ALASKA NATIVES IN TRADITIONAL TIMES
A CULTURAL PROFILE PROJECT

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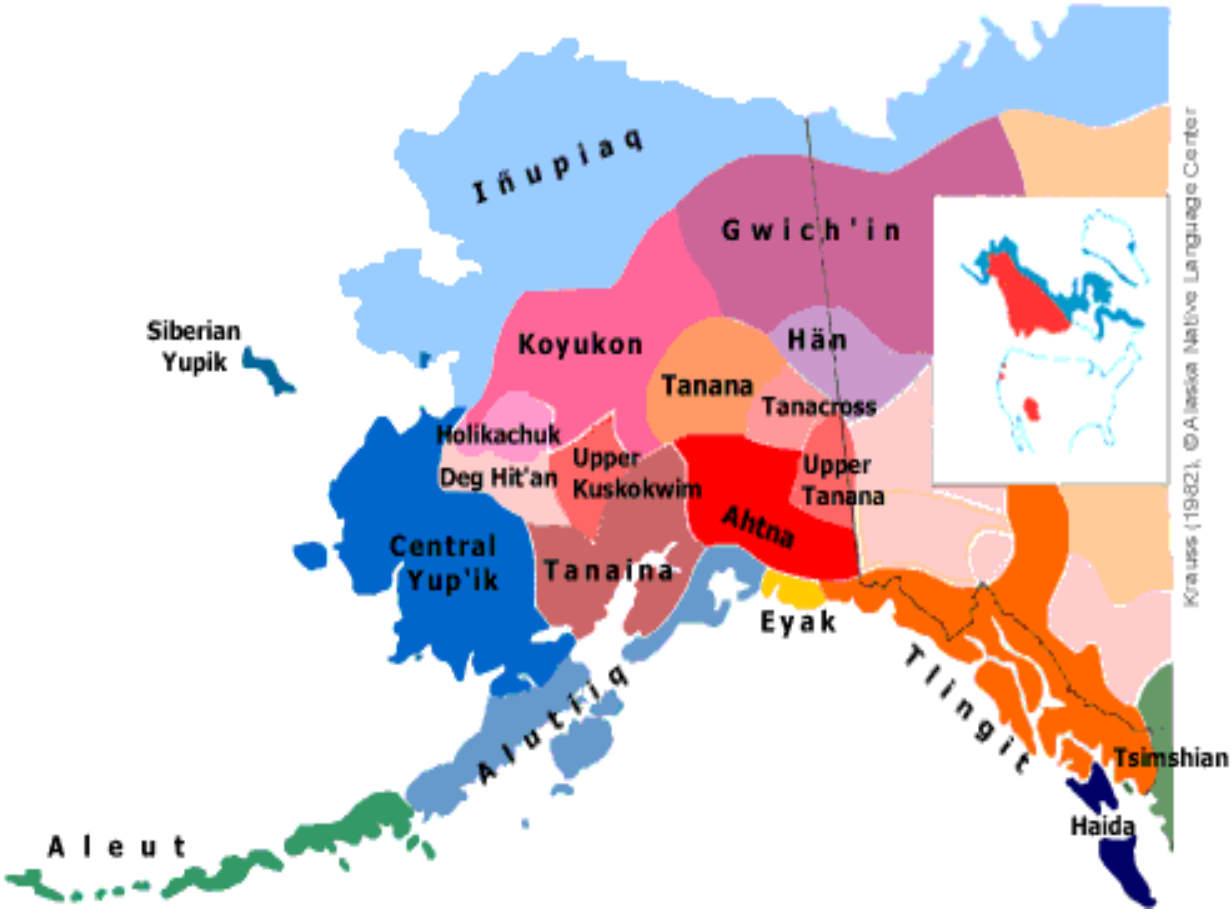
Native Peoples of Alaska



From: Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska-Fairbanks

The small map insert to the right shows Iñupiaq to be a dialect of the Inuit language which ranges across the North American arctic rim into Greenland (light blue). The map insert also shows the spread of the Athabaskan Indian language (red) from Interior Alaska across Northwest Canada. Note that Navajo and Apache people in the Southwest and several tribes along the Northwest Coast also speak an Athabaskan language. Much more on this map and some of the historical questions it raises in Chapter 3.

Chapter One

The Cultural Profile Project in a Nutshell

What is the Cultural Profile Project? Think of this project and its assignments as an educational expedition into Alaska Native history. As with any expedition – whether to explore unknown territory or collect scientific information or find new trade routes – it aims to accomplish certain objectives and perhaps discover exciting wonders along the way.

The purpose of this educational expedition is to construct a picture of Native life in traditional times. By *traditional times* we mean those times before Native societies were changed forever by sustained contact with the cultural habits, economic ambitions, and infectious diseases of invading Russians and Americans. As the title suggests, we call this historical research the *Cultural Profile Project*. You will select a Native group to study, perhaps from your region of Alaska. Or perhaps do a comparison of two Native cultures from different parts of Alaska. Using both oral and written historical materials, you will develop a "cultural profile" of your selected Native group(s) as they lived at the time of the invasions.

To "profile" means to describe the significant features of something or someone. The first thing the Cultural Profile Project asks of you is to research and describe significant features of your Native group's regional environment. Was their territory mainly tundra and hills? Or was it forests and rivers? If, for example, they lived on the arctic coast, what role did sea ice play in their daily lives? What subsistence resources were available to them?

By the way, what do we mean by "subsistence"? Outside of Alaska, subsistence is most often defined as what people do to scratch out a minimum level of existence, especially when there is barely enough food or money for survival. When talking about Alaska Natives, however, subsistence means to support oneself and family through hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. From the point of view of those living a "subsistence lifestyle," it has nothing to do with being rich or poor. For example, Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) defines *subsistence* as:

> the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicrafts articles out of inedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade.

After profiling the regional environment, you are asked to describe how your Native group settled upon and used the land and its resources. In what ways did the environment shape their settlement patterns and how they socially organized themselves? Did they, for example, live in large or small settlements? Did they frequently move from one place to another to find fish

and game? What was the territorial range of their subsistence activities? How did they harvest the fish and game inhabiting this range to meet their daily needs?

Then you are asked to profile the Native group's traditional social organization. This includes elements such as family and kinship structure, economic activities, and systems of law and politics. What were the rules regulating who could marry whom and where the new couple would live? Within the family, who was expected to do what? What, for example, did their seasonal round of subsistence activities look like? Did they always have enough to eat? How did they govern their community and maintain law and order? Did they have hostile neighbors and how did they defend themselves? What do we know about their traditional commerce – that is, about their trading relationships with other people and what was traded?

Because *Worldview* is the central feature of any society's culture and deserves special attention, we devote an entire chapter to it. As used here, the concept of worldview refers to a traditional Native society's beliefs about their social, natural, and spiritual worlds and how they should properly behave in all three. What exactly were these beliefs and how were they expressed in ceremonies and rituals? What role did shamans play in the society's spiritual practices? Did Shamans have important duties beyond their spiritual role? What ideas were held about human nature and a person's proper place in the natural world among all other living things? And how did a Native group's ideas about their own history contribute to their cultural identity – to their view of themselves as a people with distinct values and traditions?

You will then describe their cultural products which includes their technology, science, and art. What was their housing like? What did they do for transportation? What kinds of weapons (including body armor) and tools did they use? What do we know about the scientific knowledge they developed in order to live productively within their environment? What about artistic expression and its relationship to other aspects of traditional Native life?

Elements of the Cultural Profile Project. If possible, expeditions like to have maps to show the way. On the next page is an outline of the Cultural Profile Project. This is our map. Take a good look at it. See how it is divided into the four major sections of Alaskan environments and Native adaptatons, social organization, worldview, and cultural products.

Within each of the four sections of the Outline are the specific elements you will research and describe. Keep in mind, however, that we cannot anticipate every significant aspect of traditional Native life you may find. Suppose, for example, you are working on worldview as part of a Central Yup'ik cultural profile. In your research you come across a 1998 announcement of an museum exhibit of Southwestern Alaskan culture and art called *Agayuliyararput* or "Our Way of Making Prayer." You find that the purpose of the exhibit is "to bring Yup'ik masks and ceremonial materials to a wide audience in their native context." This connection between masks and ceremonies gets your attention. You then find that Ann Fienup-Riordan, the curator of the exhibit, wrote an accompanying article entitled, "The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks." You read this article and conclude that an exciting way to portray the spiritual aspects of the Yup'ik worldview is by describing the meaning of various masks and their relation to the song and dance of traditional ceremonies.[1] But wait! You look at the Cultural Profile Outline and nowhere do you find masks as an element to be described. Don't worry about it. Just include it as part of

your discussion of worldview with perhaps a note on its overlap with Artistic Expression as discussed in Chapter Eight.*

The Cultural Profile Project

1. Alaskan Environments and Native Adaptations (Chapter 4)

Climate – arctic, sub-arctic, maritime, seasonal changes

Physiography – physical features of the area – tundra, forests, rivers, mountains, valleys, ocean conditions (e.g., sea ice)

Flora – plant life

Fauna – land animals, sea mammals, water fowl, fish

Land use and occupancy – Demographics: Size & distribution of population, Settlement patterns
Land use **–** Mapping uses of lands & waters – location and boundaries, establishing community security

2. Social Organization (Chapter 6)

Social Relations – main social institutions: family structure, kinship system, social stratification, regional groups and relations between regional groups.

Economics – primary and secondary subsistence resources
Commerce: trade routes and relationships, trade goods

Governance – group decision-making, leadership, law and order

3. Worldview (Chapter 7)

Spirituality – belief system, ceremonial practices, shamanism

Core values – social rules**,** cultural identity, historical legacy

4. Cultural products (Chapter 8)

Technology – hunting/fishing gear, tools, weaponry (and body armor), housing, transportation

Applied Science – specialized knowledge developed to maintain and improve the group's quality of life

Artistic Expression – artistic purposes, design, decoration, materials

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- **Endnotes.** From time to time you will come across a small elevated number such as after "traditional ceremonies" where we discussed Yup'ik masks just above. This signifies an *endnote* found at the end of the chapter. As used here, endnotes carry no additional information, so there is no need to interrupt your reading to view them. They only cite the source of the information or quotation used in our work here. This is an ethical requirement whenever you use someone else's words and ideas. Not to so is considered plagiarism, a transgression that could destroy one's academic reputation and career.

Why Study Native life in Traditional Times?

Cultural and civic competence. We all should know our culture's history from earliest times to the present. This seems particularly important for Native Americans whose historical experiences are so different from mainstream American culture. Without this historical knowledge, how can one become a culturally competent adult able to pass on to younger generations the traditions and values of the group? Cultural competence is most in demand when valued traditions seem in danger of being overwhelmed by modern life's confusing mix of competing belief systems and instant temptations. Unfortunately, this modern confusion can sometimes include the harsh social realities of alcohol and drug abuse.

Here is a question: Without this knowledge, is it possible for one to become a well informed citizen capable of making positive contributions to the civic affairs of the community? *All* Alaskans – Native and non-Native – will be better citizens for having studied the various cultural traditions and historical experiences of Alaska Natives. We will certainly be smarter about how this history has shaped Native views on such civic issues as land management, subsistence protections, and tribal sovereignty. This fact has been recognized by many non-Native students at the University of Alaska – Fairbanks. As the Alaska Native Studies program developed over the years, non-Native enrollment in its classes steadily grew. Why? Because they understand that as professional people working in Alaska, most likely they will be in contact with Native people. And they understand that knowledge of Native life past and present will surely increase their effectiveness.

The Cultural Profile Project: A practical application. Suppose there is an Alaska Native community not on the congressionally approved 1994 list of 227 federally recognized Alaska tribes. Without federal recognition, this group has few tribal powers and is not eligible for many of the federal programs and grants designed to assist Native American tribes. But now this tribe thinks they can prepare a strong petition for federal recognition. To comply with the current Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) petitioning process the tribe must do extensive historical research proving that they have maintained a distinct cultural identity and political cohesiveness since first contact with American authorities. This is no easy task. After petitioning for thirty-two years, for example, the Shinnecock tribe of New York state finally received federal recognition in 2010. According to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), The current procedure for federal recognition is:

> … a rigorous process requiring the petitioning tribe to satisfy seven mandatory criteria, including historical and continuous American Indian identity in a distinct community. Each of the criteria demands exceptional anthropological, historical, and genealogical research and presentation of evidence. The vast majority of petitioners do not meet these strict standards, and far more petitions have been denied than accepted. In fact, only about 8 percent of the total number of recognized tribes have been individually recognized since 1960.[2]

Like your assignment, one BIA research requirement calls for what amounts to a detailed "cultural profile" of tribal life at the time of contact with outsiders. Although certainly more extensive, the research necessary to satisfy this requirement is much like the research you will

do to complete the Cultural Profile Project. Here is something to think about: Putting the necessary time and effort into the Cultural Profile Project gives you valuable experience for doing later historical research, whether required by the BIA or by any other agency or organization, including Native organizations. Similar research was done to determine the amount and location of land to be retained by Natives as shareholders in the regional and village corporations established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971.[3]

Side trips: Sometimes expeditions get word of an interesting phenomenon calling for a side trip to understand it more fully. We also will take side trips during our expedition into Alaska Native traditional times as well. Our side trips explore useful ideas and information from various fields such as anthropology, sociology, and political science. Certain aspects of federal Indian law and ANCSA also relate to our cultural profile work. Now we take our first side trip.

> **A short side trip: ANCSA basics.** We first must understand that Alaska Natives *retained* land under ANCSA. They were not given or awarded land by the United States. Why? Because a basic principle of federal Indian law is that although Native American lands certainly fall under the sovereign authority of the United States, tribes retain a right of use and occupation – an "aboriginal title" – to their lands until clearly extinguished by a negotiated agreement with the federal government.[4] Historically in the Lower-48, such agreements usually took the form of treaties. No treaties, however, were negotiated with Alaska tribes.
>
> It is, moreover, the legal obligation of the federal government to protect a tribe's aboriginal title against "all others" until a settlement is reached. The "all others" refers to state or territorial governments and outside commercial interests such as fishing, logging, and mining companies The Court of Claims ruled in 1959 that the United States government had completely failed to protect the aboriginal title of the Tlingit and Haida tribes of Alaska.[5] And if it failed the Tlingit and Haida, surely it failed other Alaska tribes as well. With the passage of ANCSA twelve years later, the federal government sought to remedy this 104 year violation of its own law.
>
> ANCSA is the largest single land transaction between Native Americans and the federal government in United States history. Indeed, ANCSA can be called a "treaty substitute".[6] Like Indian treaties, ANCSA extinguished the remaining aboriginal title of all Alaska tribes. And like Indian treaties, Native groups retained smaller tracts of land, in this case 44 million acres of Alaska's total of 375 million acres. (All together, Lower-48 tribes currently occupy only 52 million acres of land, mainly as reservations under federal supervision.) Alaska Natives also received $1 billion in compensation for lands lost. And, finally, like Indian treaties, ANCSA required Alaska Natives to accept a set of rules specifying how the retained lands and financial compensation were to be used.
>
> By the strict letter of American law, therefore, it was the United States and *not* Alaska Natives who actually received a clear title to land under ANCSA. In return, Natives as shareholders in ANCSA regional corporations now have clear title to 44 million acres of the lands they used and occupied before the American invasion.

Traditional times and the study of social change. Here is another very good reason for doing the Cultural Profile assignment. To understand the full impact of the Russian and American invasions on Native societies, we first must have a good idea of what Native life was like *before* that life was changed so dramatically. Clearly we cannot assess the changes in anything – be it climate or a chemical element or a human society – without knowing the prior state of that thing. In many parts of the Aleutians, for example, the Russian fur harvesting system

resulted in the near extinction of the sea otter by the 1790s. But what were the consequences of this excessive harvesting of the otter on Aleut culture and subsistence needs? To answer this question we need to know about the Aleut relationship with the otter as it existed *before* the arrival of the Russians in 1744. Unlike the Russians, perhaps the Aleuts saw the otter as something more than valuable peltry to be bought and sold. Was it an important subsistence resource? Did it occupy a revered place within their worldview? William S. Laughlin, an anthropologist and longtime student of Aleut history and culture, reports that in "pre-Russian times the sea otter was an honored animal considered by Aleuts to be of human origin." Moreover, its "meat did not taste good and it skin of limited value. Therefore it was hunted infrequently…" [7]

Project Mechanics

At this point you may be thinking: Okay, I understand what the Cultural Profile Project is all about and why I should do it. But *how* do I do it? What exactly is expected of me to complete the Project? Good question. So let's look at the Project's mechanics.

Preliminary work and review questions. We cannot simply jump into the research and write-up of a cultural profile without first having a clear understanding of the ideas and materials we will use to get the job done. Therefore some preliminary work is in order. You are first asked to think about words and ideas we use to organize the Cultural Profile assignment and to direct our studies. You are asked, for example, to think about such commonly used terms as tribe, Native, Native American, tradition, culture, cultural identity, and the pluralism of Alaska Native cultures. So you have two more chapters to read (about 20 pages) before starting on the actual cultural profile assignment.

At the end of this chapter is a short list of "review questions" to help you summarize what you just read. Indeed, review questions are provided at the end of all eight chapters. If you can answer each of these questions, then you can be confident that you understand the material. Of course your teacher may have other testing exercises in mind as well.

Research mechanics. Most likely the research you will do is called a *literature review*. This means you will study what written materials exist on your Native group or groups. Some of these materials are also found on websites like Alaskool and Project Jukebox. Your teacher may have rules on using internet sources. Be sure you understand and follow these rules.

To assist your literature review, you will find at the end of this book an extensive bibliography of available books, articles, and internet sites. The bibliography begins with a list of source materials on Alaska Native cultures generally. Then it is broken into sections, with each section listing materials on a specific Native culture. Obviously you will want to study the materials listed for the Native group or groups you are profiling. A number of these materials have been compiled into a single volume organized around a particular theme or covering a

specific Native culture area. Two examples are *Crossroads of Continents* and three volumes of the *Handbook of North American Indians.* Where this is the case, I have listed the relevant readings and page numbers. This should facilitate your research efforts.

If at all possible, you are urge to talk with Native elders in your community and hear what they have to say about life in traditional times. They may provide important oral history not found in your readings. Moreover, it gives you an opportunity to compare their account of past times with what you read in your literature review. If what they say matches what you read, then you can feel more confident in the accuracy of the information you are collecting.

Chapter Three – the turning point. Chapter Three on the pluralism of Alaska Native cultures is a major turning point. When you finish this chapter, you must select or be assigned a Native group or groups to profile. Then you move directly into researching the regional Environment and Native use and occupancy of the land, the first part of the Cultural Profile.

Project design. You will find that each of the four sections of the Cultural Profile Outline (page 3) has its own chapter. *The chapter must be read before proceeding with actual research on that section of the Cultural Profile*. Why? Because the readings offer explanations and examples of what you should look for in your research. Chapter Six, for example, covers Social Organization, the third section of the Cultural Profile. It includes researching economic and political systems. Among other things, you are asked to describe the primary and secondary subsistence resources of your Native group. But what is meant by primary and secondary resources? And why make this distinction in the first place? Chapter Six answers these questions.

On the living connection between the past and the present, the prominent Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes says this:

> There is no single time: all of our times are alive, all of our pasts are present.[8]

With Mr. Fuentes' words in mind, let's begin our expedition into Alaska Native traditional times.

Review questions

What do we mean by "traditional times"?

To "profile" a thing or a person is to do what?

How does the definition of "subsistence" in Alaska differ from the usual dictionary definition?

What are some good reasons for studying Alaska Native life in traditional times?

In your own words, explain what the Cultural Profile Project asks you to do.

ENDNOTES

[1] Artic Studies Center's website for the exhibit's announcement. Portions of Feinup-Riordan's "the Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks" can be found on the *Tribal Arts* website.

[2] National Congress of American Indian's Task Force on Federal Recognition, 2003

[3] *Alaska Natives and the Land*, Robert Arnold et al. Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska (Anchorage, Alaska, 1968).

[4] *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U. S. (6 Pet.) 515, 1832.

[5] *Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska v. the United States*. 182, Ct. Claims. 130, 1959.

[6] Charles Wilkinson, *American Indians, Time, and the Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) pp. 7 – 9.

[7] William S. Laughlin, *Aleuts: Survivors of the Bering Land Bridge* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1980) p. 42-43.

[8] The Carlos Fuentes quote is from: Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon's *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy*. (NewYork: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004). Although originally from Panama, Mr. Fuentes has become one of Mexico's most celebrated writers.

Chapter Two

Sharpening Our Tools: Key Concepts

Like an Iñupiaq ivory carver or an Aleut kayak maker or a Siberian Yupik whaling captain, we need the right tools to do our job properly. Our tools are the concepts we use to convey information and ideas. But we must take this notion of concepts as tools one step further. The ivory carver, kayak maker, and the whaling captain not only must use the right tools, they must be sure these tools are finely honed to precise points and cutting edges. Likewise, our words and ideas must be finely honed if we are to communicate precisely what we mean. We start by asking the question, what exactly is a concept?

Figure 2-1
North Alaskan Eskimos with harpoons and whale carcass, c. 1920

Unless stated otherwise, all photos are from the online Alaska Virtual Library and Digital Archives project, a collaborative effort initiated by the Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, the Consortium Library at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and the Alaska State Library in Juneau.

Words and ideas that mentally organize and give meaning to a set of facts and images are called ***concepts***. The word "marriage," for example, is a concept because it mentally organizes and gives meaning to facts and images about this human institution. We must also understand that what meanings are assigned to a set of social facts and images may well depend on one's cultural perspective. Within the Hindu religious traditions of India, for example, the

institution of marriage has a quite different set of meanings than marriage within Western (Euro-American) culture.

Over time, widely used words like "culture" can take on a variety of meanings. Much like bungee cords we might use to secure supplies to a sled or to the bed of a pickup truck, the concept of culture has become elastic – that is, it has been stretched to describe many things. What definition is assigned to it at any given time depends on the interests and purposes of the person using it. When watching news programs on TV, for example, we hear terms like "pop culture" which usually refers to the world of popular arts and entertainment, fashion, and celebrities. Or here in Alaska we might talk about "corporate culture" when discussing how the unique goals and operations of an Alaska Native corporation differ from conventional American corporations like General Electric or Apple Inc. This is why Chapter Five is devoted entirely to constructing a six part definition of *culture* to guide our later work on Native social organization, world view, and cultural products.

Tradition and Change

"Traditional times," "pre-contact history," and "tradition." Traditional times refers to Native life before the invasions brought about lasting social change. Often this distant past is referred to as pre-contact Native history. But the term "contact" can be misleading because simple contact between Natives and outsiders rarely resulted in Native social change. The crews of the two ships of Vitus Bering's 1741 expedition to Alaska, for example, made contact with several Aleut communities. Yet these encounters had no immediate impact on those communities. The outsiders quickly came and went. So we need to keep in mind the difference between what was simply an encounter between Natives and non-Natives and what was regular and sustained contact leading to social change. Regular and sustained contact, in fact, did not come to the Aleutians until 1744 when Russian *promyshlenniki* (fur traders/trappers) invaded Attu and Agattu Islands.

We also must distinguish between the meaning of *tradition* and *traditional times*. A tradition need not be an aspect of life lost to the invasions. It may be a social institution, including the cultural values which sustain it, that survived the invasions. An example of a Native tradition surviving to modern times is the institution of Eskimo whaling found among the Siberian Yupik on Saint Lawrence Island and the Iñupiaq along the Arctic coast. Obviously the technology used by whaling crews has changed. Yet much of the traditional social organization and cultural meaning of Eskimo whaling has survived to the present day. Edward Etta, Mayor of the North Slope Borough, has said, "the whale is the centerpiece of our culture. It holds the coastal Inupiat together. If we lose the great whale and the environment that sustains it, we lose ourselves."[1]

Clearly your cultural profile assignment focuses on Native life in traditional times. But an interesting question is: When and how does an institution or big idea become a significant tradition? What do we mean when we talk about a "Native tradition?" Do we mean only those pre-invasion cultural elements surviving to present times like Eskimo whaling? Or can we find a significant tradition brought to Alaska by outsiders which was adopted by a Native group and

then shaped by them to fit their own needs? Should such "cultural adaptations" be considered equally important Native traditions today**?**

The early acceptance of Russian Orthodoxy by Aleut communities offers a good example of a significant Native tradition arising from cultural adaptation. The Russian Orthodox church has been part of the everyday life of many Aleut communities for at least 170 years. Surely enough time has passed for the Aleut practice of Orthodoxy to develop all the cultural and emotional power of any pre-invasion Native tradition. Another cultural adaptation making a mark on modern Native social life is Athabaskan fiddling in interior Alaska.[2] This is why we must make a distinction between the concept of *traditional times* and the concept of *tradition*. There exist today deeply felt cultural traditions which arose *after* contact and which have become part of everyday Native life and cultural identity

Figure 2-2
Russian Orthodox Bells on Atka Island, Alaska, c. 1920

[**c**. = **circa**, which is Latin for "approximately around that time."]

Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.

Alaska Native? Indian? Native American?

History's lockbox: the naming of indigenous people. Those terms used most often in our work need clear definition. At the very top of the list are words historically rooted in the English language which do two things. First, they distinguish the indigenous people of the Americas from the invaders. For example, *Indian* versus *Euro-American*. Secondly, they often identify what the invaders saw as physical and cultural differences between certain indigenous groups – for example, between Indians and Eskimos.

These historically entrenched terms for naming indigenous groups are like place-names. Once the name of a place is on a map, it becomes very difficult to change that name, no matter how reasonable the argument for change may be. These place-names are stuck in history's lockbox and there they stay. A good example is found in attempts over many decades to officially change Mt. McKinley to Denali, which means the "great one" in the local Athabaskan language. Back in 1912, Hudson Stuck, Anglican Archdeacon of the Yukon, was a member of

the first climbing team to reach Denali's true summit of 20,320 feet. In 1914 he authored an account of that mountaineering feat. In the opening page of his book, he makes this appeal:

> … forefront in the author's heart and desire, must stand a plea for the restoration to the greatest mountain in North America of it immemorial native name…It is little more than seventeen years ago that a prospector penetrated from the south into the neighborhood of this mountain…and ignorant of any name that it already bore, placed upon it the name of the Republican candidate for President of the United States at the approaching election – William McKinley. No voice was raised in protest…
>
> There is, to this author's mind, a certain ruthless arrogance that grows more offensive to him as the years pass by, in the temper that comes to the "new" land and contemptuously ignores the Native names of conspicuous natural objects, almost always appropriate and significant, and overlays them with names that are, commonly, neither the one or the other. [3]

Today, some ninety years later, the Reverend Stuck's plea for an official place-name change to Denali is still unheeded, with no possibility for change in sight. Likewise, historically entrenched "outsider" names for indigenous peoples are still widely used today by both Natives and non-Natives. Not surprisingly, whatever naming scheme is used – Indian, Native, Eskimo, Aleut – not everyone will be satisfied. Someone is sure to argue strongly for a different naming system. Given the available naming options and the strong feelings about them, perhaps all one can do is avoid confusion by being consistent when using these terms. The use of "Indian" in the last chapter of the book should have exactly the same meaning as when it was used in the first chapter. Now let's tackle this problem of indigenous naming as best we can.

A indigenous naming system. We use the general term *Indian* to identify indigenous peoples of the Americas outside of Alaska and Hawaii. If the discussion is about Indians in Alaska, we always use specific linguistic and tribal designations. For example, Koyukon Athabaskan Indians, Tlingit Indians, and so forth. In fact, we also use Lower-48 tribal names whenever possible – Cherokee, Oglala Sioux, Chiricahua Apache. From time to time, however, a general term like "plains Indians" or "Northwest Coast Indians" may better fit our immediate purpose.

Already we have developed two basic rules for the naming of indigenous peoples. The first is consistency of use. This also includes keeping the naming rules as simple as possible. The more complicated the rules, the harder it is to maintain consistency. The second rule for indigenous naming is to be as tribally specific as possible. We want the naming process to be so clear that we never have to answer the question: But what Indians or Eskimos are you talking about? *Native American* is used when referring to *all* indigenous people living within the fifty states of the United States. Hawaii is included although at this time the indigenous Hawaiians are not a federally recognized tribal group. They do not have the special political relationship with the federal government as this principle has been historically developed in federal Indian law. Whether they have a right to federal recognition is an ongoing political and legal debate. When discussing Alaska in general, we use *Native* or *Alaska Native*.

While we can argue for the overall use of *Indian* when referring to lower-48 tribes, we cannot make the same argument when it comes to Alaska or Canada. In both places we must deal with the historically entrenched term of *Eskimo*. Again, we will be as tribally specific as

possible. We use *Iñupiaq*, *Central Yup'ik*, *Siberian Yupik* when talking about Alaskan Eskimos. For Canada we use *Inuit*, usually qualified by a geographical place – for example, Baffin Island Inuit or Northern Quebec Inuit. But on occasion Eskimo is the more useful term as, for example, when discussing the general subsistence culture of Eskimo whaling. And of course we have still another distinct Alaskan cultural/linguistic group historically know as the *Aleut*, the indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands and the western tip of the Alaska Peninsula.

> **A short side trip: Do we use "Aleut" or "Unangan" ?** Since the time of the early invasions, the Russian word Aleut became the ethnic term used by outsiders to identify the indigenous peoples of the Aleutian Islands. In the Aleut language, however, the word that defines them as a distinct people is *Unangan*. Many Aleuts today are returning to Unangan as the preferred term of ethnic appellation. In so doing, they join other Native groups such as Alaska Eskimos who now prefer *Iñupiaq* and *Yup'ik*, which are the names they go by in their own language. They think of themselves as Iñupiaq Eskimos or Central Yup'ik Eskimos, or Siberian Yupik Eskimos. Yet use of Aleut cannot be avoided because it is so historically embedded in the documentation of the region and in our everyday speech. To avoid confusion we will stick with Aleut. However, from time to time we will remind ourselves of the ongoing shift to Unangan.

What about the term *tribe*? Some shy away from this word because in their mind it is associated with ethnocentric images of Native Americans as primitive and uncivilized.[4] We do not shy away from its use here for the simple reason that it is a significant legal term used in everyday discussion of Native civic affairs. "tribal sovereignty" and "federally recognized tribes" are, for example, two legal concepts with precise meanings. Whatever ethnocentric images the word "tribe" may have once conveyed no longer apply. To be ethnocentric is to judge another ethnic group by what you believe to be the righteous cultural standards of your group and find them deficient in custom and character. Soon we only imagine that "other" group in stereotypic ways. A stereotype is an oversimplified idea, opinion, or image of an entire group or class of people. Reggie White was a Hall of Fame pro football player and evangelical pastor. Before his death in 2004, he unfortunately provided us with a very good example of stereotyping. What do you think of the following remarks he made in March of 1998 before the Wisconsin State Legislature?

> Why did God create us differently? Why did God make me black and you white? Why did God make the next guy Korean and the next guy Asian and the other guy Hispanic? Why did God create the Indians? Well, it's interesting to me to know why now. When you look at the black race, black people are very gifted in what we call worship and celebration. A lot of us like to dance, and if you go to black churches, you see people jumping up and down, because they really get into it.
>
> White people were blessed with the gift of structure and organization. You guys do a good job of building businesses and things of that nature and you know how to tap into money pretty much better than a lot of people do around the world.
>
> Hispanics are gifted in family structure. You can see a Hispanic person and they can put 20 or 30 people in one home. They were gifted in the family structure.
>
> When you look at the Asians, the Asian is very gifted in creation, creativity and inventions. If you go to Japan or any Asian country, they can turn a television into a watch. They're very creative.

> And you look at the Indians, they have been very gifted in the spirituality. When you put all of that together, guess what it makes? It forms a complete image of God.

By now it should be evident that we take very seriously the need to be clear and specific when referring to the variety of Native American cultures and languages. Indeed, all of Chapter Three is devoted to a discussion of Alaska Native cultural pluralism.

Culture, Ethnicity, and Race

Do we mean "cultural group" or "ethnic group"? As commonly used today, "ethnicity' refers to differences between groups based national origin, religious beliefs, language, or cultural traditions and history. Many people often use ethnicity and ethnic identity to mean much the same thing as culture and cultural identity. On TV and radio and in newspapers – indeed, in everyday speech – e*thnic group* has become a popular way of identifying different segments of American plural society – African Americans, Jewish Americans, Arab Americans, Irish Americans, and so forth. However convenient they may be, the use of such broad terms as ethnicity and ethnic group presents a problem. These words make us forget that within what we might categorize as an ethnic group, there can exist different cultural traditions.

Alaska Natives, for example, can be thought of as a large ethnic group whose traditions and cultural perspectives differ significantly from other American ethnic groups. This is why we emphasize the pluralism of Alaska Native language***s***, culture***s*** and histories. What we must remember is that within the larger Alaska Native ethnic group there exists different cultural traditions, hence different cultural identities. For example, although identified by outsiders as Indians, the Koyukon Athabaskans and the Gwich'in Athabaskans differ on language, historical experiences and certain cultural traditions. And clearly these interior Athabaskans differ from other Indian groups such as the Tlingit and Haida of Southeast Alaska.

Whether thinking about ethnicity or culture, "distinctive" is the key word to keep in mind. Members of the group have a common ethnic or cultural identity because they share some combination of language, race, religion, history or cultural traditions that distinguishes them from others. The group's members feel strongly that there is something distinctive about who they are, about their historical experience, and about what they value in life. Equally important, this distinctiveness and the ethnic or cultural identity it expresses is recognized by other groups.

Ethnocentrism and ethnic/cultural identity. Beware, however, that our ethnic or cultural identity can easily become a source of our own ethnocentrism. Unfortunately it is rather easy for any of us to become ethnocentric. On the one hand, it is natural to feel ethnic pride as Iñupiaq or Tlingit or as an Italian-American or as a Chinese-American. It is, after all, the traditions of a person's cultural group which most probably organized and gave meaning to much of that person's early life. It is also natural to have feelings of individual self-worth flow from ethnic pride. In fact a group's ethnic, national, or cultural identity has a dim future if members do not gain emotional strength from this collective birthright. Yet at the same time it is a short, slippery slope from feelings of ethnic pride to feelings of ethnic superiority, perhaps

even feelings of a God-given superiority much in the manner of the European invaders of indigenous societies throughout the Americas.

We begin slipping down the ethnocentric slippery slope by convincing ourselves that our own cultural institutions and values are universally correct. It quickly suits our purpose to find the "discovered" people to be deficient in their institutions and values. Certainly it will be much harder to justify our colonization of them, both to ourselves and to others, if we were to find them to be our equals in custom and character. And if we wish to remove and enslave them, it surely suits our purpose to regard them as a subhuman race fit only to haul our burdens and pick our crops.

> **A short side trip: Colonialism.** Colonialism results when a more powerful outside group (the colonizer) establishes dominion over a less powerful indigenous people (the colonized). Colonial rule is maintained by military force or through economic and political control backed by the threat of force. Sometimes the term "imperialism" is used to describe a nation's colonizing efforts. For example, the expansion of the Japanese *Imperial* Empire throughout much of East Asia and the Pacific during the 1930s and the early years of WWII.
>
> The purpose of colonization (or imperialism) is to exploit the indigenous people's land, resources, and labor for the benefit of outside government and commercial interests. Often European imperialism was organized and lead by colonial corporations licensed and supported by the government of the invading nation. In Alaska Native history the prime example of a colonial corporation is the Russian American Company. The Alaska Commercial Company and its impact on Pribilof Island Aleuts is another good Alaskan example of government sponsored corporate colonialism, this time by the United States.
>
> Europeans have not been the only imperialists in world history. The core definition of colonialism – a more powerful outside group invading and exploiting the land, resources, and labor of a less powerful indigenous group – easily applies to the histories of many non-European nations and peoples. Since 1950, for example, the Chinese have exercised an often ruthless colonial rule over the Buddhist nation of Tibet. In 1905 Japan forcefully occupied Korea and declared it a protectorate, a colonial system lasting until the end of WWII in 1945.

Of course the ethnocentrism supporting our conquest emphasizes the most attractive images of ourselves. Through the work of our missionaries and government agents, we steadfastly advance what our cultural values declare is virtuous behavior. But of course the indigenous folks quickly notice that how we often behave in real life does not match what we say is the virtuous life. We are soon caught in the hypocrisy of "do as I say, not as I do."

Racism goes beyond ethnocentrism. If we are ethnocentric, we can still believe the other group's cultural deficiencies can be largely overcome by social and educational programs carried out by our missionaries and government agencies. We may believe in their eventual assimilation into our way of life, even to the point of intermarriage. But if we are racists, then we brand an entire group of human beings as genetically inferior – as biologically and intellectually subhuman. We believe these genetic deficiencies can never be overcome by the educational and occupational opportunities we ourselves enjoy or hope to enjoy. So we conclude they are fit only

for the most menial tasks which we, the superior race, must assign. Our political and economic control over them must be absolute. We will not tolerate any talk of assimilation. We fear their assimilation, so we demand total social segregation from them.

Figure 2-3
Racial Segregation in Juneau, c. 1908

Alaska State Library, Winter and Pond Collection, PCA 87-1050

In United States history the most obvious example of racism and its brutal consequences is found in the centuries of American slave trading and slave owning followed by nearly a century of state sponsored racial segregation in Southern and some border states. And let's not forget that Alaska also had its own period of racial segregation when Natives were by law prevented from participating in economic opportunities such as establishing mining claims. As the photo in Figure 2-3 shows, Alaska Native were also barred from many hotels and restaurants.[5]

Shall we use "ethnicity" or "culture"? Our answer is that it makes the most sense to stick with culture and cultural identity, especially when working on the Cultural Profile Project. This is because Native people in traditional times had not yet been dragged into the worldwide mix of national and ethnic divisions. They were yet to be labeled as a single ethnic group – as a single group called "Alaska Natives." This ethnic labeling would come later with the invasions when the Russians and Americans sought to define the legal relationship between themselves and Alaska Native people. What land rights, if any, did Native people possess under the new colonial regime? What measure of *sovereignty* would Native tribes retain? What responsibility, if any, did the colonizers have for protecting the lands and resources of Native people?

From the point of view of the colonizers, these and other legal questions did not require distinguishing between different Native cultures. The idea of a single indigenous ethnic group

called Alaska Natives – all of whom were obviously different from the invaders – easily served colonial purposes.

Studying Native History

What historians value most. Historians place the highest value on what they call primary source material – the written or otherwise recorded observations by a participant or witness to a historical period or event. Societies with literate traditions have passed down from generation to generation a written record of their histories. Without doubt we have gained substantial understanding of Native life in traditional times from the written journals and reports of non-Natives, usually missionaries, exploring military officers, and traders. There is also little doubt that our knowledge of this history has been greatly increased by the published works of scholars who have painstakingly complied and analyzed these early eyewitness accounts of Native life. But the eyes and ears of those early outsiders could not be everywhere. Surely there occurred events and activities they neither saw nor heard about. Nor can we be confident that these culturally different outsiders were always capable of accurately presenting the Native perspective on events and activities they did witness. Often times they convinced themselves that what they saw and heard confirmed their views on the superiority of their own cultural institutions and beliefs.

Alaska Natives and other societies in the world without a literate tradition have also passed down a record of their histories. But it is an oral historical record. Unfortunately these Native oral histories were generally ignored by everybody outside of Native communities where people told and retold their own histories. Until recently, our understanding of Native life in traditional times came almost completely from the written observations of non-Natives. But over the last several decades this one-sided view of Native history has changed. Now we have prominent scholars using Native oral histories as a major research tool. Indeed, paying special attention to Native oral histories is absolutely necessary if we are to come close to having a complete picture of Alaska Native life in traditional times.

Two kinds of oral history. The oral history familiar to most people is when still living participants of a past event or time period orally describe their own experiences. The person writing down or taping these oral narratives then organizes what is said into a written document or audio library. We call this *living oral history* because the participants or witnesses are *still alive* to tell their stories. We are not hearing or reading these stories as they have been passed down from one generation to another. This is not secondhand information. The tellers of the oral history are actual living primary sources.

Within Native American literature, a well known living oral history is *Black Elk Speaks* published in 1932. Carefully using a translator, John G. Neihardt wrote down the words of Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux warrior and medicine man who was a living witness to the end of the great Sioux Nation. After describing his childhood and earlier battles, Black Elk talks of the 1876 Battle of the Greasy Grass, popularly known as the Little Bighorn River, where George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry regiment was soundly defeated by 2000 Teton Sioux (Lakota) and Cheyenne warriors led by such famous chiefs as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The Sioux

call it the Greasy Grass because of the slippery texture of the foxtail barley growing along its banks. Black Elk's oral narrative ends with the senseless and appalling massacre of Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee Creek in the winter of 1890. He also describes the spiritual thinking of his people during those times, including the rise of the Ghost Dance movement.[6]

In modern times the tape recorder is most often used to document living oral history. Perhaps the modern American writer best known for developing living oral history as an area of significant research is Studs Terkel. His book, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*, captures the heartbreaking realities of ordinary people's lives during a very difficult period in American history. This collection of individual oral accounts offers the kind of up-close-and-personal picture of those "hard times" not likely found in most school books and academic research papers.[7]

But, alas, our interest here is Native life in traditional times. Since the living oral history approach works only for understanding more recent events, it obviously does not fit our purpose here. Therefore we must rely on another kind of oral history which we call *oral historical legacy*.

Oral historical legacy. Unlike living oral history which directly records the experiences of still living participants of past times and events, we now want to know about a Native group's oral historical legacy as passed down through the generations. This means we must shift from thinking about primary historical sources to thinking about what are called secondary sources. Here is how the U. C. Berkeley Library describes a secondary source:

> **A secondary source** is a work that interprets or analyzes a historical event or phenomenon. It is generally at least one step removed from the event. A recent article that evaluates and analyzes the relationship between the feminist movement and the labor movement in turn-of-the-century England is an example of a secondary source … Textbooks and encyclopedias are also examples of secondary sources. [8]

Right now you are reading a book that relies heavily on secondary source material. There is simply no way around the fact that oral historical accounts of traditional times have passed through too many voices to be considered primary source material. To know a Native group's oral historical legacy means we must rely on secondary source material. Obviously we will not find living witnesses to, for instance, the Yup'ik warrior Apanuugpak's exploits during the Bow and Arrow Wars of the 1700s.

The Written Historical Record. Many times all that is available to us is an outsider's written observations and thoughts on Native life in traditional times. Unfortunately we don't always have available Native oral historical legacies as found in Ernest "Tiger" Burch Jr.'s research on the Iñupiaq nations of Northwest Alaska.[9] Or as found in Adeline Peter-Raboff's work on interior Athabaskan history.[10] Or as found in the work of Nora and Dick Dauenhauer and Lydia Black on the Tlingit – Russian battles of Sitka in 1802 and 1804.[11] Indeed, much of the time we have no choice but to rely on the written observations of outsiders unfamiliar with the underlying cultural rules governing Native activities visible to them. In most cases they did

not speak the Native language. So whatever they wrote about Native values, attitudes, and motivations should not be accepted automatically as accurate and complete. The prominent Alaska Native leader, Willie *Iggiagruk* Hensley (Iñupiaq) has expressed his frustration with written observations by outsiders on Native life:

> I am an avid collector of anything involving the Inuit or Alaska, and I have scoured countless old book collections. It amazes me: most of the books written about Alaska have been by people aiming to glorify their personal brush with Alaska's magnetism. Most knew almost nothing about Alaska Natives, even after spending a lifetime among us as teachers, missionaries, or bureaucrats. Many saw only the surface of our lives and never understood our inner world. Some focused on the bizarre or contradictory – on our tattoos, our eating habits, our nose-kissing, our smells, our *anatkut* (shamans). In most cases they did not comprehend our language.[12]

There is still another problem with the written record of Native traditional times. We have made the point that all of these outside observers were foreign to Native cultures. Not surprisingly, many of them were clearly ethnocentric, often using such terms as "savages" and "uncivilized" to describe their impressions of Natives and Native life. This raises a very important question: Can we still find value in written primary source material even when it contains what today would be considered insulting ethnocentric language? Let's look at an example of ethnocentrism in the written historical record. The purpose is to confront offensive language and see if we can still find value in the information this documentation provides on Alaska Native life in traditional times.

From late 1842 through 1844, the Russian naval Lieutenant, L. A. Zagoskin, led an expedition which traveled throughout the Yukon and Kuskokwim river valleys of Alaska. The main purpose of the expedition was to scout the different routes used by interior Natives in their trade with the Chukchi people across the Bering Strait. Although he reported extensively on aspects of Native commerce, Zagoskin's interests in Native Alaska were much broader. He carefully studied all Native settlements he came upon, describing their demographics, customs, and cultural products. Throughout his travels, Zagoskin kept a detailed journal of his observations and thoughts. This travel journal has provided scholars with a wealth of information on Native life in these regions.[13]

Among scholars who have used Zagoskin's writings as a primary source for their own research are Tiger Burch and the Gwich'in Athabaskan historian, Adeline Peter-Raboff. Here is a sample of the kind of ethnocentric statements they found when reading Zagoskin's journal:

> It is a mistake to judge the character of the natives by their first reaction to strangers from another country. their good qualities and their faults cannot possibly be compared to the good and bad qualities of enlightened Christian people. The *savage*, as the man made in the image and likeness of God, is good; the *savage*, as a man who has fallen from grace, is evil. But both his virtue and his evil are childlike. (pp. 106-07)

And when reporting on the impact of the 1830s smallpox epidemic on several Norton Sound villages, Zagoskin says:

> What became of the people? The Natives say they died of smallpox and this story was confirmed by the old timers at the fort [St. Michaels]. The infection sent to them by Providence was great, but the blessing that resulted was likewise great, as all those who are left are Christian. (p. 100)

When describing Native religion and shamanism, he says:

> One cannot demand that a *savage* attain immediately the highest reverence for the one true God, that at the first utterance of God's word he drop all of his superstitions, beliefs and customs which are incompatible with the spirit of Christianity. But to love God is within the *savage's* power. (p. 121)

And when describing Koyukon Athabaskan warfare, he says:

> Their system of fighting also is based on the surprise attack and for this reason bravery or daring in a *savage* cannot in any way be compared to the true meaning of courage, based on scorn of death in the service of home, fatherland, or Tsar. [Tsar or Czar: the King of all Russia and her possessions.] * (p. 247)

Obviously Zagoskin's ethnocentrism is revealed by his constant comparison of Native beliefs and actions to his own Christian European value system. And of course he finds Natives deficient and in need of spiritual uplifting by a so-called civilized nation like Czarist Russia.

A major research question. Do we consider Zagoskin's travel journal a reliable primary source on traditional Native life to be studied carefully? Or do we dismiss his work because we are offended by his ethnocentric views and believe it makes unreliable many of his observations? If we are to follow the lead of Burch, Peter-Raboff and others, then we must set aside the ethnocentric language and focus on those observations which, in our best judgment, seem to meet reasonable standards of reliability. For instance, is there any reason why ethnocentrism would color Zagoskin's description of, say, hunting techniques or cultural products? But what about his discussion of something directly associated with Native values such as religious ceremonies? What we must do in such a case is carefully distinguish between *interpretation* and *description*. His interpretation of ceremonies and rituals, for example, may be tainted by ethnocentrism. But his description of these events – of what people wore and what they did and where they did it – should be accurate.

Does Zagoskin's journal have value? Absolutely! In many cases it is the only written documentation we have on Native life back in those days and in those places. It can, moreover, provide important external confirmation for whatever Native oral accounts are available to us. The trick is to separate biased interpretations from what is still good information. To, so to speak, separate the eatable herring roe from the sea plants on which it is entangled.

And let's not forget that even for us supposedly sophisticated modern people who ought to know better, sometimes ethnocentric feelings are hard to shake off. So perhaps we should not feel too superior when reading Zagoskin. The wise person does not say, "Oh, I can never have such ethnocentric biases!" Instead, the wise person says: "Since I have been raised within a specific culture and taught from birth the rightness of its values and traditions, I can easily develop biases and stereotypes of other cultures and societies. Therefore I must be constantly on guard against such careless, often harmful thinking."

*** Brackets.** From time to time you will find [bracketed] text at the end of a paragraph or in the quoted works of others as, for example, the quick note defining "oligarchy" in the Chesterton quote above. These are short instructional notes clarifying the meaning of a word or concept. Just remember they are instructional notes and ***not*** part of the work being quoted.

Native oral history: a final word. To repeat, paying special attention to Native oral histories is absolutely necessary if we are to come close to having a complete picture of Alaska Native life in traditional times. It is hoped that you will have a chance to use Native oral histories in your Cultural Profile research, perhaps listening to elders talk about their group's history as they have come to know it.

History? Prehistory? Ethnohistory?

We say that the Cultural Profile Project is a study in history. Some may argue that what we are really studying is *prehistory* – "that time during the development of human culture before the appearance of the written word." The problem is that prehistory often gets confused with *prehistoric*. And for many, prehistoric calls to mind paleolithic stone-age cultures, even the age of dinosaurs. We, however, are talking about that time immediately before the invasions changed much of Alaska Native life forever. We have, moreover, a substantial written record of that life as witnessed by early non-Native visitors to Native communities. And fortunately there is increasing access to Native oral histories. Others will correctly suggest that, technically speaking, we are doing *ethnohistory*. The scholarly journal of the American Society for Ethnohistory describes this field of study as including:

> A wide range of current scholarship inspired by anthropological and historical approaches to the human condition. Of particular interest are those analyses and interpretations that seek to make evident the experience, organization, and identities of indigenous … and minority peoples that otherwise elude the histories and anthropologies of nations, states, and colonial empires. The journal publishes work from the disciplines of geography, literature, sociology, and archaeology, as well as anthropology and history. It welcomes theoretical and cross-cultural discussion of ethnohistorical materials and recognizes the wide range of academic disciplines.[14]

This description of ethnohistory certainly matches much of what we will do here. And of all the academic disciplines using historical materials, ethnohistorians have one of the best track records for taking seriously the oral histories of indigenous people worldwide. Certainly we take Alaska Native oral histories very seriously as well. And as we do here, ethnohistorians clearly recognize the value of ideas and materials from a variety of disciplines. But let's keep it simple and use "history" throughout.

Review Questions.

What do we mean when we say "culture" has become an elastic concept?

What is our two-part rule for naming indigenous/Native groups?

Why distinguish *tradition* from *traditional times*?

Why distinguish *ethnicity* from *culture*?

How is *racism* different from *ethnocentrism*?

Can you define "colonialism?"

Why have we chosen to stick with *culture* and *cultural identity* rather than switch to the currently more popular terms of *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity*?

Why do we say that collecting Native oral histories is essential if we are to have the most complete picture of traditional times?

Can you explain the difference between *primary source* and *secondary source* historical material?

What is the difference between *living oral history* and *oral historical legacy*?

Although the observations of outsiders may contain ethnocentrism, we can still find value in this written documentation by distinguishing between "description" and "interpretation." What does this mean?

Technically speaking, the Cultural Profile Project is an ethnohistorical project. Explain

ENDNOTES

[1] Nick Jans,, "Living with Oil," *Alaska Magazine*, March, 2008, p. 39.

[2] See: Craig Mischler, *The Crooked Stovepipe* (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press 1993).

[3] Hudson Stuck, *The Ascent of Denali* (The Mountaineers edition, 1977) pp. vii – xi.

[4] See: Charles C Mann, *1491* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) pp. 342-343.

[5] For more on racial segregation in Alaska history, go to: the ALASKOOL website at http://www.alaskool.org/default.htm .

[6] John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (Pocket Book Edition, 1975.)

[7] Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*. W. W. Norton & Company, November, 2000.

[8] Go to: www. lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLab/Guides/PrimarySources.html

[9] Ernest Burch Jr., *The Iñupiaq Eskimo Nations of Northwest Alaska* (University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, 1998).

[10] Peter-Raboff, Adeline, *Inuksuk:Northern Koyukon, Gwich'in, & Lower Tanana, 1800-1901*. (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2001)

[11] Nora Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer, Lydia Black (eds.) *Anooshi Lingit Aani Ka, Russians in Tlingit America: The Battles of Sitka, 1802 and 1804*, (Seattle:University of Washington Press, 2006, p.XLIV).

[12] William L. Iggigruk Hensley, *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow* (New York: Sara Crichton Books, 2009) p. 8.

[13] L. A. Zagoskin, *Travels in Russian America, 1842-1844*, edited by Henry N. Michael (Arctic Institute of North America, University of Toronto Press, 1967).

[14] See the Society's web page at: www.dukeupress.edu/Catalog/ViewProduct.php?productid=45610

Chapter Three

Alaska Native Cultures – Think Pluralism!

Note: At the end of this chapter you will begin the Cultural Profile assignment by selecting the Native group or groups you wish to research. In the next chapter you start work on their Regional Environment and their use and occupancy of the land, the first part of your Cultural Profile.

There is no such person as an Alaska Native!

In Chapter Two we spent time deciding what names to use when identifying the indigenous peoples of North America. Now we further develop the identification and naming process for the different Alaska Native cultures. But the first thing we need to understand is that there really is no such person as an "Alaska Native." Here is why.

When talking or writing about Alaska Natives, many times we say the "Natives" or the "Native people." We say things like, "a Native perspective" or "Native studies" or "Native rights." But we must keep in mind that the term *Native* is simply a quick, convenient way to distinguish Native people and their experiences from those of non-Native people. Even a passing glance at the multi-cultural realities of Native Alaska tells us that there has never been just one Alaska Native cultural group. There has never been a single Native language or single Native society or single Native history. There are Haida, Tlingit, Eyak, Chugach, Alutiiq, Aleut (Unangan), Central Yup'ik, Siberian Yupik, Iñupiaq, and a variety of Athabaskan-speaking peoples. These are human groups dating from ancient times with cultures and languages distinct from one another. Thanks largely to the work of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, we can even take Athabaskan speaking groups and sort them into eleven regional societies, each with its own language and history. *We should never forget this reality of Native cultural pluralism when we hear, read, or say the word " Native."*

As previously discussed, the term Alaska Native is a foreign concept brought to Alaska by Russians and Americans to distinguish themselves from the indigenous peoples. Much of Alaska's history is about how the invaders – particularly the Americans – constructed colonial systems to maintained this distinction. If the term Alaska Native has any basis in reality, it is as a concept reflecting the common political and legal interests of all Alaska Natives regardless of culture, language, or geographic region. It is even said by some that the term Alaska Native was not often heard in Native communities until the land claims movement of the 1960s. As Natives from all regions of the state became more aware of the land claims issue, they found common ground as Alaska Natives, not just as Eskimos or Indians, or as Iñupiaq or Tlingit. During the

land claims struggle, for example, there emerged the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), a statewide organization representing the interests of *all* Native peoples within the larger Alaskan and American political and legal systems.

Mapping Native Cultures

The ANLC Map. This textbook includes a smaller foldout version of the map, *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* published in 1982 by the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. Now is the time to take out your copy of the ANLC map. Shortly instructions are provided for studying map. But first some background information on the map's purpose and design.

In the 1970s, ANLC undertook a research project to map the Native languages of the state. In 1982 they updated their research and published a new Alaska Native language map. ANLC wished to determine the extent to which Native languages continued to be spoken in the everyday life of Native communities throughout the state. They were especially interested in the number of youngsters speaking their Native language because this is a good indicator of a language's current and future strength. What makes this map so useful is that it places a large amount of significant information right in front of us. At a single glance we have what we need to understand the remarkable pluralism of Native languages and cultures. But note that the research represented by the map was completed decades ago. More recent research suggests that the total number of Native language speakers is less today then in 1982, perhaps in some cases much less. Yet the relative numbers seem to have remained fairly constant. That is, when compared to other Native groups, those having the most speakers of their Native language in 1982 (e.g., Siberian Yupik) still have the most speakers today.[1]

We know, for example, that the *total* number of everyday speakers of Central Yup'ik has declined since 1982. Nevertheless, according to the 2000 United States census, there are about 16,000 Central Yup'ik people living in Bethel and surrounding villages. Of these, that same census estimates that over 60% still speak their Native language in the home. In contrast, the Tlingit Indian population of Alaska is about 10,000, but has only about 500 speakers of the language. The current population of Koyukon Athabaskans is about 2,300, of whom only about 300 speak the language. Therefore, compared to the Tlingit and the Koyukon, the Central Yup'ik in the Bethel region have experienced much less of a language shift to English. ANLC also assists our study with short explanations on the map itself. Note how each village has a dot ○ the size of which indicates the population size of the village. The extent to which a dot is blacken indicates the estimated number of children speaking the Native language in that village in 1982 (e.g., ● = most children speaking the language).

Language shifts and historical questions. At this point you might be asking questions such as: Isn't this a history project? Why are we using what is essentially a map of language demographics – a map of language statistics about Native populations? In fact, the only time the word "history" appears on the ANLC map is in a short paragraph on how Native languages were

suppressed by schools where children were actually punished for speaking their language. So what is the connection between this map and Native history?

While the map does not contain historical information, it does raise big historical questions. For example, we have already said that the map shows a much greater language shift to English among the Tlingit and the Koyukon Athabaskan than among the Central Yup'ik. The interesting historical question raised here is: What happened to cause a much greater shift to English among the Tlingit and Koyukon compared to the Central Yup'ik? To answer this question requires research into Yup'ik as well as into Tlingit and Koyukon contact histories to see how they differ. Indeed, the map raises other historical questions of a similar nature. Just within the Central Yup'ik region there is this historical question: Why is the Yup'ik language much stronger along the Kuskokwim River and the Bering Sea coast than in the Bristol Bay area and along the Yukon River? Again, several different Native contact histories must be examined for the answer.

The ANLC map is therefore worth close examination for two reasons. The first is that it clearly displays information showing the pluralistic nature of Native languages and cultures. This is absolutely required information. It makes no sense to attempt a more detailed study of Native cultures and histories without first understanding this pluralism. Secondly, the more we study the map, the more likely it is that comparative historical questions will occur to us. We will see that not only is there a pluralism of Native cultures but also a pluralism of Native histories – that the contact histories of Native regions can differ significantly one from the other. Consider this question: Why were the Tlingit much more successful than the Aleuts in resisting Russian colonization? We use a "comparative conditions" approach to answer this question. We ask: Were the Aleuts and Tlingits operating under different conditions? If so, did these different conditions contribute to the different outcomes? Here is how the comparative conditions approach works.

Condition 1 – Environment:

Aleuts – Mostly barren Island environments offered little physical protection and few land-based subsistence resources. They were easily cut off from the sea which held their primary subsistence resources. Materials for building fortifications was scarce.

Tlingits – Heavily forested islands and mainland offered considerable protection and contained adequate subsistence resources if cut off from the sea. Abundant forest products provided materials for building strong fortifications.

Condition 2. Demography:

Aleuts – Small scale contact. Small island populations meant small scale contact which favored the Russians because it did not take a large force to invade and establish control one island at a time.

Tlingits – Large scale contact. Invading Russians confronted large, densely populated settlements – for example, the Sitka Battles.

Condition 3. Social Organization:

Aleuts – Weak inter-island relationships, hence military alliances difficult to assemble at the time of the invasions. Russian divide and conquer strategy worked well.

Tlingits – Wide ranging clan-based kinship system united groups across Tlingit settlements, thus providing a built-in military confederation. If invaded, one Tlingit group could call upon other kin-related groups in other locations for support.

Condition 4. Technology:

Aleuts – No access to firearms.

Tlingits – Access to firearms and other military equipment through trade with the British and Americans.

Condition 5. Foreign Relations:

Aleuts – No alternative to the Russians. Until 1867 the Russians were the only foreign presence of any significance in the Aleutians.

Tlingits – Multiple early contact history. Unlike their monopoly of force in the Aleutians, the Russians faced rival European powers in Tlingit country. Tlingit contact with British and American traders gave them a strong bargaining position when dealing with the Russians.

So we see that under each of the five conditions the Tlingits had a clear comparative advantage over the Aleuts. And when all these Tlingit advantages are added together, we have the answer to our comparative history question. *As you study the map, think pluralism, both in terms of Native cultures and Native histories.*

ANLC Map: A Study Guide

Often overlooked features of the ANLC map. There are ten features of the map that are sometimes overlooked or which deserve special attention because they raise important historical questions.

1. Be mindful that the purpose of the ANLC map is to display the different Native language regions of Alaska, but not the different Native cultures of Alaska. Certainly in the broadest sense, the boundaries shown between languages represent boundaries between cultures, for example between the Iñupiaq and Interior Athabaskans. Yet the Alaska Native cultural picture is actually more complicated. Within the Iñupiaq-speaking region, for example, there are important differences between the coastal whaling communities and the inland settlements along the Noatak and Kobuk rivers and the interior caribou hunting people of Anaktuvik Pass. We also find differences within the large Central Yup'ik and Interior Athabaskan language/culture regions.

Native cultural pluralism gets even more complicated. Not only do we find different ways of life within a Native region, but we also find that similar elements of social organization can transcend these Native regional boundaries. For example, all Native societies south of the Alaska Range – from the Aleuts in the far southwest islands on down to the Tlingit and Haida in Southeast – had stratified societies containing different social classes, including the institution of slavery. In the next chapter we explore in more detail this distinctive southern Native social organization and compare it to the different settlement patterns and social organization of Native groups north of the Alaska Range.

Note the several places on the map where a broken line – – – is found within a Native region. This indicates a boundary between different dialects of the same Native language. This could mean still more cultural differences. It may be that an important element of a community's cultural identity was how their dialect – the way they speak the language – distinguished them from others of the same language group.

Always keep in mind that the map's broad language boundaries do not reflect all aspects of Alaska Native cultural and historical pluralism.

2. Look at the Alutiiq (Sugpiaq) region along the Gulf of Alaska and the North Pacific. Also known as the Pacific Eskimo region, it includes Kodiak (Koniag people), the Alaska Peninsula, and Prince William Sound. According to ANLC, in traditional times the people called themselves *Sugpiaq* (*suk* 'person' plus *-piaq* 'real'). The appellation (or name) *Alutiiq* was adopted from a Russian plural form of Aleut, which the invaders applied to the Native people they encountered from Attu to Kodiak. Unlike the Aleut (Unangan) language, however, the Alutiiq language is closely related to Central Yup'ik. Over time, Sugpiaq has given way to Alutiiq as the appellation of that region's language.

3. You should memorize the correct spelling of Native groups, including all eleven groups within the larger Athabaskan language region. Substitute *Gwich'in* for Kutchin since it is now the most commonly used appellation for this Athabaskan group. Likewise, note on the map the preferred appellation for Ingalik is *Deg hit'an*.

4. Study the North American insert in the upper right-hand side of the map. Note the extension of the Athabaskan language throughout much of Northwestern Canada. Also note that the language resurfaces among several small tribes on the pacific coast in Oregon and Northern California. It then makes a huge geographical leap to the Southwest where it is spoken today by the largest Indian nation, the Navajo, and by several Apache groups. This linguistic connection between Athabaskan speakers in the Far North and the Navajo and Apache Athabaskan speakers in the Southwest certainly raises intriguing questions about ancient Native American history.

We should also note that *Dene*, meaning "the people" in Athabaskan, is the most common appellation used in Canada. One example is the Native political organization *Dene Nation* of the Canadian Northwest Territory. Also the word, *Dine*, meaning " the people" in the Navajo Athabaskan language is rapidly becoming the preferred appellation within that Indian nation.

5. Again look at the North American map insert. Note the extension of the Iñupiaq/Inuit language across the entire North American Arctic rim into Greenland. Although marked by dialectical differences — for example, between Iñupiaq spoken in Alaska and Kalaallisut spoken in Greenland — it is one Inuit language family.

Knud Rasmussen, the famous Arctic explorer of the early 20th Century, found this to be the case during his 1921 - 1924 "Great Sled Journey" across the North American Arctic. He was born and raised in Greenland, the son of an Inuit mother and Danish father. His first language

was Kalaallisut. Danish was his second language which he learned in school. Upon reaching Iñupiaq settlements in Alaska, he made this observation:

> In so prolong a separation, it would be natural for the language and traditions of the various [Inuit] tribes to have lost all homogeneity [similarity]. Yet the remarkable thing I found was that my Greenland dialect served to get me into complete understanding with all the tribes. [2]

Of course this raises another interesting historical question: How did this language cohesiveness survive over such a wide area of extreme terrain and climate for so long?

6. Now look at the population figures found in the Language Table on the left-hand side of the map. Notice how much stronger the Athabaskan and Inuit languages are in Native communities outside of Alaska – in Canada, Greenland, and among the Navajo. Why is this? Only comparative historical research will yield the answer.

7. Look for St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Strait. The map shows that the Siberian Yupik language is also found on the Chukchi side of the Bering Strait*, not on the Alaska side*. Moreover, Siberian Yupik ancestral ties are found on the Chukchi side and not the Alaska side of the Strait. Finally, notice that the Siberian Yupik language is among the strongest in Native Alaska. Why?

8. Look for Metlakatla at the southern most point of Alaska. The green area is Annette Island, home of a Tsimshian tribe who occupy the island as the only Indian reservation now existing in Alaska. Here is another historical question: Are all Native groups shown on the ANLC map indigenous to Alaska? Of course the answer is ***no***. In 1887 the United States government gave a missionary and his congregation of Tsimshian Indians from Old Metlakatla in British Columbia, Canada, permission to settle at New Metlakatla on Annette Island and establish a reservation. The Tsimshian are the only non- indigenous Native tribe in Alaska. (Incidentally, the Court of Claims in the 1959 Tlingit and Haida case ruled that the Tlingits held aboriginal title to Annette Island and must be compensated for its illegal taking by the United States.)

9. Look for the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea. Be sure to note that these islands are occupied and locally governed by Aleut communities. They should be marked as Unangan or Aleut on whatever map test you may take.

10. Look, finally, at the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula and note the isolated Central Yup'ik area on Norton Sound. Here are more historical questions: What are the Central Yup'ik doing there? Is not this area part of the traditional homeland of the Iñupiaq? Actually, even larger portions of the southern Seward Peninsula may have been occupied at one time by the Central Yup'ik .

The First Cultural Profile Assignment

Selecting a Native group for cultural profiling. Now it is time to take the first step in completing the Cultural Profile Project. You first must decide whether to focus on a larger Native culture area or on a smaller group occupying a distinct environmental niche within that area. When you begin constructing your cultural profile in the next chapter, you are first asked to describe the main elements of the environment within which your selected Native group lives. Why do we need this information at the very beginning? Because the nature of the environment and the amount and kind of subsistence resources it contained largely determined the social and technological adaptations a Native group had to make in order to most effectively live in that place. The concept tying together the relationship between the environment and a Native group's social organization and cultural products is *environmental adaptation*.

For now, think of environmental adaptation as *the process by which a traditional Native society socially organized itself and developed technologies to effectively live in and harvest the subsistence resources offered by the environment.*

Regional vs. local Environment as a major selection factor. Let's take the Iñupiaq as an example of why environment is a major factor influencing your selection of a Native group. You can do a general profile of the larger Iñupiaq culture area as it is shown on the ANLC map. But remember that the ANLC map displays only language regions within which may exist different environments. This means you have different Iñupiaq groups making adaptations to different environments. So you might consider focusing on a local environment within the larger Iñupiaq region such as coastal sea mammal hunting areas or the more inland settlements along the Noatak and Kobuk rivers. If, for example, you chose the coastal Iñupiaq, then sea ice is a major environmental feature – a feature absent from the Iñupiaq riverine environment. Or you can move deeper inland and select the Iñupiaq of Anaktuvik Pass. Here again we are reminded that cultural pluralism is a defining feature of Native Alaska, both past and present.

Emphasizing cultural pluralism also forces us to make a similar decision for other large Native language/culture areas. Within the large Athabaskan speaking region, for example, there are major differences between the environments of the Tanaina people south of the Alaska range and that of Koyukon people north of the range. Of course the selection process is much easier when an entire Native culture area essentially occupies the same regional environment. Examples are the Unangan (Aleut) in the Aleutians, the Siberian Yupik on St. Lawrence Island, and the Tlingit and Haida in Southeast Alaska.

Assignment

Now having firmly in mind the pluralistic nature of Alaska Native cultures and histories, it is time to take the first step in completing the Cultural Profile Project by selecting the Native group or groups whose life in traditional times you will research.

Review Questions

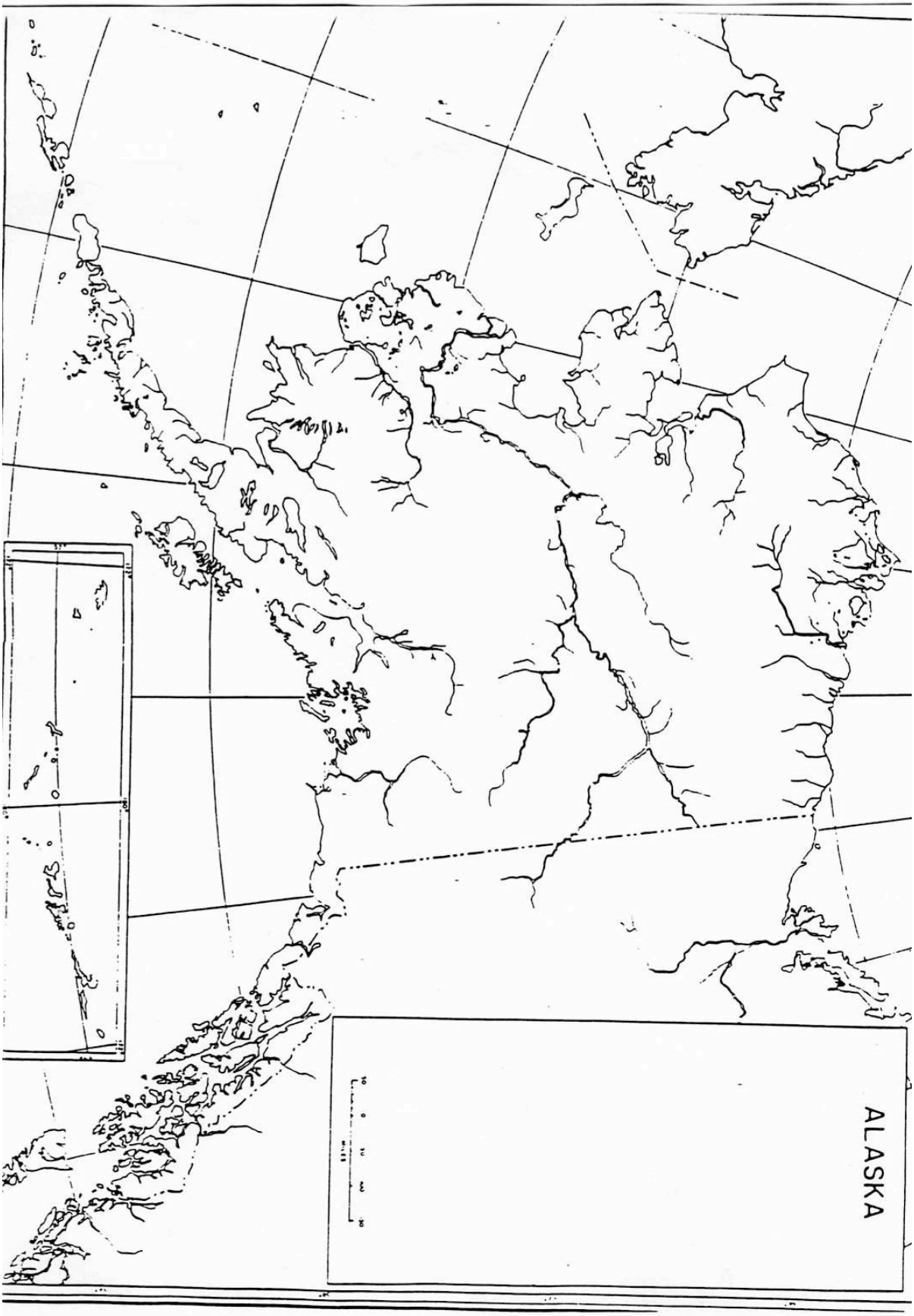
Why do we say there is no such person as an *Alaska Native*?

Why do we emphasize the pluralism of Native histories as well as Native cultures?

Can you explain why regional differences in Native language shifts to English raise interesting historical questions?

On the next page is a blank map of Alaska. From memory, can you reproduce the ANLC map, including correct spelling of the different Native groups?

Figure 3-1



ENDNOTES

[1] Go to: www Alaskool.org, accessed March, 2010.

[2] Rasmussen Knud, *Across Arctic America*, Putnam & Sons, 1927, p. x.

Chapter Four

Alaskan Environments and Native Adaptations

Climate – arctic, sub-arctic, maritime, seasonal changes

Physiography – physical features of the area – tundra, rivers, mountains, valleys, ocean conditions (e.g., sea ice)

Flora – plant life

Fauna – land animals, sea mammals, water fowl, fish

Demographics – Size & distribution of population, settlement patterns

Land use – Mapping uses of lands & waters – location and boundaries, community security

As shown above, this chapter gets you started on the Cultural Profile of your selected Native group or groups. It provides you with an instructional guide for profiling elements of the environment inhabited by your Native group(s) and their use and occupancy of land. These elements are exactly the same as listed in the Cultural Profile Project Outline on page three. The chapters to come on Social Organization, Worldview, and Cultural Products offer similar instructional guidance for completing your project. You will find, however, that this and the remaining chapters offer much more than a simple guide. As said before, we want to carefully explain the concepts we use to organize our thinking about Native societies in traditional times. What exactly do we mean, for example, when we use concepts like environmental adaptation or land-use patterns or social stratification or governance or shamanism?

The Big Picture

South vs. North. Here we emphasize the idea that elements of the environment set the parameters, the outer limits, of what environmental adaptations were possible for subsistence-based Native societies occupying a particular region. Again, the amount and kind of subsistence and material resources available in the environment largely determined what that Native society looked like demographically, socially, and technologically. The Aleuts (Unagan), for example, could do things within their maritime island environment that Interior Athabaskans could not do within their landlocked sub-Arctic environment. Of course interior Athabaskans could do things that Aleuts could not.

Now let's take a moment to paint the broadest possible picture of the relationship between Alaska's different environments and the social organizations of Native groups

inhabiting these areas. Look at a map of Alaska which shows the Alaska Range. Denali (Mt. McKinley) is the best known topographic feature of this mountain range which stretches across most of Alaska from east to west. Now draw or imagine a line along the top of the Alaska range. South of that line – south of the Alaska Range – we find very different environments and traditional Native social organizations from what we find north of the Range. Note that the Alaska Range does not extend into Southwest Alaska and the Central Yup'ik homeland. Shortly we discuss this regional environment as a "transitional zone."

The South. Easy year-round access to abundant marine resources in the oceans and rivers *south* of the Alaska range supported larger Native populations. It is true that in important ways the southern Alaskan regional environments of the Aleut and the Tlingit are different. The Aleuts lived mainly on barren, windswept islands and the Tlingit in areas of high mountains, old growth forests, and sheltered bays and coves. But the important point is that both of these very different regional environments yielded a steady supply, even surpluses, of subsistence marine resources.

Not only were southern Native populations larger but their settlements were more densely populated and more permanent than those found in the north. By "densely populated" we mean a large concentration of people within an given area. There are, for example, many more people living within each square mile of New York City than people living within each square mile of Fairbanks, Alaska. The southern settlements, moreover, were much more permanent because they had easy access to their subsistence resources throughout the year. Unlike many northern Native societies, people were not forced to move with the seasons or spend weeks on a hunting or fishing expedition just to meet the basic dietary needs of their families. To say that their primary subsistence resources lay just outside their front door is not much of an exaggeration.

When added together, these factors — large, permanent, densely populated settlements with abundant resources — led to the development of a more elaborate social organization to regulate tribal affairs. Certainly we will find more and larger government departments and neighborhood institutions such as churches and schools in New York than in Fairbanks. Another prominent feature of the more complex southern Native societies was their hierarchical social structure. A hierarchical or ranked society exists when there is an unequal distribution of wealth, power, and social status among different classes of people. When we ask about the structure and distribution of wealth, power, and social status, we are asking about a society's *social stratification* – its system of social ranking.

The social stratification of southern Native societies was based on the hereditary ranking of families and clans. This meant that the social status of the family and clan into which a person was born largely determined what social and economic advantages were available to that person, both as a child and later as an adult. General speaking, these ranked societies consisted of an aristocracy of clans at the top of the social pyramid, with commoners occupying the middle and lower reaches of society. In all southern Native hierarchical societies, the lowest social rank or class was occupied by slaves obtained through war and trade.[1] Among the Tlingit, for example, the most basic social unit at the local level was the household group. It consisted of men of the same matrilineal line and their families living together in very large wooden plank-and-beam

houses Sometimes these "longhouses" were as large as 40 x 60 feet. (A full-size basketball court measures 50 x 84 feet). Figure 4-1 shows exterior and interior views of a Tlingit longhouse.

Figure 4-1

Men in ceremonial regalia in front of Klukwan clan house, c. 1880s

Winter and Pond Collection

Watercolor painting by Theodore Richardson, showing interior of Tlingit clan house (no date)

Alaska State Museum - Juneau

Because of very accessible and abundant resources, not everyone had to be involved in the daily round of subsistence activities. This meant that certain individuals possessing special talents could devote a major portion of their day to work other than hunting, fishing, and gathering. Consequently there arose occupational specialization in important areas such as medicine, arts and crafts, spiritual leadership, political organization, and in the conduct of war and commerce. If the knowledge and skills of a particularly talented person became highly valued, he or she could concentrate time and energy on that specialty while their subsistence needs were provided for by their household group or clan. They may even have received payment for services from others within the larger community. Among the Tlingit, for example, the elder head of a household group usually did not physically participate in subsistence activities.

He had instead a full time job as the political and ceremonial leader of the household and as their chief historian and educator. If their skills were especially prized, individuals could gain wealth and privilege ordinarily reserved for those of a higher hereditary rank. The possibility of upward social mobility through demonstrated expertise in a valued specialty was certainly important to slaves. It was one way they could rise above their wretched social rank and avoid a life of despair and the possibility of being sacrificed at a potlatch. In a word, there existed a more elaborate division of labor based on occupational specialization than we find in northern Native societies.

The North. With some exceptions, the often marginal subsistence resources found north of the Alaska Range – particularly for interior Athabaskans in Winter – meant small, highly mobile Native populations spread over large areas. In contrast to the south, there was far less permanence and density of settlements. The exceptions were some Central Yup'ik areas around Bristol Bay and in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. In fact, the Central Yup'ik region has been described as a transitional zone between north and south. Without a substantial mountain range to shield the region from southern exposure, it has environmental features found in both the north and the south.[2] Another exception was the Point Hope region of Northwest Alaska in the early 1800s. At that time the area's subsistence resources, mainly marine mammals and fish, sustained a large settlement area estimated at 1,000 people. [3]

For the most part, the social stratification of northern Native societies was more egalitarian in structure. Unlike the social hierarchies of the south, there was no easily identifiable ranked social order where power and privilege differed significantly among classes of people. Normally birth into a particular family was not the chief factor determining a person's opportunities in life and future adult social standing. The northern societies offered a more level socio-economic playing field to all members of the group. Unlike the southern hierarchical society, individual effort and merit were more likely to determine a person's social status. The institution of slavery, moreover, did not exist north of the Alaska Range.

Because everyone was always involved in some part of the harvesting and preparation of subsistence foods and material products, less time was available to develop the kind of occupational specialization that occurred in the south. This does not mean there was no development of specialized skills and knowledge in the north. Every Native group had to develop the necessary science and technology to successfully meet the unique demands of their environments. We should not be surprised that expertise in weather forecasting and in animal behavior are well developed areas of traditional Native science throughout Alaska. Examples of Native technologies included the construction of sea worthy hunting craft such as the kayak and umiak, various hunting tools and weaponry, protective battle vests, weather resistant housing, dog sleds and snowshoes. We will have a fuller discussion of Native applied science and technology when we discuss cultural products in Chapter Eight.

Social stratification: beware of false dichotomies. We have said that social stratification refers to the structure of wealth, power, and social rank in society. We have discussed two seemingly opposite forms of traditional Native social stratification — the southern hierarchical societies versus the northern egalitarian societies. In so doing, however, we must be careful not to create a false dichotomy by implying that these are two quite separate and distinct

systems of social stratification. The word "dichotomy" means the separation of a thing or idea into two opposite parts. A dichotomy is an *either-or* proposition — it is either this thing or that thing. It is either apples or oranges.

So what is the problem? *The problem is that there is no such thing as a purely hierarchical society or purely egalitarian society, either in modern or traditional times.* What we have are human societies which are more – sometimes much more – hierarchical than egalitarian and vice versa. And when we talk about the more or less of things, we are talking about variables. Variables are ***not*** absolute and permanent things. They are constantly influenced by other factors and therefore always subject to change. In the real world, social stratification is very much a variable because any society can have a mix of hierarchical and egalitarian elements. As much as its members may wish or claim, no society is completely egalitarian. Some form of social ranking is always present. Some individuals or families or groups in society have more power and resources than others.

Figure 4-2
Alaska Reindeer Camp, c. 1913

Alaska State Library - Historical Collections

In their study of reindeer herding and social change among the Iñupiaq of the northern Seward Peninsula, the late Linda Ellanna and her co-author, George Sherrod, emphasize this important social fact. Their study even includes a chapter entitled "The Myth of the Egalitarian Society" in which they detail how wealth and power were never distributed evenly. Nor did these Inupiat expect to live in a purely egalitarian community. There were always some who were more clever and more ambitious than others. There were always some families who prospered more than other families and passed these advantages on to later generations. Ellanna and Sherrod make this interesting observation on control of vital subsistence technologies and key hunting and fishing sites:

> Technologies employed in collective harvesting endeavors included umiat {skin boat], caribou surrounds, and fish weirs and nets. These items of technology were not owned by the society nor owned equally by all segments of a large extended local family. Instead, this technology was associated … with the eldest productive male of the group possessing the skills, knowledge, and wealth necessary to supervise construction, maintenance, and use of these means of production. Additionally, this

individual and his closest kin controlled key geographic sites from which these technologies were deployed.[4]

In the South, the occupational specialization of the Tlingit and Haida hierarchical societies did allow for the egalitarian element of upward social mobility. No matter the status of one's family or clan, an individual could achieve a higher social rank based on demonstrated merit – on proven ability and accomplishment in an occupation or skill valued by the society. Moreover, a society's social order can be changed by historic events such as internal revolts and revolutions or by external forces such as invasion and occupation by a foreign power. In 1886, for example, a federal court ruled that the 13th amendment of the United States Constitution prohibiting slavery also applied to Tlingit and other Native groups regardless of what inherent tribal sovereignty they may otherwise possess. Obviously this legal ruling significantly changed Tlingit society by removing a major social and economic stratum — slaves —from their traditional hierarchical structure.[5]

So we must learn to think in terms of *more or less* hierarchy or egalitarianism, not in terms of *either – or* , not in terms of either a completely hierarchical or a completely egalitarian society. Some argue, for example, that despite its ideal values of equality and the rule of law, the social stratification of American society falls somewhere between hierarchical and egalitarian because it has characteristics of both social structures. Please understand that we use the dichotomy of hierarchy versus egalitarian only as a starting point, only as a framework for thinking about the different kinds of social stratification that may exist. If you are doing a cultural profile of a northern Native society, do not hesitate to look hard for elements of social ranking. Likewise, if you are researching a southern Native society, look hard for elements of egalitarianism such as social mobility – the ways individuals could rise above or fall below the social rank of their birth.

A South – North summary. We can compose a brief outline to summarize the contrast between the north and the south. The symbol ⬇ means "results in".

Southern Native societies (south of the Alaska Range)

Abundant subsistence resources, even to the point of producing surpluses

⬇

Larger, more permanent and more densely settled Native communities

⬇

Hierarchical societies with an uneven distribution of power and wealth, with a more complex division of labor based on occupational specialization

Northern Native societies (north of the Alaska Range)

With some exceptions, marginal, sometimes scarce subsistence resources

⬇

Smaller, more mobile and sparsely settled Native communities

⬇

More egalitarian social organization with much less division of labor based on occupational specialization.

Interior Athabaskans and Southern Athabaskans. In traditional times the only social facts the Interior Athabaskan groups north of the Alaska Range had in common with the Tanaina and Copper River Ahtna Athabaskans of the south was language and ethnicity. On the broad cultural profile factors of regional environment, land use and occupancy, and social organization, Tanaina and Copper River Ahtna life more closely resembled the other southern Native societies. In the North, the life of the Interior Athabaskans more closely resembled other northern Native societies.

Special features of the regional environment. Some features of the regional environment may require special attention. These are features which "set up" the significance of certain elements of Social Organization and Cultural products later in your Cultural Profile. The fauna [animal life] of any Native group's region is probably the most obvious set-up element because people's lives were almost totally organized around hunting and fishing. A clear description of the area's fish and game resources therefore *sets up* what you later say about how the group organized its seasonal rounds of hunting, fishing and gathering, and what weapons and other materials were necessary for success.

But there may be other set up features also requiring special attention. If you choose to profile the coastal Iñupiaq, for example, you will describe the usual physiographic features of mountains, valleys, and rivers. Of course you will do this for whatever Native group you are profiling. But for the coastal Iñupiaq, an equally significant but often overlooked feature of their environment is *sea ice*. Think about the relationship between sea ice and Iñupiaq life. Does not much of the coastal Iñupiaq subsistence activities – from seal hunting to whaling – depend on sea ice conditions? If so, then the social and technological adaptations made by the Iñupiaq to different sea ice conditions were absolutely crucial for establishing a way of life that went beyond mere survival. Therefore a more detailed picture of sea ice and its seasonal changes is necessary to set up your later descriptions of coastal Iñupiaq social organization and cultural products.

Environmental adaptation. Obviously a Native group had to have the right hunting and fishing technologies to effectively adapt to a particular environment. What may not be so obvious is that Native groups first had to socially organize themselves in ways that a) maintained the most effective member participation in harvesting of subsistence resources, and b) most effectively distributed these resources among its members according to the values and traditions of the group. Note that already we are discussing different ways Native societies were organized. Even with the social organization part of the Cultural Profile still several chapters away, we are already using terms like social stratification, hierarchical societies, egalitarian societies. Why? Because significant features of social life in traditional times were shaped by the nature of the environment. It was imperative that Native groups socially organized themselves in ways that took best advantage of the opportunities of their environment while avoiding the dangers. *Environmental Adaptation* is the concept which ties all these elements together. In a moment we will add a final piece to this organizing concept.

Use and Occupancy of Land

Note: "Occupancy" as used in federal Indian law means the same thing as the more familiar term "settlement patterns"**.**

Here we want to know the demographics of our selected Native group in traditional times. We need some idea of the number of people living in their tribal homeland at the time of the invasions. But do not stop with just researching population size – with just the estimated number of people living within the group's territory. Equally important for getting a good picture of what life was like back in those days is understanding the *distribution* of people across your Native group's territory. This information gives us a picture of their settlement pattern. Did people occupy more densely populated settlements like the Tlingits? Or like the Iñupiaq, was their traditional territory dotted with smaller settlements of various sizes? Or like Interior Athabaskans with their still smaller and widely distributed population, did family and local band units regularly move from one hunting area to another, particularly during winter months? Right away we see that maps are crucial if we are to construct a complete picture of Native settlements and land use in traditional times.

As we should expect, Native communities in traditional times had to establish their settlements close by fresh water and with the best possible access to fish and game. Often these settlements were in places sheltered from violent weather. Yet many of these communities still had another factor to consider before settling down – what location offered the best physical security against potential enemies? For an example, let's go to the Aleutians and the research of Waldemar Jochelson, a Russian anthropologist who did fieldwork among the Aleuts in the early 1900s. Reporting on the factors determining the location of Aleut villages, he says:

> All the ancient Aleut villages were situated on the sea-shore, not on the high land above the sea, and usually on land between two bays, so that their skin boats could easily be carried from one body of water to another at the approach of foes. Thus the usual location of villages was on narrow isthmuses, on necks of land between two ridges, on promontories, or narrow sandbanks. An indispensable adjunct to a village was a supply of easily accessible fresh water – a brook, fall, or lake. River-mouths were never used as permanent dwelling places, because the topographical conditions were conducive to unexpected attacks. The underground dwellings of the old Aleut [Aleuts of traditional times]were much like traps; if an attack were made when the inhabitants were within, they could leave it alive only through a single opening in the roof. For this reason villages were built on open places, whence observations could be made far out to sea. Nearly every village had an observatory on a hill where constant watch was kept… [6]

Be sure to look for similar kinds of information on problems of community security and how it was a factor in determining settlement patterns for your selected Native group.

Environmental adaptation: a final definition. Now we can complete our definition of environmental adaptation. The Aleut example of defensive positioning as a factor in village location makes it clear that we need to include the social world as well as the natural world in any definition of Alaska Native environmental adaptation. Unless truly isolated over long periods of time, any social group will have some relationship with other groups. As with

individuals, all human groups must adapt to the larger social environment in which they live. At any given time this environment can include both friendly and hostile forces. Every Native group conducted some form of foreign relations and provided for its own defense. Warfare, commerce, and alliance-building falls within the general meaning of foreign relations. So we need a definition of environmental adaptation which includes the social as well as the natural environment. Accordingly, our final and complete definition is:

> *Environmental adaptation occurred when a Native society socially organized itself and developed technologies to a) effectively live in and harvest the material and subsistence resources of its regional environment, and b) to effectively established secure and beneficial relations with other Native groups within their larger social environment.*

Land use and aboriginal title

"Its not down on any map; true places never are."
– Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska v. the United States. This historic Indian law case began way back in 1929 when the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) petitioned Congress to waive the sovereign immunity of the United States so that ANB could sue the federal government for not protecting their aboriginal title to lands in Southeast Alaska. In 1935, Congress agreed with ANB's aboriginal title argument and said these tribes should have their day in court. Congress then passed what is known as a "jurisdictional act" authorizing the federal Court of Claims to begin investigating the Tlingit and Haida complaint according to certain congressional guidelines. When passing a jurisdictional act, the United States government consents to being sued, thus waiving its sovereign immunity for that purpose only. *Sovereign immunity* is a legal principle passed down from old English law proclaiming that "a king can do no wrong." The principle has since been restated to say that one cannot sue the sovereign without the sovereign's consent. The reasoning is that "sovereignty" would have little meaning if the sovereign does not have complete legal protection – that is, "immunity" – against all claims that might be made against it, whether by its own citizens or by foreign powers. If everyone having a disagreement with governing authorities can sue the state, then the state is without the necessary power to effectively rule. In the case of the Tlingit and Haida, what followed were years of delay and much investigation by the Indian Claims Commission, the only judicial body ever established for the sole purpose of hearing Native American complaints against the federal government and recommending compensation or other forms of restitution.

We know that in 1959 – also the year of Alaska statehood – the Court of Claims ruled in the Tlingit and Haida case that the federal government had indeed violated the aboriginal title of these Southeast Alaska tribes. Therefore these tribes had a right to financial compensation for lands illegally taken from them. Clearly it set the stage for ANCSA by establishing aboriginal title in Alaska as valid legal doctrine. Now all Alaska Natives had a persuasive legal argument to support their land claims petition in Congress. But unlike Native regions and villages under ANCSA, the Tlingit and Haida retained no land in 1959. It was a landless settlement. They

received instead financial compensation for lands illegally taken from them over the years. Later, however, Tlingit and Haida villages would recover parcels of land through ANCSA.

Expanding the definition of Aboriginal Title. To prove use and occupancy usually means drawing maps based on the tribe's oral history of the area, on the written accounts of early visitors to the tribe's territory, and on other available social and scientific information. Mapping the proof of actual occupancy (the location of Native settlements) has not presented much of a problem. On the other hand, mapping proof of all the territory used by a Native group for subsistence hunting and fishing has resulted in major land claims controversies, not only in Alaska but also in the Lower-48 and in Canada.

Now let's suppose that during a court hearing on a Native land claim, lawyers for the federal government make the following argument: Okay, we acknowledge these specific areas of the map accurately show where Native people actually resided in traditional times. And we agree that the tribe should be compensated for the loss of this and the immediately surrounding land. But we do not acknowledge the much larger territory they claim to have used for their yearly round of subsistence activities. We understand that aboriginal title means both use and occupancy, but we see no good evidence that the tribe regularly did subsistence on all of the lands claimed by them. In fact, we don't see how they can make such an extensive claim since the area includes steep, rocky, and barren lands on which no subsistence hunting and fishing could have taken place**.**

In fact, the federal government actually put forth such a "barren lands" argument in the Tlingit and Haida case. They asserted that some of the claimed lands, particularly along the mountainous boundaries to the east, were inaccessible or useless and should not be included in any claim based on aboriginal title. The Tlingit and Haida had claimed aboriginal title to virtually all lands of southeast Alaska, from Klukwan in the north to Annette Island in the south. To the west they claimed all islands of the Southeast Archipelago as well as all of the mainland including the western slopes of the great mountain ranges to the east. The Court of Claims responded to the federal government's argument by asking two questions: a) did Alaska tribes in fact use and occupy the lands they claimed? And b) if some of the claimed lands were "barren, inaccessible, and useless," did the tribes still exercise dominion over these lands? Let's have the Court speak for itself on this question:

> We do not mean to depart in any sense from the rule of long standing that Native title to lands must be shown by proof of actual use and occupancy from time immemorial. But it is obvious from a study of the many cases involving proof of Native title to lands both in this court and at the Native Claims Commission where the Indians have proved that they used and occupied a definable area of land, the barren, inaccessible or useless areas encompassed within such overall tract *and controlled and dominated by the owners of that surrounding land,* as well as the barren mountain peaks recognized by all as the borders of the area of land, *have not been eliminated from the areas of total ownership but rather have been assigned no value in the making of an award, if any, to the Indians.* [*Emphases* ours]

We have emphasized those parts of the opinion where the Court of Claims expanded the definition of aboriginal title beyond use and occupancy. It now included lands over which tribes were traditionally recognized as having dominion, even if not regularly use and occupied by

tribal members. Once this part of the case was concluded and full aboriginal land title had been established, a second hearing took place. At this hearing the court calculated the compensation the federal government owed the tribe by determining the value of the land at the time it was illegally taken. It was during the second hearing that the "barren and inaccessible" lands already ruled as part of the tribe's aboriginal title were subtracted from the total compensation amount. Why? Because they are judged not to have had material value. In 1965, after all the maps were studied and all the financial calculations were done, the Tlingit and Haida received $7.2 million compensation for lands taken from them. (Here is an interesting historical note: The United States purchased Russia's colonial interests in all of Native Alaska for the same amount, $7.2 million.)

So far we have learned that:

1) Aboriginal title is a fundamental principle of federal Indian law.

2) Proving a tribe's historic occupancy (settlement pattern) of land has been much easier than proving their use of lands and waters which could stretch far beyond the actual settled areas.

3) Although not compensated for, the barren, unusable lands traditionally under a tribe's dominion are considered part of their aboriginal title.

4) Whether in the Tlingit and Haida case or in ANCSA, Native land claims based on aboriginal title should closely match their actual land use patterns in traditional times.

ANCSA and mapping land use. You are required to describe how your selected Native group traditionally used and occupied their lands and waters. Certainly a complete description requires mapping their territorial boundaries and settlement pattern. This mapping exercise raises three interesting questions you should consider researching.

First, does your map of traditional land-use correspond to the lands your Native group or groups actually claimed by right of aboriginal title? One place to begin your investigation is with a 1968 study conducted by the Federal Field Committee on Development Planning in Alaska. In order to have reliable information for judging various Native land claims, the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs asked the Field Committee to undertake a comprehensive research project. Among other things, the Field Committee researched Native patterns of settlement and land use in traditional times. The Committee's findings were compiled in a major document entitled *Alaska Natives and the Land* published early in 1969. Their research clearly indicates that the Native claims to most Alaska lands based on aboriginal use and occupancy were valid. [7]

The second interesting question is: To what extent does your map or the maps in *Alaska Natives and the Land* correspond to a map of ANCSA lands your Native group actually retained in 1971? Do the boundaries lines match? Did your Native group retain more land or less land or about the same amount of land they originally claimed? The Native corporations in your region

should have this information. They may even have the maps you need. In fact, the Field Committee suggested that a fair settlement would be for Alaska Natives to retain 60 million acres. But as we know, the final settlement had Natives retaining only 44 million acres.

And thirdly, there is the ongoing issue of whether Natives have some sort of aboriginal title to hunting and fishing rights on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) beyond Alaska's three mile jurisdiction. These are federal waters and the courts could decide that ANCSA extinguishment of aboriginal title only applied to Alaska state lands and waters.[8] If you are profiling a coastal Native group, two further research questions arise: Did they hunt and fish beyond the three mile limit? If so, can a map be drawn showing the area of the OCS where this subsistence activity took place in traditional times?

Review Questions.

Can you define *environmental adaptation* and explain how this process works?

Can you explain the major differences between Northern Native societies and Southern Native societies and the way different environments shaped the nature of these societies?

Why do we say beware of false dichotomies when studying Alaska Native societies?

Why have we been forced to look at aspects of traditional Native social life even before we get to the chapter on Social Organization?

Why is it important to add a social dimension to our definition of environmental adaptation?

Why is it easier to prove traditional settlement patterns than traditional land use?

How did the Court of Claims expand the definition of aboriginal title in the Tlingit and Haida case?

Some Alaska Native tribes may still have a claim of aboriginal title on the Outer Continental Self. Explain.

ENDNOTES

[1] The basic framework for illustrating differences between northern and southern Alaska Native societies is found in Joan Townsend's "Ranked Societies of the Alaskan Pacific Rim," *Senri Ethnological Studies*,4, 1979, pp 123–156.

[2] *Alaska Natives and the Land*, Robert Arnold et al., Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska (Anchorage, 1968). Online at: http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED055719.pdf

[3] Burch Jr., Ernest, *The Traditional Eskimo Hunters of Point Hope, Alaska, 1800–1875*. Barrow, Alaska: The North Slope Borough, 1981

[4] Ellanna, Linda J. and Sherrod, George K., *From Hunters to Herders:The Transformation of Earth, Society, and Heaven Among the Iñupiaq of Beringia,* Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska – Fairbanks, August, 2004, p. 135.

[5] I*n re Sah Quah*, 1 Alaska. Fed. Rpts. 136 (1886).

[6] Margaret Lantis, (Ed.), *Ethnohistory in Southwestern and the Southern Yukon: Method and Content*. The University Press of Kentucky, 1970, pp. 179-180.

[7] *Alaska Natives and the Land,* Chapter 3, "Land and Ethnic Relationships." (See the bibliographic reference for a full citation and the document's online location.)

[8] See: David Case and David Voluck, *Alaska Natives and American Laws* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2002) pp. 306-307 .

Chapter Five

The Six Parts of Culture

The broad scientific field of anthropology is built on the concept of culture. It figures in almost everything anthropologists and ethnohistorians do, whether studying ancient human remains or a society's social organization or a people's folklore and oral traditions. Even political scientists talk about a "civic culture." This is why we have said that the concept of culture is has become quite elastic. Indeed, there are almost as many definitions of culture as there are books on anthropology and ethnohistory. Why? Because each has its own purpose which requires defining culture in a specific way. Certainly the concept of culture is central to our work here. To fit our purposes here, we define culture as *a distinct way of life and way of thinking about life that is closely share by a socially organized group of people over an extended period of time.* The remainder of your Cultural Profile Project deals with traditional use and occupancy of land, social organization, worldview, and cultural products – the very essence of Native life in those days. So before proceeding, we take a timeout here to break this definition down into its six essential parts.

Part 1 – Culture is distinctive. Something about a group's culture — their way of life and how they think about that life — distinguishes them from other groups. Their cultural identity is directly tied to their feeling that "unlike other people known to us, we believe and practice these things." In turn, other groups acknowledge such differences from their own cultural perspectives. It can be argued that the word "culture" would not exist if all people everywhere looked the same, spoke the same language, organized their societies the same way, and shared the same values, and traditions.

Part 2 – Culture is shared. A distinct way of life and way of thinking about life, is closely shared by members of the group. The cultural rules, core values, and cherished traditions are learned at an early age and understood by all members. This learned cultural knowledge provides a mental road map for navigating through everyday life. It is a road map we carry in the back of our heads. We do not consciously think about these cultural rules, values, and traditions as we go about our daily lives. We simply *do* our culture, mostly without giving it a second thought.[1]

Anton Chekhov, the great Russian playwright, once observed that "Any idiot can face a crisis. It is this day-to-day living that wears you out." Chekhov was talking about daily life within his own cultural setting. But what about living and working in very different cultural surroundings where we start out with few clues on how to appropriately act as daily events unfold? Imagine how exhausting life would be if we had to stop and think about every encounter we had with a local person and about each word we uttered during the day. Anyone who has lived for any length of time in a very different cultural setting knows of this experience. Often it

is called "culture shock." We are not talking about the short, protected experience of a tourist. We are talking about, for example, the experience of Peace Corps volunteers who spend two years working in foreign environments, often in remote areas. We are talking about elderly Native people whose whole life has been in the village of their ancestors but who now must go to the city to find work or receive specialized medical care. And we are talking about the young non-Native teacher who accepts a position teaching in an isolated Alaska Native village after spending his entire life in New York City.

Part 3 – Social organization and cultural rules. If a way of life – a culture – is recognized as having distinctive elements closely shared by a group of people, than it must be considered a living reality. Culture is not simply an abstract idea in some outside observer's mind. It is a real thing having real meaning and consequences for members of the group. And to have such meaning and consequences, the culture must have a social organization, an institutional structure which at least meets the basic needs of the group.

To identify a social institution we ask this question: Is there a clearly defined category of people who repeatedly come together to accomplish certain tasks or to regulate certain activities of their society? In modern American society, for example, we have religious institutions where various activities of the faithful take place in churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues on a regular basis. Our capitalist economy is largely driven by the institution of the private corporation. In all of these institutional settings, a clearly defined category of people repeatedly come together to accomplish a certain task. In traditional Native societies we have such examples as the Iñupiaq and Siberian Yupik whaling crews, the potlatch among the Tlingit, and the men's house (*qasegiq*) among the Central Yup'ik. In each case the same category of people – a whaling crew, a Tlingit clan or house group, Yup'ik men living in the same settlement – come together on a regular basis to perform specific tasks.

Perhaps the most obvious social institution in any culture is some form of a family. Within any cultural group we can detect a pattern of how various family members are expected to treat each other as opposed to treating non-family members. This also includes how to treat members of the larger kinship group such as aunts, uncles, and cousins who may live in a different household or even a different settlement. When viewed across cultures, we can see different kinds of relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children, or between grandparents and grandchildren. Sometimes we can even identify special relationships between aunts and their nieces and between uncles and their nephews. In some societies there exist clear cultural expectations of how older children shall care for their younger sisters and brothers.

Most important, all social institutions are governed by sets of cultural rules. But what do we mean by *cultural rules*? We mean those commonly understood principles and expectations which guide people's behavior in everyday life. These rules, moreover, make up a large part of that cultural road map we carry about in the back of our heads as we go about our daily routines. It matters not whether the task is as routine as food preparation for the family or as dramatic as preparing for war. Understanding family roles and relationships within a particular culture, for example, becomes easier once we know the rules for how family members should relate to one

another — the son to the father, the granddaughter to the grandmother, the husband to his wife. Of course we can reverse this investigative process. We can try to understand the cultural rules by observing over time the pattern of behavior that takes place among family members

Part 4 – Culture persists over time. The fourth idea helping to define our concept of culture is *over time*. A distinct culture closely shared by a socially organized group of people most likely arose from adaptations their ancestors made to demands of a particular natural and social environment many years ago. As long as these environments remain reasonably stable down through time, so too should a people's social institutions remain stable.

Such cultural stability was the historical condition of Alaska Native life until the invasions brought sustained contact with powerful, culturally different outsiders. This, however, does not mean that pre-invasion Native life was without events triggering major social change for many Native communities. Indeed, the more we learn about pre-contact Native life, the more action-packed it becomes, filled with tales of hostilities between Native groups that lasted for years and resulted in the death of many and the dislocation of entire communities. Nevertheless, such pre-invasion conflict and change was usually confined to a region and affected only several Native groups at any one time. Certainly there was death and destruction in traditional times. But it was not the basic social organization and cultural values of the warring parties that was under attack. Even if beaten in battle or hit by a natural catastrophe, the customs and values of the surviving people continued much as before. With the Russian and American invasions, however, it was precisely Native social organizations and cultural values that came under direct attack.

Part 5 – A distinct speech community. The emphasis here is on *speech community*, not language as such. In both modern and traditional times, the *way* people speak a language may be as significant a badge of cultural identity as speaking the language itself. A group of people may speak the same language as other groups inhabiting the same general culture area. But they speak and use it in ways that distinguishes them from these other groups. Consider the famous line attributed to Winston Churchill, the British prime minister during World War Two. He remarked that "Great Britain and the United States are two great democracies divided by a common language." If he were to use our terms, Churchill would reword his statement to say that Great Britain and the United States share a common language but are two different speech communities.

Although, for example, its basic vocabulary and grammar is commonly shared by other American speech communities, the everyday English spoken by many African-Americans can be quite distinctive in its spoken style and vocabulary. In fact, words and phrases used by many Americans have their origins in the "Black English" speech community. Here are just a few examples: *cat* – originally a jazz musician, now anyone of the male gender; *cool* – calm, controlled; *dig it* – to understand, appreciate, pay attention; *bad* – really good. The Head of the African and African-American Studies Department at Harvard University, Henry Louis Gates Jr., makes this point:

> "It [black English] becomes part of the mainstream in a minute," the poet Amiri Baraka told me, referring to the black *vernacular*. "We hear the rappers say, 'I'm outta

> here' - the next thing you know, Clinton's saying, 'I'm outta here.'" And both Senator John Kerry and President George W. Bush are calling out, "Bring it on," like dueling mike-masters at a hip-hop slam. Talk about changing places. Even as large numbers of black children struggle with standard English, hip-hop has become the recreational lingua franca of white suburban youth…[2] [vernacular = everyday spoken language different from formal written language.]

So, you might ask, what does certain characteristics of the African-American speech community have to do with Native Alaska? We have known for many years that there is an increasing shift from Native languages to English. Those who believe that "to lose your language is to lose your culture" see this language shift as spelling doom for Native cultures. This grim view of a Native future seems to forget two things. The first is the distinctiveness of Native village life historically based a subsistence way of life no matter what language is spoken. The second is the development of various forms of "Alaska Native English." Consider the following question: Like African-Americans, is there now emerging in Alaska different Native-English speech communities? Perhaps we are at a point in Native history when, for example, a person from an Athabaskan village can say, "Aha, the way that guy speaks and uses English tells me he is, like me, a Koyukon Athabaskan from the Nulato area!"

We have taken time to discuss the idea of speech community because it is a key feature of any culture, whether in modern or traditional times. No concept of culture is complete without some discussion of linguistics – of a group's language and its characteristics. It is true that language shifts and the development of new speech communities were not major issues in traditional Native times. Bear in mind, however, that even back in those days the particular way one spoke Iñupiaq or Tlingit or any other Native language would reveal one's home community or region to other speakers of same language, perhaps signaling whether that person is friend or foe.

Part 6 – Worldview is the heart of culture. This sixth element is absolutely central to any description of a cultural group. A people's worldview is the unique way they think of themselves and make sense of the world they know. It deserves special attention. This is why all of Chapter Seven is devoted to worldview and its various elements. For a definition of worldview we go to the work of the late Oscar Kawagley, a Central Yup'ik scholar. In his book, *A Yupiaq Worldview*, Dr. Kawagley says:

> A worldview consists of the principles we acquire to make sense of the world around us. Young people learn these principles, including values, traditions, and customs, from myths, legends, stories, family, community, and examples set by community leaders…
>
> …Once a worldview has been formed, the people are then able to identify themselves as a unique people. Thus, the worldview enables its possessors to make sense of the world around them, make artifacts [material things] to fit their world, generate behavior, and interpret their experiences. As with many other indigenous groups, the worldviews of the traditional Alaska Native peoples have worked well for their practitioners for thousands of years. [3]

Worldview is indeed is the heart of our concept of culture. Why? Because it provides a everyday meaning and legitimacy to a group's social institutions and cultural identity. It is their worldview that defines, even celebrates, the group's best image of itself. It describes and promotes what is regarded as the proper attitude toward the spiritual world, the social world of fellow humans, and the natural world and its living creatures.*

As suggested by Professor Kawagley, much of a culture's worldview is revealed by what adults insist be taught to the young. Whether modern or traditional, every society down through time has established institutions to educate the young in all aspects of the group's worldview. The long-term survival of any culture and cultural identity ultimately depends on how effectively a coherent worldview is passed down from generation to generation. In modern society, for example, we have schools, youth organizations, and children's television programs like Sesame Street. In one form or another, these American institutions teach cultural values as well as skills and information.

In traditional Native societies it was other kinds of institutions which performed vital educational functions. Among the matrilineal societies of southern Alaska, for example, there existed an important educational institution called the avunculate. In matrilineal kinship systems a person traces genealogical descent through the mother's side. In the matrilineal society of the Tlingit, for example, a person's most significant kinship ties are with members of the mother's clan. Personal benefits such as inheritance, property rights, and social status are tied to clan membership. In patrilineal societies, on the other hand, a person's significant kinship ties and benefits are determined by genealogical descent on the father's side. European monarchies, for example, traditionally used patrilineal descent to establish who, male or female, ascended to the royal throne as king or queen. [Genealogy: tracing one's family history back to earliest ancestors.]

The avunculate found in matrilineal societies refers to the relationship between the mother's brother and her son. In Western terms, it is the relationship between a nephew and his uncle on the mother's side. This avuncular relationship is considered an educational institution because it was the uncle's responsibility to oversee the education and training of his sister's son who, of course, is his nephew. The biological father certainly has parental responsibilities to his son, and the son had a special connection to his father's clan. But we should not forget that he also had avuncular educational responsibilities within his own clan to his sister's son. In modern educational terms, the avuncular relationship was like having your own personal instructor in a home schooling situation. This was a fundamental cultural rule. It was a major way the group's values and knowledge were transmitted to the next generation of males.

Summary lesson. Our six-part concept of culture should remind us that Alaska Natives persisted as culturally organized communities from ancient times. It suggests that this cultural cohesion could only have happened if the group's institutions and cultural rules continually met the essential human needs of its members under demanding environmental conditions.

***** Professor Kawagley employs the appellation *Yupiaq* when referring to Central Yup'ik people. In his *Native People of Alaska*, Steve Langdon favors *Yupiit*.[4] To be consistent throughout our project, we stick with the Alaska Native Language Center's appellation of *Central Yup'ik*. [Appellation: the name by which someone or some group is known.]

Review Questions.

How have we defined the concept of *culture*?

Why do we have "speech community" rather than language as one of our six parts of culture?

Can you give some examples of cultural rules you follow in your own daily life without having to constantly thinking about them?

Why do we consider *worldview* to be the heart of any people's culture?

ENDNOTES

[1] The idea that cultural knowledge largely consists of mundane, taken for granted, often invisible rules governing social interactions in everyday life is well explained in the works of James Spradley and David McCurdy. See their: *The Cultural Perspective*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. 1989. Also see: Susan Philips *The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation* (Long Grove, Ill:Waveland Press,1992).

[2] Henry Louis Gates Jr. "Axing a Few Questions About Black Vernacular," *New York Times*, October 2004.

[3] Oscar Kawagley, *A Yupiaq Worldview* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. 1995) pp. 7-8.

[4] Steve Langdon, *Native People of Alaska* (Anchorage: Greatland Graphics, 5th edition, 2002).

Chapter Six

Social Organization

Social Relations – main social institutions: family structure, kinship system, education, social stratification, regional groups and relations between regional groups

Economics – primary and secondary subsistence resources,
Commerce: trade routes and relationships, trade goods

Governance – group decision-making, leadership, law and order

By now you should have completed the first section of the Cultural Profile Project on Native environmental adaptation and land use and occupancy. Here you study Social Organization. Then you move directly to Worldview and finish with Cultural Products. Your work here will provide a snapshot of how social relations were organized within families, communities, and even regions. It will show how your selected Native group or groups sustained life through the economics of subsistence and commerce. Because traditional Native governance is so different from our own experiences, you are asked to do some extra thinking about this element. Note that several aspects of Social Relations already have been discussed in earlier chapters – education in Chapter Three and social stratification in Chapter Four. They should be reviewed to refresh your memory.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Social institutions. Your assignment here is to describe how your selected Native group socially organized themselves, usually along kinship lines. This includes main social institutions and the cultural rules regulating people's behavior within these institutions. A cultural profile of the Tlingit, for example, requires description the clan as a main social institution and how membership was determined by the cultural rule of matrilineal descent. You also describe how all of Tlingit society was socially divided into two parts. These parts are termed moieties (sometimes called phratries), and the fundamental cultural rule was that marriage must always be with a person of the opposite moiety. Indeed, you will find that kinship – a person's network of relatives determined by birth, marriage or adaptation – to be the central social institution of whatever Native group you are profiling.

Comparative referents. Whenever we are confronted with something new, our first reaction is an attempt to make sense of the new thing by asking ourselves how it *compares* to something I already know. This is a natural human response. Whether it is a religious ceremony or a marriage custom or even a tool, is there anything in my own experience that helps me understand this new thing? In a word, we seek comparative referents. The problem is that how we might describe our life in modern times will not be very helpful when attempting to describe Native life in traditional times. Your experience as a student in a modern school, for example, will not help you understand how Native youth were educated back in those days.

There is another problem. Upon finding no clear comparative referents, we can start sliding down that slippery slope to the ethnocentrism discussed in earlier chapters. Our efforts to understand cultural differences now becomes secondary to an evaluation of those "other people" according to our own cultural values and standards. It is no longer about understanding cultural differences. Now it is about identifying cultural deficiencies. Without clear comparative referents, we of the modern world will always have difficulty understanding the social institutions of Native societies in traditional times. So what do we do? We start by first separating *social function* from *social structure***.**

Social Function. Recall during our earlier discussion of the six parts of culture we suggested that a key element of any culture is its "persistence over time." But to persist over time, a society must create institutions which *function* to fulfill the essential everyday needs of its members. Critical organs of the human body such as the heart, lungs, and liver must, for example, continually perform certain functions for us to remain alive. Likewise, the institutions (the organs) of a society must perform certain functions to keep that society alive. Indeed, the elements we have identified as making up a society's Social Organization directly reflect these necessary functions:

Social Units —-- function to fulfill the society's need to organize relationships among members and to have cultural rules regulating these relationships.

Economics ---- function to fulfill the society's need to produce and distribute food and other goods and services necessary to sustain a tolerable quality of life.

Governance --– functions to fulfill the society's need to make decisions affecting the general welfare of all and to maintain law and order.

Worldview --- functions to fulfill a society's need for an agreed upon set of moral values and sense of cultural cohesion. This is fully discussed in the next chapter on Worldview.[1]

The important point is that although we may have a hard time identifying the specific institutions performing these four functions, they most certainly had to exist in traditional times. Otherwise Alaska Native societies could not have long endured as cohesive cultures. This is especially so given the nature of their demanding physical environments. What we have to

understand is that back in those days the main social institutions of Native societies were "multi-functional." Moreover, these four vital social functions were "embedded" in these institutions which can make it difficult for us modern folk to find them let alone understand them. So let's take a close look at these concepts of multi-functional institutions and embedded social functions.

Social Structure. Along with other organs, the heart, lungs, and liver make up the physical structure of the human body. So also do institutions make up the social structure of societies. One characteristic distinguishing modern societies from those of traditional times is *institutional specialization*. Modern society seems to have established separate institutions to meet almost every social need. To understand this specialization, think about how many institutions we might deal with during a single, very busy day.

Either face-to-face or through telecommunications devices such as the telephone and computerized internet services, we might have dealings with institutions specializing in social and health services such as a Native non-profit organization, an office of the State of Alaska, or some BIA program. We can attend a service at any one of several churches representing different religious beliefs and practices. Our general economic well-being may depend upon contact with several businesses, including Native corporations, and with state and federal economic development programs and agencies. Of course there is our everyday interaction with local companies and with those doing subsistence hunting and fishing on whom we may depend for food.

Our day can become even more hectic if we are involved in civic affairs, perhaps as a village council member. To accomplish a civic goal like better fish and game management may require us to do work at different levels of the political system. This could include meetings with local tribal councils and contact with state and federal officials, perhaps even members of the state legislature. Everyday, moreover, we count on state troopers, local police departments, Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs), sometimes even the FBI, to keep us safe. If we have to go to court, we count on an extensive civil and criminal legal system to fairly uphold the rule of law. It seems, finally, that we have a school or school system to carry out whatever educational function we or our children might need during that day. There are, of course, some modern institutions that do take on extra functions. Schools, for example, lend their facilities to community events and sports activities. But these activities must not interfere with their main function of education. Can you think of any non-educational functions taking place in your school?

There is still another characteristic of modern institutional specialization. During our day of conducting lots of business, we must often interact with strangers. It's possible we know only one in five of the institutional representatives we contact on this busy day. So living with institutional specialization can also mean living in a highly impersonal world. This can even be the case if you live in a village, but especially if you live in a city where strangers are part of your everyday life. Outside of people providing subsistence foods, few of us have personal relationships with those who actually produce and distribute much of what we eat.. And most of the time we have no personal relationship with those in state and federal offices who may

exercise considerable power over our lives. To live in the modern times is to live in a world of strangers and be subject to distant power centers.

Multi-functional institutions. In Native societies of the traditional past, it was a different situation altogether. There was little institutional specialization and social relationships were personal and local. In contrast to life in modern society, the everyday activities of economics, education, governance, law enforcement, and spirituality were "embedded" in only a few local, mainly kinship institutions such as the extended family, band, or clan. Performing these social functions was almost always viewed as the primary responsibility of a kin-related group. Under these conditions, a person's everyday business was conducted with familiar people and not with strangers. You personally knew those who had the power to shape your life and future. Before the invasions, interaction with complete strangers was rare, ordinarily confined to distant trade and war.

Even if not strictly part of the kinship system, you should include any other significant institution functioning to meet the needs of the group. A good example is the *qasegiq*, the men's house of the Central Yup'ik. Within the exclusively male qasegiq were embedded a number of social functions. Some of these were the economic and technological functions of maintaining hunting and fishing gear and preparing for group hunting or trading trips. Another was the spiritual function of directing significant community rituals and ceremonies. There was also the governance function of group decision-making by family leaders and elders of the *qasegiq*. Finally there was the educational function of men giving instruction to older boys who also lived in the *qasegiq*. Although not an exclusive male residence, the coastal Iñupiaq whaling communities had a similar multi-functional institution called the *gargi*. The Iñupiaq educator, Edna Mclean, offers this description.

> Activities within the whaling communities were centered in the whaling captains' traditional communal organization called the *qargi* in Ieupiaq. *Uqaluktuat* 'life experience stories' and *unipkaat* 'legends' were told in the *qargit* (plural form of *qargi).* Here people learned their oral history, songs and chants. Young boys and men learned to make tools and weapons while they listened to the traditions of their forefathers.[2]

You will find other social institutions which served more than one function in society. In traditional Tlingit society, for example, a key institution was the *potlatch***.** The Tlingit anthropologist Rosita Worl gives this description of the potlatch:

> The Tlingit potlatch ..[was].. a ritualized competition in which clan leaders increase their status through the opulent consumption and distribution of goods and the destruction of property. While these activities were part of the traditional ceremonial activities of a potlatch, they are not its central elements. Basically, the Tlingit social and spiritual order is acted in the traditional potlatch.[3]

Here is another description of the potlatch given by Steve Langdon, also an anthropologist:

> The major ceremonial institution among the Tlingit and Haida was the potlatch. This was staged with great pomp an ceremony, primarily to honor a deceased person but also to demonstrate the clan's status and the competence of the heir. Due to a combination of

> grieving and fear of the corpse, Tlingit clansmen did not handle arrangements for the interment of their dead. Rather the members of the opposite moiety, typically those of the clan with which long-established ties existed, would take care of the body and details of the burial or cremation, depending on the status of the dead person's position…
>
> About a year later, the heirs of the deceased would invite those who carried out the burial work and other clan members from the opposite moiety to the potlatch. Goods, wealth and foods which had been accumulated during the intervening year were distributed in memory of the deceased individual and in thanks for the efforts of the other side.[4]

We know that theories on the distribution and consumption of resources is a major subject of economics courses. Since Rosita Worl uses these economic concepts to describe a function of the potlatch, maybe you should describe the potlatch under economics. But the potlatch also served spiritual functions. So do you put it under worldview? It also had the social function of increasing clan or household social status through displays of wealth and generosity. So do you put it under social stratification? Of course the greater the social status of the clan, the greater the clan's political influence within the tribe's system of governance. So do you need to say something about it as an element of governance? Here is a suggestion: Like the Yup'ik *qasegiq*, the Tlingit potlatch was a major multi-functional institution and best treated as single topic with all of its functions described in one place.

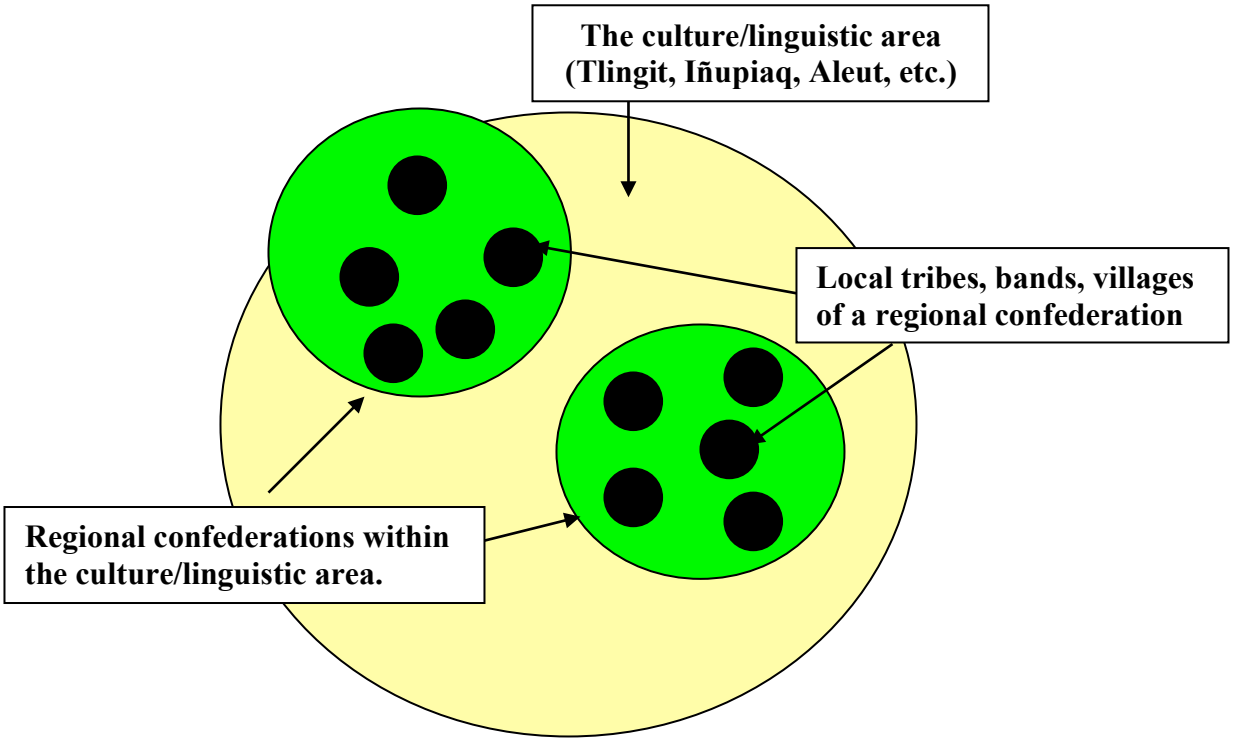
Structure and function: a summary. Always keep in mind that Alaska Native societies could not have survived over such a long period of time without having a structure of institutions performing critical social functions. On this point, shortly we will discuss how the United States Court of Claims used a functional analysis to conclude that in traditional times the Tlingit and Haida did indeed have authentic governing systems exercising sovereign authority over a defined territory. Therefore they had legal standing to press their right of aboriginal title in American courts. Also keep in mind that our everyday experience with modern institutional specialization provides no clear comparative referent for understanding the multi-functional institutions of traditional times – the idea that any number of significant social functions could be "embedded" in a single institution, most often the kinship system.

Regional confederations and interregional relations. Here our interest goes beyond family and other local institutions like the *qasegiq* and potlatch. Now we want to know about the relationships, if any, among a) Native groups within a region and b) between different regional groups. Figure 6-1 presents the main elements of this discussion. The large outer circle represents the broad culture/linguistic areas as shown on the ANLC map. The green circles represent regional confederations made up of local groups shown as black dots .

The questions here are: Did the Native group I am researching belong to a regional confederation? And if so, what did this relationship look like? What sorts of activities brought members of the confederation together on a regular basis? For example, did people gather at certain times of the year for trade or ceremonial events or hunting activities? Are there any oral or written reports of major conflict *within* a confederation? As for relationships among local

groups within a confederation, we must not forget the ultimate bonding power of kinship as a system of mutual obligations and protections. For the very practical reasons of survival and prosperity, we should expect to find that people often relied upon kinsmen living in other parts of the region. When on a trade mission or hunting expedition, for example, a person could receive aid and comfort from kin living in other areas of the region. Of course these regional kin relationships were established over time through whatever form of marriage was the custom of the regional group.

Figure 6-1



Then, finally, there is the question of relations between different regional groups within the larger culture/linguistic area. Under what conditions could one regional group expect assistance from other regional groups? Apparently the relations between people of different Aleut Islands were not generally harmonious. Yet three Fox Island groups were able to mount coordinated attacks on the Russians in the 1760s. And in 1802, several Tlingit regional groups (Kwaans) carried out simultaneous attacks on Russian posts at Sitka, Yakutat, and Kake. On the other hand, there are historical reports of major conflict between regional groups. We know of an intense interregional war between the Iñupiaq nations of Kotzebue and Point Hope.[5] And then there were the "Bow and Arrows Wars" waged by Central Yup'ik regional confederations of the Lower Yukon River Delta.[6] And we can learn from Miranda Wright about shaman-led conflict between groups within the Koyukon Athabaskan region.[7]

What rules governed marriages across regional boundaries? Among the Central Yup'ik, for example, interregional marriage was generally frowned upon. Yet it did occur, perhaps to strengthen a profitable trade relationship between families of different confederations.[8] So you may come across terms such as "arranged marriages" and "women exchanges." Understand that

such customs were certainly not limited to Alaska Natives. For centuries European royal families arranged marriages across national boundaries to create political and military alliances or to reinforce these alliances. Queen Victoria of Great Britain (1819-1901), for example, was of partial German descent. She has been called the grandmother of modern Europe because she worked tirelessly to arrange the marriages of her nine children and twenty-one grandchildren with the royal families of other European nations.

ECONOMICS

Native subsistence. The Cultural Profile element of economics has two parts. The first part is description of your Native group's traditional subsistence activities. Under Regional Environment you have already described the fish and game inhabiting the area. Now you want to know which fish and game were primary subsistence resources and which were secondary. A primary subsistence resource is one which a Native group heavily depended upon to maintain the expected quality of life. One way to determine what constituted a primary resource is to ask: What would have happened if this resource was severely reduced or disappeared altogether? What, for example, would have happened to Southeast Alaska tribes if the salmon had stopped running? Or what would have happened to Iñupiaq and Siberian Yupik whaling communities if the migration pattern of the Bowhead whale radically changed? If it could not be readily replaced with other fish and game, then it is a primary subsistence resource.

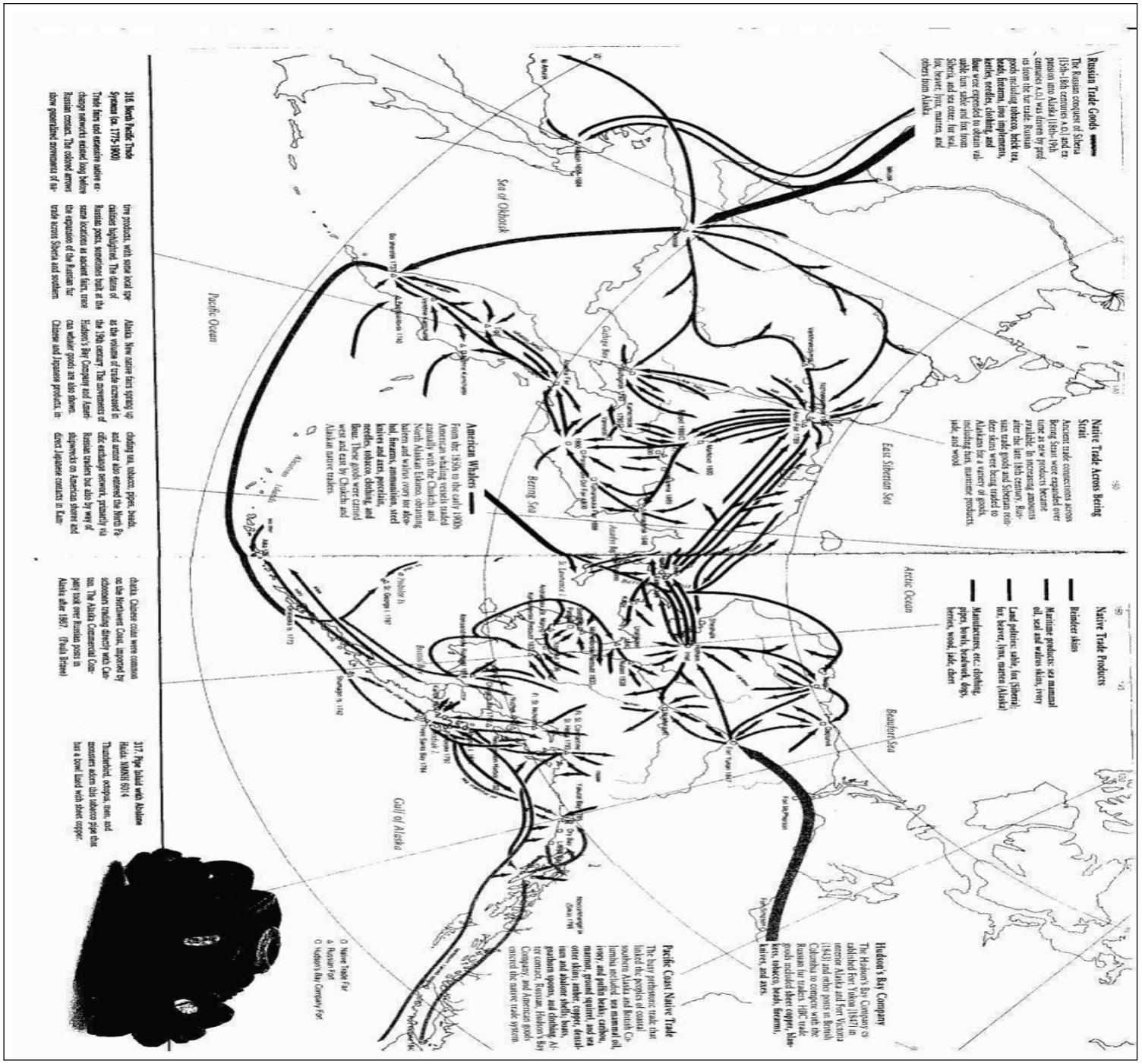
We can think of what constituted secondary subsistence resources by asking: If the primary resource was severely reduced, what resources were available to take its place? And would these resources, taken together, have been enough to meet the dietary needs of the same number of people? If the salmon had stopped running, what subsistence resources were still available to Southeast tribes? It may be that the Tlingit and Haida people could still preserve their quality of life by harvesting other fish species, including shellfish, and by more aggressively hunting sea mammals and land animals. But would these secondary resources – even when added together – have been enough to sustain the comparatively large, densely populated Tlingit and Haida settlements?

And, of course, you want to highlight any special ways the group organized itself to carry out subsistence activities. One example that comes to mind is the "fence and corral" method of hunting caribou among interior Athabaskans. You also want to include how subsistence foods were distributed among community members. Were there cultural rules about who received shares of recently gotten fish and game? Was distribution only to immediate family members? Or to extended family members or clan? Or was it expected that members of the entire community should share the harvest, perhaps based on the charitable principle of who is the most needy.

Native commerce. In most discussions of traditional Native economics, this section would be entitled "Native trade." Here, however, we use the term *commerce*. We have changed this wording to emphasize the fact that Native trading activities ranged far and wide and were complex in their organization. This often underestimated aspect of traditional Native life was of

such significance that the word, "trade" does not adequately capture the full meaning of what actually took place. Commerce is defined by most dictionaries as the large scale buying and selling of goods and services over a broad geographical area. The *Crossroads of Continents* map of North Pacific trade systems (Figure 6-2) illustrates the various commercial systems of Alaska Natives in traditional times. Take a good look at this map. Surely the number of different Native groups involved, the large geographic reach – indeed an intercontinental reach – of the various Native trade networks, and the extensive inventory of goods traded clearly fits the definition of commerce as we think of it today.[9]

Figure 6-2



Using the *Crossroads* map as a visual aid, we see that Alaska Native groups conducted commerce reaching beyond the borders of their home territories, sometimes far beyond these borders. As with any commercial enterprise throughout human history, the purpose is to overcome the local scarcity of a valued product. This was done by trading for "foreign products" manufactured or harvested by people living in another region having the material resources to produce these goods. One of the first things you study in any economics course is the law of supply and demand. If there is high demand for a scarce product, the more it is valued. The more valued a product, greater will be the time and energy people spend producing it. And, obviously, the more people will pay or give in trade to acquire it. Of course you would prefer to acquire these scarce goods by developing a favorable commercial relationship with those who have them. Traditional Native economies were as influenced by the law of supply and demand as are modern industrial economies. If you lived on the coast, for example, you had a good supply of seal oil for cooking and lighting, but you lacked the forest resources to produce highly useful wood products. If you lived in interior Alaska, on the other hand, the forest resources necessary to make wood products were all around you. But everyday interior life was made easier if you had a supply of seal oil with its cooking and lighting benefits.

So what did Native people do in such economic situations? They developed commercial networks based on the principle of supply and demand. From earliest times, Alaska Native groups have always enjoyed products developed from natural resources not found in their own region. This also included goods from Russia and from other parts of North America even before contact with these Western economic systems. On the traditional commerce of Interior Athabaskans, the oral history scholar William Schneider says:

> Long before explorers and fur traders made their way to the Alaskan Coast, the goods of their world were arriving across the Bering Strait. The Chukchi and the Eskimo people of Siberia traded regularly with northwestern Alaskan Eskimos, who then made exchanges with Athabaskans of the Interior. Iron, copper, tobacco, and reindeer skins enriched the traditional trade between these people. [10]

The *Crossroads* map lists other examples of valued products exchanged along ancient intercontinental Native trade routes. Some of these were jade, dogs, pipes, bowls, sea mammal oil and skins, and various fur peltries.

New commercial opportunities. Because they are unfamiliar with the overall significance of Native commerce in traditional times, many people are surprised at the remarkable speed with which Alaska Natives became shrewd traders within the new commercial systems introduced by the Russians, Americans, and agents of the Hudson Bay Company. Therefore they conclude that this speedy adaptation can only mean that Natives eagerly sought assimilation into Western culture. Let's present a different perspective.

We start our discussion of Western culture and Alaska Native assimilation by asking: Just who was commercially assimilated by whom during the early contact period? Can it be argued that in many cases what occurred during these early years was actually the assimilation of Western traders into longstanding Native commercial activities and attitudes? An example would be the early years of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Yukon where Gwich'in Athabaskans

controlled trade with the Company's agents. At the time, the Company's supply lines were stretched over a thousand miles. This meant that re-supplying the Fort Yukon post with foodstuffs and trade goods was a slow and uncertain proposition, all of which made the Company's agents more dependent on local Gwich'in for basic life-sustaining food and materials.

The white traders at Fort Yukon soon found that many of the trade goods they had to offer were of little value to the Gwich'in whose own subsistence-based material for making winter clothing and other items was far superior. We go to Bill Schneider who helps us understand the early Hudson Bay trader's predicament. He provides us with this report from Alexander Murray who established the Fort Yukon post in 1847:

> Blankets, axes, knives, powder horns and files went off readily enough, but it was hard to dispose of the clothing, as they [Gwich'in] consider their own dresses much superior to ours both in beauty and durability, and they are pretty right, although I endeavor to persuade them to the contrary. I could not give them a reason for bringing so few goods, that we had brought only a few for trial, but more would be sent next year, which was the only way to prevent them from disposing of their furs elsewhere. [When Murray says "disposing of their furs elsewhere," he means through traditional Gwich'in commercial networks reaching agents of the Russian American Company down the Yukon River and beyond as well as the Iñupiaq on the Arctic Coast.] [11]

Another example is the early assimilation of whalers and traders into Eskimo commercial networks governed by Eskimo rules on how trade was to be conducted. We turn again to Tiger Burch. Using both written records and Native oral histories, he shows that the history of contact between the Iñupiaq and many of the thousands of whalers and traders who came to the Arctic between 1850 and 1910 can be divided into an early and a late period.[12] During the early period, 1850 to about 1870, it was the Iñupiaq and not the whalers who controlled the contact situation, including control of commerce. During this time the whalers and traders sailed in fragile wooden sailing ships and therefore had a well founded fear of Arctic sea and ice conditions. Burch reports that as many as seventy-six whaling ships were lost in the Northwest Arctic between 1860 and 1871. Whaling crews were well aware that surviving a ship wreck often depended on swift rescue and the offer of food and shelter by the Iñupiaq. They knew their very lives may well depend on how they behaved within Iñupiaq communities.

Here is a final point. Suppose I think German-made automobiles and kitchen appliances are the best in the world. For as long as I can remeber, in fact, I have only purchase German brands. Does this mean I've assimilated German culture? That I have generally adopted German customs and values? Of course not.

The rest of the story. We know Iñupiaq control of the contact situation was not to last. From the 1870s onward an ancient way of life was under intense physical and cultural assault from many directions. There was widespread famine and disease. Burch estimates that the Iñupiaq population of Northwest Alaska plummeted from 5,500 in 1860 to only about 1,100 in 1890. Soon there was an ever increasing presence of outsiders in everyday Iñupiaq life as missionaries and government agents soon followed the whalers and traders. Unlike the early

period controlled by the Iñupiaq, these newcomers came with power. They controlled the distribution of western goods (food, clothing, tools, building materials) now absolutely necessary to sustain life in many Iñupiaq communities devastated by famine and disease.[13]

To summarize, during early contact, the energetic pursuit of new economic opportunities offered by outsiders was only an extension of Native traditional commerce. It did not signify a major change in attitudes and activities through assimilation. To the extent Western ways were adopted in the late period, most often it was the only life-sustaining option available. It was, therefore, the only reasonable response to life-threatening new conditions rather than an eager pursuit of Western values.

GOVERNANCE

The cultural profile element of governance focuses on how decisions were made for and by the whole group as well as how law and order was maintained. Of all the traditional Native social institutions we study, governance may be the most difficult to describe. This is because the political systems we are most familiar with today are so different from the ways Native governance was done in traditional times. Indeed, our experiences with national, state and city governments, with tribal councils, and with the police and the court system are of little help here. It defies our modern experience to think that so critical a social function as governance was embedded in broad multi-functional institutions.

Euro-Americans and Native governance. Historically, Europeans found among many Native American societies no comparative referents to their own political experience of absolute control exercised by a royal monarch and his/her political and military representatives. There were, however, a few exceptions. The centralized political systems of New World Native empires such as the Maya, Inca, and Aztecs made some sense to Europeans. So did powerful Indian confederacies ruled by a well defined governing body like the Grand Council of the League of the Iroquois. So did large Indian nations ruled by a paramount chief like Powhatan in Virginia during the early 1600s. For the most part, however, the general European view was that New World indigenous people had little, if any, political organization. Therefore they were not true political states possessing a sovereign authority to be respected, especially a sovereign authority over land. But this attitude should not surprise us. We know Europeans were looking for institutions akin to their idea of a "political state" and for concepts of law similar to the traditions of Christian Europe. Of course such ethnocentric evaluations of Native governance certainly provided the invaders with intellectual cover, no matter how flimsy, as they feverishly sought fertile land and valuable resources.

As with other areas of traditional Native social life, political processes were embedded in kinship institutions, making them almost invisible to outsiders. Even today, proving the historical existence of a sovereign political authority which neatly fits the Western ideal has been especially difficult for many Native American tribes. Remember that to gain federal recognition a tribe is required to present documented proof of continuous political authority and

cohesiveness from the beginning of sustained contact to present times. As we know, this can be a very difficult task indeed.

We must therefore approach the study of traditional Native governance by keeping in mind that all human communities down through time had ways of making decisions and enforcing rules affecting the welfare of the whole group. Complete community agreement on a major issue is hard to achieve in any society, whether traditional or modern. Some political process had to exist for a community to endure over time. There had to be some mechanism for controlling internal disputes in ways that did not break the community apart. As we did with other Native social institutions, let's focus on political functions rather than political structures. This is exactly what the Court of Claims did in the Tlingit and Haida land claims case.

The Tlingit and Haida case and Native governance. We return to the 1959 Tlingit and Haida case where we previously discussed whether a Native group's valid aboriginal title extends to lands not regularly used and occupied by them. Now we turn to another argument presented by the federal government's lawyers – that the Tlingit and Haida were never politically organized according to the federal definition of a "tribe." Therefore they were not true political entities capable of exercising any real authority over land. And therefore they could not possibly hold a legitimate aboriginal title to that land.

In rejecting this argument, the Court of Claims took a *functional approach* to validate the existence of traditional Tlingit and Haida systems of governance. Citing the Indian Claims Commission's extensive research on the different social and political functions of clans, the Court ruled that the lack of a separate, specialized political structure as we generally think of governance today did not mean the lack of a *functioning* political authority. The Court also noted that the Tlingit and Haida had maintained their cultures and cultural identities from time immemorial. Such an epic achievement of social cohesion could not have been accomplished without a functioning political authority. In traditional Tlingit and Haida cultures, this authority was embedded in a complex structure of clans with rules of governance mostly invisible to Europeans. Therefore the Tlingit and Haida clearly had legal standing in American courts to claim a violation of their aboriginal title by the United States government.

Summary. we can say that in traditional times the functions of governance were embedded in the general day-to-day activities of kinship groups and in other multi-functional institutions like the Central Yup'ik *qasegiq*. We know we will not find specialized political institutions similar to the tribal, city, state, and federal governing bodies of our modern experience. We understand, finally, that the functions of governance had to exist in order for Native societies and cultures to survive through the ages. Even without separate institutions like tribal councils and courts, there still had to be functional forms of group decision-making, leadership and law. We now turn our attention to leadership and law, the two remaining aspects of governance.

Leadership. Here are some questions you might keep in mind when researching leadership in traditional Native societies:

- Who were considered leaders when decisions involving the total group had to be made?
- In times of crisis or great controversy, to whom did members of the community look for direction? For example, a key leadership role might be the hereditary head of an Aleut matrilineal household. Or it may be a highly respected whaling captain among the coastal Iñupiaq. Or it may be a Koyukon Athabaskan chief with shamanic powers. Or it may be the elders of a Central Yup'ik qasegiq.
- How did one become a leader and what powers did a leader have? Did the group expect leadership from certain families who, from generation to generation, seemed to produce people with special talents?
- Perhaps leadership was situational. A person was considered a leader for some situations such as hunting and fishing but not for other situations such as conducting foreign relations and war.
- Could a powerful, charismatic person be recognized as the group's leader in all matters such as the once powerful Shahnyaati, chief of the Deenduu Gwich'in band?[14]
- Could a leader simply announce a decision and all others were obliged to follow?
- Or did leaders have to build a political consensus within the community on an issue before providing an opinion or announcing a decision?
- Or did community consensus on an issue simply emerged over time, and leaders were those who could best execute that decision?
-

Finally, keep in mind that complete agreement on an political issue is always difficult to achieve within any group at any time in any place. There is always the potential for conflict. There is, moreover, always some criminal behavior in any society, no matter how strongly members of the group believe in the cultural rules prohibiting such behavior. This brings us to law and order.

Law and Order: **different perspectives on justice.** The first line of defense against lawlessness is that the members of society agree on a philosophy of law which distinguishes acceptable from unacceptable behavior and affirms how the laws will be enforced. In today's legal language, a society's philosophy or science of law is called *jurisprudence*. Like spiritual beliefs, philosophies of jurisprudence can differ greatly from culture to culture. In fact, most often laws reflect long held moral and spiritual beliefs. American jurisprudence, for example, derives from what is commonly called the Judeo-Christian tradition found in the teachings of the Old Testament of the Bible, also known as the Torah in Judaism, combined with the teachings of Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament. Here is a short description of the Judeo-Christian tradition provided by a 1991 *Washington Post* editorial:

> In our country, "Judeo-Christian values" is shorthand for a complex idea: the common culture of the American majority. The values are called Judeo-

> Christian because they derive from the complementary ideas of free will, the moral accountability of the individual rather than the group, the spiritual imperative of imperfect man's struggle to do what is right and the existence of true moral law in the teachings of Christ and the Jewish prophets.

A word of caution is necessary here. The fact is that Judaism and Christianity differ on important theological points such as on the nature of God, on the relationship between God and the individual, and on the origin and punishment of sin.[15] Nevertheless, the concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition is still widely used and understood to signal clear differences in basic values between the West (Euro-Americans) and other major culture areas of the world, including differences with Native American tribes. It has, in a word, made its way into history's lockbox.

Indeed, a major cultural difference between American jurisprudence and that of many Native American tribes is found in how they have historically dealt with criminal justice. The American approach draws on the so-called Judeo-Christian notion of *retribution* wherein justice is sought through finding guilt and assigning punishment. On the other hand, the approach of many tribes was often one of *restitution* which sought to justly compensate the injured party for the wrong done to them, even for heinous crimes such as murder of a loved one. In their book, *American Indians, American Justice*, Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle describe the difference:

> Under Anglo-American notions of criminal jurisprudence, the objectives are to establish fault or guilt and then to punish. The sentencing goals of retribution , revenge, and deterrence and isolation of the defender are extremely important (though the system often pays much lip service to the concept of rehabilitation as well). Under the traditional Native system the major objective was more to ensure restitution and compensation than retribution.....In most instances the [tribal] system attempted to compensate the victim and his or her family and to solve the problem in such a manner that all could forgive and forget and continue to live within the tribal society in harmony with one another. [16]

But rather than construct a list of research questions as we did for leadership, let's use a real historical event to jump-start our thinking on traditional Native jurisprudence.

The case of *Ex Parte Crow Dog*. In their book, Deloria and Lytle give a good historical example of the retribution – restitution difference when they review the facts of a very significant case in federal Indian law. The case is *Ex Parte Crow Dog* decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1883.

The case arose during a time of almost continuous hostilities between the Sioux Indian Nation and the United States government. Often using its armed forces, the federal government was relentless in its effort to put Indians on reservations. The Sioux and other tribes were equally relentless in their resistance to this reservation policy, resorting to armed conflict on many occasions. Most of us know the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Indians of the Northern Great Plains as the Sioux Nation. This can be confusing to many people. Like the names of so many Native American groups, "Sioux" is actually a term historically used by outsiders. Apparently it is a mix of French and Ojibwa languages. Since the Sioux and the Ojibwa Indian nation had a history of conflict before contact with Euro-Americans, most likely it is not originally intended to be a flattering term. Whatever its original meaning, "Sioux" remains in history's lockbox as the most common appellation for these indigenous people.

The Lakota Sioux historian, Joseph Marshall III, tells us that the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota are three geographical divisions of the Sioux Nation. Within each of these three divisions there exists self-governing tribes. Some of the best known Sioux tribes are the Santee, Teton, Yankton, Oglala, Hunkpapa, and Brulé. [17] Historically these tribes were able to quickly form alliances among themselves when threatened by outside forces. A good example is when they came together with several groups of Cheyenne Indians in 1878 to defeat Colonel George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry at the historic battle of the Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn).

In 1883, a Brûlé Sioux medicine man named Crow Dog killed a Brulé Sioux chief named Spotted Tail who was working closely with United States officials. Because he was willing to compromise Sioux lands to get peace, the American press and many white settlers saw Spotted Tail as the best Indian hope for negotiating a final land settlement favorable to the settlers' interests. But the great Sioux chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse were adamantly opposed to Spotted Tail's acceptance of most American demands. They aggressively resisted any further loss of Sioux territory and viewed many of Spotted Tail's actions as traitorous.

Following the killing, the relatives of both Crow Dog and Spotted Tail met to negotiate compensation for the victim's family. As was the Sioux custom, Spotted Tail's relatives sought restitution rather than retribution and revenge. They were anxious to avoid any long-term quarrels which might weaken the tribe's solidarity during those difficult times. After lengthy negotiations conducted by Brûlé peacemakers, Spotted Tail's relatives agreed to a compensation package of $600, eight horses, and one blanket from Crow Dog's people. The *Peacemaker* was part of many Native American tribal justice systems. Usually this person was a distinguished elder proven wise in using the custom of restitution to solve disputes among tribal members. The purpose was to settle a dispute quickly before its emotional impact spread throughout the tribe, ultimately involving other people and families, perhaps in violent conflict. It functioned as the "court of first resort" when disputes arose. Even today, for example, the role of Peacemaker is an important part of the Navajo Nation's judicial system

When it was learned that Crow Dog was still free, the American press and public opinion cried for his arrest and trial. Americans clearly wanted retribution for the killing of Spotted Tail. Even though the dispute had been settled in the traditional Sioux way, a warrant was issued for Crow Dog's arrest. He was convicted of murder by a jury of the federal territorial court and sentenced to death. But he convinced local federal marshals that he would return for the execution if released to spend his last days with his family. To the surprise of many Americans, on the appointed day Crow Dog simply walked into the federal marshal's office at Deadwood, South Dakota and gave himself up for execution. He had given his word, had he not? Many Americans saw this as a brave and honorable act, even those who had most loudly called for his execution. Crow Dog now received favorable press coverage and became somewhat of a romantic public figure. Acting in *Ex Parte* (on his behalf), a group of lawyers filed a *writ of habeas corpus* with the United States Supreme Court. Habeas corpus literally means "you have the body" in Latin. In today's jurisprudence, a writ of habeas corpus is a warrant issued by a judge ordering a person's release from jail because the police can show no lawful reason for detaining him.

The question facing the Supreme Court in the Crow Dog case was whether the federal government had jurisdiction over Indian-on-Indian crimes committed on Sioux lands. The Supreme Court reasoned that the only way the federal government had such criminal jurisdiction was if the Sioux had clearly given away this sovereign power when they signed the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The Court found no such extinguishment or "giveaway" language in the Treaty or in its amendments. Nor could they find Sioux criminal jurisdiction extinguished by any other act of Congress. The Court therefore ruled that the Sioux retained all jurisdiction over Indian-on-Indian crime committed on their lands. Since a) the tribe's justice system had already resolved the dispute through restitution, and b) the federal government had no jurisdiction over the case, the Supreme Court issued the writ of habeas corpus and Crow Dog became a free man.[18]

The rest of the story: allotment and assimilation. Crow Dog may have emerged as a romantic figure, but many Americans and their political representatives still viewed tribal justice systems as uncivilized and called for a federal takeover of criminal justice in Indian country.* As a result, the Major Crimes Act was passed two years later in 1885. It severely diminished this key element of tribal sovereignty by transferring to the federal government complete jurisdiction over seven felony crimes (murder, etc.) committed in Indian country regardless of the race or tribal membership of the parties involved. This was quickly followed by passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887. This policy had two parts. It first sought to break down the traditional communal ownership of tribal lands by allotting 160 acres to heads of Indian families, eventually to be held as individual parcels of private property. Congress believed that the very fact of owning private property would accelerate the assimilation of Indians into the American capitalist economy and its Euro-American culture. And secondly, once the allotment process was complete, remaining tribal lands were declared "surplus" and opened to non-Indian settlement and businesses. By the time of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 – only 47 years later – tribes had lost 90 million acres of their lands.

Retribution and restitution are variables. A word of caution on drawing a bright line between the retribution approach and the restitution approach to achieving justice. As we did with social stratification (hierarchal versus egalitarian societies), we must be very careful not to create a false dichotomy by falling into the either–or trap. Elements of jurisprudence such as retribution and restitution are variables. We will find more or less of either one depending on the situation.

The point is that American jurisprudence is not just about retribution and traditional Native American jurisprudence was not only about restitution. Deloria and Lytle acknowledge the variability of criminal justice when they say that the main objective of the traditional tribal system "was *more* to ensure restitution and compensation than retribution." That is, when a crime was committed, traditional Native American tribes leans toward the restitution approach while American jurisprudence emphasizes the retribution approach. There are certainly recorded

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* The term "Indian country" is a significant concept in federal Indian law having a precise meaning. It refers to all Native American lands on which tribes exercise self-governing powers under the supervision of the federal government.

instances where tribes dealt with major crimes by imposing severe penalties, including execution and exile. American jurisprudence, moreover, is of two parts: criminal law and civil law. While criminal law is certainly about determining guilt and punishment, civil law is about restitution – about fairly and justly compensating the injured party. Deloria and Lytle rightly confine their discussion to criminal justice.

A strategy for researching law and order. To get your work on law and order quickly underway, start by testing the retribution versus restitution thesis. Did the traditional jurisprudence of your selected Native group lean more or less toward the restitution approach, and how so? Or was it a mix of the two and, again, how so?

Along with jump-starting our inquiry, testing the retribution versus restitution question has another advantage. In the course of researching this question you should find basic information on your Native group's law and order system. What were considered to be crimes, particularly major crimes? What institution or individuals functioned as "judges" and heard criminal complaints and determined guilt or innocence? Or was it left to the relatives of the victim to decide the punishment and carry it out? Was there anything like a police force as we think of it today? How might a perpetrator of a serious crime be punished – by loss of property? by execution? by exile?

There is still another advantage to starting with the retribution versus restitution question. Because it reflects two broad philosophical approaches to law and order, it takes us to the connection between jurisprudence and the main characteristics of your Native group's traditional worldview. Already it has been suggested that the origins of a peoples' legal system can be found in their core beliefs and values. Therefore some of your work on law and order may overlap with your work on worldview in the next chapter.

Review questions

To best understand traditional Native social institutions, it is strongly suggested that we start by separating social function from social structure. Why?

Why divide the traditional Native subsistence economy into primary and secondary resources?

We think *commerce* rather than *trade* best describes a very important part of Native life in traditional times. Why?

Do you think Alaska Natives knew something about Russians and Euro-Americans before first contact with them?
(Hint – look at the *Crossroads of Continents* map on page 112.)

We note that the Court of Claims took a *functional approach* to deciding that the Tlingit and Haida had legal standing for claiming an aboriginal title to lands. Explain.

How does the *Ex Parte Crow Dog* case illustrate the contrasting criminal justice philosophies of the Sioux (restitution) and the Americans (retribution).

ENDNOTES

[1] The list of requisite social functions is loosely based on, Aberle, D. F., Cohen, A. K., Davis, A., Levy, M. & Sutton, F. X. (1950). "Functional prerequisites of society." Ethics, 60, 100-111.

[2] Edna Ahgeak MacLean, "Culture and Change for Iñupiat and Yupiks of Alaska." Online at www.Alaskool.org

[3] Rosita Whorl, , "Tlingit" in Hoxie, Frederick E. (ed.) *The Encylopedia of North American Indians*, Houghton Mifflin, 1996, p. 631

[4] Steve Langdon, *The Native People of Alaska*. Great land Graphics, 2002.

[5] Ernest S. Burch, Jr. "From Skeptic to Believer: The Making of an Oral Historian" *Alaska History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 1991

[6] Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Regional Groups on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta" in *Etudes Inuit,* Vol. 4, 1984, p. 74-75.

[7] Miranda Wright, *The Last Great Indian War*, Masters Thesis, (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1995).

[8] Ann Fienup-Riordan (1984)

[9] The map is from: Burch, E., "War and Trade" in *Crossroads of Continents*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p. 236-237.

[10] "On the Back Slough," Schneider, William, in J. Aigner *et al* (eds.) *Interior Alaska*, Alaska Geographic Society, 1986, p. 148. For a summary of research showing Iñupiaq pre-contact access to Western goods, See: Ellanna (2004) pp. 23-26.

[11] Schneider (1986) p. 152-153

[12] Ernest Burch Jr., *The Traditional Eskimo Hunters of Point Hope, Alaska, 1800–1875*. Barrow, Alaska: The North Slope Borough, 1981.

[13] Burch, 1981. Also, Bockstoce, John, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, University of Washington, 1995, pp. 205 – 230.

[14] See: Peter-Raboff (2001) pp. 133-135, and Schneider (1986) p. 155.

[15] David Ross, "the Judeo-Christian Oxymoron" (www.rossde.com/editorials/edtl_oxymoron.html)

[16] Deloria Jr. Vine and Lytle, Clifford *American Indians, American Justice*, Univ. of Texas Press, 1983, pp. 112 -113.

[17] See: Marshall, Joseph III, *The Journey of Crazy Horse*, Viking Press, 2004.

[18] Deloria and Lytle, pp. 168 – 170.

Chapter Seven

"Worldview" Deserves Special Attention

Worldview – belief system, ceremonial practices, shamanism,
core values, cultural identity, historical legacy

An Alaska Native Worldview

The past illuminates the present. We have said that worldview is the heart of our concept of culture and therefore deserves special attention. Now it is time for you to give it that special attention by exploring how your selected Native group or groups made sense of their spiritual, natural, and social worlds, and the rules for conducting themselves in these worlds. This exploration should tell us much about their cultural identity and how it was shaped by core beliefs and valued traditions.

But first recall that one purpose of the Cultural Profile Project is to show how the study of traditional times can help us better understand modern Alaska Native life and civic affairs. We highlighted the connection between the distant past and the present when we discussed the historical research required when a tribe applies for federal recognition. And again when we discussed how Native aboriginal title served as the legal basis for Tlingit and Haida land claims and for ANCSA. Yet it may surprise you to know that understanding the spirituality of traditional Alaska Native worldviews can also have practical application in modern times. To illustrate this connection, we go to the Alaska Supreme Court case of *Carlos Frank v. State of Alaska* and the story it tells.[1]

In 1979, Carlos Frank and several other Athabaskan Indians from Minto were arrested for taking a moose out of season for the purpose of providing ritually required moose meat at a funeral potlatch. Mr. Frank and his legal counsel argued that the funeral potlatch is a religious event dating from traditional times and the consumption of moose meat has always been an essential ritual of this spiritual activity. They said that to apply this "game regulation to him, under the circumstances, amounted to an abridgement of his freedom of religion," hence a violation of his constitutional rights under the First Amendment. Before appeal to the Alaska State Supreme Court, the case was heard in district court.

Alaska's Attorney General countered Frank's defense with three arguments. First, while the consumption of moose meat at a funeral potlatch is highly desirable, it is not an absolute necessity. Secondly, The State of Alaska has a "compelling state interest" in applying the rules of fish and game management equally to all Alaska residents. And thirdly, the regulation of fish and game is closely watched by many Alaskans passionately involved in hunting and fishing activities. It is, the Attorney General said, predictable that any exception made for one class of people is sure to set off a firestorm of anger, protest, and possible "lawlessness." Therefore this potentially explosive situation only heightens the state's compelling interest to deny any exception to the rule, no matter the circumstance.

Using as precedent two decisions by the United States Supreme Court on questions of religious freedom, the district court applied a three part test.[2] First, was the funeral potlatch an integral part of a "distinct belief system?" That is, was it an authentic religion? Secondly, was the conduct of the hunters clearly tied to fulfilling a fundamental tenet of that religion? And thirdly, was Carlos Frank a sincere believer in the religion? The lower courts agreed that the funeral potlatch and its spiritual context clearly satisfied the first two parts of the test. As for the third part, they easily found Mr. Frank to be a sincere believer.

So an interesting question becomes: What evidence convinced the district court that this spiritual element of a traditional Athabaskan worldview constituted a religion as commonly defined in modern times? Answer: The court was convinced by the considerable testimony they heard from respected Athabaskan elders, including Chief Peter John of Minto, and from distinguished scholars who had studied available historical documentation. The courts also found that the oral history they heard was well supported by the written historical record. Even so, the district court agreed with the state that "moose meat was not such an absolute necessity…as to override the compelling state interest of the State of Alaska in the management and control of its game for the benefit of all its people, Native and white." Therefore Mr. Frank's freedom to practice a religion was not abridged, and the state has the right to impose the appropriate penalty for his violation of fish and game laws.

On appeal, the Alaska Supreme Court reversed the district court's ruling. The Court held that "absolute necessity" is too strict a standard when judging a freedom of religion case. The fact that moose meat consumption at a funeral potlatch was a deep and abiding spiritual tradition was cause enough to allow an exception to the game regulation. Moreover, the state's interest in maintaining healthy moose populations is not compromised by such rare, religiously based exceptions. As for the state's prediction of civil disobedience and possible lawlessness if an exception is allowed, the Court found no evidence supporting this assertion. The Court went so far as to say that such a suggestion insulted the people of Alaska. After years of appeal, Carlos Frank's conviction was finally dismissed, and the angry protests predicted by the state never occurred.

The past illuminates the present in the Carlos Frank case by showing that knowledge of the past – of a traditional Native worldview – can help explain aspects of Native beliefs and behavior in modern times. Mr. Frank would have been convicted if the Alaska courts had felt the oral and written testimony they received on Athabaskan traditional spirituality lacked historical credibility. Perhaps an event more to the point occurred in 2009 when the taking of moose for

memorial potlatches again became a public policy issue. This time the question was not whether moose could be taken out of season for a memorial potlatch, but *where* the taking could take place. The Department of Public Safety interpreted state game regulations to say that even the taking of moose for religious purposes had to be done in state designated subsistence hunting areas away from urban centers. Citing the Carlos Frank decision of 1979, the Alaska Board of Game ruled otherwise. The Board determined that such a restriction would still be an abridgement of religious freedom. But at the same time it is reasonable to require potlatch hunters in non-subsistence areas to first obtain authorization from the nearest Fish and Game office.

An "intricate subsistence-based worldview." Dr. Oscar Kawagley's book, *A Yupiaq Worldview*, continues to assist our work on this important subject by describing what he sees as the Yup'ik worldview and how it conflicts with the Western, Euro-American worldview. He suggests that the fundamental elements of the Yup'ik worldview have much in common with all other Alaska Native worldviews. He further suggests that when compared to the Western worldview, what differences may exist melt away. Therefore we want to pay close attention because he is telling us what to look for in our own cultural profile research.

Dr. Kawagley actually gives us an instructional guide for conducting our research. First and foremost, he emphasizes *an intricate subsistence-based worldview* as the overarching concept. What he means is that the elements of the traditional Native worldview flow from a subsistence way of life as opposed to an urban-industrial way of life or a rural agricultural way of life or any other way of life. He points out, for example, that a major element of the traditional Native worldview was proper respect and behavior toward the natural world, particularly toward the body and spirit of animals. Since Native life was totally dependent on fish and game, it should not surprise us that over time certain animals took on mythical qualities and spiritual meanings for the people directly dependent on them. These animals were, after all, the ultimate givers of human life.

In the following passage from his book you will find other important elements of the Native worldview emphasized in italics. You only have to make a list of these elements to know what to look for when researching the worldview of your Native group. These elements are myths (for example, the role of Raven in creation stories), rituals, ceremonies, role of elders, and everyday core values such as responsibility, awareness, harmony, and reciprocity. Here is that passage:

> Alaska Native peoples have traditionally tried to live in *harmony* with the world around them. This has required the construction *of an intricate subsistence-based worldview*, a complex way of life with specific cultural mandates regarding the ways in which the human being is to relate to other human relatives and the natural and spiritual worlds.

Citing the works of several scholars, He continues:

> This worldview, as demonstrated historically by the Native peoples of Alaska, contained *a highly developed social consciousness and sense of responsibility.* As indicated by the writings of outside researchers and observers, Native peoples' *myths, rituals, and ceremonies* were consistent with their relationship to one another and to their

environment…

Wisdom, insight, knowledge and power were considered *the prerogative of the elders*, who were honored and respected in recognition of their achievements. *Attitude was thought to be as important as action*; therefore one was to be careful in thought and action so as not to injure another's mind or *offend the spirits of the animals and surrounding environment.* For one to have a powerful mind was to be "aware of or awake to its surroundings."

To help practitioners along this reciprocal path, Native peoples developed many *rituals and ceremonies* with respect to motherhood and child rearing, care of animals, hunting and trapping practices, and related ceremonies for maintaining balance between the human, natural, and spiritual realms. This *intricate sense of harmony* with all things has been identified by most observers as central to understanding Alaska Native worldviews ...

Fienup-Riordan has called the Alaska Native and other indigenous peoples the "original ecologists." One reason for this is that *their worldviews are dependent upon reciprocity* — do unto others as you would have them do unto you. All of life is considered recyclable and therefore requires certain ways of caring in order to maintain the cycle. Native people cannot put themselves above other living things because *they were all created by the Raven,* and all are considered an essential component of the universe. [*Emphases* ours] [3]

Professor Kawagley then gives us an Iñupiaq example of how significant elements of a worldview are passed on to future generations. Within the following short story by Mary Muktoyuk are many of the points emphasized in the above passages. He says that "out of this ecologically based emphasis on reciprocity, harmony, and balance have evolved some common values and principles that are embedded in the worldviews of Alaska Native people." From Mary Muktoyuk's *Iñupiaq Rules for Living*, here is the story:[4]

Back then, my parents would give us lessons on correct behavior, back when I was first becoming aware. My parents spoke with great wisdom of things that we did not know about.

Also, when we were small, from time to time someone would kill a polar bear. The people were very happy when a hunter killed a polar bear, for polar bears were considered extremely dangerous then. Then after they had slept a certain number of nights, they would give thanks for it by dancing. They would give thanks for the polar bear.

Then they would give some pieces of skin for sewing to those who were growing old, and they gave them food, too, because they were thankful for that polar bear and were celebrating it. They tried to make those who were growing old happy, too. These days, people are no longer like that, because we are no longer in our land, and because those wise people of long ago have died, all of them. They would give freely of food or skins for sewing. In those days, they gave and gave freely. They lived a good life then. These days, they no longer live in a good way, for they are no longer as they used to be.

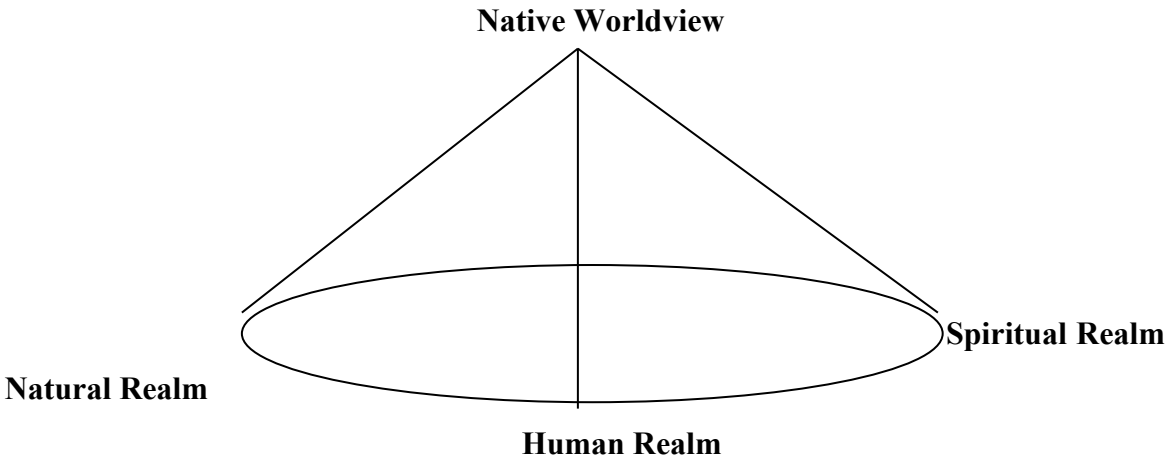
The elders, in those days, we held in great respect. Whatever they told us, we would listen very carefully, trying not to make mistakes when we listened, because we respected them so highly, because they knew much more than we did while we were still growing up. In these times, though, people seem to have stopped doing things in the old way. It is known that they no longer do things as they used to. (9-10).

Dr. Kawagley employs an interesting device for summarizing the Native worldview. He calls this device a tetrahedral metaphor based on the geometric concept of a polygon. A polygon

has three or more sides connected in such a way that no two lines cross. The simplest polygon is the triangle. A tetrahedron is a polygon with four line segments or "faces." The Egyptian and Mayan pyramids are good examples of a polygon structure. Below is his tetrahedral structure of the Native worldview and his explanation of what it illustrates.

Oscar Kawagley's Tetrahedral Metaphor.

Figure 7-1



> To help illustrate the interrelationship among human nature, nature, and super nature (or spirituality) in the Yupiaq worldview, I will utilize a tetrahedral metaphor… If we use the three corners of the base to represent the human being [including human social organizations], nature, and spirituality respectively as elements in a common circle of life, we can see the apex as representing the worldview that overarches and unites the base elements of our existence. The lines connecting these "poles" can be seen as the life forces that flow all ways between and among the human, spiritual and natural worlds and are united through the worldview. The three base poles all provide essential supports to the Yupiaq worldview…The Yupiaq would agree with Chief Seattle (1790—1866), who stated that "This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself" (Kawagley, pp. 15-17).

Ceremonies. We can get a good idea of a people's worldview by examining their rituals and ceremonies. A "ceremonial cycle" provides a cultural window through which to glimpse less visible core cultural values of the group. Take what might be called the yearly ceremonial cycle of Americans. An African anthropologist from, say, the Nation of Botswana in Southern Africa can get some idea of American values and traditions by asking about the meaning of our holidays and how they are actually celebrated. Among others, there is Presidents Day, Independence Day (fourth of July), Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For an Alaska Native example, we go to the work of the anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan. She has described five major feasts and festivals making up the traditional winter ceremonial cycle of the Central Yup'ik. There is the Bladder Festival, the Feast of the Dead, the Gift Festival, the Messenger Feast, and the Masquerade Festival. As with

American holidays, the question becomes: What aspects of Yup'ik culture is being celebrated by these holiday feasts? So be sure to look for similar ceremonial activities of your selected group.[5]

Shamanism: A Comparison

Alaska and Siberia. A cultural profile of a Native group's traditional worldview is not complete without a description of their spiritual leadership. Here we are talking about what is usually called shamanism, although there are some Athabaskans who prefer the designation, medicine man or medicine woman. The term *shaman* apparently comes from the language of a Siberian Native group, the Evenk, and means "ones who knows." Rather than start with an example of traditional shaman duties and practices from Native Alaska, let's look at a brief description of shamanism as generally practiced among the twenty-two indigenous Native cultures of Siberia.

Figure 7-2
Evenk Shaman of Siberia[6]

But, you may ask, why go abroad when our specific interest is Alaska Natives? We broaden our knowledge and sharpen our ideas when we seek comparative referents from other places and other times. You may indeed find that shamanism in Native Alaska has interesting similarities to that practiced in Native Siberia. In her book, *The Shaman's Coat: A Native History of Siberia,* Anna Reid offers this description:

> The Native Siberians believed that everything around them was animate, possessed of personality and living force…When the mountains threw rocks in the air

> they were fighting…The sun was a man in glittering clothes who drove a team of copper-antlered deer, and the Milky Way [the galaxy of which the sun and our solar system are a part] as a river choked with boulders. The south-west and south-east winds were an estranged couple who shouted abuse at each other as they passed; thunder was the noise of heavenly infants playing on a seal-skin…
>
> The Native Siberians' mediators with this vital, teeming world were their shamans…(who)… performed the usual sacred offices, presiding over thanksgiving and propitiation ceremonies, healing the sick and divining the future. [propitiation: to win favor from others.] Their most characteristic function was the soul-journey, undertaken while in a trance achieved by dancing, fasting or ingesting hallucinogenic [mind-altering] plants. In the course of such a journey a shaman might turn himself into a wolf or gull, fight the spirits of famine or bad weather, retrieve a sick man's soul, summon migrating walrus, or compete with the shaman of an enemy tribe.[7]

Anna Reid certainly gives us a colorful description of the Native Siberian worldview and of one shaman ceremony called the "soul-journey." Yet it may be only a partial description. Whether in Alaska or Siberia, the main function of the shaman was to act as spiritual go-between or mediator for his or her group in their relations with the spirit world. In many cases, however, Alaska Native shamans had other important duties. In addition to their spiritual duties, they were often the chief practitioners of medicine. We turn again to Dr. Rosita Worl who has researched traditional Tlingit shamanism. She reports that Shamans always accompanied their clan and war leaders into battle, acting as their intelligence officers. No Tlingit clan would dare be without the everyday services of a shaman.[8] It is not overstating the case to say that shamans were single-person multifunctional institutions.

Figure 7-3
Tlingit Shaman from the Wrangell Area, c. 1899

Historical Alaska Native and Western Worldviews.

To further explore Dr. Kawagley's elements of the Native worldview, lets compare it to the historical Western worldview by asking several questions. If you were to select a tetrahedral metaphor like Kawagley's to illustrate the historical Western worldview, what would it look like? Perhaps a better question is: Would it work at all? Can it be argued, for example, that the "Natural Realm" (the natural environment) will not fit into any diagram attempting to represent the historical Western worldview because it has not held nearly the same spiritual meaning as found in subsistence-based Native societies? Please note that we say "historical Western worldview," not simply Western worldview. We do so because over the past several decades, many Euro-Americans and others have become much more aware and protective of the natural environment and its creatures. We see this in the growing political power of environmental and animal rights groups. Historically speaking, however, Western man did not seek protection of the natural world. In fact, quite the opposite is true as we will see shortly when we discuss the doctrine of higher uses.

Alaska Natives and the natural world. The point has been made several times that the quality of life in traditional Native subsistence-based societies was almost totally dependent on a people's relationship to wildlife and their habitat. Therefore we should not be surprised that the natural realm took on sacred meanings for Native people who infused it with ceremony and ritual. Why is the Raven the central figure in many traditional Native beliefs about creation? Why do Iñupiaq whaling families traditionally give a drink of fresh water to the head of a just butchered whale and other marine mammals and push it back into the sea?[9] Shortly after killing a black bear, why do Koyukon Athabaskan men hold what has been described as a potlatch-like feast honoring the bear?[10] Why are all Tlingit clans totemic, with their clan crests showing a specific animal as emblematic of the clan's mythical origins?

Totemism refers to the set of symbols and rituals used by a kinship group to express their mythical relationship to a natural object such as an animal or plant. This mythology is usually found in the kin group's creation stories. A totemic society is organized into a fixed number of clans, each of which is represented by a totemic figure. For the Tlingit, such totemic figures were, among others, the killer whale. the beaver, and the salmon.

When we think of totemism, we usually have in mind the tall, ornately carved Native poles of Southeast Alaska which depict the totemic figures of a clan or clan house along with other symbolic representations of their historical legacy. However, according to the late Tlingit writer, Andrew Hope III, "one often hears it said by the older people that originally totem poles were used inside of houses only, to support the huge roof beams."[11] Among totemic societies in other parts of the world you don't always find striking monuments like totem poles depicting a clan's history and mythology. A good example is the clan systems of Australian Aboriginal societies where their totemism is portrayed by other forms of artistic expression.

Doctrine of Higher Uses. The traditional Native view of the natural realm as sacred is quite at odds with the historical Western worldview where, until recently, the basic theme has been the belief that the natural environment exists to be exploited and changed for human

material advantage. Most often Western man has viewed the natural environment as an obstacle to overcome, not as sacred realm to be carefully used and maintained. Declarations of a divine inspiration to "tame the wilderness" occurred repeatedly during the European colonization of the Americas. Many times this belief provided justification for removing Native tribes from their lands in order to advance the Western concepts of progress and Christian civilization. Some scholars have fittingly called this attitude the *doctrine of higher uses*. [12] Rather than be left to the primitive pursuits of subsistence hunting and gathering, the land and its resources must be put to the "higher uses" of farming, ranching, industry, and commerce. Anything less was often considered sinful idleness.

The doctrine of higher uses was well expressed in the ideology of Manifest Destiny. By the 1840s Americans had come to believe it was manifestly evident, even divinely justified, that the United States was destined to expand across the continent to the Pacific, bringing its grand experiment in democratic capitalism to the uncivilized Native tribes. Americans – particularly new European immigrants to America – were looking for fertile lands west of the Mississippi to settle and cultivate. And American merchants and manufacturers were searching for new raw materials and markets. One of the best known Native American writers is N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa Indian from Oklahoma. He makes this point:

> The Indian considers the land to be possessed of spirit, and his identity is bound up in it. 'Manifest destiny' implies that the land can and must be appropriated for the sake of expansion, empire building, profit. It is an enterprise without spirit, and not only Indians have suffered from its unchecked pursuit.[13]

Historical Legacy and Worldview

Historical legacy: **reality and myth**. Dr. Kawagley suggests that "myths" and "legends" are a large part of any people's worldview. We would add *historical legacy* as also embedded in the collective memory of every human group. It is that part of the group's past – most often a heroic past – which is told and retold down through the ages to the point where it can easily become the stuff of mythology and legend. For every human group, whether traditional or modern, the retelling of their historical legacy always has purposes beyond mere presentation of facts. There are always cultural values to be considered and lessons to be learned. Reflecting on popular tellings of his culture's history, the Irish writer, Sean O′Faolain, reminds us that: "History is … an ever-developing process, and all its events not so much events as thoughts hammered into mortal heads."[14]

O′Faolain's observation that over time the triumph and tragedy of significant historical events and heroic figures are retold in ways that remind adults and convey to youngsters the essential aspects of their society's core values and cultural identity. It is "hammered into mortal heads" by story telling, the construction of monuments, and through ritual and ceremony. In recent times, for example, there has been much public storytelling of the American experience in World War Two. It is being hammered into our mortal heads.

World War Two – the Great American Historical Legacy. Starting sometime in the late 1990s, World War Two storytelling seemed to surge with the publication of, among others,

the bestselling books by the historian, Stephen Ambrose. Especially popular were his *D-Day, June 6, 1944* and *Band of Brothers*. The D-Day book inspired the box office hit and academy award winning movie, *Saving Private Ryan*. The *Band of Brothers* book led to one of the most widely watched television events in recent times — the ten part mini-series of the same title on HBO. And published in 1998 was one of the all time bestselling books, *The Greatest Generation*, by former NBC News anchor, Tom Brokaw. Using the living oral history method, he interviews fifty Americans from different walks of life who lived, worked, and fought during World War Two. He suggests that they should be considered the greatest generation because they changed the course of American history with their courage, perseverance, and sacrifice during the war. He also feels that they provided exceptional leadership in countless ways after the war. Then in 2007 there was the seven part PBS documentary by Ken Burns entitled "The War" which, of course, is WWII. Most recently in 2010, the producers of *Band of Brothers* had another WWII mini series on HBO entitled *The Pacific*.

As for monuments, all of this well crafted and immensely popular storytelling led to the remarkably swift construction of the World War Two Memorial in the heart of the Nation's capitol. It was opened to the public in April, 2004, only six years after *Saving Private Ryan* hit the movie houses and the *Greatest Generation* hit the bookstores. The Memorial was funded almost entirely by private contributions totaling $195 million, a fact that certainly attests to the emotional impact the retelling of this historical legacy has had on the American imagination. Not surprisingly, the World War Two Memorial is flanked by two other significant America historical shrines, the Washington Monument to the east and the Lincoln Memorial to the west. The very manner in which visitors conduct themselves at America's war memorials in Washington D. C. tells us we are on hallowed national ground. It makes no difference if it's the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, or the World War Two Memorial. People move slowly and quietly and speak in hushed tones as if they were in church. If America has a central spiritual place — a great outdoor national cathedral dedicated to what is found sacred and glorious in the American spirit —it is these war memorials combined with the nearby Presidential memorials, all of which are within walking distance of each other.

Along with the telling and retelling of stories and the construction of monuments, there is constant ritual and ceremony to remind us of how the historical legacy represented by war and presidential memorials reflects the best of American values and traditions. At major sporting events there is the singing of the national anthem or an equivalent such as "America the beautiful." Often there is the presence of a military honor guard and the unfurling of the American flag. The pledge of allegiance is recited by children and teachers at the start of the day in many of the nation's schools. And it should not surprise us that both Republicans and Democrats at their national conventions spend less time on specific issues affecting people's everyday lives and more time on how they are better than the other party at representing the best of the America historical legacy. The overriding convention message is that our political party's version of American history and what made this country great is better than the other party's version. Therefore our political party has proven best at advancing the ideals of freedom and democracy and maintaining America's leadership in the world.

Why World War Two? Why does the historical legacy of World War Two occupy such a venerated place in the American worldview? Because for years to come it will provide the perfect opportunity to reinforce our most cherished national self images. It was the right war fought at the right time in the right place. Unlike other American wars, the morality of it — the righteousness of its cause — was clear. A militaristic Japanese imperial government with its "sneak attack" at Pearl Harbor and the monstrous purposes and actions of Nazi Germany make them the perfect enemy. You cannot say enough bad things about them and, therefore, think enough good things about us. It is, moreover, the retelling of a horrible history without horrible consequences, at least from the American perspective. World War Two itself was surely brutal on every front, with the Americans sustaining considerable loss of life and limb. But when looking back, it is the triumph over just such brutal conditions which makes for an even more uplifting historical legacy to be played over and over again down through the ages. It has become a treasured legacy which blends fiction with fact to deepen its emotional appeal and highlight cultural lessons to be learned.

Because we are all familiar with it, World War Two is chosen here as an example of a historical legacy giving rise to a mythology which, in turn, becomes part of a culture's worldview. That is, World War Two has transcendent cultural meaning. By "transcendent" we mean the purpose for telling the history goes well beyond facts. Like the film *Saving Private Ryan*, it is not always claimed that every part of the story is true. Instead, it is told and retold because of what it says about American traditions, values, and cultural identity. It is a historical fact that there was no Private Ryan to be saved. But that's not what is important about the film. What is important are its searing images of extreme sacrifice and courage for what are considered all the right reasons. The historical event's people and actions become larger than life and rise to the level of mythology, usually to the level of heroic mythology.

When World War Two is bundled together with other historical legacies such as the Founding Fathers and their struggle for independence and a constitutional democracy, we glimpse the dominant American worldview and cultural identity. An example of an Alaska Native world view shaped by historical legacy is the heroic exploits of Yup'ik warrior Apanuugpak during the 18th century Bow and Arrow Wars.[15] Still another example is the Kiks.ádi clan's survival march during the 1804 Tlingit – Russian war.[16] So when working on your cultural profile assignment, always keep in mind this idea:

> **All societies and cultures down through time and around the world have historical legacies as significant parts of their worldview and cultural identity.**

Ideal Culture and Social Reality

A social contradiction without end. Another important reason for giving worldview special attention is because it highlights the idea that all human societies operate on two levels. There is the *level of ideal culture* where oral and written traditions, including historical legacies, reflect what the group says are its most precious values. But there is also the *level of social reality* where many times the everyday actions of people and institutions contradict the very values declared to be most precious.

We know that many of the statements on human equality and liberty in the American

Declaration of Independence and the Constitution's Preamble and Bill of Rights have been violated by real American history. Since the founding of the American nation, almost ninety years of slavery and another eighty years of legally sanctioned racial segregation in mainly southern states are obvious examples of such contradictions. (246 years of slavery if we count from the time the first slaves were delivered to the Jamestown colony in 1619.) And of course there is the shameful history of federal Indian policies and their often devastating consequences for Native American tribes. It should not surprise us when many Native Americans become irritated at the popular retellings of certain American historical legacies. The "discovery" sagas of Christopher Columbus and the inflated one-sided storytelling of "Custer's Last Stand" come quickly to mind. In 2009 Congress finally admitted to this tarnished history by passing a joint resolution formally apologizing to Native American tribes for a history of "official depredations, ill-conceived policies and the breaking of covenants." [17]

In all societies there always exists some gap or contradiction between the ideal and the real simply because we are all imperfect humans operating imperfect human institutions. Fortunately this social fact has not kept courageous people from challenging injustices by asking questions such as: Is the gap closing between our ideals and how we actually conduct our real life? Or is it getting wider? Do we have the legal means and the political will to close the gap? But as the prominent American statesman and two-time presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson once said, "It is often easier to fight for principles than to live up to them." Nevertheless, a strong ideal culture can have the power to sustain people's hope and aspirations, even in the face of the most oppressive social realities.

Foundations of federal Indian Law: an ideal legal culture? In the United States there is an ideal legal culture defining the rights of Native American tribes, including Alaska Natives. This jurisprudence is found in the foundational principles of federal Indian law largely established by three early Supreme Court decisions.[18] Together, they are known as the "Marshall Trilogy" because Chief Justice John Marshall wrote all three court opinions. Even today these principles still furnish the essential standards for adjudicating major controversies over Native rights. (From an Alaska perspective, federal Indian law could just as easily be called federal *Native* law since Eskimos and Aleuts are equally subject to its rules.) Here are the principles in brief:

- Tribes have a right of use and occupancy to their lands until clearly extinguished by the federal government through a negotiated settlement. As we have seen, this land-use right is called "aboriginal title."

- Congress has plenary (complete) power over Indian affairs. But this power carries with it the clear obligation to protect tribal rights and resources from all others. For example, Alaska or any other state only has power over Native affairs when that power is clearly delegated to it by Congress.

- By the very fact of being original occupiers of the land, tribes possess an inherent sovereignty. Therefore the federal government cannot grant sovereignty to tribes because tribes already possessed it *before* the United States existed. Exercising its plenary power, Congress can, however, extinguish the sovereign powers of tribes in all or in part. Indeed, much of the history of federal Indian law and policy is marked by a continual diminishment

of tribal lands and self-governing powers by Congress and the courts. This is what the Native American rights lawyer Walter Echo-Hawk (Pawnee) calls the "dark side of federal Indian law." [19]

- And, finally, federally recognized tribes have a special relationship of one sovereign to another with the United States government. Of course the federal government is the ultimate sovereign, but certain sovereign rights and immunities are retained by tribes. Note that within the American Republic, there are only three political entities having the power to exercise sovereign authority – the federal government, the fifty states of the Union, and Native American tribes.

So whenever Native American tribes argue for their rights in court or in Congress, the driving idea behind their argument is: "These are your own American laws. All we ask is that you abide by them"! By invoking one or more of these foundational principles, tribes seek to expose what they view as the gap between an American legal ideal and whatever perceived challenge to Native rights they confront at the moment. Of course tribes do not always prevail. If, however, there was no ideal legal culture to call upon, tribal arguments would have little chance of being heard let alone a chance of success. To understand the significance of these federal Indian law principles as ideal legal culture, we now look at the contrasting case of Aboriginal tribes in Australia.

Australian Aborigines: a contrasting Native rights situation. In sharp contrast to the ideal culture of American Indian law is the uncertain legal status of Aborigines, the indigenous people of Australia. Unlike the United States, there is no historically developed legal doctrine defining Aboriginal land rights and tribal sovereignty in Australia. Even today, Australian Aborigines cannot say, "These are your own Australian laws. All we ask is that you abide by them"!

Geographically, Australia is the sixth largest nation in the world. It has, however, a relatively small population of 20 million. The Australian federation consists of six States and two federal Territories. The Aboriginal population is estimated to be about 500,000, or about 2.5% of the total population. Before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal tribes occupied most areas of the Australian continent. Scientific studies indicate that they had inhabited Australia for at least 20,000 years before European contact. In 1770, Captain James Cook landed on the east coast of Australia and claimed the continent for the British Crown. By 1790 the non-Aboriginal immigrant population rose to about 160,000. Then in the 1850s, the growth of the wool industry and gold rushes led to a new wave of immigration to the Australian colony.[20]

Like the white settlers who invaded Indian country in the American West, the early colonists in Australia desired large tracts of land for farming, livestock raising, and mineral development. But unlike American settlers who were often confronted by large, powerful Indian tribes, the Australian colonists encountered far less threatening small, nomadic hunter-gatherer groups scattered throughout the continent. They quickly sought to bar any possible Aboriginal land claims by declaring Australia to be *terra nullius*, which means "empty land" in Latin. According to European-made international law of the time, a nation could claim a right of discovery to empty wilderness lands not already claimed by another nation. By the end of the

18th century, however, the *terra nullius* doctrine was expanded to include lands occupied by "uncivilized tribes" described by European colonizers as lacking any real legal system, hence any land tenure rules to be respected.

Figure 7-4

Australian Aborigine, Djakapurra Munyarryun, plays the didgeridoo in the "Sea of Hands" display in Sydney in 1998. The display was in support of native title and reconciliation of Australian aboriginals. (Source:AP)

For two hundred years *terra nullius* survived as Australian legal doctrine automatically extinguishing whatever Aboriginal rights to land and sovereignty might be claimed. Then in 1992 the Australian High Court agreed to hear an Aboriginal challenge to *terra nullius*. The Court ruled in *Mabo v. Queensland* that indeed *terra nullius* had been wrongly applied from the very beginning. As the High Court's Chief Justice Gerrard Brennan put it, "The fiction by which the rights and interests of indigenous inhabitants in land were treated as non-existent [and] justified by a policy [of *terra nullius*] … has no place in the contemporary law of this country."[21]

But did striking down *terra nullius* as legal doctrine mean Australian Aborigines now have recognized rights to land and sovereignty approaching that of American tribes? Unfortunately it did not. While the High Court's decision in *Mabo* held that the declaration of *terra nullius* did not extinguish Native title, it also said that other actions by the British Crown over the years may have the power of extinguishment. The Court held that as ultimate sovereign of Australia, any grants of land made by the Crown to non-Aboriginal private or public interests are likely to be valid acts extinguishing any Aboriginal claims to the same land. In a word, much of what the High Court gave with one hand, it seemed to take away with the other hand.

Ideal legal culture – a final comment. Western democracies such as the United States and Australia claim to cherish the Rule of Law, which usually means a well defined jurisprudence fairly and equally applied to all. It is the law and not the prejudices and self interests of men that should prevail. But obviously there first has to be a body of law to cherish, to abide by. In the United States we have the foundational principles of federal Indian law. In Australia there is no such body of law – there is no ideal legal culture to call upon.

When they reflect the best standards and traditions of a society's ideals, there is simply no substitute for the protections offered by established legal doctrine. Previously the late Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. introduced us to the *Ex Parte Crow Dog* case and elements of the Sioux system of justice. Most likely the general public knows him best as a harsh critic of United States Indian policy and law. His first book, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, disturbed many people. It was, nevertheless, a nationwide best seller in the 1970s. Yet even Deloria concedes that "in spite of the history of exploitation and conquest represented by American settlement of North America, American Indians have actually been treated considerably better than any other aboriginal group on any other continent."[22] Interestingly, when ruling on important Native rights issues in their own countries, both Australian and Canadian courts have directly referred to those early United States Supreme Court decisions establishing the fundamentals of federal Indian law.

Review Questions

According to Oscar Kawagley, what are the major elements of the traditional Alaska Native worldview?

How does the traditional Alaska Native worldview differ from the historical Western worldview?

Although performed by just one person, why do we consider shamanism to be a multi-functional institution?

Why do we include *historical legacy* as an essential part of any culture's worldview?

How does the historical legacy of World War Two transcend fact and take on a larger, almost mythological meaning within the American worldview?

Why is it important to understand that all societies have both an *ideal culture* and an often contradictory *social reality*?

Aborigines make up 2.5% of the Australian population. Native Americans make up only 1% of the United States population. Yet Native Americans have far more self determination than Aborigines. Why?

ENDNOTES

[1] *Carlos Frank v. State of Alaska*, Supreme Court of Alaska (1979.AK.224).

[2] *Sherbert v. Verner* (374 U.S. 398) 1963, and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (406 U.S. 205) 1972.

[3] Oscar Kawagley, *A Yupiaq Worldview* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1995) pp. 8 - 9.

[4] Mary Muktoyuk, Iñupiaq *Rules for Living*. Anchorage: AMU Press. Found in Kawagley, pp. 9-10.

[5] Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Eye of the Dance: Spiritual Life of the Bering Sea Eskimo"' in W. Fitzhugh & A Crowell (eds.), *Crossroads of Continents*, pp. 267-269.

[6] Shaman Khorolkan of the Kambaghir tribe of the Evenk, first quarter of the 19th century. See: Solovyova, Karina, "Shamanism among the peoples of western and Eastern Siberia" *Russian Museum of Ethnography* at About.com

[7] Anna Reid, *The Shaman's Coat: A Native History of Siberia*, Walker Publishing Co. 2003, pp. 4-5

[8] Rosita Worl, "The Ìxt': Tlingit Shamanism," *Celebration 2000*, Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 2000, pp. 155-172.

[9] Steve Landon, The Native People of Alaska (Anchorage: Greatland Graphics, 2002) p. 77.

[10] Richard K Nelson, *Make Prayers to the Raven*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983) p. 20.

[11] Andrew Hope III, "Southeast Region: Reading Poles" in *Sharing Our Pathways*, A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. Volume 3, Issue 5, 1998.

[12] See: Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the present* (New York: Vintage Books – Random House, 1979).

[13] E-mail message to the editors of the New York Times Book Review, October 29, 2006, p.6.

[14] John Water, *Jiving at the Crossroads* (Dublin: Blackstaff Press, 1991) Flyleaf.

[15] Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Robert Redford, Apanuugpak, and the Invention of Tradition" , *Études Inuit*, 11, 1987.

[16] Herb Hope, "The kiks.ádi Survival March of 1804" in Andrew Hope III and Thomas F. Thornton, *Will the Time Ever Come: A Tlingit Source Book* (Fairbanks: Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2000). Online at www.Alaskool.org

[17] Senate Joint Resolution 14, signed into law by President Barack Obama, December, 2009.

[18] *Johnson v. McIntosh,* 22 U. S. (8 Wheat.) 543, 1823; *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U. S. (5 Pet.) 1, 1831; *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U. S. (6 Pet.) 515, 1832.

[19] Walter Echo-Hawk, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: the 10 Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2010).

[20] Go to: About Australia. Com

[21] *Mabo v*. *Queensland (No 2)* , 1992, HCA, 23.

[22] Deloria Jr., Vine & Lytle, Clifford, *The Nations Within*, University of Texas Press, 1998, p. 2.

Chapter Eight

Cultural Products

Technology – hunting/fishing gear, tools, weaponry (and body armor), housing, transportation.

Applied Science – specialized knowledge of the regional environment developed to maintain and improve the group's quality of life.

Artistic Expression – artistic purposes. design, decoration, materials.

Culture and Its Products

A cognitive definition of culture. In Chapter Five we discussed the six parts of our concept of culture. When you finished reading that chapter you may have said to yourself: "But wait a minute! Something is missing. What about a people's technology and their science and art — the material things they produced that can be seen and touched?" They are missing because we consider these visible and material things the products and reflections of culture, but not basic elements of culture itself. Here is why.

We employ what is called a *cognitive* definition of culture. The term cognition refers to the mental processes of knowing, of reasoning, of being aware. Culture is not a physical thing. It is a mental thing. The elements of social organization, cultural rules, cultural identity, and worldview are carried about in the minds and habits of the group's members. Technology does not come into existence by itself. It cannot stand by itself. There first must be recognition by someone or some group that a particular technology is needed or desired before efforts are made to design and develop that technology.[1]

Technology

Here we use the term *technology* to mean those material products developed by a Native group in order to maintain and improve the quality of life within their natural and social environments. Indeed, no other element of your Cultural Profile has such a direct connection to the process of environmental adaptation than does technology. This is because technology furnishes the basic means or instruments of adaptation. Housing, clothing, tools, weaponry (including body armor), and transportation (kayaks, canoes, umiaks, dog sleds) are all things we can actually see and touch. As such, they can have considerable impact on how we picture a Native group's way of life. It is what first gets our attention. Any museum we go to anywhere in the world displays cultural products. This is the main purpose of museums.

But we must be very careful not to assume the material things we see tells us all we can learn about that culture.

If technology is not part of our core concept of culture, then why include it in the Cultural Profile? Remember that the central purpose of your assignment is to develop a profile of what life was like in traditional times for an Alaska Native group. To draw the most complete picture of a people's *way of life* requires going beyond basic elements of culture – social institutions, cultural rules, and worldview. As already discussed, it requires description of the natural and social environments to which a Native group had to adapt. Now we need a description of the technology and science they developed to successfully accomplish this environmental adaptation.

Cultural products as reflections of cognitive culture. Although technological products do not fit within our cognitive definition of culture, they can reflect core cultural elements. The Central Yup'ik storyknife is a good example of a cultural product or artifact offering a peek into Yup'ik cognitive culture.* Artfully carved out of ivory either by an uncle or the father, the storyknife became one of a young Yup'ik woman's most prized possessions. Usually the carvings included decorative symbols and images of birds. The storyknife was used mostly by the young woman's grandmother as a teaching tool. As she told her granddaughter a story of particular cultural significance to women, she would take the knife and draw on the ground pictures and symbols to reinforce the educational points she was making. So knowing about an Yup'ik artifact such as the storyknife offers a window onto aspects of Yup'ik cognitive culture. And we catch a glimpse of several important social relationships in a young Yup'ik woman's life by knowing who carved her storyknife and who was the "educator" who used it. And secondly, we get some sense of the Yup'ik worldview as reflected in the carved illustrations on the knife and the themes of the stories told.[2]

Native Applied Science

Native applied science and a good story. It is not a question of whether traditional Native societies did "science." It is, rather, a question of what kind of science was done. Here is a good story to illustrate the point. Awhile back, *Alaska* magazine had an article entitled "The Ice Man" by the Anchorage writer, Charles Wohlforth. Here is part of the story he tells about the late Iñupiaq elder, Mr. Kenny Toovak, who was a longtime employee of the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory in Barrow before it closed in 1980:

> One fine summer morning decades ago,John Kelley, a marine scientist and later director at Barrow's Naval Arctic Research Laboratory, went to Kenny Toovak, who managed the lab's boats and equipment, and asked for a ride out to Point Barrow in one of the 18-footers with an outboard motor. As the story goes, Kelley had work to get done and limited time, and wanted to go right away. Toovak looked at the sky

* The term *artifact* refers to a material object made by humans and, therefore, a cultural product from times past.

> and told him, with typical Iñupiaq indirectness, "I'd like for you to wait a bit."
>
> Kelley didn't insist at first, but paced around impatiently, making it clear he needed to go soon and saw no reason to wait. The weather looked perfect. In 15 minutes, he returned and told Toovak that it was time to go.
>
> Toovak, a skilled storyteller who can draw out every detail in a slow, dignified style, said he told Kelley, "You really want to go out, I'm going to give you a boat and an outboard. You can go. But I'm no going to give you a driver. And I don' think we're going to look for you, even. You really want to go out, go on and go.'
>
> Kelley returned to his office. Shortly, the wind picked up. It was soon howling, with white caps frothing on top of the waves. He returned once again and said, "Kenny, I thank you for not sending me out."
>
> Scientists and the Iñupiaq of Barrow have worked together, on and off, for 150 years; similar incidents may have happened many times as Eskimos kept scientists safe and taught them about the natural history of the Arctic. Toovak's story stands out because hardly anyone has done as much to bring Iñupiaq knowledge to science, and because, in his early 80s, he is still teaching. Changes in the arctic climate have become a topic of scientific urgency and Toovak's memories have attained special value.
>
> Some scientists would like to reverse- engineer the skill of Eskimo elders, hoping that the signs and patterns that elders use would help researchers understand nature as well. But it's not easy to dissect the magic of what an old man feels in his bones.
>
> When asked what he saw that day with John Kelley decades ago, Toovak said, "It was something about the sky, the clouds and south wind, a bit warm. It's always kind of rapid, it always happens in a rapid way. I learned that lesson from my parents and from the elder people. When the wind is kind of blowing from the south you better hold off for a while and see what the weather will do."
>
> Elders across the Arctic have told researchers that the weather has become erratic and more difficult to predict since the climate started to change in the past two decades. Atmospheric scientists following up on these observations agreed that the weather is more changeable and cyclonic storms have become more frequent in the Arctic, shorting times of stability and perhaps breaking the rhythm of the winds that the elders had learned to anticipate. [3](pp. 42-43)

How did Mr. Toovak learn to anticipate changes in Arctic weather so precisely? He said he learned this special knowledge from his parents and other elders as he grew up. And, of course, they learned to do weather forecasting from the generation before them. What is clear is that at some point in the distant past, perhaps over several generations, the North Slope Iñupiaq carefully studied these weather patterns. Their very survival in Arctic waters and on sea ice depended on reliably forecasting changing weather conditions. In the language of modern science, it depended on developing special knowledge of meteorology, the study of the earth's atmosphere, especially its patterns of climate and weather. In another section of his story about Mr. Toovak, Mr. Wohlforth tells us that many of today's scientists now take very seriously Iñupiaq knowledge of changing Arctic weather patterns and seek ways to fit this traditional Native science into their own work. Scientists also have begun to incorporate Iñupiaq traditional knowledge into other aspects of their work on the Arctic ecosystem. An example is how traditional Iñupiaq knowledge of Bowhead Whale behavior has changed the way scientists look for and count current whale populations.

Wohlforth also says that "it's not easy to dissect the magic of what an old man feels in his bones." But it is really not magic at all. What Mr. Toovak "feels in his bones" is a confidence to apply a specialized body of knowledge built upon generations of very careful study of Arctic weather. What seems like magic was Mr. Toovak's special talent for applying Iñupiaq meteorology so effectively. It has all the elements of what today is called *applied science*. Applied science develops in situations where, first, a problematic condition like sudden weather changes has been identified. Then members of the group seek the knowledge necessary to understand the problem. Over time they develop a body of specialized knowledge and learned to directly *apply* this knowledge to whatever health, security, or welfare issue confronts the group.

Applied versus basic science. Because it is concerned with solving immediate problems, applied science has a purpose different from basic science. Basic (or pure or theoretical) science does not seek a solution to an urgent problem. Its purpose is to study a particular phenomenon simply because it exists and greater understanding of it would advance scientific knowledge generally. In formulating his universal law of gravitation, for example, Sir Isaac Newton only wished to understand why objects fell to the earth at accelerated rates and why the moon and other heavenly bodies maintained their positions in space. His purpose was not to meet an immediate need or desire of English society.

Eventually the theories and findings of basic science may contribute to solving immediate problems, but that is not the original intention. All the basic science done over many years on the chemistry of gases, for example, contributes to understanding and hopefully reducing green house gases, including their impact on the Arctic. But we can be certain that the scientists who developed the first theories of gases such as Robert Boyle in 1662 and Joseph Gay-Lussac in 1802 did not have greenhouse gases and Arctic warming in mind. Because specialized Native knowledge developed as an immediate response to the problems and opportunities of the environment, applied science seems the more appropriate term.

Specialized knowledge. We have made the point that Mr. Toovak had a unique talent for applying a specialized body of Iñupiaq knowledge to understanding Arctic weather patterns. But what is specialized knowledge? The answer becomes clear when we separate specialized knowledge from common knowledge.

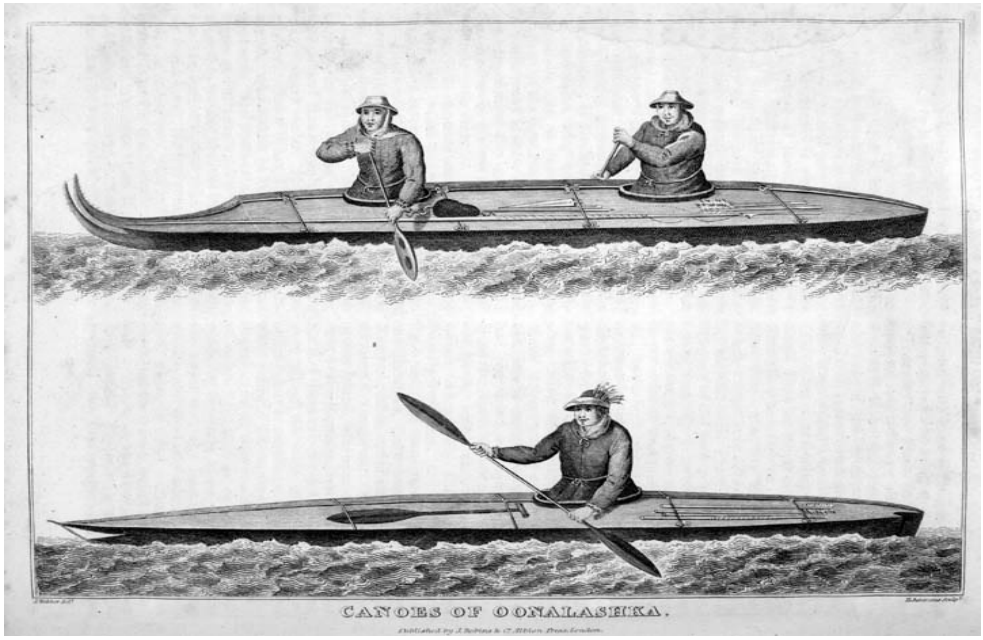
In order to live successfully within their natural and social environments, all members of a traditional Native group had to know a body of common knowledge and be able to apply it to their daily life. At a minimum, this common knowledge included obtaining and preparing food, having and raising children, coping with illness, and knowing how to deal with the opportunities and dangers of the surrounding environment. It also included knowing how to maintain in good working condition such cultural products as tools, housing, clothing, modes of transportation, and hunting and fishing gear. Of course most of this list can be applied to life generally because it covers the timeless and essential requirements for living in the world. After all, doesn't everyone down through time need food, clothing, shelter, health

care, and child-rearing skills?

So the question becomes: Beyond common knowledge, was there knowledge needed or valued by the group which could only be developed with special talents and special methods of study? Where we discussed common knowledge and cultural products above, we were careful to avoid the verbs "to construct" or "to build." We only used the verb "to maintain." We said that common knowledge was required *to maintain* various cultural products. Why? Because many times the design and construction of essential products was not done by just any man or woman. They were done instead by individuals who became specialists in a particular art or craft.

The traditional Aleut kayak, for example, is still considered by master boat builders around the world to have the ultimate design for speed and maneuverability of a one and two man ocean-going paddle craft. Just imagine what special knowledge was required to design a kayak that would withstand the often furious currents and winds of the North Pacific along the Aleutian chain of islands. These ancient Aleut craftsmen even designed a bilge pump allowing the kayaker to suck out sea water that sloshed into the kayak. Although the Kayak (or *baidarka* in Russian) was an essential Aleut cultural product operated and maintained by many, only some had the special talent and training for its design and construction. Another example is the intricately carved totem or house poles of the Tlingit and Haida. Again, a needed and valued cultural product requiring special talents in art and woodworking only possessed by some.[4]

Figure 8-1



This drawing from Captain Cook's 1778 voyage to Alaska shows Aleuts in double and single hole kayaks. The men are wearing traditional waterproof skins. The man in the single man kayak is also wearing the distinctive Aleut sea visor with feathers. [From: Alaska Digital Archives.]

Specialized knowledge can become common knowledge. Over time aspects of specialized knowledge can become common knowledge. The internal combustion engine, for example, is a scientific invention of the mid 1800s that became part of everyday life. Among other things, it powers the various vehicles we use daily — autos, trucks, ships, boats, airplanes, and snow machines. If it requires fuel to run, it is an internal combustion engine. If you wish to be a well trained mechanic, you would likely take courses in such areas as "engine thermodynamics," "heat transfer in engines," and "fluid mechanics." Obviously this is all very specialized knowledge acquired by relatively few people after serious study. But because the internal combustion engine is so essential to our daily life, many of us know enough about it to perform fairly complicated maintenance and repair operations. We may not be able to explain engine thermodynamics, but we do know about carburetors, pistons, spark plugs, fan belts, engine blocks, and the need to change the oil according to the season. And probably we know the difference between 2 stroke and 4 stroke engines. We need to know these things if we are to keep the motors of our fishing boat and snow machine in good working order. All of this has become *common knowledge* necessary for living as a modern subsistence hunter, trapper, and fisherman in Alaska.

One measure of how much an area of specialized knowledge has become common knowledge is the extent to which it is part of our everyday language. We even use some of this language as metaphors — she is the "spark plug" of the high school basketball team. This vocabulary did not exist before the invention of the internal combustion engine. It had to be invented along with the engine itself. As you read this chapter, you can bet that somewhere vocabulary is being invented to keep up with the rapidly expanding information technology of computers and the internet. Not too long ago, nobody heard of "apps" or "blog" or "twitter."

In the course of developing specialized knowledge, traditional Native societies also had to invent specialized vocabularies. And over time these new words became common knowledge and part of the language of everyday life. An good example is the set of thirty-one Inuit words establishing a detailed classification system for various conditions of snow.[5] Here are some of those words:

Aluiqqaniq: Snowdrift on a steep hill, overhanging on top.

Aniuk :Snow for drinking water.

Aput: Snow on the ground (close to the generic Snow)

Aqilluqqaaq: Fresh and soggy snow

Auviq: snow brick, to build igloo

Ijaruvak: Melted snow.

Isiriartaq: Falling snow, yellow or red.

Kanangniut: Snowdrift made by North-East wind.

Katakartanaq: Crusty snow, broken by steps.

Kavisilaq: snow hardened by rain or frost.

Kinirtaq: wet and compact snow.

Masak: wet snow, saturated.

Matsaaq: snow in water

Maujaq: deep and soft snow, where it's difficult to walk.

Mingullaut: thin powder snow, enters by cracks and covers objects.

Mituk: small snow layer on the water of a fishing hole.

Munnguqtuq: compressed snow which began to soften in spring.

Natiruviaqtuq: snow blasts on the ground.

Niggiut: snowdrift made by south-west wind

Niummak: hard waving snow staying on ice fields turned in ice crystals.

Notice how just one Inuit word highlights a condition of snow requiring several English words. Like the English words used to capture the functions of the internal combustion engine, this Inuit classification of snow conditions is a good example of specialized knowledge becoming common knowledge.

The scientific method. Along with specialized knowledge, a definition of science must include the process by which scientific evidence is obtained and theories tested. This process is called the *scientific method*. The key idea here is contained in the verb "to do." If people anywhere at any time follow a series of well defined steps to understand some aspect of the natural or social world, they *are doing* science. They are using the scientific method. The Iñupiaq who painstakingly developed the metrological knowledge Mr. Kenny Toovak relied upon that fateful day used the scientific method which is ordinarily thought of as consisting of two parts. The first part is *attitude*. Is the attitude of the investigator working on a scientific problem such as Arctic warming dedicated to rational thinking? That is, does he use logic and reason rather than emotional, magical, or spiritual thinking when making his observations and drawing his conclusions? Is the attitude of the investigator objective? Is he willing to go wherever the facts take him although it may contradict strongly held beliefs? Is he open to new evidence and ideas even if they may prove his current theory wrong?

Many consider the scientific method to be the major difference between matters of science and matters of faith. Religious doctrine such as belief in God and a supernatural world cannot be empirically tested – that is, proven right or wrong by real life observation and experimentation. But this does not mean a reasonable person schooled in the scientific method cannot also conclude that a well ordered universe with no apparent middle or edges suggests the existence of a supreme being or ultimate creative force. Albert Einstein, the scientist best known for his theories on how the universe works, believed exactly this. Responding to the question of whether he believed in God, Einstein said, "I believe in a…God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings." [6] But most important, he never claimed that his scientific work proved or disproved the existence of God. Certainly he would be the first to say that science was never meant to answer questions of faith and how the faithful should imagine a supernatural world. That world must be thought about and approached in other ways.

The second part has to do with *method* — the actual process of doing science. Is the information (the data) gathered by the investigator accomplished through a series of

deliberate and well organized observations of the phenomenon under study? A fundamental rule of the scientific method is that theories must be constructed so that their propositions can be further tested by others under the same conditions using the same methods. Usually scientific proof is based on empirical evidence. Interior Athabaskans, for example, developed a method for hunting caribou by chasing the animals into large corrals where they were "speared, snared, and shot with arrows." [7] It is easy to imagine how different "chase methods" were empirically tested before finding the most effective method. Or their testing of different materials used for constructing the corral before finding one that was easy to work with but strong enough to hold frightened caribou. And Mr. Kenny Toovak's story certainly gives us some idea of how the Iñupiaq applied the scientific method to the study of weather in much the same way Albert Einstein studied the universe. Ancient Alaska Native societies did not have written scientific journals to record and organize their research. Their oral traditions served this function. Certainly they did not have the scientific instruments available to Albert Einstein and other modern scientists. Even so, they could not have accomplished such extraordinary adaptations to the unique challenges of their environments without applying what today we call the scientific method.

Medical science. We must not forget that traditional Native cultures also used the scientific method to advance their understanding of the human body and medical treatment of it. Aleuts (Unagan), for example, performed autopsies to increase their understanding of human autonomy and causes of death. They also developed an inventory of herbal cures — in modern terms, a pharmacy — derived from the precise mixing of substances taken from various plant life found within the Aleutian regional environment. Aleut medical science also allowed development of a special feature of their worldview found on several Aleutian islands — the practice of mummification to memorialize the spirit of a deceased person of high social standing or for extraordinary accomplishments in life. Only through rigorous empirical study could such a body of knowledge be achieved.[8] In discussing traditional medicine among the Yup'ik, Oscar Kawagley directly connects the development of this knowledge to application of the scientific method. After describing several complex and lengthy treatments for arthritis, he says:

> The experimental process leading to the development of a treatment such as this [arthritis] had to occur over a very long period of time before its medicinal value was recognized. This required experimentation, using the rational ability of the human being, establishing a process for refining a natural substance, using very practical means at hand, observing and committing to memory the process of change in the solution [for treating arthritis], and noting the effects on the human body for determination of its effectiveness.[9]

As we know, shamans often performed the dual role of spiritual leader and healer of both physical and mental health problems. In fact, many traditional Native worldviews did not clearly separate spiritual issues from health issues. In many cases, physical and mental illness was viewed as a sign of possible spiritual disharmony within the community or within the individual who is sick. Some shamans were even thought to have the power to create this disharmony and make people physically or mentally ill. But no matter how this dual role was

performed within a specific Native culture, shamans and other prominent healers used elements of the scientific method to advance their medical knowledge.

Artistic Expression

What is Art? A main cultural product of any society is its Art. A people's values, traditions, and aspirations are often expressed through powerful artistic imagery. Of all the elements that make up any society's cultural production, it is art which most clearly reflects aspects of that society's worldview. The Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome, Italy is an excellent example of how art is used to visualize a major religious tradition, in this instance the Roman Catholic tradition. Its interior is covered with paintings of biblical stories done by Italian renaissance artists, including the ceiling painted by the renowned Michelangelo, a section of which is shown in figure 8-2.

Figure 8-2
Michelangelo's ceiling at the Sistine chapel[10]

In our earlier discussion of the Central Yup'ik storyknife, we said that the imagery

carved on the ivory handle was an example of how this Yup'ik artifact can give us a glimpse of Yup'ik cognitive culture. But at the same time it is equally an artistic product. Like all art, the images carved into the storyknife handle were meant to represent an idea or series of ideas. The father or uncle who did the carving was perhaps expressing a significant thought for the young girl to keep in mind as she anticipated adult female responsibilities.

Where do we find traditional Native Art? The storyknife gives us a major clue to finding and describing traditional Native art. Unlike art collections found in modern museums, in traditional times we would not find separate structures housing pieces of a Native group's art to be contemplated and admired. What we would find is artistic expression displayed in the decoration and design of material objects having other functions. Remember that the Yup'ik storyknife was also crafted to serve an educational purpose. Also within the Central Yup'ik artistic tradition is expression of their supernatural world through the design and decoration of ceremonial masks. Just as the art of the Sistine Chapel vividly displays elements of the Roman Catholic tradition, the art of ceremonial masks vividly displays aspects of the Yup'ik spiritual tradition. Figure 8-3 below shows a *Nepcetaq* (shaman mask) with face peering through a triangular shield, painted red, white, and black. Red sometimes symbolized life, blood, or give protection to the mask's wearer; black sometimes represents death or the afterlife; and white sometimes can mean living or winter. [11]

Figure 8-3
Yup'ik Shaman Mask

We even find art in decorative designs fastened or sewn onto clothing. For interior Athabaskans whose life was almost constant movement, their cultural products had to be easily transported on one's back or in bags carried by dogs. Of course they also had to be easy to assemble and disassemble. One scholar of Native art, William Fitzhugh, says of Athabaskan clothing that "most outstanding was their skin work, which employed dyed

porcupine quill and moose hair embroidery in its early stages and, later, glass beads, dentalium shell, and other trade goods." [12]

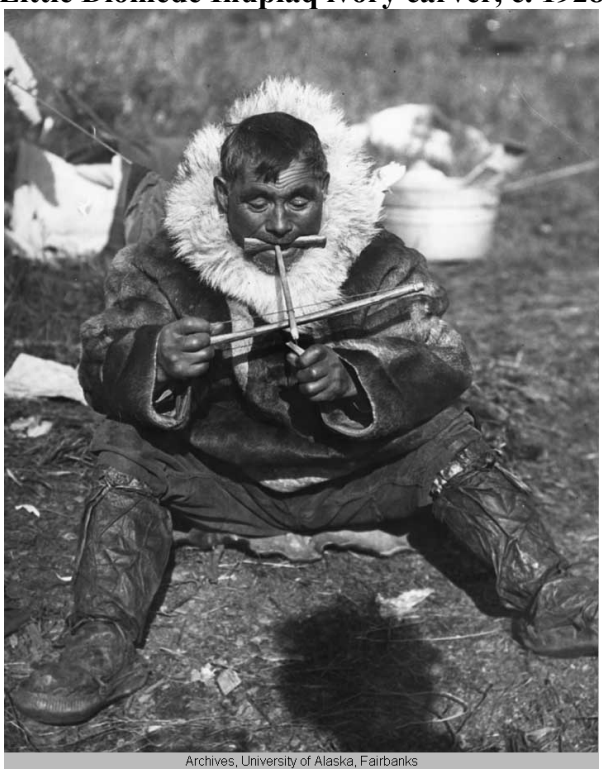
Figure 8-4
Albert Maggie with beaded coat. Nenana, Ak., c. 1913)

Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Here we should highlight what we said earlier about the importance of commerce in traditional Native economies. Because these pre-contact commercial networks reached beyond Alaskan borders, many of the decorative beads and shells were acquired by interior Athabaskans *before* their actual encounters with Europeans. Dentalium seashells, for example, are found along the northwest coast of North America. They are usually white and hollow inside and cone shaped like a tooth or tusk. They were so highly valued by Indians from California to Alaska that they became a medium of exchange much as we use dollar bills and coins today. Look at the photo of a Tlingit shaman in the last chapter (p. 81). Dentalium shells decorate his apron-like leg covering .

What we learn from Native art. We have said that art serves as a window through which we can view elements of people's worldview. But art forms can also differ between otherwise similar cultural groups. William Fitzhugh has observed that Central Yup'ik art "was more diverse, abstract, and symbolic than that of the Iñupiaq peoples." The exquisite and celebrated Iñupiaq art of ivory carving portrayed life in its natural form. An outsider knows at once that it is a carving of a polar bear or a whale or a seal. On the other hand, making sense of the more abstract and symbolic Central Yup'ik decorative art requires knowledge of their worldview, particularly aspects of their traditional spirituality.[13]

Figure 8-5
Little Diomede Iñupiaq ivory carver, c. 1928



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

We also learn that some Native art crossed territorial boundaries. One of the best known and most studied of all Native American art forms is the Northwest Coast Indian tradition. This very distinctive Native art stretches 1,200 miles along the Pacific Coast from Oregon in the south to the Tlingit and Haida homelands of Alaska in the north. Although speaking different languages, these Northwest Coast tribes had in common a heavily wooded temperate maritime environment, a clan-based hierarchical social organization, and a totemic worldview with Raven at the center of their creation mythologies. Andrew Hope III, refers to this entire Northwest culture area as the "Raven Creator Bioregion." Perhaps one of the most knowledgeable experts on Northwest Coast Indian art is University of Washington Professor Emeritus, Bill Holm. For his distinguished work, he was honored in 2001 with a certificate of appreciation from the Sealaska Heritage Institute, an organization which seeks to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultural knowledge. Holm characterizes Tlingit and other Northwest Coast Indian art as a well organized design system of ovid-shaped form lines depicting totemic creatures central to the mythological histories of clans and of house groups within clans. The Chilkat blanket shown below is a good example of the description Holm gives of the Northwest Coast Indian art form[14]

George Emmons, a United States Navel officer who carefully observed Tlingit life in the late 1800s, reported that ceremonial blanket-weaving originated with the Canadian Tsimshian and later spread north to the Tlingits through commerce and marriage. Settled near the present day town of Haines, Alaska, the Chilkat tribe of Tlingits developed their own design style and became the best weavers, producing numerous blankets for clans and

clan houses of other Tlingit groups. The Chilkat Blanket was highly sought by Indian nobility up and down the Northwest Coast long before the first explorers came to the region.[15]

Figure 8-6
Chilkat Blanket

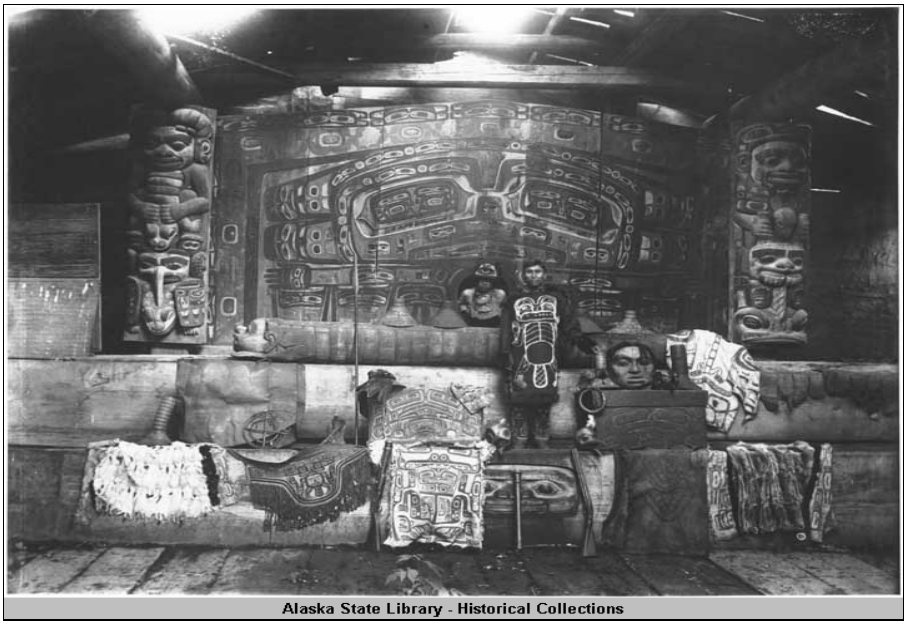
A detailed artistic depiction of a totemic creature along with other clan or clan house symbolism is called a *crest*. Here is another good example of art teaching us something about the society in which it is found. In this case we learn about the connection between Tlingit social organization and Tlingit art. Again we go to Andrew Hope III for instruction:

> To appreciate Tlingit pole art, one must understand Tlingit social organization: what Frederica de Laguna refers to as ." . . the fundamental principles of . . . clan organization, . . . the values on which Native societies are based," that is, the names and histories of the respective Tlingit tribes, clans, and clan houses.
>
> The seventy-plus Tlingit clans are separated into moieties or two equal sides- the Wolf and the Raven. Tlingit custom provides for matrilineal descent (one follows the clan of the mother) and requires one to marry one of the opposite moiety. The clans are further subdivided into some 250 clan houses.
>
> To underscore the duality of Tlingit law, Wolf moiety clans generally claim predator crests, whereas Raven moiety clans generally claim non-predator crests. For example, the Kaagwaantaan, a Wolf moiety clan, claim Brown Bear, the Killer Whale, the Shark and the Wolf as crests. The Kiks.áàdi, a Raven moiety clan, claim the Frog, the Sculpin, the Dog Salmon and the Raven as crests. Tlingit totem art is *utilitarian* as opposed to decorative art. Tlingit pole art depicts clan crests and histories.
>
> The figures seen on a totem pole are the principle subjects taken from traditional treating of the family's rise to prominence or of the heroic exploits of one of its members. From such subjects crests are derived. In some houses, in the rear between the two carved posts, a screen is fitted, forming a kind of partition which is always carved and painted.[16]

According to traditional Tlingit property laws, moreover, a clan or clan house has clear ownership of their crest and it can be used only by their members. Elements of the crest ornamented other cultural products such as house poles, screens, war canoes, headgear, boxes and chests, and even parts of hunting and fishing equipment. In some ways a European noble family's coat-of-arms is comparable to the Tlingit clan crests because it also exhibits

symbolism of the family's honored history and mythological beginnings. Figure 8-7 shows the interior of Tlingit clan house emblazoned with carved clan crest and symbols. Note the pole art discussed above by Andy Hope. Also note the ovid-shaped form lines described by Bill Holm. For a European comparison, the British Royal Family's coat-of-arms or crest is also shown below. [17]

Figure 8-7
Interior of Whale House of Chief Klart-Reech, Klukwan, Alaska. c. 1895.



British Royal Family's coat-of-arms

Not only did the ovid-shaped form lines of Northwest Coast Indian art extend 1,200 miles south to Oregon, but it also influenced the artistic expression of other Alaska Native groups along the North Pacific Rim. We know that hostilities sometimes existed between the Tlingit and other Pacific Rim peoples. Yet studies by Bill Holm and others show that the

Chugach of Prince William Sound and the Koniag of Kodiak Island adopted certain elements of the Northwest Coast artistic tradition to decorate their basketry, headdress, storage chests, and eating utensils. Indeed, the spread of the unique Northwest Coast Indian art form offers yet another example of Native people traveling great distances to exchange both goods and ideas. [18]

An interesting artistic comparison. According to historical records, it took Michelangelo about four years to complete his ceiling at the Sistine Chapel. In all, Michelangelo's work covers 5,000 square feet. (A NBA basketball court measures 4700 sq. feet.) By comparison, in 1998 Clarissa Hudson, a master Chilkat blanket weaver, began weaving a blanket for a Canadian Native chief. As she says, "Between caring for my family, finishing my other commissions, and moving (twice!) I finished the blanket in just over two years." [19] Let's assume Clarissa spent a quarter of her time on the chief's blanket while attending to other parts of her full life. If this is a reasonable assumption, it means that if she were able to work full time on her blankets, she still could only weave four 25 sq. foot Chilkat blankets in the time it took Michelangelo to complete his 5000 sq. foot Sistine Chapel painting.

Review Questions

Cultural products are not a basic part of our concept of culture? Why not?

Why do we say it is not a question of whether Alaska Natives did science in traditional times, but a question of what kind of science was done?

Why distinguish *specialized knowledge* from *common knowledge*?
(Hint – the connection between science and specialized knowledge.)

Can you explain the *scientific method*, and why we say it is not just a modern or Western practice, but has been used down through time by all peoples?

Why do we say: "Of all the elements that make up any society's cultural production, it is art which most clearly reflects aspects of that society's worldview? Can you give examples from Alaska Native cultures?

Give some reasons why we must look for traditional Native art on cultural products having other functions.

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Congratulations – but don't stop studying now!

If you are reading this, then you have completed your Cultural Profile Project or are very close to completing it. If you have dedicated the necessary time and effort to the required research and readings, then you know more about Alaska Native ethnohistory – that is, about Native life in traditional times then most Alaskans. And certainly more than nearly all people outside of Alaska. Congratulations!

Now let's see why congratulations are in order. Although you worked on just one or two Native groups, the concepts and methods – the tools – you used for this research can be applied to the study of any Native group. The Cultural Profile Project's outline, for example, provides you with a comprehensive guide – a road map – for the study of traditional Native life anywhere in Alaska. Most important, you now have the actual experience of bringing this outline to life with your own cultural profile work. You know what has to be done and how to do it. In fact, the outline can serve as a framework for studying the life of indigenous subsistence-based societies anywhere in the world. So don't lose it. You may need it again.

Along with doing actual research, you were asked to think hard about the concepts and methods often used to study Native American history. You have contemplated the meaning of such terms as culture, tradition, ethnocentrism, tribe, aboriginal title, social stratification, assimilation, and even the concept of "Alaska Native." You have been introduced to the variety of Alaska Native histories and cultures. You have explored the world of Native traditional technology, science, and art. And you have taken what amounts to a short course on Alaska Native historiography – the ways and means of studying Native history.

You have been asked, moreover, to contemplate how history has shaped current Alaska Native perspectives on the important civic issues facing their communities. Now, for example, You may be able to assist a tribe struggling with the research required for federal recognition. You may even have some good ideas about how to go about researching traditional Native use of the Outer Continental Shelf. If you spent some extra time on the several segments dealing with aspects of federal Indian law, then you join an even smaller group of Alaskans who know the fundamental principles of this very important American jurisprudence. Perhaps your cultural profile work has given you new ways of thinking about such highly publicized issues as regulating subsistence hunting and fishing, the powers of tribal governments in Alaska, or on the problems of law and order in rural Alaskan villages. So again, congratulations!

Are you now thinking any differently about your own educational future, maybe thinking about going on to college? Work on the Cultural Profile Project has given you important academic skills and insights. But there is so much more to know and to do. Have you developed an interest in Alaska history generally and in Native histories and cultures specifically? Or have you developed an broader interest in Native American history? Was your curiosity at all sharpened when we discussed Native peoples in other parts of the world? If so, what about pursuing comparative indigenous studies? If science is your academic interest, then what about working toward a degree in one of the natural sciences with an eye toward including traditional Native science as part of your program? We certainly know more about bowhead whale populations and behavior because traditional and modern science have finally formed a partnership.

These are just some of the possibilities in higher education if you have the desire to pursue them. It will be hard work. No question about that. But it will be an extended educational expedition well worth the effort. In some ways it will be an expedition to explore uncharted waters because the pace of social change has quicken just as changes in the planet's climate have quicken, particularly in the Arctic. Who knows what lies ahead ten or twenty years down the road. Well, that's not quite true. We do know that all of us will be better off if more young Alaskans – Native and non-Native – have the motivation and knowledge to smartly tackle the social, political, and environmental issues of the day and stand ready to confront issues yet to come. You are needed on this new expedition, so give it some serious thought. Thank you.

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> **NOTE**: The Alaska Tsimshian came to Annette Island, Alaska in 1887. Therefore we must go back to their original homeland in British Columbia to learn about Tsimshian life in traditional times.