrieved seals shot in the water:

“On these hunts, most seals are shot with rifles from boats, and the floating carcass is retrieved with an ordinary boathook. Until recently, a harpoon without a float was used for this purpose, the hunter simply retaining in his hand the line attached to the butt end of the shaft” (de Laguna 1972:374).

Johnson describes the hooks used during seal hunting, and how hunters used the hooks to haul seal onto the decks of canoes:

“The hook was, it had a line on the end. They were actually were built and they had little eyes in them. There was a spear on the end and the spears were used for if a seal sunk. We shoot a swimmer and the seal, because

you shoot a seal in the side or on the back, you never shoot them head on because if you shoot them as they're looking at you, they'll throw the head this way, the air will all come out of their lungs and they'll sink. Well if one is sinking then a lot of times we could go up and spear it. We'd see it down in the clear water and spear it down and then it would you know, they were very, very sharp spears and then we'd hook onto it and bring it back up again you see. And then the big seals, that they were swimmers, the way you get the seal in the boat: you take him, go up to it and then grab onto the flipper, the little short flipper and you flip them like that way and the back flippers come up. And when the back flippers come up, you grab the back flippers and go down as far as you can, then you pull as hard as you can that way and then get it over the side of the rail and then hopefully they'd fall in, but some seals were pretty big you know. We had to try two or three times" (SJ).

Johnson remembers hunting seal pups from a canoe in Icy Bay with his father:

"Well, my dad and I went hunting and we were hunting pups that time and the canoes were twenty feet long and the pups...I found out how many pups a canoe would hold: forty-six. He shot forty-seven times and we didn't need that last one anyhow, he missed that one, but every time my dad pulled the trigger we had a seal. That old—I never got to be as good a shot as the old guys. Gee whiz!" (SJ).

Once the seals were taken to shore, the men and women onboard began processing them for meat and hides. Skip Johnson describes the knife used in Yakutat to skin the seals:

"And in Yakutat, we have a knife to flesh seals it's called *wéiksh* [? Tlingit term]. And the [repeats term] is very similar usage as the Eskimo *ulu*. But ours is different. It's shaped different and it works better. And that's how we take the fat off...there's a few people who used to make them...in the last fifty years they'd make them out of...boxes" (SJ).

Seal skinning required practice, and precautions had to be taken to not ruin the hides. Skip Johnson recalls the technique used to process seal:

"And then when we get the seals in the boat, we never let one seal touch the other one. Very important. And we take ice a lot of time and put ice between the seals, because if two seals touched each other, that's where

they would slip and when the ladies then would take and flesh the seals out, then that hide sometimes became no good because if it sat there for like in the daytime, the seals are hot you see, very hot. And two seals touching each other like that, that's where the hair will slip when it's you know. So we had to have seals all apart. And then we'd put them in the boat and then we'd start working the seals and put them in there. And then we'd have take and cover them with canvas. We always took canvas or gunnysacks. We had used our gunnysacks for the coal because we got coal, a lot of people burned coal. We could get a hundred and twenty-five pound sacks off the boats. And then we take the gunnysacks and put on there because the sun, the sun would ruin the hides too in a short time, didn't take long. And that's the same way when we flesh out the seals. You'd always take and see, if you ever see pictures, old pictures, you'll see pictures of the seals on the stretcher. Like, a lot of people used alders because that was easy to get to, and stretched the seal hides out and you'd never see a seal hide looking at you with the fur, you'd always see the frame, the back frame. And the reason is, is because you can't have the sun hit that. And most of the time, they were, when you'd start drying them out, they'd have to be in the shade" (SJ).

Maintaining connections to traditional lands—including some portions of Wrangell-St. Elias—through sealing activities was a way for Yakutat Tlingit to retain integral elements of their culture in the face of changes brought to the region in the post-war period.

Fishing the Coastline of Wrangell-St. Elias in the Postwar Period

Impacts from the introduction of new technologies, such as the motorboats used for sealing, extended into traditional fisheries in the Yakutat region. Though motorboats impacted resource procurement traditions of the Yakutat Tlingit in complex ways, interviewees still recalled using many traditional fishing grounds along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast during the latter half of the twentieth century. Salmon remained a major component of the Tlingit diet during this period, and Yakutat fishermen spent significant periods of time along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, both smoking salmon and fishing (on seine boats and skiffs, gillnetting, seining, trolling and jigging).



Map 8

Within current Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve boundaries, salmon fishing was most significant along the coastline at Point Manby, near the Sitkagi Bluffs, branching inland via waterways such as Esker Stream, Sudden Stream, the Spoon River and Yahtse River (see Map 8).¹²⁶ At one time, all of these places were productive springtime salmon spawning areas for returning sockeye and coho. During an interview with Skip Johnson, he points out coho migratory patterns around Manby Stream on a map:

“Oh here it is. This is the Manby [Stream] right here. See those little lake systems. The lakes come down to the clear stream. They come out and the sockeyes go up those lake systems you see. Then the cohos, they go up the main Manby and they go on all these little streams over in here see” (SJ).

Lena Farkus remembers salmon trolling with her brother along Manby Stream and the Sitkagi Bluffs, and in Icy Bay. They would camp by the river on the Yakutat side of the bay: “That one summer when we fished Manby [Stream], but up here we used to, as I say, go up there in May for about, anywhere from a week to two weeks, putting up food in May” (LF). Many interviewees remember fishing in these areas during the summer months—for some, as early as May. James Bremner fished at Manby Stream sporadically over the expanse of a decade:

“I fished the Manby [Stream] two or three different times I went there. Let’s see, when I was like eighteen I fished there for a year. And then that wasn’t very good fishing year so I didn’t go back for a while. And then I went back probably five, six, seven years later and fished there for two to three years. So I probably fished there probably about four years” (JB).

Helen Bremner, in an interview with Goldschmidt and Haas during their 1946 fieldwork, also recalled fishing at Point Manby:

“Point Manby is a place where we get fish. It doesn’t belong to any special group, and the Natives fish here to sell to the cannery. They were last there in September. There are no whites in there” (quoted in Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).¹²⁷

In addition to Manby Stream, Skip Johnson also fished Esker Creek, Sudden River and Spoon River:

“I fished not only the Manby [Stream], I fished Esker Creek...Esker Creek, I fished that and I fished Sudden River and I fished Spoon [River], and I

fished Manby [Stream]. And there used to be a lot of fish over there. There were a lot of cohos. But one of the reasons that there were a lot of cohos was because of the spawning areas” (SJ).

Many of the interviewees for this project have strong memories of utilizing these traditional fishing grounds in the post-war period. Though traditionally these waters were used for subsistence harvests, as the twentieth century progressed, utilizing the traditional streams and rivers for fishing provided a means to participate in the commercial fishing economy of the region.

Commercial and Surf Fishing

The proliferation of gas-powered boats during the post-war period helped Yakutat Tlingit fishermen bring greater efficiency to old ways of fishing. The fishermen of Yakutat have a longstanding and unique tradition of surf fishing (also known as “breaker fishing”): “breaker fishing is a very special type of fishing that only in Yakutat they do this. Cordova has a boat, breaker fishing, but it’s not like the Yakutat” (WJ). Well before the advent of motorboats, Yakutat fishermen knew how to ply the dangerously large waves of the outer ocean coast—an environment unlike most other settled parts of Tlingit territory. In the early- to mid-20th century, with the arrival of small motorboats, fishermen refined their techniques, learning to fish for salmon directly in the rolling waves of the outer beaches. These fishermen learned to idle motors and align their boats so as to stay relatively still and stable in the pounding surf, adapting their fishing nets to ride out the large waves.

“We set where the waves are coming in, we set our nets right in the waves and the breakers hit the net and then wash right over and then we’re picking it with the skiff. And, quite exciting. After you get through it you know you’re alive, let’s put it that way—you know very definitely that you’re alive, your heart is beating, you’re just shaking, you’re scared, you’re vibrating all over but then you know you’re alive after you get done. And these are not little waves like this, this is twenty, thirty foot seas, waves that we take all the time. We’ve done it many times” (WJ).

The surf-fishing technique traditionally used by Yakutat continued into the latter half of the twentieth century:

“The breaker fishing that is taking place when I first came to Yakutat in 1957, after I graduated out of high school I came here. ...We were rowing all over the river. We rowed from the camp all the way around the point,

all the way down, set our nets, come back and row back up with the tide. We'd rowed until we hit the tide then we'd started walking it up, fish and all. Within three years they started introducing motors onto the back of the skiffs. And they would tow the skiffs down, the breaker skiffs down and anchor the outboards out and row them in. After a while they started using the outboards to go set their nets and stuff and brought it around to what it is today" (WJ).

This style of fishing is quite distinctive, and provides access to fish before they enter the rivers; for this reason, there have been efforts by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to restrict the practice, including an outright ban in 1981 (Mason and Ramos 2004:56). In response, Yakutat fishermen then fought a successful legal battle against these restrictions: "[we] filed suit against the state of Alaska for when they were going to take away the breaker fishing" (WJ).

While the arrival of motorboats into the Yakutat territory led to innovation regarding fishing, it also brought with it complications. For example, the ease of which Yakutat fishermen could access traditional subsistence fishing areas was now largely dictated by gas prices and boat ownership. The introduction of gas-powered boats created many more complications, as well. According to Langdon, as referenced by Thornton (2012):

"[T]he floating fish trap and gas-powered boat were the two technologies that most fundamentally altered traditional Tlingit relations of production. In the case of gas-powered boats, the desire for young Tlingit men to strike out on their own in high-status jobs as independent fishing captains stimulated investment in motorized purse seine vessels. Though these boats constituted a considerable investment, cannery operators would finance the construction and purchase of the seiners on behalf of the fishermen; however, the debt incurred by the fishermen in effect indentured them to produce exclusively for the cannery. Some fishermen worked their whole lives without ever emerging from debt or gaining title to their boats" (160).

Gas-powered seine vessels forced fishermen to harvest more intensively and at greater distances from traditional fishing grounds (Thornton 2012:160). Fishermen also took to sleeping on their boats rather than camping on land, which reduced the physical association and traditional ties to the land (Thornton 2012).

Camps and Commercial Fishing: In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s

Salmon were harvested in the rivers and streams, then processed and smoked at nearby seasonal campsites in smokehouses. At one time, a multitude of camps and settlements existed along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline, most relating to both commercial and subsistence fishing. Commercial fishermen and traditional subsistence users returned to these locations seasonally. Commercial fishermen spent much of the year on the water, where an intimate knowledge of Yakutat Bay is crucial for navigation, and where familiarity with the ecology is required for a successful harvest. For many interviewees, commercial fishing for salmon along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline is a memory that dates back to the 1950s and 1960s. Commercial fishing was not only a family business, but a way of life for Tlingit men and women.

Many Yakutat Tlingit found employment in other facets of the fishing industry, such as in canneries, as the need for cash employment increased alongside barriers to traditional subsistence lifestyles. Interviewees mentioned themselves or family members taking seasonal employment in canneries within Yakutat and in other Gulf of Alaska communities.

Whether for subsistence or commercial purposes, certain areas and camps were closely associated with individuals and families—most but not all directly linked to the area by kinship and clan affiliations. Skip Johnson mentions that his uncle Georgie [Valle?] had a fish camp at the Manby Stream in the 1950s, saying, “now before, back in the fifties, my uncle Georgie fished over there and they had a camp” (SJ). Johnson also describes the fish camps he remembers at Manby Stream in the 1960s and then at Yahtse River and Yana Stream in the 1970s:

“I fished in Manby for a lot of the sixties. Jerry Nelson had the camp over there, and I fished with Jerry and Joe-Joe, Sampson Jr., his brother, and Michael was over there, Michael Harry, Walter Johnson, Andrew Grey. ...And then later on towards the seventies, then he went to Yahtse and Yana up the Yahtse River and then Helena, his wife ran the camp. And then George Bogren was over there. Rusty was there...you know, there was a lot of people that fished there” (SJ).

Though it occurred largely outside of lands now within the park, fishing at Yahtse River was also an important activity. However, transportation between the Yahtse River camps and the fish loading areas on Icy Bay was complex due to topographic constraints. As Sam Demmert explains,

“further up the coast from there, we fished the Yahtse from [set nets]. I think I fished there three or four years; three or four different seasons.

And a good fishery there, it's just that getting fish from Yahtse to Icy Bay was really difficult because some years there'd be a big sandspit. You'd try to get across there and it was just washed out. It was right up against the cliffs" (SD).

As elsewhere along this coast, families maintained subsistence cabins in this area. These cabins were shared between members of the larger Yakutat community. James Bremner, for example, remembers fishing Yahtse with his grandfather in the mid-20th century, based at a cabin owned by Jerry Nelson:

"in Yahtse...just there was a—my grandpa used to fish with Jerry Nelson but he had that building, couple buildings there...He [Jerry Nelson] fished there too, and he had Yahtse in there, and I fished with them a little and stuff" (JB).

While these camps on the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline were significant for a variety of purposes, many Yakutat families instead used camps for sealing, fishing, and other purposes on the eastern side of Yakutat Bay. Ray Sensmeier spent much of his childhood on Knight Island with his family:

"We lived on Knight Island when I was small, from 1946 to 1952 when de Laguna was there. ... But we lived in a tent. It was ten sheets and a roof and because the wind so hard then, it could actually twist those huge trees. My dad had to build a cellar and we'd go down there when the wind was really—the north wind. It was actually a house pit because he dug up a lot of ashes and stuff like that" (RS).

As part of the communities' participation in the commercial harvest, they had to ship fish from their camps or other landing areas and transshipment points where ships could unload the catch. For a time, surplus military vehicles, including jeeps, troop carriers and even tanks were used by the cannery operations to transport salmon across the landscape. This method was used to ship fish between camps from Point Manby to Sudden Creek. Skip Johnson recalls that,

"for a couple years we hauled them with a tank. ... Yeah, it's called a 'Water Buffalo.'...they were military. The cannery I think bought five of them...we had one in the Manby and Bill Wiggley¹²⁸ ran that tank. I made a lot of trips with him up and down from Manby, all the way to Sudden and back again. And they would swim and he'd come down, go right up to where skiffs, lower the ramp down. We'd [load] in twelve hundred

cohos. ... Close the ramp and it could go up the beach, thirty miles an hour and swim right out to the [boat] you know Clayton and he'd brail them out. ...Then he'd put the tank on the beach, go to town, deliver the fish, come right back again and then do the same thing. He was continually hauling fish you know. And that was kind of an interesting way to deliver fish" (SJ).



Figure 12 – Transporting military surplus vehicles along the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline in the mid-20th century. Such vehicles were integral to subsistence and commercial fishing operations along this coast, and were abundant in the wake of World War II. Photo courtesy Skip Johnson.

Around the same time, there was a tank and a weapons carrier performing similar operations in Icy Bay. According to Skip Johnson,

“they...had a weapons carrier up there too. Had one of those with a trailer on it. That was what hauled fish from the Yahtse also. As a matter of fact, they hauled fish from the Yahtse more with the weapons carrier than they did the tank. When the tank broke down, they still had the weapons carrier” (SJ).

In the same way the introduction of motorized boats allowed Yakutat Tlingit hunters to hunt for seal in new and efficient ways, these new mechanisms—tanks and weapons carriers—facilitated the participation of Yakutat Tlingit fishermen in the commercial fishery. The introduction of these machines also helped set a precedent for the use of motorized land vehicles in Wrangell-St. Elias as part of twentieth-century commercial fishing

Mountain Goat and Other Terrestrial Animals

As with fishing and sealing during the post-war period, land hunting activities continued in traditional locations, and arguably expanded in geographical range and intensity. Yakutat Tlingit as well as non-Native hunters continued to pursue mountain goat in the Yakutat's traditional territory: "Mountain goat hunting during the late summer by local residents occurred upland from the Yakutat Forelands during the 1920s to the 1940s, according to respondents" (Mills and Firman 1986:170). Skip Johnson describes hunting mountain goats with his father on the ridges and points on the western shores of Icy Bay:

"We'd go back up in there and we walked up to where there was a ridge that went up and then it was another ridge that went up, and then there was this big, huge meadow that was out there, and there were a couple hundred goats there, and the goats were already climbing up the mountain, and they were going up the trail on the other side" (SJ).

One or more hunters flushed the goats over Kichyatt Point, while others waited with rifles on the other side. Skip Johnson's father, whose connection to this place was widely known, is the source of the point's name: "There's [a point] they named in Icy Bay for him. There's a Kichyatt Point" (SJ).

Ray Sensmeier also remembers hunting mountain goats in Icy Bay:

"Mountain goats are in Icy Bay, and there used to be a lot of goats there and the people, the men, would go around behind and come up and the goats would come down this side where the hunters were, towards the lake to have easier access to them. ...Much easier to do it that way than to try to pack it out over the mountains" (RS).

In addition to hunting goats for their meat, Yakutat Tlingit continued to use goat wool in blankets and regalia, as well as for trade with other Tlingit communities—a practice that continued until around the time of park creation:

“Even today, there is still quite a bit of trade and gift exchange between Yakutat and southeastern Alaska. ... [A] Yakutat woman has a ‘relative’ at Klukwan from whom she hopes to get dried mountain goat meat in exchange for seaweed” (de Laguna 1972:352).

People continued hunting mountain goat and gathering mountain goat wool. Though regulations imposed in the mid-1970s curbed hunting in the traditional hunting grounds, it is apparent that at times hunting took place within what is now the southern edge of Wrangell-St. Elias:

“Goats have frequently been harvested from the cliff areas near Icy Bay. The regulatory bag limit for this area was reduced in 1975 from two animals to one to help conserve the population. This reduced bag limit and the considerable expense of the 80 mile trip by boat or air for one goat has caused some Yakutat hunters to abandon the hunt” (Mills and Firman 1986:69-70).

Even with the introduction of bag limits and other regulations, Yakutat Tlingit continued to hunt for goats in the traditional hunting grounds of previous centuries.

Moose and Deer in Yakutat Territory: 1930s-1970s

Historically, moose and deer did not play a significant role in the traditional subsistence patterns of the Yakutat Tlingit.¹²⁹ Only in the second half of the twentieth century did moose and deer move into the Yakutat region, in part due to environmental changes that allowed ice-free corridors from the interior, the mobilization of wolves and other predators, and adequate browse in formerly glaciated landscapes. For a time, the growing moose and deer numbers helped to offset the use of seal, bear and other species that involved comparatively long journeys or high risks to pursue.

Moose were more commonly reported as game within what is now Wrangell-St. Elias than deer. As moose are a fairly new addition to the Yakutat region, appearing in the 1960s, they are relatively new to the Yakutat Tlingit diet.¹³⁰ “They started migrating down here in the thirties and forties from the interior. The habitat was perfect for them” (BA).¹³¹

Once moose made their initial appearance into the Yakutat region, they proliferated quickly. Skip Johnson describes the large populations of moose in Yakutat in the 1960s:

“There used to be thousands of moose in Yakutat. Did you know that? Back in the sixties there wasn’t a day that you could drive around any place without seeing at least a half a dozen moose. Like, on the roads. And, because at that time you could see a long ways into the meadows you know and so you could see moose way off there. ...But on the roads you know? There were just a lot of moose!” (SJ).

Moose were once plentiful enough to support an annual Moose Barbeque at Yakutat held by Tlingit families, which continued until moose populations dropped below the management threshold introduced by Fish and Game:

“We used to have a moose barbeque...and one of my sisters, Evelyn was the first moose barbeque queen. But we had a big party. I mean, they’d bring out a big cart of crab from the Bellingham Canning Company. They’d bring crab out and Mortenson, Bud Mortenson was the one that used to package it all up, the moose, and we’d dig a big pit out there and have a huge roaring fire going and line it with rocks. And then scrape that out and put all the moose in there and build a fire on top of it. Man, that moose meat was fantastic” (SJ).

In spite of the initial abundance of moose in the Yakutat region, several interviewees identified the south shore of Wrangell-St. Elias as an especially prime place to hunt moose. The area was hunted in the course of trips for other purposes to that shoreline, and was especially important when moose populations in Yakutat faltered. Sam Demmert points out the places he would hunt for moose on the coast at Point Manby:

“I hunted over here. Yeah, these two little [rivers in the Preserve]...we’ve gone across here several times to go moose hunting. I think we still have access there. I haven’t been across here for several years now. ...We’d camp out there also [at] Esker Creek” (SD).

Skip Johnson also recalled hunting for moose at Point Manby and Icy Bay. The marshy lagoons and estuaries along Point Manby were said to be browsed by moose and were particularly good hunting areas:

“If you look on the map [of] the Manby, you’ll see a long, real long waterway that comes almost to the ocean. It’s just right across there and

that's where we used to hunt moose too up in there. ...We hunted moose up there for subsistence" (SJ).

He indicates that his father was probably the first person to fell a moose in modern times along Icy Bay: "Used to be a lot of moose and a lot of moose up in Icy Bay and stuff. As a matter of fact, my dad shot the first moose in Icy Bay" (SJ).

Birds and Bird Eggs

Gull egg harvesting, discussed previously as an important part of Yakutat Tlingit resource procurement traditions, continued in the post-WWII period and throughout the twentieth century. Yakutat collected gull eggs in and around Wrangell-St. Elias lands, particularly north and west of Disenchantment and Yakutat Bays:

"The most common species and a year-round resident is the glaucous-winged gull, *Larus glaucescens*. They hang about the cannery dock and breed in Disenchantment Bay, especially on Haenke Island and the moraine-covered edge of Hubbard Glacier where the eggs are gathered by the natives in May or early June" (de Laguna 1972:45).

George Ramos Sr. remembers harvesting seagull eggs in the Wrangell-St. Elias area in the 1940s:

"when I was climbing those cliffs, there used to be a lot of seagulls there...my uncle [and I were], hunting up there at that time...if an eagle came along, all the seagulls used to—I don't know if you've ever seen that—they'll all take off. It used to be covered with seagulls. But I was up there in the last few years, the last, well fifteen years, there's hardly any seagulls up there" (GR).

Lena Farkus describes her family's movement across the landscape as part of the traditional subsistence lifestyle, including the gathering of gull eggs, which she recalls was a prominent activity among Tlingit in the mid-20th century:

"We'd go up the bay like now we'd be up the bay by Egg Island area, Hubbard Glacier area.¹³² And my brothers and my father would get some halibut and king salmon, get some seagull eggs and we'd get some seaweed and my father always told us, 'Watch the mountains.' And the

slides you could see the black bear come out. And so, oh he would be excited and we'd all start jumping and hollering, 'There's a bear! There's a bear!' and so they'd take off in a boat and shoot a bear. But we put up food there and towards the end of May come back to town, go to school for a couple weeks and then move on to Situk or Ankau put up fish again. So we traveled with the season. We never actually stayed at home" (LF).

In addition to Disenchantment and Yakutat Bays, interviewees recalled collecting seagull eggs at Icy Bay. Skip Johnson points out the prime harvesting areas he remembers visiting on Gull Island in Icy Bay: "the seagull eggs are all along the, there's reefs coming in here. ...They call it Gull Island" (SJ). Johnson collected eggs in conjunction with his return to the salmon fishing grounds. He can still clearly recall the cold mornings, spent hovering over a gas stove on his boat, percolating coffee and seagull eggs for a quick, warm breakfast:

"Coleman used to make little gas stoves about that big that would flip out and that would go in the bottom of the boat box and you'd have a little pot, a coffee pot to put in there to make coffee in there and no matter if the wind was blowing, you could make coffee. And then, as soon as you'd put the coffee in there then we'd take and put eggs in there, or seagull eggs, and when the eggs, when the coffee was done, the eggs were done. Eggs in coffee" (SJ).

Ray Sensmeier also recalls collecting seagull eggs in Icy Bay in conjunction with his hunting trips:

"I've been to Icy Bay many times to go hunting and mostly for seagull eggs. ...There's a little island in...Icy Bay—that they're always on. That used to be a good place to collect those" (RS).

In the post-war period, care was taken by Yakutat Tlingit to maintain proper traditional subsistence resource harvesting techniques. Interviewees presented examples of these stringent protocols in reference to seagull egg harvesting. Ray Sensmeier describes the rules he remembers for such harvesting:

"If you saw three in a nest, you didn't touch those because they had been there for a while. If there were two then those two or one, you could collect those because they hadn't started developing yet. And sometimes somebody would carry a little pail of water and they'd put the eggs in the water and if one of them floated, that was starting to develop so you'd put

that one back. If they sank to the bottom, it had not yet begun to develop so it was okay to take those” (RS).

In addition to collecting bird eggs, Yakutat Tlingit continued to hunt for waterfowl and other types of birds in twentieth century. One of de Laguna’s interviewees from her research in the late 1940s and early 1950s recalled how Yakutat would continue to use some traditional methods of hunting birds well after the arrival of guns in the region:

“They still use things like that now if they get out of gun shot [have no more ammunition]. You tie a string to it about four feet long, and then put a small fish, a herring, or a eulachon, or a smelt... You put a line across the river and use several strings with gorges hanging from it. Put it in a shallow place where the water runs so the fish [bait] look like they're swimming... The sawbill [duck] swallows the fish and gets that stick stuck in its throat... You can catch seagulls this way, too” (de Laguna 1972:373; quotes from de Laguna’s interviewee).

Traditional gathering and hunting areas, as well as traditional regulations in regards to seagull egg harvesting, continued to have importance in Yakutat Tlingit life in the post-war period. The maintenance of these traditional practices, in addition to other resource procurement activities, kept Yakutat Tlingit visiting their traditional resource procurement grounds, including some portions in and around Wrangell-St. Elias, well into the twentieth century.

Plant Gathering

Gathering plant foods—berry-picking in particular—was another Yakutat Tlingit resource procurement tradition that continued into the post-war period. Of her research in the late 1940s and 1950s, de Laguna writes: “Berries were the most important type of plant food in the past, and the women still gather and preserve quantities. Berrying grounds were formerly owned by sibs” (de Laguna 1972:407). Berries were either preserved or eaten fresh in historic times, and this practice continued into the mid-20th century. De Laguna’s interviewees gathered a variety of berries, including: salmonberries, blueberries, red elderberries, highbush cranberries, lowbush cranberries, nagoon berries and strawberries, in addition to other berries and plants. Some of these were available in the vicinity of Wrangell-St. Elias, while others were gathered elsewhere (de Laguna 1972:408).

Throughout the twentieth century, strawberries, specifically, remained an important part of Yakutat resource procurement traditions. Strawberries were identified as significant resources at Point Manby and were once prolific at the Coast Guard Station near Yakutat when the station was in operation (YB). Sam Demmert remembers picking strawberries as a side trip while commercial fishing along the coast of Manby in July: “That would be fun—the whole gang picking strawberries” (SD). Victoria Demmert was with Sam on these fishing trips to Manby and remembers the large amounts of fruit that they would harvest:

“They picked berries like, in these big bowls. I don’t carry buckets, carried big dishpans...They’d fill them up, they’d dump ‘em, they come back and get some more” (VD).

Most interviewees remember the sheer abundance of these berries and how people would gather at a strawberry patch, filling their buckets, dish pans and massive bowls to be taken home and eaten fresh, or to be processed and preserved. Ted Valle also comments on the abundance of strawberries throughout the Yakutat region and how berries were typically preserved or processed:

“So there was a lot of strawberries. We had a lot of strawberries. Our people picked strawberries all the time and dehydrated it. And they got seaweed from rocks...And they’d make a seaweed and strawberries into bricks and put them into...boxes” (TV).

The gathering of plants, such as those discussed above, continued to be a vital part of traditional use of Wrangell-St. Elias throughout the period preceding park creation. Berry picking and the collection of other fresh plant foods and materials, in addition to the various other resource procurement traditions discussed previously, facilitated Yakutat Tlingit’s ongoing connections to the lands in and around Wrangell-St. Elias, traditions that continue into modern day.

NEW PRESSURES

While the continued richness of resources in the region and innovations in transportation technologies of the post-war period opened a range of new opportunities for Yakutat residents, they also opened the Wrangell-St. Elias region to outside sports hunters and fishermen. Hunting and fishing for mere sport, and not for sustenance, became a growing concern for many Tlingit. Traditional hunting practices are intentionally conservative and protective of resource balance and health. Trophy hunting targets only the largest in a population and shifts the focus of hunting toward additional species regarded as impressive specimens rather than food to be eaten. Bears, for example, were only shot by Tlingit hunters if they entered a camp or settlement and were considered a danger. Ray Sensmeier remembers bear hunting guides operating out of Manby in the 1960s and 1970s for trophy hunting purposes: “Most of the guides are not from here. A lot of them aren’t even from the state. ... We had a few guides a long time ago but that’s not something that we condone” (RS).

Non-Native bear hunting for sport was a cause for concern for Yakutat Tlingit not only because it was a practice they did not necessarily condone, but because it increased attention and regulation on the part of federal agencies. According to Ray Sensmeier:

“They’re doing bait, bear baiting which I have a real concern about because put meat in a certain place and then they’ll wait and the bear will come and they shoot it. And not for food, because they don’t eat bear meat. ... [G]oing into Fairbanks for anything, Anchorage where the dumpster are, they’ll find them where the, full of meat, that they discard it. So they’re hunting for sport... I can’t understand how you can kill something for sport” (RS).

Some Yakutat Tlingit are concerned that these hunting practices fail to incorporate conservative thresholds. For example, when moose hunting was permitted along this coast in the 1960s, hunters flocked to Yakutat hoping to shoot a moose, not for food, but merely for sport:

“And then in the sixties, the State of Alaska, through all their conservation methods and all the way the Fish and Game operate, they advertised in all the newspapers all the way down—I think it even went in the Sacramento Bee. They advertised: Come to Yakutat and Hunt Moose. They said, the Fish and Game said, ‘We have too many moose in Yakutat for the feed. There’s not enough feed for them. They’re going to eventually starve out. We need to limit the population of moose.’ Yeah! And so the airlines was taking out somewhere in the neighborhood of what, three, four hundred

animals a year. Go out there and just—I mean moose were just very easy to get” (SJ).

Killing the largest and strongest of an animal population is the tactic of many charter-hunting services offered to tourists. This hunting strategy is antithetical to the traditional practices of Yakutat Tlingit hunters.¹³³ Ray Sensmeier explains further:

“They were guides for bear and goats and get ten thousand dollars apiece for killing those animals. They always take the biggest and the strongest which is something we never did. The biggest and the strongest carry the most powerful genes, so they used to fight for the right to mate and the strongest one would mate. But when you kill the biggest and the strongest, then the ones that wouldn’t normally mate, maybe they have injuries or maybe they’re not fast enough to keep up with the herd, or whatever, they get to mate. And so the offspring you know might carry those characteristics. And they do carry those characteristics of the father and eventually the herd gets smaller because of that. ...[T]he Eskimos [called wolves] ‘The Ones Who Keep the Deer Strong,’ and they were referring to the reindeer because the wolves, they’re not going to go after the biggest and the strongest. They go after the ones that can’t keep up or they’re injured or something, the easiest to get” (RS).

In addition to the rush of sports fishermen and hunters in the post-war period, the industrial development of the post-War period brought other impacts as well. Interviewees mentioned there had been commercial logging of the areas just west of Icy Bay during the mid-20th century (see also ADF&G 1984:27). Oil drilling along the southern coast of Wrangell-St. Elias has also had effects on traditional activities. Most notable is the Colorado Oil and Gas Corporation oil well at Sudden Creek. Abandoned in 1962, this well was a source of contamination and a focus of cleanup efforts that contributed to Yakutat Tlingit avoidance of the area (Bleakley 2002:153-56). The shoreline just beyond NPS control remained vulnerable to “timber harvest, commercial fishing, oil exploration, placer mining, subsistence and sport hunting and fishing” (ADF&G 1984:33).

Pressures even came in the form of competition for lands by other Native communities. Interviewees, especially Kaagwaantaan interviewees, expressed frustration with the fact that after the passage of ANILCA, Chugach Natives Incorporated—of which Cordova is a part—claimed lands along the coast as far east as Icy Bay in what are widely understood by Yakutat residents to be Yakutat Tlingit lands: “The forelands southwest of the Malaspina Glacier (approximately from the Yana River to Icy Bay) are within the regional selection of the Chugach Natives, Incorporated” (ADF&G 1984:32). Some

interviewees also note that they did not have the opportunity to participate in allotment claims of the same period, such as Ted Valle, who notes,

“I was in New York City when the information for allotments came out and my mom and my dad didn’t forward any of this information for me so I missed out, otherwise I would have had an allotment in Kaliakh for sure” (TV).¹³⁴

Together, some suggest, these developments compounded their families’ displacement from lands along the shoreline—in and near Wrangell-St. Elias.¹³⁵

All of the resource use practices outlined here remained vital in the period following WWII and leading up to park creation in 1980, contributing to the diet, economy, society, culture and spirituality of Yakutat Tlingit people. Indeed, Yakutat Tlingit culture was able to rebound somewhat during this period, as the pressures to assimilate that so characterized earlier decades began to evaporate. This was true even as growing connections with the outside world made certain changes inevitable. In this context, traditional resource use not only persisted but thrived, adapting to new potentials and in some cases expanding its scope in the years running up to ANILCA and the 1980 creation of Wrangell-St. Elias. While there were mounting new threats to Yakutat Tlingit connections to the landscape, the connections persisted. In the years that followed, some of the factors that had started to undermine Yakutat Tlingit use of the area continued to affect Yakutat Tlingit use of Wrangell-St. Elias—a fact alternately amplified and ameliorated by NPS management.

Modern Connections

ENDURING TRADITIONS OF RESOURCE USE IN AND AROUND WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS

In the years immediately preceding the creation of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in 1980, and into the present day, Yakutat residents have continued to value and harvest natural resources from within Wrangell-St. Elias boundaries. The area remains functionally and spiritually linked to *A Téix'*—the “heart of Yakutat Bay”—which is understood to be a source of resource wealth, food security, and many other things by contemporary Yakutat Tlingit. Despite this continued connection to Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources, however, in recent years, natural resource harvesting is becoming increasingly rare within park boundaries. Yakutat Tlingit use has declined as that segment of the population who were the most active users in the era before park creation have aged and discontinued many of their traditional subsistence activities. Esker Stream is still the site of cabins used by subsistence users, and those same families still camp, hunt, fish, and carry out other activities at Malaspina Lake. However, at the time of this writing, those families using the Esker Stream cabins are the only Yakutat Tlingit holding subsistence permits for Wrangell-St. Elias. Camps persist on other waterways – Manby Stream, Sudden Stream, and others – but they are used less frequently and are reported to be in decline. A number of resource users mentioned that they formerly stayed at cabins in Wrangell-St. Elias, but that those cabins are gone and now they only stay in tents, if they stay at all.

Traditional activities were sometimes fostered by NPS management, by virtue of preserving the landscape in a largely unaltered state, and yet interviewees suggest that such activities were more often curtailed by NPS management—especially in the years shortly after park creation. For example, Yakutat residents are eligible to hunt mountain goats on park lands at Icy Bay under federal subsistence regulations, but interviewees note that access is difficult without an airplane, which the Yakutat Tlingit community, in general, does not possess. What follows is an overview of the challenges reported by Yakutat Tlingit resource harvesters in the years after park creation, as well as an overview of some of the key resource traditions that have persisted in some fashion into modern times in spite of a range of new challenges.

The continuation of traditional resource utilization by the Yakutat Tlingit at Wrangell-St. Elias was weighted considerably during the development of the park’s enabling legislation. As a result, provisions were made to protect subsistence uses of the landscape and to ensure access for commercial fishing and other purposes. These provisions also worked to reaffirm the legal standing of Native Corporation land selections made in the new park under ANCSA. That portion of ANILCA that specifically addressed Wrangell-St. Elias was the product of a series of compromises between park advocates, especially advocates operating at the national level, and mostly local and state interests that sought to protect access for the many active users of

these lands (Reckord 1977, 1983).¹³⁶ The hearings leading up to the approval of the Wrangell-St. Elias portion of ANILCA illuminated some portion of the resource practices outlined in earlier sections of this document; within that context, it was clear to legislators that resource use could not be extinguished within the proposed park without significant local opposition. For example, during the ANILCA Senate committee hearings it was “noted that Yakutat residents customarily used aircraft for access to the Malaspina Forelands ... since traveling by boat, the only other possible means of transportation, can be extremely dangerous due to the violent storms that frequent the Gulf of Alaska” (Bleakley 2002:107). Special regulations were issued in 1981 to allow for this airplane access to the Malaspina Forelands by Yakutat residents—one of several preexisting activities to be effectively grandfathered into NPS management of Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources.

Yet interviewees suggest that, as the park proposal took shape, many verbal or implied agreements were not codified in written form, while even written agreements proved to be negotiable or short-lived in the years immediately following park creation. Interviewees therefore report considerable turbulence in park-Yakutat relations at the time of ANILCA’s passage and during the original establishment of park policies pertaining to the Wrangell-St. Elias south shoreline.

“The St. Elias and over here at Manby’s shore, they fought us going over there and fishing. ...They did not want to have Native allotments claims on St. Elias Reserve. There was a guy that came in... [a] forest ranger that came in for St. Elias was a soft sell guy and...he came in and he said, and he told us, ‘No problem! ...We just got a little park and we’re just going to kind of watch over it for you folks and you can still do the same traditional things you’ve always done. There’s no problem whatsoever. You can just enjoy your fishing and your hunting. There won’t be any changes.’ Because he did not want the people to get up in arms knowing what was eventually was going to come. It’s a government thing. The government promises you things and says, ‘Oh there’s no problem,’ but then pretty soon they start, ‘No, no. You can’t do that. No, you can’t go fishing. No, we need a permit. You have to fill out the paperwork. No, you can’t go this time of year. No, you can’t take four-wheelers over there...’ And then the rules start coming out. Then they, we begin to see they’re all carrying guns. And then they say, ‘Well you can’t go on the land unless you have a permit. And you can’t land a plane on there.’ It’s just the rules. They keep more and more and more and pretty soon that’s not *Klech Haa aani*. It’s not Our Land. And so this is how it happens. And that’s how it did happen” (SJ).

This turbulence affected, and has continued to affect, Yakutat Tlingit perceptions of Wrangell-St. Elias. When interviewees spoke of their concerns about the NPS generally, they focused very little on recent issues—which are addressed through various institutionalized venues such as federal regional advisory councils and what has become a largely routinized NPS consultation process. Instead, their remarks focus principally on the disruptive experiences surrounding park creation.

A number of interviewees described limited and contradictory consultation with the Yakutat community at the time of park creation—a pattern that many Yakutat residents resented in light of their unique and enduring associations with lands and resources in the proposed park. While the National Park Service and other involved agencies made efforts to consult with Yakutat residents regarding land claims and access issues, interviewees felt that these meetings were poorly timed in a way that excluded many families—especially those involved in commercial fishing.¹³⁷ Even when consultation did occur, interviewees suggest that the community’s input had little sway over the specifics of ANILCA language or the transfer of regulatory responsibility from the US Forest Service to the Park Service. In part, Yakutat interviewees suggest that this was because members of the community perceived how NPS management might restrict future use of lands and resources. As a member of the Yakutat City Council at the time, Sam Demmert worked to maintain Native access to Wrangell-St. Elias:

“our concern about having access to it was brought up and they reassured us that we would have access...they started talking about this happening...they talked a good talk: ‘Oh yeah, you will have access to it. You can continue fishing.’ All of that. There was no objection that I recall because we were given word that we’re going to continue to be fishing down there. Well once they got [the park established] everything went out the door” (SD).

Interviewees suggest that these exchanges ensured the retention of a sizeable part of the Yakutat Bay shoreline within the Wrangell-St. Elias boundaries, but accomplished relatively little else. These early issues, they propose, left matters of Alaska Native rights in the southern edge of Wrangell-St. Elias poorly defined, contributing in turn to the displacement of Native land and resource users in the years that followed.

Interviewees provided consistent accounts of the rapid changes brought about by the formation of Wrangell-St. Elias and other public lands under ANILCA through the 1980s. Indeed, multiple interviewees reported that Yakutat Tlingit fishing and hunting camps were destroyed upon the creation of Wrangell-St. Elias, as federal employees sought to clean up the landscape and restore “natural” conditions to a long occupied landscape. Accounts varied as to the timing, locations and the agencies involved. Skip Johnson attributes some of these actions to the US Forest Service:

“Oh they [did] as a matter of fact, the seal camp that we had up there—well I think the Forest Service did that though. But yeah, they went over in Esker Creek and...anything that was a Native camp or anything [was destroyed]” (SJ).

Temporary camps, or those that superficially appeared to be unoccupied or defunct, were said to be especially targeted. Interviewees such as Ted Valle reported such camps being burned to the ground without prior notification of the owners:

“The only problem I’m aware of and it really bothered me, nothing was done about it, was some of our young [people went to] Manby, or [Bering] River they went in through the river and they built a camp there. They were moose hunting. And while they went up moose hunting, the Park Service landed there and burned their camp down, burned it up. Didn’t even allow them to take anything out of their camp, burned everything. Now that to me is wrong. They should be paid for it” (TV).

NPS has never openly acknowledged a policy, formal or informal, of burning or otherwise destroying smokehouses, cabins or subsistence camps, although similar charges have been leveled against Glacier Bay and in other parks (Thornton fieldnotes 1992-1997). In contrast, the USDA Forest Service has acknowledged such a policy in the Tongass National Forest and issued a formal apology for its actions (Petershoare 2010). However, some elders have not been satisfied with an apology, as traditional law requires compensation for such destruction. As one elder stated at a 2014 meeting:

“Traditional camp sites which included smoke houses were totally destroyed. One conclusion that came up from one of the top people of FS [Forest Service] was to have three poles carved -- Tlingit, Haida & Tsimshian. ...Then nothing. They keep saying ‘no funds,’ and just an apology. It was explained to them that in the tradition [a] solution was some type of compensation & that an oral apology was not acceptable as a solution. No response” (USDAFS 2014).

Allotments provided footholds for certain families that remained undisturbed, but these were often held by people outside of Yakutat or are not otherwise available to active Yakutat resource users. Instead, interviewees suggest, many of the most active camps were those sitting outside of allotment boundaries, on lands that were being actively managed by the NPS for the first time. Even as past NPS documents have suggested, relationships between the NPS and Yakutat were often tense through the early 1980s as

an outcome of these conflicts. As the official Wrangell-St. Elias Administrative History recounts,

“Yakutat residents complained about NPS mistreatment. Submitting numerous grievances, Yak-Tat Kwann [*sic*], Inc., President Don Bremner suggested that the relationship between the local community and the government had ‘reached the point of hate’” (Bleakley 2002:46).

As Ted Valle notes, Yakutat Tlingit involvement in the early years of park management were negligible, and NPS management tended to come to the attention of Yakutat residents largely as an outcome of specific conflicts. In this light, many Yakutat Tlingit began to perceive the NPS as the latest in a series of interlopers within their traditional tribal lands:

“the local people at the time didn’t know anything about the Park or its happenings. ...Nobody wanted to be involved with the Park and they should have, you know they should have. So the Park Service just kind of ran over the few people that were there. ...They need to know the land belongs to us. And we keep telling them for the last couple hundred years. They don’t hear us” (TV).

Interviewees sometimes suggested that working relationships between NPS and Yakutat Tlingit Tribe members contain residual tensions that emerged from this time, the miscommunications, and the unrealized expectations of Yakutat Tlingit regarding the implications of NPS management.

As these early conflicts simmered, Yakutat residents began to shift resource-harvesting activities to other parts of their traditional homeland. The threat of conflict, legal challenges, or loss of property had significantly disincentivized resource harvesting in the southernmost portion of Wrangell-St. Elias. These issues reached tentative conclusions in the early 1990s, as consultation improved and NPS management in the Wrangell-St. Elias reportedly became more predictable. Yet this shift was said to have involved new permitting processes and camping restrictions that still deterred many Yakutat families from returning to the Wrangell-St. Elias region despite a desire to continue gathering resources within traditional subsistence boundaries. As Sam Demmert notes,

“The restrictions got so bad that you know we used to be able to camp there: A-frames or cabins, whatever. Once they started putting restrictions on, camping down there just became too hard to go down there anymore.

So there were very few people that go back—I don't [know] if anybody goes back down there anymore as a result of that" (SD).

While use and even occupation of the southern edge of Wrangell-St. Elias is allowed, interviewees suggest that regulations have tended to involve special restrictions or gear requirements that are expensive—favoring affluent and, by extension, often non-Native users.¹³⁸ Further, interviewees report that even when they have a desire to maintain or rebuild pre-existing cabins, they are reluctant to engage with NPS staff due to stress and/or confusion regarding the permitting process and NPS regulations.

In this context, certain tribal members have been hesitant to report traditional subsistence activities within Wrangell-St. Elias for fear of fueling future regulations. Interviewees often expressed concern that traditional subsistence activities such as seagull egg gathering might be further restricted in the southernmost portion of Wrangell-St. Elias and beyond, based on changing federal and state regulations.¹³⁹ As Ted Valle explains:

"I don't like to [share traditional subsistence information with] government agencies. Okay, one day they invited us all, conference up there next to the Forest Service. They wanted to know where we got seagull eggs, etcetera. And I kept telling them, 'Don't go to the meeting. Don't tell them where we get seagull eggs.' They said, 'Well, why not?' Because next thing you know they're going to start regulating us" (TV).

Some significant portions of subsistence activities within the southern edge of Wrangell-St. Elias are reported, then, but there are certainly activities that go unreported as well.

While access to land within the Wrangell-St. Elias boundary is said to have been complicated by park regulations, Yakutat Tlingit families maintained a close relationship with the area and have continued to access it for resource harvesting purposes, especially from camps retained on Knight Island and elsewhere on the southeast shore of Yakutat Bay—further consolidating seasonal settlements along this southeastern shore. Yakutat Tlingit connections to the islands in Yakutat Bay, Disenchantment Bay and Russell Fiord remain critically important to those families seeking to continue seal hunting and other subsistence traditions linked directly or indirectly to Wrangell-St. Elias.¹⁴⁰

In addition to these challenges, interviewees shared concerns about the effects of non-Native recreational use within Wrangell-St. Elias. Poaching by recreational hunters, and even professional outfitters, is said to be a problem along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast

today. While the NPS has sought to limit these effects, certain interviewees expressed the view that non-Native usage of Wrangell-St. Elias—and its consequences—was inadvertently accelerated by Wrangell-St. Elias’s national park status. Traditional subsistence opportunities are said to have been undermined by competition from hunting guides, who have accessed these lands since before the creation of the park.

In this context, trophy hunters were said to be a modest but persistent problem—outsiders, sometimes with charter guides, taking only the head and antlers of the largest moose, for example, leaving the rest of the body to rot—a phenomenon that interviewees found unpardonably inconsistent with traditional protocols for the area:

“You know people go over and hunt, I don’t know how much. I know one group that went over and you know found seven carcasses: moose with only the heads gone. So those are the trophy hunters. They always want the largest rack to hang on their wall” (RS).

Certain interviewees also suggested that charter fishing operations along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast were having disproportionately negative effects on the stocks of fish in that area, compounding the effects of historical mismanagement of certain commercial fisheries in Yakutat Bay.¹⁴¹ Commercial and sport fishing operations are managed by the state of Alaska not by the NPS; however, their impacts – as well as other impacts outside NPS jurisdiction that are mentioned here – are still of concern to the Yakutat Tlingit resource users connected to Wrangell-St. Elias. A few interviewees also mentioned egregious cases of recreational users tormenting wildlife such as mountain goats—infrequent events, perhaps, but symbolically potent ones that tend to become embedded in enduring community discourse regarding the adverse effects of tourism in the area.¹⁴²

Tour ships began to visit Hubbard Glacier as early as the late 1800s, but it was not until the post-World War II era that cruise ships became predictably present on coast near Yakutat. The movement of cruise ships and the wave action and smoke produced as they enter Disenchantment Bay are of concern to interviewees, as well. Some Yakutat Tlingit began to petition to remove cruise ships from Disenchantment Bay, noting that the peak pupping season in late spring and early summer correlated with the peak cruise ship traffic (BA). Some Yakutat Tlingit such as Ray Sensmeier have noted the movement of seals from Disenchantment Bay into Icy Bay during periods of cruise ship visitation, as the seals seek to avoid the disruptions caused by wakes, noises, and other cruise ship impacts. Those that stay in Disenchantment Bay when cruise ships have visited regularly are said to have suffered various adverse consequences:

“The fear is that they’ll all be going up to Icy Bay because the entrance prevents any large ships from entering it and so they’re safe there and

they can lay out in the sun and nurse their young and in August they'll molt and you know, lose their hair and stuff. And in Disenchantment Bay, if they're disturbed they're constantly going into the cold water which is not good for a molting seal. They don't have any hair. ...So we had an issue with cruise ships coming in precisely at that time. And so the little ones don't have fat yet, they don't know how to swim right off, the mother teaches them and...sometimes there's five ships a day in there so they're disturbing the ice that the pups are laying on and get washed into the water and the ice, the water from the falling from the calving glacier is much, much colder than the ocean water...the current comes up where the cruise ships are stopping at...two and half knots, northwest that comes up this way and around. ...So that's another concern, how it affects the fish and the...seals and other things that travel through it...the highest I remember was 71 ships came in here in the summer" (RS).

Exhaust from cruise ship traffic in Disenchantment Bay was also mentioned as a source of concern—not only because of its resource effects, but because it is seen by many as fundamentally incompatible with the “purity” and the spiritual significance of the A



Figure 13 – An early tour boat, visiting the base of Hubbard Glacier in Disenchantment Bay. Cruise ships began regularly making visits to the base of this glacier especially in the years following World War II. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

Téix' area: “there’s an inversion that exists in Disenchantment Bay that holds the smoke in there and if you’re trolling...it’s visible from twenty miles out on the ocean” (RS).¹⁴³

Persisting Resource Traditions

In spite of the many challenges brought by federal and state regulation, competing users, the distance of Wrangell-St. Elias resources from Yakutat, and other considerations, Yakutat Tlingit traditional fishing, hunting and gathering practices remain remarkably robust. Subsistence traditions remain strong among Tlingit communities generally, but Yakutat stands out somewhat as a persisting center of traditional subsistence, where salmon fishing, seal hunting and other traditional activities continue to serve as cornerstones of community life and enduring mixed economies. As Thornton (2012) confirms,

“subsistence production remains a significant sector of the economy, and the vast majority of subsistence resources are gathered locally, that is, within traditional *kwaán* territories associated with each community. ...Yakutat continue[s] to have the most productive subsistence relations with their traditional environment” (Thornton 2012:166).

Similarly, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, “Yakutat has one of the strongest subsistence economies of Alaska’s coastal areas” (ADF&G 2014:56).

Certainly, there are many obstacles to subsistence harvests within Wrangell-St. Elias beyond those associated with federal and state regulation. The difficulty of access is significant, as the coastline abounds with navigational hazards and the cost of gasoline can be prohibitive. Moreover, there are readily accessible resources very close to Yakutat, so that resource harvesters now gather largely in places like the Situk River, with its short and safe roads to and from town. And, in spite of the robust subsistence tradition in Yakutat, many Yakutat Tlingit must now work traditional subsistence tasks into a conflicting schedule dominated by the cash economy and regulatory restrictions, rather than—as in decades past—building paid employment around subsistence tasks.¹⁴⁴

Still, while the southern coast of Wrangell-St. Elias is not as actively utilized as some portions of the Yakutat Tlingit traditional territory, it is still used and widely understood as a part of Yakutat’s subsistence lands. According to recent statistical assessments, “The shoreline and inland areas across Yakutat Bay from the community, from Point Manby to Bancas Point, and the offshore areas on the west side of Yakutat Bay. [As of 2006], this area is used by 30-60% of households” (CBY 2006:3-105, Mills and

Firman 1986). Moreover, with a broad spectrum of environments ranging from recently exposed granite to Sitka spruce forest, the southern coast of Wrangell-St. Elias provides a variety of habitats from which to gather these resources: “There’s a bounty right outside the door if you’re willing to put in the work” (YB). And, in Yakutat, there is still a lively tradition of harvesting not only salmon and other significant species, but a diverse range of traditional food resources—including a wide range of fish, as well as marine mammals, land mammals, plants, birds’ eggs and other resources (see Figures 14 & 15). Despite the convenience of similar proximal resources, there continue to be both long-term and short-term stays along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast to harvest plants, animals and fish—used for food and social purposes, for materials used in traditional crafts, and for use in ceremonial activities. Many trips involve harvesting multiple

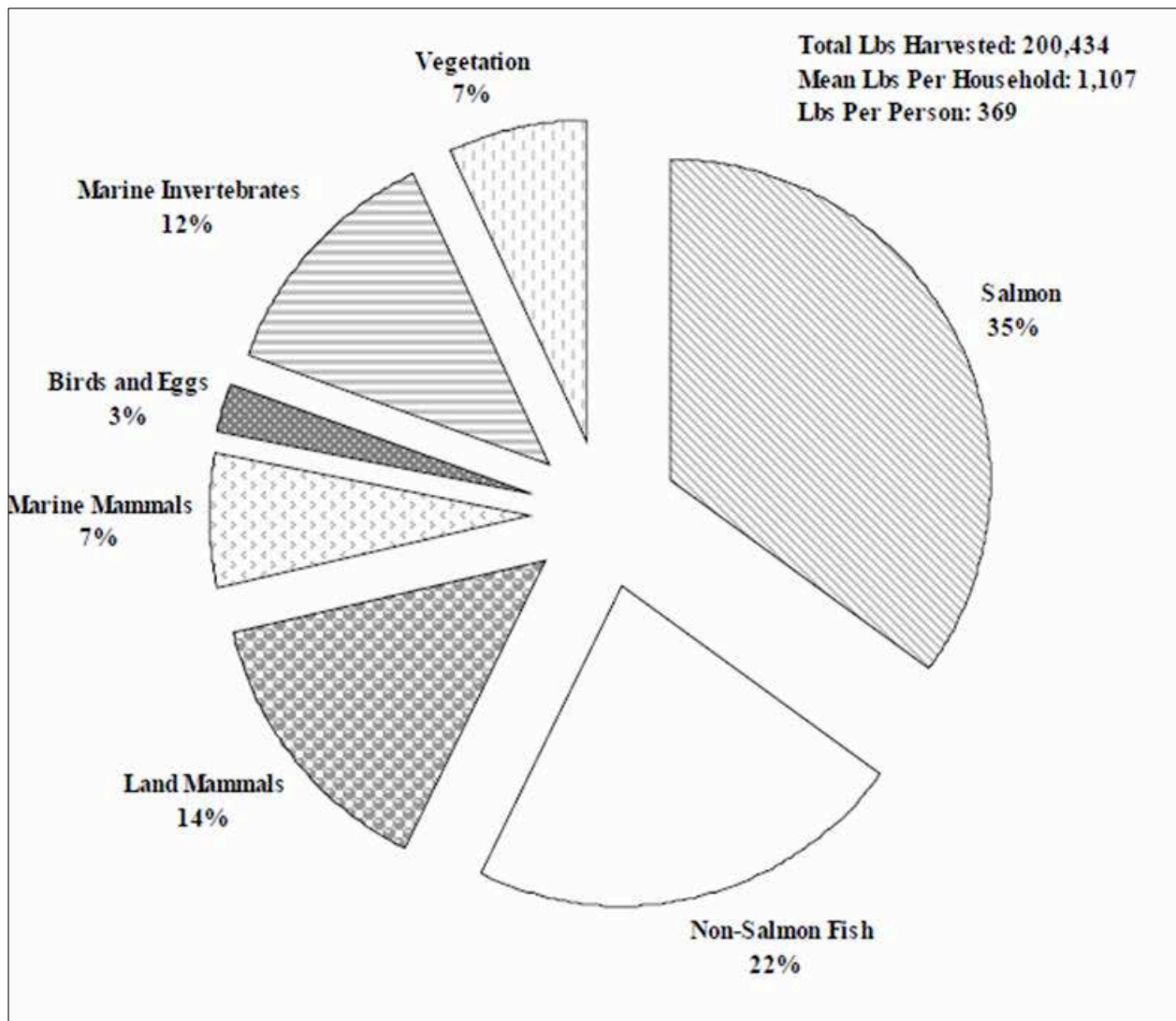


Figure 14 – Subsistence harvest by Yakutat residents, by resource category, in pounds, 1984 (based on Mills and Firman 1986:79)

resources concurrently, making the most of the variegated distribution of natural resources in this dynamic landscape. For example, Skip Johnson remembers harvesting seals, crab, cockles, seagull eggs, geese and fish from Icy Bay into the late 20th century:

“Now as far as subsistence in Icy Bay, and subsistence in Icy Bay is a lot of stuff. Not only seals, but crab and also we found out there were big, humongous cockles on the beach. ...We also ate seagull eggs. And geese, young geese. We’d go out there in the reeds. And then fish of course. We ate a lot of fish that we’d get there” (SJ).

Thus, diverse resources from places such as Icy Bay and the head of Yakutat Bay have long served as prominent traditional subsistence harvest areas and continue to be utilized by the Yakutat Tlingit community today. Families still know when certain resources will be available along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast based on long-known cycles and environmental cues detected in the community of Yakutat, still mobilizing to these places for reasons that are dietary, economic, social, cultural and spiritual.¹⁴⁵

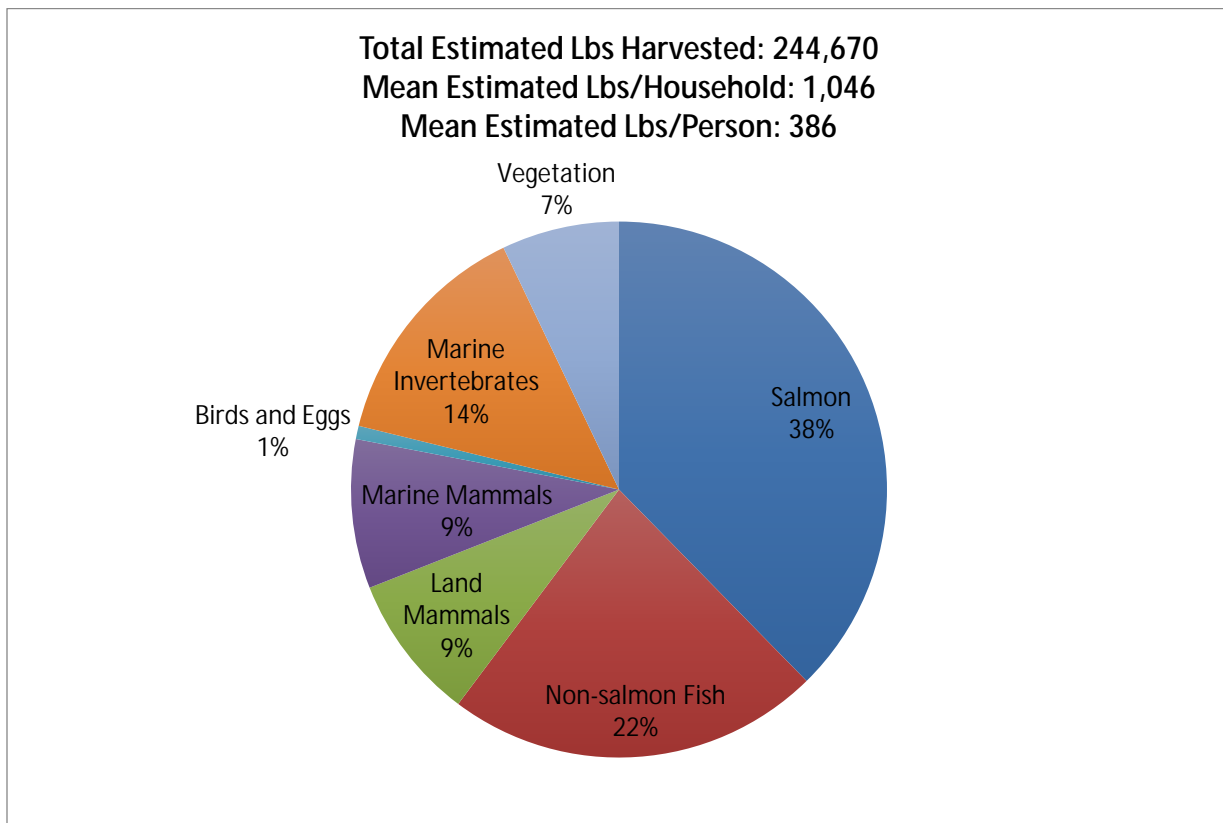


Figure 15 – Subsistence harvest by Yakutat residents, by resource category, in pounds, 2000 (based on data from ADF&G 2000)

For Yakutat Tlingit, it is important to continue visiting ancestral landscapes, including those in the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias and along its southern coast to harvest resources, especially key cultural foods (e.g., berries, fish, shellfish, bird eggs, harbor seal and mountain goat). To be sure, the importance of traditional subsistence resources obtained in these areas is not solely material, or manifested as caloric intake by Yakutat residents. Traditional subsistence foods harvested in Wrangell-St. Elias by Yakutat Tlingit continue to hold cultural, social and spiritual significance for the community. Interviewees make it clear that continued access to and use of natural resources are considered essential to the maintenance of cultural relationships with the land. The items harvested in these areas are understood, in many cases, to be directly descended from the same populations that fed one's own ancestors in the past. Foods from these traditional areas reinforce a person's identity, sense of heritage, purity and balance. Thus, the "value of such natural resource areas as a means of conserving physical, social, and Tlingit spiritual relations to country, can hardly be overemphasized" (Thornton 2010:114). The natural food products acquired in this way are important to the economy, culture and society of Yakutat Tlingit, but the process itself—the various resource procurement activities—is said to sustain the community's sense of identity, as well as its unique relationships to their traditional homeland.

It is also true that traditional clan claims on the resources of the Wrangell-St. Elias area persist, so that one's clan identity as a member of Kwáashk'ikwáan, or closely-associated Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, brings added incentives to return to Wrangell-St. Elias. Interviewees sometimes expressed the view that the integrity of the clan system depended on people observing connections to traditional harvesting areas, and that by not observing these protocols, Yakutat Tlingit place the integrity of their culture at risk. As noted elsewhere in this document, resource harvests have also allowed multiple generations to be present on the land together, giving families a degree of self-sufficiency and cohesion, allowing for an intergenerational exchange of information regarding Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources in a way that sustains the cultural integrity of Yakutat Tlingit and their constituent clans that they sometimes found hard to maintain in the modern world (Hunn et al. 2003; Thornton 2008, 2010; Deur and Thornton 2015).

In addition to maintaining group and personal connections through traditional harvesting practices, resources gathered from traditional areas in Wrangell-St. Elias are often touted as having distinct qualities. Resources taken from Yakutat Bay are considered to be more flavorful, "pure," and more spiritually significant than similar resources found outside of the area. Harbor seal, in particular, are said to "taste better" when harvested in the glacial ice that exists in Wrangell-St. Elias near the head of Yakutat Bay. For this reason, Wrangell-St. Elias continues to be sought out as a harvesting location by traditional subsistence users, even when similar resources are available in other parts of Yakutat Tlingit territory. What follows are mere "highlights" regarding contemporary resource harvests in, and immediately adjacent to, Wrangell-

St. Elias based on interviews for the current project and available gray literature. The creation of more detailed account of contemporary harvesting practices in the study area presents a future research opportunity.

Seal and Sea Otter Hunting

Seal hunting had diminished significantly in the years following the bounty program, but the hunt has rebounded somewhat in recent years. The head of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays continues to be one of the most celebrated seal hunting areas on the entire south-central Alaska coastline. While harvest levels vary, some degree of seal hunting has continued along this coastline since it emerged from under the ice centuries ago. People have gone there from a number of Tlingit and Eyak communities to join Yakutat residents hunting seals in the floating ice at the base of the tidewater glaciers: “At Yakutat, spring seal hunts continue. Some people still use temporary camps located at traditional sealing areas near the north end of the bay, while others travel daily to the area from Yakutat by high speed boats” (Davis 1996:136).

Yakutat hunters continue to utilize traditional subsistence base camps along the shoreline, largely though not exclusively on the southeastern shore of Yakutat Bay. From here, they travel to Disenchantment Bay and Haenke Island to hunt seal and gather seagull eggs. Thornton explains:

“There were at least four seal-hunting camps between Point Latouche and Haenke Island and additional hunting camps in Russell and Nunatak fiords, where mountain goat and other resources were prevalent in addition to seal. Yakutat Natives still use these camps as a base for harvesting seal in Disenchantment Bay and seagull eggs on Haenke Island” (Thornton 2007:6).

Over time, harbor seal hunting may be gradually declining per capita, but has remained a robust part of Yakutat traditional subsistence hunting. Even in recent years, Yakutat has been identified as one of the top three Native communities in Alaska in terms of total and per capita harbor seal harvests. Yakutat residents generally harvest more seals than any other Tlingit community, with Hoonah often being in distant second place. The vast majority of seals hunted by Yakutat residents are harvested along the south coast of Wrangell-St. Elias (Wolfe et al. 2009:1517). (Unlike some Alaska Native communities, by contrast, sea lions are seldom harvested for food in Yakutat.) Many hunters have integrated new technologies and materials into traditional seal harvesting practices: “Seal hunts still take place, though the gun and metal harpoon have replaced bone and wood darts and shafts. Outboard motors have replaced the wooden paddle to propel boats” (Davis 1996:134).

In spite of these changes, seals continue to be hunted in the spring during the months of April and May when seals are gathered on the ice to rear pups following pupping season.¹⁴⁶ Today, Jeremiah James is one of the younger hunters, and he is involved in the production of clothing and crafts, making seal skin vests, hats, and gloves, as well as a number of items from sea otter fur. The meat and fat of the seal continue to be eaten fresh, but are also preserved by canning and other methods for use throughout the year. The sharing of seal meat provides important support to elderly members of the community and others who do not participate in the hunt. This redistribution within the community is a source of pride, as well as means of demonstrating a continuation of respect for the elders and their way as a people and a community.

As in earlier times, the area close to the base of the tidewater glaciers is considered to have the tastiest seals in the region due to a variety of factors, including colder temperatures. Interviewees make it clear that the relative absence of ship traffic or other sources of degrading pollution along the coast in contemporary times has contributed to perceptions of the Icy Bay and Hubbard Glacier areas as especially prime hunting grounds relative to other areas in Tlingit country that are less protected. There continue to be perturbations in the availability of seal, and interviewees mentioned seal populations moving from some of their usual pupping waters in Disenchantment Bay to Icy Bay.¹⁴⁷ These changes in seal distribution will likely result in changing patterns of seal hunting over time, with increased hunting in the “park’s waters” as tidewater glaciers generally retreat from historical positions. (Still, Icy Bay hunting remains minor relative to other seal harvests—reflecting in part its distance from town and established seal camps.) While reflective of both natural processes and traditional conventions of hunter mobility on this dynamic coast, the movements between waters of different agencies has regulatory implications that will need to be considered if Yakutat Tlingit sealing on this coast, and traditions associated with the sealing, are to persist into future generations.¹⁴⁸

Sea otters, by contrast, were hunted to extinction in many southeastern Alaskan waters during the fur trade. At the same time, small populations could still be found in Lituya Bay, Icy Bay and off Cape Yakataga.¹⁴⁹ The Yakutat Bay coastline remained a minor stronghold of sea otter populations long after otter had been extirpated from most of the coastline. Through a translocation program beginning in 1966,¹⁵⁰ they were reintroduced to the Yakutat Bay area. The program was remarkably successful, as is true in other parts of southeast Alaska. Under a provision of the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act (and also by the terms of the Endangered Species Act), Alaska Natives are allowed to continue hunting sea otters for the purposes of subsistence or the production of handcrafts, provided these harvests are not “wasteful,” reflecting the enduring cultural significance of sea otter hunting. Today, a small number of Yakutat Tlingit harvest sea otters in modest quantities in Yakutat Bay, including areas along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, fashioning furs into hats, mittens, slippers and other handicrafts. Some are used by Yakutat families, while others are made specifically for

sale to Yakutat tourists and people outside the region. As part of this continuing fur trade, these hunters often fashion seal skins into similar items. Sealskin hats, slippers and even Christmas ornaments can now be found for sale in family-owned craft shops in Yakutat, from the homes of certain Yakutat Tlingit hunters, or even through online sales. These operations provide a modest inflow of cash to subsistence hunters, and are one of the ways certain households capitalize on Yakutat's tourist economy.

Land Hunting

Like seal and sea otter hunting, the hunting of land mammals such as mountain goat has persisted into the era of NPS management along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. However, hunting on land has been qualitatively different than sea mammal hunting—requiring not only a boat, but a landing place and often a cabin or foothold on the land. These footholds have been comparatively difficult to maintain in the years following the creation of Wrangell-St. Elias. As noted elsewhere, certain camps were reported to be demolished at the time of Wrangell-St. Elias creation. In addition, the regulatory environment—introduced at that time not only by the NPS but by ADF&G and other agencies—provided a range of new obstacles. In some respects, these limited the times and locations of hunting in ways that Yakutat Tlingit found to be inconsistent with traditional harvest protocols, unresponsive to natural changes in game availability, or incompatible with the practical limitations of their work lives. Moreover, the presence of a complex regulatory environment was said to disincentivize hunting within the preserve, if only because complex and changing regulations create a situation of uncertainty. Not wanting to risk violations, and not always sure of what constitutes a violation, many hunters reduced or simply stopped hunting within the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias, especially along the shoreline of Yakutat Bay. Deur and Thornton (2015) have referred to this phenomenon as “regulatory pollution” in a separate study of Tlingit uses of NPS lands.

Commenting on this point, Skip Johnson notes that he could return to the shoreline area of Wrangell-St. Elias to camp and hunt but the regulations and restrictions on his movements make his return unlikely:

“You can go over there anytime you want. You just have to fill out all the paperwork. You just have to abide by all the rules that they got. That's no problem. There's no problem with it. And this is what they'll advocate. This is what they will tell you. They will try to make us believe that the traditional uses haven't changed. ...But...how even to try to figure out how to go across and do that. Like moose hunting is entirely different over there now. And I don't know what their rules are for moose hunting. Do you? I haven't even investigated into it because I didn't even want to go there. I didn't even want to deal with their B.S.” (SJ).

So too, as the patterns of resource distribution change, many traditional hunting areas are no longer considered appealing, even if hunters have access. Even Icy Bay, one of the premier places for mountain goat hunting, is said to no longer be especially appealing due to declining mountain goat numbers—a phenomenon attributed to some combination of past ADF&G management, competition with sport hunters from outside the area, and environmental change. As Skip Johnson notes,

“We hunted mountain goat. Now, Icy Bay was one of the best places for mountain goat. We went up every year and subsistence hunted mountain goat. ...But mountain goat as a subsistence use, there’s now hardly any mountain goat in Icy Bay anymore” (SJ).

Traditionally, localized changes would prompt the relocation of Yakutat Tlingit hunters to alternative locations that are not so overtaxed. But with land jurisdictions and the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias being fixed, adaptive geographical flexibility with regard to hunting is no longer possible. Add to this the sheer difficulty of accessing the Wrangell-St. Elias coast due to navigational hazards, fuel costs and other issues, and Yakutat residents agree that hunting on the Wrangell-St. Elias coast has gradually declined from roughly the moment the park and preserve were created.

Still, the hunting of mountain goats, in particular, continues. According to Lena Farkus, “My father got mountain goat up the fjord...some men still do” (LF). The coastline of Wrangell-St. Elias continues to hold unique appeal as a place where mountain goats can be seen by boat, since the goats travel the relatively high and rocky terrain along the coast. In this environment, mountain goats can be hunted by land or by boat, unlike in many other portions of the Yakutat coastline. (Mountain goat hunting by airplane was reported especially for the years immediately preceding the creation of Wrangell-St. Elias, but has reportedly diminished since that time along with other airplane-based hunts, reflecting the growing cost and complexity of airplane use in Alaska Native communities.) Mountain goat meat and fat continue to be used in traditional cuisine and medicine, while mountain goat wool and pelts are used in the production of blankets, clothing, regalia and other items.

Habitat conversion outside of Wrangell-St. Elias, occurring at roughly the same time as park creation, reportedly had effects on mountain goat populations. These changes reduced total mountain goat hunting within the community, while enhancing the relative importance of goats still found within the southern edge of Wrangell-St. Elias. In particular, commercial logging was said to have compromised the natural habitat of the mountain goat on lands adjacent to Wrangell-St. Elias, causing a general decrease in population. As Mills and Firman note,

“In Yakutat community subsistence use areas, timber harvesting near Icy Bay has removed known timbered wintering sites for the local mountain goat population. Yakutat key respondents have reported that they no longer hunt mountain goats near Icy Bay as they did 10-15 years ago. Until the late 1970s in the late summer and fall, groups of Yakutat hunters travelled by boat or occasionally by airplane 30 miles northwest up the coast to Icy Bay. They hunted for goats along the cliffs and mountains that surround the bay. Because of the length of the trip and the time and energy expended to reach the areas where goats are found, the groups of hunters harvested more than one goat each” (Mills and Firman 1986:169).

Similarly, Ray Sensmeier reports that logging reduced the number of mountain goats throughout Yakutat traditional territory:

“But they logged that whole area from Glacier Bay all the way to oh, past Yakataga a little ways. And the goats used to go down to the beach to get salt. You know they need a lot of salt. But once they clear-cut it, they didn’t want to cross an open clearing, so they didn’t. So the population of the goats dropped dramatically...you walk around and you probably won’t get anything” (RS).

Logging camps, road development and other activities were said to have amplified this impact, adversely affecting goat breeding as well as impacting migratory routes in ways that persist into recent times.¹⁵¹ Goat numbers in the years that followed declined generally, while some areas distant from these disturbances—including areas along the north shore of Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays—were sought out as alternatives. Newly developed bag limits, enforced by ADF&G, generally limited the catch to single goats during this period, which simultaneously reduced the harvest of goats in areas especially distant from Yakutat.¹⁵² Again, quoting Mills and Firman,

“The Yakutat hunters who had continued to hunt the Icy Bay area despite the increased activity and competition in the area soon discontinued using the area because of the reduced bag limits, according to key respondents. ‘It’s just not worth the time and expense to hunt for goats in Icy Bay when you’re only allowed to take one,’ one key respondent commented. The last time he had hunted in the Icy Bay areas was in the early 1970s” (Mills and Firman 1986:170).

The patterns described for other resource harvests commonly followed the pattern of mountain goat, with resource harvests generally declining even as the proportional

importance of the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline of Yakutat Bay was high. As mentioned elsewhere in this document, moose and deer moved into the Yakutat region in the late twentieth century. These game animals were at one time abundant in the region, but have since declined substantially in number. In the 1970s, in particular, the moose population fell dramatically due to two especially harsh winters (Mills and Firman 1986:133). Now, to the frustration of some Yakutat Tlingit hunters, moose hunting is very restricted both inside and outside of Wrangell-St. Elias lands. It is widely reported that moose hunting is a small part of the Yakutat subsistence hunt near Yakutat Bay, but moose hunting has been carried out in the nunatak for moose and goats, especially when other hunting options were limited (VD).¹⁵³ Occasional hunting of bear and wolf was mentioned within the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias, along with the incidental hunting and occasional trapping of such species as beaver. These activities are reported to be comparatively minor today, largely coincidental with primary resource harvesting activities such as salmon fishing and seal hunting. Trapping is also reported within the southern edge of the park and preserve, though little detail was forthcoming from reconnaissance interviews undertaken for the current study.

Fish and Shellfish

By contrast, fish—salmon in particular—still represent a cornerstone in the diet, economy and culture of the Yakutat Tlingit. All five species of Pacific salmon have long been harvested by Yakutat families—sockeye being an especially large proportion of the harvest (e.g., Fall et al. 2002). Families continue to preserve salmon through smoking, drying, freezing and jarring; salting and pickling are also mentioned. Today, both the Situk and Dry Bay areas remain important sources of salmon, reflecting both the proximity and productivity of these rivers. Fish are harvested in the rivers both commercially and for traditional subsistence purposes (Thornton 2007:6-7).¹⁵⁴ According to Ramos and Mason (2004:14), the Situk River is the most important source of king, sockeye and steelhead salmon for Yakutat Tlingit families, with seventy-five percent of Yakutat residents utilizing the Situk for salmon-fishing purposes—a percentage that has arguably increased in the decade since Ramos and Mason’s report. However, in addition to Dry Bay, Situk River and areas such as Ankau River that sit nearer to Yakutat, a number of fishermen continue to utilize areas along the north shore of Yakutat Bay, in places within or very near the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias:

“The Tsiu-Kaliakh watershed supports a lucrative commercial and recreational salmon fishery. Many of the commercial fishing permit holders come from Yakutat and Cordova, maintain camps on the Tsiu, and engage in subsistence fishing and hunting activities in conjunction with their participation in the commercial fishery” (Thornton 2007:5).

In fact, Yakutat is somewhat unique among southern Alaskan communities in its retainment of commercial fishing permits among locals (Langdon 2015) , and in structuring complementary commercial and subsistence fisheries in places like the Tsiu, Situk, and East Alsek rivers. It could be argued, in fact, that the opportunity to commercial fish in rivers distant from Yakutat, such as the Tsiu, keep viable subsistence practices of food gathering in these areas.

Fishermen continue to work in the waters around other key landmarks on the coastline, such as Point Manby, Sitkagi Bluffs and points beyond. Fishing along the exposed outer coast continues to be a skill taught by elder fishermen to younger men, including how to navigate the rough and wave-pounded coast, as well as skills associated with surf fishing, still practiced at times in the area. For some, the continuation of this tradition is highly important and symbolic of the persistence of Yakutat Tlingit fishing traditions generally. For Kwáashk'ikwáan or Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan men, the fishing of this exposed northern coastline is especially important. Maternal uncles continue to share highly localized navigational and fishing knowledge with their nephews, and men of the clans continue to hold special standing among fishing peers who travel the fishing grounds, due to their familiarity with, and traditional rights along, the coastline.

So too, interviewees report some persistence of subsistence fishing in the early years after the creation of Wrangell-St. Elias at sites like Esker Stream, Sudden Stream and Point Manby. These camps served as seasonal fishing stations for subsistence fisheries involving entire families, while also serving as a base of operations and “safe haven” for commercial fishermen plying the exposed Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. Still, the number of subsistence and commercial fishermen visiting these areas and areas within the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias has dropped significantly since the creation of the park and preserve. While some Yakutat Tlingit fishermen still visit these areas occasionally, most interviewees report that, for a multitude of reasons, they have ceased to fish regularly in areas around the once popular fishing camps at Point Manby and beyond. For most, fishing at these camps is said to have become extremely difficult due to stringent permit regulations that are compounded by restrictions regarding beach access and camp construction. Sam Demmert confirms this, saying “it’s hard to do unless you have the camp...Once they put the restrictions on, hardly anybody went down there” (SD). Interviewees report that there has been a decline of fishing at Yahtse River—including lands outside of, but draining Wrangell-St. Elias near Icy Bay—for some of these same reasons. The reduced availability of cabins along the coastline is said to add complexity to commercial fishing, making it difficult to store supplies or to come ashore safely in inclement weather.

People report occasionally raising tents in places where cabins once stood, so as to maintain a foothold while fishing the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline along Yakutat Bay. This practice is also employed in areas just outside of Wrangell-St. Elias, such as at Yahtse River. James Bremner reports of that area,

“[Jerry Nelson] he had some cabins there. I don’t know if they’re there anymore, but when I went back I fished with—we just put up tents and I fished there two or three years. ...But now I just mainly fish the Situk and Dry Bay” (JB).

Bremner’s experiences appear similar to those of other Yakutat Tlingit interviewed. The effort required to procure a fishing permit, the cost of gas, and the difficulty of accessing the region without the means of storing supplies in permanent structures, have been major deterrents to fishing along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, contributing to the ongoing consolidation of fishing activities at places closer to the community of Yakutat.

Other fish, such as herring, are also reportedly harvested along the Yakutat Bay coastline, though this largely occurs on the southeastern shore. (According to Bert Adams Sr., the herring do appear to be returning to Knight Island in quantities large enough to fulfill the resource needs of today’s Yakutat Tlingit.) In addition, Yakutat Tlingit have continued to harvest a range of marine invertebrate species where they can be found along the ocean coast, including (but not limited to) cockles (*Clinocardium spp.* and *Serripes spp.*), butter clams (*Saxidomus giganteus*), littleneck clams (*Protothaca staminea*), mussels (*Mytilus spp.*), marine snails (class *Gastropoda*), chitons (class *Polyplacophora*), sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus spp.*), sea cucumbers (*Parastichopus californicus*) and octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*). Tanner and Dungeness crabs were also speared in shallow water historically, and with Alaska King crab, became part of a later commercial catch, along with such shellfish as shrimp (e.g., ADF&G 2008). Razor clams (*Siliqua patula*) are traditionally harvested on the sand beaches, apparently including those lining the south shore of Wrangell-St. Elias. Many of these shallow-water invertebrate species are still harvested today: “There is an abundance of intertidal resources available, found in habitats that include rocks, boulders, and bedrock outcrops, or sand, gravel, and mud beaches, tidal flats, and estuaries within the area” (Davis 1996:47). Most of these are eaten fresh, but are also sometimes preserved for later use through such methods as smoking, canning or freezing. Harvests of all of these species tend to be small and coincidental with other activities along the shoreline. Such harvests have been reported along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast in the course of commercial and subsistence fishing especially.

Seagull Eggs

Seagull and other bird egg gathering is a traditional activity that has long been carried out on the rocky islands along and near the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline. Yakutat Tlingit continue to gather eggs in the springtime, during peak nesting times. This is often done as a side trip when fishing along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, but interviewees report

that occasional trips have been undertaken specifically for the purpose of gathering eggs. While seagull egg gathering remains an important tradition, some Yakutat Tlingit see it happening less frequently in modern times:

“They used to come up and get seagull eggs [at Egg Island] and the old-timers used to come up there and hunt. It was a routine, year after year. And then after years went by and I kind of less and less” (GR).

Regardless, seagull egg gathering is a harvest tradition that continues to reunite families each spring, even for those who have been unable to participate directly in other resource harvests. As a resource practice that brings together families in various ways and fosters intergenerational exchanges of harvesting knowledge *in situ*, seagull egg gathering remains a symbolically significant aspect of traditional resource harvesting practice today, even if its overall contribution to the Yakutat diet is modest. As with other categories of natural resources, the sharing of gull egg is widespread. Though egg collection often takes place outside park boundaries, it is often associated with Wrangell-St. Elias, as gathering can occur in conjunction with fishing trips to the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline.

Plant Gathering

Plant harvesting, especially berry picking, remains an important part of Yakutat Tlingit life. Many interviewees spoke of modern plant gathering traditions, especially gathering for food and medicine, though it is unclear whether the practices are still carried out at Wrangell-St. Elias. For example, it appears that “rice root lilies” (*Fritillaria* spp.), devil’s club, and perhaps cedar were gathered when available, coincident with visits to what is now the southern shoreline of Wrangell-St. Elias, but this may have been prior to and just after the creation of Wrangell-St. Elias.¹⁵⁵

Berry picking continues to take place in many of the same places and seasonal times reported historically: “Berry picking...occurs in the summer around Yakutat and near the summer fish camps. A variety of berries are available. The most common include strawberry, salmonberry, nagoonberry, highbush cranberry, blueberry and huckleberry” (Mills and Firman 1986:69), and “in 1984, a household in Yakutat harvested on the average 26 quarts of berries” (Mills and Firman 1986:123). Berry picking, especially the picking of strawberries, is also reported as an ongoing activity at Point Manby and other locations along the coastline, particularly in places where fish camps and other facilities bring people together. Speaking of Point Manby, Lena Farkus reported: “The whole place has strawberries!” (LF). The shoreline of Wrangell-St. Elias is prized for being less developed or “polluted” than parts of the coastline closer to Yakutat, warranting extra effort to get there.¹⁵⁶ Many of these harvests are conducted

coincidentally with other activities along the shoreline, such as commercial fishing, though trips for the sole purpose of berry picking are occasionally mentioned.

Plant gathering follows some of the same basic patterns described in generations past, adapted slightly to fit modern circumstances. For example, in the past, clans maintained strict ownership rights over berry patches, but now ownership rights have become more flexible and individuals are freer to pick berries and collect other plants wherever they choose. Still, some harvesters continue to seek permission of clan leadership for harvesting in special places, such as the Point Manby strawberry patches, as a matter of protocol. There is still a clear predilection for gathering plant resources in one's clan territory to the extent that this is possible. Technological change has, however, opened up new options for berry harvesting. Importantly, berry-pickers now employ high-speed motorboats to travel to prime berry patches, allowing for day trips from Yakutat. In the past, canoes were used to access berry patches, and berries were only gathered in the course of long-term treks to the Wrangell-St. Elias coast.¹⁵⁷

Into modern times, plant gathering continues to be done primarily by women: "It is they who dig roots, gather berries, and collect the seaweeds and marine invertebrates called 'beach food'" (de Laguna 1972:392). Still, men sometimes report taking an active interest in plant gathering activities, and some eagerly take part in family treks to productive berry patches.

While berries were traditionally dried into "cakes" and other cuisine, they are now commonly jarred and jellied for the purpose of being consumed throughout the year. As with gull egg gathering, berry harvesting traditions often involve broad segments of the community, including individuals who may not often harvest other traditional foods. The distribution of jams, jellies, and other berry products in the Yakutat community reaffirms social ties and cultural practices.

A number of plant gatherers express concern that resources within Wrangell-St. Elias might be jeopardized over time by increased competition with non-Native harvesters, including potential commercial harvesters who target strawberries, mushrooms, or other wild edibles. A certain amount of such harvesting goes undetected, they note, and they are concerned about how (unanticipated) changes in NPS regulations or promotion of the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline could degrade coastal plant resources. Mary Ann Porter, for example, voiced her concern that if Wrangell-St. Elias experienced increased non-Native visitation, commercial plant or mushroom harvesting could develop there, even without formal NPS sanction, due to the remoteness of the area:

"Yeah, we don't need that. ...You know, this is pristine country. This is clean. It doesn't have no pesticides. You don't have the stuff from the cars. I mean you've got really organic, as organic as you can get. And they find

that out and pretty soon you have a nice little cute operation coming in that starts to grow” (MP).

Currently, there are some non-locals who arrive for the purpose of gathering mushrooms. Mary Ann Porter isn’t concerned about these individuals, but would like to see proper harvesting methods utilized to avoid destructive practices:

“Yeah, we get a few people that come in for that, just to harvest. ...It’s hard to say it’s not our land and it’s hard to say, ‘Hey don’t do that.’ But at least show them how to pick so they can pick without harming” (MP).

Some suggest that public interpretation on traditional Yakutat Tlingit ownership protocols, as well as natural resource harvest protocols, might help ameliorate such an effect. In fact, public interpretation could potentially be utilized to minimize many of the challenges discussed above. The topic of interpretation is discussed elsewhere in this document. What follows now is a brief discussion of how Yakutat Tlingit consider themselves stewards of the lands within and adjacent to Wrangell-St. Elias, as well as the natural resources that exist therein.

Traditional Yakutat Tlingit Stewardship of Natural Resources

As discussed in earlier sections of this document, Yakutat Tlingit have not only occupied and utilized the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline in various ways for many generations, they have actively engaged with the landscape through that time. In some respects, there is cause to believe they have been integral to ecological processes along this coast. Despite the close relationship Tlingit have maintained with this shoreline, the National Park Service operates under a mandate to regulate all human use—including Tlingit use—in an effort to preserve what is understood to be the natural condition of the lands and waters. NPS, by virtue of its protective functions and mandates, has helped to preserve many of these traditionally significant resources within the park. While human use can certainly negatively impact the ecology of an area, many Tlingit maintain that their ancestors were ecological stewards in their own right, creating and maintaining habitat conditions for key species abundance and sustainment, and that traditional resource harvesting can and should play a role in ecosystem maintenance and conservation (Thornton, Deur and Kitka 2015; Ramos and Mason 2004).

Again, according to traditional Tlingit cosmology, all living things are considered to possess a spirit, and conservation practices are a means to express respect for the spirit and sentience of all harvested resources. In some cases, this has involved basic efforts to

avoid overexploitation. Interviewees allege that the practice of harvesting only what was necessary—either for oneself or a shared group—helped to maintain sustainable harvests in the Yakutat homelands. In addition to general practices surrounding quantities of harvests, Yakutat Tlingit have employed specialized conservation measures, as discussed previously. For example, the selective harvesting of seagull eggs, interviewees maintain, has helped to control the gull populations to keep them at sustainable levels. The Yakutat Tlingit also maintained strict proscriptions on sealing at inappropriate times, in a manner that both demonstrated respect to the seals and ensured their continuous presence along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. Stories of punishments doled out to Tlingit clan members for disregarding sealing regulations were commonplace among Yakutat, and helped to reinforce these regulations. Similarly, traditional regulations regarding sea otter hunting limited the hunting season and the number of animals Yakutat could take in one season. These types of self-imposed regulations regarding the harvesting of wildlife, interviewees maintain, were a way to keep harvests sustainable and demonstrate what the Yakutat Tlingit view as their natural tendency towards stewardship of their traditional lands. They also persist today in various forms—not so strictly enforced, perhaps, but still serving as a cosmological and ethical background to most resource harvest decisions.

In spite of myriad historical changes to their lands and culture, then, interviewees report that Yakutat Tlingit subsistence hunters and gatherers are acutely aware of the interdependency of environmental elements of which they are active participants. As such, they have aggregated traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and developed conservative harvest methods to foster the long term integrity of the natural resources on which they depend. By their accounts, these conservative practices developed as a means to both respect these resources, and to protect the productivity of the resources for Tlingit consumption. Thus many interviewees suggest that animal populations, such as salmon, seagulls, seals, sea lions and many shellfish species, have come to partially depend upon traditional Tlingit harvest methods to remain healthy—or, at least, to reach some sort of population equilibrium. NPS management, in the view of many interviewees, sometimes assists in this goal, but may interfere with it too—resulting in variegated responses to NPS management. (Likewise, many hunters expressed concern that traditional Tlingit harvest prescriptions were better for the long term health of prey species than those now being employed in Wrangell-St. Elias and beyond under guidance of the ADF&G.)¹⁵⁸

As stewards of their homeland, the Yakutat Tlingit continue to regard themselves as active constituents within a dynamic environment. Resource harvesting therefore, becomes an integral activity to maintain resource health. Even younger members of the community still assert this view.¹⁵⁹ This perspective is sure to shape Yakutat Tlingit views of the landscape into the foreseeable future and will ensure that the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe will seek a voice not only in planning of resource harvests but in the

broader management of habitats and species in Wrangell-St. Elias with which they have abiding, multigenerational ties.

We now turn to a discussion of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and its current sociopolitical organization, which has played an important role in the sustainment of both the economy of the Yakutat region and its resources, maintaining strong ties between the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and their lands.

MODERN COMMUNITIES: THE YAKUTAT TLINGIT TRIBE, YAK-TAT KWAAN, AND YAKUTAT, ALASKA

The traditional sociopolitical units in Yakutat Tlingit culture (nation, moiety, *kwáan*, clan, house and individual) continue to organize social, ceremonial and economic life in diverse ways. Yet, the US federal government, and other outside institutions, have created pressures for Alaska Native people to organize into “tribes.”¹⁶⁰ While these tribes have no direct correlation with preexisting Tlingit social categories, they have become a necessity for communities maintaining government-to-government relationships with the United States. Further, the development of an independent tribal corporation lent a degree of economic stability and autonomy during a period that witnessed the closure of the Bellingham Canning Company cannery facilities (mid 1960s), the emergence of oil drilling and shipping as a significant economic force in the Gulf of Alaska, and rapid changes in both the organization and regulation of the fishing industry. In the process of creating these tribal structures and tribal corporations, the designation of “tribes” has placed myriad pressures on Yakutat Tlingit social structure, yet tribal status has allowed Yakutat Tlingit and other Alaska Native communities to present a unified front when interacting with the outside world.

Today, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe is a federally recognized tribe. The creation of a tribal government has allowed Yakutat Tlingit to structure their relationships with federal agencies, as well as coordinate activities relating to key federal legislation that affects their economic, social, and cultural interests. This establishes a unique government-to-government relationship between Yakutat Tlingit and federal agencies such as the National Park Service. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT) received federal recognition only recently—in 1993. They were among 225 additional tribes in Alaska so designated at the time, formalizing their relationship with the federal government and replacing the relatively vague *de facto* tribal status held by many of those tribes (CBY 2010:95; Thornton 2002:186). This status was confirmed by the Secretary of the Interior, and was carried out in response to a series of legal challenges and reviews regarding the tribal status of Alaska Native communities. Simultaneously, Yakutat Tlingit had been actively petitioning for federal status independent of these national efforts; indeed, the groundwork for federal recognition, as well as for the development of the Yak-Tat Kwaan corporation, was arguably built decades before this monumental development, and involved efforts by the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) and other Native organizations with significant Tlingit leadership.¹⁶¹

As Thornton notes, “this move served to energize and reinvigorate tribal governments at the *kwáan* level, giving them not only new legitimacy and power but also access to federal funds through grants, loans, and compacting agreements” (2002:186). Federal

“tribe” status creates specific obligations and opportunities for a “government to government” relationship, defining the relationship between the NPS and Yakutat Tlingit into the foreseeable future. For this reason, the fundamentals of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, as well as the community of Yakutat, are addressed here—especially to provide guideposts for NPS staff seeking to engage the themes and issues addressed in this document. So too, we devote a small portion of this section to the historically associated Eyak community in Cordova.

Today the five clans of Yakutat are represented by the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. The tribe maintains a standing list of enrollees, including almost all of the modern Yakutat Tlingit community. In addition, its members may also be shareholders within the Native village corporation of Yak-Tat Kwaan Inc., created under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Typically, they are also shareholders in the Sealaska Native Corporation, a regional corporation representing the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimishian people of Southeast Alaska. Yakutat Tlingit may also hold membership in the umbrella tribal entity, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, the local chapter (the “Yakutat T&H [Tlingit and Haida] Community Council”) being one of the possible twenty-one Alaska Native community chapters. Finally, Yakutat is home to an active camp of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANBANSGC n.d.; CCTHITA n.d.). Eyak, meanwhile, are represented by an entity called The Eyak Corporation, as well as by the federally recognized Native Village of Eyak in Cordova.¹⁶² Yakutat Tlingit who have become part of the Cordova community sometimes have family or personal enrollment in the Native Village of Eyak and the Chugach Alaska Corporation. Thus, there are Yakutat Tlingit in other Tlingit communities and corporations throughout Southeast Alaska.

The enrollment of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe varies slightly from year to year, but has recently had approximately 545 enrollees. Today, YTT membership has interests in lands both within and outside of the Borough, including lands as far west as Cape Suckling (CBY 2006:83-84, CBY 2010). The YTT is a tribal partner of the Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority, with Yakutat’s Sunrise Apartments being part of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Rental Program for qualifying families. Within the Borough, as of 2006, there were roughly twenty Native Allotments. As a result of the Native Allotment Act of 1906, each Native allottee has up to 160 acres of land, free of taxation unless the lands are leased or developed. The allotments are private lands, owned by the allottees, although the BIA retains certain trust responsibilities in consultation with the YTT and other tribes in which allotment owners are enrolled (CBY 2006:10; CBY 2010:95). The YTT is also involved in a variety of environmental programs in the community, including beach cleanups, road cleanups, an Energy Fair, and environmental restoration and remediation at former military sites around the community (CBY 2010:95; THRHA n.d.; YTT n.d.).

The YTT is highly invested in the conservation of both the lands in and around Yakutat, as well as the traditional culture of the tribe (YTT n.d:2-4). By 1995, the tribe had a formal plan for historic and cultural preservation, the “Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan for the Tlingit People of Southeast Alaska,” compiled by Gary Gillette and D. Scott Williams. Guided in part by this plan, the tribe has taken many steps to preserve the distinctive language and culture of Yakutat Tlingit, and has successfully acquired and managed a number of grants, public-sector and private, for such purposes. Tlingit language classes, available to youth and adults alike, are among the major achievements of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe’s ongoing cultural initiatives. Many dedicated Many Tribal members and staff have lent their time and knowledge towards the goal of continued practice and revitalization of their rich culture and heritage, both in the school and the community.

The YTT has run a Culture Camp as well—an educational program especially for tribal youth that began in 1985, before the tribe’s official recognition. This Culture Camp took place at the Ankaus Saltchucks—a complex and biologically rich estuary just west of town, and one of the important traditional sites for subsistence activities today, including the collection of shellfish, fish, waterfowl, plant materials and other wild foods. The Culture Camp persisted at the site until 2003, when the Department of Defense officially confirmed that the site was contaminated with dioxins, asbestos and other substances as a result of its military use in World War II and beyond. Cleanup efforts, involving the Department of Defense and other federal agencies in collaboration with the YTT, continue to this day.¹⁶³

In 1995, the YTT and the Yak-Tat Kwaan began partnering on tourism planning efforts. With inspiration from a plan developed in the 1990s entitled the “Yakutat Tourism Development Plan,” the two entities have sought to foster tribal economic development that capitalizes on the rich natural resources of the Yakutat area, but also the rich heritage of Yakutat Tlingit which—under certain circumstances—is seen as appropriate for sharing with outside audiences (CBY 2006:133). Activities such as the production and sale of traditional crafts—including clothing and other items made from seal and otter skins acquired near the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline—have been a growing part of this effort to facilitate a modest tourist industry built upon, rather than undermining, traditional skills and values. These efforts have often been supported by non-Native members of the Yakutat community, and by agencies with interests in the Yakutat area. The Tribe is currently partnered with the CBY, Yakutat Chamber of Commerce and the local and regional ANCSA corps in pursuing ecotourism to enhance the economy of the community. Some are motivated by the potential economic benefits of “ethnotourism” in addition to the intrinsic value of having their Yakutat Tlingit friends, neighbors and kin maintain a strong cultural identity.¹⁶⁴

From nearly the moment Yakutat Tlingit received federal recognition, the YTT has been involved in consultations with a variety of government agencies on matters ranging

from routine ground disturbances, to natural resource access issues, to nationwide policies surrounding sacred sites. As part of this effort, the YTT has worked directly with the NPS on matters large and small relating to Wrangell-St. Elias. In addition, the YTT has collaborated with federal agencies to procure funding for cultural conservation and preservation. The National Park Service (NPS) has entered into various partnerships with the YTT to supply funding and resources to further the research and preservation of Tlingit culture, and has maintained a government-to-government agreement regarding collaboration on cultural efforts of mutual interest:

“[The] NPS and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT) have had a formal, written government-to-government agreement since 2004. In that agreement the parties have agreed to work together to promote the understanding of Tlingit history, culture, and the interpretation of traditions of the Tribe. Furthermore, the NPS agrees to participate in cooperative historical, ethnographic, and archeological research with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe” (USDOINPS 2011).

The YTT acts as a repository for the materials produced by these and other preservation efforts: historical documents, ethnographic papers, archaeological research, maps, audio and video files, transcriptions, photographs and other materials are increasingly being housed in the YTT collections in Yakutat. For example, ongoing research undertaken by Judy Ramos—as part of her dissertation work, her collaborations with the Smithsonian Institution and other activities—has documented a wealth of knowledge about the traditional Tlingit seal camps throughout the Yakutat region, especially those used in hunting along the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. YTT will be the recipient of this rich material by the terms of these project agreements:

“An archive will be established with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe with more than 500 hours of footage and video-recorded interviews with key informants, scenes such as the clan ceremony conducted at Shaanax Kuwóox’ [“wide valley,” a seal hunting campsite near Hubbard Glacier] and hundreds of documents, photographs, and reports resulting from the seal camps project” (Oh 2014:36).

No doubt, the materials that are finding their way to the YTT archive will expand considerably on themes summarized in this document, and will be a rich source of information for future researchers within, or collaborating with, the tribe. The tribe now actively seeks to build its collaborative capacities, including efforts to develop a permanently staffed cultural department or THPO that might collaborate in the documentation and management of cultural resources on lands managed by federal agencies such as those of the National Park Service (BA).

The YTT has a wide scope of responsibilities relating to the preservation of history, culture, language and traditional practices. They are also charged with the representation of Yakutat Tlingit heritage to the growing number of tourists that descend upon the Yakutat region each summer. For example, YTT has employed tribal members to act as Tlingit interpreters on cruise ships that enter Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays. Within the last few years, however, no cruise ships have taken advantage of this service. Nonetheless, participants in this program celebrate the potential of public interpretation as a mechanism for sharing Yakutat Tlingit history and culture, helping to facilitate the respectful engagement of tourists with Yakutat Tlingit territory, and restoring what is seen as a more appropriate “host-guest” relationship with visitors. Presentations for these events were written and edited by groups of Yakutat Tlingit elders, facilitating a more accurate and sensitive presentation of Yakutat particulars than would have otherwise been the case. Some of the images included in this report were originally compiled by the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe as part of this effort by the elders (BA). The potential for cruise ship-based tourism has been an incentive for Yakutat Tlingit Tribe collaboration with the NPS and the US Forest Service in efforts to seek a permanent facility in Yakutat from which to coordinate on-site interpretive efforts and visitor services, among other activities.¹⁶⁵

In these diverse arenas, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe often operates in coordination with, or on parallel courses with, Yak-Tat Kwaan—the Native village corporation that represents many Yakutat Tlingit shareholders. Once a geographically defined polity of independent clan units that gathered only during the winter months, the Yaakwdáat Kwáan has lent its name and some of its economic functions to Yak-Tat Kwaan—the village corporation that not only manages more than 23,000 acres within the boundaries of the Yakutat Borough but also plays a key role in the stewardship and development of these lands including ongoing efforts to protect Tlingit subsistence practices. This corporation took shape in response to the 1971 passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The major provisions of that law were as follows:

Aboriginal land title was permanently extinguished in Alaska. Except for Annette Island in Southeast Alaska, existing Native reserves were revoked.

Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights were extinguished, except within special cases.

As compensation for loss of 90 percent of Alaskan lands, Natives were to be compensated at \$3 per acre, a total of \$962.5 million.

Natives received title to approximately 10 percent (44 million acres) of Alaska. Native communities’ assets were organized into corporations, which managed those assets on behalf of “shareholders,” consisting of members of those communities (Thornton 2002:184)

In this context, modeled on United States private corporations, Native Alaska communities were encouraged to reorganize themselves as “corporations with shareholders” rather than as “tribes with enrollees.” Certain assets were allocated to these corporations, partially to offset the loss of preexisting and more general claims on lands and resources and, reflecting broader trends in federal policy, to expedite Alaska Native transitions to capitalist forms of economic organization. It was under ANCSA that the Yak-Tat Kwaan Corporation, which is the Yakutat village corporation, was formed, along with thirteen regional corporations including Sealaska Corporation. As noted earlier in this document, though the Yak-Tat Kwaan was officially created under ANCSA, its roots arguably date back at least to the 1940s, when the Colorado Oil Company sought to drill exploratory wells in the Icy Bay area—conferring a degree of federal legal standing to the “Five Chiefs of Yakutat,” who represented the five clans of the village and who received modest compensatory payments for oil drilling on their lands. While the number of enrollees varies, the number is generally somewhat higher than that of YTT, and has been reported as being well in excess of 400 shareholders in recent years. Although the majority of modern Yak-Tat Kwaan shareholders are Tlingit, there are also shareholders who identify as Eskimo, Aleut and other Alaska Native heritage and who have become part of the Yakutat community in various ways (YTK 2013).

The Yak-Tat Kwaan Corporation has received monetary compensation for loss of lands but also title to certain traditional lands for purposes of economic development. Upon its formation, the Yak-Tat Kwaan received surface rights to 23,040 acres of land in the immediate vicinity of Yakutat, while the subsurface rights to the lands fall under the jurisdiction of the regional corporation, Sealaska (ADF&G 2014:41). Since the formation of the Yak-Tat Kwaan Corporation, it has acquired additional land within the vicinity of Yakutat. Today, the Yak-Tat Kwaan is a major private-sector landowner in the Borough of Yakutat, along with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT). Yak-Tat Kwaan has also been involved in a variety of business ventures. In its earlier years, the YTK was involved in extensive timber harvesting, though these operations declined in recent years—in part due to concerns about adverse environmental effects of further logging in the Yakutat area.¹⁶⁶ More recently, YTK has participated in the development of a robust and successful seafood processing business, providing salmon to Seattle and other Lower-48 markets, and has been diversifying into such markets as oystering—capitalizing on the relatively pristine environments and reputation of the Yakutat region, which is increasingly yielding tangible economic benefits.¹⁶⁷ (Not surprisingly, some portion of these seafood products are acquired in Yakutat Bay, not far from Wrangell-St. Elias, even if commercial harvests in lands and waters of Wrangell-St. Elias play little role in this modern economy.) Additionally, the YTK has interests in construction, equipment leasing and other ventures, as well as developing partnerships for the production of construction-grade sand, gravel and clay from glacial deposits in the area (CBY 2006:9-10; ADF&G 2014:35).¹⁶⁸

Ultimately, as has been true of Yakutat Tlingit people for generations, the Yak-Tat Kwaan Board of Directors has sought to maintain the economic well-being of Yakutat Tlingit into the foreseeable future, in spite of a succession of unpredictable political and environmental changes that are largely beyond their control. While serving as a foundation for economic development, the ownership of large land tracts and resources has allowed Yakutat Tlingit to maintain a degree of leverage in a landscape that had otherwise fallen out of their control in the last century. As noted in Yakutat's 2006 Coastal Management Plan, "this land selection allowed the native-owned corporation to exert greater influence over development of its shareholder's traditional living area than had been the case in the past" (CBY 2006:20). Also, counterbalancing certain economic potentials of their lands, Yak-Tat Kwaan manages their holdings in a manner that is meant to sustain traditional subsistence activities, allowing YTT enrollees and YTK shareholders to continue to use their lands into the foreseeable future.¹⁶⁹ As an Alaska Native Corporation, they have to maintain the "bottom line," yield profits and provide employment opportunities, as well as steward the natural resources and traditional subsistence lifeways. The balance between these interests can be challenging, but the corporation has made an active effort to sustain this balance, supporting the long-term resiliency of Yakutat Tlingit interests.¹⁷⁰

All of these developments have occurred within the community of Yakutat, which has become a mixed community of Native and non-Native residents, managed by a municipal government that exists independent of the YTT and YTK. In 1948, Yakutat was officially incorporated as a city government. The decades to follow saw growing non-Native populations and growing management issues—especially reflecting changes in the fishing industry, the growth of the federal land management presence in the region, as well as the sale of gas and oil leases in the Gulf of Alaska (CBY 2006, 2010). These changes facilitated the rapid growth of the municipal government as well as the growing influence of the municipal government in Yakutat Tlingit life. In its initial configuration, Yakutat consisted of just over three square miles within the city limits. In September of 1992, Yakutat residents voted to dissolve the City of Yakutat as part of the Skagway-Yakutat-Angoon Census area and form the City and Borough of Yakutat, incorporating it as a Home Rule City consisting of 5,875 square miles from the Alsek River west to Icy Bay and north to the Canadian border. In 1997, Yakutat annexed the area of Icy Bay to Cape Suckling, bringing it to its current form, an area of about 9,460 square miles, roughly the size of Vermont. As a result, the primary landowners within the City and Borough of Yakutat are the federal and local governments, which manage about 97% of the area. Portions of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, as well as Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Tongass National Forest all now overlap with the boundaries of the City and Borough of Yakutat (YCC n.d.; CBY 2010).

Today, Yakutat is a place of remarkable diversity, considering its small population. According to the 2010 US Census, the population of the City and Borough of Yakutat

was 662 individuals, with 42.4% of the population identifying as white and 35.8% of the population identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 15.4% of the population identifying as two or more races (US Census Bureau n.d.). Commercial and sport fishing, as well as fish processing and government services, represent the foundation of Yakutat's cash economy; yet, most residents rely on subsistence hunting and fishing, with salmon, trout, shellfish, deer, moose, bear and goats all contributing to an enduring mixed economy (YCC n.d.; CBY n.d.).

The City and Borough of Yakutat remains a relatively isolated community today, though it has, in part, been able to overcome that distance due to airport infrastructure developed in World War II. There is no road access into Yakutat, so air travel has been, and remains, the primary means to access the community. Currently, Yakutat Airport is the hub for a commercial airline, Alaska Airlines, linking the community to Juneau, Cordova, Anchorage and Seattle. In February of 2015, the US Department of Transportation awarded Alaska Airlines the contract to serve Cordova, Gustavus, Yakutat, Petersburg and Wrangell through the Essential Air Service Program for two additional years. The program, which was enacted in 1978, ensures airline service to small communities. Air taxi services provided by several regional companies, such as Yakutat Coastal and Mountain Flying Service, also run passenger flights to Juneau, Cordova, Icy Bay and Yakataga. The Federal Aviation Administration has recorded over 10,000 enplanements (passenger boardings) from 2008–2010, which qualifies Yakutat Airport as a primary commercial service airport according to the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. Yakutat Airport provides year-round employment opportunities for local residents,¹⁷¹ as well as hangar space for private plane owners and small charter planes that support the traffic in cargo, tourists, sports hunters and sports fishermen, especially during the summer months. According to the Tsiu River Fisheries and Land Management Report, the daily air traffic may include “up to six carriers bringing in day-fishers” (2009:1). As such, the airport has become integral to sport and commercial fishing operations throughout the region. So too, this airport has been critical to the rapid transportation needed to sustain local industries dependent on rapidly deploying fresh salmon by jet to markets largely located in the Lower 48 states.¹⁷² With these operations, Yakutat Tlingit continue to reside in their traditional homeland, within the pre-Euro-American settlement core that is Yakutat, and maintain a vital economy that draws on traditional fishing skills, while employing cutting-edge shipping technologies and trading partnerships throughout the United States and beyond.

We now turn to modern Yakutat Tlingit views of their lands, history and people, and how their views and values shape current relationships with the land, as well as hopes for, and concerns about, the future.

MODERN CONNECTIONS: ENDURING CONNECTIONS AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

In spite of over two centuries of outside influence and interference, Yakutat Tlingit cultural and social ties to particular landscapes, including those within Wrangell-St. Elias, remain remarkably resilient. While Yakutat appears to be confined to a city on a map, in reality Yakutat is a region, the homeland of the Kwáashk'ikwáan, Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, and the other constituent clans of the Yaakwdáat Kwáan. It contains the footsteps of unknown generations of ancestors and shared Alaska Native history. Moreover, the community is conceptualized not only as the town of Yakutat; Yakutat is conceptualized as the peopled hub in a vast and dynamic landscape that includes Wrangell-St. Elias and is integral to the existence of Yaakwdáat Kwáan.

Oral traditions about the great migrations of the clans, including the clans that passed through lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias, are a source of strength, identity and wisdom to their membership. They help map a geography that is still salient in the maintenance of clan identity, Yakutat Tlingit cultural integrity, and enduring claims to particular lands and resources. When asked what Yakutat means to Ted Valle as a Kaagwaantaan, he replies with pride:

“It means home. I mean, you got the only Nation that ever defeated Russia to the point where they are never looking back. ...This is our place. This is where my ancestors come from. So it's real important to me. From Kayak Island clear down...our Kaagwaantaan land would be from there all the way down to the northern shores of Icy Bay” (TV).

Lorraine Adams echoes this sentiment, saying:

“All these places I know who it belongs to. In my mind I still live it. I still say this is my grandfather's land, this is my father's land and it just makes me feel good even though I know some of it is in the Tongass National [Forest] lands and Forest Service and Park Service. But to me it's still my people's. If in my mind I could think that I can live with it” (LA).

Clans and houses, in particular, maintain their own special connections to those places, rooted in the distant times described in their oral tradition. As Sam Demmert explains, “Well, the *Dis hit* [house] are from Mount St. Elias, you know they used that as their landmark” (SD).

Yakutat families—those who are Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan—still invoke the landmarks from their journey in memorial potlatches and other ceremonial contexts that involve clan *at.óow*. At potlatches, names are called out to memorialize individuals and maintain connections to the past; those names and their origins are explained with reference to their place in Yakutat Tlingit oral history, including key landmarks from the migration narratives:

“[T]he thing about Tlingit culture is their memorial and reincarnation and that’s where a lot of these stories pop up. When they’re having their potlatches and they’re doing their mourning songs and they’re caught in the spirit of those that have gone. They call name. ...This is his name and we’re still mourning him. They still have this reincarnation so that the name has been passed to today” (EA).¹⁷³

Applied in potlatches and other settings, the narratives and landmarks of these oral traditions are said to still sustain Yakutat people culturally and to reveal new forms of “teaching” and relevance rooted in the experiences of one’s ancestors. As Victoria Demmert recalls,

“While my grandmother Susie Abraham was alive, she got to go up to Copper River area and Chitina and met people there and told the story and they tell the story of how we left. But they thought we died and perished on the glaciers and so there was much crying and rejoicing when [they] found out that we we’re still alive. We’ve become ‘Tlingit-ized.’ And they’re still alive and it’s a wonderful story when you think about it: how resilient the people are and how adaptable our people are you know to nature and whatever gets thrown at them” (VD).

Younger members of the community likewise attest to the importance of these connections today. Yvonne Baker describes her connection to her homeland:

“I think to know the stories is important and also feel personally tied to the land, to have—I have wondered how you know, how we grew up so different that Native people can feel such a tie to the land and where other people might say, ‘Why don’t you just move? Why don’t you just go? The cost of living is too high. It’s too hard to be there, too hard to get there.’ I don’t know how to express to someone that doesn’t understand a tie to the land. Don’t know how to make someone understand when they think it’s so easy to just walk away” (YB).

Again, with these rich and resilient oral traditions as their guides, Yakutat Tlingit have maintained key cultural values relating to their homelands despite the myriad changes brought about by missionization, acculturation, industrialization and regulation. Even the landscape on which they depend is constantly shifting under the dynamic influence of geology and glacial action. Yet, Yakutat Tlingit have forged through these changes, adapting traditional social practices to accommodate new realities, integrating new technologies into harvest practices, and approaching each challenge in turn with a solidarity rooted in the culturally significant conceptual framework of respect.

“Respect” remains a central organizing theme among Yakutat Tlingit: it is not simply a mode of decorum, but it implies a mindfulness of one’s position within a larger world and worldview, shaping one’s actions toward the land, resources, as well as between human communities. It is a fundamental principle that shapes social relationships, but most importantly in this document, it is the basis for their many significant relationships with their traditional homelands.

The central principle of “respect” is said to still play such an integral role in Yakutat Tlingit life, in part, because the landscape and living things within it are understood to have a “spirit” or sentience that demands this respect. Victoria Demmert describes how this worldview creates a dynamic relationship with the environment and suggests certain ways of relating to the land:

“from our perspective, and I know you’ve heard this before, but...this isn’t rocks and dead land. Everything’s alive. Everything has history and everything’s alive. And so if you don’t have that perspective, you don’t know how to see a tree or a rock or water. You don’t see it as glorious and magnificent and alive and there’s a story about it and there’s a name for it. And now you walk away from that place with—you’ve changed someone’s perspective on looking at things and now people aren’t looking at things in a flat way, they’re starting to see a 3-D light to things. It’s really important” (VD).

These values are conveyed between generations in part through the continued observation of resource ethics, but especially through the sharing of *kwáan* oral history that has been passed from one generation to the next in stories and song. Ray Sensmeier and other interviewees explained that the Tlingit still observe “natural laws,” rooted in these oral traditions, demanding that they are respectful of the land, resources and each other:

“We were, from the beginning of time you know, one of the natural laws was that we protect and take care of the land and the resources and use them in a good and proper way and not waste anything that we will always be there. Usually if it’s the first one—I don’t know someone’s

biggest moose—but the hunter would give away most of it. And that way ensure that there would be more. ...And the hunters, the seal hunters now, and going back, they keep very little of the seal that they get and they gave it away to the elders and other places. They shared—they used to come down and down by the old village there's a beach there and they used to take the meat and put it on the beach and people could come down and take whatever they wanted...And stories were told from the time we were [born]...the grandmother actually when you were born...would whisper things in their ear and the Creator's name was never named because of respect but the grandmothers would whisper it into the baby's ear" (RS).

It is because of this connection to the land, and not just traditional territorial claims, that Yakutat Tlingit continue to view themselves as stewards, caring for the land on which they live and depend. Their hunting and gathering practices are purposeful and often conservative, wasting little and involving the sharing of resources within and between households.

In this light, even modern hunting, fishing and gathering are said to be more than simply subsistence activities; they are a means of maintaining one's obligations and connections to human communities, prey communities, and the land: "You know you always looked at the animals and the things as you would a brother and a sister. And you treat them that way" (RS).

Despite a number of challenges, a robust oral tradition is in part responsible for facilitating the continued close connection of Yakutat Tlingit to certain portions of Wrangell-St. Elias that are part of their homeland. For example, placenames are still recalled and passed between generations that travel the land together, serving as a mnemonic of cultural and historical details from the distant past.¹⁷⁴ Often transmitted in the course of resource harvesting—commercial or otherwise—these and other oral traditions not only reinforces a degree of continuity in traditional social structure, but also reifies individual and community relationships within the ancestral landscape. As Kaagwaantaan leader Ted Valle notes,

"There's a lot. And when I was a kid I used to hear my mother tell me about it and talk about it. And then I went fishing in Tsiu [Tsiu River, west of Icy Bay] with Johnny Bremner and Harry Bremner. And then in their time off, they started telling me, they said, 'Haa Aani. This is your land.' So they started telling me the story about the area. And I could tell they were having a hard time with English. So I told them, 'I can understand Tlingit. Just tell it to me in Tlingit,' you know. So I got questions and all that. And

they told me all about that. Just about everything I told you is what my mother told me. So that's all I know about our people and our land" (TV).

The intimate knowledge of Wrangell-St. Elias lands possessed by Yakutat Tlingit is kept alive through oral history and solidified by annual, seasonal and perpetual trips. Yvonne Baker remembers taking day trips to the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias with her parents and siblings, and feeling a strong sense of connection to her ancestors by "walking in their footsteps" while there:

"I grew up with three brothers and sisters so we would all get in the skiff and go up there and play around the ice and hop out and have a picnic. And it was mentioned how important it was to us, but just being there I think that was real important to spend the time...I know it has great cultural significance for us as far as—I mean you guys have talked to them about migration. I grew up hearing stories about my grandpa and how he would call the mountains his playground. It just means a lot in that I can go to these places that he has been. And while my great-grandpa, I never knew him, but I can feel a tie to him through the land. I can walk on the same land he walked on and go to the same places he did and try and sit somewhere and feel maybe what he was feeling when he was here. That is a deeply emotional thing for me" (YB).

The intergenerational sharing of memories, some note, is an important way for people to stay connected to the lands in and around Wrangell-St. Elias, even when younger tribal members may not personally have spent time on those lands. Significant cultural ties thus remain strong between Yakutat Tlingit and areas now within park boundaries widely within the community, in spite of declining use of those lands in recent decades. According to interviewees, these connections to the homeland remain, even when a person is living hundreds of miles away, or only had learned of traditional uses of Wrangell-St. Elias second-hand from elders.¹⁷⁵

This deep personal and group association with the land is renewed through the visitation of significant places on the landscape and through the practice of traditional subsistence harvesting. In the course of subsistence-related visits, people recall not only their family histories, but also the teachings and values of elders who are long gone. Victoria Demmert made this comment regarding the significance of subsistence activities in and around Wrangell-St. Elias today:

"And it's not like the whole town does it anymore like we used to...we're not predatory on it. It's just getting to enjoy and when you get to eat those types of things, it brings you back to times with your grandparents...it

makes you start thinking about things they told you and people that you might not have thought about for a while, just in the eating of those, those foods. Or just going out to gather them, just getting ready to go do it. It just brings all your history back to you” (VD).

Resource harvests have also allowed families and communities to be present on the land together. In this respect, resource harvests often became the venue for the sharing of cultural knowledge; by virtue of the distance from subsistence use areas from the pressures of “town,” this function continued even at times when there were restrictions on traditional cultural practice from missionaries and others. Such resource harvests facilitated the intergenerational exchange of information regarding Wrangell-St. Elias lands and resources in a way that has been critical to Yakutat Tlingit cultural integrity—suggesting the deeper cultural values of subsistence harvests today.

While the importance of time spent on the landscape is widely felt throughout the Yakutat Tlingit community, interviewees report that they have very few opportunities to return to areas within the Wrangell-St. Elias that were once occupied year-round, or utilized seasonally as part of traditional subsistence practices like hunting and fishing. Yet despite many challenges – from the cost and dangers of travel to the specter of growing regulation - there are those who persevere in a limited capacity. For example, a number of people fish at Point Manby, but almost none of these families camp there any longer: “there are people that go over there and fish, but they don’t have camps. They come back” (RS).

While this connection is still very important to many Yakutat Tlingit interviewees, there is also concern regarding the potential for significant cultural loss in coming generations if people lose footholds in the culture and on the land. Very few Yakutat Tlingit have the opportunity to learn the Tlingit language, much less grow up “on the land” or with the subsistence lifestyle known by their elders. Interviewees believe the displacement of Yakutat Tlingit from their traditional lands and lifeways has contributed to the dismantling of Tlingit traditional practices and identity. Lena Farkus attempts to explain the ramifications of these lifestyle changes:

“Our older people that knew history and could speak language and relationship and the whole works had to stop. So we have people that are lost” (LF).¹⁷⁶

Expanding on this point and its implications, many interviewees suggest that shared memories of the landscape, rooted in ancient history, are held firm in the minds of elders, yet are fading fast as generations become more removed from direct contact with the land. Cultural integration, television and mass communications, and other

connections with the non-Native world have, in many respects, had more erosive effects than generations of forced assimilation. The current generations are pivotal in this area. The oral traditions of Yakutat Tlingit have remained surprisingly robust in spite of pressures to the contrary, as well as provide details of historical association with Wrangell-St. Elias with a high degree of fidelity, but current generations are witnessing a significant erosion of that knowledge:

“it’s something how back when, back when was I’m sure you know, stories were only told by certain people. Only by authorized storytellers. And the stories were to be told verbatim. One word could not be changed for another word. All the words had to be—the stories were told identical from generation to generation by storytellers. And storytellers didn’t have to do anything else but tell stories. And they were provided for by the village and they were, when they told a story, then they got paid extra for that. And that’s why when I hear people say, ‘Well, you can’t rely on oral history because it changes depending on who’s telling it.’ Maybe in some other cultures, but not in the Tlingit culture because they were pure stories told identical, you know exactly. We don’t have any storytellers anymore you know. I mean, like the old time” (SJ).

Still, some storytellers persist in the community, presenting Yakutat Tlingit oral tradition in potlatches and other traditional events, but also in government meetings, public events, Park Service sponsored trips to Dry Bay, and beyond.¹⁷⁷

Within these enduring stories can be found the history of Yakutat Tlingit, culturally significant landscapes and nuances of the Tlingit language. As mentioned elsewhere, *kwaán* migration story tells how the Tlingit people wandering the landscape in search of their new homeland began to follow – depending on the *kwaán*, a raven or the ears of a rabbit. Upon reaching the Yakutat area, they found they had been viewing the top of Mount St. Elias. According to Elaine Abraham, many Tlingit youth are unfamiliar with this story, so that they miss both the deeper meaning of those narratives as well as their significance in terms of the cultural geographies of Yakutat Tlingit:

“And the potlatches, my Uncle Harry Bremner he would say, ‘I see the ears of the rabbit.’ Ninety-nine percent of the people there did not have any idea what he was talking about. ‘What are you talking about a rabbit for?’” (EA).

When those oral traditions are not shared repeatedly within a community that shares their language and those common points of reference, they fade with time. Thus, for

example, Ted Valle, a highly knowledgeable leader of Kaagwaantaan, admits that even he is struggling with remembering some of these stories:

“they kept telling us that if you lose your language, you’re going to lose your culture. They kept pointing at it...And sure enough, you know, I can’t believe how much I’ve forgotten. I can understand when an old-timer talks to me, but I can’t speak it that well myself. But I speak enough to—I speak to people in the Interior and they understand me and I understand them. But meanings is, unless you grow up with it, it’s pretty hard to remember...You know a lot of the young people don’t know. There’s just a few of us left here that know quite a bit and when we’re gone, that’s pretty much the end of it” (TV).

Many fear the knowledge has already been lost and express that there is a great urgency for the preservation of what remains through systematic documentation, language programs, and efforts to get young people together with their elders on the land. Skip Johnson laments the loss of knowledge that had been harbored by the elders that are now gone:

“unfortunately we’re a little late. A lot of the old people are gone now who knew the history and knew all these little things. Because when we were young, we didn’t ask a lot of questions. You know, we just never thought about it. Yeah, what was it? We didn’t know the answers. We didn’t even know the questions” (SJ).

There is a fear among Yakutat Tlingit that the younger generations will not learn cultural traditions in a way that is sustainable for the community. The process of intergenerational sharing of traditions is complex, and interviewees see access to resources as an opportunity to facilitate the passing down of knowledge to younger generations. This colors perceptions of issues of access to Wrangell-St. Elias in a variety of ways, making the issue more urgent and symbolically charged than many NPS managers might initially anticipate. This presents an arena of potential conflict or collaboration between the Yakutat community and the NPS into the foreseeable future.

Park-Tribe Relationships

In this context, and in light of the resource access conflicts of past years, the NPS and Yakutat Tlingit have had a variegated relationship over time. Matters of communication and miscommunication have been numerous, and there has been inevitable

disorientation associated with evolving park policy regarding issues from subsistence access to the management of cultural resources.¹⁷⁸ Yakutat Tlingit interviewees also perceive that NPS policy sometimes favors the interests of relatively wealthy, non-Native visitors and the guides who choreograph the recreational activities such as hunting and fishing, complicating subsistence activities for the local communities. In turn, they suggest, these policies have sometimes hastened and compounded the erosion of Yakutat Tlingit cultural integrity.

While interviewees expressed frustration with their dealings with the NPS in times past, there are still many forms of collaboration between the NPS and Yakutat. The park has made a concerted effort to establish a physical presence within Wrangell-St. Elias, renting Yakutat facilities to establish an office and providing government funding to support a seasonal park ranger position. As noted in the park's Administrative History,

“In early 1981 the superintendents of WRST [Wrangell-St. Elias] and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (GLBA) developed a cooperative plan to manage the new ANILCA addition to Glacier Bay National Park and the southern, coastal section of WRST. WRST received base funding to rent a Yakutat facility and hire a district ranger with the understanding that the ranger worked for both parks. WRST launched the operation in May 1981, dispatching District Ranger Clarence Summers and a four-month seasonal ranger to establish the office. The park leased its first facility from Yak-Tat Kwaan and storage at the Yakutat hanger from the Yakutat Pilots Association” (Bleakley 2002: 177-78).

The facility and position were largely supported by Wrangell-St. Elias almost exclusively in its early years, so the emphasis of the office tended to center on Wrangell-St. Elias matters. Operations, including a new visitor center, were relocated to central Yakutat by 1993. When the visitor center was developed, the interpretation of Yakutat Tlingit culture was part of the plan: “As Yakutat's Tlingit community had expressed an interest in displaying some of their cultural objects in the park's visitor center, conservators Ronald Sheetz and Alan Levitan from Harpers Ferry Center (NPS's museum conservation center) visited that summer as well, accessing and cleaning the *Galyix Kaagaantaan* [sic] Beaver Screen. They also suggested raising the visitor center's ceiling in order to display it properly” (Bleakley 2002:319).

Responding to local guidance, various NPS employees worked to maintain a facility in that location, because “it provided necessary visibility and also helped establish a rapport with local residents by remaining accessible” (Bleakley 2002:201).

In addition to establishing a Wrangell-St. Elias facility and visitor center in Yakutat in an attempt to better connect the community to the park, there have been concerted

efforts to amend current legislation to allow for the continuation of traditional resource harvests within Wrangell-St. Elias park boundaries. In 1994, the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission approached the Department of the Interior to help amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to allow for egg harvests by Yakutat residents and other park-affiliated communities (Bleakley 2002:132-33). Additionally, Princess Cruise Lines began seeking NPS interpreters on ships in 1994, and Yakutat Tlingit interpretation was a part of this effort. As noted elsewhere, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe organized a group of elders to oversee the development of interpretive content, and clan leaders such as Bert Adams Sr. and Ted Valle were among the primary interpreters on board these ships.

Indeed, many Yakutat residents suggest that they desire an even greater NPS presence in the community in the form of permanent offices and employees, as well as NPS engagement and contact. In spite of this, the visitor center closed not long before the time of this writing; however, a park office, which remains open, was relocated to the airport. Several interviewees, such as Victoria Demmert, have expressed frustration with this loss, and suggest that it suggests waning support for the NPS-Yakutat relationship in recent times:

“I’ve told them before, it’s like you’re doing the ‘creep out.’ You know, you’re taking your little building one by one and you’re sneaking out of town. And they’re [the NPS staff] saying, ‘Well, it’s a money thing.’ This [other gateway community] place is rich and this place is rich. Ok, here’s the thing, this is not a Native community. This is a Western community and that’s a Western community. They are not paying attention to the indigenous people who live here, it’s money and building things to sell... Is the Park more interested in catering to wealthy tourists or to the indigenous people who are struggling to subsist within the Park?... they used to have a nice display here and they has presence here in Yakutat. Now they’ve got a big display over in Glennallen, and a presence in Glennallen and they’re growing. And they’re growing in Glacier Bay. And they have one, two people here now, two people here and no office... what are they doing here to aid in the economy, to be a partner, to be a partner with us that they say they are?” (VD).¹⁷⁹

Interviewees also commonly expressed the view that the few locally based NPS rangers are overbooked and responsible for tracts of land of land so vast that they can scarcely manage it: “They’ve got two guys here, and it’s hard to get them because they’re always out either in one of these parks that we’re part of” (VD). Most Yakutat Tlingit interviewees generally understand the limits on NPS resources, but many are still eager to develop these relationships and facilities where it is possible: “the Park Service is

really going through a lot of financial problems, but that doesn't mean that they should ignore us" (BA).

Many expressed the desire to have the NPS partner with the Yakutat Tlingit community in a direct and meaningful way. Yakutat Tlingit interviewees see collaboration between the two entities as feasible and potentially desirable for the community but also – if approached cooperatively, collaboratively, and respectfully – for the well-being of their homeland, including portions of that homeland now sitting within Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve.

Simultaneously, interviewees acknowledge that there have been a few recent efforts made by NPS to facilitate a renewed partnership with the Yakutat Tlingit community. Some note that the NPS has continued consultation to sort out enduring access concerns, and increasing interpretation opportunities within the park; the NPS has also sometimes hired Yakutat Tlingit to participate in interpretive and educational events, bringing certain people back to the land for educational and certain cultural purposes albeit not for many traditional activities such as subsistence. For example, Mary Ann Porter worked for the Park Service seasonally for about four years. During her time with NPS she increased community participation and tribal interpretation:

“[W]hat I did is I started bringing people in to do presentations local you know. Everybody was curious about what it was like here during the war. So we brought people in to talk about that. We brought in [the writings of] Frederica de Laguna and it was kind of like a story night every Tuesday night in the winter time. We had people come in and anybody wanted, in the community, they wanted to ask them questions they would” (MP).

In addition to employing Yakutat Tlingit members, Bert Adams Sr. mentions that there have been previous efforts made by the Park to recognize *kwáan* boundaries in the park and to discuss different types of land access matters, including the use of various types of motorized vehicles by subsistence users in the Point Manby area.¹⁸⁰ Interviewees mention that NPS staff has also made a concerted effort to include tribal members on the Subsistence Resource Commission, as well. In spite of challenges with that commission, Yakutat Tlingit have been able to facilitate a more open discussion of community interests and concerns, and occasionally influence management. For example, some suggest that this has contributed to such policies as a moose hunt for local subsistence users before the sporting season opens on the federal lands around Yakutat and south to Dry Bay: “Now we have a subsistence hunt prior to the hunt. That helps the local people a lot because we don't have airplanes to fly around and spot them” (RS). While these are tentative steps, interviewees often point to them as a potential beginning, and a precedent for more ambitious communications and collaborations in the future.

Looking Toward the Future

In every interview conducted for this study, Yakutat Tlingit interviewees expressed a strong desire to maintain their cultural traditions and to pass on those traditions to younger generations. Engagement with the NPS is one avenue interviewees identified as not only desirable, but essential, for the community to maintain the integrity of their relationship with their homeland and, in turn, the integrity of their culture. Some advocate confrontation with the NPS while others eagerly embrace collaboration. No matter the outcome, the NPS – as the manager of so much of the Yakutat homeland – is sure to figure significantly into future deliberations and into the very fundamentals of Yakutat Tlingit history as it is written into the 21st century and beyond.

However, it is Yakutat Tlingit, themselves, who now take direct action to perpetuate their culture. Many Yakutat Tlingit now participate in bold expressions of cultural revival. Ongoing since at least the mid-20th century, this movement has built on the foundations of elders of earlier generations who kept cultural traditions alive, if often hidden from the colonizers' view. The movement brings traditional institutions into a modern context—keeping them relevant, even as they adapt to the experiences, capabilities and expectations of successive generations (Kan 1991, 1989b). George Ramos Sr. speaks of the cultural revival of recent decades, and a dance group called the Mount St. Elias Dancers:

“When they [my children] were growing up I never talked about it. ...I never taught them the Tlingit language. And now I sit down with [my daughter] and I go to see her and I tell her some of the things that I told you because like I said, we were made to be ashamed of who we were and why. And now I'm working with these young kids and the dance group you know. And I tell them, 'I want you to be proud of who you are. I want you to hold your head up high' ...it has been really interesting and I thought I'd try to pass that on to the young people. 'Hey, you are somebody. Hold your head up high and be proud of who you are'” (GR).

For Yakutat Tlingit young and old, there has been a resurgence in pride and identity, buoyed significantly by the activities of the Mount St. Elias Dancers, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe language program, and other tribal initiatives. Yvonne Baker no longer dances with the Mount St. Elias Dancers, but reports that the beat of the drum still resonates within her:

“I didn't dance from probably junior high was when I didn't dance anymore, through high school. But just something about hearing that drum, hearing the songs...is moving, it's exciting, it's definitely something that can get adrenaline going and feel so much pride” (YB).



Figure 16 – The Mount St. Elias Dancers continue to represent a cornerstone of organized cultural activities for the Yakutat Tlingit community, contributing significantly to the education of younger tribal members on traditional songs, crests, and other *at.óow*, while also fostering enduring pride in this cultural heritage. Photo courtesy Yakutat Tlingit Tribe/Bert Adams Sr.

With these organizations taking a significant role in the perpetuation of knowledge used in memorial potlatches and other settings, they maintain a type of solemn relevance in community life. These organizations also aid the Yakutat Tlingit community in showcasing their living culture traditions through such venues as the biennial Tlingit Celebration in Juneau. So too, they sometimes help present a powerful community identity to Yakutat visitors; anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, for example, describes attending a 2002 conference in Yakutat where,

“the Yakutat Tlingit hosted a thoroughly successful cultural evening in their Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall. The dance group [Mount St. Elias Dancers] included some thirty adults, teenagers, and youngsters who wore elegant, handmade ceremonial regalia featuring the wearer’s clan crests—Beaver, Eagle, Thunderbird, Brown Bear and notably, Mount St. Elias, the mountain that we heard once guided their ancestors to Icy Bay and eventually to Yakutat Bay. They performed a series of songs and dances that traced webs of kinship and narratives of first arrival at Yakutat Bay. References to glaciers were embedded in larger stories about human migrations and connections among clans.

“A ‘Copper River song’ commemorated the history...about how clan members originally travelled to Yakutat Bay and found it occupied, so retraced their route westward across the Bagley and Tana glaciers to retrieve [copper] that allowed them to purchase living space at Yakutat. A second song told of travels inland to the Yukon across mountains that one of the performers, David Ramos, reminded the audience are ‘the children of Mount Saint Elias and Mount Fairweather,’ spread between the coast and the interior...David Ramos also mentioned that glaciers dislike intensely the cooking smells of human food...” (Cruikshank 2005:48).

Sharing *kwáan* songs, stories and dances in this way remains an important way for Yakutat Tlingit to demonstrate the veracity of those cultural traditions that do endure, while also aiding significantly in its preservation and transmission within the community.

In this context, many interviewees also feel that maintaining ceremonial traditions linked to their homelands, including the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline, is a crucial part of ensuring continuation of the culture. Some Yakutat Tlingit clan leaders still occasionally carry out ceremonies on their traditional lands, outside of the confines of the ANB Hall. Simultaneously, it remains unclear whether Yakutat Tlingit will resume some of the more intensive subsistence and settlement practices that have characterized their historical relationship with the Wrangell-St. Elias south shore. Some wish to redevelop and reassert subsistence interests for reasons that are dietary or economic, yet in this context there are plenty of symbolic and even political reasons why some families may wish to harvest even small quantities of resources from Wrangell-St. Elias. Yet, restoring cultural and subsistence traditions is no small feat, and interviewees expressed a range of opinions as to whether, in the end, this revitalization of culture might spread across Yakutat Bay or would instead be relegated to cultural practice within the boundaries of Yakutat proper.¹⁸¹

Whether considering land use and access to the park by Natives or non-Natives, Yakutat Tlingit agree that changes in park policy relating to land and resource issues will require earnest and regular tribal consultation—perhaps beyond the minimum legal requirements. As Yvonne Baker notes,

“I think having tribal input is important. One of the things that I you know, growing up here and my mom’s thing was, we’re all surrounded by park land, forest service land, and that these people hold the deed to that land but that we’re the stewards of the land and when they’re gone, these people, our people will still be here. So having tribal input I think is vital” (YB).

Interviewees assert that Alaska Native access to the park should not only be a topic of this consultation but a shared goal, essential not only for dietary purposes but in the sustainment of Yakutat Tlingit culture. NPS programs and funding that might facilitate annual trips, hikes and subsistence activities inside park boundaries for traditionally-associated Yakutat Tlingit families would foster not only park-tribe relations, but ultimately the cultural integrity of Yakutat Tlingit.¹⁸²

Several interviewees felt that interpretation was an important point of entry for Yakutat Tlingit community members to not only collaborate with the NPS, but to engage with their traditional homelands. Collaborative potentials may include interpretive development, with a significant Yakutat Tlingit “voice.” An advantageous place to begin development of this “voice” would be the integration of Tlingit placenames into current map displays. Traditional placenames often contain significant historical and cultural references. Reintroducing these placenames would be a recognition of the deep history of Yakutat Tlingit connections to the land, and their enduring connections as stewards and traditional hosts on the land. Ted Valle would like to see traditional Tlingit names utilized by NPS staff: “I mean there’s a lot of great history here that could be highlighted and it could be a real, great park of building and a collaboration between us” (TV). Some of these opportunities are already being realized. In partnership with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, the National Park Service has recently taken groups of Yakutat children out onto the land at Wrangell-St. Elias, in places such as Esker Creek. Interviewees made further recommendations regarding educational and youth opportunities for Yakutat Tlingit at Wrangell-St. Elias. At least two interviewees have been involved in some plant-based educational programs already; one of them, Yvonne Baker, describes the enthusiasm she sees in the younger population, including her own children:

“Yeah, the kids here in summer school when he went to do things with plants and I think one year they focused like on drying plants. ...One time it was trees and all kinds of trees. But just seeing how kids respond to that is so cool. Just my boys, I’ve taken them out and they’ll pick every little piece of mushroom out of anything I cook. I take them out in the woods, ‘Hey look at this mushroom. We can take it home and eat it.’ ‘Ok!’ They’ll go out in the woods and try it. And that is really cool” (YB).

Baker goes on to say that she would like to see a traditional plant guide specific to the Yakutat region researched and created:

“I think Yakutat is really unique and while there’s, the one [plant guide] that I have is an overall southeast, I think one specific to Yakutat would be great. ...I love going out and seeing what’s out there today, to forage. But

to have a plant guide that the kids can you know, run and look and say, 'Oh here! This is it!' I think that will be great" (YB).

Collaboration between the Yakutat community and the NPS on projects such as a Yakutat traditional plant guide, she notes, could be useful not only to aid in teaching future generations about traditional lifeways, but also in facilitating a stronger partnership between Yakutat Tlingit and the NPS.

While the social and political landscape of the Yakutat Tlingit homeland has changed drastically since contact with Euro-Americans, as has the land itself, Yakutat Tlingit understand these lands to be their own inheritance and their own responsibility. The community remains integrally connected to particular landscapes within their traditional territory, including those within Wrangell-St. Elias. As such, interviewees expressed a desire to be viewed as stewards of their traditional homeland, and as a people with long-standing and unique connections to the land. As Yvonne Baker observes,

"[we must] remember that these lands mean something to us and...we have a tie to this. It's in our blood...we're so tied to the land. And [the NPS must] be conscious of that when they're talking to people...That these mean something to the Native people and just remember that when they talk to tribal people that instead of always referring to this as 'their land.' If they could find a better way to phrase that and acknowledge that. While it's been taken over by them, that we were stewards of the land long before and we'll continue to be in charge of who's in charge of the land" (YB).

The NPS has entered into a landscape with a rich human history. The agency must sometimes occupy the pivot-point between two cultures – one Native and the other hailing originally from another continent – that have actively negotiated their relationships over a period of more than two centuries. Challenges that have arisen between the Yakutat Tlingit community and the NPS point to the complexity of land management issues and of efforts to preserve the spectacular and dynamic landscapes within Wrangell-St. Elias. Yakutat Tlingit appreciate that the fate of their community and the NPS are now joined in many ways, for better or worse. In this light, and with an eye on the future of their community, their children, and their children's children, many seek ways to meaningfully collaborate – solving old problems and seeking out new solutions that might help preserve Wrangell-St. Elias while also preserving their historical memory and their most important and venerable cultural traditions.

Toward a Collaborative Future: Conclusions and Recommendations

With its sprawling scale, towering mountains, and vast and shifting glaciers, the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve is often perceived by visitors as a wild landscape, devoid of human history or presence. As this document suggests, such a perception is far from true. Even as glaciers engulfed much of Yakutat Bay, ancestors of today's Yaakwdáat Kwáan traveled long river valleys, over glaciers and ice fields, and established a foothold on lands exposed by the retreating ice, within the region now managed as part of Wrangell-St. Elias. For clans arriving from the elsewhere on the coast or the Interior, landmarks such as Mount St. Elias served as beacons, orienting the clans as they moved along the coast. The accounts of their journeys—handed down through generation after generation of clan leadership—became integral to clan crests, origin narratives, and other clan properties, while the places they encountered along the way became guideposts to a sacred geography still central to Yakutat Tlingit cultural identity.

In time, the clans of the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline—principally Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan—gradually moved to consolidated settlements, principally Yakutat. They did so in response to myriad changes in the human and natural landscape: pushed out by glacial surges that sometimes engulfed whole settlements, by epidemics that reduced and displaced communities, and by missionary and military pressures. Economic opportunities, new social institutions, and deep kinship ties drew them to Yakutat. There they became part of the consolidated Yaakwdáat Kwáan, five clans living together in one community, gradually transitioning from a pattern of wintertime cohabitation to full-time residence. In spite of this “secondary migration,” a journey from the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, these clans continued to visit the coastline seasonally, to live and harvest resources, and to engage places of unique cultural and ceremonial importance. At each stage, these clans continued to understand this coastline as their homeland, honoring its landmarks in crests and the names of traditional homes, and invoking the landscapes in their most important clan ceremonies. The southern reaches of Wrangell-St. Elias remain a storied landscape, rich in human history. Tlingit names for its landmarks still live in the memories and discourse of the elders and can still be heard on the streets, and in the ceremonies, of Yakutat.

With Athabaskan and Tlingit roots converging in the village, the people of Yakutat possess a rich, hybrid heritage. This served the community well, often fostering resilience in a landscape where glaciers have dramatically advanced and retreated,

bringing peril and opportunity. Life at the glaciers' edge has always defined Yakutat Tlingit life. Historically, this provenience brought Yakutat Tlingit great wealth — exposing copper deposits, providing a wealth of seal and sea otter on the retreating margins of the tidewater glaciers—much of this within or adjacent to what is now Wrangell-St. Elias. These things made Yakutat Tlingit rich, as middlemen in trade networks spanning hundreds and perhaps thousands of miles. But the wealth also attracted the attention of colonizers, especially fur traders of the Russian Empire. Life on the oceanfront exposed the people of Yakutat to the full effects of seaborne exploration and trade in ways distinct from Tlingit of interior waters. Yet, the forceful expulsion of the Russians by Yakutat Tlingit in the early 19th century was a pivot-point in the post-contact history of the community, allowing Yakutat Tlingit to maintain distance from some of the most pernicious colonizing influences. Many of the community's keystone traditions remained comparatively intact into the American period and, indeed, into modern times. Many traditional practices were suppressed under the influence of Swedish Covenant Church missionaries and a growing American presence. Yet, the resistance of Russian influence, coupled with the preservation of so much cultural knowledge “underground” within Yakutat's constituent clans during the early American period, allowed certain Yakutat Tlingit traditions to rebound rapidly in recent times.

Such institutions as the Mount St. Elias Dancers sprang to life from these roots the moment formal prohibitions on traditional cultural expression diminished in the mid-20th century, carrying forward the knowledge of the five clans and traditionally trained elders into modern times. These institutions remain strong, carrying forward a sense of attachment to clan homelands and the resources of the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. Though the community is a modern one, with its economic and social life increasingly integrated into national and international currents, Yakutat Tlingit retain their knowledge of how to navigate this glaciated coast—to navigate its waters by boat, but also to navigate its spiritual potentials and enduring meanings as the foundational landscape of modern clan identity. So too, Yakutat remains an epicenter of traditional resource use and knowledge, relating to the distinctive environmental predicaments and potentials of this rugged coast. Thus, for example, seal hunting has been, and remains, a practice of unique importance to Yakutat Tlingit, and the geographical loci of that tradition are the places where glaciers exiting Wrangell-St. Elias meet the sea.

Much of this story is recoverable from the existing corpus of materials related to Yakutat Tlingit history and culture. As this document demonstrates, the work of Frederica de Laguna looms large on this part of the coast, reflecting over a half-century of focused research and writing on Yakutat themes. Her work was in many respects definitive, its literature review nearly comprehensive, so there is little incentive for recapitulating it in encyclopedic fashion in the pages of this report. Instead, this document has sought to extract and distill key references to park lands and resources from her work, and many others. So too, this document seeks to bring the existing work

up to date—recovering original ethnographic information through interviews, especially on the nature of the relationship between Yakutat Tlingit and lands within Wrangell-St. Elias in the decades preceding and following park creation, a topic critical to modern park management, interpretation and policy. Much of this report provides a thematic overview of key outcomes of this survey, integrating the vast literature on Yakutat Tlingit with the words of contemporary interviewees. The outcomes are revealing, tracing the outlines of changing human relationship to lands and resources within Wrangell-St. Elias from pre-contact times to very recent events. The bibliography of this document, as well as the annotated bibliography of major sources (available separately), provides waypoints for any researcher, agency resource manager, or Yakutat Tlingit investigator, to dig much deeper into the themes outlined here. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe may yet produce clan histories for each of the clans with direct ties to Wrangell-St. Elias, which will surely expand the depth, relevance and voice of the current study.

If there were data gaps apparent in the course of this study, they relate to topics beyond de Laguna's scope, or post-date her data-gathering in Yakutat. Many of these themes are geographical or historical in emphasis, and would help to better illuminate Yakutat Tlingit cultural linkages to lands now within Wrangell-St. Elias. For example, there are matters of the past settlement of the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. To be sure, Yakutat Tlingit settlements have existed along the coastline in and very near what is today Wrangell-St. Elias—including large, permanent settlements like those described in Kwáashk'ikwáan oral traditions of Icy Bay, as well as a wide constellation of seasonal resource encampments that appear to have moved with time in response to glacial movement, changing access and fluctuating resource availability. Still, the scale, scope and chronology of human settlement along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast remains ambiguous based on the materials reviewed in the course of this current project, which provides opportunities for future research on this topic. So too, the historical processes and chronology involved with displacement from those settlements over time is an important, if poorly documented, theme, only thinly recoverable from available written documentation. Certainly the analysis of settlement patterns is challenging due to such factors as the dynamism of the landscape and the gradual exodus of Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan families from their homeland shores through the post-contact period in response to factors that “pushed” them off the coastline or “pulled” them toward Yakutat. This information can likely be reconstructed, in part, based on more detailed interviewing, as well as a review of untapped archival resources (such as those of J.P. Harrington, those materials currently being developed by Aron Crowell and Judy Ramos, and those in the Sealaska Heritage archives such as the Dauenhauer Tlingit oral history collection). Coupled with a complementary review of the available archaeological and geological record, it is likely such an investigation would prove illuminating for Yakutat Tlingit and NPS staff alike. (Additional archaeological survey may also prove fruitful in certain locations within the Yakutat Tlingit area of interest, though this is beyond the scope of the current study.) So

too, such an investigation may reveal other, interconnected geographical phenomena that are elusive in the existing record, such as the configuration of trails along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast at different periods, or the canoe travelers' responses to navigational risk along the icy and exposed coast, among other matters.

This research also reconfirms the well documented fact that oral tradition is rich regarding sealing, fishing and other resource practices among living Yakutat Tlingit. Yet, in some respects, there is an urgency in documenting the perspectives of contemporary elders, who may be among the last frequent traditional users of certain lands and resources within Wrangell-St. Elias. Their availability and knowledge offer the potential for more detailed research addressing past resource use practices and values. The accounts in the current "reconnaissance" document only hint at the depth of knowledge in Yakutat. (Also, certain key resources users, such as members of the Pavlik family, were not available during project interviews and would surely provide valuable perspectives in future interview research.)

Certainly, as this document suggests, there have been many studies mentioning resource use within what is now Wrangell-St. Elias. However, following general trends in Alaska subsistence studies, so much of the available literature pertaining to resource use in and immediately around Wrangell-St. Elias focuses on simple matters of harvested species, quantities, and locations—points well covered and unlikely to require additional attention beyond the usual cycles of ADF&G and NPS reporting. What is too often missing from these studies (but suggested tentatively by our reconnaissance interviews) is a discussion of the deeper cultural significance of the resource harvests. These themes are eminently worthy of thoughtful investigation. It is clear, for example, that resource harvests not only provide food security and dietary breadth to Yakutat, but also foster intergenerational exchanges of information regarding resources, lands and values relating to natural resource procurement. In this sense, resource harvesting helps to keep Yakutat Tlingit culture alive and vital. The resources so harvested also help in maintaining cultural continuity, social cohesion and economic resiliency within Yakutat and other Alaska Native communities. Additionally, the use of such resources helps Yakutat Tlingit to maintain footholds within traditional lands, and to continue applying traditional concepts of tenure and territoriality in certain venues. (Most classic accounts on this topic, such as Goldschmidt and Haas [1946], being situated in times quite distant and without reference to modern associations and identities, require updating if they are to be of use to park managers or YTT staff.) So too, subsistence practices will continue to evolve and adapt, requiring ongoing documentation over time. Again, future research might allow all parties to better appreciate the deeper meanings of subsistence in the perpetuation of traditional culture knowledge, and in the intergenerational transmission of key resource practices and values that yield far more than caloric value to the people of Yakutat.

The presence of so many experienced resource harvesters also presents an opportunity for myriad traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) studies. Responses of Yakutat Tlingit resource harvesters to the changing availability, temporality and geographical distribution of species in the dynamic glacial landscape is clearly a topic of interest to many researchers—partially but not fully examined in the course of ongoing, focused research on seal camp traditions by Crowell, Ramos and others. Relying heavily on Tlingit oral tradition, such cultural investigations can be correlated with the growing natural resource and natural history literatures for this coastline to illuminating effect. Of particular interest too, interviewees’ comments suggest a rich corpus of traditional resource management techniques that have not been adequately documented in past studies. These include plant management and traditional gull egg management along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, some of these methods (such as burning or other vegetation management methods) seemingly mimicking or “resetting” certain biomes to earlier, post-glacial successional stages that are culturally valued. Traditional techniques for fish management, such as salmon and herring egg “cultivation” are also suggested for Yakutat Tlingit, especially in highly dynamic environments, and seem likely to have had historical associations with Wrangell-St. Elias. Interviewees and written sources made brief references to the details of copper procurement and use, including some degree of procurement near the park’s southern boundary, that are likely to be more fully recoverable through interviews, even if the practice is unlikely to be recalled in great detail. *Galyáx*-Kaagwaantaan accounts on this point were especially illuminating in reconnaissance interviews, reflecting their deep ties to copper deposits in the Robinson Mountains and beyond. Pending the result of the Judy Ramos dissertation research at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and Smithsonian Institution research guided by Aron Crowell, there surely will be new research questions and continuing opportunities for research following-up on seal hunting themes associated with the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline. So too, there may be value in documenting the full history of sea otter use and procurement into modern times—a topic not only of historical significance, but of growing contemporary relevance as Yakutat Tlingit reengage and revitalize otter hunting practices near the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. Finally, there is still much to be learned from traditional resource harvesters about the skills associated with navigating and surviving amidst the ice and glacial landscapes of the coast—a topic richly suggested by our reconnaissance interviews.

Matters of more general cultural geography are pivotal to understanding the relationships of people and place, yet are seldom addressed directly in recent literatures. Research that might illuminate the Yakutat Tlingit “sense of place,” outlined in the Introduction, as it relates to Wrangell-St. Elias would be exceedingly helpful in addressing many of the questions raised in this document generally, and in this conclusion specifically. Investigations of the topic might allow researchers to more completely evaluate the meaning of traditional *kwáan* territory and migration landmarks in contemporary tribal identity on several scales—personal, family, *kwáan*, Tlingit and Alaska Native. In light of the significant changes in community life and

structure, the depictions of de Laguna and other writers of the last century are important points of reference on the “baseline conditions” of the past, but are not sufficient in understanding many salient features of this relationship today. Such matters are important in understanding Yakutat Tlingit values generally, but have tremendous implications to the NPS in the arenas of tribal consultation and compliance.

Indeed, an entire Traditional Use Study or Ethnographic Landscape Study could be devoted to the matter of the migration routes and their significance, alone. Working collaboratively with local experts, especially Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan leadership and cultural experts, researchers might help compile, compare and contrast routes discussed in oral tradition; carefully map these routes and landmarks with reference to modeled coastline and glacial configurations at the approximate time of the migrations; organize photographs and placenames for landmarks mentioned in those narratives; and help record and organize migration narratives and other oral traditions relating to the same period and landscape. Such a document might discuss the contemporary importance of migration narratives and landscapes in various venues—from *kwáan* ceremonies to private life—for contemporary Yakutat Tlingit individuals, families, *kwáans* and communities. Such documentation might readily be assembled into interpretive and educational packages—for example multimedia digital formats to be used in educational programs for YTT youth.

Similarly, the spiritual and cultural “meanings” of the landscape and its constituent features, such as glaciers, are implied but not fully explored by certain existing written sources. There are clear hints of this level of significance in the words of interviewees for the current study, who attest to the sacredness of the landscapes within Wrangell-St. Elias and spiritual powers traditionally associated with that area and its landforms, in addition to the landscape’s particular meaning to specific *kwáans* both as territory that they care for, and which cares for them. Other sources, most notably de Laguna’s writings (especially de Laguna 1972), contain information relevant to the topic but do not seek to articulate this as a unified theme. Other sources still, such as the writings of Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987, 1990, 1994), provide suggestions of the rudiments and foundational concepts of place-based spiritual practice and belief, while directing limited attention to the specifics of the current study area. Meanwhile, the writings of Cruikshank (2008, 2001) foreground these concepts as they relate to glacial landscapes in and around Wrangell-St. Elias but, in truth, contain relatively little new or substantive data on this theme. While this is a sensitive topic, it is one that is of enduring importance to Yakutat Tlingit. This theme is also certain to have implications for park management, which is responsible for managing Wrangell-St. Elias with reference to federal laws and policies pertaining to sacred places such as Executive Order 13007, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and others. Most of these relevant laws and policies do not hinge on the historical importance of these landscapes, but on their enduring importance to contemporary peoples—suggesting

that some level of contemporary documentation may be required to illuminate the nature of modern Tlingit values relating to the landscapes and to outline the compliance mandates of the NPS. A research methodology could be developed to gather information on contemporary views and values as they relate to “sacred landscapes” of Wrangell-St. Elias, largely through interview research, but with a view to protecting sensitive information and clear options for redaction by the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, participating *kwáans* and interviewees. Such research would set a high bar for tribal consultation in the scoping, execution and review of research activities.

By this same token, there is ample evidence that Wrangell-St. Elias contains one or more places likely to meet the criteria for listing as Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) — for places that are uniquely linked to the history, culture and contemporary identity of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and its constituent clans. Minimally, by even narrow interpretations of National Register guidance, Mount St. Elias and Icy Bay are likely to meet the criteria for TCP status, based on their centrality to *kwáan* origin narratives, traditional crests and other property, early *kwáan* history, and the modern ceremonialism and identity of *kwáans* as well as the larger Yakutat Tlingit community. Interpreted more broadly, the pathways taken by Yakutat Tlingit clans upon their first migration from Copper River to Yakutat Bay—that of Kwáashk’ikwáan in particular—are likely to be eligible as National Register-eligible “cultural landscapes,” multiple property districts or similar, utilizing TCP criteria as outlined in Bulletin 38 of the NPS National Register program, with all of the key landmarks from those origin narratives serving as “contributing resources.” Broader National Register options might also exist. Due to the oral traditions and enduring cultural value of glaciers, mountains and other features in the southern swath of the park, one might consider a Multiple Property District approach that would account for all of these landmarks as “contributing resources.” This might be accomplished within a special study that focuses specifically on TCP eligibility of features on the Wrangell-St. Elias south shoreline, or addressed within a conventional NPS Ethnography Program report category, such as a Traditional Use Study.

Similarly, places that are key in the Raven cycle of Tlingit oral tradition are unusually concentrated along the coastline of the region from Cape Yakataga (south and west of Wrangell-St. Elias) to Dry Bay (in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve). These are among the best known Native oral traditions of the entire Northwest Coast. They are known nationally and even internationally, and are iconic of Northwest Coast traditional culture. They also imbue the landscape with unique forms of significance to modern Tlingit, providing not only a sense of their own history and identity, but access to a rich corpus of traditional teachings on such matters as morality, ethics and interspecific obligations that might provide insights to tribal members today. The coastline of this area, including portions of Wrangell-St. Elias, possesses landmarks that are linked to specific tale episodes, associated placenames, and other forms of cultural knowledge. In light of this fact, those sites arguably warrant independent investigation



Figure 17 – The entrance to the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall, Camp 13, Yakutat Alaska. The Eagle and Raven, the two moieties of the Tlingit, are shown on both sides of the summit of Mount St. Elias, an enduring keystone landmark in Yakutat Tlingit culture and history, likely eligible for listing as a Traditional Cultural Property. D. Deur photo.

as a possible National Register-eligible Cultural Landscape, multiple property district or similar. Such an investigation would involve documentation through published, archival and interview research, similar to the other National Register proposals outlined here, primarily using TCP criteria to frame project methods and analysis. In light of the geographical breadth and multiple jurisdictions involved, Wrangell-St. Elias would likely require some level of involvement from, at minimum, Tongass National Forest and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

There are a number of other aspects of Yakutat Tlingit cultural geography that might warrant attention in future park-based research. For example, current research suggests that there may be many more placenames that could be added to those already recorded in published sources (Thornton 2008). Judy Ramos and Elaine Abraham, in particular, have recorded detailed information on placenames in the glaciated portions of Wrangell-St. Elias, as well as travel routes through those glaciers as described in *kwáan* oral traditions, extending beyond what is available to date in written form. These resources were not reviewed in the current research, but opportunities may exist for the NPS to support organization of this material into formats usable by the YTT and Wrangell-St. Elias alike. Interviewees for the current project also mentioned several

placenames that were not fully transcribed and translated, suggesting that additional interviewing may yield information on these names, their origins and their historical and cultural significance in and around Wrangell-St. Elias. It is possible that, accessed through further systematic interviewing, including placename mapping and possible field visits, these interviews might augment lists collected to date by Ramos and Abraham. Archival sources, though already tapped extensively by Thornton, Ramos and Abraham, may yet yield more names as well. Certain archival notes, such as those of Harrington (n.d.) were not reviewed exhaustively for the current project and may still yield insights on these topics, especially when working in collaboration with specialists in the Tlingit and Eyak languages.

Various other gaps were noted in available ethnographic and ethnohistorical literature. The topic of NPS-tribal relations as they relate to Wrangell-St. Elias is increasingly a “historical” topic, as so many of the key events took place three decades ago, or more. In this light, this topic might also be appropriate for investigation in the course of Traditional Use Studies that center more directly on the topics outlined above. Assessed in its historical context, this material could assess past challenges and successes in NPS-YTT relations, and highlight opportunities for the continued improvement of park-tribe relationships into the foreseeable future. There is also the matter of the independent history and culture of the Cordova-area Eyak community—a theme that is only addressed parenthetically in this document. The NPS had planned to undertake interviews with Native Village of Eyak members concurrent with this research, but budget and logistics made this impossible. A broader investigation of that community’s unique history, including ethnographic or oral history interviews, would certainly yield perspectives on the significance and traditional uses of Wrangell-St. Elias, including areas in the Copper River drainage not addressed in the current document.

While this discussion of data gaps has centered on the state of the existing literature, the “gaps” are not solely to be found in the sources. There are also management and interpretation needs that must be addressed, sometimes through academic research and sometimes through collaborative data gathering with park-associated tribes, clans, families and individuals. Some of these management and interpretation needs are known to NPS managers now working at Wrangell-St. Elias. Other needs and interests were identified by members of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe in the course of interviews and in meetings for the current research. Tribal members have discussed a number of key objectives that should be repeated here, as they provide valuable context for the recommendations of this study, as well as future opportunities for park-tribe collaboration. Certainly, the interests of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe must and will continue to be discussed in the course of formal consultation with the NPS and other agencies. Still, tribal interviewees —formal and informal—expressed their hopes for the future of park-tribe relations, starting from the foundational idea that the NPS must, in all facets of park operations, “remember that these places mean something to us” (YB). Most expressed, at minimum, a desire to see these things.

Wrangell-St. Elias Visitors and Management Respecting the Landscape

There is a widespread perception that non-Native visitors to those parts of Wrangell-St. Elias associated with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe have not had sufficient “respect” for the land and the living things upon it. Interviewees suggest that non-Native hunters, charter operators, cruise ships and other visitors—as well as certain NPS managers in the early years of park development—have shown inadequate respect for this land’s spiritual significance, cultural significance and enduring importance to Yakutat Tlingit. Disrespect was widely said to have secondary effects that can be independently destructive, eroding the enduring bonds between Yakutat Tlingit and this part of their homeland. Some also express the belief, deeply rooted in Yakutat Tlingit cosmology, that this disrespect can have negative consequences for visitors, management and Yakutat Tlingit by destabilizing or offending spiritual forces at work in the landscape—possibly leading to injury, illness or even death. Interviewees expressed a general desire to find ways to help instill that respect. This, they suggest, might be accomplished in part through management, interpretation, or other mechanisms reflective of Tlingit perspectives, while helping to instill respect in park visitors and, as needed, land managers. Again, this is a general goal that should be understood to permeate the discussion of other, more specific management or interpretation goals outlined below.

Meaningful Acknowledgement of Yakutat Tlingit Linkages to the Land

Interviewees often mentioned a strong desire to have Yakutat Tlingit associations with the study area acknowledged and engaged by the NPS at all levels, especially in interpretation and in the management of both natural and cultural resources. Several interviewees suggested that Yakutat Tlingit culture and history has often been absent from interpretation of Wrangell-St. Elias landscapes. When these themes are mentioned, interviewees suggest, the Yakutat Tlingit content is commonly eclipsed by natural history themes that mention human themes parenthetically and often without equal standing.

At minimum, certain interviewees suggest, there should be interpretation that accentuates the history and continuity of *kwáan* associations with specific lands and the resiliency of Yakutat Tlingit culture into modern times. More specific themes were mentioned as secondary, but no less appealing, options such as traditional resource management practices and values, or the adaptability and ingenuity of Yakutat Tlingit people in their relationship with the dynamic glacial landscapes of the south end of Wrangell-St. Elias. Much of the information on *kwáan* history is traditionally considered *kwáan* property, so the NPS might be asked not only to present these interpretive themes, but to collaborate closely with the YTT and appropriate *kwáans* in its creation. Concerns center not only on “content,” then, but also on matters of intellectual property that suggest the “methodology” of interpretive development is of nearly equal interest.

Similarly, interviewees report that they are eager to have NPS resource managers engage with the unique history of Yakutat Tlingit in the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias in particular. This implies acknowledging tribal and *kwáan* associations to particular landscapes within the management process—not only meeting the letter of the law when it comes to “consultation,” but the spirit of those laws as they relate to tribal interests. While the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe coordinates with its traditionally associated clans when consulting with NPS, some suggest that the NPS should continue to acknowledge that, while tribe is the legal point of contact, the *kwáan* is the basis for traditional association. Yet, the implications of these suggestions go further still. Some interviewees recommend that NPS managers seek to develop natural resource management strategies in coordination with the tribe that integrate Yakutat Tlingit traditional ecological knowledge and are responsive to its teachings. Some also recommend the development of protocols for cultural site protection that are rooted in traditional values. The specifics of these proposals are beyond the scope of the current document, but such sentiments suggest avenues for future consultation and perhaps future research that involve collaboration between NPS managers, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe representatives and research specialists from these and other institutions.

A Voice as “Host”

Most interviewees spoke of their shared desire to have a greater voice in the messages provided to Wrangell-St. Elias visitors. Traditionally, Yakutat Tlingit *kwáans* were responsible for the education, safety and well-being of visitors to their traditional lands. Yakutat Tlingit are, in their view, still the genuine “hosts” of visitors entering this part of Wrangell-St. Elias, and it is only appropriate that they continue to be presented as such, while providing visitors with orientation to the landscape’s grandeur, history and hazards. Short of getting the land back, or the outright YTT control over park interpretive functions, several interviewees expressed an interest in seeing collaborative interpretive development that would include creating booklets, placename maps, and other media significantly featuring the tribe’s voice and perspective. In this, they suggest that Yakutat Tlingit would provide significant content, but would also have review authority over the use and presentation of that content, even if outside interpretive development specialists participated in the final assembly of interpretive products and the NPS was involved in its delivery. Some pointed to the interpretive development undertaken in Hoonah relative to Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve as a possible model, suggesting even more elaborate interpretive possibilities. NPS development of new visitor center facilities in the Yakutat area are seen as outstanding opportunities for possible collaboration. Some suggest that such venues would allow NPS collaboration with Yak-Tat Kwaan, YTT and the City and Borough of Yakutat, to coordinate interpretive efforts that might meaningfully support the Yakutat economy while accurately portraying Yakutat history and culture. They note that many stories

may be best told within the town of Yakutat, such as the history of the Yakutat Tlingit expulsion of the Russians and its implications. So too, interviewees expressed interests in reviving the cruise ship-based interpretation by Yakutat Tlingit individuals, working with the input and sanction of the YTT. Interpretive media have already been developed for this purpose with significant community involvement, and the material is ready for redeployment by experienced YTT interpreters. Generally, interpretive planning and development might draw inspiration and content from earlier interpretive efforts such as the cruise ship presentations that were developed through a collaborative community process organized within the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe.

Additionally, the NPS might move forward with the planned collaboration on the development of Yakutat *kwáan* histories—an activity that was originally planned to take place concurrent with the present study. These *kwáan* histories, while of intrinsic value to the *kwáans*, might provide an opportunity to introduce a clear and authentic Yakutat Tlingit voice into park interpretive materials. So too, some interviewees noted it might be wise to facilitate a broader study of Yakutat community history from the tribe's perspective—developed either independently, or with technical assistance from outside researchers.

Educational, Economic and Employment Opportunities that are Consistent with Traditional Values and Practices

Many interviewees point out that Yakutat Tlingit are eager to develop educational, economic and employment opportunities for tribal members that are consistent with traditional values and practices. Such opportunities, they note, are sometimes elusive. Yet, Yakutat Tlingit together represent a community with unique knowledge and skills relating to the NPS mission, and the NPS sometimes affords opportunities to participate in activities that are largely compatible with community goals of cultural preservation. Interviewees note that their skills and background might contribute to NPS interpretation, allowing them to tell their stories and share their experiences with park visitors. Others note opportunities for NPS resource management that would allow the integration of Yakutat Tlingit knowledge and the benefit of skills of Yakutat Tlingit resource specialists. Some promote more active NPS efforts to recruit seasonal hires, while there is also an interest in possibilities for permanent employment—especially if the NPS is able to develop a Yakutat visitors' center, or to participate in co-management agreements allowing Yakutat Tlingit employment in park-supported functions while remaining in their home community. As noted elsewhere in this document, there may be potentials for formal NPS collaboration with Yak-Tat Kwaan, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and other tribal organizations on such matters.

Interviewees also noted the enduring importance of mixed subsistence economies in both providing food and cultural continuity to the Yakutat community. By allowing largely unfettered access for resource harvests that are in some manner traditional and not environmentally impactful, they note, the NPS will help the community maintain a healthful balance between economic and cultural needs.

A number of interviewees mentioned educational opportunities that might be afforded via collaborative efforts with the NPS. Certain interviewees, for example, discussed opportunities for the collaborative development of traditional plant use guides for use in schools and other settings, perhaps relating to specific plants, places and modern dietary potentials. Also mentioned were possible collaborations centering on the development of detailed educational materials on the glacial advances and retreats of the Yakutat Bay region, discussing geological history and forces in a way that references, and is respectful of, traditional Yakutat Tlingit narratives regarding these changes, and outlines the many effects on Yakutat settlements and subsistence over time. So too, interviewees expressed interest in developing educational materials on traditional resource use, values, tenure and territoriality on the Wrangell-St. Elias coast. Such materials, interviewees note, might help educate young Yakutat residents and park managers as well as—if properly redacted, with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe input—adapted for the education of park visitors through various interpretive media.

Members of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe often expressed an interest in greater direct control over the management of lands and resources within the territories of the five *kwáans*, beyond options outlined above. Tribal members spoke of their interests in developing a larger, standing cultural program or Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) that might oversee the tribe's efforts specifically relating to cultural and historical interests. In addition, some suggest that tribal members are eager to pursue co-management agreements with the land management agencies in their areas of interest, to give the tribe greater influence over resource management decisions, to reassume their traditional “host” relationship with visitors, and to generate employment and administrative opportunities that will build on existing tribal capacities.

Maintaining Connections with the Land

Finally, Yakutat Tlingit interviewees note they are eager to maintain a foothold on traditional *kwáan* territories. Many interviewees were eager to promote organized visits by the community or portions of it, including visits for subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Also of particular interest is the potential for educational visits for tribal youth—perhaps involving NPS facilitation of Yakutat school groups, as has been done in the recent past. Some propose maintaining cabins or other facilities within Wrangell-St. Elias that would be available to the community (and not just individually held by

families) and that would serve as a foundation for fishing and other subsistence tasks, as well as providing shelter in inclement weather or emergency situations. The development of *kwáan* houses, analogous to those developed at Glacier Bay by the NPS and Huna Tlingit, was mentioned as a possible means of facilitating these goals.

It is clear that the current work has a number of tentative compliance implications not fully addressed here. These could be elaborated upon in later documents. Certain lands seem to warrant management as TCPs, even if eligibility has not yet been demonstrated.¹⁸³ Lands exist that are likely to meet the thresholds of federal law and policy pertaining to sacred places, such as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and Executive Order 13007, which guarantee (among other things) tribal access to those landmarks.¹⁸⁴ There are Alaska Native interests that could reasonably be expected to be “disproportionately affected” by future permitting or other activities within the southern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias in particular, as per the language of Executive Order 12898. And there are implications under ANILCA. For example, the history of motorized vehicle use is likely to allow such activities to be grandfathered in perpetuity under ANILCA provisions. Though it is unlikely Yakutat residents will seek to resuscitate the “traditional use” of tanks and troop carriers in Wrangell-St. Elias, the precedent for motorized vehicle use is clear and sets certain parameters for motorized access into the future. These compliance implications are beyond the scope of the current document, but may deserve additional research, as well as ongoing discussion, within the context of tribal consultation and compliance.

On the basis of all the findings outlined in this document, and in this conclusion, we recommend that NPS staff consider undertaking one or more future studies relating to Yakutat Tlingit interests in Wrangell-St. Elias. The recommendations outlined above make it clear that at least one Traditional Use Study is warranted. As defined in NPS-28, a Traditional Use Study is an ethnographic study that fills the gaps identified in an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, developing materials on traditional practices that might aid in management and interpretation:

“Describing and analyzing traditional resource use and management regimes, this field study will be conducted and periodically updated for all parks having traditional resource users. It fills the data gaps identified by the ethnographic overview and assessment and satisfies requirements of ANILCA, specific legislation for parks in the contiguous 48 states, and global climate change and Man in the Biosphere programs for information on customary uses of cultural and natural resources. Its benefits include the baseline information needed to inform interpretive programs, monitor effects of use on renewable and non-renewable resources, reach culturally informed decisions about appropriate kinds of protection, and assess effects of restricted use on traditional users. Subsistence studies require at least one year of documentary review and intensive fieldwork in

collaboration with members of the involved communities, facility with local languages, residence in the community, ethnographic interviewing, and participant observation” (USDOINPS 1998b).¹⁸⁵

A traditional use study might focus on documenting the cultural significance of landmarks within Wrangell-St. Elias among contemporary Yakutat Tlingit Tribal members in the manner suggested elsewhere in this introduction: assessing migration routes, sacred spaces, placenames and related oral traditions, for example. Such an effort might also further illuminate the management and compliance implications of its findings. A Traditional Use Study might be developed to address these matters with or without recourse to National Register of Historic Places criteria. If National Register objectives were highlighted, the Traditional Use Study might contain a specific assessment of National Register eligibility of places such as migration routes, Icy Bay and Mount St. Elias under Bulletin 38 criteria, and might provide elements contributing to National Register “context statements” as needed. While the proposed effort is envisioned as focusing largely on the southern portions of Wrangell-St. Elias, larger multi-park or multi-agency efforts might be warranted for extensive areas such as migration routes or places associated with Raven story cycles. In some cases, Traditional Use Studies may be used specifically to advance interpretive development, assembling information that may be used within interpretation, as well as establishing processes and protocols for its use. This might be considered as an independent study.

Also, Wrangell-St. Elias and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe might benefit from developing a full Ethnohistory study that provides an overview of the chronology of settlement (and its demise) as well as resource use along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast, while also addressing the coastline more directly in light of the full historical sweep outlined in the “Transitions” section of this document. Like a Traditional Use Study, an Ethnohistory is a standard baseline report within the NPS Ethnography Program and is described as follows:

“Ethnohistory—a methodology for obtaining culture-specific descriptions and conducting analyses within a historical framework—addresses dynamic relationships between parks and traditionally associated groups. The objective is to consider a people's lifeways through time so that continuities and change in land use patterns, family organization, demography, ceremonial life, and other features can be plotted in time and in variable contexts such as changing neighbors, frontiers, or economic, social, and political climates” (USDOINPS 1998b).

In this light, an Ethnohistory may be very useful in sorting out changing patterns of land use and related changes in trade and tribal economies, demographics, social

structure and other variables over time—from the arrival of the first European fur traders to recent times. In such an effort, researchers might be able to present explorer and Russian American Company accounts more fully than has been attempted here, alongside, for example, Russian Orthodox Church and Swedish Covenant Church records, Stimson company records and other accounts. In turn, these sources might be juxtaposed with tribal perspectives and accounts from unpublished literatures, archival materials (especially on Tlingit oral history) and additional interviews with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe members on historical themes.

The studies thus proposed, and other forms of collaborative research, may yet help to illuminate the enduring interests and connections of Yakutat Tlingit and the lands and resources now managed as part of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. However, the recommendations put forward here are just the starting point for discussion. It is only through ongoing communication and consultation between the NPS and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe that the full range of Alaska Native interests might be understood, and the full range of prescriptions realized. Many of the concepts proposed in this conclusion could serve to minimize, or partially mitigate, some of the specific adverse impacts that, according to many Yakutat Tlingit, resulted from park development. In this respect, these suggestions may be of practical use to any future park-planning or permitting activities. However, they are proposed with a broader vision. They might also foster continued Native use of Wrangell-St. Elias, and collaborative relationships between the NPS and Yakutat Tlingit, as well as other Alaska Native villages, for generations to come.

Today, Yakutat Tlingit still highly value lands within Wrangell-St. Elias and share a history and sense of responsibility for these lands. In spite of the many changes since the passage of ANILCA, Wrangell-St. Elias is still widely seen as a homeland, as a place of great natural abundance and as a desirable place to visit. Moreover, there are Yakutat Tlingit who have been eager to share their knowledge, hopes and concerns about Wrangell-St. Elias with members of our research team. That willingness to share extends to NPS staff who might wish to come, to listen to these stories and to help build lasting relationships of mutual trust with Yakutat Tlingit and other traditionally associated Alaska Native communities. Interviewees were often eager for not only government-to-government consultation, but an enduring and less formalized relationship between their community and the NPS. Certainly, Yakutat Tlingit and the National Park Service are here for the long term and will need to continue finding ways to creatively resolve differences and advance mutual opportunities. They have much to discuss. More often than some might expect, they have parallel interests, as they seek to maintain the integrity of Wrangell-St. Elias, “unimpaired for...future generations,” even if there are differing views of what that mission means going forward. It is our sincere hope that this report will help foster the long-term conversation, and sustain enduring positive relationships between the National Park Service and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe.

Sources

INTERVIEWEES

Interviewees Quoted or Paraphrased in the Text

<u>Name</u>	<u>Code</u>
Bert Adams Sr.	BA
Lorraine Adams	LA
Elaine Abraham	EA
Yvonne Baker	YB
James Bremner	JB
Sam Demmert	SD
Victoria Demmert	VD
Lena Farkus	LF
Eli Hanlon	EH
Skip Johnson	SJ
Vincent Johnson*	VJ
Walter Johnson*	WJ
Mary Ann Porter	MP
Judy Ramos	JR
George Ramos Sr.*	GS
Ray Sensmeier	RS
Ted Valle	TV

* Only interviewed informally for the current project; quotations in text from interviews conducted as part of other studies.

NOTES

¹ At the time of this writing, this document can be accessed at:
http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nps28/28chap2.htm

² The Kwáashk'ikwáan and Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan clans are the primary focus of this document, as their traditional territories overlap with portions of Wrangell-St. Elias. However, the three other Yakutat Tlingit clans are mentioned throughout the text, as well, in more general discussions of Tlingit history and migrations in the region.

³ Much of the classical ethnographic literature regarding Tlingit has some value in understanding matters at Yakutat, even if specific references to Yakutat are often parenthetical in many classic accounts (cf. W. Olson 2004; Kan 1999, 1989a; Tollefson 1976; R. Olson 1967; Krause 1956; Oberg 1937). Yet, even from the beginnings of formal ethnographic research on Tlingit, there were certain individuals who sought out specific information on Yakutat culture and history. John Swanton recorded information pertaining to Yakutat during research in Sitka in the beginning of the 20th century, though he apparently did not record information within the Yakutat community (Swanton 1908, 1909). Not long afterwards, George Emmons gathered ethnographic and oral history materials pertaining to Yakutat (Emmons n.d.a., n.d.b., 1907-30) – work that became especially accessible through its later editing and incorporation by de Laguna (Emmons and de Laguna 1991). In 1939 and intermittently thereafter, John Peabody Harrington also recorded Yakutat Tlingit cultural knowledge – significantly linguistic in nature, but also including references to oral traditions relating to the study area (Harrington 1939-57, n.d.). Walter Goldschmidt and Theodore Haas recorded information pertaining to Yakutat during their 1946 fieldwork, especially useful in reviewing land ownership traditions (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946, 1998).

⁴ Nora and Richard Dauenhauer's work on oral traditions, Judy Ramos's work on many themes such as traditional ecological knowledge, and to a lesser degree authors such as report coauthor, Thomas Thornton's work on place-based knowledge and placenames have contributed significantly to the literature on Yakutat Tlingit (e.g., Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987, 1990, 1994; Ramos 2003; Ramos and Mason 2004; Thornton 2008, 2012). Most of these recent studies have produced large collections of archival material that are largely in the researchers' private collections and untapped as of yet for publication. The Sealaska Heritage Institute Archives has been especially proactive at archiving these materials as they become available, especially within the vast Nora and Richard Dauenhauer Oral History Collection. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe also is developing an archive of cultural materials, including some portion of those collected by Judy Ramos in the course of the ongoing Smithsonian Institution research addressing Yakutat Tlingit sealing camps.

⁵ To access these guidelines, consult the websites of these two organizations at <http://www.aaanet.org/> and <http://www.sfaa.net/> respectively.

⁶ It is important to note that the comments made by interviewees and included in this document often reflect their observations and experiences over a long period of time. This provides contextual depth to the current project, as interviewees' personal history of Wrangell-St. Elias

visitation allows them to comment on changes they have witnessed over the course of several decades. With such a time depth of personal observation, however, it is important to note that some interviewees' comments often allude to issues that seem to have been resolved some time ago, such as past debates over access and subsistence use shortly after the passage of ANILCA in 1980. Yet, the fact that these issues emerge in contemporary interviews may still be of interest to the park and others, as such interviewee comments sometimes reflect enduring perceptions of the park and the National Park Service that arguably still influence Tlingit relationships with the park. Some of these comments point toward opportunities for clarification in future park-tribe communications and thus are included in qualified form within the pages that follow.

⁷ Some stories concerning Raven in mythic time – related to clan histories and events beyond these histories – continue to be retold by Tlingit people all over southeast Alaska.

⁸ Due to the spiritual relationships between Tlingit and the landscape, Tlingit sometimes attribute changes in the landscape – such as surging glaciers – to a lack of respect demonstrated toward the spirits of the beings acknowledged to inhabit the landscape (JR).

⁹ De Laguna describes a couple of groups that, according to oral tradition, once occupied the Yakutat area, before selling their lands to later inhabitants of the Bay and surrounding lands:

“The original inhabitants of the Yakutat area have been called "Aleuts," and one informant reported that the immigrants from the Copper River purchased their lands from them. According to others, the group that sold their territories to the Copper River Indians were the Koskedi (Ravens), the HInyedi (Ravens), or YEnyedi (Eagles). Other names applied more specifically to the original occupants of the lowlands east of Yakutat Bay are the Łuxedi (Eagles), who may or may not be the same as the TłaxayIk-Teqwedi, and the StaxAdi (Ravens).

...One very well-informed Kwackqwan man said that his people, on coming from the Copper River, purchased their lands at Yakutat from the Raven HInyedi. After selling their territories, these people emigrated to southeastern Alaska; most are believed to live near Ketchikan, but there are a few in Juneau.

...The Koskedi (Ravens) were among the names given by two Kwackqwan informants to designate the original inhabitants of the Yakutat area. According to their version of the tradition, these people sold their land to the immigrants from the Copper River (the Kwackqwan), and then moved to southeastern Alaska, being now found at Sitka” (de Laguna 1972:220).

¹⁰ De Laguna summarizes the migration of groups into Yakutat thusly:

“In the Dry Bay area, the TłukwaxAdi and the Koskedi(?) were the original Athabaskan occupants; the other sibs are Tlingit from southeastern Alaska. The original residents of the Yakutat area were evidently Eyak-speakers. From southeastern Alaska, via Dry Bay, came the later residents, except for the

K^wackqwan who were Atna Athabaskans from the Copper River, and the ǴałyIx-Kagwantan who were Eyak-speakers of the western Gulf Coast” (de Laguna 1972:18-19).

Maggie Harry, one of de Laguna’s informants from her research in the late 1940s and early 1950s, relays the oral history of the migration of tribes from Copper River into the Yakutat region:

“We came from Copper River, like Moses going out of Egypt.

Four brothers fought over an ivory dish, called tśAnduk. Hundreds of different stones were made on it. So we split in four. Gudíłta’ was the king at Copper River. The others left the town to die. GAnexqwan [GInexqwan] was the tribe left at Copper River.

We were the family that first went on top of Mount Saint Elias. That’s our flag [crest]. One tribe was lost when it was foggy, so came to Kaliak River and became the ǴałyIx-Kagwantan.

Our tribe thought they saw a seagull far off when they first saw Mount Saint Elias. Every day it is getting higher. Generations grew and died in the wilderness.

They found the Teqwedi in Icy Bay. Aleuts, Go’ex, were here at Yakutat. They sure were mean!

All of the four tribes finally met again at Copper River and made a village at the mouth. The GInexqwan still remembered us.

Three hundred years ago there were no trees at Yakutat—just strawberries. Our clan bought the land from the Kuskedi” (quoted in de Laguna 1972:236).

“Under Mount Saint Elias” (de Laguna 1972) contains numerous renditions of elders relaying the migration of groups from the Copper River area to Yakutat. See de Laguna 1972:231-242 for a more complete treatment of migration stories such as the one above.

¹¹ De Laguna later provides a more detailed description of the different migrations of groups into the Yakutat area:

“The K^wackqwan are named for the Humpback Salmon Creek on the east side of Yakutat Bay. The name for the stream, k^wack, is simply the Eyak word for humpback salmon, whereas the Tlingit word is tcaś. This Raven sib traces its origin to Chitina on the Copper River, which they left following a dispute over the inheritance of a dead chief’s property. The original group was called GInexqwan or GInExqwan after the Bremner River, or ŁdaxEnqwan or Łtahninqwan after the Tana River. At the time of their emigration they spoke the Copper River language, i.e., Atna Athabaskan, and some songs in this language are still preserved at Yakutat, and some personal names are Atna words. Part of

the emigrants became separated from the others and became the Eyak ƆanAxtedi. The rest of the group traveled overland, past Mount Saint Elias, which they therefore claim as a crest, and at Icy Bay married a group of Ɔalyix-Kagwantan. They later crossed Yakutat Bay and eventually obtained possession of that area, including the stream from which their present name is derived, through purchase from the original inhabitants” (de Laguna 1972:223).

¹² The moieties were, in some cases, already attached to groups prior to their arrival in Yakutat:

“According to tradition, the K^wackqwan were already Ravens before they left the Copper River, yet the incident of how "brothers" and "sisters" married each other (or were saved from sib incest in the nick of time), suggests that the immigrants were actually a mixed or incompletely structured group at that time. What is significant here is not the historical accuracy of the tradition so much as the way it illustrates the overriding tendency for the Tlingit and the foreigners they have assimilated to read all history in terms of sibs” (de Laguna 1972:451).

¹³ As de Laguna writes, the “Yakutat Bay people” are:

“[T]hose on the coastal plain from the Italo River, 25 miles to the southeast. Their territory also embraced Icy Bay and its western shore, some 65 miles west of Yakutat. This area, as we shall see, once had an autochthonous population, originally Eyak or perhaps Dry Bay Athabaskan, but in prehistoric times submerged by Eyak from the coast to the westward mixed with a migration of Atna Athabaskans from the middle Copper River. Later, it became Tlingit because of the migrations from southeastern Alaska and the Dry Bay area” (de Laguna 1972:18).

¹⁴ As Krause noted,

“In more recent times the Yakutat seem to have pushed westward along the coast or they have intermingled with the Ugalent or Ugalakmut with whom, according to Wrangell and Veniaminof, they are closely related both by marriage and blood. Petroff and Jacobsen met Tlingit at the mouth of Copper River. According to oral information... there are [near the mouth of the Copper River] the villages of Tschilkat (Chilkat) and Allaganak (Alaghanik on the maps of Holmberg) which are inhabited by Tlingit who are subject to the chiefs of Yakutat Bay and who return there generally in the winter” (Krause 1956: 65-66).

¹⁵ Traditional songs are one of the venues where migration stories are recounted:

“Other traditional songs with Atna words are connected with the migration of the GInexqwan from Copper River to Yakutat, but were not recorded. One is a mourning song, supposedly composed by a woman who stayed behind at Icy Bay when some of the GInexqwan began to regret that they had left Chitina and went back again. The mountain was so steep that they had to walk in zigzags up the snow. The woman who was left behind was so sad that she was weeping and composed this song. It is not known whether the others ever reached Chitina” (de Laguna 1972:1157).

The third volume of de Laguna’s 1972 book, “Under Mount Saint Elias,” contains a collection of Yakutat Tlingit songs that cover a variety of topics, including certain landmarks, hunting trips, averted wars with other Alaska Native groups, etc.

¹⁶ The man who killed his sleep is also a hero to the L’uknax.ádi (Raven) clan (see Swanton 1909:154–65). The L’uknax.ádi may have been, originally, the Athabaskan who returned from the interior to Glacier Bay with Kaakeix’wtí. It is said that the Kaagwaantaan were the wives of the L’uknax.ádi (161) and vice versa. They lived together at Glacier Bay and later at Sitka. The L’uknax.ádi, too, gained wealth through favorable trade with the interior Athabaskans, including native copper through the Copper River trade corridor. According to oral tradition (documented by Swanton 1909), sometime after Kaakeix’wtí hosted the Athabaskans, the L’uknax.ádi travelled to the mouth of the Copper River (*Eekhéení*), where they established a village, *Kus’eixka*. Swanton’s consultant, Kadashan, notes: “All along where they went they gave names. A certain creek was called [*Nagukhéen* (Rolling Water, at Cape Spencer)], and they came to a lake which they named [*Ltu.áa* (Inside the Point Lake, Lituya Bay)]” (Swanton 1990:160). Also named were the two tallest mountains of northern Southeast Alaska: Mount Fairweather (*Tsalxaan*, “Land of the Ground Squirrels”) and Mount St. Elias (*Waa’eit’ashaa*, “Mountain Inland of *Waas’ei Yik*” [known in English as Icy Bay]). The L’uknax.ádi, eventually settled in Dry Bay at the famous village of *Gus’eix*, where the first Sleep House was built and named in commemoration of these events stemming from the wanderings of Kaakeix’wtí, the man who killed his sleep.

¹⁷ Ted Valle also describes how the Galyáx Kaagwaantaan found copper at Kaliakh River:

“When my people were [at] Kaliakh, they were going toward Bering River and they were walking along the field there, up kind of ahead of Kaliakh River, there’s a mountain there that we claim as a crest. And we call it [*Ch’awáax’*, Kultheith, or Robin Mountain]. And when they were walking in the field there, they were going exploring toward Bering at that time. This head man and this woman and I don’t know who else. The woman noticed that there was patches of green...kind of green on their shield. And she thought, ‘Something’s causing it to be green like that.’ So she told the man, ‘Why don’t you dig some up to see what’s causing that green water?’ So they dug some up and there were copper nuggets, but they were oxidized, green. And so they dug some up and then they said, ‘We’re going to camp here for overnight.’ So they put around where they were going to make a fire and they made a fire. When they woke up in the

morning, the rocks were no longer laying there. They also discovered copper so they knew it was metal. Then they started heating it and see if they could make things of it. So, and the large nuggets that they found, they pounded flat... This was before that they found that beaver and built that village there [referring to Beaver House on the Bering River]" (TV).

¹⁸ Bremner's narrative is included here, as recorded and annotated by de Laguna. According to Harry Bremner (1952):

"My people, the Kwáashk'ikwáan, were Copper River people at Chitina, Chitina. Lots of things happened before we left. The real name for our tribe [sib] then was Ginéix Kwáan. Ginéix is the name for the Big Bremner River [Likely the Little Bremner according to our informants and de Laguna note 69, p. 101] across from Chitina. There is also a Little Bremner River below Chitina. They were named for my step-grandfather, John Bremner.

Before we came to Yakutat we used to have war with the McCarthy Indians. They were a part of us, but we at Chitina were small; they were great big people, all giants. They didn't like us, and we didn't like them. The trouble was over hunting grounds, I think.

We stayed at Chitina. The Raven chief...died. He had lots of property. Everything belonged to the whole tribe. Long before he died, he killed a giant moose. He used the horn for a big dish, every time he gave a potlatch. When they divided the property among the tribe, there was trouble over that dish. The brothers— all the men in the tribe called themselves "brothers"— had trouble over that dish, but there was no killing. They lived in a long town, with rows of houses. One group didn't get the dish; the other group did. The group that didn't get the dish got sore. So they left, walking on the glacier.

The people who started out from Chitina got lost. It is foggy between Icy Bay and Chitina. One part of the bunch started going one way and the others went the other way. They hollered back and forth to each other: "wuhu! wiiiii! wuhu! wuhu!" That's the way they called to each other, but they kept getting further and further apart. Then one bunch came out on the mouth of the Copper River. They had no name then, until a big shot, Xatgawet, from southeastern Alaska, came up and called them the Gaanaxteidi. They stayed first at a place called SAxwdaq. That word means 'cockles' in the Copper River language. Some of them stayed at Eyak Lake near Cordova. Pretty soon they moved to Katalla, and then moved again to Chilkat on Bering River. Long afterwards we Kwáashk'ikwáan met them again, when we travelled up in canoes to Eyak and Katalla and found our brothers again. The Copper River people came to meet us and that's where we get to meet again.

(Way later on, when we met them again, they had a chief of the same name as the chief who died. The last one of that name died over 100 years ago. We met them at the mouth of the Copper River afterward, every summer. We went in canoes to Alaganik, 'AnAxAnAq, or sometimes to Eyak [Anaxanáq, #1; see Map 5]. The Chitina people didn't own Alaganik, but they came to meet us.

They would bring down furs, and coppers, chewing gum from interior spruce, and sell it to us” (August 28, 1952).

“...Our people kept walking over the glacier. There was only ice, no bushes, nothing. They started southeast. They had nothing to eat. There was starvation on the glacier. It was a long way for us to walk.

Then the people thought they saw a wolverine. They used it for a compass and walked towards it. When they came to it they saw it was a little mountain, an island with trees on it, just a little hill. They had a campfire but nothing to eat. That night a wolverine came to their fire. The hungry people killed him and ate him. They cut him up into little pieces to feed all the people. Then they walked on again.

Pretty soon they saw a rabbit sitting on the snow, far away. They walked towards the rabbit. After two days walking they saw it was the top of a mountain, but they kept on walking anyway. Finally they came to Mount Saint Elias. It was a compass for the people so they wouldn't get lost.

Then they found that bay, Icy Bay, Watse [yase] [Was'ei, #45; see Map 5]. The glacier was all over the bay, way out. They made a camp just west of the place where the bay is now— not houses — just a camp of yellow cedar bark. The camp is Watse dAx [yase dA#?] [Was'ei (Yas'ei) Dak. Behind Icy Bay, #49; see Map 5], 'in the bay,' and the camping place was Taay'ani, 'place [town] of the yellow cedar bark [taay]' [Teey Aani, #39; see Map 5]. That was what the people used to use for the roof of houses. When they travelled, they used to pack it along, just like a tent.

They were just lucky and they found the Kagwantan [Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan]. The next day seal hunters brought back the report that they found blood on the ice where someone was skinning seals. They reported to the chief and the chief asked his braves who was going to look for those people. 'Me, I'm going to go!'

'Me, I'm going to go!' the young men said.

So they went to look for those people. They found Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan. They had come from Galyáx [Kaliakh River] before us. They found the land before us. They had the land from Strawberry Point to Gùts'áxw [Muddy Water, from Eyak, #37, White River; see Map 5], a big valley west of Icy Bay. That's why we had to come east by an inland route and why we went east, because they already had the land to the westward. Icy Bay is ours. The Galyix-Kagwantan had big war canoes when we met them, but we had nothing. They spoke Tlingit, we spoke Chitina language. They were called Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan, but after they moved to Yakutat they were called Tlaxaayík-Teikweidí.”

¹⁹ Lena Farkus also describes the conflict that caused the Ravens to leave Chitina and settle in Icy Bay:

“And anyway, the chief of—I'll refer to chief, that's what everybody is, actually up here, it was—they were always referred to as the 'Leader of the Clan.' And he

passed away without saying which one of his brothers was going to take his place. Usually it's the grandparents, they watch the children as they grow up, which one will be good at hunting, which one looked like they'd be wise and make decisions in the right way. Just by their actions, they watch them and as they grow up. The same with the girls. And so they taught the parents, 'This one will probably be a good hunter. This one might be a good Leader or a medicine man.' And so that's what they pushed them toward being and learning these things. But our leader in Copper River passed away and he had some brothers and did not say which one would take his place.

"When you're a leader, all of your stuff goes to the person that he picks as the next leader which includes regalia, your dance shirts and just different, maybe a chain, a platter and stuff like that, and their dancing regalia or hunting or warring like sort of thing. And so he didn't. And there was this big giant moose antler and someone made a big platter and had some abalone shells...inlaid around it and some different kinds of stones and stuff. Well, this one, one brother really wanted, thought that he would be the one to take his place but it didn't happen and the leader was already gone and they were kind of having problems over it.

"Anyway, he decided, 'well, I'm leaving.' I'm not going to live here. I'm going. So some of his family members and some of the Ginéix Kwáan said, 'I'll go with you'" (LF).

Victoria Demmert adds to Sensmeier's description of the quarrel, which led to the Ravens leaving Chitina:

"On my grandmother's side is we were originally started up in Athabaskan country, we're Athabaskan and we had up around Chitina and we had a disagreement among the, in the tribe after the chief died, over who was going to be the next chief between the two brothers and who would own the Big Chief's bowl which was made out of big moose antler that they said had abalone decoration" (VD).

²⁰ Farkus continues her story of the migration:

"And one day he went out hunting with his brother and he—you know how there's ground fog when it's cold up by the mountains? Well he thought he saw a bear and you know a long time ago our people used to use animal fur for clothing. And so he took the rifle...It's kind of a, some say it was one of those spears, long spears, took it out from his sled and I thought he hit a bear but it was his brother and he killed him. And when he came walking back pulling the sled, he composed a song, 'I killed my own Brother.' And they forgave him. He told them why it happened. And they went on and kept moving" (LF).

²¹ When asked how long she thought the *Ginéix Kwáan* stayed in the Bagley Ice Field, Elaine Abraham estimated ten years:

“But the way...Harry Bremner talked, I would say they spent five, ten years just going back and forth. ...They were able to just walk. ... They were able to protect their people from strange people in a strange land. And they watched how the people lived. I would say they might have been there ten years” (EA).

Elaine Abraham notes that life at Bagley Glacier was still strenuous:

“They left their families there and then they went to look at the land all the way down to the Icy Bay area. Icy Bay is very important to our people. That’s part of our—first place that we lived along with Bagley Glacier. So, we moved to that area and they struggled. And to think they then sent out and begin to populate and claim land. ... [T]hey were Interior people so they were not familiar with the glaciers, they were not familiar with the land, they were not familiar with mountains and by the time they were living in from Bagley to Icy Bay, they were beginning to have a spiritual relationship with their surroundings. Instead of being afraid of the other glacier and all the other glaciers that extend to Canada and the mountains they became part of that environment spiritually. And they were blessed and guided by the mountains and the land that’s why it’s a sacred land. But that’s how they settled at what is now called national park” (EA).

²² Judy Ramos remembers her grandmother telling how the *Ginéix Kwáan* arrived at Icy Bay:

“[E]verything was new and different, including the availability of seal skins...The Tlingit people looked down at it because it was kind of—for poor people. ...[T]he Tlingits like, you know, the Athabaskan moose hide but these new other people like the seal skin. So I thought that was kind of interesting that they came down to this coast new environment and everything was new and exciting...people and things like that” (JR).

²³ Ray Sensmeier notes that there was an ice cave, which the *Kwáashk’ikwáan* utilized to go between either the Bagley Ice Field and Icy Bay or between Icy Bay and Yakutat Bay, as they moved down the coast:

“When they came to that part they found a large cave with water flowing through it. And they wanted to enter it and see where it came out so they wouldn’t have to go all the way around. They didn’t have canoes that they get there. And the three eldest women, because their lives were almost over, volunteered to go into that ice cave. And they were gone, and I don’t know how long afterwards, was on the other side they saw smoke coming up. So they knew

they had made it. So the rest of the Kwáashk'ikwáan took the same route and came out on this side where the glacier didn't cover a lot of these places" (RS).

²⁴ Lena Farkus describes how the Kwáashk'i kwáan became concerned about procreation and the future of their clan:

"They came to a spot where they realized, 'You know, we're all Ravens. There's no Eagle [opposite moiety to marry]. How are we going to marry and start a family?' It's a Tlingit law. You don't marry the same clan. That's how they kept track of each other. And so they said, 'Well, we're just going to have to—somehow or another start a family. Maybe just have a relationship with one of our own people after dark time so we don't know who it is.' And you know, it just went on like that. And so once they decided, they looked out and there was two boats coming into shore and that was the Jeeshkweidí and Kaagwaantaan...from Katalla. Those were Eagles. So they visited with them and I imagine it was talked about that there was no Eagles among them and some of them stayed and intermarried with them because they were Eagle" (LF).

Harry Bremner and another of de Laguna's informants, known as X, also discussed the fear of the clan dying out because of a lack of viable options for procreation. According to Bremner, as quoted by de Laguna:

"The chief said: 'We will be the lost tribe.' He meant that they had no husbands and wives with them. They were only the men and their 'sisters,' the women of their own tribe. They never married their sisters. This meant that there wouldn't be any children and the tribe would die off.

Then they had something like these soldiers' barracks— a woman's hut and a man's hut. The chief called a meeting. They decided that all the brothers would go to their sisters' hut at night time when it is dark and sleep with their sisters. But the women were never going to ask who he is that came, just put a red mark on the man's forehead, at the center near the hair, for a mark. So they will know the next day, but they won't say anything.

The Icy Bay chief was planning this. He said: 'You sisters are not going to refuse any brother that comes to you, or we'll all die off.'

But they didn't have to do it" (HB).

De Laguna's informant, X, of the same sib as Bremner, reported similarly on May 2, 1954:

"You know the chief said: 'We're all going to die out.' X said the chief said to his tribe, 'We're going to meet our sisters,' and they told the sisters to put marks on the men. But they found the other tribe [i.e., *Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan*, before this was necessary]. But X says it happened. And one girl really slept with her own brother. And next day she find out. She is so ashamed she went in the water and

he went in the water. They turn into sea bird. [The last belongs to myth, he said, not to history]" (annotations by de Laguna).

²⁵ A third clan, the Jeeshkweidí, (Eagle) clan, was associated with the villages of Chilkat [Jilkáat, "Cache" from Eyak, #19; see Map 5] and Katalla [Kaataanaa, from Eyak, #15; see Map 5], above Cape Suckling. According to de Laguna, they were thought to be originally from Chitina, and are children of the Ganaaxteidi clan, who gave them land in the vicinity of Copper River, which was rich in furs, so rich in fact that the Ganaaxteidi took some of it back (presumably the areas closet to Copper River; see de Laguna 1972:254). Another of de Laguna's informants linked them to the Galyáx Kaagwaantaan, however:

"Some other tribe (was) mixed in with the (Kwaashk'ikwáan) people walking this way, and came here with them. (They were) people from Galyáx that moved over, moved away from their tribe that went up to Djilqat (Chilkat on Bering River). They separated from the main tribe, Galyáx Kaagwaantaan. They gave another name for themselves after they separated from their main tribe. Part of George Johnson's [The last of the Jeeshkweidí] tribe, that's them that come down this way – Tcicqedi [Jeeshkweidi]" (1972: 239).

Jeeshkweidí claimed the territory west of Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan "From Strawberry Point to Copper River" (1972:104). Their main villages were at: K'aagan Heenak'u ("Stickleback Creek," #2; see Map 5), at the mouth of the Copper River; (Gixdaklak, "Behind Gixdak," #7; see Map 5) at Cape Martin; K'ixóoliyaa ("Teeth," from Eyak, K'uxu:liyah, #8; see Map 5) on Salmon River; Ts'a'di · q' ? ("On the Place of [Frequently Absent?] Mud Flats" [from Eyak, Ts'a'di:q, #4; see Map 5]), a camp on Martin River; Katalla [Kaataanaa, #5; see Map 5]; Chilkat [Jilkáat, #19; see Map 5] on Bering River; Bering Lake [Kaasheishxáaw Áa, "Dragonfly Lake," #16; see Map 5]; Cordova [Xaat Áa Duls'el' Yé, "Where They Dig Spruce Roots," #5; see Map 5] (Eagle House); and spring and fall hunting camps at Wingham Island [Thaatt'aaát*, "Small Kayak," from Eyak or Athabaskan, #13; see Map 5] and Martin River (see also Ramos 2003). Although Wingham Island was claimed by Jeeshkweidi it is also said that "it belonged to the Galyáx Kaagwaantaan who used to come there in spring for seals, halibut, cod and black seaweed" (De Laguna 1972: 103). No Jeeshkweidi clan members were interviewed for this project, however. Nor did we attempt to document territorial associations west of Controller Bay, which are historically associated with Cordova groups, such as the Eyak Gaanax.ádi (Raven), who claimed Copper River (Eek Héeni, Copper River, #9; see Map 5), including Cordova and Alaganik [#1; see Map 5] (Krauss 1982; De Laguna 1972) and were said to been part of the original Ahtna group that migrated from Chitina and got lost in the fog. Thus, rather than migrating toward Mount St. Elias, like the Kwash, they ended up at Softuk Lagoon (Saaxw T'aak derived from the Eyak for "Behind the Cockles", #6; see Map 5) and Eyak Lake; their village near Cordova was known as Iyak, evidently a Chugach/Alutiiq placename, from which the name "Eyak" is derived. Alaganik Village, their other main settlement was also derived from an Alutiiq word, alaraanq, meaning "mistake," and became Eyak-ized as Anaxanáq, meaning "Mistake or Wrong Turn" (#1; see Map 5).

²⁶ In terms of subsistence locales, through trade arrangements and inter-clan marriages, clans gained access to each other's resources.

²⁷ George Ramos Sr. summarizes the "tribes" on the north shore in this way:

"going this way is the Gineix Kwaan or the other name is the Kwashkakwaan. And the northern area, Galyak Kaagwaantaan...The Five Tribes...were the land owners in the Yakutat area. And each has his own history...our villages were spread along these rivers that were of the Five Tribes" (GR).

De Laguna provides her summary of the lands around Yakutat Bay and which groups claim them, saying,

"All of Yakutat Bay and the adjacent lands are claimed by the Kwackqwan, who trace their origin to the Copper River. The west side of the bay, and indeed all of the shores as far west as to include Icy Bay, was theirs apparently by right of settlement. The eastern shores were purchased from the original owners. However, the Kwackqwan Ravens were accompanied to Yakutat by the Wolf ÇalyIx- Kagwantan, with whom they had intermarried at Icy Bay. These latter (or a closely related Yakutat branch of the same sib) were known as the TłaxayIk-Teqwedi (perhaps after they had settled on Yakutat Bay). While some settlements seem to have belonged predominantly to the last sib, or at least to have had a man of that sib as their most distinguished house chief, control of Yakutat Bay for hunting, fishing, and gathering was in the hands of the leading Kwackqwan chief" (de Laguna 1972:59).

Later, de Laguna says of the Galyax-Kaagwaantaan:

"The ÇalyIx-Kagwantan (or ÇalyAx -Kagwantan) are an Eagle sib, once very large, which claims territorial rights from Strawberry Point in Controller Bay to Williams Creek west of Icy Bay. The first part of their name refers to their principal village, ÇaliyAx or ÇalyAx, which was formerly at the mouth of the Kaliakh River. They were also one of the groups named by Xatgawet, who married their chief's daughter and called his father-in-law's people 'Kagwantan' after the famous sib at Chilkat and Sitka and Hoonah. These people, together with their Kwackqwan or Eyak Raven wives, make up the tribal group called 'Guth-le- uk-qwan' by Emmons.

... The ÇalyIx-Kagwantan are associated with the history of Yakutat proper, for the Raven emigrants (GInex-qwan or Kwackqwan) from the Copper River encountered at Icy Bay a group of ÇalyIx -Kagwantan who had moved east after a quarrel with their kinsmen. These people were traveling in big skin or wooden canoes. They intermarried with the Copper River Ravens, and moved with them across Yakutat Bay, when, according to some, they became known as the TłaxayIk-Teqwedi...The ÇalyIx -Kagwantan claim to have found the wreck

of a Russian ship (on the coast west of Icy Bay?), the first Russian ship seen, and one of their number married a Russian woman, the sole survivor” (de Laguna 1972:219-220).

²⁸ De Laguna reports on the importance of these exogamous kin groups, saying,

“From Italio to Icy Bay was Yakutat territory proper...in the Copper River delta country lived the Eyak. However, to designate these groups as ‘tribes’ and the areas they utilized as ‘tribal territories’ would not reflect either the actual situation or native thought. Thus, while the ‘inhabitants’ of each geographical district were to some extent united by feelings of local pride, local sociability, and ties of affinity, they still did not constitute a tribe in the sense of a politically organized and autonomous group. Rather, a sense of community identity definitely took second place to the ‘patriotism’ felt by the members of each sib for their own matrilineal exogamous kin group” (de Laguna 1972:212).

²⁹ The Beaver Clan is named after the Beaver House. “That’s where their history starts, the Galyáx Kaagwaantaan history,” notes Elaine Abraham, speaking of the Beaver House on the Sha haat on Bering River. Ted Valle expands upon the origin of the Beaver House on the Bering River, saying,

“They went up there and that’s where they encountered a washed out beaver dam. And there was a little beaver on a log, crying and singing. And so they got our mourning song from this beaver. ...And this man went up and got the beaver and saved it. So that was where we built our first House and we called it the Beaver House. ...Up there in Sha haat] on the Bering. We were one clan. ...An Eagle Clan” (TV).

Skip Johnson also comments about the origins of the Beaver Clan, saying,

“[T]here used to be a big glacier right up in there and that was the old story and I’m sure Uncle Teddy [Ted Valle] told you the story about the little seal—I mean the little beaver. That’s why our clan is the Beaver Clan: S’igeidí Hít [Beaver House]” (SJ).

Regarding the sacred mountain found on the regalia of the Galyáx Kaagwaantaan Beaver Clan (Ch’awáax’), Ted Valle says,

“I don’t know. I think it might be an Eyak name. ...It’s part of our crest. ...The last time I saw it was on one of my cousins and I don’t know what happened to his regalia, but that’s where I saw it” (TV).

Both Kulthieth Mountain and the beaver became crests, or *at.óow*, for the clan—the mountain for its role as a landmark and refuge for the clan from the Flood, and the beaver for its mournful song. De Laguna (1972:456) suggests that little is known about the symbolism of the mountain design. Yet the mountain is be considered a sacred property of this clan. There are apparently also songs associated with these events, including the mourning song inspired by the beaver.

³⁰ In addition to animals and places, other physical elements—such as the moon—can be used as names on the crests:

“Kuwakan names are said to be derived from some crest or valued possession belonging to the donors, or may symbolize something suggestive of good will, even though the association may seem to us rather farfetched. Thus, the Kwáckqwan have used as sources of names their crests, the Moon (dIs kuwakan), the White Raven (yeł tled; p. 457), as well as Mount Saint Elias (ca kuwakan) and Glacier Point below it (sIt' xa kuwakan)” (de Laguna 1972:599).

³¹ De Laguna furthers explains:

“Mountain House (ca hIt), named for Mount Saint Elias, a crest of the Kwáckqwan, was said to have been built by three men. The first was known as QAqwl-'ic; the second was Yakutat Charley, S'isdjAkw-'ic or WAtsdAł (1862-1920), who married the widow of the first, SIqawUłqEn, a Kagwantan woman. The third was Shorty, Nanut or Txak-'ic. They were assisted by Mrs. Sitka Ned, 'Atkwe, Kwáckqwan daughter of Ca-kuwakan of Bear House on Khantaak Island. Mrs. Sitka Ned (died 1926) inherited the house. It was sold to a White man for a store, and finally burned down” (de Laguna 1972:323).

³² Some personal names, as well, also can reflect the geology of the landscape:

“A few names are derived from geographical features of particular significance in the history of the sib. Thus, a Kwáckqwan woman has the name 'On Its Surface All Died,' referring to those who perished on Mount Saint Elias during the journey from the Copper River country. A Tł'UknaxAdi man, who may have been given the name from his Kwáckqwan grandfather was called ŁtahĪn, or ŁdaxĒn as it was usually pronounced. This is the Tlingit form for the Atna name for the Tana River, which also figured in the journey. The Atna name is Łłá'-nà, 'Point-of-land River.' One man said that the Kwáckqwan man's name, Cada, meant 'Around the Mountain,' referring to Mount Saint Elias, although others said it was Russian” (de Laguna 1972b:789).

³³ De Laguna discusses the crest shirts that were common among Yakutat Tlingit and their value in the cash economy of the twentieth century:

“A Mount Saint Elias coat acquired by a private collector in 1946, and now in the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, is of cloth ornamented with buttons and beads that form floral designs on the cuffs and hem and has the conventionalized figure of the cloud-ringed mountain in the middle. This was a crest of the Kwáckqwan, and the coat was probably worn by a man.

In addition, there was a sleeveless cloth shirt with beadwork outlining the mountain, within which is a squatting figure with enormous head (the spirit of the mountain?) and various faces. This was named as the Mount Saint Elias ‘Blanket’ (yaše ʔa ca xu), even though it is a shirt, perhaps because it replaced a blanket of that name” (1972:440).

Crest blankets also played a role in Yakutat Tlingit life, including into the post-contact period:

“A modern crest blanket, representing Mount Saint Elias, is a fine white Hudson's Bay four point blanket, on which the mountain with a face inside the peaked outline and clouds about the summit, four moonlike faces below, two Humpback Salmon, and a doubleheaded monster (the mouth of the Humpback Salmon Stream?), are all outlined in colored machine stitching. It belonged to Young George, Kwáckqwan, who drowned in 1915” (1972:442).

³⁴ According to the City and Borough of Yakutat Comprehensive Plan:

“Tlingits living together in a geographic area are known as kwaan. The 2003 TEK report listed the ‘tribal’ territory or kwaan boundaries from Controller Bay to Lituya Bay” (CBY 2010:23).

³⁵ Galyáx Kwáan in the north extended from Cape Suckling to Controller Bay, and took its name from the Kaliakh (Galyax) River (Emmons n.d.; de Laguna 1972, 98). Galyáx people were originally Eyak speakers, but as a result of intermarriage and the expansion of Tlingit culture, most Natives residing in the area spoke both languages well into the twentieth century (de Laguna 1972, 99). Two contemporary Yakutat Tlingit matrilineal clans identify with places within this region, the Kwáashk'i Kwaan (Raven), who claimed from Icy Bay down to Yakutat Bay, and the Galyax-Kaagwaantaan (Eagle), who claimed from west of Icy Bay to Strawberry Point. Their relationships to these lands through migration and settlement are discussed in detail below.

³⁶ De Laguna differentiates the different Eyak groups thusly:

“*The Eyak-speaking people of the coast* [occupied the area] just west of Icy Bay to Cape Martin at the eastern edge of the Copper River delta. Their main settlements seem to have been at Cape Yakataga, Kaliakh River, and Bering River in Controller Bay. In the 18th century, however, Controller Bay was claimed and

was certainly frequented by a branch of the Chugach Eskimo of Prince William Sound. The Chugach were apparently intruders into Controller Bay and its islands, but when they first began to occupy it, and whether they ever established more than seasonal hunting camps, we do not know. At any event, they were driven back at the end of the 18th century by the Tlingitized Eyak from farther east.

“*The Eyak of the Copper River delta and of Cordova just within Prince William Sound* (Birket-Smith and de Laguna, 1938).

“No pronounced differences distinguished the last from their Indian neighbors at Cape Martin, although there was a sharp linguistic and a somewhat less clearly marked cultural boundary between the Eyak and the Chugach. The Copper River Eyak (or the handful who live or lived until recently at Cordova) appeared more distinct when Dr. Birket-Smith and I studied them in 1933 than they would have even in 1900, largely because of the depopulation of the coast east of them, and also because they preserved into the present century the Eyak language once spoken along the coast as far as the Ahrnklin or Itatio Rivers beyond Yakutat Bay. However, the intrusion of the Eskimo into Controller Bay as well as difficulties of communication may explain why there were two dialects of Eyak: ‘Ugalentz’ (Copper River Eyak-proper) and Yakutat” (de Laguna 1972:18-19).

³⁷ The Tlingit *gudiyé*, a specialized seal hunting canoe first developed for use among the ice floes of Icy Bay by its Eyak and Tlingit inhabitants is an example of such a material “genre” of place. These nimble craft were built with a heavy prow and equipped with a special wooden protuberance off the bow designed to quietly push aside floating glacial icebergs as hunters moved into the bay to stalk their prey. The canoes were so well adapted to the ice-filled bays of the Gulf of Alaska that their inventors reportedly kept them hidden in a secret lake called *Ligaas.áa*, “Tabooed Lake,” above Icy Bay (de Laguna 1972, 1:97), near the sources of cottonwood which were used to produce them. Protected and celebrated, these marvels of marine technology seem to have attained the status of *at.óow* for their Yakutat possessors. Yet, in Glacier Bay, just one hundred miles to the south, Huna Tlingits developed a very different but equally adaptive technological genre of place to aid in seal hunting in this larger, less ice-choked bay: glacier-white camouflage clothing and outriggered white blinders for canoes (Harriman 1899; see Emmons 1991). Here, visual cover, as opposed to auditory cover or tight manoeuvrability, was critical to successful sealing, and so the processes of landscape enculturation differed. In each locale, the respective genres of canoe technology became not only successful adaptations but also means of engaging places as “tasksapes” (meaning “array[s] of related activities”) in the “poetics of dwelling,” (Ingold 2000) and as treasured possessions, emblems of identity, and ways of being Icy Bay or Glacier Bay Tlingits.

³⁸ De Laguna explains,

“According to Yakutat tradition, much Tlingit influence, probably including potlatch ceremonial and crests, was spread westward by *xatga’wê’t*, a wealthy Tlingit chief and shaman of the *te’qwe’dí* (a Wolf clan), who was born near Dry

Bay in the eighteenth century. He is said to have ‘organized’ for trade the backward Eyak speakers of Yakutat, among whom he settled, but he also traveled all over, taking Eyak wives from places as far west as Cordova, bestowing Tlingit clan names on his wives’ kinsmen, and introducing Tlingit ceremonial gift exchange” (1990: 193).

³⁹ Those travelling from the Copper River area were said to have crossed the receding ice:

“According to native historical tradition, the ancestors of the Kwackqwan, coming from the Copper River, crossed to the east side of Yakutat Bay on the ice which then extended from Point Manby to the vicinity of Eleanor Cove, even though the ice was then already beginning to melt back because they had killed a dog and thrown it down a crevasse” (de Laguna 1972:26).

⁴⁰ Cruikshank (2008: 30) also provides a brief overview of the dramatic advances and retreats of glaciers during the 18th and 19th centuries, as reported in the accounts of explorers, travelers, surveyors and geologists.

⁴¹ This area is also a place where Raven was active. Cape Yakataga (Tayeesk',* “Little Adze,” #33; see Map 5) was named for its adze-like shape. It was transformed by Raven, who made a “canoe trail” (Yakwdeiyi, #35; see Map 5) there after quarrelling with his wife: “She threw his adze ashore to make the point, and he threw her sewing basket overboard. It is now a rock full of clams and sea urchins, and called [Yeil Naasa.aayi]” (de Laguna 1972, 100; #36; see Map 5). Yakataga was also the site of a large village. To the west, the cape gives way to the Duktoth River (Daktaal,* #31; see Map 5), an important travel and trade corridor to the interior, and a salmon fishery at the mouth of which were smokehouses (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998). To the east lies the White River (Gùts'áxw, “Muddy Water,” #37; see Map 5), which served as a boundary between the clan territories. Oral history provides clues as to the natural history of the region. Galyáx-Kaagwaantaan historical narratives refer to a shipwreck in this vicinity of the cape. Based on clues from this story as well as another legend about offshore halibut banks where Raven tricked Bear into killing himself to provide halibut bait, de Laguna (1972, 99–100) hypothesized that this may be the site of the now submerged Pamplona Searidge.

⁴² De Laguna describes the “second advance of the glaciers” in and around Yakutat:

“The second advance of the glaciers culminated in the 18th century. Since presumably the Icy Bay, Malaspina, Yakutat Bay, and Russell Fiord Glaciers advanced at about the same time, a date of less than 300 years may apply to their growth. This date is indicated by carbon-14 analyses of trees destroyed by the Malaspina, as well as by the age of living trees on its moraine. Icy Bay was again covered with ice, but the Malaspina Glacier itself did not advance much beyond its present limit. The Yakutat Bay Glacier (i.e., Hubbard, Turner, and other glaciers in Disenchantment Bay) apparently advanced as far as Blizhni Point,

where a submarine ridge represents the terminal moraine” (de Laguna 1972:26-27).

⁴³ For example, as reported in the Alaska Coast Pilot,

“There is an Indian settlement at the mouth of the Tschettschitna [Chittyná], and when the ice breaks up in the lake the stream suddenly overflows its banks and rushes with such swiftness that the inhabitants flee to the mountains. ... On the left bank of the Atna [Copper River], a mile above the Tschettschitna, is the single house of one of the Russian company’s traders” (Davidson 1869).

No sign of this settlement was found by Allen (1887: 23-24).

⁴⁴ De Laguna describes how the Yakutat Tlingit also view wind as sentient:

“Winds may be conceived as animate. Light breezes just blowing on the water (kA wusInuk^w) are ‘arguing to see which is the strongest, which is going to start’ (wuc xe yu get [gIt?] hAS ’AtkA wUdIník—‘together mouths moving their on-it are-speaking?’)” (de Laguna 1972:805; quotes are from de Laguna’s informant, MJ).

⁴⁵ Mount St. Elias, in addition to a few other mountains in the area, was unique for its proper name. As de Laguna explains:

“With the exception of Mount Fairweather (Tsałxan), or ‘Silver [Dollar] Mountain’ (DAna ca, a peak in Russell Fiord of no symbolic importance), and of Gateway Knob (Kítca or YAdagwAł), mountains in the Yakutat area have no proper names of their own, as was clearly noted by Harrington. Rather, mountains are designated as standing ‘at the head of’ some important body of water, such as the great fishing streams, Ahrnklin and Situk Rivers, or the rich of Icy Bay, guarded by Mount Saint Elias” (de Laguna 1972:456).

⁴⁶ De Laguna describes the “Great Flood” as it is understood by Yakutat Tlingit and recounted in Yakutat Tlingit oral narratives:

“Once there was a great Flood, believed to have been the same as that described in the Bible. This was like an abnormally high tide that covered all the earth. It was caused by Raven’s jealous uncle who became angry when his beautiful wife was molested by Raven. This personage is equated with Noah by some, and was called in Tlingit QIngA (or QIngE), and also ‘He Who Orders the Tide’ (qís kuqék). In two versions of the myth, this person is identified with the Moon

(dIs). He became so angry at what happened to his wife that he went up into the sky, and his slaves accompanied him as the Stars.

The great Flood forced people into canoes and onto the tops of the highest mountains, where they built shelters or 'nests'. 'A nest was built on Mount Fairweather during the Flood. It was called *qís kanAda*, "high tide all around.'" There was also a nest on Mount Saint Elias. No other mountains were mentioned, although many are known to the Angoon Tlingit (de Laguna, 1960, p. 52). The great Flood not only drowned many, but was responsible for the dispersal of the survivors, so that a number of sib origin stories begin with this event" (de Laguna 1972:789).

De Laguna's informant Maggie Harry also spoke of the "Great Flood," when interviewed by Harrington in 1939 or 1940 and de Laguna, herself, in 1949 and 1952:

"There was a big water flood all over the world. They thought it was all over the world. There were three places in the world that were not covered by water: Devil's Thumb near Wrangell, Mount Saint Elias, and Mount Fairweather. They [the Indians] knew that the old people lived up there because they found their skin robes subsequently, high in the mountain rocks.

When the migrators were coming to Yakutat across the ocean, offshore, they saw Mount Saint Elias ahead, looking like a seagull on the water [MH to Harrington, who comments "her words," 1939-40].

These Indians started as four brothers on the upper Copper River. An ivory dish with beautiful stones, the first brother wanted it, the second brother wanted it, the third brother wanted it, they all wanted it. An old woman prophet had said that whoever got the dish, had to keep it. So the three [who didn't] had to migrate.

One of them came down the Copper River and settled near the mouth, another came along the ocean in a big skin boat, bringing his family with him of course as [they] all did.

But her family's brother ancestor [i.e., the family of the brother who was the ancestor of the informant] came across the ice, glaciers, till they saw land, till they saw good land, which was here at Yakutat. The ones that came along the ocean got here first, the glacier migrants arrived later. There was a little argument but they settled down peaceful.

The migrators over the glaciers maybe consumed a hundred years in migrating to Yakutat. When they reached here, the Indians who had come along the coast by boat were already at Yakutat. When the ocean travelers arrived here, there was no one living here" (quoted in de Laguna 1972:235-236).

⁴⁷ According to de Laguna,

"Hendrickson told Emmons that: 'The Indians believe that the mountains were people in the olden times and St. Elias and Fairweather were married.

Fairweather was the woman and St. Elias the man. They had lots of slaves, work people and children. During a family quarrel they separated, Mt. St. Elias travelled west and took a lot of slaves and men with him and from these the range of mountains were formed between Mt. St. Elias and Fairweather. The mountains to the east of Fairweather are their children.'

I was also told that a mountain at the head of Akwe or Italio River, Mount Raeburn or a nearby peak, called Tacak, is the slave of Mount Saint Elias and Mount Fairweather, whom the owners used to send back and forth with messages" (de Laguna 1972:819).

⁴⁸ De Laguna summarizes the significance and power of mountains, and Mount St. Elias in particular, saying,

"Mount Saint Elias (waše ta ca, or yaše ta ca) 'mountain at the bottom (head) of Icy Bay,' a pyramidal peak, is the last and most impressive of the snowcapped range northwest of Yakutat. Mount Fairweather (tsAlxán), although far southeast of Dry Bay, is visible from the coastal plain east of Yakutat. Because they are landmarks for travelers and hunters on the sea, and are important in forecasting the weather, it is natural that they should have become crests of two Raven sibs, the Kwackqwan and the T'UknaxAdi. In addition, 'Mount Fairweather gives a sign when something terrible is going to happen,' said one informant, commenting on the portent (given too late?) that presaged the drownings in Lituya Bay. There may even be a vague notion that these mountains can control the weather, for Mount Saint Elias is said, in the song, to have 'opened the world' by sending sunshine, thereby making people happy, and so is told to be happy" (de Laguna 1972:819).

⁴⁹ Both mountains and glaciers, like other landforms in and around Wrangell-St. Elias, are said to possess sentience and/or spirits associated with these landmarks:

"'Not only does a glacier have its khwaan (people), but a mountain, caa, has its people, too, called caa khwaan,' Harrington wrote.

Mountain spirits were 'inhabitants in the mountains' (ca tu qwani). The mountain itself, or these beings within it, are supposed to be the grandparents of mountain goats. The mountain tells the goats whether or not to release the hunter who has climbed into a dangerous place.

In Swanton's story about the Kwackqwan told by a Yakutat man (Tale 105, esp. pp. 356-357), there is a "being of the mountain" (cāt-wuqoa'ni, i.e., ca-tu-qwani) that comes to help an unlucky hunter. This spirit has rooms full of all different kinds of game in his home in the mountain.

There was also(?) an anthropomorphic being, "Mountain Man" (cakAnáyi), who lived in the mountains, and who married the girls who stole their mother's mountain goat tallow. According to one informant, he "looks like the sunbeam." Another (MJ) called him "the mountaineer," and "the spirit of the

mountain," specifying that the locale of the story was near the headwaters of the Ahrnklin River. Swanton has also recorded two versions of the story of Mountain Dweller (1909, Tales 65 and 92), in which he is called CāqAnay' and CAkAnā'yī" (de Laguna 1972:819).

⁵⁰ De Laguna reports on another oral history that describes the destruction of a village due to disrespectful behavior towards a glacier:

"At a much earlier period, perhaps in the 17th or early 18th century, before the glacier filled Icy Bay, there was a village in Mud Bay. Because some young fellows laughed at the glacier it came down and overwhelmed the village. I heard one version of this story, and another was recorded by Topham in 1888. My informant had seen remnants of the forest above Point Guyot which had been destroyed by this advance and then uncovered by the retreat of the ice" (de Laguna 1972:97).

⁵¹ As de Laguna reports,

"Not only were glacier spirits repelled by the stench of old clothes burning, but the great glacier that formerly covered Yakutat Bay was supposed to have retreated because a dead dog was thrown into a crevasse, and the glacier in Icy Bay melted back because the entrails of a Tsimshian Indian were buried in the ice. In these cases, the dead dog and the decaying human flesh acted to waste away the glaciers in ways similar to those employed by witches to injure human beings" (1972b:819).

⁵² Tabooed Lake is apparently another landmark to which Yakutat Tlingit must show a proper amount of respect, hence the lake's name. As de Laguna explains:

"Another man, telling about 'Tabooed Lake' (IlgàsÀ 'a) near Icy Bay, where one was not allowed to make a noise, called it 'Bad Luck Lake' and further explained that 'Ilgàs means against nature,' but did not specify what would happen if one broke the taboo associated with this lake" (de Laguna 1972b:814).

⁵³ Seals are said to stay in the narrower, shallower channels in Icy Bay and Disenchantment Bay during pupping season to avoid predation from orcas.

Goldschmidt and Haas also discuss the use of this area for seal camps:

"There is a sealing camp at the head of Disenchantment Bay and of Russell Fiord and Nunatak Fiord. The seals they use for moccasins, and the fat for grease. The meat is dried for the winter' (Harry Bremner #32)" (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

⁵⁴ On this point, de Laguna notes “It is uncertain whether the seal was the crest of any sib; it was certainly not so featured at Yakutat” (de Laguna 1972:41).

⁵⁵ To cite one of many possible examples, Yakutat men were traditionally expected to provide seal meat to members of the opposite moiety following the death of their high-status maternal uncles prior to the completion of mortuary rites and the settling of the deceased’s grave (de Laguna 1972: 538).

⁵⁶ A detailed study of these seal camps has been underway concurrent with the current research, overseen by the Smithsonian Institution, with the extensive involvement of Judy Ramos and other Yakutat residents; that project has assembled a considerable body of data on these camps and associated sealing practices that are not detailed in this report but warrant review for a more complete picture of the importance of sealing to Yakutat.

⁵⁷ According to an interviewee of Birket-Smith and de Laguna, in the summer, seals entered Eyak Lake and were hunted up the Copper River as far as “Tea Kettle,” or Tiekkel at mile 96 on the Copper River Railway, some distance west of Wrangell-St. Elias (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:107-108; de Laguna 1990:190; USDOINPS 1998a:46). The Tiekkel River enters Copper River about ten miles southwest of Spirit Mountain, at a western border of Wrangell-St. Elias.

⁵⁸ The Eyak consumed different pieces of the seal, including the flippers, which the Eyak considered the most desirable part, and infants were given seal fat to suck on. In addition to consuming seal meat, the Eyak used the different parts of the seal for a variety of other purposes. Sealskin was used in the making of large canoes such as umiaks. Young de-haired sealskin was used in the construction of sewing bags, as was the seal esophagus (de Laguna 1990:91, 191). They also used seal teeth and whiskers as personal ornaments, and they would use seal oil to protect their skin from the harsh wind (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:62, 63, 99).

Sea otters appear to have primarily been hunted at locations southwest of the study area, along the coast, including at Hinchinbrook Island and the Egg Islands, as well as off of Strawberry Point, even though these areas “belonged” to the Shallow Water Eskimo (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:17-18, 111). Eyaks used two-hole bidarkas for hunting sea otters, and they used small-cleft prow dugout canoes when hunting in the open water (de Laguna 1990:191).

According to de Laguna, the Eyak did not hunt whales or sea lions, as canoeing in the open sea was dangerous. However, when the surf brought stranded whales and sea lions to the beach, the Eyak would utilize them as traditional subsistence resources (de Laguna 1990:189-190). They consumed the fat and perhaps the flesh of whales, if one washed ashore in their territory. They also used the baleen of the whale for utensils such as dishes and spoons. Walrus were not hunted because of the Eyak belief that they were transformed human beings (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:89, 107).

⁵⁹ According to de Laguna,

“While seals were undoubtedly hunted in winter in ancient days, the Kwackqwan chief who controlled the summer hunting grounds in Yakutat and Icy Bays would not permit hunting at the breeding places until after the young were born, that is, not until the end of May.

“‘If there are young seals, then the mothers will stay with them, and there is not as much chance of scaring the whole herd away...The chief would also say that the men had to get seals with spears. He didn’t want people to shoot [with guns] because they would scare the seals. If anybody went sealing before the seals had pups, they would scare the whole herd away.’

At a still earlier period, “They were very strict with the land. In those days they couldn’t buy food from the store, and they didn’t have guns. Now anybody can shoot a seal, but when they hunted with spears it was different” (de Laguna 1972:374; quotes are from de Laguna’s informant).

Olaf Abraham also recalled regulations regarding when sealing was permitted. According to Abraham,

“There was a certain time when the Tlingit people would go to their seal hunting grounds. Laws concerning the seals were...set by the Head chief. The seal oil was an important part of their diet. The Head chief made an announcement to the people, during the time when seal pups were being born, that no hunter was to hunt seal during this period. If hunters disturbed the seal, they believed the seal would move out of their area. If a hunter went up to the glaciers where the seals were, made fire, and was reported to their Head chief, he was called to the chief and his council, usually his canoe was destroyed.

“The Head chief would send men to watch the seals, sometimes the news came that the seal birthing was over, then the Head chief would give the order, go ahead and hunt seal. Some hunters would leave and travel all night to get to the glaciers, taking their families to the seal hunting grounds. There they would stay and use the seal as needed.” (Abraham 1973: 5-6).

⁶⁰ Many explorers commented on the fact that the sea otter populations were robust, and remained healthy in the Yakutat area long after the otter was scarce elsewhere. As Merti notes,

“Sea otter were extremely plentiful in 1786. The members of the expedition obtained 1,000 skins from the natives by barter, and La Prouse states that a trading company at that time could have taken 10,000 skins a year. The skins of the wolf, sea otter, and sea lion (?) were most prized by the natives at that time” (Merti 1931:121).

As summarized by de Laguna,

“The northern sea otter, *Enhydra lutris lutris*...was the most important fur-bearing mammal in Alaskan waters. Long after it had become extinct in southeastern Alaska, and was hardly to be found along the Aleutian Islands, it was still hunted at Lituya Bay, Icy Bay, and off Cape Yakataga, until protected in 1911 by Federal legislation and international treaty. Its bones were represented in the site on Knight Island, and until harassed by hunters it used to frequent Yakutat Bay” (de Laguna 1972:40).

⁶¹ According to a 1887 manuscript by Seton-Karr, sea otter hunting techniques of the late 19th century reflected this belief:

“The Indians [according to Nils Anderson, the trader] usually only hunt land fur in winter, not sea-otters, for the sea is too rough for canoes. They always use bows and arrows for sea-otters, and will only use a gun when they are close and cannot miss. They have an idea that guns frighten away the otters; or perhaps loading takes too much time, for they use muzzle-loaders. In winter the otters are driven by the gales to take refuge near shore, in lee of the islands; but in summer they can only be found out at sea” (quoted in de Laguna 1972:380).

⁶² For example, according to an informant of de Laguna, CW, he traveled on a hunting trip with his uncle at a young age:

“I been hunting with my uncle two times up at Icy Bay. Long way—hand power [i.e., paddling the canoe]. One time I been there he killed two yuxtc [sea otter]. I was lonesome that time. I was little boy. I think of my mother...He [uncle] was teaching me...Early morning we start way up to other side [of Yakutat Bay], All way hand power, hard work. That’s one day up there. We stay all night. We get up early in morning, and started again. Go to Icy Bay...Next morning, next day, go hunting sea otter. Come back same place [to the camp]. Next day going out, come back same place.’ The small boy paddled in the stern of the forked prow canoe while his uncle used a shotgun in the bow. Neither could eat while they were out in the boat.

“Wind blow all that time. I was thinking of my mother. Sometimes I cry, I think of my mother. Pretty hard staying with my uncle—talking, talking! ‘Don’t sleep too long. Wake up early in the morning!’...Every morning I heard no yell [raven—it was before the raven called]. It’s pretty dark, dark two mornings. ‘Make the fire! Make the fire!’ my uncle [told me]. ‘Cook some coffee!’”

“This was the first time the boy had left his mother. Most of what he learned on the trip, we gather, was how to handle a canoe, make camp and cook, and some

of the magical rules to follow on the hunt. According to his sister (MJ), he was about ten years old when he went sea otter hunting with his uncle” (de Laguna 1972:517; quotes from de Laguna’s informant).

⁶³ As Staton suggests,

“Tlingits imposed rules against visiting certain seal or sea otter hunting grounds during the spring pupping season. Tlingits used all parts of the animals they killed, and killed only what they could consume. This practice was not due to concern about the supply of game and the public welfare, but because they sought to earn the animal’s favor in order to bring themselves luck and future hunting success” (Staton 1999:13).

De Laguna’s informants shared that in early times, it was the chiefs that controlled hunting practices related to sea otter and enforced restrictions regarding when and for how long people could hunt the otters:

“The sea otter hunt was strictly controlled by the Kwackqwan chief, since his sib owned the waters where the animals were encountered.

“Yaxodaqet restricted all the land from Yakutat to Icy Bay. No one may hunt sea otter unless he knows it...Those chiefs [the first Yaxodaqet and his successors] would say when it was all right for the people to start hunting sea otter. They watched how many each man got. If one man had four and the others had only two or three, they would tell the man with the most to stop hunting. The chiefs saw to it that each family got the same number of skins’” (de Laguna 1972:379-380).

⁶⁴ On this point, de Laguna notes,

“The coho is the favorite salmon for drying at Yakutat, and is also the name crest of another Raven sib. The runs come late in the year, from July or August through October, and the natives prefer to cure the fish in the cool fall weather... Practically all the streams in the Yakutat area have cohos, although the Situk is especially rich” (de Laguna 1972:51).

⁶⁵ As de Laguna noted,

“[Dog salmon] is relatively unimportant to the Gulf Coast Indians, although the Tlingit of southeastern Alaska regard it as the best to smoke for the winter, and recognize the Dog Salmon as the crest of a Raven sib. I was told that there were few dog salmon in the Yakutat area, but that they could be caught east of Dry

Bay, where the Dohn River or a tributary is called 'Dog Salmon Stream'" (de Laguna 1972:51).

⁶⁶ In an interview with Goldschmidt and Haas, Billy Jackson described the Yakutat Tlingit use of Point Manby for resource procurement:

"Grand Wash and Point Manby belonged to the Kwáashk'i Kwáan. It is a place where we get marten, mink, fox and seal. We also get fish there. There used to be a house there, but it is gone now" (quoted in Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:46).

⁶⁷ Exploring this area in 1893, Israel C. Russell was one of these early writers. He describes game trails running through what are today Wrangell-St. Elias lands, which he observed during his second expedition from the old mouth of the Yahtse River to the Chaix Hills in 1893. Russell notes,

"A broad game trail which had evidently long been used by bears, wolves, foxes, and mountain goats. This well beaten thoroughfare skirts the foot of the hills for several miles, and, as we afterwards learned, is continued across the glacier 6 or 8 miles northeastward to the Samovar Hills" (quoted in de Laguna 1972:98).

⁶⁸ As summarized by Davis,

"Mountain goats, highly valued for their tallow and wool, were hunted within the forests along the slopes of the mountains as early as August, with better hunting following the later snows that forced the goats to lower ranges during late September and October. Informants have stated that mountain goats could even be taken, during times of very heavy snow, at sea level along the coastal beaches" (Davis 1997:146).

⁶⁹ According to de Laguna,

"The Yakutat people face a variety of large brown bears and grizzlies. These have never been classified to the satisfaction of biologists, but for the native all these large species are 'the Bear' (*xuts*), the prize of the intrepid hunter and an important sib crest. The very large, dark grizzled Dall brown bear, *Ursus dalli*, lives northwest of Yakutat Bay, especially along the Malaspina Glacier" (de Laguna 1972:36).

Yakutat Tlingit traditionally hunted for bear throughout their territory and spring was a particularly reliable season for bear hunts:

“Bear were hunted along the shoreline-beach fringe areas of Yakutat and Dry Bays and Russell Fiord during the spring as they fed on fresh beach greens and roots. Bear have a wide-ranging habitat that varies with the season and the food resources available to them” (Davis 1997:148).

⁷⁰ In addition to sea mammals, land animals played an important role in Eyak traditional hunting patterns, with bears and mountain goats identified as the most important of the land mammals. Eyak hunted both brown (Kodiak grizzly) and black bears during the winter. According to Birket-Smith and de Laguna, bears were hunted some distance southwest of the study area, with the Eyak traveling up Orca Inlet after bears. They typically did not travel up this way in single canoes, because this was the territory of “Eskimo” communities (Bennett et al. 1979:23; Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:100; de Laguna 1990:190; USDOINPS 1998a:46; Workman et al. 1974). Goats were hunted in the mountains near Mountain Slough, which is located just south of Cordova. According to Birket-Smith and de Laguna,

“[Goat hunting] was considered the most dangerous type of hunting, and this was reflected in the taboos. Colonel Abercrombie says that the natives had to climb above the goat, because the goat always looked down the mountainside for its enemies. They would shoot the goat between the ribs and the arrow would almost protrude from the farther side.” (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:100)

Among the Eyak, goats were hunted for their meat, as well as for skins and fur. Goatskins, as with sealskins, were often used in the construction of umiaks, while goat wool could be used in the making of robes for both men and women (de Laguna 1990:191-192). Also, according to de Laguna, “in 1884, Colonel Abercrombie noted that the Eyak slept under woven goat wool blankets about a yard wide and 5 feet long, but our informants denied that the Eyak knew how to make them” (de Laguna 1964:180-181). It is possible that Eyak used to make goat wool blankets, but at the time of de Laguna’s research the practice no longer continued.

In addition to bears and mountain goats, during the fall and winter the Eyak hunted fox and lynx with snares, and mink and martins were hunted using deadfalls. Eyak hunted muskrats with bow and arrow, and they used box traps to hunt for weasel and ermine. Beavers were hunted in the spring and fall using a deadfall set in a beaver trail, because during the winter they were not accessible due to ice. Ground squirrels were also hunted, and the Eyak reportedly used their furs in the making of robes. According to Birket-Smith and de Laguna, the family of the chief of a village would adorn themselves with necklaces made from beaver teeth (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:62, 101-102; de Laguna 1990:190).

As with walruses, the Eyak did not hunt land otters, likely because of their belief that these animals were transformed human beings who had become lost or drowned. Birket-Smith and de Laguna believed that wolves were not hunted for this same reason (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:101-102; de Laguna 1972:38; Workman et al. 1974:6).

⁷¹ De Laguna goes on to note, “All the natives on the boat which took us up the bay in July 1952, agreed that Hubbard Glacier had advanced in recent years, and it was clear that the front extended farther into the bay than on the [1945 USC&GS chart #8455, 6th edition] chart” (de Laguna 1972:69).

⁷² The Eyak homeland contains a number of lakes and lagoons, which have attractive a wide variety of birds. Eyak hunted an assortment of birds, including duck, geese, swan, ptarmigan and grouse. Ptarmigan and grouse were available year-round, while the other bird types were hunted in autumn when they were molting. Ducks, geese and swan were primarily taken in August during village-wide drives. Colonel Abercrombie, for example, reported seeing villagers from Alaganik preform a drive to catch molting geese on the mudflats near the village (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:112). In the littoral zone in the spring and summer, Eyak also collected bird eggs, which were an important traditional subsistence item (de Laguna 1990:190, 192; USDOINPS 1998a:44; Workman et al. 1974:6). According to Birket-Smith and de Laguna (1938:113), loons were not hunted because of Eyak oral tradition noting that a boy had once turned into a loon.

⁷³ De Laguna summarizes the purchase of Knight Island at a time when it was covered in strawberries:

Knight Island [in Yakutat Bay] was the first territory acquired by the Copper River immigrants, who obtained it by purchase after one of their women, a chief’s daughter or sister, had been prevented by the owners from picking strawberries on it. At that time it was just a big strawberry patch, without trees (de Laguna 1972:65).

⁷⁴ De Laguna reports that Yakutat Tlingit gathered spruce bark in the late winter and early spring by scraping off the inner bark (de Laguna 1972:360).

⁷⁵ Plants played a large role in Eyak subsistence. In the spring and summer, Eyak peoples gathered seaweed in the littoral zone and dried it for the wintertime (de Laguna 1990:190). According to Birket-Smith and de Laguna,

“Three kinds of seaweed were gathered in July and August, but only two kinds were eaten from choice. The first of these is black and grows on the rocks, especially around Mummy Island. The second kind is thick and brown at the base, with long tapering ribbons. In times of famine they ate the stems of seaweed described as having balls at the end which pop when crushed.” (1938:97-98).

Dried kelp was reportedly used to make halibut fishing lines (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:92). During the spring and summer, the Eyak collected a number of key plants, including an assortment of summer berries and Kamchatka lily root (chocolate lily or “wild rice”), which can grow in tide flats, meadows, open forests, or on beaches and stream banks, as well as

gathering a number of other plants of the intertidal margins (Charnon n.d.). The Eyak ate the root of the lily, which they dried and boiled (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:97). They also consumed the sap from hemlock trees, which they scraped off using collected mussel shells (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:97).

The Eyak traditionally gathered a variety of berries, including blueberries, salmonberries, high-bush cranberries and low-bush cranberries. Berries were traditionally picked and dried into cakes for consumption, or they were preserved in oil for the winter. Berries could also be boiled with salmon eggs to form a jelly (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:97; de Laguna 1990:190; USDOINPS 1998a:46).

The fall is also an important plant-gathering season. Starting in February, the Eyak traditionally gathered a wide variety of edible roots, as well as wild celery and the inner bark of the hemlock. According to de Laguna, spruce roots were probably collected at this time for the construction of baskets (1990:190). The Eyak also used hemlock to make bows for hunting (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:102).

⁷⁶ Houses, too, were said to have been constructed of cedar bark:

“The emigrants from the Copper River were supposed to have built shelters of yellow cedar bark when they reached the coast near Icy Bay. Sheets of such bark were formerly carried in the canoe when people traveled, to serve as tents (de Laguna 1972:305).”

⁷⁷ Some interviewees disagree with this assessment of red cedar’s buoyancy relative to other woods used for this purpose.

⁷⁸ Interviewees note that copper was often used in the making of weapons. “Emmons collected at Dry Bay an iron arrowhead, ‘used against small animals as marten, marmot, etc.,’ and a copper arrowhead, for ‘land animals only.’ Similar copper heads for land animals came from Yakutat” (de Laguna 1972:369).

⁷⁹ In distant times, people were said to have “left a lot of wealth behind in Chitina.” As it was with the Athabaskan people of that region, they received Yakutat seal meat, sea otter furs, and other items in exchange for copper and inland foods (MP).

⁸⁰ Slaves were obtained directly or through trade, representing a diversity of coastal and interior peoples, speaking a variety of languages (Mitchell and Donald 1985; Mitchell 1984).

⁸¹ Iron was also an important mineral resource for the Yakutat people. Iron was used in a variety of ways, including in the construction of weapons:

“Emmons obtained two iron spearheads at Yakutat, both of which were said to have been used for bear hunting, but also received contradictory information about the length of the shaft. The spearhead that had belonged to Yakutat Chief

George Yaxodaqet, 'George, the principal chief of the tribe,' was said to have been set into a shaft 4 feet long (AMNH E/2258, taken back by Emmons in 1915)" (de Laguna 1972:368).

Yakutat Tlingit obtained iron from Russian sources prior to the Russians actually arriving in their territory. According to de Laguna,

"Before the Russians themselves came to Yakutat, a schooner was wrecked on the shore west of Icy Bay, and from this the GalyIx-Kagwantan obtained a great deal of iron which they made into spear points. Harrington also recorded from GJ what may be the same story or an account of a similar event:

"A ship get wrecked, drift ashore, lots of iron in there, big spikes. Indians get and make into knives, and into the blades of bear spear. Oh my, it was a rich man who found a piece of iron in those times. The old Indians were tough and long-lived'" (de Laguna 1972:412).

While the Yakutat did not necessarily have access to iron in its raw state, with the arrival of iron into the region as early as 1787, it became an important traditional subsistence resource for the Yakutat Tlingit thereafter (de Laguna 1972:113, 116).

⁸² This ochre was traditionally used as a face paint and as a paint for objects. As de Laguna reports,

"The red paint was made of hematite or red ochre (léx^w), which could be found at the head of Disenchantment Bay. Some lumps of pure hematite were found, in the site on Knight Island, that showed marks of use; there were also some pieces of clay stone which had been burned to increase their red color, although Yakutat informants did not mention this practice. Red ochre was used both for painting objects and for decorating the face." (de Laguna 1972:416)

Pigments were often used to paint faces of people attending ceremonial gatherings:

"On ceremonial occasions, men and women both painted their faces with red ochre (léx^w). This was obtained from Metlakatla, or from between Turner and Hubbard Glaciers in Disenchantment Bay. It was ground up to make paint, and kept in a little tanned skin bag." (de Laguna 1972:447).

⁸³ On this, de Laguna notes,

"Stone (tE) was used to make blades for adzes, chisels, knives, scrapers, and weapons, as well as for lamps, pestles, hammers, drills, whetstones, and strike-a-

lights. Most of the stones used were hard igneous or metamorphic rock, shaped by pecking and grinding.” (de Laguna 1972:413)

In addition to their uses in weaponry, stones could be used for more ceremonial purposes. For example, the Yakutat carved marble to be used for doll heads (de Laguna 1972:413).

⁸⁴ Mineral gathering was an important part of Eyak life, as minerals were used in a number of ways. Native copper is highly significant to Eyak traditionally, and served a variety of functions. It was used in the construction of harpoon arrowheads, such as those used for hunting sea otter along the coast near Cordova (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:111). Copper was also used in the making of other tools, such as knives, ulus, pins and scrapers (USDOINPS 1998a:44). Copper was (and often still is) shaped into jewelry. Both Eyak men and women traditionally wear copper rings and bracelets, and de Laguna hypothesized that “the rings were probably obtained from the interior” (1938:62). According to von Wrangell (1970:5), the Eyak obtained their copper tools and weaponry from trade with the Ahtna, who were situated north of the Eyak on the Copper River and wore similar rings fashioned out of copper. De Laguna also reports that the Ahtnas used the Copper River to bring native copper south to trade with the Eyak (de Laguna 1964:161; 1990:190).

The Eyak also gathered a variety of non-mineral items, such as glass and shells. These were often worn as personal adornments on a daily basis, as well as during performances. For example, male dancers wore headbands decorated with glass and obsidian beads. Some of the wealthier women of the village adorned their hair with dentalium shells when attending a dance – presumably traded into the area in exchange for copper and other goods (Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938:59-60).

⁸⁵ Speaking of the changes that Euro-American “discovery” and settlement brought to Yakutat Tlingit and their connections to their homelands, Ray Sensmeier stated: “So it was hardly a wilderness to us. Like they talk about the Wild West ...It was never wild for us. It got wild when the Europeans came” (RS).

⁸⁶ Sea otters abounded in the cold waters of eastern Russia, along Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, as well as the Kamchatka Peninsula. Their dense, dark coats fetched astonishing prices when they could, with some difficulty, be delivered to Asian and European markets. The sea otter fur was a tremendous sensation in China in particular, becoming emblematic of high status and increasingly integrated into the dress of Chinese elites as hats, capes, and the furry fringe of silk robes and other clothing.

⁸⁷ Traveling to what is today the northern British Columbia coast, the Perez expedition met with the Haida, trading for pelts and other goods in the first well-documented encounter between European peoples and Northwest Coast tribes. Perez returned to San Blas, where his commanders and viceroy celebrated the expedition’s success in extending the Spanish reach to the lands and peoples of the distant northern coast, while also celebrating the illusory absence of Russians on those shores.

⁸⁸ As summarized by Aurel Krause,

“One finds in this an extensive description of the Yakutat with whom, during his stay in Yakutat Bay, Malaspina established friendly relations which were threatened only once by a theft [sic]. Malaspina received favorable impressions of the moral standards and industrial capabilities of these natives; among their industrial achievements, their canoes and woven blankets aroused his astonishment” (Krause 1956:24).

⁸⁹ The name was initially “Malaspina Plateau,” based on the fact that it had not been carefully surveyed by non-Native investigators at the time Dall applied the name.

⁹⁰ A version of this story has been reported in other sources, such as by de Laguna et al.,

“A ship was wrecked on the shore near Malaspina Glacier. Two men and a woman survived, but the men fell down a crevasse and only the woman was alive when the Indians found the wreck. The latter, through ignorance, spoiled most of the treasures they took from the ship. Thus, they put the guns into a fire and pounded up the barrels with stones to make spears. They could work iron because they already knew how to shape copper. At that time an iron spear point was worth a slave, and so the men became rich. One of them married the white woman, who lived to old age” (de Laguna et al. 1964).

⁹¹ Eventually, Baranov decided against calling the settlement *Slavorossiik*. In a letter (1796) to the settlers, he sarcastically stated, “Your settlement is to be named Novorossiisk [“New Russia”] and not Slavorossiisk [“Glory of Russia”], because you have done nothing glorious” (in Grinev 2013:454).

⁹² Baranov took over his position in 1790, replacing a Greek merchant named Eustrate Delarov (de Laguna 1972:158).

⁹³ Many of the settlers, or *posel'shchiki*, were actually Siberian exiles recruited to populate the colonies (Grinev 1989:446).

⁹⁴ The procession included,

“the Russian flag and coat of arms, the twenty *promyshlenniki* who were with him [Baranov] marching with rifles and falconets, conducting military exercises. Under a three-gun salute from rifles and cannons, the surrounding territories were declared possessions of the Russian Empire. This was announced to the local Tlingit, who after long negotiations agreed to the construction of a colony on their lands” (Grinev 2013:451).

⁹⁵ Some elders, including de Laguna's informant Maggie Harry, attest that the abduction of their children was a major reason for the Yakutat Tlingit's eventual attack on the Russian fort. Maggie Harry reported the following to Harrington in 1939 or 1940:

"There were 8,000 or 10,000 Indians here when the Russians came. The Russians thinned them out by taking their kids away.

...There used to be 8,000 Indians here at Yakutat 1,000 years ago. These were the only Indians who defeated the Russians. The Russians elsewhere always came back. Here not.

The Russians took 50 kids away from here, under the pretext of taking them away to school. For 10 years they did not come back. That was a long time. That, and shutting the gate at Ankau Inlet made the people here decide to do away with the Russians. This was the only place we succeeded.

The Russians had first fought the Aleuts. Later they mixed with them, whoring their wives.

...My grandfather [momobro] used to lead his people over to the castle. My grandfather was the Prince of Yakutat and was named Cáada (a name given him by the Russians). Cáada was the son of XAtkaawéet. [They] called the castle núuwuu ['fort']. It was like a big castle, just like a big castle. My father built a smokehouse there later, after the Russian prince had been killed.

The Indians burned the castle and all the Russians down. The Indians took all the ammunition, but took *no food* from there. The food and dishes they burned when they burned the castle [MH to Harrington, 1939-40]" (quoted in de Laguna 1972:136).

⁹⁶ Polomoshnoi further complicated the situation. Even after his removal, he attempted to influence the management of the colony. He, along with a Lieutenant G.T. Talin, endeavored to convince the settlers of the colony to denounce to the government Baranov and the other leaders in the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, S.F. Larionov, and N. Mukhin. Polomoshnoi then joined Talin on his ship, the *Orël*, and attempted to sail to Kodiak with 22,000 rubles worth of fur taken from Yakutat's storage. En route, the *Orël* wrecked, and five people died, including Polomoshnoi, his wife, their children and his wife's sister (Grinev 1989:457).

Though Polomoshnoi and Talin were ultimately not successful in convincing the settlers to denounce Baranov, the colony was proving itself to be more and more of a burden on the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, as opposed to the profitable outpost it was initially meant to be.

⁹⁷ While the colony at Yakutat was floundering, the new colony at Sitka was becoming increasingly more important. As such, the establishment of Fort Mikhailovskii at Sitka in 1799 had an inadvertent, yet critical effect on *Novo Rossiysk*. With this new station at Sitka, Yakutat no longer served as Russia's primary outpost in southeast Alaska. Rather, Yakutat's new, less glamorous role became that of serving as a staging base for hunting parties traveling to the straits of Alexander Archipelago from Kodiak (Grinev 1989:458). This arrangement, however, proved temporary as tensions between Sitka Tlingit and the new Russian settlers there began to flare. Sitka Tlingit, for their part, were getting firearms from American traders and other non-

Russian individuals. Additionally, American traders from Boston were compensating the Tlingit for their furs at a rate that Russians simply could not match (Kushner 1975). These factors contributed to increasing dissatisfaction with the Russian presence among the Tlingit at Sitka, in particular. As a result, Baranov only narrowly deterred a feud with armed Sitka Tlingit at Fort St. Michael in the winter of 1799-1800 (de Laguna 1972:170).

This fragile peace between the Sitka Tlingit and the Russian settlers quickly deteriorated, and the Tlingit successfully seized Fort Mikhailovskii in June of 1802. This assault came just one month after Baranov's trusted assistant, A.I. Kuskov, and his party were attacked by a group of Tlingit at Dry Bay, which had previously created an atmosphere of fear at *Novo Rossiysk*. Coincidentally, it was Kuskov and a team of Yakutat colonists that are credited with deterring a similar attack on Yakutat shortly after Sitka was taken. Kuskov was en route to Sitka when he learned of the seizure of Fort Mikhailovskii and, as a result, rushed back to Yakutat. Upon arrival, Kuskov and his crew encountered a large party of Tlingit gathered there (de Laguna 1972:172-173). The Tlingit explained that they had congregated for a fishing expedition; however, K.T. Khlebnikov reports (1863) that the Tlingit were there to ambush the fort and Russian settlement that evening, but were forced to abandon their plan because of Kuskov's return. While no attack followed that evening, the settlers at Yakutat were so disturbed by the news of the destruction of Fort Mikhailovskii that they, along with Nikolai Mukhin, insisted Kuskov remove them to Kodiak for safety. Due to the lack of ship availability and Kuskov's reassurance, however, the colony stayed intact for the time being (Grinev 1989:458-459).

⁹⁸ Not all Tlingit clans in the vicinity of Sitka participated in the seizure and subsequent resistance against Russian presence in the region. For example, the Sitka Eagle Clan remained neutral in the confrontations of 1804 (Tollefson 1977:33).

Following Baranov's departure from Yakutat, the governor of Russian America then traveled on a hunting expedition to "Beaver Bay." In September, he then went on to Sitka, at which point a fleet of vessels coalesced and forced the Tlingit to surrender the fort that they had seized back in June of 1802. Subsequently, Baranov commanded the building of a new Russian post, *Novo-Arkhangelsk*, at a site not far from the abandoned Indian village (de Laguna 1972:173). Baranov then spent the winter at the new Russian post, and the fate of the Russian colony at Yakutat appeared more secure as hunting expeditions continued by and large without incident (Grinev 1989:460).

⁹⁹ A more complete retelling of Lena Farkus' account is as follows:

"the Russians came, and built a fort in Ankau. They started taking the women and kids and they'd take them over there so they could clean fish and do things and they'd never see them again. And so one of the leaders, a Teikweidi man named Tanuk... there was a Tekweidi clan living at—I can't say exactly where, somewhere in the Yakutat Bay area, and so he just got tired of the Russians taking some of the ladies with their children over there to work for them. And so him and another man went over there. The Russian ship had gone back to Kodiak so there was just a few men there watching the fort. And they picked some strawberries, there's a lot of wild strawberries around, and took it to the

guy that was guarding the door and told him that they had picked some berries for the main guy in the fort. And so he let them in and one of them...killed the guard. They went in and just killed the other—there was just a few men—this is what I was told—and burned the fort down. Well one Russian got away. He hid. And so when the Russian ship came, he ran down and told them that the “savages” had burned down their fort” (LF).

¹⁰⁰ The Russians were said to have been attacked on Dry Bay after they were found looting shamans’ graves (BA).

¹⁰¹ An additional letter from Rezanov, dated June 17, 1806 provides further details of the attack at Russian Yakutat colony:

“Yakoutat was captured by the savages in October [sic], the fort burned, the people all knocked on the head except 8 men, 2 women and 3 boys who were absent from the fort, and made their escape after hiding in the bay and are now prisoners of the Ougalakhmutes [Eyak-speakers], who demanded a ransom for them which has been sent from Kadiak” (Tikhmenev 1863 in de Laguna 1972:174).

¹⁰² While it is understood that the fort at Yakutat was never restored, one account provides a confusing alternative description of the circumstances of Russian occupation at Yakutat. As de Laguna explains,

“Native tradition maintains that the Russians never restored their fort and colony at Yakutat. However, Captain Golovnin, writing about the Russian colonies in North America, which he had visited on a voyage around the world, gives a list of the Company's establishments in 1818, which ends: “...on Behring Bay, Yakoutat Cove, Nikolaïevsky, near Mount St. Elias, Simeonoffsky. At Yakoutat there had previously been a settlement called Slava Rossia, but in 1803 [sic] it had been destroyed by the Koloshi and had never been restored” (Golovnin, 1861, p. 5). This obscure passage contains one obvious inaccuracy, and I know it only in Petroff's poorly punctuated translation. Golovnin later refers to "Fort Nikolaïevsky" in the "Gulf of Kenai" (Cook Inlet) which casts further doubt upon any post on “Yakoutat Cove” (de Laguna 1972:176).

¹⁰³ As Krause noted, following the attack on the fort, “only rarely did traders enter [Yakutat]”—a condition that persisted into the 1880s. Still, the coast continued to be hunted and of considerable interest to Russian interests. Based on a review of Russian sources, Kan (1999: 560) observes that

“The only parts of *Lingít aaní* [Tlingit territory] where sea otter hunting by RAC [Russian American Company] employees continued up to the 1850s were the

Yakutat and the Lituya bays where this animal was still plentiful and where the Tlingit could not muster enough forces to chase away the poachers, as they had continued to do elsewhere in the area.”

Indeed, the coastline along Yakutat Bay continued to be a distinctive sea otter hunting hub well after that period. Writing in the 1880s, Aurel Krause noted that among the Tlingit, “the Yakutat...are now almost the only people who can get sea otter,” bringing considerable attention to the Yakutat community from outside hunters and traders (Krause 1956: 65).

Additionally, the Chitina River Basin seems to have been largely bypassed prior to the American expeditions of the late 19th century. As Henry T. Allen reported during his 1885 expedition,

“The natives informed me that no white men had ever ascended the Chittyná River, and this is partially corroborated by the fact that in 1867 the officers of the Russian American Company supposed that pure copper was found in masses twenty-five or thirty miles above the mouth of the river” (Allen 1887: 23).

The Native communities of the lower Copper River region, he notes, were widely known for largely resisting Russian overtures and incursions—apparently both a cause and effect of the limited Russian presence in the greater Yakutat region.

¹⁰⁴ The early Russian Orthodox baptisms had been of modest scale, only involving Yakutat people held captive by the Russians—inspiring limited church loyalty. Sitka, a Russian Orthodox stronghold by contrast, served as a point of entry into the Yakutat community, and occasional Yakutat visitors are mentioned receiving baptisms in the 1860s. Yet even those who accepted baptism remained largely at a distance from the Church and its influence. As Sergei Kan notes of the entire Tlingit world of southeast Alaska, “on the eve of Russian withdrawal from Alaska, only 60 of about 500 baptized Tlingit are listed as having had confession and communion,” and most of those who did were living in communities such as Sitka with a strong Orthodox presence (Kan 1999: 168). Yakutat, by contrast, “had only a handful of Orthodox Tlingit” (Kan 1999: 428). Some Orthodox converts from Yakutat requested an expanded Church presence in Yakutat into the 1880s and beyond, and the Church did make inroads within the community over time. Yet, the land was now claimed by the Americans, and it would be missionaries with ties to the United States that would most actively seek to reshape Tlingit values and practices in the decades ahead.

¹⁰⁵ After much negotiation between Russian minister to the United States, Eduard de Stoeckl and US Secretary of State, William Henry Seward, the Alaskan territory, a total of 375 million acres, was sold to the United States for \$7.2 million dollars. Many called this land purchase ‘Seward’s Folly’ because little was known about Alaska other than its cold climate.

¹⁰⁶ At this time a civil government was assigned by President Chester A. Arthur as the result of the passage of the First Organic Act. The Second Organic Act renamed the District of Alaska as

the “Territory of Alaska,” an organized, incorporated territory of the United States (Hinckley 1996, 1972).

¹⁰⁷ As miner/author Wait Bruce has commented,

“rich mineral indications are found along the coast at Lituya Bay. Rich deposits of ruby and black sand stretch along the coast for miles toward Yakutat. The quality of the gold found in this region is fine, but amalgamates readily, and is easily saved by careful sluicing” (Bruce 1989: 44).

¹⁰⁸ The influx of Americans into the Yakutat area during this period also led to an interest in those newcomers in climbing the imposing and – to Yakutat Tlingit – sacred Mount St. Elias. This interest in summiting the mountain continued into the early twentieth century. In her book, “Under Mount Saint Elias” (1972), de Laguna covers some of these attempts to summit the great mountain:

“In July 1888, a new expedition came to attack Mount Saint Elias, but again without reaching the summit. This was led by Harold W. Topham and his brother, both British Alpinists, who were accompanied by George Broke, and by William Williams, an American; four Sitka Indians and two miners, Harry Lyons and Shorty MacConahy, served as porters. The party came up to Yakutat from Sitka on a rather unseaworthy fishing schooner, the Alpha, chartered for that purpose” (de Laguna 1972:193).

In addition to Topham, H. G. Bryant of Philadelphia attempted the summit in 1897 and Prince Luigi Amedeo, Duke of Abruzzi attempted and reached the summit (de Laguna 1972:205-207).

¹⁰⁹ Yet people still maintained connections, in spite of the obstacles. Speaking of his uncle, George Ramos Sr. notes, “he used to tell me they used to row from Yakutat to Icy Bay. Now that’s a long way...in their small dugout canoes” (GR).

¹¹⁰ As Kan stated more generally of the missionary experience,

“The greatest threat to the traditional Tlingit culture and society came from the missionary, and later the public schools, with their rule of obligatory attendance” (1985:199).

¹¹¹ Early commercial fishing in Yakutat centered around the saltery (herring) built by F.A. Fredericks Company of Seattle in 1901 (Ramos and Mason 2004), and the oddly named Yakutat & Southern Railroad Company cannery (sockeye, coho, halibut, crab), built in Monti Bay in 1904. There was also a herring saltery inside the mouth of Ankau Creek built by A.L. See and A. Flenner during this same time period (Ramos and Mason 2004).

¹¹² Interviewees note that Tlingit fishermen would ride the train for free to Situk River on Monday, fish throughout the week, and then return to town on Friday. The cannery and railroad operated under Stimson from 1905 until 1912 when ownership was transferred to Gorman and Company. In 1913, Libby, McNeil and Libby, a Chicago-based company assumed control, and it continued to run until 1951 when it again change hands. Bellingham Canning Company of Bellingham, Washington picked up the company at this point and it continued to operate under this ownership until the mid-1960s when it changed hands for the last time. The Marine Foods Packing Company was the last to own and operate the Yakutat & Southern Railroad, filing for bankruptcy in 1971. Today, the cannery is owned and operated by Yakutat Seafoods.

¹¹³ The Copper River and Northwestern Railway (CR&NW) brought similar revolutions in the Cordova and Copper River Delta regions. Cordova has long been the juncture of multiple trade routes used by the Eyak, Ahtna, Tlingit, and Chugach-Aleut. The importance of these trade routes were intensified and solidified, maintaining Cordova as a central transportation hub:

“The Eyak Culture in the Copper River Delta Area was the center of activity and exchange between the Eyak, Ahtna, Tlingit, and Chugach-Aleut. The discovery of oil, salmon, gold, and copper all in the Copper River area by European and American explorers and traders changed the Eyak village from a regional trading hub to one of world renown, with the advent of the Copper River & Northwestern Railroad and the development of the harbor town of Cordova” (NVE 2009:13).

Before the onslaught of gold rush miners, the Russians were the only explorers to make any significant impact on the land or amongst the native Eyak. Their main interest was in establishing trading posts for the exchange of goods (NVE 2009: 14).

Shortly after Russian explorers arrived in the region, the population of Eyak peoples fell drastically due in large part to famine and disease. From 1837 to 1838, a smallpox epidemic swept the region, reducing the Eyak population roughly by half. Disease and lack of access to traditional subsistence resources continued to take their toll on the people throughout the nineteenth century. Then in 1892, one of their primary settlements at Alaganik was abandoned when a measles outbreak took hold of the area. Just a few years later, Eyak Village and Glacatl Village were abandoned when a new set of epidemics again plagued the area. By 1900, the remaining Eyak people that survived the outbreaks relocated to Old Town, near today’s city of Cordova (Hund 2014:273).

The mouth of the Copper River was soon noticed by commercial salmon fishing operations, many moving from the lower Columbia River and other salmon fisheries that had been depleted in the Lower 48 states. By the late 1800s, “the Copper River fishery was already well established. Four companies operated canneries in 1889 near the river's mouth—two near the present site of Cordova and two on Wingham Island near Controller Bay” (Bleakley 2002: 290). Eyak families often served as labor in the fishery. The community became a robust multi-ethnic commercial fishing town in the century that followed. Still, beyond this foothold, Europeans

and Euro-Americans made few lasting impressions in the Cordova region other than documentation.

Then came the gold prospectors. In 1900, prospectors “Tarantula Jack” Smith and Clarence Warner happened upon large deposits of oxidized copper in the Wrangell Mountains—deposits that were part of the larger complex long utilized by Native resource harvesters. They staked their claim and sold it to Steven Birch, a mining engineer, who partnered with J.P. Morgan and members of the Guggenhiem family. These investors were known as the “Alaska Syndicate” (Wikle 2014). The Syndicate members later incorporated themselves into the “Kennecott Copper Corporation” after the nearby Kennicott River. (A mistake on the final paperwork accounts for the altered spelling.)

When the Kennecott mines began operation, copper ore was transported via packhorses to the city of Valdez. As copper production increased so did the need for improved modes of transport.

“As production increased, Syndicate members developed plans for a railroad to link the mine with a port on the Pacific Ocean...a route was selected along the north banks of the Nizina and Chitina Rivers following the Copper River southward across its delta to Orca Inlet and the town of Cordova. From there, ore could be shipped by steamboat to Tacoma, Washington for smelting” (Wikle 2014: 141).

The early 1900s saw further decline of the Eyak population, as economic activities in the region, necessitated the development of a railroad through part of Eyak traditional territory. The abandoned village of Alaganik was covered with tracks when the Copper River and Northwestern (CR&NW) Railroad was built under the management of Michael Heney. With the introduction of the new railroad, Heney bestowed upon Cordova its modern day name in 1906, and in 1909 the city was officially incorporated (CRKS n.d.: Hund 2014:273). By the following year, the city’s population had reached 2,400 people; however, when construction of the railway was complete, many individuals left the area, and the population fell to 1,555 in 1920. By this time, there were only roughly 60 remaining Eyak people (State of Alaska n.d.).

Formerly settled around the Copper River Delta, many Eyak moved to the modern community of Cordova when a deep-water port was established there in 1906 to ship copper ore by rail from the interior. Unlike Yakutat residents who confronted a Russian fort, the Eyak at Cordova experienced the first significant influx of outsiders as a result of the gold rush, copper mining and the oncoming train. Five profitable copper ore mines operated at the time around the towns of Kennecott and McCarthy near Kennicott River and Glacier.

In addition to its distinction as the terminus for the railroad, Cordova was an important ocean shipping port for copper ore mined from Kennecott. The railroad effectively connected Cordova to the interior towns of Kennecott, McCarthy and Chitina. The mines continued to operate and support these towns until 1938 when the deposits disappeared. Rail service ended in 1938 and the Kennecott Copper Corporation filed an application with the Interstate Commerce

Commission (ICC) to formally close the CR&NW Railroad. The last train left the station on November 10th of that year (Wikle 2014:148). Today, the legacy of the CR&NW remains. The McCarthy Road remains the main access route to Kennecott, a 62-mile gravel road that continues to attract tourists, and sport hunters and fishers.

In addition to the mines, Cordova's economy was fueled by the oil industry, with the Katalla oil field operating until 1933 when it was destroyed by a fire. With the closure of the mines and the oil field, Cordova's economy turned to commercial fishing as the primary industry in 1940s (CRKS n.d.). As Cordova underwent these changes to its economic base, and as high levels of poverty prevailed among the local Alaska Natives, the Eyak and their Native neighbors saw a growing need to protect their economy, lands and culture in order to sustain themselves in the coming decades.

¹¹⁴ Americanization presented yet another shift of the sociopolitical framework that again forced the Tlingit to recalculate and expand their defense against total assimilation but which continued to utilize the brotherhood system (Hinckley 1996, 1972). The Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) and Sisterhood (ANS), formed during the rapid Americanization of Alaska, have played an integral part in the protection of these traditional subsistence and cultural practices by creating an avenue of direct dialogue within the legislative structures introduced by federal regulation. The Alaska Native Brotherhood (followed quickly by the Sisterhood) was founded in 1912 in response to the outcomes of the 1867 Treaty of Cession, which sought to subject Alaska Natives to the same regulations as the American Indians in the United States. Their purpose was to gain equality in the form of citizenship and educational rights for the Native people of southeast Alaska. So too, the ANB movement took shape out of early political and legal efforts to maintain Native sovereignty over lands and resources being appropriated under new, American territorial claims. In a letter written in 1890 by Willoughby Clark, an attorney hired by the "Stickeens" Tlingit, to President Harrison wherein the Tlingit asked to be:

"exempt from fish, game, timber and general land laws; that they be legally authorized to make their own laws; that the system of concubineage between white men and Indian women be restricted; that title to villages and garden patches be confirmed to them in severalty in fee; and that their rights to their fishing streams be recognized or that they severally receive quid pro quo for their relinquishment" (Ramos and Mason 2004:50).

Similarly, Tollefson notes,

"During the 1920s their leadership, membership and goals became solidified into a powerful and effective political organization. In the early years, the ANB sought full acculturation, recognition as American citizens, and formal education as the means to its achievement. In their zeal to survive in the wake of overwhelming settlers, the early goals of the ANB were to join the dominant culture and 'to do away with Tlingit culture' (Former Grand Camp Officer). Later, these same leaders became concerned with preserving their cultural

heritage and joined the more conservative element of the people in preserving it” (Tollefson 1984: 237).

¹¹⁵ According to Conn, Engelman and Fairchild,

“In the 1939 planning it had also been agreed that, if the Army were to fulfill its air mission of assisting in the defense of the new military establishments to be developed along the southern Alaskan coast and of supporting the Navy in resisting hostile attempts to gain lodgment in Alaskan territory, the Army Air Corps must be able to conduct operations as far west as Kiska and as far south as Ketchikan. Accordingly, plans were made to build a series of staging fields north from Puget Sound and out to the Aleutians that would tie in with the new Anchorage base and with the Navy's fields (which the Army proposed to use also) at Sitka, Kodiak, and Unalaska. The Army proposed to build these staging fields at Metlakatla (near Ketchikan), Yakutat, and Cordova... On 19 September 1940 construction of the Metlakatla (subsequently known as Annette Island airfield) began, and a month later construction of Yakutat airfield was started” (2000: 229-31).

¹¹⁶ The creation of this base was made possible by the Civil Aeronautics Act, which was passed in 1938 for the purpose of both stimulating and regulating the civil air industry for commercial and defense purposes, as well as for the benefit of the postal service (US NARA n.d.). The passing of the Civil Aeronautics Act and the resulting creation of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) enabled the establishment of airports and radio range stations in Alaska and beyond (Kurtz 1995:85-86).

¹¹⁷ Though the cannons are originally from a World War I era US Navy cruiser or auxiliary ship, they were released to the US Army in the 1930s to be utilized in coastal defense programs, and they represent the only two permanent shore batteries built in Yakutat during World War II (CBY 2006:141).

¹¹⁸ According to documentation by the US Army Corps of Engineers,

The Yakutat Army Air Base improvements, equipment, and materials, not transferred to CAA [Civil Aeronautics Administration], were declared to the War Assets Administration (WAA) for disposition in May 1948, pursuant to the Surplus Property Act of 1944 (USACE 2015:3).

¹¹⁹ From their research in the mid 1940s, Goldschmidt and Haas report that,

“From data presented by Native witnesses and from observations in the field, it appears that Native of Yakutat use all the area within the Alaska Territory that

they owned in pre-American times, from and including Icy Bay on the north to and including Dry Bay on the south” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:52).

These areas include,

“Those shores of Disenchantment Bay and the fiords and inlets... [which] are regularly used for hunting seal, mountain goat and bear, and for gathering seagull eggs” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:52).

¹²⁰ According to Goldschmidt and Haas’s interviewees, Disenchantment Bay was widely used by Yakutat Tlingit for sealing into the 1940s:

“Disenchantment Bay is a place where I get my seals from. All the men from here get seals there. They went there also spring. They also go up there to hunt mountain goats and bear. They go way up Russell Fiord for these. There is no special ownership up there (Helen Bremner #31, corroborated by Minnie Johnson #41, Olaf Abraham #33, and Sam George #36)” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

These areas were used not only for sealing, but for other resource procurement activities, as well, including hunting and gathering seagull eggs:

“[Disenchantment Bay and the fiords and inlets above it are regularly used by the Yakutat Natives for hunting seal, mountain goat, and bear, and for gathering seagull eggs. It was territory used by the whole tribe:] ‘Disenchantment Bay and Nunatak Fiord, at the head of Russell Fiord, are good bear hunting area. It is also a good seagull island. We get seagull eggs in June. Two boats went up there this spring and brought eggs back’ (Jack Ellis #35)” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

¹²¹ Goldschmidt and Haas also reported that Yakutat Tlingit continued the use of Icy Bay for sealing in the 1940s. According to their informants,

“My brother had a house for seal hunting and used to trap there [at Icy Bay]. Three years ago Peter Harry and William Thomas went there to trap” (Billy Jackson #39)” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:46).

An additional informant also reflected on the use of the bay for sealing:

“Yakutat people all go to Icy Bay for seal hunting. Kayak Tom had one house at Icy Bay and one house at Yahtse. ... The last time he was there was about five years ago, I think. There are also some people from Yskuisgi (Jishkweidi?). These

people also claim Katalla. There are now whites in this area because it is used for mining' (Jack Ellis #35)" (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

Apparently, the use of Icy Bay declined for some Yakutat Tlingit users in the early twentieth century:

"[The use of Icy Bay by Kayak Tom and other Natives was testified to by several witnesses:] 'Icy Bay used to be a place where our people went. Kayak Tom has a smokehouse there. I never was there, but William Thomas has a claim on it. He is now at Lost River with his wife. The last time I know of his being there was in 1928' (Helen Bremner #31)" (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:46-47).

¹²² A number of individuals have shared personal recollections of hunting for seal bounties at Icy Bay:

"So when I took off, I took off at eight o'clock in the evening. And I was going to hunt up in Icy Bay because I figured that I knew how to hunt and I could make some money for my family. And that's when I took off with an eighteen horse. I says, 'Well I got my eighteen horse paddle here and I'm going to make it.' And it was nice because westerly winds stopped in the evening and it started sometimes up until eight in the morning or nine in the morning and it'd start blowing again. So one o'clock in the morning I would walk into camp in Icy Bay where Joe Nelson, Ray Smith and I think Johnson were there. And I hunted there for one-month time. That was during the pupping season and expanded into beyond that a little bit. So I shot 600 seals in that time. Joe Nelson had shot 900. I think he had 400 and Ray had a big skiff that he was hunting out of. I don't know if he got 200 in that one spring season. I had onboard my boat, I had all my hunting equipment plus the fuel, plus a five-horse when I took off from here...But right off Sitkagi Bluff I ran into choppy water. And the, sometimes the water was coming in the bow of the boat. And I thought, 'My gosh, I am halfway to Icy Bay and it's going to take me another four hours to go back to Yakutat. And just about another two hours to the camp up...' I thought, 'If I turn back I have to run this whole section. Well, what I'll do is keep on going. I'll just go slow.' And after I passed Sitkagi Bluff it calmed down again. But what I found out is that the current comes and meets right there..." (GR).

¹²³ Skip Johnson recalls some of the techniques used for outfitting these new, non-traditional boats for sealing purposes:

"[In] the bow, we would take tires and cut them in half and then nail a tire on the, half a tire so that it'd come around that way and nail it up under the long [axis]...And that was to bump the ice. And then the outside, if we could get it, and we had a lot at that time, down at the old cannery, I mean the cannery belts

were about a foot wide. And they would finish with these belting and they'd throw them out, just toss them. So we'd gather all those up and then cut it and then nail them around the canoe like that way. And then on the bottom a little but front, up the ice hardly ever went under the boat but once in a while. And then we'd put [the belts] two feet up the sides and nail those on there. And that protected the wood from getting eat up, otherwise the ice would eat up the wood in one day, no problem. [We sometimes used] other things we could find, we'd use cardboard" (SJ).

¹²⁴ The significance of boats to Yakutat Tlingit life was – and is – evident in the fact that canoes, then plank canoes, then motorboats were given names:

Large [war] canoes were owned only by house chiefs and were therefore sometimes designated as 'tribal canoes.' They were also called 'named canoes,' (H-sayi yak^w), since they had individual names, as did lineage houses. Like the latter, the names often referred to sib crests...In recent times the custom of giving such names was applied to motorboats, for one owned by a Kwackqwan chief was named for Mount Saint Elias (waše-ta-cA yak^w)" (de Laguna 1972:340).

¹²⁵ George Ramos Sr. recalls a similar seal hunting method:

"If you're hunting seal and you're getting into them sitting on the ice, one seal will always be looking. And what you do is you get as close as possible and watch him, the one that's looking. The rest of them are just sleeping. Now when you shoot that one, they'll all come up. And they don't see anything that's suspicious, they'll go back asleep, but one of them will keep their head up. And I have shot up to five seals like that because in 1963, or 64 when the pelts, when they buy the pelts, I ran a boat, a eighteen horse canoe from Yakutat to Icy Bay: an eighteen foot canoe that we used for hunting" (GR).

¹²⁶ Beyond the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias, Knight Island and the nearby mainland streams were also used as fishing locations:

"There is good humpy ground up toward Knight Island, which is called Kwáashk'. It is from this place that the Kwáashk'ikwáan got their name, and it is claimed by these people. The Bureau of Fisheries now has a house there, and it is no longer used very much' (Jack Ellis #35)" (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

Similarly, another of Goldschmidt and Haas's interviewees discussed the less frequent use of this area for fishing:

“[On the mainland just inside Knight Island there is a stream called Kwáashk’, which is the home of the Kwáashk’ikwáan.] ‘Our people used to have a claim up Disenchantment Bay at a humpy creek called Kwáashk’. I used to go there to smoke fish, but I have not been there for six years now because I can no longer get around. I used to fish there for the cannery. There were houses there a long time ago, when I was a young man’ (B.A. Jack #38)” (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

¹²⁷ In conjunction with fishing trips, Yakutat Tlingit also hunted during their trips to Point Manby and the surrounding area. According to Goldschmidt and Haas’s interviewee, Jack Ellis,

“Between Point Manby and Esker Creek is good for silver salmon and hutting seals. I think Harvey Milton went over there last year for fishing. We do not stay there but go there for the day. This used to be good trapping grounds, but whites have used poison and killed off all the animals. I think whites are going into that area to fish now” (quoted in Goldschmidt and Haas 1998:47).

¹²⁸ There is some suggestion that this person might be Bill Wheatley.

¹²⁹ Davis notes that neither was considered native to the area until recent generations:

“It is important to understand the extent of native wildlife ranges on suitable habitat on the [Yakutat] foreland. It is equally important to understand that the present-day common large mammalian species such as deer and moose, were not present or available to either prehistoric or early historic foreland occupants” (Davis 1997:45).

Deer first appeared in the region in 1934, when twelve individual Sitka black-tailed deer were introduced from the southern portion of the archipelago. These deer thrived on various islands, such as Knight Island, but did not reach high numbers on the Yakutat foreland area, likely as a result of environmental factors such as wolf predation and periods of heavy winter snows in winter browse areas nearby. From the 1940s to about the 1980s, the Yakutat people have hunted deer on the islands and eastern coastline of Yakutat Bay, opposite the Wrangell-St. Elias shoreline, but there was little reference to deer hunting within Wrangell-St. Elias in project interviews. George Ramos Sr. remembers seeing his first deer in Yakutat proper:

“I remember when they brought the first deer into Yakutat. The deer, and moose and some of the animals are not of the Yakutat area ... When they brought the first deer in, I was very small... the deer was walking right down the main street there, as it is now. And for some reason he took a disliking to a block of wood that was right below our house and he was charging that and hitting it. And so, the only car that was in Yakutat at that time belonged to the preacher, Ian Axleson. And he came down there and they lassoed the deer. And I remember

him dragging it down the road trying to take it down toward the village behind a car” (GR).

Deer continued to inhabit the Yakutat area in large numbers until the early 1970s, when particularly harsh winters brought the deer population down dramatically (Davis 1997:45; Miller and Firman 1986:104, 168).

¹³⁰ Expanding populations of moose in the interior region of Alaska pushed the animals toward the coast, over an expanse of mountains and into the Yakutat region in the 1960s.

¹³¹ Ray Sensmeier recalled the arrival of the very first moose in Yakutat proper:

“The first moose that they found in Yakutat, my uncle Jerry Nelson, they were [on] the railroad tracks went out to the fish camps and they were walking in, or walking out, and they saw this huge animal standing in the tracks so...they killed it and brought it to town. Lo and behold, it really tasted good. That one made it through the mountains from the interior and then the rest followed. So we had quite a population like in the sixties and seventies” (RS).

¹³² In addition to seagull eggs, Egg Island was also home cormorants and cormorant eggs:

“There used to be a crack along the—if you go about halfway up in there. And there’s a cave there. And the cave is called the [*Yuk tukook*], ‘The Cormorant Cave.’ And the cormorants used to lay their eggs, they built their nests and just slick inside of that cave. And I used to wonder what cormorant eggs looked like so I asked my uncle if I could go in and see if I can get one. So I finally got some cormorant eggs” (GR).

¹³³ Skip Johnson resents the accusation by Fish and Game that the Tlingit people over-hunted the moose and are to blame for the current scarcity:

“And then the worst part about it was, I heard from the Fish and Game that ‘the local people were the problem for the demise of the moose’...we went to get moose one year, the [annual] moose barbeque continued on for a while and then we went to get a moose permit to get an early moose. No. Can’t do it. ‘Well, how come?’ ‘We did a moose count and there’s not a moose for you to get a moose.’ One moose! They had let it go, Fish and Game had let it go to that point. Practically extinction” (SJ).

¹³⁴ Ted Valle’s mother was born in Kaliakh but did not grow up in the area. He explains how, at that time, travel from Yakutat to Kaliakh was commonplace:

“My mother, the last time my mother went up to Kaliakh, my mother was born in Kaliakh, and the only time she was up there was when she was two years old. Yeah, they traveled back and forth in canoes, or walked, or both” (TV).

¹³⁵ De Laguna reports on the locations of past Yakutat Tlingit settlements and where the people lived in the period of her research:

“The former settlements at Lituya Bay, at Dry Bay, on the rivers between Dry Bay and Yakutat, as well as those farther west at Icy Bay, at Cape Yakataga and Kaliakh River, at Controller Bay, and about the Copper River Delta, are now deserted. A few descendants of their former inhabitants may be found in Cordova, in Hoonah and Sitka, or in Juneau, but the greater number live today at Yakutat” (de Laguna 1972:17).

¹³⁶ The enabling legislation included specific clauses pertaining to “grandfathered” uses of the landscape within Wrangell-St. Elias. Section 201(9) of ANILCA states,

“Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park, containing approximately eight million one hundred and forty-seven thousand acres of public lands, and Wrangell-Saint Elias National Preserve containing approximately four million one hundred and seventeen thousand acres of public lands, as generally depicted on map numbered WRST-90,007, and dated August 1980. The park and preserve shall be managed for the following purposes, among others: To maintain unimpaired the scenic beauty and quality of high mountain peaks, foothills, glacial systems, lakes, and streams, valleys, and coastal landscapes in their natural state; to protect habitat for, and populations of, fish and wildlife including but not limited to caribou, brown/grizzly bears, Dall sheep, moose, wolves, trumpeter swans and other waterfowl, and marine mammals; and to provide continued opportunities including reasonable access for mountain climbing, mountaineering, and other wilderness recreational activities. Subsistence uses by local residents shall be permitted in the park, where such uses are traditional, in accordance with the provisions of title VIII” (94 Stat. 2376).

Section 204 of ANILCA also recognized and agreed to honor valid Native Corporation sections within what was Wrangell-St. Elias.

On the matter of access and transportation methods, Section 205 specifies,

“With respect to...the Malaspina Glacier Forelands area of Wrangell-Saint Elias National Preserve and the Dry Bay area of Glacier Bay National Preserve, the Secretary may take no action to restrict unreasonably the exercise of valid commercial fishing rights or privileges obtained pursuant to existing law, including the use of public lands for campsites, cabins, motorized vehicles, and

aircraft landings on existing airstrips, directly incident to the exercise of such rights or privileges, except that this prohibition shall not apply to activities which the Secretary, after conducting a public hearing in the affected locality, finds constitute a significant expansion of the use of park lands beyond the level of such use during 1979.”

¹³⁷ Sam Demmert recalls that he was unable to attend any of the meetings held to discuss issues surrounding Alaska Native access at this time. He hints that perhaps the timing of these meetings may have been intentionally scheduled to exclude anyone who participated in the fishing season:

“I don’t recall participating in any meetings by Park Service itself you know, just secondhand information that—you only have a certain amount of time to comment. That certain amount of time was when we were fishing” (SD).

¹³⁸ For example, trapping cabins have been increasingly utilized by non-Native trappers on Yakutat Bay:

“You’re allowed to have trap lines and things like that, but some of the ones, the non-Natives that participate in that activity are very well off and so they were able to build cabins and use snowmachines and things like that” (RS).

Interviewees also sometimes report that they want to rebuild or repair old cabins, but are reluctant to engage what they describe as the “hassle” and regulation of working with the NPS, or express confusion regarding the permitting process:

“Those people that had permanent cabins were somehow grandfathered in but they had to meet restrictions on height. Well, you know very few people build a cabin they can raise and lower. And some people did, but not the locals. And then it even came to the point where you couldn’t even put up a tent frame anymore” (SD).

¹³⁹ Gathering seagull eggs has not been restricted thus far, but both Victoria Demmert and Ted Valle anticipate future restrictions on federal lands:

“But now there’s gates being put up as to, ‘You can’t go here, or you can only do this.’ We felt really bad for the Huna people because they were being restricted in gathering eggs when we could gather eggs up here because it was—Forest Service and it isn’t like they said, ‘Oh yeah, go ahead and do it.’ They just didn’t say anything” (VD).

¹⁴⁰ As the City and Borough of Yakutat reports,

“Disenchantment Bay and Russell Fiord are important harbor seal habitat, are home to the southern most Beluga whale concentration in the Alaska, and to feeding concentrations of kittlitz murrelets. Disenchantment Bay is extensively used by residents for subsistence activities” (CBY 2006:143).

¹⁴¹ Halibut, for example, were said to be suffering as a result of targeting by sport fishermen who tend to catch the largest fish that are the most prolific spawners in Yakutat Bay:

“there are fewer and fewer halibut because of the charter boats, and there’s quite a few of them, they take the biggest halibut and those are the spawners” (RS).

¹⁴² For example, Skip Johnson tells of a helicopter pilot who amused himself and his passengers by knocking mountain goats off the mountainside:

“Yeah, they were up there with helicopters and they used to bump them off. I talked to a helicopter pilot one time that was up there and he said, ‘Oh yeah, we had a lot of fun the day we bumped off twenty mountain goats off the mountain,’ you know. Those big probes on the front? And he said they’d just come down and ‘Bump!’ And he said, ‘It was funny. You could watch them tumble all the way down the mountain’” (SJ).

¹⁴³ A detailed overview of Tlingit perceptions of cruise ship effects has recently been completed, referencing Huna homelands in Glacier Bay proper (Deur and Thornton 2015). The findings of that study are likely to be of relevance in discussing past, present and future issues surrounding possible cruise ship effects in Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays.

¹⁴⁴ As Davis notes,

“Seasonal rounds today revolve around the timing of the salmon runs on the foreland. In the past, salmon may not have been so critical, as other resources may have played a more important or equal role with salmon, such as the year round availability of halibut, other fish, and the heavy reliance on marine mammals such as seals. Present-day harvest controls (mostly on salmon and halibut) imposed by government agencies sometimes correspond to regular native resource collection, but just as often they conflict to some degree with the natural cycle of the seasonal rounds once enjoyed by the foreland inhabitants” (Davis 1997:138).

¹⁴⁵ There are many examples to be found in Yakutat of these environmental cues being used to determine the condition of resources remotely. The arrival of eulachon and salmon in Monti

Bay, for example, continues to be a source of considerable discussion in Yakutat today, not only because of the potential harvests at Monti Bay, but also because of what it portends for other areas in the Yakutat territory. Other authors have noted this too. Davis, for example, notes that

“Clan members monitored a variety of environmental indicators that aided in predicting when and where a resource could be found. For example, today, the arrival of eulachon to Monti Bay announces that the king salmon will soon follow. The inhabitants presently know that once the king salmon are in Monti Bay, one or two weeks later the fish will be available in rivers as far away as Dry Bay” (Davis 1997:137).

¹⁴⁶ Again, according to Davis:

“The most productive seal hunts took place during the spring months of April and May (a practice that continues today). Spring weather is better and adult seals and their pups were/are concentrated on the floating ice near the calving terminus of glaciers” (Davis 1997:143-144).

¹⁴⁷ Yakutat residents also report watching seals feed on salmon at Point Manby, which draws orcas that prey on the gathered seals.

¹⁴⁸ In 2002, the seal population at Disenchantment Bay fell under closer scrutiny by the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT) and the Northwest Cruise Ship Association (NWCA). Many local Yakutat community members had observed a decline in harbor seal within the bay. One interviewee, Ray Sensmeier, describes the large seal population in Disenchantment Bay and relates that some hunters have the impression that populations have decreased because these seals are moving into Icy Bay:

“And in Disenchantment Bay there’s fifteen hundred seals so...a lot of the hunters think they’re you know, moving into Icy Bay. And one thing I didn’t know, I learned from a scientist, is that when a seal’s born, wherever it’s born that’s where it returns to like a fish” (RS).

Together, the YTT and NWCA funded a study by the National Mammal Laboratory (NMFS) to determine if there was a correlation between cruise ship traffic and seal population distribution in Disenchantment and Icy Bays:

“The YTT and the Northwest Cruise Ship Association (NWCA) agreed that they had a strong mutual interest in having more scientific information about the potential impact of vessels on harbor seals in the Bay. The NWCA provided partial funding for a three year study, which was begun in 2002 by the NMFS National Marine Mammal Laboratory. The focus of the study is to document and evaluate the interactions, if any, between cruise ships that regularly visit

Disenchantment Bay and the harbor seals hauled out on floating ice—particularly female seals birthing and rearing pups. The study will also provide information on the distribution and abundance of harbor seals in Disenchantment Bay and the region (Disenchantment and Icy Bays), and will present a log of all cruise ships' traffic routes during their visits to the bay" (CBY 2006:143).

Interviewees report that investigations continue, but that studies have suggested vessel impacts on seal populations are currently minor along the Wrangell-St. Elias coast; some interviewees take issue with these findings.

¹⁴⁹ In the late 19th century, traders in search of sea otter in these areas would outfit local Yakutat residents with boats, guns and ammunition and pay them to hunt to supply the commercial industry. These hunting practices continued until federal legislation designated the sea otter as a protected species in 1911 (de Laguna 1972).

¹⁵⁰ As noted by the City and Borough of Yakutat,

"There are small populations of sea otters in Yakutat Bay, Icy Bay and around Cape Suckling. The Khantaak Islands and the surrounding waters contain established populations and concentration areas of sea otters. They were reintroduced by transplant in 1966 after having been wiped out by intensive hunting pressure in the early part of this century. The coast and offshore area between Cape Fairweather and Cape Suckling also provides sea otter habitat" (CBY 2006:56).

¹⁵¹ These observations appear to be consistent with studies of mountain goat breeding success in other settings. As noted by Mills and Firman,

"Vehicle traffic and noise have been documented as being disrupting to goat behavior and potentially interfering with reproductive behavior by separating nannies and kids and increasing susceptibility to predation, in studies in the Rocky Mountains" (Miller and Firman 1986:169).

¹⁵² In 1975, a bag limit was enforced regarding hunting mountain goats, and this greatly impacted Yakutat Tlingit hunters' ability and willingness to hunt for the goats in their traditional hunting areas:

"When logging began in the Icy Bay area in the late 1960s and early 1970s, camps were established and roads were built near the areas where hunting had taken place by Yakutat residents. Key respondents reported that they stopped hunting in the area because of the increased activity and number of people, and the destruction of their hunting camps. Roads were constructed and timber was

removed up the sides of the mountains creating easier access to land based motor vehicles to the cliffs where goats were hunted. Because of the increased pressure on goat populations by the newly established logging camps and the increased access, the bag limit was lowered from two to one goat per hunter by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game” (Miller and Firman 1986:169-170).

¹⁵³ Referring to areas outside of Wrangell-St. Elias, Eli Hanson explains these changes:

“If you look at the moose population, we’re allowed only so many on this side of the Dangerous River, we’re down to the twenty five now...When I first came here we were allowed fifty moose period, on Yakutat...You didn’t have to be a bull or it you could take a cow at the time. That was the early sixties” (EH).

¹⁵⁴ Of Dry Bay, Thornton writes: “Today, the area supports a healthy commercial salmon fishery, though permits are limited and access to the fishery has been tightly controlled by the state” (Thornton 2007:7).

¹⁵⁵ Plant gathering of devil’s club, red cedar, strawberries, mushroom and hemlock continues to be a common practice among the Yakutat Tlingit. As a child, Yvonne Baker learned to identify the many wild plants around her under the tutelage of her parents, but it wasn’t until she became an adult that she came to understand their medicinal applications:

“So, but I think if I look back, my mom really fostered a lot of that as a child. Just, I grew up with the wild plants. You have plants in the house everywhere. And she would talk just about the importance of plants and my dad who is well-known for making medicines would take me with him and explain to the importance of certain plants. But it wasn’t until I was an adult that he actually started really showing me how to use these plants. I’ve been taught you know, since I was little, ‘this is this, and this is what it’s used for, and this is what it can do.’ But to actually start doing that, it wasn’t until I came back from the military that my dad started showing me” (YB).

Devil’s club is particularly pungent but Yvonne relishes the fragrance:

“[I] suppose if you didn’t, aren’t growing up around it, it might not [smell very good] because one of my nephews does not like the smell of it...But my boys, when my dad starts making that on the stove and they get a little stepstool and they’re standing over it and they’re like...breathing in the steam, and they’re like, ‘Oh, that smells so good!’” (YB).

Yvonne Baker and her father gather devil’s club along the road system. Gathering is done systematically and with respect for the plant and its continued well-being:

“[Yvonne and her father] never [gathered] in the same place. And my dad and I are always on the lookout for good spots for nice older plants that you can take some of but that you know is going to be there since it’s a really great old plant. Might take a shoot, but that we come back to and so there are places all over that we can go...So then you know in a few years we can come back and maybe take another offshoot, but once we take from one place we don’t visit it for a while...Growing up with, wanting a respect for plants...They’re alive and living as well and taking them, there’s a certain amount of respect that you have to give for taking that” (YB).

Sam Demmert uses the bark of the devil’s club to create powerful medicine and describes the technique used to ensure continued plant health:

“Yeah, the older [devil’s club] you get, the older ones are a lot better than ...[others]. The think about the older ones, you never want to kill them either. You know, you just take the parts off that you need and let them continue growing” (SD).

Demmert comments on the gathering and use of other medicinal plants in addition to devil’s club:

“But there was a berry called the crowberry and we use that for cancer along with the cedar and devil’s club ...There was another swamp tree I don’t know what it’s called. It looks like a hemlock. The needles are in clusters instead of flat [yew?]. And their bark is really rough. It’s not smooth. It was always black, black markings. They only grow in certain places in the swamp. Lower southeast they grow huge. The ones I’ve been able to find up here are just kind of sticks. But those are things we use for medicine” (SD).

Red cedar was also mentioned as a plant with significant medicinal properties:

“One of the things I didn’t mention was medicine we had there. They’re not in the parks as much but we used these lands for gathering medicine, devil’s club. The only thing we don’t have up here is red cedar and I haven’t been able to find it. Someone said there was a patch in Icy Bay” (SD).

Mary Ann Porter describes a plant that would assist Tlingit runners with their stamina during their trips between villages:

“There’s a plant that actually, when you take it, the runners would take it when they were running. They were running messages to the rivers. They would take

this plant and take it while they were running to help their heart. It helped their heart” (MP).

Unfortunately, very few people have received much knowledge regarding the gathering and preparation of wild plants for medicinal or for subsistence purposes. Yvonne Baker has taught a foraging class during which students were taught how to gather and prepare wild foods:

“Yeah, just recently we did a foraging class, a year ago. And so I was just telling my kids that the ‘wild rice,’ that lily [*Fritillaria spp.*] are starting to come out and I was shocked at this stage of growth that they’re already amazing. This spring has been unreal...I was able to show them, ‘This is wild rice,’ and they were really excited about it. Taking them around the beach, enjoying the beach greens and those kinds of things are just really fun for them...That was one thing that we really noted over the three day...class that we were gathering during all three days. And on the last day we put all of these together to make you know a nice meal. We each did a dish. And we thought, ‘This is three days to make one dish and a lot of work in between.’ It gives you even more respect for those people that came before and their ability to preserve” (YB).

Yvonne Baker expressed interest in teaching wild plant cultivation and care, saying, “I talked to someone who worked at the University about some natural gardens and—to teach people how to do sort of enhance their certain areas that—just what grows here naturally” (YB).

Mushrooms continue to be harvested by Yakutat Tlingit, though prime gathering spots are somewhat guarded. Mary Ann Porter, who is privy to these locations, made these comments regarding the knowledge transferred regarding locations for mushroom picking:

“I heard the comments, but not real statements to me. Just comments when they were talking. So most of the time I think when you’re talking, an elder will want you to know something but wants you just mind your own business, but still want you to know something, they will tell somebody. You will hear that and then you’d know that it’s something that you don’t perpetuate” (MP).

As with many traditional resource-harvesting practices, mushroom gathering requires tutelage from ecological stewards in the Yakutat Tlingit community. Yvonne Baker describes her experience taking her children to gather mushrooms:

“I took them out last year showing them different mushrooms...It’s wild. And I thought it was really cool that last year they were so interested and this year I can focus a little more on when is the right time and those kinds of things while they’re still interested” (YB).

In addition to the variety of plants discussed above, some interviewees also reported consumption of the cambium layer of Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*): “We eat hemlock. That’s where we got our sweets from. It was just like candy” (SD).

¹⁵⁶ As Mills and Firman note,

“Much of the gathering continues to take place along the water front near the community, where it has for generations. A few older residents expressed concern that some of the old berry patches which had been traditionally have been replaced by development” (Miller and Firman 1986:122).

¹⁵⁷ Similarly, as Davis reports, “Coffee cans and plastic containers have replaced grass and spruce root baskets for collecting berries and glass containers have replaced the bentwood box for storage” (Davis 1997:134, 154).

¹⁵⁸ There was a consistent concern among the hunters interviewed, that the moose population is being mismanaged by the ADF&G. Skip Johnson critiques Fish and Game’s management technique related to the moose hunting regulations:

“The thing that happens with the moose, the system is regulated to develop inferior animals. And the reason is, I studied Boone and Crocket before I got my guide license. I was a guide back in the 60s, registered guide in Alaska, and I got my guide license. And one of the things we studied pretty extensively is Boone and Crockett. And the realization that the taking of the biggest, the primest, the best animals that there are, is the detriment to the survival of the species, totally. Any time you take out at the Fish and Game, ‘Well you got to take the—you got to have a certain size of racks.’ Yeah, those are the guys that are really, really neat to continue the race, continue the moose herd. So now you get the little runt animals, the only ones that are left and so they’re the ones that are keeping the herds going. So you’re getting an inferior grade of species not only in moose but bear, well everything that they’re hunting. They’re taking out prime stock. Prime stock” (SJ).

Eli Hanlon also finds the targeting of healthy, large males in the moose population to be problematic:

“But now what the management is doing is they’re allowing only bulls to be taken and that doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to me. I’m not a game biologist, but it’s just something that doesn’t set well. You’re only taking the male [of the] species. When you’re hunting you consider your population of any species by doing away with the males” (EH).

Bert Adams Sr. provides a detailed account regarding the formula utilized by Fish and Game and the release of moose hunting permits south of Yakutat. He also suggests that a possible solution to the current problem could be to open up a new area for hunters:

“There’s a lot of moose in Yakutat. And we have the district you know divided into two parcels and [?] on this side of Dangerous River to Dry Bay. And this way to the East River back toward Dangerous River. All of the hunting is concentrated on this side. And Fish and Game and you know Forest Service are concerned about the cow/bull ratio. And over the years you know they’d knock it down from thirty to twenty five on this side of the river, but they keep it the same on the other side. The bull/cow ratio had been, to have a healthy population you have to have twenty five bulls to every hundred cows. And this has been down to eleven, twelve, way low in the past two years and that’s the reason why they limited the take to twenty five on this side. But on the other side and that’s you know a lot of moose out there. And all in all, on both sides, there’s a healthy moose population but if the Dry Bay area can be opened up for easy access, then a lot of that pressure would be taken off in here and people would be going down to hunt in Dry Bay” (BA).

¹⁵⁹ Yvonne Baker remembers the care her mother took to maintain the berry bushes near their home in recent years, which she describes as a manifestation of this much deeper Yakutat Tlingit ethic:

“We have berry bushes in our backyard and my mom would really worry about them when we had like a drought or something, she’d get a sprinkler and stick in the berry bushes and turn it on to make sure they got their water” (YB).

¹⁶⁰ A tribe, as defined by the Bureau of Indian Affairs:

“is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States. ... Furthermore, federally recognized tribes are recognized as possessing certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States. At present, there are 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages (BIA 2015).

¹⁶¹ The establishment of the ANB laid the groundwork for the creation of a number of new Alaskan Native political organizations—from village to state level—that sprang up in the decades to follow, including the Yak-Tat Kwaan. Many Yakutat Tlingit credit the ANB with “helping pull the tribe together” in the early years, as they began to seek federal status. At around the time of federal recognition, the community formed the Yakutat Native Association, a non-profit organization that sought to promote tribal self-governance, and has continued into recent times. Collaborating with other entities, the group helped create a “Yakutat Action Plan”

that led to a number of community improvements, including the construction of a new dock and the renovation of the ANB Hall. Self-governance remains a high priority for many tribal members today. See, e.g., Thornton (2002) for a review of this history.

¹⁶² Both the Tlingit and Eyak not only share an intermingled past, they now face similar economic and socio-cultural challenges as Alaskan Natives in rural settings, and sometimes have worked together to better address these issues. Today, the independent Eyak are represented by the federally recognized Native Village of Eyak (NVE) located in the city of Cordova. In part as an outgrowth of ANCSA, the Native Village of Eyak Traditional Council gained federal recognition in 1971 (Hund 2014:274).

When ANCSA was originally enacted by Congress, it authorized the formation of a number of village level corporations, but did not include a village corporation for the Native Village of Eyak in Cordova. Instead, it was due to the petitioning of Cecil Barnes, a Chugach leader, that the Eyak Corporation was approved for incorporation in July of 1973. The Eyak Corporation is one of five village corporations within the Chugach region, and when it was formed, it represented 326 shareholders who identified primarily as being of Aleut heritage, but possessed clear ties to Yakutat Tlingit (Eyak Corporation n.d.). In addition to federally recognizing Alaska Native corporations on a local level, ANCSA also authorized the formation of twelve regional corporations in the State of Alaska, including the Chugach Alaska Corporation (CAC); incorporated on June 23, 1972, the CAC included the Eyak community in Cordova as shareholders, along with the communities of Seward, Valdez, Whittier, Port Graham, Chenega Bay, Nanwalek (English Bay) and Tatitlek (CAC n.d.b.; Eyak Corporation n.d.).

Today, the Native Village of Eyak is still located within Cordova's city limits. In 1972, Cordova had annexed the village of Eyak, expanding the city limits and population. Cordova again expanded in 1993 when the city annexed an additional 68.23 square miles (CCC n.d.). According to the 2010 census, Cordova had a population of 2,239 individuals, with 70.25% identifying as white, 10.9% of the population identified themselves as Asian, 8.84% of the population identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native and 8.98% identified as two or more races (US Census Bureau n.d.).

The City of Cordova is nestled into Orca Inlet, within the southeastern portion of the Prince William Sound. Situated 52 air miles southeast of Valdez and 150 miles southeast of Anchorage, Cordova is accessible only by airplane or boat. The city is linked to Whittier, Valdez, Tatitlek and Chenega through a ferry service operated by the Alaska Marine Highway System. There is also year-round barge service to Cordova, connecting the city to the North Pacific Ocean shipping lanes via the Gulf of Alaska. The city itself is comprised of 61.4 square miles of land and 14.3 square miles of sheltered waters. Cordova has a temperate rain forest climate, characterized by an average annual precipitation of 167 inches and an average annual snowfall of 80 inches. The average temperature in wintertime is 20 degrees Fahrenheit and 55 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer (City of Cordova n.d.).

Today, fishing and fish processing are central to Cordova's economy. Cordova supports a large fishing fleet for Prince William Sound, as well as several fish processing plants. Copper River red salmon, pink salmon, herring, halibut and a number of other species of fish are harvested at

facilities in and around the city. In 2011, almost 400 residents of the community held commercial fishing permits. Additionally, almost half of all households have at least one individual working within the fishing industry. The largest employers in the city are Trident Seafoods, Inc., Cordova School District, Cordova Community Medical Center, the City and the Alaska Department of Transportation (City of Cordova n.d.).

Both commercial and subsistence fishing continue to play a prominent role in the NVE members' cultural traditions and economy (CRKS 2011; Chugachmiut n.d.). Nearby streams and marine waters contain sockeye, coho and Chinook salmon, as well as rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden char, halibut, rockfish and lingcod. Shrimp, razor clams and a diverse array of hardshell clams are also widely available in the surrounding waters, facilitating a rich mixed subsistence economy (ADF&G 2006:3).

Due to the importance traditional lands and their resources have to Eyak cultural identity, stewardship of the lands figures significantly into contemporary NVE governance. As part of the NVE Traditional Council tribal government, the NVE Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) acts to preserve Eyak traditional lands and culture, as well as administer the tribe's resources and protect their lands against environmental degradation. As the NVE asserts on their website today, "the people of Eyak have been stewards of this land for over 7,000 years and DENR seeks to continue that tradition" (NVE n.d.). The DENR has collaborated with various government and non-governmental entities in resource management efforts, such as the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program run by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Subsistence Management. According to the NVE's website,

"Since 2001, DENR has expanded greatly and is now pioneering a modern era of research and collaborative management combining western science and traditional knowledge. As active stewards of the land and water, NVE has built strong ties with governmental agencies, becoming an integral part of the region's environmental and resource management policy making" (NVE n.d.).

In addition to their work in the environmental realm, the NVE also helps to sustain the cultural identity of its members through a variety of cultural programs. There is a certain urgency to these efforts, informal interviewees note, underscored by the 2008 death of Marie Smith Jones, the last native speaker of Eyak (State of Alaska n.d.). Cultural programs, especially the Ilanka Cultural Center work to preserve Alaska Native culture of the Cordova region. The Ilanka Cultural Center opened in Cordova in 2004. The Center maintains a collection of cultural materials ranging from "prehistoric" to contemporary and presents materials in exhibitions open to the public. The tribe also runs a youth cultural camp called *Miqwanwasaq* (little camp), which operates from mid-June through mid-August and offers tribal youth an opportunity to connect to their culture, especially through outdoor and craft activities emanating from Eyak traditions (NVE n.d.).

Like the YTT, the NVE faces certain economic and socio-political challenges. Both areas are inaccessible by roads and yet support a seasonal influx of tourists seeking fishing, hunting and other outdoor adventures. As federally recognized tribes, the NVE and YTT have cultivated

opportunities to partner with federal agencies and programs to address environmental and cultural issues.

¹⁶³ Hazardous contamination consisting of asbestos has been identified at both the Yakutat Army Air Base and across the Ankau Saltchucks, the complex estuary that occupies the peninsula just west of Yakutat proper. In 1980, the Department of Defense instituted the Environmental Restoration Program which was implemented in 1984:

“To remedy the problems in Alaska, the Eleventh Air Force created an environmental organization focused exclusively on overseeing the removal of debris and hazardous waste and restoring the lands back to their natural condition. Steps were taken to consult with local Alaska Native villages and a system of local environmental restoration advisory boards was established. At the same time, the Air Force took steps to insure that local labor and expertise be used to the maximum extent in the cleanup and restoration effort” (Cloe 2003:12).

These decontamination efforts began in earnest in the 1990s and have been a long term process that continues today. Remediation efforts have been concentrated at the Ankau Saltchucks, a region used by members of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe as a subsistence area where the Yakutat Culture Camp was once held.

“The Culture Camp began in 1985 and closed in 2003 due to extremely high levels of dioxin in the soil, water, and seafood. The dioxin contaminates were left from abandoned military and dump sites from the 1940’s to 1970’s scattered throughout the peninsula” (James 2012:3).

The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and the Department of Defense are working together in this immense undertaking: monitoring, testing and disposing of contaminants from the region. The efforts continue today.

¹⁶⁴ According to the Yakutat Coastal Management Plan of 2006, “being supportive of YTT and Yak-Tat Kwaan efforts to preserve not only culturally important sites, but language as well, could help promote tourism while also protecting cultural resources” (CBY 2006:87).

¹⁶⁵ In 2010, these partners formally proposed the construction of a multi-purpose building with a visitor center and museum proposed:

“The City and Borough of Yakutat, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, US Forest Service and others are teaming-up to try to obtain funding for a new multi-purpose building in Yakutat to house some new public offices and a Senior Center, Youth Center and/or Visitor Center/Museum” (CBY 2010: A-5).

As of 2011, funding for the Senior Center has been approved, but the use of the same building as a museum and visitor center was determined to be incompatible (CCED: 2011). Many Yakutat residents, Native and non-Native continue to seek such a multipurpose facility.

¹⁶⁶ Timber harvesting by the Yak-Tat Kwaan began in earnest in 1981 when a massive storm felled numerous trees on land managed by the YTK. As a result, YTK entered into a five year management agreement with Koncor Forest Products, Inc., a consortium of northern Gulf Coast Native corporations (Yak-Tat Kwaan, Chenega, Natives of Kodiak and Ouzinkie), to oversee the harvest of 47 million board feet of timber on YTK land (CBY 2006:83; CBY 2010:20 Knapp 1992). A timber mill was constructed at Sawmill Cove in Yakutat in 1984 but operated sporadically for only a year before shutting down (CBY 2010). Currently, timber harvesting has come to a halt due to community concerns regarding the environmental impacts and sustainability of the practice but may be revisited in the future.

“Current market conditions will likely keep commercial timber harvest activity low. However, the installation of a biomass electrical generation plant...in Yakutat could change this, with fuel for the plant coming from either waste wood or a planted crop. Local land owners with substantial holdings, such as the Yak-Tat Kwaan, could benefit from this” (CBY 2010:46).

¹⁶⁷ In 2010, Yak-Tat Kwaan joined with Haa Aani, LLC (HAL) in these efforts and formed three new oyster farms in the Yakutat Region. According to information provided by HAL:

“HAL is actively collaborating with these agencies and organizations in an effort to facilitate expansion of the emerging mariculture industry, leading to increased jobs and economic growth. While the mariculture in Alaska is still in its infancy, we are contributing to its rapid growth with enterprises that include ... A partnership with Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc. to form three new oyster farms in the Yakutat region. The farms now have more than 1 million seed in production and employ six tribal member shareholders” (HAL n.d.).

¹⁶⁸ Yak-Tat Kwaan has also partnered with Haa Aani LLC (HAL) in a rock harvesting venture. Along the shores of Yakutat Bay are glacial deposits of unconsolidated sand, gravel silt and clay that are being excavated for use in construction projects (roads, airport runways, harbors and ports) in the region. This enterprise is unique in that Yak-Tat Kwaan owns the surface rights in Yakutat Bay and HAL, with its links to Sealaska Corporation, has access to the subsurface rights (CBY 2010). HAL states that

“We are provided direct access to Sealaska’s 560,000 acres of subsurface estate endowed with large deposits of construction-grade aggregate. While ACA does not engage directly in the development of Sealaska’s subsurface estate, we pursue and manage strategic partnerships for the development of these resources in order to serve projects in Southeast Alaska communities. ... An example of

this is our development of a successful gravel aggregate business in partnership with ANCSA village corporation Yak-Tat Kwaan by brokering a unique partnership where the land assets of both the regional corporation and the village corporation are used to bring sand, rock and gravel to market” (HAL n.d.).

¹⁶⁹ As various documents note, Yak-Tat-Kwaan is one of several land management entities that must manage lands in a way that respects Tlingit hunting, gathering and fishing interests:

“Subsistence is currently regulated by both the federal and state governments; a great deal of subsistence hunting and fishing also takes place under sport hunting and fishing regulations, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages sport hunting on all lands. In addition, land managers like the Yak-Tat Kwaan also have a say in the types of activity that take place on their lands” (CBY 2010:11).

¹⁷⁰ In a letter to the shareholders entitled “SUSTAINABILITY = DIVERSIFICATION = RESILIENCE,” Yak-Tat Kwaan President and CEO, Casey Havens, outlined the corporation’s vision:

“Yakutat has a long social, cultural, and economic history, characterized by a dependence on its natural resources which currently provide us with quality of life amenities, tourism, recreation, our customary and traditional subsistence along with salmon and other fisheries resources. Our future is brightening; it holds Biomass electric energy, heat and refrigeration, silvicultural resources including commercial energy crops, personal use timber, pellets and firewood. We are also looking to possible expanded success through value added ventures and retail.

“I believe for the continuation of our quality of life, we must permanently develop and implement immediate and long-term, cultural, social, economic, and environmental programs, specifically designed toward SUSTAINABILITY. Sustainability success is directly dependent on the wise management of our corporation, plus sensible administration of our physical and natural resources.

“I believe it is Yak tat [*sic*] Kwaan’s role and responsibility to provide leadership and support to diversify the economy in our community by providing jobs around renewable energy, forest restoration / energy crops, tourism, subsistence, alternative fisheries and Mariculture. We must promote small business creation, expansion and retention; improve access to capital; create quality jobs and sustainable economic growth; and assist in the development of an in depth, comprehensive infrastructure through promoting job training and educational opportunities” (Havens 2010).

¹⁷¹ In 2007, the two major companies associated with the airport, Alaskan Airport Properties and Alaska Airlines together employed 23 people, nearly as many as the federal government (CBY 2010: 32).

¹⁷² For example, Yakutat Wild has developed partnerships with Alaska Airlines, while Yakutat Seafoods employs one air carrier based out of Yakutat Airport to transport fish. They also fly fish from the Tsiu River during the coho fishing season using DC-3 aircraft (CBY 2006:124).

“Coho salmon from the Tsiu have a reputation for quality including their excellent roe byproduct. Fish are transported by airplane to market; Yakutat Seafoods (YS) out of Yakutat is currently the sole commercial buyer. YS flies DC-3s two-four times/day during the season, weather permitting, to a small buying station near the Tsiu River lagoon to transport these set gillnet caught fish to Yakutat” (CBY 2009:10).

¹⁷³ “The Boy Who Raced the Seagull” and “The Boy Who Fell into the Ice” are two oral traditions that were mentioned in this context:

“He was one that raced the seagull. ...And I think that’s...good for us because we’ve maintained that because with the name, the person’s own name is always a place like this boy fell into the ice” (EA).

¹⁷⁴ Skip Johnson recalls his father speaking of the origins of the name for a place called, “The Place Where the Dog’s Can’t Get By”—a place along the east shore of Yakutat Bay sometimes visited while en route to hunting in Icy Bay and Disenchantment Bay:

“I didn’t realize it and I never even thought about—he never told me, ‘I’m going to take you up and teach you all these names.’ He would just point it out and say [the name....like a Tlingit name] that means ‘The Place Where the Dogs Can’t Get By.’ Because the dogs a long time ago when the seal would go up to the ice, the dogs didn’t ride in the canoes you know, they ran the beach. And when you got to Chicago Harbor there was one place there right where this little stream came down, and this rock, and there’s no beach...and they have to run up the side of the mountain and go over the top” (SJ).

¹⁷⁵ Yvonne Baker discusses how her own ideas and identity were influenced by hearing about how grandparents would spend a month in the spring near Hubbard Glacier:

“When I was little my dad would take us on boat rides and we’d get to go up to the glacier and mom would say, ‘This is where your grandpa used to come.’ And so, yeah. They used to go camping up there but... They would spend like a month in the spring, but that was before I came along. ...[My parents would tell me that] they’d be up there for about a month at a time. I never asked them what

they were specifically there for. I just got to hear of the good times they had” (YB).

Baker notes that she did not realize how connected she was to her homeland until she spent four years away from it while serving in the military:

“So I was stationed in Yuma, Arizona and that was horrible because I couldn’t [be home]. And I would drive to San Diego every weekend just because I needed to be near the water. And when I finally got to come home, I didn’t realize how much I missed it. I didn’t realize there was sort of this part of me that was always longing to be home and it never felt right until I was back home again, and I knew I was going to be home. And I think, you know, it has a lot to do with just that the land here is so deeply seated inside of me” (YB).

The homeland that Baker discusses is not limited to the city of Yakutat and the lands around it, but it expands into the portions of Wrangell-St. Elias that are part of the Yakutat Tlingit’s traditional territory. Though these lands are now protected as national park lands, the connection that Yakutat Tlingit interviewees feel to these lands is said to have not diminished.

¹⁷⁶ On this point, she elaborates:

“And so our people from then on after taking care of their babies they had nobody to take care of their babies because they lived in different houses. And so they weren’t taught, ‘This is the way you take care of your children,’ and by babysitters so you can work and put up food and stuff. All that changed, but nobody was teaching their own people, you know how to wash your clothes, how to cook and how to hunt, or work for money. So a lot of them were poor and they were still poor enough to Icy Bay to get the seal and out to sea in different places to get fish to eat and stuff. And so it was kind of hard I think all over Alaska because our people couldn’t speak their language” (LF).

¹⁷⁷ Bert Adams Sr. is one of the remaining storytellers in the Yakutat region, a responsibility that he carries forward in diverse venues from government meetings to public presentations to published books:

“You know you’re having a lot of these meetings here these past few years and talking about history and culture and all that and so [a Gunaxoo elder by the name *Tekwaht?*] would be there and I would ask a question, ‘Could you tell the story.’ And she said, ‘No.’ And she wouldn’t say why then, but when I got home she took me to task. She said, ‘Women didn’t tell the stories.’ It was always the men that told the stories. And I said well, ‘You’re going to have to teach me.’ So she did her best to help me understand but there was a lot of stories. I wish I

could say them in Tlingit you know. So now, you know, [chuckles] I'm the story teller" (BA).

¹⁷⁸ Skip Johnson describes a unique scenario where he approached NPS requesting help to preserve a sunken ship at Schooner Beach or "the Schooner Strip," which was said to be in danger of being taken over by the shifting beaches of the Manby Stream, within Wrangell-St. Elias. He was said to have met with resistance:

"There was historic boat there, I don't know if was Chinese or Japanese, but there was a schooner there and the three masts were sticking up there. We called it the 'Schooner Strip,' and it was buried in the sand... from what I understand, it was the early part of the century that that boat went on the beach there, and then when the St. Elias took it over we could see that the water, the sand was moving because in Yakutat the beaches are not permanent, everything moves. Maybe one day there's a river coming out, the next day you wake up and you see a corks line that's all because the river's moved. But the schooner, we could tell that it was moving in and we asked the Park Service people if we could go move that schooner because it was moving. 'No, no. Can't touch it. No, no that's government land. You can't touch it.' 'Well, it's going to go away.' 'Well, if it goes away, that's too bad, tough.' Well, this is historic...we really want to save it. And we had a number of people that were willing to go over there and help dig it out and put it on skiffs and winch it up to higher ground so that it would be saved because nobody had really seen the hull, only the three masts sticking up. ... But anyhow, one day they said, 'Oh, Skip now you can go over there and get that schooner. It's on the beach.' Well, it was the middle of the winter. And they did, it finally got up to where you could see—they took pictures, the people the flying the airplanes, you know the air taxis took photographs. You can see it sitting on the beach and it opened right up. You can see the hull and everything, but it was down on the beach. But it was too late, it was you know. And that really, really aggravated me as far as the conversation thing the Park Service advocates for and they would not allow us to move that schooner. And I was really, really pissed. It makes me unhappy that they did that to us" (SJ).

¹⁷⁹ She elaborates on this point:

"[W]e live in the park and in the Tongass. They are tribal lands that we're living in and they [the NPS] can't even have a presence here because it's a thing about money. But it's an area of 'Where's your interest? Are you interested in the people who are living here or are you interested in the people from New York who are going to buy your trinkets and stay in your lodge?' And now I hear that they're talking about if you're a commercial photographer, they're going to charge you for taking pictures in the park, which is ridiculous!" (VD).

¹⁸⁰ As a result of this consultation, the people of Yakutat decided they did not want to allow four-wheeler access within the park but plane was considered less invasive because of existing airstrips (RS):

“You know they wanted to allow four-wheeler use on the other side and from seeing their air photos of the areas that have been traversed by ATVs, it didn’t seem like a good idea because I’ve seen tracks in the tundra that were put there during WWII and they’re still, you know still eroding and they don’t come back to how they were originally. So we didn’t want that to happen” (BA).

¹⁸¹ When asked if the tradition of subsistence and commercial fishing could be restored at Point Manby, Skip Johnson was skeptical, not because of an absence of fish, but because the traditional methods outlined and required by current park policy for subsistence fishing were created as a means to perpetuate inefficiency:

“Well, the restoration of the situation over there is, it’s really hard to say how it could possibly even be restored because of the encroachment of the new politics of...the Mount St. Elias unit over there. You can’t revitalize something that has been consciously and methodically dismantled. Just like trying to build an old relic, a WWII relic with no parts. And the fishing situation is different over there. The way we fish is different. The way of hauling things are different. Things evolve so we might use weapons carriers to do it then, the method of transportation, because of the advent of new units. ...In other words, we used three-wheelers over there then and weapons carriers, now there’s better stuff, there’s better things, but they say we have to use traditional methods. Then how do you go back and use old stuff in the modern day?” (SJ).

¹⁸² As Victoria Demmert notes,

“We’re going to reap the benefits or suffer the consequences of whatever decisions are made by the feds. And so we need to be at the table because when they’re retired off in Arizona or somewhere, we’re going to deal with whatever they did. And we want to make sure it’s there for our grandchildren’s grandchildren so that they can enjoy it in the same way we did and that we are...We firmly believe and we know this is all tribal land. The Park Service or the Forest Service or State, whoever, they might have the deed but it’s still tribal land. That doesn’t change anything. We’re the stewards” (VD).

Skip Johnson suggests that awareness of land rights and traditional uses within the Park must be integrated into the classroom:

“Because I do think the young people really need to know more about what’s happening with the land. I don’t know that it’s taught in school. I don’t know

how much my nephews and nieces know about these things. I haven't talked to them about that you know" (SJ).

Victoria Demmert, among others, would also like to see NPS step into a more prominent role not only in the interpretation and informational guidance of visitors to the area, but as a point of contact for those who are working to organize activities inside park boundaries:

"Well, I would expect them [the Park Service] to have an office, to where we could go and see someone. I would expect—they used to have interpreters. They used to have programs here so people could go out into the park and they would take hikes and just... Our young people here need to be able to take those hikes and all those nice things that other people are having in other areas. We are part of this park and this park and you could never ever tell it" (VD).

Some interviewees suggest that these interpretive concepts are "too little too late" and provide a symbolic gesture when more tangible forms of Yakutat Tlingit engagement with the park are needed. When asked if adding the Tlingit placenames to current maps would be a good idea, Ted Valle responds, "it would be a good, but I don't know what good it would do now" (TV).

Interviewees also say that as more equitable roles are sought alongside NPS interpreters especially, younger generations of Yakutat Tlingit must be educated and encouraged to fill those roles. Furthermore, Demmert suggests that an increase in tribal input regarding park access policies could result in a more robust tourist experience by expanding the current venue for scenic tours and interpretive programs:

"They could do more to put an office in, let us be able to have dialogue and then have the interpretive programs that they have in other places to where people can go out and hike and people could invite... When you get all these 'sporties' in, now they're starting to bring their families and they want to have something to do. They want to do something besides [sports fishing]. The glaciers are beautiful, but there are beautiful hikes you could take. There are beautiful places you could see. There are places that with partnership with them, we could talk about our history, migration" (VD).

¹⁸³ There are a number of places that appear likely to meet the standard for Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) status, though detailed investigations—beyond those undertaken in the current report—would be needed to meet the standard for a National Register nomination. Individual landmarks such as Mount St. Elias and Icy Bay appear to be eminently eligible for TCP status, reflecting their singular importance in clan histories and in the shared identity of Yakutat Tlingit today. Many other specific landforms, such as individual glaciers and waterways may also meet TCP criteria, including but not limited to those that relate to clan origins and traditional properties within Wrangell-St. Elias. While individual landforms might warrant consideration as Traditional Cultural Properties, the distribution of culturally

significant sites is broad and might best be treated as a “district” rather than as a conventional TCP. The entire southern coastline of Wrangell-St. Elias is of pronounced, and arguably unique, cultural and historical significance to Alaska Native communities. A Cultural Landscape nomination might allow the NPS to effectively “capture” the range of landscape features, along with all of the cultural knowledge and intangible values that are nonetheless potentially contributing to the Wrangell-St. Elias’s National Register eligibility.

¹⁸⁴ Access to places within Wrangell-St. Elias for ceremonial purposes is not common, but the practice would likely be protected under *The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA)*.

¹⁸⁵ Another NPS Ethnography Program category, the Ethnographic Landscape Study, might potentially be considered for the study of topics indicated in this conclusion, but may be too limited in its scope. In contrast to the Traditional Use Study, NPS-28 describes an Ethnographic Landscape Study as follows:

“This is a limited field survey to identify and describe the names, locations, distributions, and meanings of ethnographic landscape features. It can be combined with traditional use studies or conducted as part of other cultural landscape studies. It follows or may be combined with the ethnographic overview and assessment when gaps in the available data base indicate the need for detailed data on park ethnographic resources. Community members will be involved in site visits and ethnographic interviewing. Studies will be coordinated with the cultural landscape program, which has primary responsibility for cultural landscape identification and management” (USDOINPS 1998b).

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