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Indeterminate Natures: Race and Indigeneity in Ice-Geographies

By

Jennifer R. Smith

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Shari Huhndorf, Chair

Professor Thomas Biolsi

Professor Jake Kosek

Professor Beth Piatote

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Abstract

Indeterminate Natures: Race and Indigeneity in Ice-Geographies

by

Jennifer R. Smith

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Shari Huhndorf, Chair

My dissertation *Indeterminate Natures: Race and Indigeneity in Ice-Geographies* analyzes the ways that land, race, and indigeneity have been co-constitutively formed under conditions of coloniality. Unlike other Indigenous places in the United States, Alaska has not been colonized primarily through land dispossession by military warfare, through the enactment of treaties, or creation of reservations. Instead, Alaska lands and Alaska Native peoples have been subjected to colonization through gradual encroachment and resource development—processes that hinge upon colonial definitions of land, race, and indigeneity that are indeterminate and thus, often fall outside of hierarchies of race given by scientific racism, and legal protections afforded by federal Indian law. Specifically, at the time of the Alaska Purchase in 1867, the geographical boundaries of the territory of Alaska had not been legally defined, and the racial origins of Alaska Natives were ambiguous and therefore they were not legally understood as Indigenous subjects or potential citizens. It wasn't until 1931 that Alaska Natives received legal federal recognition as Native subjects. These racial, geographical, and legal indeterminacies, I argue, have shaped conflicts surrounding Native rights and territorial claims to the present day. Over the course of five chapters, I use methods of literary analysis, archival research, and grounded fieldwork to examine the conditions under which these forms of indeterminacy are produced and contested in treaties, scientific expeditions, land surveys, photographs, letters, poetry, and embodied knowledges. My analysis covers four key moments in Alaskan history that elucidate the ways in which Alaska Natives have been uniquely dispossessed through colonial definitions of racial, geographical, and legal indeterminacy.

In Chapter One, I use archival documents of geographical data, racialized cartoons, climate tables, and U.S. Senate documents, to analyze racial and geographical indeterminacy at the time of the Alaska Purchase. Each remaining chapter examines the ways in which indeterminacy figures in racial and territorial conflicts in subsequent periods in Alaskan history. Chapter Two focuses on the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899, which launched scientific studies of the territory during the era of the Alaskan Gold Rush. I focus on the landscape photographs of Edward Curtis and renderings of Alaskan people and lands, including the spectacular aesthetic of ice. Chapter Three examines conceptions of land and Native identity in the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history. I am

particularly interested in the ways that ANCSA redefined indigeneity through a corporate capitalist status and land as commodity while leaving unsettled questions about sovereignty and subsistence rights. For this chapter, I analyze letters written and testimony given by Alaska Natives of the era who grappled with the political indeterminacy the Act generated for Alaska Natives. Chapter Four analyzes Alaska Native poetry about Indigenous Arctic landscapes changing landscapes in global warming and other universal narratives of humanity that take place in Arctic spaces. I conclude with Chapter Five that brings together the main themes of the preceding chapters through examining oral histories of my home community of Eyak, Alaska. Together, these chapters draw out the political and social effects of indeterminacy over time, how they have enabled unprecedented forms of dispossession, and how they ultimately leave Alaska Natives in a precarious political position in the time of climate change.

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For my mother,
who teaches me how to share the beauty and bear the violence of this world.

Introduction

“The ‘uncivilized tribes’ specified in the Russian treaty were in an anomalous position. They were omitted from the General Allotment Act, which was the method of obtaining citizenship for the American aborigines. They were omitted from the Homestead Act as being neither citizen nor alien capable of obtaining citizenship. They were forbidden by Congress to enter into treaties with the United States for the cession of some lands and the retention of others. Physically they comprised the major part of Alaska’s population. Officially they were invisible.”

- *“Alaska Natives and The Land”*¹

I am Eyak from the Eagle Clan: my mother is Pamela Smith, my grandmother was Rosie Lankard and my great-grandmother was Lena Gaiyu. My people are from what’s for now known as Cordova, Alaska, or iiyaaG ya’d, Maatl’Aqa’d, and Alaganik. They are from fish camps at tsaalAXa’luw where they caught saag with nets, and digiLXah IAGD where they dug clams with shovels. My inheritances are of silty glacier-fed iiyaaG guda’d where fat-bodied te’ya’lee swim; and from rain-soaked muskeg that give cha’tl’, q’a’ts’ya’lah’mahd, ts’AXLiqaatl’, and shug abundantly.

Eyaks have been classified as sub-Arctic Alaskan Indians, along with Lingít, Ts’msyen, and Haida, decided culturally distinct from the other two anthropological-cultural-geographical categories, Aleut and Eskimo. In very early philosophical imperial musings, however, those Aboriginal inhabitants of northern spaces were lumped together as racially suspect: almost certainly not of American Indian origin, not quite properly Asian either. These were people of ice. From ambiguous landscapes, ambiguous peoples surely emerge.

In May of 2019, after I walk in the graduation ceremony to be hooded and to receive my Ph.D., I will be disenrolled from the tribal membership in the Native Village of Eyak (NVE). Enrollment requires that one must be a papered-Native person living in Cordova, Alaska for at least 185 days out of the year, or if living elsewhere, one must be enrolled as a full-time student. NVE is a landless governing body and a federally recognized traditional council that was established in the early 1990’s through activist organizing led in part by my grandmother, Rosie Lankard. Only two of her five surviving children meet the requirements of enrollment in NVE.

When I lose my tribal membership in NVE I will also lose with it my voting rights, permission to attend and comment in council meetings, and access to “free” community health services. Yet, I will retain my Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) issued to me by the federal government when I was eight years old, which has fractioned out the Alaska Native “blood quantum” that I possess. I will also retain my shareholder status and shares, and therefore my quarterly dividends, in the Chugach Alaska Corporation (CAC), one of 13 for-profit regional Alaska Native corporations established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971. CAC, operating from Anchorage, Alaska is entitled to approximately 378,000 acres of full

¹ United States, *Alaska Natives and the Land*, (Anchorage: Alaska), 434.

fee estate and 550,000 of subsurface estate to be managed for economic opportunity and growth for their more than 2,000 shareholders of Aleut, Eskimo, and Indian heritage.²

I inherited these CAC shares after my grandmother Rosie passed away and my brother inherited her shares in the Eyak Corporation—one of over 200 village corporations also established by ANCSA. My adult cousins do not hold shares in any regional or village Alaska Native Corporation as original shares were issued on December 18th, 1971 and no new shares have been created since that date. My brother's son who will be born in September will also only become a shareholder when inheriting shares upon the death of kin. New generations of Alaska Native peoples do not diminish in number as anticipated, but instead, outgrow this legislation.

The discovery of oil in 1968 in northern Alaska prompted and expedited the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Directly following the settlement, the Trans Alaska Pipeline System began construction to transport oil from the fields of Prudhoe Bay through the interior of Alaska to the port of Valdez on the south-central coast. The 800-mile pipeline was completed in 1977. The labor of my mother and a few of her siblings was enlisted to aid the construction of the pipeline. She dug ditches with a shovel outside of Glennallen for \$3,000 a week working 12-hour days.

Twelve years later in 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker bound for a refinery in Long Beach, California ran aground on Bligh Reef just outside of the Valdez Arm. 11 million gallons of crude oil spilled into the Prince William Sound. While the Prince William Sound was named nearly 200 years earlier in 1778 by James Cook, these waters are originally and continually Alutiiq and Eyak relations. The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill occurred 30 years ago this year on March 24th, 1989. I was born on April 23rd, 1989—less than one month after the spill. Today, there is still oil on the beaches just half an inch down.

If I am a sub-Arctic Indian, I have also inherited both oil and ice.

This dissertation is moved by an interest in the historicized political present, lodged in and by a desire to understand how things transpired, as shaped by the *longue durée*. Thus, this dissertation is less an intellectual exercise and more a practice of unearthing. A taking stock of my heirlooms, material and otherwise, in relation to one another. An accounting of what has been given and what has been dispossessed.

Race, Indigeneity, and Ice

This dissertation undertakes an analysis of colonialism in Alaska and the Arctic. I investigate ice as a non-conforming geography, as a milieu that morphs, melts, freezes, and moves. I contend that ice is a materiality that troubles the categorization of land and sea, as well as colonial taxonomies of race and difference. Put another way, I argue that ice and Arctic climate as a non-normative terrain shapes how race and indigeneity come to be conceptualized in science and

² Language drawn verbatim from: “Who We Are,” Chugach Alaska Corporation, <http://www.chugach.com/who-we-are>.

culture and concretized in law. This dissertation, then, is interested in how colonial definitions of race and indigeneity have been and are shaped in relation to ice-geographies, particularly in Alaska and the circumpolar Arctic. And within that interest, I focus on how indeterminacy has been produced—throughout my five chapters, I examine racial indeterminacy, legal indeterminacy, and geographical indeterminacy.

At the time of the Alaska Purchase in 1867, the racial origins of the territory's inhabitants were under scrutiny by anthropologists and legislators. Multiple contestations were raised about the racial origins and racial makeup of who the inhabitants of the territory of Alaska were. Were they American Indians? Were they recent migrants who had crossed a land or ice bridge? Had they boated upward from islands in the Pacific? Were they of Asian descent? This is what I'm calling racial indeterminacy: an ambiguity and confusion about who these inhabitants are, which is related to how they should be scientifically ordered and legally classified.

I contend that these concerns levied in 1867 are symptomatic of a longer history of inquiring after racial origins and a desire to measure and record difference across humans. The questions that arise about Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska are related to theories of human migrations from East Asia and/or out of Africa. They are also related to theorizations that human difference was determined by geographical placement on the globe, climate, and environment. In order to better understand the questions asked in 1867, and how they inform Alaska Native contemporary politics, I trace a genealogy of racial-spatial thinking as it pertains to organizing and categorizing Indigenous Arctic peoples. In so doing, I demonstrate that concerns regarding the racial origins and racial makeup of Alaska Natives during the time of the Alaska Purchase are linked to and can be traced back to Enlightenment philosophies that correlated climate to human difference.

Prior to the rise of scientific and biological racism at the turn of the 19th century, environmental determinism was used to decipher difference among humans and contended that environmental and climatic factors shaped racial divergences. This dissertation is particularly interested in how Arctic spaces and ice-geographies were figured in that organization. I argue that in what became Alaska and in spaces of the Arctic, Indigenous Arctic peoples are read through multiple narratives of grand human history that predict and qualify race and disallow indigeneity: a perceived proximity to the phantom Bering Land Bridge, to the “civilizing” Asian continent, and to presumably unforgiving and ungenerous ice-geographies. Ice is understood as an undesirable and unsettleable landscape in contradistinction to temperate and agriculturally-friendly locales. Alaska's supposed spatial proximity and material constitution of a Bering Land Bridge linked with Siberia casts Alaska as a temporary and liminal landform —only as generative of transits and migration that occur across it, out of the Old World and into the New. These renderings of Arctic and Alaska would then shape colonial definitions and legal classifications of race and indigeneity in the Arctic, and particularly so in Alaska.

For instance, following the Alaska Purchase in 1867 Alaska Natives were not legally understood as American Indians nor as potential immigrant citizens, but floated in an indeterminate legal lack of classification until 1931. This amounts to more than 60 years of U.S. occupation where Alaska Natives were not able to make legal claims to their lands, due to being racialized as “of Asian descent.” This is an example of legal indeterminacy. Since then, Alaska Natives have been legally recognized as Indigenous with an Aboriginal claim to land. However, Aboriginal title

was then extinguished through an unprecedented process of land claims in 1971. This land claim, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA, bound land to capitalistic corporate entities as opposed to the utilization of other, more recognizable, forms of autonomous governing bodies such as those found in the continental U.S. Concerns regarding sovereignty, self-determination, and tribal governance have remained unsettled in Alaska, and contestations around such issues continue into the present moment.

In one way, this analytic of indeterminacy is an intervention into thinking about legal racialization and its relation to indigeneity. Yet, what my dissertation additionally contends is that these racial and legal indeterminacies were fashioned simultaneously and in relation to geographical and material concerns about Alaska. Namely, about the non-contiguous nature of Alaska in relation to the U.S., and about ice as an indeterminate, confusing, and ambiguous landscape. This is what I'm calling geographical indeterminacy. I argue that theories of ambiguous racial origins were formed in relation to the supposed indeterminate ice-landscapes of the geographically non-contiguous territory of Alaska. Similar to the ambiguous Alaska Native, Alaska's lands, waters, and ice have also defied landscape-definitions and have been characterized as many things over the years: a landmass connecting America and Asia, a space of economic and aesthetic resources for multiple colonial powers, and currently as a location of crisis and fragility in a changing climate, along with ongoing resource extraction. Ice does not give root, it does not generate arborescence, it is not rhizomatic. Ice, therefore, does not offer itself easily to the paradigms of the colonial. The role of ice as a geography was fundamentally significant in early scientific imaginings of race and indigeneity in Alaska, and as ice melts in a contemporary moment of climate change it creates a new, yet historically and dispossessively familiar form of material precarity for Indigenous Arctic peoples. These multiple, related, and yet often contradictory formations have produced historical and ongoing ambiguity about indigeneity, race, and the material constitution of Alaska itself.

My dissertation, then, explores how the figurations of racial, legal, and geographical indeterminacies of Alaska Native peoples and Alaska lands are inherently related projects. I analyze how definitions of indeterminate lands and racial classifications in Alaska have been formed, the means by which they have been reproduced, and the consequences for Alaska Native contemporary politics. Over the course of five chapters. I bring together the humanities and social sciences through a mixed-methods approach of cultural analysis, archival research, and grounded fieldwork. I examine legislation, aesthetic conventions of scientific expeditions, landscape photographs, letters, poetry, and embodied knowledges. My methods and materials demonstrate how indeterminacy is a critical analytic for transforming questions of colonialism, indigeneity, and race more broadly as it requires that ice be taken seriously as a political material-geography.

My methodological approach maintains that materials of law, science, and culture must be read together as they are the primary means by which race and land have been constituted, and therefore require an interdisciplinary approach. A substantial portion of my dissertation depends on archival research as I am tracing a history that has not yet been recorded by secondary materials. Archival research is therefore crucial to my dissertation, and the information found in select archives reveals neglected stories of the colonial-archival formations of lands, colonial terms of racial categorizations, and Alaska Native participation in and responses to those

productions. I also use literary and cultural analysis to show how scientific and bureaucratic documents *and* cultural productions have informed one another, and shaped definitions of race, indigeneity, and ice, and how Indigenous Arctic peoples have responded to and contested colonial regimes, particularly through literary expression. I also draw upon a life lived in Alaska in a post-ANCSA moment and upon my own migrations home annually as I continue projects of language work, land reclamation, and cultural revitalization in my home community.

In this dissertation, when possible, I have foregrounded Alaska Native narratives, testimonies, archives, opinions, scholarship, and literature. When historical materials and archival documents failed to provide Alaska Native perspectives or insight, I work to privilege first Native American and Indigenous scholars, critical-political scholarship in Native American and Indigenous Studies and related fields, and second, scholars with what I understand to be the most useful and most precise analytical purchase into specific ongoing colonial relations of Alaska and the Arctic. Bringing together cultural, scientific, and legal materials and using a range of methodological approaches, this dissertation offers five thoroughly transdisciplinary chapters.

A Dissertation in Five Chapters

I begin with a major transition of land ownership in 1867 through the purchase of Alaska from Russia by the U.S. and examine the multiple figurations of ambiguous racial subjects and indeterminate icy landscapes that immediately followed. To historicize this legislation, Chapter One traces a genealogy of Enlightenment thinkers who mapped racial differences to climate and geography. I give particular attention to how peoples of ice-geographies troubled racial categories and spatial situatedness by also being rendered perpetual migrants that had recently arrived from elsewhere, or what I'm calling "migrant-Asian-adjacent." I position 1867 U.S. Senate archival documents, cartoons, climate and land surveys, and political speeches within this outline to contextualize the unique racialization of Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska and musings on indeterminate ice-geographies of Alaska.

I then examine the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899, as the nation's intellectual elite traveled by cruise ship to the coast of Alaska to order land, resources, and peoples that had previously escaped concrete definitions as described in Chapter One. Chapter Two is interested in the ways that scientific and aesthetic knowledge production is entwined in the 19th century Harriman Expedition productions to demonstrate that scientific and cultural knowledge production aid and constitute colonial violence in relational forms. Moreover, focusing on the entangled aesthetic and scientific dimensions of colonial expedition documents offsets an overwhelming canon of scholarship on political economic resource extraction that dominates historical and contemporary scholarship on Alaska, which often reduces rich archival materials to mere capitalist accumulation. Therefore, I analyze aesthetic materials produced by men who have been retrospectively glorified as "hard scientists": George Bird Grinnell and William Dall. In relation, I read Edward Curtis, not as a portraiture artist, but instead as a natural historian and ethnologist through an examination of his landscape photographs of Alaska as they recast an analysis of his larger portfolio, and especially his well-known twenty volume project *The North American Indian*.

I follow with an analysis of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history. Chapter Three analyzes specific legal mechanisms of the Act that retool legal definitions of race, indigeneity, and land. In particular, I am interested in the legal definitions of “Native,” “Native village,” and the use of blood quantum to determine Native belonging that emerges from ANCSA, and how they are symptomatic of a longer history of racial ambiguity. I also examine how the Act created a temporal and spatial relationship to capitalism and resource extraction for Alaska Natives, in that keeping land in the property of corporations necessitates constant influx of income. I argue that ANCSA builds upon histories of ambiguity and furthers a kind of political indeterminacy into the future, as ANCSA replaced sovereign governments with for-profit regional corporations. I pair close readings of the Act with analyses of letters and testimonies from the 1960’s-1980’s by Alaska Native leaders, activists, and community members who were critical of the legislation after its passage.

Next, I explore climate change as land and ice are reshaped in Alaska and Arctic regions. In this chapter, I problematize dominant discussions of the Anthropocene and how Arctic spaces are deployed as demonstrative of a universal human crisis. To combat this phenomenon, I trace a racial history of ice and argue that the Arctic is often utilized as a space that narrates universal narratives of humanity, such as human migrations across the Bering Land Bridge, and now a melting ice human-induced catastrophe. Both are colonial-scientific projects uninterested in ongoing Indigenous relations to ice, and especially uninterested in those relations that cannot be easily translated or rendered into normative data. For this chapter, I analyze poetry by Inupiaq poet Joan Naviyuk Kane as a way to disrupt and counter these grand narratives of universal humanity. Specifically, I examine her poem “Exceeding Beringia” that accounts for emplaced narrations of Indigenous practices in land of the Inupiat later renamed “Beringia,” and describes multiple forms of climate migrations by way of forced relocations as the hands of colonial governments and as consequences of unbridled carbon empires.

In Chapters One through Four, I analyze how colonial renderings of indeterminate race and indigeneity have been shaped co-constitutively in Alaska and the Arctic more broadly. To move against the “grand narrative” critiqued in Chapter Four, Chapter Five brings together the main themes of the preceding chapters through a more granular analysis of the narrative of Indigenous extinction of dAXunhyuu (the people). I examine again imperial archives, but here I turn to those that pertain to Eyak peoples specifically and analyze the relationship between archival documents and the legibility of land claims in Eyak territory. I pair these readings with contemporary news articles that identify Eyak people and language as “extinct” along with oral histories and autoethnography that upend an extinction narrative.

I conclude with a return to an analysis of ice, but in this context as a data set. I examine the narrative power of data extracted from ice cores as it is instrumentalized to recapitulate a global human and climate history. I analyze a January 2019 finding drawn from ice core data that argues that the depopulation of Indigenous peoples in the Americas by colonization cooled the earth’s climate. Effectively halted widespread agriculture subsequently gave rise to rapid reforestation and ultimately causing the Little Ice Age. I contend that even in moments meant to account for a human history through historical facts of empire and colonialism, the materiality of ice is not critically contextualized or historicized, and Indigenous people of ice-geographies, often from where ice cores are extracted, are once again overlooked.

Together these chapters draw out the political and social effects of indeterminacy in ice-geographies over time, how they have enabled unprecedented forms of dispossession, and how they ultimately leave Alaska Natives and Arctic Indigenous peoples in a precarious political position in the time of a rapidly changing climate.

Emplaced Colonialism

Unlike other geographical locations in the U.S. and unlike certain tribal nations or geographical areas who have received more scholarly and critical attention, critical scholarship on Alaska Native politics and Alaska Native histories are significantly under-analyzed. Although the state of Alaska has a large and thriving Indigenous population, there are few books that critically analyze Alaska Native politics, histories, and culture.³ This is in part due to the unique colonial history that distinguishes Alaska Native communities from tribes in the continental U.S. The latter coloniality is predicated on physical violence by genocidal warfare, treaty-making, political control over land and reservations, and thus resulting scholarship is centered around these ongoing political contexts. Yet, these dynamics do not characterize Alaska Native experiences.

Given this context, this dissertation works largely with colonial histories and archives to more fully and rigorously understand the unique imperial and colonial history of what, for now, is called Alaska, and among whom, for now, are named Alaska Natives. This method is purposeful, as part of my intention is to be attentive to the ongoing colonial geo-political contexts in Alaska and the Arctic more broadly. This requires a historical excavation that is particular to these spaces and these peoples, and therefore I wish to puzzle together analytics that are specific to place, and less to align my work with a broad logic-based understanding of empire and colonialism in North America, the U.S., or Canada. Colonialism materializes differently in relation to specific spatialized and geographical contexts and Alaska is no exception. In light of this, by staying close to the specificities of Alaska's unique colonial history and spatial location in the Arctic, along with its proximity to Asia, this dissertation shifts the ways that colonialism is understood, theorized, and contested.

Within Alaska, there are multiple forms of identifying as an Indigenous person and/or Indigenous group and I work to carefully consider these articulations. There are twenty distinct Alaska Native languages spread among 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska. Yet, in the chapters that follow, I do not transpose the term "Alaska Native" or "Indigenous peoples" on to a historical moment of the mid 19th century or before. To appropriately historicize the perceived

³ See Maria Williams collection *The Alaska Native Reader*, and the collection named *Alaska Native Writers, Storytellers, and Orators* compiled by Jeanie Breinig, Ronald Spatz, and Patricia Partnow for the only edited collections that examine Alaska Native stories, histories, and politics. The only other critical compilation of writings is a published anthology of papers presented at the first Alaska Native Studies Conference in 2012. Roy and Shari Huhndorf began the body of published work about Alaska Native histories and politics written by Alaska Natives; Jessica Bissett-Perea and Eve Tuck have also recently added to this literature. Much of Alaska Native published work is in the form of poetry, short story, and overwhelmingly, memoir. See Frances Degnan, Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Joan Kane, Ernestine Hayes, Velma Wallis, William Hensley, Peter Kalifornsky, Robert Davis, Susie Sillook, Diane Benson, Sydney Huntington, Harold Napoleon, Ishmael Hope, Mary Tallmountain, and Fred Bigjim among others.

racial ambiguity of Alaska Natives leveraged in historical eras, I use the term “aboriginal inhabitants” or “native inhabitants of Alaska,” to mirror concurrent legislative language. The term “Indian” has historically only been applied to sub-Arctic peoples and not to Arctic Indigenous peoples broadly, in part due to longer histories of concerns with racial origins that I explore in this dissertation.

“Alaska Native” as a term can be read as one that potentially flattens distinct histories, experiences, languages, and politics that vary across groups. The first legal or official use of “Alaska Native” came with the establishment of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and later the Alaska Native Sisterhood civil rights organizations, both created in 1912. In this vein, it might also be understood as a term forged in strategic political organizing of Indigenous peoples of Alaska to make their claims more legible to dominant settler governments. It might also be read as an insistence of indigeneity and temporal continuity of land use under colonial conditions that worked to racialize Indigenous peoples out of their Aboriginal claims afforded to them by U.S. international and federal Indian law. In either case, the colonial experiences and transmutations of subjectivity and identity of Alaska Natives are not homogenous and cannot be recounted by any one story or history alone, including this dissertation. In fact, this dissertation makes visible a particularly Eyak sensibility and presence, as dAXunhyuu have been omitted even within Alaska Native histories. Certainly, there are shared colonial conditions and like-minded efforts to politically organize across distinct tribal delineations in Alaska, the contiguous U.S., and transnationally—particularly in thinking of political organizing across a Circumpolar North. When possible, I use specific tribal affiliations as opposed to broad identifiers, though often names of specific tribal affiliation are not untouched by discursive strategy, colonial manipulation, or contestation. For instance, “Eyak” is the name of a material geographical location that means “throat of the river,” which was chosen by linguists as a useful shorthand to name dAXunhyuu, as Eyaks traditionally call themselves.

My consideration of terminology and emplaced colonialism is meant to historicize the term “Alaska Native” as an organizing category in relation to a troubling of the settler territorial borders of “Alaska.” For, to call oneself Alaska Native may normalize the imposed boundaries of “Alaska” as owned property of U.S. empire. Moreover, in staying attentive to the specificities of colonialism in Alaska, I understand Alaska not as merely an appendage of the U.S. “frontier” or as an inevitable extension of Manifest Destiny, but as a racialized ice-geography that is constitutive to Circumpolar Arctic colonial histories that defy boundedness of nation. In this dissertation, I am interested to not only trace the historical racialization of Indigenous peoples of Alaska and the Arctic and their related ongoing dispossessions, but to demonstrate the simultaneous emergence of attempts to measure and record Alaska as definable land, to render determined the indeterminate.

Chapter One

“Migrant-Asian-Adjacency: Alaska as Temporal and Spatial Link”

Introduction

This chapter traces the multiple and shifting legal, scientific, and cultural colonial descriptions and definitions of Alaska Natives before the term “Alaska Native” came to be more commonly used and concretized in law. More specifically, this chapter examines how Indigenous peoples in Alaska were uniquely racialized and thought to be racially divergent from American Indian Asian peoples. A related goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how the racialization of Indigenous Alaskan peoples is co-constituted by the simultaneous defining and organizing of Alaskan lands.⁴ For example, the materials and evidence analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that men who were either asked to complete surveys of land and peoples, or made them of their own accord, were interested in minute specificities of distinct Native groups: their differences across the landmass of “Alaska,” the characteristics of the landmass itself, and how Native peoples measured against one another and against other intricately documented subjects of empire. By giving close attention to the practices of measuring land, mapping spaces, and narrating peoples in what later became known (for now) as Alaska; this chapter contends that race and land, and more specifically colonial figurations of land and colonial figurations of Indigenous peoples, were made together.

This chapter illuminates a refusal by the U.S. of legal recognition of indigeneity, in which Alaska Native peoples were read and translated as legally non-Aboriginal. Instead, Alaska Natives were characterized as racially ambiguous, as “of Asian descent.” This chapter is interested in the conditions of possibility for the approval of this indeterminate status and therefore the nature of its acceptance and endurance. I go on to show that the racialization of Alaska Natives was co-constitutively manifested with the simultaneous invention of land and landscape. Put another way, the determinations of Native peoples and the determinations of land are co-constituted. Within the co-constitutive nature of land and race, in the specific context of “Alaska,” an important theme emerges: ambiguity. The perceived ambiguity and indeterminacy of both Aboriginal inhabitants and the lands they live within are central to their colonial figurations. While demonstrating the mutual constitution of land and race in Alaska, this chapter also demonstrates how the ambiguity of race and specifically, *ice* come to the fore. In this sense, this chapter is attentive to the specificities of Alaska’s geographical imperial and colonial histories that have significantly shaped the forms and definitions of land, race, and indigeneity in the historical present.

Russian-America

⁴ As Kim Tallbear writes in *Native American DNA*, in the tradition of Donna Haraway and Sheila Jasanoff, “rather than being discrete categories where one determines the other in a linear model of cause and effect, ‘science’ and ‘society’ are mutually constitutive—meaning one loops back in to reinforce, shape, or disrupt the actions of the other, although it should be understood that, because power is held unevenly, such multi-directional influences do not happen evenly.” (11)

Excavations of Alaska Native colonial histories must necessarily pre-date U.S. occupation. “Alaska” as a material and imagined space has played an integral role in the workings of the world in more ways than as annexed property for the expansion of U.S. Empire.⁵ “Alaska” has been of interest as a landmass and as a land-bridge in its hypothetical connection to “Asia” and as such has played a central role in theories of human migration for centuries. Beginning in the late 1400’s, economic pursuits of discovering the Northwest/east Passage by main Western powers fueled an Arctic exploration, in which “Alaska” factored into explorations of trade routes.⁶ These two theoretical musings and their attendant material measurements alone have produced multiple archives about the space now known as Alaska long before U.S. presence and subsequent purchase. Importantly, this documentation by men in search of scientific and geographic information that accumulated over centuries amounts to more than a benign form of record.⁷ Amassing geographical and ethnological information about visited lands created a great range of archives that were consistently referenced to make legal and political decisions about space and peoples. The many records and narratives made about the original Indigenous inhabitants of the landmass, later known as Alaska, would be utilized as scientific evidence to make legal and racial claims about them.

Specifically, Russian presence in “Alaska” would inform the ways that original peoples there were read as racialized subjects of empire and would also materialize landscapes. Alaska and Alaska’s first people were thoroughly documented and researched by Russian colonial presences. By 1867 when “Russian-America” was purchased by the U.S., the coast and parts of the interior accessible by waterway had already been subject to decades of imperial occupation, over a century of imperial visits, and centuries of factoring into imperial imaginings. The Russian Empire claimed the “right of discovery” in 1741, but waves of visitors representing Britain, France, and Spain had also recorded narratives of the space and intricate documentation of Native peoples living there. Explorers with surnames such as Bering, Cook, Vancouver, Laperouse, and Malaspina, among others, inscribed their names on waterways and landforms, and reported back to their respective powers in regard to the lands and peoples of the “tip of America,” “the Alaska-Arctic,” and the “North Pacific.”⁸ These reports would be deployed by

⁵ Alaska was the first non-contiguous territorial acquisition, and was followed by Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and an occupation of the Philippines.

⁶ For further context, see *Contesting the Arctic: Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North* by Philip E. Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch, and Hannes Gerhardt; *The Last Imaginary Place* by Robert McGhee; *The Spiritual History of Ice: Romanticism, Science, and the Imagination* by Eric Wilson.

⁷ As discussed in later sections, original reports made by explorers such as Captain James Cook, Nathaniel Portlock, George Dixon, George Vancouver, John Webber, among many, many others.

⁸ See *Arctic Mirrors: Russi and the Small Peoples of the North* by Yuri Slezkine; *Enlightenment and Exploration in the North Pacific, 1741-1805* by James K. Barnett, Stephen W. Haycox; and Caedmon Liburd for a collection of essays that document the movement of explorers seeking to discover, narrate, and map the North Pacific waters, lands, and islands. *Exploring and Mapping Alaska: the Russian American era, 1741-1867* by Alexey Postnikov and Marvin Falk offers a useful and straightforward account of Russian endeavors to map and narrate the spaces of Russian-America that they came into contact with and utilized largely for the exploitation of fur. However, this book does not as rigorously account for the documenting and narrating of Alaskan Indigenous inhabitants with whom Russian explorers engaged. For more on the Russian-Alaskan-American history see writings by Lydia Black in

Russian documentarians and scientists, but also later by American senators and lawmakers assessing the benefits of acquiring Alaska as a territory and attempting to determine the racial strain of Aboriginal inhabitants.

For Russia, there were multiple sets of Russian presences occupying Alaska Native territories. Two of the most formative groups were the Russian *promyshlenniki*, or frontiersman fur traders, working on behalf of the Russian-American Company, and Russian explorers and documentarians who ranged from traditional academics to military and clergy. All of these men were crucially instrumental in producing the material reality of Alaska's landscapes and the colonial histories and futures of Alaska Native peoples who experienced a range of relationships with Russian fur traders and men of science.⁹ The efforts of Russia's Tsar Peter the Great hoped to modernize and expand Russia's territory through the adoption of concurrent Western sciences of the Enlightenment by bringing in scientific experts from Germany, France, and Britain. Following this transition, the Russian Empire made a devoted and concerted effort not only to develop the trade of fur across the Pacific coast of America and maintain control over that trade, but also to organize and store scientific-geographic information, which assisted in economic expansion. Russia organized over sixty voyages to North America between 1741 and 1867, many of them carrying scientists from various Western nations paid to train Russian navigators, who then published extensive reports.¹⁰

For instance, the earliest explorations of Siberia and Russian-America in the Kamchatka expeditions in 1724 and 1733, and later the expeditions under the direction of Shelikhov demonstrate the simultaneous gathering of information about land and Aboriginal peoples. G.W. Steller's copious record-taking regarding botany, zoology, and ethnography on the Northern Expedition took the form of "A Survey of the Grasses Collected in America," "A Dissertation on Fishes," "A Survey of Fishes," "A Survey of Birds," "A Survey of Marine Animals," "A Survey of Insects," "A Survey of Objects that Fly Out of the Sea," and "A Mineral Survey," were paired with Kamchadalian and Chukot language lexicons.¹¹ Furthermore, Okladnikova writes, "Steller and Krasheninnikov were among the first to pose the question of the origin of native American

particular, *Russians in Tlingit America: The Battles of Sitka 1802 and 1804*, co-written with Nora and Richard Dauenhauer; and *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867*. Additionally, see recent text on this topic such as *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America* by Gwenn Miller; *Early America and the Revolutionary Pacific* by Michelle Burnham; *Glorious Misadventures: Nikolai Rezanov and the Dream of a Russian America* by Owen Matthews.

⁹ In many histories of the Russian-Alaska time period, historians argue that the violence of Russian occupation was minimal when compared to the colonization of Siberia, and the histories of colonization in the Americas. The intent of this work is not to generate a measured, comparative analysis of colonial violence across time periods and technologies of physical violence and warfare, but to demonstrate that the unique colonial history of Alaska has informed the historical present in the ways that Alaska Natives are understood as legal, racial, historical, and cultural subjects.

¹⁰ Information borrowed from Stephen Haycox, "Charles Sumner: Alaskan Hero," Alaska Historical Society, <http://alaskahistoricalsociety.org/about-ahs/150treaty/150th-resource-library/new-articles/charles-sumner-alaskan-hero/>; and the digital project "Meeting of the Frontiers," funded and supported by the National Library of Congress together with the National Library of Russia, found at <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfdiscvry/discrusci.html>

¹¹ E. A. Okladnikova, *Russia's American Colony*, (Durham: Duke University Press).

Indians. This issue was resolved when their ethnographic and geographic findings supported the hypothesis of the transmigration of American aborigines from Asia.”¹² The evidence of the co-gathering of ethnographic and geographic and mineral materials continues on to the intricate documentation of language dialects by I.I. Billings in the 1810’s, the descriptions of “zoological, mineralogical, and botanical research, von Landsdorf left memoirs which describe the homes, diet, dress, finery, and tattoos of the Unalaskan Aleuts.” These reports would later be used to “support the hypothesis of the Asiatic origins of the Aleuts inhabiting Kodiak Island” by men like Khlebnikov who simultaneous to this conclusion would also in his own report give “special treatment to a discussion of the soil texture on the Aleutian islands” in 1817.¹³

Simultaneous to those journeys, Russia enlisted its naval officers and clergy of the Russian Orthodox church to investigate and record details about Russian-America and Indigenous inhabitants living there, specifically in the fur trade ports along the coast of Alaska where the military or Orthodox church took up residence either permanently or temporarily.¹⁴ The presence of the Russian Orthodox church along the coast of Alaska, especially in Kodiak and other Unangan territories, began in 1794 in Kodiak. Several other Orthodox churches were built along the coast and kept meticulous records, particularly in the nature of genealogy and conversion rates. Churches loosely filled the roles of schools, translated bibles into Indigenous languages, and also often worked as spaces of safety for Alaska Natives against cruelty at the hands of the *promyshlenniki*. Their decided priority was to convert Natives to Christianity, and to bring them a “civilized way of life”—a goal not shared by naval officers, men of science, or the *promyshlenniki*.

Important to note is that the Russian Orthodox religion was first circulated, disseminated, and practiced in Russian America largely by laymen—not ordained clergy. Antoinette Shalkop writes that “the church in Alaska was always part of the Siberian diocese, and never developed an independent structure,” meaning that Russian-America was a particularly far-flung religious colony for the Russian Orthodox church.¹⁵ She continues, “the bishopric of the new diocese was oriented primarily toward Kamchatka and eastern Siberia; the Russian American colonies received only a small share of administrative attention.”¹⁶ Lydia Black writes in the context of Aleutian interface with Orthodox religion that there was much sharing across religions between Aboriginal Alaskans and Russian settlers. It wasn’t until the 1800’s that the Russian Crown began sending Russian Orthodox missionaries to Alaska in order to institutionalize the religion.¹⁷

Naval officers and clergy were not the only Russians moving through and inhabiting Alaska’s landscapes. Many individuals who were first to remain along the shores and islands of what is

¹² Ibid, 220.

¹³ Ibid, 224, 227, 228.

¹⁴ In particular, Orthodox priest Ioann Veniaminov, the first Orthodox bishop in Alaska, took copious records concerning the Alaska Native peoples he had sustained relationships and his journals were referenced in trying to scientifically “place” Alaska Native peoples. Veniaminov’s notes in *Notes on the Unalaska Islands* are particularly relevant as Veniaminov covers the topics of geography, history, and ethnography of the area, concluding that “Aleuts were natives of Mongolia” as E.A. Okladnikova writes.

¹⁵ Okladnikova, “The Russian Orthodox,” In *Russia’s American Colony*, 196.

¹⁶ Ibid, 199.

¹⁷ Lydia Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867*, (University of Alaska Press, 2004).

now Alaska, were not men of science, military, or religion, but were *promyshlenniki* who hoped to accumulate capital via fur trade. *Promyshlenniki* were the laborers for the Russian-American Company, the most consistent presence in parts of “Alaska,” which did not work to create civil governments or large settlements. This company and its laborers were there first and foremost to accrue income, not necessarily to establish religious or political dominion, or to organize and manage the space through governance. As Lydia Black states, “Creation and development of a permanent Russian population in Alaska...was incidental to maintaining the Russian presence in the face of Native opposition and providing the necessary support for fur extraction, acquisition through trade with the Natives, and marketing activities.” For Black, “there was never a government-sponsored plan for establishing a permanent Russian population in Alaska; in fact, government regulations forbade Russian settlement for the sake of settlement.”¹⁸

Many of the *promyshlenniki* had been a part, were descendants, or must have been acutely aware of the colonization and violence in the Russian acquisition of Siberia. Sharing a familiar history with many Indigenous groups, Indigenous peoples of Siberia had been overrun by military violence, had been decimated by disease, were expected to convert to Christianity, and/or had been dispossessed of their lands by Russian colonial forces and had been coerced to relocate. *Promyshlenniki* who witnessed and participated in these colonial movements were often bachelors absent of families and were also most often criminals who had been ostracized to Siberia to labor permanently on behalf of the Russian Empire.¹⁹ In this sense, *promyshlenniki* were not stationed in Russian-America to represent Russia in an official capacity, rather, these often cruel fur traders occupied spaces to exploit the fur trade for purposes of individual economic accumulation. Most of Siberia was populated via this method by non-Indigenous peoples: through criminal sentencing that would result in an individual living their remaining life in “katorga”—a system of penal labor authorized by the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union called this place by another name, the “gulag.”

While *promyshlenniki* were not necessarily the men writing scientific, geologic, geographic, or ethnological narratives about Alaska land and Alaska Native peoples; they were considerably shaping the material landscapes and interpersonal, inter-national relationships forming and unfolding with Alaska lands and Alaska’s original peoples. Some of these formations emerged as an exploited resource of fur from sea otters and seals, and others in an enslaved and violently coerced population of Alaska Native—mostly Unangan—peoples to ensure the continuance and success of this trade economy. Russian *promyshlenniki* enslaved Unangan men by taking their wives and children hostage. This was a common practice carried out against Indigenous peoples in Siberia and had been outlawed by Catherine the Great but was taken up again in Russian-America as there was no legal recourse or protection for the Unangan. Through this method, Unangan people were enslaved and when one area had been decimated of sea otters and seals, their laboring bodies were transported by Russian fur traders from the coasts of Alaska ranging down to the coastline of southern California.²⁰ Unangan peoples experienced the violence of

¹⁸ Ibid, 209.

¹⁹ Similarities might be drawn here to think of Alaska as a dumping grounds for those coded as criminal by Russian powers in a similar way that Britain shipped its criminals to Australia.

²⁰ Structures at Fort Ross in California remain as one main site of the Russian fur trade where Unangan people had been taken to carry out the bidding of their enslavers.

slavery at the hands of fur seekers in the earliest interactions between Russians and Alaska Natives. It wasn't until around 1818 that Russian traders began traveling into Yup'ik territories to hunt for land otter. Other *promyshlenniki* settled along coastal and riverine Alaska, married Native women, made families, and the children of these relationships would later be named a population of Creoles.²¹

Early travel narratives and geographical records regarding what would later become known as Alaska were constituted largely by geographical documentations concerning navigable lands and waters, pseudo-scientific ethnological narratives about Native peoples, and also how each was constituted by the other. Documentarians were concerned with tracking available resources and charting previously “unknown” lands. They were equally interested in recording intimate characteristics of Native inhabitants: their diets, art forms, industriousness and amicability, physiology, linguistics, and most importantly, how the land, climate, and general geographical details influenced or informed the previous inquiries. To put it another way, these men were interested in learning how Native peoples were using their lands, and how those lands were informing their characteristics. In tandem with the intricate recordings circulated by Russian presences, the exposure of Christian values, domestic living, and limited education would inform the ways that the Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska would later be read and understood by the U.S.

While the documents recorded by Russian Orthodox clergy were of a different narrative form and had divergent intentions underlying the minute documentation of Aboriginal inhabitants; these records were nonetheless utilized as verifying information as to their supposed origins and racial characteristics. Moreover, the evidence in documents crafted by Russian Orthodox clergy, Ioann Veniaminov, and men of science, such as G.W. Steller, in their attempts to trace the origins of the Aboriginal inhabitants back through Asia illustrates that these inquiries are more than attempts to map, secure, and exploit economic resources. While the political economic intentions of the Russian empire and Russian-American Company are one part of this narrative, the desires to record and describe the racial characteristics and origins of Aboriginal inhabitants, paired with the minute descriptions of land and landscape reveals a more complicated story of the co-constituted nature of race and land.

Alaska Purchased: “Seward’s Folly”

The Treaty of Cession, or the Alaska purchase, did not transfer ownership of the state of Alaska on a map as it is understood in a modern sense. The landmass referred to as Russian-America was purchased by the United States in 1867 for \$7.2 million from Russia, for a little more than 2 cents an acre. The Treaty was negotiated and finalized without the participation of Indigenous

²¹ See Gordon L. Pullar’s article “The Legacy of the Russian-American Company and the Implementation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in the Kodiak Island Area of Alaska,” for an interesting analysis of the ways that the Russian-American- Company established a Creole estate for the children of Russian men and Native women. Creoles benefited from a set of special rights and privileges that were revoked in the Alaska purchase by the U.S. See also: Margaret Mary Wood’s “The Russian Creoles of Alaska as a Marginal Group”; Susan Smith-Peter’s “Creating a Creole Estate in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian America”; and Michael J. Oleska’s “The Creoles and Their Contributions to the Development of Alaska,” In *Russian American: The Forgotten Frontier*.

peoples. The population of Native inhabitants to non-Native ranges in number, but most sources agree that at the time of the purchase, the number of Native peoples at least tripled non-Natives.²² As illustrated in the previous section, while the Treaty concretized a major transition of ownership between two Western powers, Native peoples had already inhabited these lands for sustained stretches of time and had exercised their own material and philosophical practices in relationship with the land and with one another. The borders of Russian-America-Alaska were relatively indeterminate when the purchase was made. Through the Treaty, the U.S. had purchased lands that had been previously surveyed and were under the control of Russian occupation and were represented by the Russian map of Russian-America.

Competition and pressure by the Hudson's Bay Company as it encroached across Indigenous territories cum Britain's colonies of Canada, kept the boundaries between the two powers in constant flux. When the Treaty of Cession was signed, Russia suggested that the U.S. complete surveys to clarify and determine where the western border of Canada lay, but the U.S. deflected.²³ Disputes between Canada and the U.S. concerning the boundary between them in Alaska would continue on for decades and wasn't officially solidified until 1903.²⁴ Simultaneously, pressure from Spanish conquest moving north along the coast of California in search of sea otter kept Russian powers adjusting the spaces under the Russian-America Company domain. At certain times "Russian-America" extended from what is now understood as Alaska to coastal regions of Oregon, Washington, and California.²⁵ Not only were the cartographic borders of Alaska indeterminate and under transition after the purchase of Alaska, but the purchase itself was also under considerable scrutiny. Securing the funds for the purchase had been discussed for over a decade by U.S. legislators, but great sums of money were hard to come by particularly in 1867 as the Civil War had just ended and Reconstruction policy ensued. The purchase of Alaska had been negotiated mostly behind closed doors, so when it was completed and revealed to the general populous many critics vehemently opposed and attacked both Andrew Johnson, then president, and William H. Seward, Secretary of State, who oversaw and finalized the purchase.²⁶ Critics disputed the viability of Russian-America, labeling it a "polar bear's garden," nicknaming it "Walrussia," "Russian Fairy Land," and "Seward's folly."²⁷ Unlike other previous acquired territories by the U.S., which were celebrated for their wealth of

²² Alaska's Population & Economy Statistical Handbook, Vol. II P.7 (University of Alaska) from 1903 states that the Alaska Native population was 35,000 in 1867, and more than double that at the time of Russian contact, available on alaskool.org. Other primary materials state that in the 1870's there were as many as 60,000 Alaska Native peoples living in Alaska, others say there were 50,000 men on the island of "Kadiak" alone (Vincent Colyer, Charles Sumner, Hubert Bancroft). Of course, it's impossible to arrive at a concrete general number of how many Alaska Natives lived in the general landmass area as for most of Alaska's early history with Russia and the U.S. the interior was largely unknown.

²³ "Alaska Boundary Dispute," <https://law.jrank.org/pages/4213/Alaska-Boundary-Dispute.html>.

²⁴ See *The Alaskan Boundary Dispute* by John A. Munro.

²⁵ See *A History of the Russian-American Company* by P.A. Tikhmenev.

²⁶ "Today in History - March 30," The Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/march-30/>.

²⁷ For more on historical context on the interpretation of Alaska's landscape as useless and a mistake of an investment, see Lydia Black's *Russians In Alaska*; Maria Williams' *Alaska Native Reader*; Galen Perras' *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy*.

resources or settler opportunity, Alaska becomes quite clearly the reason for a joke.²⁸ During this time period, most legislators and men of power were strategic expansionists who normatively wanted to see America grow in territory, but in its icy ambiguity, Alaska was not a promising acquisition.

The cartoons included below demonstrate concerns about ambiguous, icy landscapes and equally as confounding, Aboriginal peoples. These cartoons, circulating from 1867-68 directly after the Alaska purchase, are undoubtedly satirical responses, yet draw from important scientific and cultural concerns about the value of Alaska lands and the indeterminacy of Alaska's Aboriginal peoples.



OUR NEW SENATORS.
 SECRETARY SEWARD—"My dear Mr. Kamskatca, you really must dine with me. I have some of the very finest tallow candles and the loveliest train oil you ever tasted, and my whale's blubber is exquisite—and pray bring your friend Mr. Seal along with you. The President will be one of the party."

Figure 1, "Our New Senators. Secretary Seward—'My dear Mr. Kamskatca, you really must dine with me. I have some of the very finest tallow candles and the loveliest train oil you ever tasted, and my whale's blubber is exquisite—and pray bring your friend Mr. Seal along with you. The President will be one of the party.'"²⁹

²⁸ One might use responses to the Louisiana Purchase, annexation of California, Oregon, Washington as a comparison.

²⁹ Granger, "Alaska Purchase Cartoon," Fine Art America, July 25, 2016, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/8-alaska-purchase-cartoon-granger.html>.



Figure 2, “The Two Peter Funks. Russian Stranger—‘I say, little boy, do you want to trade? I’ve got a fine lot of bears, seals, icebergs and Esquimaux—They’re no use to me, I’ll swop ‘em for all those boats you’ve got.’ [Billy, like other foolish boys, jumps at the idea.]”³⁰

³⁰ Granger, “Alaska Purchase Cartoon,” Pixels, July 25, 2016, <https://pixels.com/featured/4-alaska-purchase-cartoon-granger.html>.

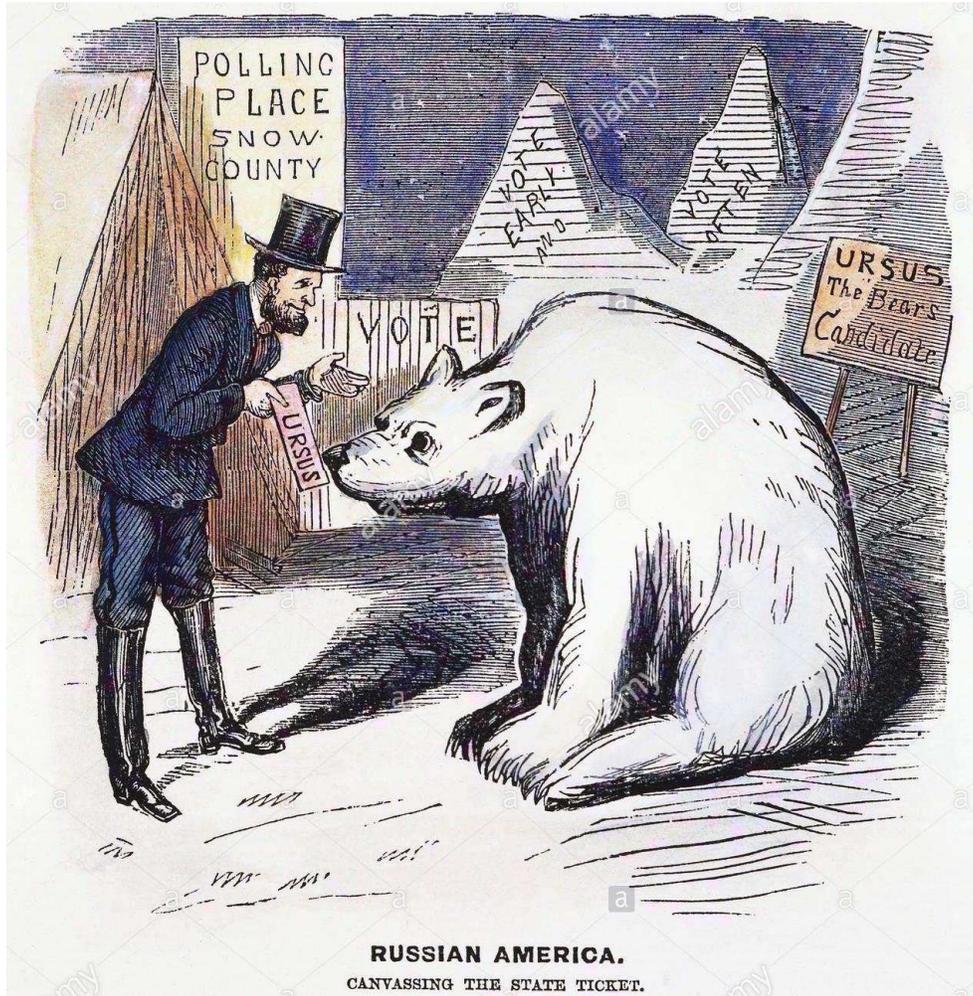


Figure 3, "Russian America. Canvassing the state ticket."³¹

³¹ Granger, "Alaska Purchase Cartoon," Pixels, November 13, 2014, <https://pixels.com/featured/3-alaska-purchase-cartoon-granger.html>.



Figure 4, "'The Big Thing.' Old Mother Seward. 'I'll rub some of this on his sore spot: it may soothe him a little.'"³²

³² Thomas Nast, "The Big Thing," Cartoon, *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/harp/0420.html>.



Figure 5, “Preparing for the Heated Term. King Andy and his man Billy lay in a great stock of Russian ice in order to cool down the Congressional majority.”³³

Across these cartoons are consistent themes about questionable lands and ambiguous race, and more specifically, how Aboriginal peoples are supposed to look and behave and how lands are meant to be used. Within these depictions, it is unclear who Alaska’s Aboriginal people are, and what use, if any, Alaska’s lands hold. Alaska was understood as a landscape of endless ice mountains, which were most likely barren of economic resources and opportunities, save “tallow candles,” “oil,” and “whale blubber” (figure 1) that apparently abounded. In addition to these few apparently inconsequential amenities, “Esquimaux” was “one of the advantages,” (figure 4) that came along with the purchase, and “bears,” “seals,” and “icebergs” were utilized as bargaining chips in the negotiations (figure 2).

The Alaska portrayed in these images is imagined as endless landscapes of ice mountains, rivaled only by an abundance of ice-dwelling animals: walrus, bears, and seals. These satirical editorial cartoons wage a straightforward, sharp critique at Secretary of State William Seward and President Andrew Johnson and their portrayed terrible and unfortunate purchase of an ice-land. Yet, the cartoons also reveal embedded concerns about the ambiguity of Alaskan landscapes that appears as illegible in these portrayals—particularly in figure 6 as the entirety of “Russian America” is reduced to one gigantic iceberg hauled in a wheelbarrow. While one aim of these cartoons is to convey a pointed, simple critique at the interpreted bungle of veiled political moves by powerful individuals, the cartoons also demonstrate U.S. sentiments that are unable to make sense of Russian-America-Alaska; its icy ambiguity and indeterminate Native inhabitants that are packaged within the acquisition.

³³ *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 24, no. 603 (1867 Apr. 20), 80.

The implicit underpinnings to these critiques about ice-lands as laughable is that expansionism, colonialism, and Empire hinge on a set of fundamental beliefs about land use.³⁴ In order for Alaska to be read and translated as a glorified acquisition, the land must be navigable, it must be pliable, fertile, and able to be cultivated. Only within these bounds can the American Republic, as a voting institution as it identifies much differently than the Russian and British Crowns, be expected to flourish and succeed. This is mirrored in figures 1 and 3. In figure 1, the Native inhabitant, Kamskatca, brings with him a leashed pet, who is called “Mr. Seal” by Seward, though he looks like more of a penguin. The punchline and title of the cartoon reads “Our Senators,” which mocks Kamskatca and Mr. Seal by proposing the apparently preposterous idea that this pair would, and necessarily would need to, act as the future politicians of the indecipherable space of Russian-America. In figure 3 this sentiment is repeated, “Russian America. Canvassing the state ticket,” wherein there are no Native inhabitants to run for regional government, save the polar bear, “Ursus,” who is “The Bear’s Candidate” of Snow County. Certain hyperbole and satire of these cartoons aside, figures 1 and 3 express serious concern about the lack of governability of the icy landscapes of Russian-America, and the potential inability of a democratic government to succeed among ambiguous mountains of ice, bears, and “Esquimaux.”³⁵ Within these cartoons, it is already implied that agriculturally-generative soil, deep roots, and agricultural farming are the proper practices that should occur with land to ensure the flourishing of the American government. These closely held beliefs of a normatively useful landscape are so constitutive to American consciousness that the idea of ice as a desirable colonial acquisition is comical.

Not only does the materiality of land provide a resource for puns, but figures of Aboriginal inhabitants also become the place for satirical humor and indeterminacy. To return to figure 1, the ambiguity concerning Native inhabitants is particularly palpable. The cartoon depicts an Indigenous inhabitant with a dark complexion, a distorted face that wears a large grin, and is decorated by a range of inconsistent items that are meant to signal Aboriginality—a harpoon tipped with a fish, a quiver of arrows, snowshoes, and a headpiece that appears similar to horns. As depicted in this set of satirical editorial cartoons, the U.S. was not entirely pleased with the lands they had acquired and established ownership over in signing the Treaty of Cession, and a similar ambiguity resounds about Native inhabitants in the territory. What is distinctly conveyed through the cartoons is that “Esquimaux,” as a stand-in for all of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the acquired territory, are understood as an inheritance similar to the animals that also live in the space. As figure 1 demonstrates, imagining a seal or Native individual as a senator is laughable.

The “Russian Stranger” (minister to Russia Eduard de Stoeckl) in figure 3 offers bargaining chips to William Seward in the form of seal, icebergs, and Esquimaux as equal in value to the amenity of a boat—but the punchline is that this actually is a terrible trade, and Esquimaux will, in reality, be a burden for the country. This would be a familiar message to Americans as the U.S. had been involved in violent Indian Wars for decades before the purchase of Alaska. In

³⁴ See, for instance, John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* who writes that only through a specific kind of relationship to land, one founded in agriculture, can allow a people’s government to emerge and flourish.

³⁵ French spelling of “Eskimo” used by many to describe the population of Indigenous peoples living in Alaska.

figure 5 an image, possibly meant to be a photograph, hangs in the backdrop of the scene and depicts a small family of Aboriginal peoples of Russian America; it is labeled, in sarcasm, “One of the Advantages.” The other image that hangs in the backdrop depicts a man wearing snowshoes while dressed like Uncle Sam as he works to outrun a bear among a scene of towering ice mountains while two walruses look on. The message: Esquimaux doesn’t equal in value a boat, which has very a clear use-value particularly for purposes of imperialism, but is more similar to the troubling, useless, and not-productive meaning and import of ice—the very territory itself.

Dissimilar from visual and narrative propaganda concurrently circulating regarding American Indians, these depictions of Aboriginal inhabitants of Russian-America portray non-threatening and relatively ambiguous figures. In figure 3, an “Esquimaux” is perched in a dopey stance atop an ice mountain with their mouth gawking at a polar bear as though it were their first encounter. In figure 5, the hanging image in the background depicts two nondescript figures with small smiles. Kamscatca, in figure 2, is adorned with a range of “Aboriginal” objects that it is unclear from where he hails; he is also smiling. Shari Huhndorf’s “Nanook and his Contemporaries: Imagining Eskimos in American Culture,” writes that “the stereotype of the cheerful, peaceful Eskimo... provided a counter-image to a Western world ravaged by the violence of the war.”³⁶ The image of the smiling, inconsequential, and ambiguous Eskimo at once infantilizes and feminizes the Aboriginal inhabitants of Russian-America-Alaska making their portrayals distinct from the “savage” tropes of American Indian representations.

The racial ambiguity present in these cartoons is in part related to the indeterminate status of ice. Present in each cartoon is a concern about ice: as a useless territorial acquisition, as an uninhabited except for ice-dwelling animals, as ungovernable, and as a rootless transitional entity particularly demonstrated in figure 5. Ice is understood here as a liminal object that can melt, float, and move in ways that make it difficult to measure, map, and document—ice escapes category. The same can be understood about the original inhabitants of the acquired territory. Liisa Malkki in her work regarding sedentary metaphysics in “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,” argues that territorialization through arborescent metaphors is normalized as a form of national-cultural belonging in that rootedness, and attachments to soil metaphysically and politically link people(s) to places.³⁷ This notion is particularly apt in the context of expectations of Native peoples and their relationships to land: “terms like ‘native’ and ‘indigenous’... served to root cultures in soils.” Quoting Appadurai, Malkki writes, “natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places.” The expected rootedness of Native peoples is particularly relevant in the context of Indigenous claims to land, and the ways that Native peoples must associate themselves immovably to space as having an uninterrupted relationship of land use. In the context of Alaska, which was understood as nothing more than a rootless and moveable ice mountain, the ambiguity and questionable indigeneity of those that lived there is

³⁶ Shari M. Huhndorf, “Nanook and His Contemporaries: Imagining Eskimos in American Culture, 1897-1922,” *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 1 (2000): 134.

³⁷ Liisa Malkki, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44.

related to the inability of ice to give or receive roots in the Anglo-American ideal so dependent on the cultivating, civilizing effects of agriculture. In this way, the co-constitution of land and race lurk right below the surface of this satire that jests at ice as ludicrous in its inability to be land and mocks Aboriginal inhabitants as indistinct.

Racial Ambiguity

The supposedly ambiguous nature of the Native inhabitants of Russian-America-Alaska would remain the basis of the refusal of the U.S. government to recognize Alaska Native peoples as Indigenous for over fifty years. This refusal to recognize Indigenous Alaskans would shape the political futures of Alaska Native peoples in the case of claims to tribal or nation sovereignty; it would foreclose previously existing legal structures to make claims to land, and continues to shape the way that Alaska Natives engage politically. At the time of the purchase of Alaska, the U.S. was assessing its efforts that had been expended in fighting Indian Wars, as well as the Civil War. Due to these expenditures, the U.S. was averse to spending another undetermined amount of funds to slaughter Native peoples for the ‘opening’ of land. American Indians, as objects of culture and war, were and continue to be necessary to America’s founding and maintenance of white superiority and masculinity.³⁸ The landscape of the American West as material for the continuance of manifest destiny grounded colonial land grabs and buoyed American identity, in part through the creation of wilderness areas. The (ongoing) dispossession of Native lands promised the futurities of state and capital. The American Indian juridical status as ‘wards of the state’ solidified their invented role of Constitutional Indians³⁹—uniquely foreign and domestic sovereign nations.⁴⁰

Unlike the “manifest destiny” motivations of the American West, the purchase of Alaska was not mythologized and romanticized as a land in need of the civilizing capacities of Anglo settlement, there was not a mass American settler exodus to Alaska.⁴¹ Alternatively, the newly acquired territory of Alaska was left in a form of “frontier” status and governmental neglect—no civil government was instated until 1884 through the Organic Act, 17 years after Russian-America’s

³⁸ See Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*; Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Joanne Barker, *Native Acts*; among other for works on how Native Americans have significantly shaped American culture.

³⁹ Francis Walker, commissioner of the Office of Indian Affairs from 1871-1872 stated, “I have never believed that the natives of Alaska were Indians within the meaning of the Constitution...and I am disposed to avoid entirely the use of the word Indians as applied to them,” meaning that unlike Indian peoples of the continent, who were apparently undoubtedly Indian, Alaska Natives were unworthy of government-to-government interface. Quoted in *More than God Demands: Politics and Influence of Christian Missions in Northwest Alaska 1897-1918* by Anthony and Sally Urvina, 2016.

⁴⁰ See Bruce Duthu, *Shadow Nations*; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*; Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*

⁴¹ Alaska was purchased after the Homestead Act of 1862 signed by President Lincoln that opened up land in western states allowing homesteaders 160 acres with the legal obligation to reside for at least 5 years. Additional legislation was made in 1898 for Alaska to entice settlers to make their homes there—the opportunity didn’t take off until after WW2, and this legislation wasn’t outlawed until 1986. “Homesteading.” Alaska Centers. <https://www.alaskacenters.gov/explore/culture/history/homestead-act>.

acquisition.⁴² Before the Organic Act, Alaska was officially understood as “Indian Territory,” and therefore legal statutes could be made in regard to interface with “Indian” peoples, the first, and for a lengthy bit of time the singular, legal requirement made was the criminalization of liquor distribution to Native peoples, though this mandate was not strictly enforced.

By 1867, interactions between the U.S. and American Indian nations varied across the continent and across particular political moments, which were also not homogenous. These many histories, political relationships, and militarized warfares cannot be fully attended to here, though they have been rigorously taken up by many capable Native American studies scholars, historians, and activists. It should also be noted that many of the colonial techniques and technologies utilized to interface and manage Alaska Native peoples are very similar to those enforced upon American Indians. Yet, most crucial for the purposes of this chapter’s arguments is that the Native inhabitants of Alaska were not legally communicated with as recognized functioning nations prior to contact and this continued thereafter.⁴³

Importantly, the Treaty of Cession crafted between Russia and the U.S. determined that “uncivilized native tribes” living in Russian-America would be “subject to laws and regulations as the United States may...adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country.”⁴⁴ Essentially, the language of the Treaty shows an assumption that Aboriginal peoples of Alaska would be treated in the same manner as American Indians. However, five years after the treaty had been signed, the “uncivilized tribes” of Alaska still went without any form of outlined legal relationship with the U.S., and none of that resembled interactions that American Indians had experienced or were currently experiencing from the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA). This left many interested political parties disgruntled, and as a result, multiple conversations were held to discuss what should be done with the population of Native inhabitants in the recently acquired lands of Alaska.⁴⁵ Many senators believed that the tenets of the Treaty should be followed, in that the Natives of Alaska should be regarded in a similar fashion to American Indians. Some were unsure and asked for some sort of scientific evidence as to whether the Natives of that landmass were indeed racially American Indians, or if they were another racial strain entirely. Others did not need to have the origins of those Native inhabitants clarified in order to legally recognize and consider them to be domestic dependent wards, as many American Indian groups had been heretofore understood. Others still would have liked to see the Natives of Alaska, particularly the

⁴² “Alaska Natives” were not allowed to purchase or own land under the Organic Act. This civil government was created to legalize white property ownership, and to protect that property.

⁴³ The point is not to draw distinctions and divergences between “colonized peoples” of the U.S. but to demonstrate that Alaska Native peoples have a particularly unique historical and ongoing colonial relationship with the federal government that has not yet been discussed. This crucial information discusses and works to explain some of the big differences between Alaska Native experiences and politics and those of the contiguous U.S. which, again, are also not homogenous, but Native American and Indigenous Studies has cohered around a set of analytics that cannot neatly be applied to Alaska.

⁴⁴ Treaty of Cession, Article III, 1867. See “Article III,” Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/treatywi.asp#art3.

⁴⁵ See Stephen Haycox’s article “‘Races of a Questionable Ethnical Type’: Origins of the Jurisdiction of the U.S. Bureau of Education in Alaska 1867-1885” for an outline on what these conversations looked like. Also see Anthony and Sally Urvina’s text *More than God Demands: Politics and Influence of Christian Missions in Northwest Alaska 1897-1918*.

“Aleutians” as under the racial category of “Asian” and therefore have forms of American citizenship extended directly to them.

In 1872, the Office of Indian Affairs Commissioner, Francis Walker, temporarily resolved the issue by creating a legal void. Walker was an unlikely choice for the role of the commissioner of OIA and served in this capacity for just one year. However, in his short duration as commissioner, the decision he made about the inhabitants of Alaska would remain a formative declaration in its upholding of racial ambiguity and would have a long-lasting legacy on the futures of Alaska Native peoples. Walker dictated that federal Indian law should not be “extended unnecessarily to races of a questionable ethnical type, and occupying a position practically distinct and apart from a range of undoubted Indian tribes of the continent.”⁴⁶ The supposedly indeterminate origins of the Native inhabitants of Alaska, their ambiguous racial strain and proximity to “Asia” would remain the basis of the refusal of the U.S. government to recognize Alaska Native peoples as Indigenous for 60 years until 1931.

The next section will examine the document written and orated by Senator Charles Sumner to sway the United States Senate before they voted to ratify the Treaty of Cession. It will also take up the main report that Francis Walker used to make his decision regarding the racial origins of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska, a report compiled and written by Vincent Colyer. Finally, it will outline the desires of the U.S. to thoroughly map and document the lands and peoples of Alaska following the Treaty of Cession, as they both remained indeterminate in the scientific, cultural, and anthropological communities of the U.S.

Making Alaska

The incorporation of Indigenous inhabitants and the lands of Russian-America and its transition into Alaska did not happen on its own—specific processes of inclusion were made through material and imaginative processes. One of the most important narrators of Alaska’s land and Alaska’s inhabitants, as it pertained to its annexation, was Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner. At the time of the Treaty of Cession, Sumner was the chairman of the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee and therefore was in a position to approve the purchase of Alaska or deny it. The Senate was in agreement with the heavy skepticism circulating in regard to the purchase of a “polar bear’s garden.” For instance, Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine retorted that “he’d only vote for the treaty if it stipulated that the secretary of state be compelled to live in Alaska.”⁴⁷

Before Sumner could make his vote of support, he “spent countless hours buried in maps, journals, pamphlets, periodicals, atlases, newspapers, manuscripts, and more than 100 books” written about Russian-America-Alaska.⁴⁸ Importantly, these resources were written in English,

⁴⁶ Francis Walker, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department for the Year of 1872*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 34.

⁴⁷ See “Charles Sumner’s Alaskan Project.” United States Senate. April 08, 1867.

https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Sumners_Alaskan_Project.htm; Stephen Haycox, “Charles Sumner: Alaskan Hero,” Alaska Historical Society. <http://alaskahistoricalsociety.org/about-ahs/150treaty/150th-resource-library/new-articles/charles-sumner-alaskan-hero/>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

German, French, and Russian, by explorers and men of science, demonstrating the thorough documentation of the landmass prior to the U.S. purchase as earlier discussed. When Sumner addressed the Senate, eventually in support of the Alaska purchase, he spoke for three hours to read his forty-six page report that ranged in data and detail from the Aboriginal population to climate to mineral products. His persuasive, long-winded speech swayed the Senate to vote overwhelmingly in favor of the Treaty of Cession.

Sumner's report not only persuaded the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Cession and annex Alaska as a U.S. territory, but his thorough research also set the stage for the way Alaska would be understood in reports, surveys, and political moves yet to unfold. For instance, Sumner saw the acquisition of Alaska as an extension of the Republic and therefore an overturn of monarchic institution. Sumner quotes John Adams in saying ““thirteen governments...founded on the natural authority of the people alone, and without pretense of miracle or mystery, and *which are destined to spread over the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe*, is a great point gained in favor of the rights of mankind.”” Sumner continues, “the present Treaty is visible step in the occupation of the whole North American continent...but the Treaty involves something more. By it we dismiss one more monarch from this continent. One by one they have retired; first France; then Spain; then France again; and now Russia; all giving way to that absorbing Unity which is declared in the national motto, *E pluribus unum*.” This clearly stated U.S. nationalism aligns with the Manifest Destiny underpinnings of westward expansion of the continental U.S., but is intensified in the context of Alaska, as the space plays an important role in the racial underpinnings of nationalisms by other Western powers. Although Sumner is pleased that the purchase of Russian-America will de-throne a various Crown from a colony, this does not mean that the racial tenets of nation did not remain entirely intact. An excerpt from Sumner's report, perhaps most persuasive to his audience, was in recounting the interest of other countries in acquiring Russian-America. Sumner quotes German scientist, Adolf Erman, who was working on behalf of Britain in his production of the text *Archiv für Wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland* published in 1841. Sumner identifies Erman as “unquestionably the leading authority on Russian questions,” and quotes his text in the following:

It is just as much the destiny of our Anglo-Norman race to possess the whole of Russian America, however wild and inhospitable it may be, as it has been the destiny of the Russian Northmen to prevail over northern Europe and Asia...the Anglo-Norman and the Russian yet look upon each other from the opposite side of the Behring straits. Between the two races the northern half of the Old and New World must be divided. America must be ours.⁴⁹

In this excerpt quoted by Sumner, Erman is normalizing racially-fueled imperialism participated in by “the Republic” and monarchs alike. He makes it clear that Britain desires Russian-America for another colony, and that it is Britain's “destiny” to possess “the whole” of Russian-America by virtue of being a nation of dominance in superior Anglo-Norman race. While this is certainly the foremost concern, that Britain possesses Russian-America, there is an overarching desire for the Anglo race more generally to achieve and maintain dominance of the globe in its entirety. Although Erman separates Russians and “Anglo-Normans” into two races, they are nonetheless

⁴⁹ Sumner, Vol. 22, 47-70.

keepers of a form of a particularly white, Western civilization and therefore worthy of dominion. As Erman expresses, America, along with the rest of the globe, must be dominated by the Anglo race—white men must be able to gaze upon one another from across the divide of the Old and New Worlds. In this sense, “Alaska” plays an important, spatially distinct role in the “completion” of a racially white global Empire.

Related to the dominion of the globe under the purview of Western powers, Sumner urges the Senate, after they choose to ratify the Treaty of Cession, to send a team of scientists to the newly acquired territory. Sumner states:

An object of immediate practical interest will be the survey of the extended and indented coast by our own officers, bringing it all within the domain of science and assuring to navigation much-needed assistance, while the Republic is honored by a continuation of national charts, where execution vies with science, and the art of engraving is the beautiful hand-maid. Associated with this survey, and scarcely inferior in value, will be the examination of the country by scientific explorers, so that its geological structure may become known within its various products, vegetable and mineral. But your best work and most important endowment will be the Republican Government, which, looking to a long future, you will organize, with schools free to all and with equal laws, before which every citizen will stand erect in the consciousness of manhood.⁵⁰

This excerpt of Sumner’s speech in which he makes a push for the creation of an archive of the Alaskan coast that is fully American, demonstrates that cartographic and geological scientific knowledge is aided, supported and co-constituted by the “arts,” and is always deeply constitutive to nation-making, a topic further explored in the following chapter. The move to map Russian-America-Alaska, and to record and document exploitable resources is at the behest of extending an American government—one founded upon exclusive ethno-nationalism. Just before this excerpt, Sumner suggests that the name of the annexed territory should “come from the country itself. It should be indigenous, aboriginal, one of the autochthons of the soil.” Sumner goes on to say that in the reports of Captain Cook, such a name was recorded from the “islanders of the Aleutian chain,” meaning “the great land.” Sumner states, “it only remains that, following these natives, whose places are now ours, we, too, should call this ‘great land’ Alaska.”⁵¹

Additionally, Sumner also called for one last request in the acquisition of Russian-America—in this territory “the day is earlier by twenty-four hours with (Russia) than with (the U.S.), so their Sunday is our Saturday, and the other days of the week are in corresponding discord... all else must be rectified according to the national meridian, so that within the sphere of our common country there shall be everywhere the same generous rule and one prevailing harmony.” In these closing remarks, Sumner works to pull the landmass under the academic-scientific purview of the U.S., identifies a new name for the area that draws from the “autochthons of the soil,” and

⁵⁰ Sumner, 48.

⁵¹ Alaska, as recorded by Cook, is actually a Russian mutation of the Unangan word “aláxshaq,” meaning “the object toward which the action of the sea is directed,” a word that Russian documentarians, and then James Cook dictated to be translated as “the great land.”

turns back the clock 24 hours asserting a necessary hegemonic Gregorian calendar year to replace “the unreformed Julian calendar received from Russia.” Each of these requests was fulfilled. The transition of ownership over space, time, and name of the territory was complete.

In part as a response to Sumner’s urging to create an American encyclopedia of geographical information directly following the Alaska purchase in 1867 geographer George Davidson was sent by the U.S. government to make sense of the coastal dimensions of the newly acquired territory. This report also followed the concerns regarding the ambiguity of Aboriginal inhabitants and indeterminate icy landscapes of the annexed territory. Davidson was requested to delimit the space of coastal Russian-America through the aid of Native peoples that lived there along with previous cartographic materials composed by the explorers hailing from all over the West, as previously described. Davidson writes, “among the authorities examined have been Müller, Coxe, Cooke, Meares, Portlock, Dixon, La Pérouse, Vancouver, Lisiansky, Kruzenstern, Kotzebue, Wrangell, Beechey, Seemann, George Simpson, Thomas Simpson, Venjaminoff, Tebenkoff, Holmberg, Grewing, Annals of the Observatory at Sitka, together with many manuscript maps of the Russian-American Company, and verbal communications from the navigators of the company.”⁵² Building from and extending these works, Davidson accomplished the work of material measurements of Alaska land and collecting previous endeavors to accomplish prior pursuits.

His contribution to the text *Coast Pilot of Alaska*, which was gathered in August-November 1867 and published in 1869, painstakingly detailed Alaska’s coast through his own and others’ charts, maps, surveys, geographical descriptions; Davidson described each cove, inlet, and bay along the coast, making note of its ability to welcome ships via anchor or potential for building harbors. The *Coast Pilot* and Davidson’s later text, *The Alaska Boundary*, more fully includes an annotated bibliography of each relevant policy, legislation, convention, and treaty made in the history of “Alaska’s” lands.⁵³ Davidson and other contributors to the *Coast Pilot* also “translated and gathered much material upon the subject” of the “divisions and subdivisions of the Indian races that inhabit the seaboard of Alaska.”⁵⁴ In the *Coast Pilot*, Davidson attended to Indigenous inhabitants of Alaska recording population density across geographical location, physiological characteristics, gender divisions, personality traits, cultural object use, art, skill sets/industriousness, and racial makeup. He connected his own observations to an archive constituted by other texts that worked to make similar distinctions as a point to compare and contrast Alaskan inhabitants to other peoples who travelers had been documenting in their tours around the globe. Davidson also made note of each possible and concurrently used coastal landscape for the extraction of gold, fur, fishing, and mining economies.

The creation of this text is a product of empire and aids the goals of imperialism into the future. Davidson’s report stands as the first U.S. survey of the imperially acquired territory of Alaska. It is the first survey that attempted to delineate the coastal borders of Alaska in totality, the

⁵² George Davidson, *Pacific Coast: Coast Pilot of Alaska, From Southern Boundary to Cook's Inlet* (Washington: G.P.O., 1869).

⁵³ These preliminary coastal surveys would later become institutionalized as the entity known today as NOAA.

⁵⁴ Davidson, *Pacific Coast*, 50.

resources within and along those coastal borders, and how Aboriginal inhabitants factored into the future of that space. The *Coast Pilot* also further sedimented understandings of Alaska as potentially bountiful in resources yet largely undocumented, and Native peoples there as of ambiguous racial descent. The various forms of documenting achieved by Davidson further mapped, charted, and named the Alaskan coast, along with recording anthropological qualifiers to compare and contrast Alaska Natives to American Indians. Multiple versions of the *Coast Pilot of Alaska* were published, with other documentarians contributing to the volume, including William Healey Dall, an important figure who shaped the history of Alaska, and was onboard the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899 that worked to further map the coast of Alaska and is the subject of the following chapter.

Drawing from this important document was landscape artist and self-identifying humanitarian, Vincent Colyer. Colyer was appointed to the board of United States Special Indian Commissioners and as part of his responsibilities, traveled to Alaska in 1869 to conduct a survey of the “sixty thousand Indians in that Territory.” Though an artist by trade, Colyer was sent to the territory to make a case for Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska to be considered legal subjects under federal Indian policy, as the racial category of the American Indian had been specifically curated for legal interface with the U.S. By 1869, two years after the Treaty of Cession, lawmakers were still undecided as to whether or not Natives in Russian-America-Alaska qualified or should be legally recognized as occupying the same legal category of American Indian. Put another way, the Aboriginal inhabitants of the annexed territory were essentially illegible to the U.S. government that had heretofore interacted with groups that had been legally and scientifically ordered and understood as a specific racial group. These racial categories had been invented and deployed against groups of people who were seen as “American Indians,” among others. As Anthony and Sally Urvina write, up until this point “opinions ranged from there being no Indians...to all Alaska’s people were Indian, interspersed with the possibility of Chinese, Japanese, and Hawaiian racial influences in the Aleutians and along the northern coastal regions. There was even speculation that Alaska Natives were one of the ten ‘lost tribes’ of Israel.”⁵⁵ With these queries fueling Colyer’s trip to Alaska, the expectation to decipher these ambiguous peoples was pressing.

Colyer’s report offered multiple comparative illustrations of Alaska’s Native inhabitants to stereotypical popular renderings coterminously circulating about American Indian peoples. Colyer discussed Alaska’s Native inhabitants as “far superior in habits and industry to the crafty, marauding, and wandering Indians of the plains who scorn to do anything but fight and hunt, leaving their squaws to do all the other kinds of work.”⁵⁶ This discordant American Indian behavior is juxtaposed with a scene from an “Indian village” in coastal Alaska wherein these Indians are “semi-civilized, peaceful, docile, friendly, and anxious and willing to work. Justice, kind treatment, and prompt payment for services rendered will, in the course of time, change them to law-abiding and good citizens.” Importantly, Colyer’s report isn’t building an argument based in racial science, and he does not discuss the racial strain of Alaska’s original inhabitants.

⁵⁵ Urvina, *More Than God Demands*, 22.

⁵⁶ Vincent Colyer, *Alaska ... Report Of The Hon. Vincent Colyer, United States Special Indian Commissioner, On The Indian Tribes And Their Surroundings In Alaska Territory, From Personal Observation And Inspection In 1869* (Washington D.C., 1870).

Not a scientist by training, but rather a painter of landscapes, Colyer's training implores him to make suggestions toward the potential civilized status of these Natives and their projected readiness to be assimilated into the U.S. as citizens in relation to the landscapes wherein they live. In so doing, however, Colyer commits a similar action to race-scientists—comparing racial subjects who come to be under the gaze of colonialism and imperialism against one another. Within the content of Colyer's report, he reiterates the apparent lack of civilization of American Indians to demonstrate the potential of those Aboriginal to Alaska. However, this is not the only group of non-white peoples that Colyer operationalizes to demonstrate a specific point to lawmakers and men in important positions of power who read and acted upon Colyer's report.

Colyer's report includes an appendix by William S. Dodge, the ex-mayor of Sitka, as he writes that "Alaska Indians...are not to be compared to the Indians inhabiting the interior of our country, or even to those living on the borders of the Great Lakes. They are of a very superior intelligence, and have rapidly acquired many of the American ways of living and cooking." Dodge goes on to report that the "Sitka Indians" supply the town with all of its food in the form of "game, fish, and vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, beets, and radishes, and they are sharp traders." Citing other sources, such as the local post trader, Frank Louthan, in the town of Sitka: Colyer concludes that because "Alaska Indians" are "susceptible of a high standard of cultivation," they only require "industrial and educational schools" similar to the missionaries found in Vancouver and Fort Simpson under British control. When traveling to the Aleutian islands, Colyer conveys an interaction between "a number of the chiefs and head men of the Aleutes" who asked him "about our form of government, and whether it was true that 'all men were free and equal' and whether or not they would be allowed to vote for the President, or the 'emperor' as they called him, thinking of their former Russian government."

In an interesting intersection with the cartoons discussed above, Colyer's report both defies and reinforces the concerns directly following the purchase—Natives in Alaska were of unexpectedly "superior intelligence" particularly in the context of their ability to "cultivate" pliable lands, and that they would be pursuing the avenues of participation in U.S. forms of government. In these descriptions of supposed superiority, Colyer is leveraging the element of the previous "civilizing presence" by Russians in Alaska, stating that the existing presence of Western civilization via Russian forms of domesticity and Russian-Orthodox Christianity had preemptively accomplished most of the assimilatory work required to bring these Natives out of their assumed lack of development. Colyer writes, "the Aleutes, like our Cherokees, were fortunate in having faithful Christian men to work for their christianization and civilization." Colyer was so convinced by this sentiment that he happily reported that Alaska's Natives are a "peaceable race respectful to the white man as a superior. There is no doubt that in time they could be shaped into useful citizens." Furthermore, Colyer not only believes that these Natives can be shaped into citizens, but goes as far to declare: "educate the Indians of Alaska, and they will supply the United States with fish and furs." For Colyer, by 1869 the Natives of Alaska were so malleable that they would not require the violence of being subdued by warfare, and alternatively were ready to be interpellated as laborers for the U.S.—an imperial colony populated with docile Indians that could conveniently feed and clothe the citizens of the rightful metropole, that of the contiguous U.S.

Ultimately, Colyer moved to recommend that Natives of Alaska should be subject to “our dealings with the Indians,” in that the U.S. should secure to them “all their rights, tribal and individual, to lands or moneys due them, we should secure agents and teachers to guide them, and provide schools, mechanical tools, agricultural implements, &c., everywhere.” Colyer goes on to write that reservations should be established, but “amply provided for and protected” and that “civil law should be extended over all Indians”—including an extension of the 15th amendment that had just been established in 1869, granting African Americans the right to vote and that prohibits state and federal government from denying a citizen the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”⁵⁷ Alaska Natives and American Indians were not considered voting citizens until 1924 through the Indian Citizenship Act, but Colyer recommended that the U.S. extend the 15th amendment to the Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska, and this sentiment is operationalized by the rhetoric of citizenship below:

I do not hesitate to say that if three-quarters of them were landed in New York as coming from Europe, they would be selected as among the most intelligent of the many worthy emigrants who daily arrive at that port. In two years they would be admitted to citizenship, and in ten years some of their children, under the civilizing influence of our eastern public schools, would be found members of Congress.⁵⁸

On the surface, it appears that Colyer’s main lens is one of extending U.S. citizenship and stretching that category to include the Natives of Alaska, though American Indians were not yet welcomed as voting citizens. However and importantly, categories of citizenship are underpinned by national and racial belonging. Comparing Aboriginal inhabitants of the recently annexed territory of Alaska to incoming immigrants to the U.S. through eastern ports does more than commits paternal racial uplift to include a group of non-white “foreigners” into the nation. The migrant racialization happening at main U.S. ports is related to the nature of racialization of Alaska Native peoples; comparing Natives of Alaska to immigrants from Europe reinforces a migrant-status of those Indigenous peoples, which effectively displaces a sustained land use and social history of space. This comparative migrant-racialization disallows Indigenous claims to land through preceding legal structures made for the explicit reason of claims to land made by Aboriginal peoples. This migrant-racialization makes immigrants out of Indigenous inhabitants of Alaska through the annexation of the territory. These descriptions demonstrate the various forms of racialization that were concurrently circulating in regard to Native American peoples of the contiguous U.S. and emigrating peoples coming to the U.S., and the supposed civilizing and assimilatory powers of citizenship, public schooling, and industrial/agricultural training, of which cannot be fully attended to in this chapter. However, the investments in cultural and political erasure for the purposes of supremacist nation-making have been thoroughly and rigorously attended to elsewhere.⁵⁹ The iterations of racialization of Alaska Native peoples offer

⁵⁷ “15th Amendment,” History.com, November 09, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fifteenth-amendment>.

⁵⁸ Colyer, 560.

⁵⁹ See in particular, Mae Ngai’s *Impossible Subjects* for a sophisticated historical contextualization of nation-making through exclusionary practices. Applicable for the turn of the century citizenship and

an example of the ways that race categories are invented and deployed in modes constitutive to other oppressed peoples.

This comparative approach exemplified in the excerpt above in identifying the characteristics of racial subjects of empire was not unusual. During this time period, several discussions about race and racial origins and the causes for human difference were beginning to take hold in the form of racial sciences. One of the most resonant and understudied theorizations of racial differences was climate-caused racial characteristics—that the land itself produced differences across humans. Coupled with these inquiries was a broader concern about the origin of the human and the possibility of divergences in the human species. The question of racial differences by climate and the concern of human origins both come to bear on the Asian-racialization of the Native peoples of Alaska. As discussed, racialization is made possible in part through the constitutive and comparative racialization of other non-white bodies—a form that much scholarship has closely attended—yet race is also made through designations of land. In the context of the landmass of Alaska, there are two main designations of land and space that inform how Aboriginal inhabitants of that space become known. These determinations of race are decided through climate and through proximity to Asia, and are discussed in the following sections.

Climate

As demonstrated in the cartoons above, concerns of Alaska's icy landscape permeated cultural imaginings of the space. To combat this overwhelming understanding and portrayal of Alaska as an ice-land, Sumner, Davidson, and Colyer all worked to effectively de-ice Alaska's coast by demonstrating that parts of Alaska were, in fact, habitable and quite temperate. As Colyer's report moves to demonstrate that "Alaska's Indians" are "susceptible of cultivation," Charles Sumner's speech read for the Senate win in 1867 works to illustrate that the Russian-American climate is, against popular belief, hospitable and livable. Sumner demonstrates that the surprisingly mild climate, especially of Alaska's coast makes it susceptible to normative forms of agriculture by the domestication of cattle and the installation of vegetable farming. To evidence that Russian-America-Alaska was able to be cultivated, and therefore controlled, Sumner's speech included climate tables that he created with the help of the Smithsonian Institution. Colyer also utilized five separate climate tables in his report on "Alaska's Indians": Davidson also produced climate tables. See two of the tables below.

subject-making pertaining to Indian peoples in the contiguous U.S. with a particularly sharp attendance to gender is Beth Piatote's *Domestic Subjects*.

	Mean Temperature in Degrees Fahrenheit.					Precipitation in Rain or Snow. Depth in Inches.				
	Spring.	Summer.	Autumn.	Winter.	Year.	Spring.	Summer.	Autumn.	Winter.	Year.
St. Michaels, Russian America..... Lat. 63° 28' 45" North.	28.75	52.25	27.00	7.00	27.48	-	-	-	-	-
Fort Youkon, Russian America..... Lat. (near) 67°.	14.22	59.67	17.37	23.80	16.92	-	-	-	-	-
Ikogmut, Russian America..... Lat. 61° 47'.	19.62	49.32	36.05	0.95	24.57	-	-	-	-	-
Sitka, Russian America..... Lat. 57° 03'.	39.65	53.37	43.80	32.30	42.12	18.32	15.75	32.10	23.77	89.94
Puget sound, Washington Territory..... Lat. 47° 07'.	48.88	63.44	51.30	39.38	50.75	7.52	3.68	15.13	20.65	46.98
Astoria, Oregon..... Lat. 46° 11'.	51.16	61.36	53.55	42.43	52.13	16.43	4.85	21.77	44.15	87.20
San Francisco, California..... Lat. 37° 48'.	55.39	58.98	58.29	50.25	55.73	6.65	0.09	2.69	13.49	22.92
Nain, Labrador..... Lat. 57° 10'.	23.67	48.57	33.65	0.40	26.40	-	-	-	-	-
Montreal, Canada East..... Lat. 45° 30'.	41.20	68.53	44.93	16.40	42.77	7.66	11.20	7.42	.72	27.00
Portland, Maine..... Lat. 43° 39'.	40.12	63.75	45.75	21.52	42.78	-	-	-	-	-
Fort Hamilton, New York..... Lat. 40° 37'.	47.84	71.35	55.79	32.32	51.82	11.69	11.64	9.88	10.31	43.22
Washington, District of Columbia.....	54.19	73.07	53.91	33.57	53.69	10.48	10.53	10.16	10.06	41.24

Figure 9, Table comparing coastal Russian-America climates to “this region of the world.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Charles Sumner, “Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, on the cession of the Russian America to the United States Senate,” Washington: 1867, 30.

APPENDIX I.
Summary of winds and weather from January 1, 1868, to August 31, 1869, at Sitka, Alaska Territory.

Months.	Warmest days.			Coldest days.			Amount of rain.	Number days cloudy.	Number days fair.	Number days rain.	Number days snow.
1868.											
January	36	46	39	14	30	17	7.00	12.33	18.66	3	3
February	50	51	45	11	28	12	4.35	20.00	9.00	12	0
March	45	53	49	32	35	32	5.72	26.33	4.66	5	4
April	51	60	44	32	49	36	1.37	21.33	2.66	3	0
May	58	64	48	35	41	36	7.55	22.00	9.00	12	0
June	60	71	59	50	54	49	1.93	18.33	11.66	4	0
July	62	68	57	52	54	50	4.20	28.00	3.00	10	0
August	58	61	61	52	51	52	4.01	24.33	6.66	9	0
September	57	60	60	38	57	46	6.81	20.00	10.00	11	0
October	58	59	59	38	42	36	7.27	27.66	3.33	14	0
November	52	52	48	25	31	26	9.38	25.00	5.00	16	0
December	48	53	47	20	34	22	6.69	20.00	11.00	10	0
								275.31	100.63	109	7
1869.											
January	47	41	51	29	32	37	10.14	28.66	2.33	10	1
February	43	47	59	24	40	25	14.80	24.33	3.66	13	3
March	48	53	45	29	37	41	6.30	21.66	9.33	6	0
April	48	56	51	39	38	36	8.99	24.33	5.66	8	1
May	58	70	54	41	49	40	6.87	25.66	5.33	6	0
June	56	69	55	47	50	45	4.99	24.33	5.66	7	0
July	57	69	61	48	53	49	3.20	24.66	6.33	5	0
August	56	68	57	52	57	50	3.84	22.33	8.66	6	0

Figure 10, "Appendix I, Summary of winds and weather from January 1, 1868, to August 31, 1869, at Sitka, Alaska Territory." Vincent Colyer's report "On the Indian Tribes and Their Surroundings in Alaska Territory, From Personal Observation and Inspection in 1869."⁶¹

Sumner and Colyer's climate tables attest to the livable, even settleable, conditions of Russian-America. Reading Colyer's report, Davidson's report, and Sumner's speech together, it becomes clear that the men are illustrating that Alaska's Aboriginal inhabitants have been made useful and are essentially ready for citizenship due to the civilizing powers of the Russian Empire. Simultaneously, Alaska as land is rendered malleable and manageable by the perceived geographical and climate conditions. This is at once a gesture to bring Alaska into the cultural national imagination, to make its resources legible and exploitable, and susceptible to normative forms of settlement and labor—but these seemingly mundane recordings of climate by Colyer, Davidson, and Sumner are also about race.

Bringing land and race explicitly together, Sumner speech references Baron de Montesquieu's theory of climate, as outlined in his *The Spirit of Laws* (1748). "Montesquieu has a famous chapter on the influence of climate over the customs and institutions of people. Conclusions which in his day were regarded as visionary or farfetched are now unquestioned truth. Climate is

⁶¹ Vincent Colyer, "On the Indian Tribes and Their Surroundings in Alaska Territory, From Personal Observation and Inspection in 1869," Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington D.C., 586.

a universal matter.” Sumner’s application of Montesquieu is worth quoting at length at it exemplifies the ways in which land and race are being curated simultaneously:

There are general influences more or less applicable to all these races. The climate is peculiar, and the natural features of the country are commanding. Cool summers and mild winters are favorable to the huntsman and fisherman. Lofty mountains, volcanic forms, large rivers, numerous islands, and an extensive sea-coast constitute the great book of nature for all to read. None are dull. Generally they are quick, intelligent, and ingenious excelling in the chase and in navigation, managing a boat as the rider his horse, until the man and the boat seem to be one. Some are very skillful with tools and exhibit remarkable taste. The sea is bountiful and the land has its supplies. From these they are satisfied. Better still, there is something in their nature which does not altogether reject the improvements of civilization. Unlike our Indians, they are willing to learn.⁶²

Sumner here is drawing from a common discourse of the time, in a belief that climate produced racial characteristics of people around the globe.⁶³ For instance, in 1837, Georg Hegel wrote in “The Geographical Basis of History” that groups who lived in certain climatic zones should not be considered as historical actors. Hegel writes, “first take notice of those natural conditions which have to be excluded once for all from the drama of the World’s History. In the Frigid and in the Torrid zone the locality of World-historical peoples cannot be found.”⁶⁴ This climatic determination negated entry into the History of the World by those who inhabited specific geographies with certain climate conditions.⁶⁵

However, the climate tables done by Davidson, Colyer, and Sumner implies that Russian-America-Alaska does not quite fit into the duality of Frigid or Torrid zone, and that there are multiple subgroups of “Esquimaux,” some of which are deemed Indians in similarity to American Indians of the continental U.S. For instance, through detailed record making and measurement, Davidson is able to evidence the changes in climates in the North Pacific, specifically the currents that are shared with Japan by their name of Kuro-Siwo. These currents warm the northwest coast of America, according to Sumner, and by referencing multiple Japanese shipwrecks that have been pushed eastward by currents that “always keep their direction from west to east.” This movement of winds from west to east is also reiterated in Sumner’s speech. He writes, “The Pacific coast of our continent is warmer than the

⁶² Charles Sumner, “Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, on the cession of the Russian America to the United States Senate,” Washington: 1867, 30.

⁶³ Many geographers, philosophers, scientists, and who we modernly understand to be anthropologists were making varying connections to the production of human difference across space and because of spatial-climate-environmental differences. See Alexander von Humboldt, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Charles Darwin, Immanuel Kant, George Hegel, Arthur de Gobineau, Karl Ritter, among many others.

⁶⁴ Georg Hegel, “Geographical Basis of History,” in *The Philosophy of History* (1837), 79-102.

⁶⁵ This example is one among many in a longer genealogy of race-space analytics that if following Michel Rolph-Trouillot’s concept of the ‘savage slot’ can be traced to periods of the Enlightenment. While such orderings of peoples based on human difference were not homogenously agreed upon, the early musings of geographical determinism have shaped how peoples have been categorized into racial taxonomies, and how nations and nationalism have been formed over time, and how land is managed and dispossessed.

corresponding Atlantic coast, and that America is warmer than Asia, so far at least as can be determined by the two opposite coasts. Such is the unquestionable truth, of which there are plentiful signs. The Flora on the American side, even in the Behring straits, is more vigorous than that on the Asiatic side; the American mountains have less snow than their Asiatic neighbors.” Quoting Davidson again, he reinforces these beliefs by writing that explorer “Kotzebue found Asiatic woods among the Aleutes of Unalaska.” Colyer’s extension of these concerns and curiosities are peppered throughout his report—racializing Aboriginal peoples and their objects and art forms as “Chinese in form” and of “Mongolian origin.” Within this time period, to create a conversation about climate, soil, and the earth sciences of land is an effort to describe race. The labor to describe climate is an effort to calculate racial characteristics. Land is the animating element.

In these excerpts taken from Davidson, Colyer, and Sumner, the land and space of Alaska not only provides the literal ground from which racial characteristics of Aboriginal inhabitants emerge, but becomes the place of contestation for where these Aboriginal inhabitants originally arrived from. Between the three men, they make a case for the surprisingly temperate climate allowing for a malleability of character to invite changes of civilization—here the land itself is providing an opportunity for the developmental group of Alaska’s Native inhabitants to be closer to the endowment of citizenship. However, there is also an undergirding concern about the original homelands of these Aboriginal inhabitants—did they travel to this land, east to west with and like the currents of the Pacific? Their art forms reveal Chinese and Mongolian influences, and their geographical proximity to Asia, while at once beneficial due to the exposure to Western civilization by the Russian Empire, belies a veracity of Aboriginality. The movements of the currents that push things eastward, the ambiguous forms of art, all allow for a specific kind of racialization that is spatial in nature. Alaska’s proximity to “Asia” also helps to imagine migrants out of Native peoples. It opens them to a unique and specific kind of dispossession and conjured claimlessness that is contingent upon an invented racial designation via spatial approximation.

Racial-Spatial Thoughts

As covered in previous sections, Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska were legally neglected out of a federally recognized indigeneity, and instead were understood through a racialized status. This section offers a name for this racialized status as migrant-Asian-adjacent—a status both temporal and spatial. The geographical proximity of Alaska to “Asia” makes migrants out of Indigenous Alaskans—their historical claims to lands and waters are constantly and consistently under suspicion, and have been legally suspect since Alaska was annexed by the U.S. This status was curated through the reports, narratives, and cartoons listed and analyzed above, along with the many, many archives of journeys and reports from which they reference. One of the overarching concerns within these reports that is often muted is that the inquiries into the origins of the Native peoples of Alaska was just one part of investigating the origins of the human—the main narrative to explain human origins has the landmass of Alaska at its center: what’s modernly referred to as the Bering Land Bridge.

Colyer’s report was specific in that its main purpose was to give a recommendation as to whether or not Alaska’s Native inhabitants should be seen as under the purview of federal Indian policy. However, the impetus behind this report was that many men in positions of power to make and

amend policy were unsure of the racial origins of the Aboriginal peoples of Alaska. Tracing racial origins was not a unique inquiry to U.S. lawmakers, but was in fact a major point of concern that has interested, and some argue, has constituted the very crux of Western philosophy in pinpointing the origin of the human.⁶⁶ A key part of investigating the origin of the human, and subsequent human migrations, is the figure of “the American Indian.” The illusive question of the origins of the American Indian is one that continues to endure as unresolved in to this contemporary moment.⁶⁷ What often goes overlooked in building scientific and data-driven origin and migration stories of the human are the explicit violences acted out upon Native American communities both historically and today. Kim Tallbear writes that “in the 19th and 20th centuries, massacre sites and graves were plundered for body parts to be used in scientific investigations that inform today’s anthropological and biological research on Native Americans.”⁶⁸ Tallbear goes on to argue in her book, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and False Promise of Genetic Science*, and elsewhere, that these violences are the foundations for modern-day genetics, and Native American peoples continue to be unethically “sourced” for biological material to evidence a Western cosmology of a specific migration story, along with contemporary genome research.

Research violences withstanding, the theory of Bering Land Bridge migrations and has been effectively normalized as fact among scientific communities and the general American population, and becomes particularly solidified in the modern age of DNA testing.⁶⁹ However, Bering Land Bridge theories and DNA testing have been understood by Native communities as dangerous scientific narratives and pursuits that overlook contemporary Indigenous politics and ongoing social relationships that tie Indigenous peoples to land and landscapes. Also elided is an autonomy over their biological information, intellectual properties, and not to mention that these migration theories fly in the face of distinct Native peoples’ creation stories that tell a range of emergences and arrivals.⁷⁰ Vine Deloria Jr., writes in his book *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, a text written especially to respond to the enduring desire to pinpoint human origins through Native American migrations, “by making us immigrants to North America they are able to deny the fact that we were the full, complete, and total owners of this continent. They are able to see us simply as earlier interlopers and therefore

⁶⁶ See Kay Anderson’s *Race and the Crisis of Humanism*; Sylvia Wynter’s “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument”; and Alexander G. Weheliye’s *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.

⁶⁷ José V. Moreno-Mayar, Ben A Potter, Lasse Vinner, et al., “Terminal Pleistocene Alaskan genome reveals first founding population of Native Americans,” *Nature* 553 (2018): 203-207.

⁶⁸ Kim Tallbear, “Tell me a Story: Genomics vs. Indigenous Origin Narratives,” *Genewatch* 26-4, 2013. <http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/GeneWatch/GeneWatchPage.aspx?pageId=495>

⁶⁹ See Kim Tallbear’s *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. Tallbear has also expressed on the New Books in Native American Studies Podcast that the peculiarity of the desire of scientific studies regarding such origins to both begin and halt their inquiries at the imagined and invented boundaries of ‘the human,’ as though the history of ‘the human’ doesn’t continue to stretch back further in linear time beyond a particularly homo sapiens variant. Also taken up Vine Deloria in *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*.

⁷⁰ However, this is complicated by the use of DNA testing by many Native American polities to determine belonging.

throw back at us the accusation that we simply *found* North America a little earlier than they had.”⁷¹

More recently, one especially pernicious theory that explains the populating of the Americas that is supported and heralded by white supremacists is the Solutrean Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that North America was not populated by “Native Americans” that “walked across the land bridge,” but that sea-faring peoples from France and Spain were instead the first to settle the continent after crossing the Atlantic Ocean, thereby creating de facto claims to land as original occupants.⁷² While dismissed by most,⁷³ the Solutrean Hypothesis gains traction in the modern moment of resurgences and mutations of ethno-nationalism across the globe in harbinger countries of Western Civilization.⁷⁴ Embedded within and at the core of this hypothesis is the racial geographies of deeper and systemic origins—much like those contributions either curated or reiterated by the men and their documents read above. Therefore, the Bering Land Bridge and Solutrean Hypothesis are more than just methods of explanations that should be immediately dismissed but should be understood as part and parcel of longer racializing theories that are linked to understanding climate and geography as producing inherent, distinct characteristics.

For the space that would later become understood as Alaska, many individuals procuring information, and building on the information procured by others before them, were convinced that Alaskan inhabitants were migrants from Asia, or direct descendants from those recent migrants, and many remain convinced of this today. The theory of “Asian origins” of all Native American peoples is more as the Beringia Land Bridge theory, or Beringia Standstill model.⁷⁵ The land bridge was originally imagined in 1590 by Jose de Acosta, but became institutionalized in the 1930’s by Swedish botanist and geographer, Eric Hultén. In this framework, the landmass of Alaska is connected to Siberia and acts as a bridge connecting two, later distinct, continents.

Some of the troubling aspects of this framework are the ways in which Siberia-and-Alaska as a connected landform is cast as both temporally and spatially temporary. The meeting of Siberia and Alaska are only productive as a liminal space—not as particularly useful or meaningful in their own right but only as generative of a human migration that would then populate and shape, apparently, more meaningful parts of the world. Meaning only arises, then, by the changes that

⁷¹ Deloria Vine, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum, 1995), 56.

⁷² “Director Defends Documentary That Claims Europeans Could Have Been 1st Humans in North America,” CBC, January 12, 2018. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-friday-edition-1.4484878/director-defends-documentary-that-claims-europeans-could-have-been-1st-humans-in-north-america-1.4484883>.

⁷³ See “Genetic Data Does Not Support Ancient Trans-Atlantic Migration, Professor Says.” University of Kanas, January 04, 2016. <https://college.ku.edu/about/news/genetic-data-does-not-support-ancient-trans-atlantic-migration-professor-says>.

⁷⁴ See this link to some ranging responses by Indigenous peoples to the recent documentary being made about the Solutrean Hypothesis: Angela Sterritt, “B.C. Indigenous People React to the Resurfacing of 2 Migration Theories,” CBCnews, January 09, 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-indigenous-communities-react-to-the-resurfacing-of-two-migration-theories-1.4479632>.

⁷⁵ Erika Tamm, Kivisild T, et al., “Beringian Standstill and Spread of Native American Founders,” *PLOS ONE*, 2007. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000829

are affected elsewhere. The underpinnings of the land bridge are that this touching of land mass essentially bridges two temporalities and two spaces, an old world and a new—a linear model to explain the populating of the globe. “Alaska,” as it would later become, is not a delimited space that holds or contains or generates relations, but it is momentary and transitional, a simple materiality that hinges two things for a moment and is defined only by the movement that occurs across it. Within this framework, the land itself is not productive of social relations—it is a means to an end.

According to these frameworks, all Native American peoples have migrated across the landmass, which results in a situation where, as Tallbear writes, “‘Native American’ becomes a moniker used to represent a clearly traceable biological link to the ‘Old World’ that lies back beyond the Bering Strait, rather than a label indicating long-standing and intimate relationships between humans and nonhumans on this side of the Bering Sea—relationships that cohere as peoples within origins in specific landscapes.”⁷⁶ This presents a particular set of issues for Native American peoples in the contiguous U.S. and parts of Canada, as the term “Native American” becomes untethered to political tribal peoples that have distinct and historical relationships to governments, claims to lands and waters, practices of belonging and thriving within specific spatial histories and contexts. For those Native inhabitants of the landmass of Alaska and their descendants, the Beringia model has been formative in particularly harmful ways.

A similar concern could also be levied for Alaska Native people in Tallbear’s apt critique, particularly in how Siberia-Alaska becomes and remains not a space of its own distinct claims and spatial practices unique to a range of Indigenous peoples of the area but effectively becomes “a route” in and of itself, which allows for a unique racialization to unfold. In this way, the set of issues in this regard for Indigenous peoples of Alaska is complicated by their landmass being immediately proximal to the Bering Strait, and at one point in time (so the theory goes), contiguous to Siberia. The valid concern raised by Tallbear upholds disparate, distinct continents via the material-water modernity of the Bering Strait—the same theoretical move of keeping “Asia” separate from “America” is not a historically or politically accurate option for considering the unique colonial-legal history of Alaska Native racialization. Moreover, according to the land bridge theory, American Indians crossed, but are understood as somehow “less migrant” than Alaska Natives, and Indigenous peoples of the Arctic are more generally and somehow more historically situated in a geographically distant location further from “Asia.” Certainly, as Tallbear argues, Native Americans on “this side of the Bering Sea” find their claims threatened or made vulnerable by historical Bering land bridge and biologized DNA genome research, but in fact occupy a divergent, more historical, status of indigeneity that is not afforded to Alaska Natives.

Conclusion

The landmass of Alaska and the Indigenous peoples living there have occupied unique roles and statuses within the U.S. national imagination and its colonial history. However, this chapter has also demonstrated that U.S. occupation has been predicated on decades of other imperial imaginings and presences in that space through multiple imperial narratives, documents, and

⁷⁶ Tallbear, *Native*, 13.

reports from many different national entities. Moreover, this chapter demonstrated how Alaska operates as an imagined place of transit and movement of human migrations in ways that decenter Alaska as a space of social history, social relations, and crucially meaningful in its own right—a trend that continues to the modern day in pernicious forms. Related to Alaska’s place as a temporary landbridge, is how Native peoples of Alaska have been uniquely racialized as “of Asian descent,” a status that this chapter has offered as “migrant-Asian-adjacent.” This status disallowed Alaska Native peoples from making claims to land for over 60 years of its history as an annexed space of the U.S., effectively making migrants out of Indigenous peoples in their ancestral homelands. This chapter has laid out the historical context that continues to influence Alaska Native politics in the current moment, and offers a foundation for the following chapters that take up a specific scientific voyage that documented the Alaskan coastline in 1899, the eventual creation of Alaska Native land claims in 1971, and the ways that transit, migration, and ice-landscapes are thought of anew in the Anthropocentric moment of climate change.

Chapter Two

“Science and Aesthetic: Looking again at Edward Curtis, George Bird Grinnell, and William Dall on the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899”

The Harriman Alaska Expedition (HAE) or “floating university” held 126 passengers, the majority of which were academics and artists. The list of passengers included John Muir, Edward Curtis, George Bird Grinnell, John Burroughs, William Healey Dall, C. Hart Merriam, Henry Gannett, among others, and some of their invited wives and children. The Expedition produced 13 volumes of data, ordered 13 genera and 600 species by way of ornithology, botany, paleontology, mining engineering, geology, forestry, geography, anthropology, natural history, zoology, agriculture, glaciology, mineralogy, taxidermy, and photography. These scientific forms of categorization were joined by artistic representations such as landscapes, flowers, birds, starfish, and insects crafted in pencil, watercolor, and charcoal. Interspersed throughout the 13 volumes were poems about Eskimos, landscape paintings of mountains and rivers, drawings of mermaids embracing seals, and photographs and drawings of Alaska Native peoples. Some of these materials will be examined in the following sections. This form of accounting on an otherwise scientific expedition implies that scientific knowledge production and cultural knowledge production are part and parcel of the same colonial endeavors—to map, to narrate, to order, and ultimately, to dispossess. Extending the critique of archival accumulation levied in the first chapter, this chapter narrows those interests by looking at one expedition in particular: the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899, a scientific and humanistic journey to coastal Alaska and Siberia.

Narratives produced by the HAE are typical of the genre of travel writing also popular during the turn of the century. Travel writing was meant to narrate foreign spaces to a domestic literate population, creating a kind of soft Empire or “anti-conquest,” in comparison to military warfare.⁷⁷ Mary Louise Pratt contends that travel writing “gave reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement, and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in and colonized.”⁷⁸ Travel writings, therefore, are “essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger European public.”⁷⁹ With this in mind, that travel writing was a genre of rewriting scientific content to circulate among laymen, I would like to extend Pratt’s analysis to analyze the ways that “scientists” themselves were also producing content that appealed to popular culture audiences, and how cultural creators, too, were operating in scientific venues. Specifically, I am curious as to how natural historians cum race-scientists, George Bird Grinnell and William Dall, produced aesthetic materials, and how a portraiture artist, Edward Curtis, was also deeply implicated in racial-scientific knowledge production, particularly on board the HAE.

By 1899, American travel narratives of Alaska had been circulating for over a decade, including essays regarding Alaskan wilderness written by John Muir while employed by the United States

⁷⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

Geological Survey.⁸⁰ Settlers, pioneers, surveyors, tourists, and homesteaders had added to the literary imagination of Alaska since before it was considered a territory in 1867.⁸¹ More broadly by 1899, expeditions to the Arctic has produced a substantial body of scientific and travel narratives that had been circulated prior and contemporaneously to the HAE.⁸² Moreover, at the turn of the century, the Klondike Gold Rush (1869-1899) and Nome Gold Rush (1899-1909) had attracted a considerable number of settlers, venture capitalists, and homesteaders to rush to the Alaska territory in search of riches, and this also exponentially increased the number of economic, scientific, and travel narrative texts produced about the North and Alaska specifically.⁸³ In fact, many of the men onboard the HAE had already been to Alaska as scientists or military men. Railroad tycoon and financier of the expedition, Edward Harriman, was in part interested in traveling to Alaska to assess potential railroad ventures in the Alaska territory, in particular, an option of building transportation to Russia.

During this time period the multiple aesthetic, economic, and scientific dimensions of Alaska travel are related and constitutive of one another. In the case of the HAE, driven originally by the economic interests of railroads by Harriman, the Expedition was explicitly interested in the scientific discoveries and aesthetic creations that could be produced while traveling around Alaska's coast. While onboard artists, poets, photographers rubbed elbows with geologists, marine biologists, engineers, and taxidermists. The men took turns presenting their works in the lecture hall of the ship, reading their nature poetry or discussing gathered data regarding geological strata. In many cases on the journey, scientists tried their hand at poetry and photographers produced ethnological images of racialized subjects. Following this phenomenon, this chapter is interested in tracing out the aesthetic dimensions of science, and the scientific dimension of aesthetic. I contend that scientific and cultural knowledge production do not necessarily operate in distinct silos, and not only inform one another, but co-constitute the other.

For instance, Edward Curtis captured hundreds of landscape photographs while employed as the official photographer for the Expedition. Yet, Curtis is largely known for being a portraiture artist, particularly made (in)famous by his portraits of Native Americans of the West in his sweeping 20 volume work *The North American Indian (NAI)*. Taking Curtis' landscape photographs of the HAE as a starting point, this chapter contends that Curtis' larger work, most often categorized as portraiture of the Indian face, must be contextualized in its relation to Alaska, and in its relation to landscape as a genre more broadly. While Edward Curtis' larger portfolio has been roundly critiqued by a body of literature in cultural studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies, his work has rarely been read in relation to landscape. Re-reading Curtis as not only a portraiture artist of the Indian face focuses attention on the questions of land dispossession in Curtis' photography and not only a problematic assemblage of stereotypical images that romanticize Native peoples. In relation to accounting for Curtis' abundance of landscape images in his work, I also linger on other non-portrait images such as those of material-cultural objects, dwellings, and many images where the face is obscured by the

⁸⁰ Muir's writings were collected and published posthumously as *Travels in Alaska* in 1912.

John Muir, *Travels in Alaska* (1915).

⁸¹ For instance, Jack London and Rex Beach.

⁸² See Michael Robinson's *The Coldest Crucible*.

⁸³ See Robert Campbell's *In Darkest Alaska* for a manuscript length text on re-reading the Klondike Gold Rush era.

laboring body is centered. In that vein, I argue that Curtis is not just a portrait photographer-artist and should be understood also as a natural historian and ethnologist. Moreover, I contend that aesthetic dimensions of scientific knowledge production must be attended to, understood as just as influential, and analyzed in relation to forms of anthropological and geographical knowledge production.

Curtis' career began when he was 19 years old when he was asked to work as the official photographer in Alaska on the Harriman Expedition in 1899, and Curtis' final volume of the *NAI* ends with "The Alaskan Eskimo." Curtis returned to the Bering Strait region in 1931, which he first visited on the Harriman Alaska Expedition in 1899, in order to curate his final volume of the *NAI*. Curtis' photographic career is bookended by a fascination with Alaska. Before the HAE, Curtis was a working portraiture artist in Seattle, making a living by snapping images of mostly middle-class Americans, as photography had become a more accessible technology. While hiking on Mt. Rainier he encountered a group of men who had lost their way on Mt. Rainier in 1898, among them George Bird Grinnell and C. Hart Merriam. Merriam, who was placed in charge of handpicking the team of academics who would compose the HAE team, asked Curtis if he would join as the photographer of the journey. On board the ship, Curtis was introduced to an academic coterie of men interested in and who made their living by trafficking in concepts and colonial activities regarding land, race, and nation. A connection made with George Bird Grinnell, Indian-culture aficionado, proved to be particularly crucial for Curtis. Grinnell's social circle helped to fund Curtis' later project, the *NAI*, through the deep pockets and social clout of men like JP Morgan and Teddy Roosevelt.

Section II: Aesthetics and Science

In this section, I will highlight the aesthetic dimensions of scientific knowledge production specifically in the works of two men onboard the Harriman Alaska Expedition, George Bird Grinnell and William Dall. Both Grinnell and Dall were responsible for anthropological documentation onboard the ship and were understood as ethnological experts by men of their time in regard to the study of Indigenous peoples. In the present day, these two are canonized as through-and-through men of science—specifically as zoologists and paleontologists. Moreover, Grinnell is often mostly fondly remembered by naturalists as the father of conservation, particularly for his role in the creation of National Parks; most specifically Glacier National Park in what is now known as Montana, wherein Grinnell Glacier and Mount Grinnell bear his name.⁸⁴ Dall, too, is remembered as a scientist first and foremost, in fact, he is named by one biographer "The First Scientist in Alaska."⁸⁵ His scientific expertise on animal life resulted in the naming of the Dall sheep and Dall's porpoise in Alaska. He was, among many other things, also responsible for creating a map in 1875 for the Bureau of American Ethnology that documented a color-coded organization of the "Distribution of Tribes of Alaska and Adjoining Territory," which is, but one material manifestation of his interest in organizing Indigenous peoples of the Alaska territory that will be discussed in a following section. Yet, the production of literary

⁸⁴ See Mark Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness* for an account of Grinnell's disposition toward Native tribes that were displaced by the creation of the Glacier National Park.

⁸⁵ Edward A. Herron, *First Scientist of Alaska: William Healey Dall* (New York: J. Messner, 2011).

materials by these two men regarding Native American peoples both of the Plains and in Alaska, respectively, does not seem to garner similar attention. Grinnell's production of a series of young-adult novels for children and Dall's poetry and drawings circulated widely in popular culture and should be considered as significant, particularly when understanding their more "scientific" works.

The matter of George Bird Grinnell's influence in the context of Edward Curtis' career is particularly crucial as Grinnell was something of a "mentor" to him. For example, following the Harriman Alaska Expedition, Grinnell invited Curtis to accompany him to the Piegan Reservation of the Blackfeet people in what is now known as Montana to photograph a Sun Dance ceremony. There, Curtis' interest in photographing Indian peoples, cultures, and lands was further fostered and facilitated by Grinnell through the connections he had previously made during his time in Blackfeet territory. In line with how colonial-educational legacies operate patrilineally, Grinnell's own childhood was steeped in the colonial lore and adventure narratives of the American West.

Grinnell grew up in Audubon Park, on the property of John James Audubon, a family friend of the Grinnell's.⁸⁶ As a boy, he spent his days in "the Audubon houses [that] were like nature museums, filled with artifacts, trophies from Audubon's western trips, mounted birds, and deer antlers on the walls supporting muzzle loaders, powder horns, and ball pouches. Paintings of birds and mammals filled the cluttered rooms, creating a visual setting for tales of Indians, big-game hunting, trappers and trading posts."⁸⁷ As a graduate student in zoology at Yale studying paleontology, he traveled as a naturalist on major expeditions in 1870 and 1874 with George Armstrong Custer. On these militarized journeys, he witnessed the slaying of a young Cheyenne man and the theft of "some beads, a medicine bag, bracelets, and moccasins" from a Lakota grave. Grinnell recorded these moments in his journal as they sparked his interest in Indian peoples who he would later name "living fossils."⁸⁸ In a well-read magazine, *Forest and Stream* that he both created and edited, he penned his concerns about conservation in the West so that animals and resources wouldn't go the way of the dying Indian. Further, Grinnell and colleague Teddy Roosevelt collaborated to start the huntsman organization, the Boone and Crockett Club. Grinnell also organized the New York Zoological Society and created the Audubon Society.

In addition to those efforts and experiences, Grinnell also produced over thirty ethnological texts mostly about the Pawnee, Cheyenne, and Blackfeet peoples. Grinnell wrote as what Sherry L. Smith refers to as a "populizer."⁸⁹ Smith states that Grinnell, "belonged to that group of 'horse and buggy ethnographers' who...came onto the scene just as the U.S. Cavalry galloped off."⁹⁰ Grinnell's ethnological texts were not understood by more "established" anthropologists of the

⁸⁶ See Carolyn Merchant's text *Spare the Birds! George Bird Grinnell and the First Audubon Society*.

⁸⁷ Biographical information from "Grinnell, George - Biography,"

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/resshow/perry/bios/grinnellgeorge.htm>; and Introductions to George Bird Grinnell's narrative of the journey, *Harriman Expedition to Alaska: Encountering the Tlingit and the Eskimo in 1899*, by Polly Burroughs and Victoria Wyatt.

⁸⁸ Sherry L. Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 18.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 57.

moment to be rigorous in method or in adherence to scientific training, but he was understood by a less academic crowd to be an “Indian expert.” Grinnell’s less than exacting ethnology bleeds over into a kind of creative interpretation of his time in Indian country. Grinnell wrote extensively for a popular audience, not only in *Forest and Stream*, but also in a lengthy series of adventure books he authored for young children readership. Working creatively with the figure of the Indian that he had studied in the field, Grinnell’s applies this “participant observation” to his fiction texts wherein his protagonist “Jack” tries his hand at being a ranchman, a trapper, or simply being “in the Rockies,” but always “among the Indians.” This series was published between 1900 and 1912.

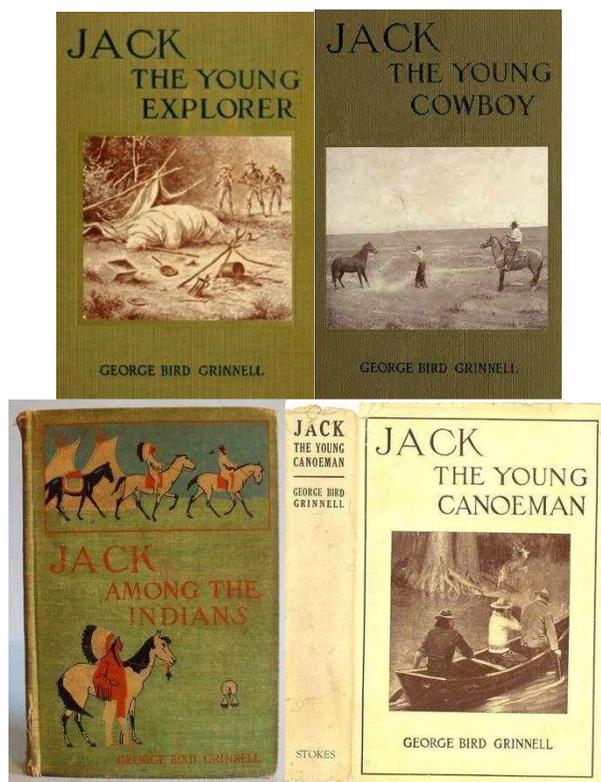


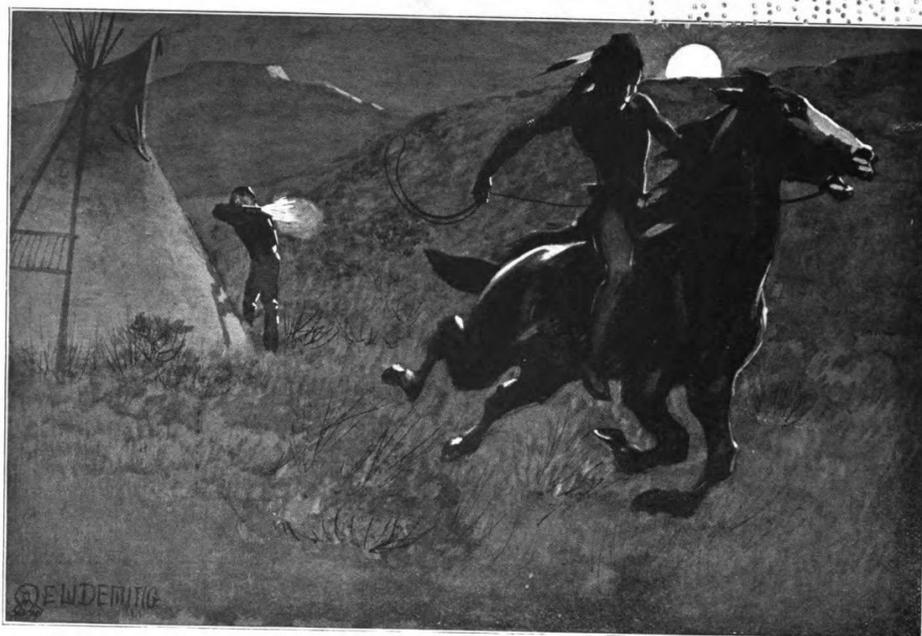
Figure 1⁹¹

Grinnell’s 300-page novel *Jack Among the Indians* (1900), which like the rest of the *Jack* series, was written for his “Nephews and Nieces” perhaps hoping to instill in them the same kind of magical imagining of adventure in the West that he experienced as a child growing up on the Audubon property.⁹² Grinnell’s adventure series is consistent with his own experience and imagining of the West—it is quite violent and portrays the death of many Indian people. Below is an image taken from the adventure book written for his young relatives, in the chapter “An Enemy in Camp.” Jack is seen firing at an “Assinaboine” Indian horse thief, killing him. Directly following the murder, Jack’s friend Hugh tells him ““You done well. No man could have done

⁹¹ “The Online Books Page,” Online Books by George Bird Grinnell, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Grinnell>.

⁹² George B. Grinnell, *Jack Among the Indians* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1900), 1.

better.”⁹³ In this instance, Jack has protected his camp, his horses, and his settler friends against the force of Indian thieves.



“JACK’S GUN WAS AT HIS SHOULDER, HE FIRED.”—Page 174

Figure 2⁹⁴

One hundred pages later in *Jack Among the Indians*, a very similar image repeats, but in this context Jack shoots at a bear and is once again victorious against his foe. These are classic tropes of the Western, popularized by men like Owen Wister and Zane Grey, wherein the settler can test his mettle against the dangers of the West and prove to be a vanquisher, usually aided by the power of a gun. Grinnell’s *Jack* series, however, was written explicitly for a younger audience, familiarizing American youth with “danger and adventure” of the West, brought about by the wildness of both Indian people and wildlife.

⁹³ Ibid, 176.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 174.



“HE HAD NO TIME TO THINK, HARDLY TO MOVE.”—Page 28

Figure 3⁹⁵

Moreover, this fictionalized text *Jack Among the Indians*, takes place on the Piegan Reservation of the Blackfeet, the material space where Grinnell had spent time and, following the HAE, invited Curtis to join him there to photograph Blackfeet peoples. Images and text regarding the Blackfeet would later constitute part of Volume 6 in Curtis’ *North American Indian* anthology. By the time Grinnell invited Curtis to join him at Piegan reservation, Grinnell had already published extensive ethnological texts about the Blackfeet including, *Blackfeet Indian Stories* and *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Stories of a Prairie People*. In these texts, typical for the time period and the emerging discipline of ethnology, Grinnell focuses mostly on the “spiritual myths” and “lore” and heavily romanticized descriptions of “culture” of the Blackfeet peoples.⁹⁶ Within this context, even though Grinnell is affectionately remembered in this moment of modernity as a scientist and a conservationist concerned with the natural world, it’s quite clear that Grinnell was also drawn to the arts and used them to romanticize his relationships and time spent among Native American peoples.

Similar to Grinnell, William Healy Dall was interested in Indigenous peoples, but particularly in Alaska and the North. By 1899 when he joined the Harriman Alaska Expedition, Dall had already spent a substantial amount of time traveling through the territory of Alaska. In 1865 he made his first trip to Alaska to “make plankton hauls at sea and collect natural history specimens at the ports” for the United States Geological Survey.⁹⁷ During his second trip, the death of

⁹⁵ Ibid, 28.

⁹⁶ John F. Reiger, “Grinnell, George Bird (1849-1938), Conservationist and Ethnographer,” *American National Biography*, 2000. <https://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1300661>.

⁹⁷ W. P. Woodring, *William Healey Dall, August 21, 1845- March 27, 1927* (New York: Columbia University Press for National Academy of Sciences, 1958), 96. <http://www.nasonline.org/publications/biographical-memoirs/memoir-pdfs/dall-william.pdf>.

Robert Kennicott presented an opportunity for Dall to occupy the absented role of Chief of the Scientific Corps and Surgeon for the district between the Yukon and Bering Sea.⁹⁸ By 1871, he was also the Acting Assistant for the US Coast Survey, building on George Davidson's work discussed in the previous chapter, and commanded four additional expeditions along the Alaskan coast from 1871-1880. Among his more than 100 influential published texts about the territory, in 1870 Dall wrote *Alaska and its Resources*, a watershed text that would encourage and evidence the necessity for the further and complete colonization of Alaska through an exploitation of its resources: the information for which he had steadily accumulated for the prior five years.⁹⁹

More than simply a scientist of the earth or a student of mollusks, Dall was quite invested in, but lesser known for, his study of the Indigenous inhabitants of Alaska. Following the purchase of Alaska, and the resulting confusion in the purported inability to trace the racial origins of the territory's Indigenous inhabitants as discussed in Chapter One, one of Dall's personal missions was to sort and order the racial and cultural characteristics of the many variations of Indigenous peoples in the territory. In fact, just a quick glance at the index of one chapter from *Alaska and its Resource* demonstrates that his employment for the Coast Pilot was equally about documenting Alaska Native peoples as it was an endeavor to document Alaska Native lands:

CHAPTER II.	
Arrival at Nulato, and introduction to the Creole bidarshik. — Description of the post and its inhabitants. — Adjacent points. — History. — The Nulato massacre and its cause. — Barnard's grave. — Daily life at Nulato. — Larriown. — Koyukun Indians. — Ingaliks. — Kurilla. — Plans for the coming season. — Examination of a coal-seam. — Nuklukahyet chief. — Christmas festivities. — New Year's and erection of the first telegraph pole. — Aurora. — Return of Ketchum. — Collections in Natural History. — Indian rumor. — Cannibalism. — Russian ingenuity. — Founding of Fort Kennicott. — Departure of Ketchum and Mike on their winter journey to Fort Yukon. — Arrival of our bidarra. — Trip to Wolasatux' barrabora. — Scarcity of food. — First signs of spring. — Robbing a grave. — First goose. — Indian children. — Rescue of the bidarshik. — Anecdote of Major Kennicott and erection of a monument to his memory. — Formation of alluvium. — Preparations for our journey. — Breaking up of the ice on the Yukon	44

Figure 4, This synopsis of Chapter II of *Alaska and its Resources* demonstrates Dall's keen interest in Indian people of Alaska. Items of note, "Koyukon Indians," "Ingaliks," "Kurilla," "Nuklukahyet chief," "Indian rumor," "Cannibalism," "Robbing a grave," and "Indian children."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Aly Desrochers, "William H. Dall: He Had Malacology Down to an Art," Smithsonian Institution Archives, August 16, 2012, <https://siarchives.si.edu/blog/william-h-dall-he-had-malacology-down-art>.

¹⁰⁰ William H. Dall, *Alaska and its Resources* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1897), ix.

Furthermore, due to his “expertise” and experience in interacting with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the territory of Alaska, and through his tedious documentation of geography and peoples, he created one of the very first ethnological-cum-cultural-area maps of Alaska in 1875.

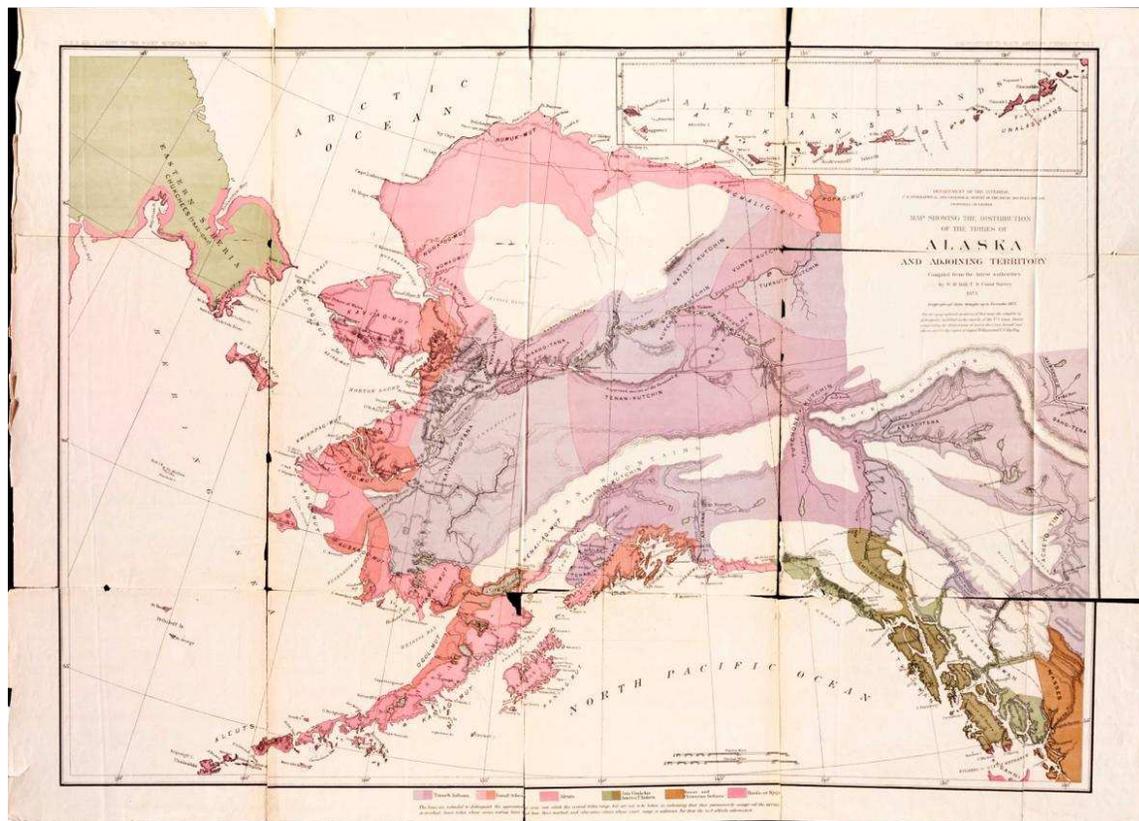


Figure 5¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Cathy Hunter, “William Dall: National Geographic Founder and Pioneer of Alaskan Exploration,” National Geographic, January 19, 2018, <https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2018/01/19/william-dall-national-geographic-founder-and-pioneer-of-alaskan-exploration/>.

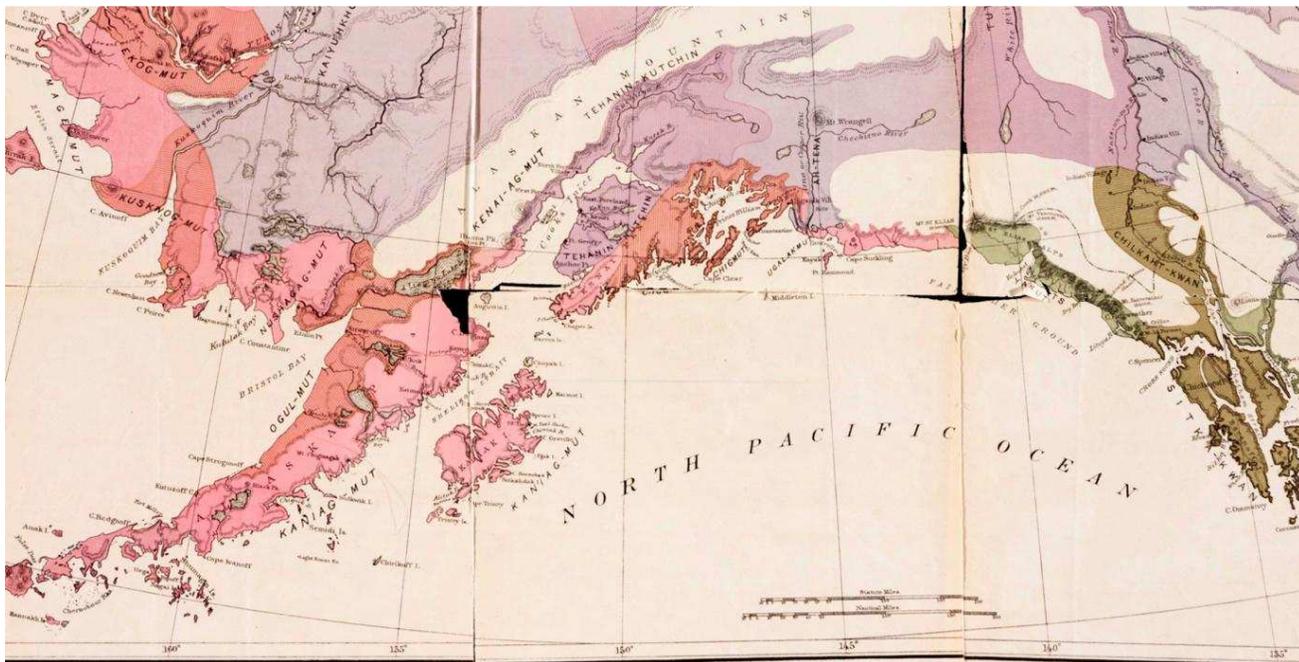


Figure 6¹⁰²

Dall also kept diaries of his interactions with Native peoples and documented the distinct differences among them, their objects, and their homes. His information regarding Alaska Native peoples was intricate and thorough and many of his publications are constituted by elaborate descriptions of racial and cultural difference and often times with a flair for the humanistic and aesthetic.

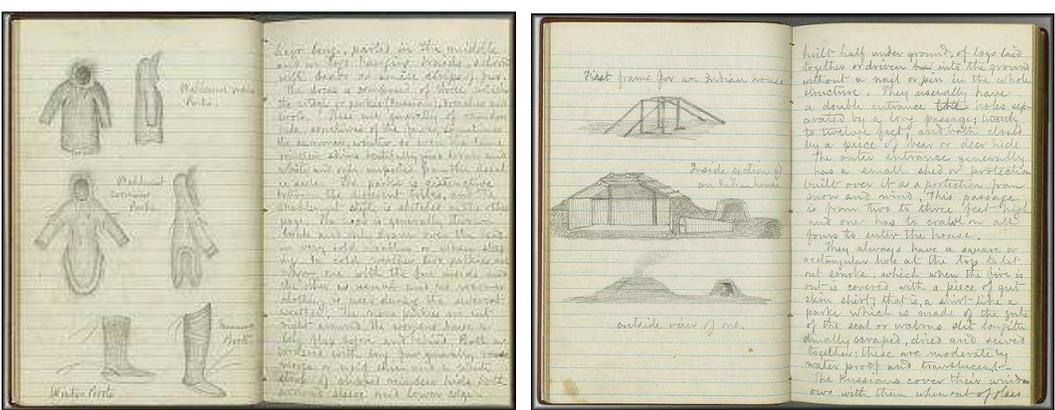


Figure 7¹⁰³

Curiously, for all the interest and dedication that Dall demonstrated in documenting the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Alaska territory clearly, he did not write the anthropological or ethnological data of the HAE journey; this responsibility was given to Grinnell. Grinnell’s work

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “Description of Indian Life in Alaska,” Smithsonian Institution Archives, September 17, 2012, <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/featured-topics/stories/description-indian-life-alaska>.

for the Harriman Alaska Expedition, *Encountering the Tlingit and Eskimo*, is not much of a citational ethnological piece. Grinnell is sweeping in his generalizations of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska and Siberia, and he relies heavily on illustration and photography for his descriptions. The majority of his narrations are of domestic spaces and material objects. At one point in his narrative, Grinnell actually avoids describing the Aboriginal peoples that he meets, stating, “better than any description that can be given of the village and its people are the reproductions of photographs, taken by the expedition, which accompany this account.”¹⁰⁴ Embedded in his short, 50-page narrative are over 60 illustrations and photographs, many of which were captured by Edward Curtis. It seems that Grinnell depended upon these visualizations to substitute for his lack of knowledge about the territory of Alaska and the peoples there.

While Grinnell was deemed Expedition anthropologist, Dall was tasked as official paleontologist of the Expedition and wrote the section, “The Discovery and Exploration of Alaska” in Volume II. Dall’s section is a straightforward colonial history of the multiple imperial powers who occupied parts of Alaska including Russia and Spain. Dall chronicles the purchase of Alaska and ends with the presence of the HAE in the territory stating, “the work of the Harriman Expedition, in spite of the extremely limited time available at any one locality, shows how large a field there is as yet untilled...we may confidently anticipate for years to come a rich harvest for the scientific explorers and naturalists whose good fortune may lead them to the fascinating study of the virgin North (204).” This excerpt follows Dall’s preceding colonial-expansionist logics found in multiple other writings about Alaska and the need to begin settling and extracting resources from the “untilled” and “virgin” territory.

However, this task of orating the historical and economical aspects of Alaska did not deter Dall from including his own unique expressions about the Indigenous inhabitants of the territory, in addition to his timeline of Alaska’s “discovery and exploration.” For instance, included as the very final installation in Volume II, following a narrative description of the potential lucrative dimensions of “Fox Farming” on the Pribilof Islands written by M.L. Washburn; the Volume concludes with a photograph taken by Edward Curtis titled “Eskimo Settlement, Plover Bay, Siberia,” and a poem written by Dall named “The Song of the Innuite.” Below are images of the poem that demonstrate the unique form of the poem as it includes illustrations drawn by men onboard the HAE. Many of these drawings are crafted after Curtis’ photographs with the exception of the final image, which consists of a mermaid pulling a seal to her bosom in an embrace, which was drawn by Frederick Winthrop Ramsdell¹⁰⁵ in 1893, and chosen later to be included in the souvenir, presumably by Curtis. The content of only Volume II out of the twelve other Volumes in the series demonstrates the proximity of scientific and aesthetic knowledges being produced on the Harriman, and that scientists too, were participating in the production of cultural media.

¹⁰⁴ George B. Grinnell, *The Harriman Expedition to Alaska: Encountering the Tlingit and Eskimo in 1899* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2007), 177.

¹⁰⁵ Ramsdell is most well-known for his advertisement poster for American Crescent Cycles, which feature a woman with long flowing hair, very similar to the mermaid depicted in Figure 11.

THE SONG OF THE INNUIT¹

BY WILLIAM H. DALL

Oh, we are the Innuit people,
 Who scatter about the floe
 And watch for the puff of the breathing seal,
 While the whistling breezes blow.
 By a silent stroke the ice is broke,
 And the struggling prey below,
 With the crimson flood of its spouting blood
 Reddens the level snow.

Oh, we are the Innuit people,
 Who flock to the broken rim
 Of the Arctic pack where the walrus lie
 In the polar twilight dim.
 Far from the shore their surly roar
 Rises above the whirl
 Of the eager wave, as the Innuit brave
 Their flying lances hurl.

¹Innuit is the name by which the Eskimo calls himself and his people from Greenland to Mount St. Elias. The topek is the winter house of turf and walrus hide, as contrasted with the igloo or snow-house, used where there is no wood. All Innuit believe in evil spirits which dwell inland from the shores; in Greenland they are supposed to inhabit the Nunataks or peaks which rise like islands out of the bosom of the glaciers. In times of starvation Innuit ethics allow a mother to expose an infant, for whom she cannot supply food, in the snow to die. The child's mouth is usually stuffed with grass, as otherwise its spirit would return and be heard crying about the house at night.

(367)

Figure 8¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ John Burroughs, John Muir, et. al., "Alaska the Harriman Expedition, 1899 by Two Volumes Bound as One" (New York : Dover Publications Inc, 1986), 367-370.

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DALL

Oh, we are the Innuït people,
 Who lie in the topek warm;
 While the northern blast flies strong and fast,
 And fiercely roars the storm;



Recounting the ancient legends,
 Of fighting, hunting, and play,
 When our ancestors came from the southland tame,
 To the glorious Arctic day.

There is one sits by in silence,
 With terror in her eyes:
 For she hears in dreams the piteous
 screams
 Of a cast-out babe that dies —
 Dies in the snow as the keen winds
 blow,
 And the shrieking northers come
 Of that dreadful day when she starv-
 ing lay,
 Alone in her empty home.

Figure 9¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 368.

Oh, we are the Innuit people,
 And we lie secure and warm,
 Where the ghostly folk of the Nunatak
 Can never do us harm.
 Under the stretching walrus-hide,
 Where at the evening meal
 The well-filled bowl cheers
 every soul,
 Heaped high with steam-
 ing seal.



The Awful Folk of the
 Nunatak
 Come down in the hail and snow,
 And slash the skin of the kayak thin,
 To work the hunter woe.
 They steal the fish from the next day's dish,
 And rot the walrus lines —
 But they fade away with the dawning day,
 As the light of summer shines.

Oh, we are the Innuit people,
 Of the long, bright Arctic day :
 When the whalers come and
 the poppies bloom,
 And the ice-floe shrinks
 away:
 Afar in the buoyant umiak,
 We feather our paddle
 blades,
 And laugh in the light of the sunshine bright,
 Where the White Man's schooner trades.



Oh, we are the Innuit people,
 Rosy and brown and gay;

Figure 10¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 369.

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DALL

And we shout as we sing at the wrestling ring,
 Or toss the ball at play.
 In frolic chase we oft embrace
 The waist of a giggling maid
 As she runs on the sand of
 the Arctic strand,
 Where the ice-bear's
 bones are laid.



Oh, we are the Inuit people,
 Content in our northern
 home;
 While the kayak's prow cuts
 the curling brow
 Of the breaker's snowy foam.
 The merry Inuit people,
 Of the cold, grey Arctic sea,
 Where the breaching whale, the aurora pale
 And the snow-white foxes be.

PORT CLARENCE, ALASKA,
 July 13, 1899.



Figure 11¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 370.

This poem by Dall, written in AB rhyme scheme, narrates the “Innuït” people as he, a scientist and natural historian, understands their activities and behaviors. In a similar fashion to Grinnell’s *Jack* series, Dall is depicting Indigenous life through an ethnological, but creative and aesthetic lens, showing that knowledge about Native peoples is not only produced, but also disseminated by and through scientific and cultural knowledge production. The majority of the content of the poem generally depicts the “Innuït” as a happy, smiling, playful people—a historically problematic representation with its own colonial legacy.¹¹⁰ This patronizing voice of the poem that describes “Innuït” as “rosy brown and gay” who are “content in [their] Northern home,” is also cut with Dall’s own anthropological trivia. For instance, in the poem’s only footnote, an explanation of the word “Innuït” in the title, he states:

Innuït is the name by which the Eskimo calls himself and his people from Greenland to Mount St. Elias. The topek is the winter house of turf and walrus hide, as contrasted with the igloo or snow-house used where there is no wood. All Innuït believe in evil spirits which dwell inland from the shores; in Greenland they are supposed to inhabit the Nunataks or peaks which rise like islands out of the bosom of the glaciers. *In times of starvation Innuït ethics allow a mother to expose an infant, for whom she cannot supply food, in the snow to die. The child’s mouth is usually stuffed with grass, as otherwise its spirit would return and be heard crying about the house at night.*¹¹¹

Dall speaks at once to his translation of Inuit living spaces, spiritual or religious beliefs, and finally ethics of infant death. It is this latter point that is given multiple stanzas in the body of the poem. Dall lingers on what is a repeated concern across anthropological texts more broadly, arising almost as frequently as inquiries of cannibalism, is infanticide.¹¹² This narration of infanticide emphasized across anthropological sites was useful in that, as David Stannard puts it, generates political mythology that supports the colonial notion in which Indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands are entirely uncivilized and violent when left to their own devices.¹¹³ The obsession with either recorded or fabricated acts of infanticide by Western documentarians was also a productive ground for gendered concerns of proper maternalism and domestic care, which thus provided white women with a project in occupied territories.¹¹⁴

In his poem, Dall creates an aside to a scene where a group of “Innuït” recount “the ancient legends/ of fighting, hunting, and play,” but one woman does not participate and instead struggles alone with her memories, presumably, of infanticide. She “sits by in silence,/ With terror in her eyes:/ For she hears in dreams the piteous/ screams / Of a cast-out babe that dies—/ Dies in the snow as the keen winds blow,/ And the shrieking northerns come/ Of that dreadful

¹¹⁰ See again Shari Huhndorf’s article “Nanook and his Contemporaries.”

¹¹¹ Burroughs, “Alaska the Harriman Expedition, 1899,” 367. (emphasis mine)

¹¹² David E. Stannard, “Recounting the Fables of Savagery: Native Infanticide and the Functions of Political Myth,” *Journal of American Studies* 25, no. 3 (1991): 381-417.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 383.

¹¹⁴ See Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*; Ann Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*, “Tense and Tender Ties”; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

day when she starving lay,/ Alone in her empty home.”¹¹⁵ This thematically darker scene is otherwise buttressed by the “Innuits” participating in a “frolic chase.” They otherwise, “shout as we sing,” and end each day in the “topek” where they “lie secure and warm” and “the well-filled bowl cheers every soul.” For Dall, his fantasized lifestyle of Inuit people of circumpolar geographies is filled with a daily enjoyable toil of securing warmth and food. Within the context of the poem, infanticide seems to be one unfortunate consequence of a lifestyle lived from one day to the next, where preparedness for the future is obscured by the necessity of daily exertion for survival. In this context, any hardship experienced by Dall’s “Innuits” is a matter of their own doing. To that end, conveniently, Dall’s fictionalized “Innuits” “laugh in the light of the sunshine bright,/ Where the White Man’s schooner trades.”¹¹⁶ There is no animosity, conflict, or tension between the “White Man,” his presence in their lands and the many suspect things the trading schooner brings with it.

Dall’s romantic poetic invention of “Innuits” life is written pointedly from their imagined perspective, based upon the common refrain that begins five of the nine stanzas “Oh, we are the Innuits people,” though this narrative device is complicated by the anthropological footnote. In that Dall writes at once from the first-person narration, while simultaneously occupying the role of anthropological researcher. This whimsical, yet disturbing, piece ends fittingly with a drawn image of a mermaid clutching a seal to her bosom—giving an airy, playful, and fanciful take on Inuit life and landscape. This poem and mermaid draw a close to Volume II of the Harriman Alaska Expedition, giving the last word to the creative interpretations of the aesthetic.

In this section, I demonstrated the creative and humanistic dimensions of knowledge production by those who are considered scientists, mainly George Bird Grinnell and William Healey Dall, both members of the Harriman Alaska Expedition. I demonstrated the importance of their impressions on Edward Curtis and Alaska Native ethnological documentation more broadly. While in this section I illustrated the humanistic and aesthetic contours of scientific knowledge production, and scientific expeditions more specifically, I will continue to demonstrate the constitutive nature of aesthetic to science knowledge, but from the other direction. Edward Curtis is most often understood as a portraiture artist of Indian people and in particular the Indian face. While Curtis is widely understood as a portraiture artist working with the romantic aesthetic of the figure of the Indian. Just as I read Grinnell and Dall as producers of culture, I wish to recontextualize Curtis’ work within scientific realms of ethnography, anthropology, and natural history.

Section IV: Edward Curtis

Extensive scholarship regarding the life and legacy of Edward Curtis has yet to consider his photography of the Harriman Alaska Expedition to be a crucial part of his portfolio.¹¹⁷ At first

¹¹⁵ Burroughs, “Alaska the Harriman Expedition, 1899,” 368.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 369.

¹¹⁷ See Shamoan Zamir’s *The Gift of the Face*; Mick Gidley’s *The North American Indian, Incorporated*; Christopher Lyman’s *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions*; James C. Faris’ *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People*; Peter Jackson’s “Constructions of Culture, Representations of Race: Edward Curtis’s Way of Seeing”; Gerald Vizenor’s “Edward Curtis:

glance, Curtis' landscape photography of Alaska is seen as anomalous when compared with the criticism of his larger body of work, particularly the multiple volumes for which he is most famously known: *The North American Indian (NAI)*. The twenty-volume anthology of the *NAI* was published between 1907 and 1930 and contains over 5,000 pages of narrative text and 2,200 images—a project to document the “80 tribes west of the Mississippi.”

Scholarship on Curtis often critiques his work as representative of a larger turn-of-the-century project that hoped to document Native peoples and their distinct cultures “before they disappeared.”¹¹⁸ This critique lays bare the colonial violences of the era, yet it also has the tendency to reduce the relationships of Curtis and those Native individuals he photographed. Writing against this potentially reductive analysis, Shamoan Zamir's *The Gift of the Face* reimagines the interactions between Curtis and the Native individuals who sat for him in a way that presences a “co-authorship” of the portraits. Following Gerald Vizenor's similar analysis, Zamir's analytic of co-authorship works to restore some complexity to these fraught moments of Curtis' knowledge production, as the power differential between the two parties was substantial. Native people during this time period experienced considerable racism as they had limited access to capital, legal support, and were not yet considered citizens of the U.S.

My reading of Edward Curtis' photographs acknowledges the body of scholarship that categorizes *The North American Indian* anthology as a colonial project that worked to romanticize Native life without attending to the serious and injurious contexts of colonialism in the U.S. at the turn of the century. I am also aware of the multiple indigenized artistic projects that rework and retool Curtis' endeavors, including Matika Wilbur's (Swinomish and Tulalip Tribes) *Project 562*, which is “dedicated to photographing over 562 federally recognized tribes in the United States resulting in an unprecedented repository of imagery and oral histories that accurately portrays contemporary Native Americans.”¹¹⁹ There are many Native artists and photographers that respond to the legacy of Edward Curtis, in particular, a recent exhibition that included Native artists Zig Jackson, Wendy Red Star, and Will Wilson.¹²⁰ Alaska Native artist Nicholas Galanin has a particularly biting piece entitled “Things are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter” that has a split image of Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia on the right and a 1906 image of a Hopi woman taken by Curtis on the left.¹²¹ Native American scholars and artists, as well as Native American Studies scholars more broadly, have thoroughly critiqued Edward Curtis and his appeal to the American sociological imagination that fetishizes Indian people and the accoutrements of “Indianness” defined in opposition to modernity, in particular through

Pictorialist and Ethnographic Adventurist”; and Pauline Wakeham's “Celluloid Salvage: Edward S. Curtis Experiments with Photography and Film.”

¹¹⁸ Florence Curtis Graybill and Victor Boesen, *Edward Sheriff Curtis: Visions of a Vanishing Race* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

¹¹⁹ “Changing the Way We See Native America,” Project562, <http://www.project562.com/>.

¹²⁰ Zig Jackson, Wendy Red Star, and Will Wilson, “Contemporary Native Photographers and the Edward Curtis Legacy,” Portland Art Museum, <https://portlandartmuseum.org/exhibitions/contemporary-native-photographers/>.

¹²¹ Nicholas Galanin, “Things Are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter,” Humber, 2012, <http://www.humbergalleries.ca/collection/objects/89/things-are-looking-native-natives-looking-whiter?ctx=033a0323-fa18-4185-948a-e97608486e62&idx=3>.

Curtis' wistful, sepia portraits of the Native American face. Many have argued that there is not another photographer of Native American peoples that has a more influential, lasting, or continually recycled and reemerging legacy.

Moreover, while I commend the intentions to complicate the outright dismissal of Curtis' work as something more dimensional than detritus of colonialism, for the context of the Harriman Alaska Expedition, I cannot fully adopt the analytic of "co-authorship" of photographs generously put forth by Zamir. Documents from the HAE archive describe several instances in which it was clear that Native women did not want their pictures taken and yet, Curtis' continued to photograph them. John Burroughs wrote in his narrative for the Harriman Expedition, "The [Yakutat] Indians were living in tents and bark huts and hunting the hair seal amid the drifting icebergs that the Turner and the Hubbard cast off... The women and girls were skinning them and cutting out the blubber and trying it out in pots over smouldering fires... The Indian women frowned upon our photographers and were very averse to having the cameras pointed at them."¹²² Additionally, Curtis was not alone in his endeavors to document Native people during the HAE's brief visits to land. He was among nine other individuals equipped with the tools of photography, and among several artists who drew likenesses of Native people in the same moment that photographers captured photos. In the archives, there are many repeated scenes in images across mediums. In this way, Curtis' HAE photographs cannot be understood as an intimate session of portraiture, or as a sustained engagement with any distinct group of Alaska Natives, which can perhaps foster "coauthored" images such as those in his volumes of *NAI*.

My own reading of Edward Curtis' legacy, particularly in the context of the Harriman Alaska Expedition, offers a general recalibration of Curtis' larger portfolio. I argue that Curtis' HAE photographs should not be categorized solely as portraiture or pictorialism and should be positioned within the larger context of *The North American Indian* project. Curtis' work should be repositioned to take stock of the sweeping entirety of his larger work, as well as the historical context and collaboration in which it was produced. I am referring here to Curtis' social network that began on the Harriman Alaska Expedition and was extended through well connected and monetarily furnished men such as George Bird Grinnell. I am also referring to the historical moment of anthropology, ethnology, and salvage ethnography of the 19th and turn of the 19th century in which Curtis is operating and informed by. Put another way, I read Edward Curtis as an anthropologist and natural historian in addition to a portrait artist. In my readings that follow, I focus my attention on Curtis' images from *The North American Indian* and from the Harriman Alaska Expedition. I analyze photographs of objects and landscapes that range in scope from glacial fields to flower buds. I also devote some attention to the presence of laboring bodies in his photographs that do not center the face or bust.

Curtis was one of two official photographers for the Harriman Alaska Expedition, along with his assistant D.G. Inverarity, and together they took 5,000 photographs during the journey. Curtis' HAE photographs are mostly of landscapes: glaciers, mountains, sunsets, ocean vistas, rivers, bays and inlets, some flora and fauna. Curtis' photography also depicts architecture, the expedition members, the *Elder*, Alaska villages and towns, Alaska Native peoples and their domestic spaces, totem poles, baskets, and boats. I will be analyzing images that Curtis chose to

¹²² Burroughs, "Alaska the Harriman Expedition, 1899," 60-61.

include in the souvenir album created at the behest of Edward Harriman for the members of the voyage. The souvenir album consists of two volumes that contain a visual chronology of the two-month journey. The souvenir album was curated and printed by Curtis in his Seattle studio and Curtis took 113 of the 253 images included in the two volumes of the souvenir album.¹²³ Before conducting close readings of Curtis' photographs of Alaska and Siberia, I wish to resituate Curtis' visual projects back into the context of the breadth of *The North American Indian*. I begin by investigating his earliest work before he had embarked on the Expedition and connect these photographs to the tropes and figurations seen in the *NAI*. Beginning with Curtis' earliest photographs and walking through his larger oeuvre compel a different form of reading the portrait in its relation to landscape.

Before the HAE and *NAI*, Curtis' studio in Seattle was a business of portraiture, trafficked by young men and women who wanted self-portraits done as the technology became more accessible.¹²⁴ With the emerging technology of photography during this time period, likenesses could be created more quickly and cheaply than ever before: making painting of portraits nearly obsolete. Curtis' earliest photograph, a portrait, was of the daughter of Chief Siathl, Princess Angeline, a Duwamish woman to whom he paid one dollar for her image and her time. While Curtis' first photograph was a portrait of Princess Angeline, his photographs that received notoriety were not in the genre of portraiture, but of landscape. "Homeward," for which he was awarded the first prize in the Genre Class at the National Photographic Convention, is seen below in Figure 12.¹²⁵

¹²³ Zamir, *The Gift of the Face*, 34.

¹²⁴ Gilbert King, "Edward Curtis' Epic Project to Photograph Native Americans," Smithsonian.com, March 21, 2012, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/edward-curtis-epic-project-to-photograph-native-americans-162523282/>.

¹²⁵ Valerie Daniels, "Becoming Edward Curtis, 1891-1907," Edward Curtis: Selling the North American Indian, June 2002, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma02/daniels/curtis/becoming.html>.

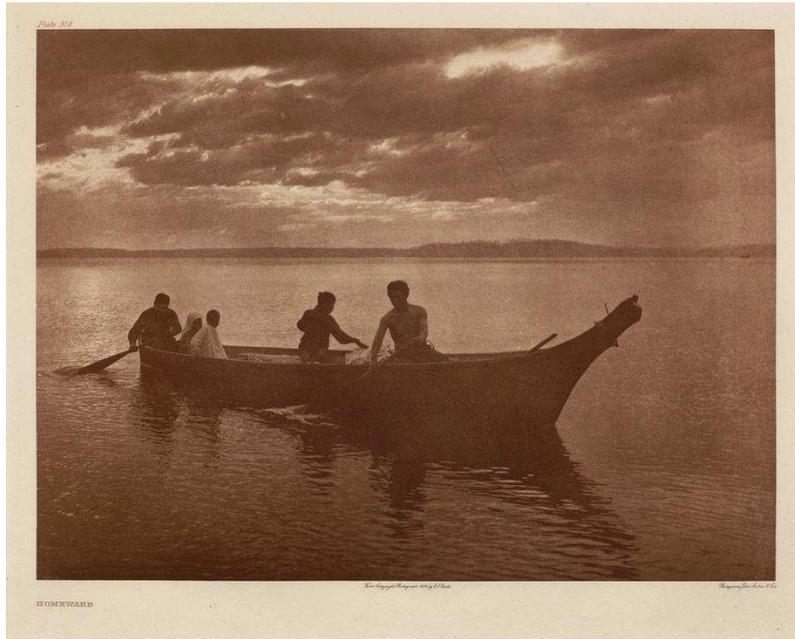


Figure 12, “Homeward”¹²⁶

The following year, he won the same prize with three other photos, two of which are of Angeline, but again are not portraits.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ “Edward S. Curtis and The North American Indian, Spring-Summer 2018: Homeward,” LibGuides, <https://pitt.libguides.com/edwardcurtis-allabouttheland/homeward>.

¹²⁷ Daniels, “Becoming Edward Curtis, 1891-1907,” <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma02/daniels/curtis/becoming.html>.

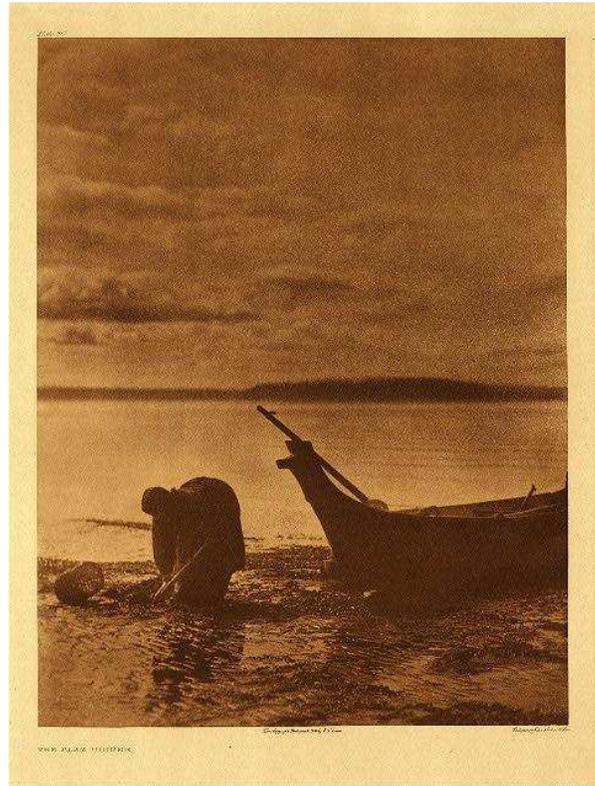


Figure 13, “The Clam Digger”¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=3&size=2&id=nai.09.port.00000026.p&volume=9#nav>.

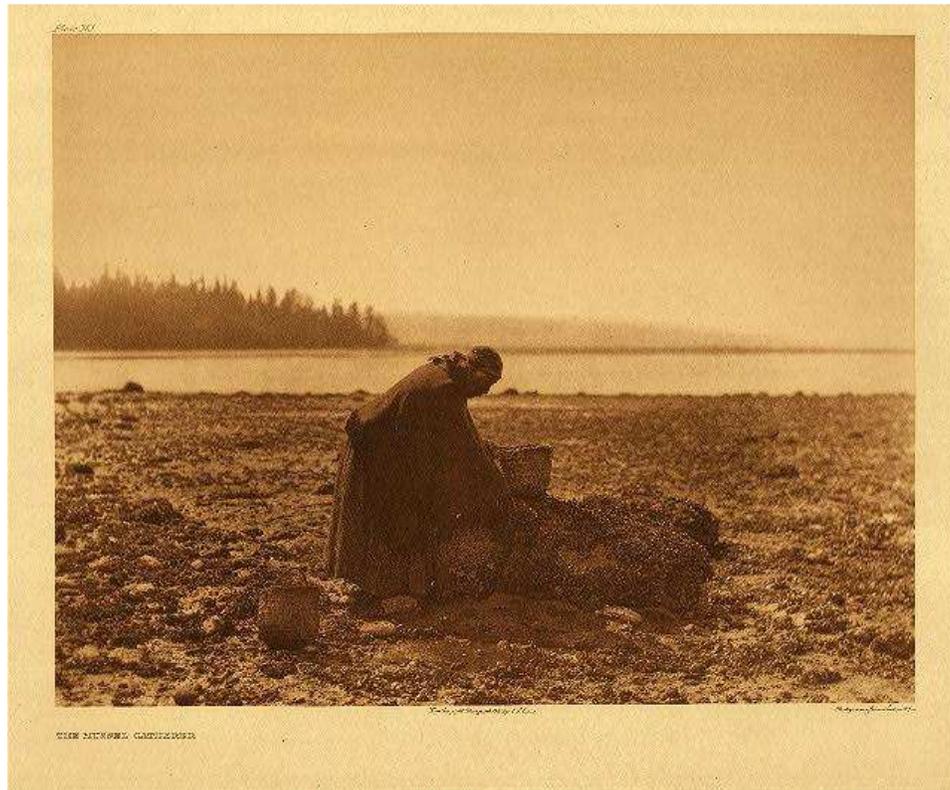


Figure 14, “The Mussel Gatherer”¹²⁹

In distinction to Curtis’ earlier photograph of Angeline, these images are not portraits. “The Clam Digger” and “The Mussel Gatherer” can be categorized as landscape images that includes a solitary laboring figure. However, the viewer can assess this image to be about Native people without a “Native” face or a title that explicitly categorizes it as such. The figure in the image is marked as Indigenous through signifiers in the photograph: the objects in the photographs, the canoe, and baskets. The actions captured by the titles “The Clam Digger” and “The Mussel Gatherer” also mark the subject as Indigenous—clam digging and mussel gathering at the turn of the century was easily recognized as subsistence or food gathering practices by the Native peoples of the Puget Sound area.¹³⁰ Each of the images is taken with landscapes framing the labor and bodies of the figures. In “Homeward,” we can only see the silhouettes of the figures in the photograph, it is the object of the canoe and the landscape backdrops that literally defines them. These early Edward Curtis’ photographs consist of visible, perceived indigeneity in ways that are implied and assembled by the viewer.

These images are unlike his better-known photographs of portraits of Indian people that are commonly circulated and criticized, which center the face and the bust, which is almost certainly

¹²⁹ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis'*, <http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.09.port.00000022.p&volume=9#nav>

¹³⁰ See Peter Jackson’s “Constructions of Culture, Representations of Race: Edward Curtis’s Way of Seeing.”

dressed in regalia. Such portraits overwhelmingly indicate Native American identity through a specific phenotype, which relies on its own invented understanding of what Indians supposedly look like.¹³¹ When examining a portrait, the viewer is pushed to identify what the individual subject innately exudes by expression and by recognizable signifiers of material culture that have been coded as ornamentally “Indian.” In these images shown above, viewers are not tasked with searching a subject’s face to locate some “unmistakable Native American features,” or to identify with some interpreted emotion found there. These landscape-figure photographs also rely on a historical production of indigeneity, not one that relies on phenotypical markers, but on certain activities that are practiced in “Nature.” Curtis’ photographs require the viewer to look elsewhere, away from the face, in order to create the image’s meaning and significance.

Curtis’ portraiture when read as stand-alone pieces, offer terse titles that cannot adequately contextualize the individuals whom he photographs or their historical moment. This has resulted in the bulk of critique of Curtis’ work.¹³² However, the surrounding material in *The North American Indian* is supposed to accomplish that task of contextualization, of informing the reader about distinct and more general Indian life. Whether this information is accurate and misinterpreted by Curtis and his aides as recordkeepers, or whether the project as a whole is somewhat suspect and problematic is another matter entirely. What is lacking in many critiques of Curtis’ portraits is a close reading and attendance to the surrounding material that was produced alongside and in the very same larger text. To take the portrait away from the text, away from the volume, and as a part divergent from the other photos in each chapter of each volume, is to not see the text in its complexity and among the sheer quantity of Curtis’ project. I posit that it is crucial to analyze the *NAI* as it was produced—as an ethnological text of cultural salvage, as a natural history, and on a massive scale. In fact, *The New York Herald* hailed Curtis’ *North American Indian* as “the most ambitious enterprise in publishing since the production of the King James Bible.”¹³³

I argue that Curtis’ *The North American Indian* is not simply twenty volumes of photographs or a book of portraits. It is an ethnological text that attempts to document and record Native language, creation stories, domestic and societal organization, religious and spatial practices, and historical and concurrent land use. *NAI* is a taxonomic endeavor that seeks to order and classify land and space based on its use by Native American peoples. The twenty volumes are a site of discourse and a structure of knowledge production that seeks to produce an order of the Native American tribes west of the Mississippi.

Early on in *NAI*, Edward Curtis attempts to eschew the grand theories of human origin, which was a common—and still ongoing—practice of archaeologist, anthropologists, geographers, and ethnologists not only in the 19th century, but for many decades prior.¹³⁴ The North American Indian race, as it was put by many, troubled scientific theories of racial origins—it was unclear where American Indians had originally traveled or migrated from according to regimes of Western science and philosophy. This quandary is currently explained by the Bering Land

¹³¹ For a further history on this topic see film *Reel Injun* by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond.

¹³² See especially the image “Vanishing Race” which has garnered considerable critique.

¹³³ Smithsonian.com, “Edward Curtis’ Epic Project to Photograph Native Americans.”

¹³⁴ See Chapter Four for more details regarding this history.

Bridge theory, though it is highly contested—as discussed Chapter One, and will be taken up again in Chapter Four. Curtis addresses this concern in NAI, and writes, “nor is it our purpose to theorize on the origin of the Indians—a problem that has already resulted in the writing of a small library, and still with no satisfactory solution.”¹³⁵ Alternatively, Curtis describes his project as such: “The object of the work is to record by word and picture what the Indian is, not whence he came.”¹³⁶ Moreover, Curtis remarks that “it has been deemed advisable that a geographic rather than an ethnologic grouping be presented, but without losing sight of tribal relationships.”¹³⁷ In this way, Curtis is not only an anthropologist attendant to the material practices of the Indian that occur in Nature that makes “what the Indian is,” but is also spatially-minded, ordering Native groups by geography in his “broad and luminous” text.¹³⁸

His own project can also be read a sweeping taxonomy that works to order Native lands and the spatial practices that they carry out within them. Take, for example, the first volume of *The North American Indian* designated to “The Apache,” “The Jicarillas,” and “The Navajo.” The volume begins with a fifty-page chapter regarding the “The Apache,” which includes an historical sketch of the Apache people that documents linguistic characteristics, colonial history with Spaniards and Americans, a brief history of policies created in regard to managing the Apache, and a history of their removal from their original homelands to a created reservation. The next written chapter of “The Apache” documents homeland and livelihood, which ranges from the climate of the reservation where they have been forced, a description of the harvesting of mescal and other plants, and characterization of the division of labor and familial organization. The following two chapters detail Apache “Mythology” and “Medicine-Men.” Moreover, the photographic contribution to “The Apache” chapter contains fifty-one photographs. Fifteen are portraits.¹³⁹ Eight are images of objects.¹⁴⁰ The remaining twenty-three photographs are of Apache people partaking in tasks like harvesting and processing mescal, fording rivers on horseback, or collecting water. For examples, see the images below:

¹³⁵ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis' "The North American Indian,"* 2003, xv, http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/site_curtis/.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹³⁹ These are labeled “Typical Apache,” “Tenokai,” “Alchise,” “Apache Girl,” “Das Lan,” “Apache Maiden,” “Geronimo,” “Sigesh,” “Story-telling,” “Apache Nalin,” “Eskadi,” “Apache Babe,” and “Chideh.”

¹⁴⁰ These are labeled “Apache Still Life,” “Sacred Buckskin,” “Maternity Belt,” “Medicine Cap and Fetish,” and “Sand Mosaic.”

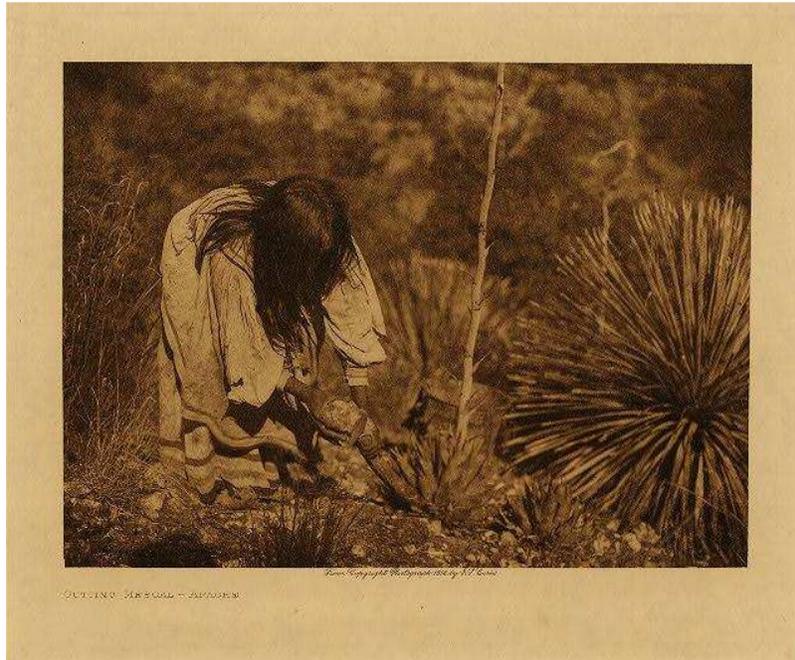


Figure 15, "Cutting Mescal"¹⁴¹

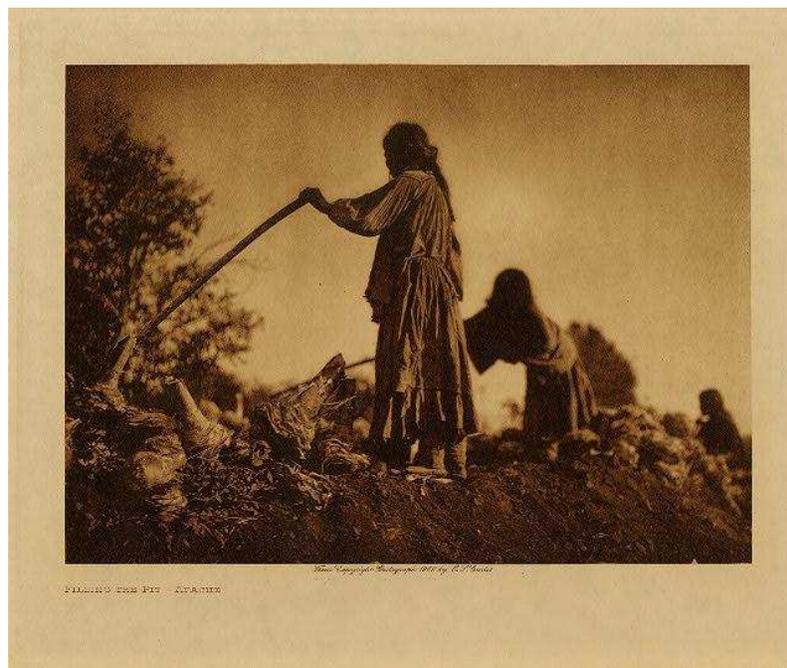


Figure 16, "Filling the Pit"¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis'*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000053.p&volume=1>

¹⁴² Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis'*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=3&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000059.p&volume=1#nav>

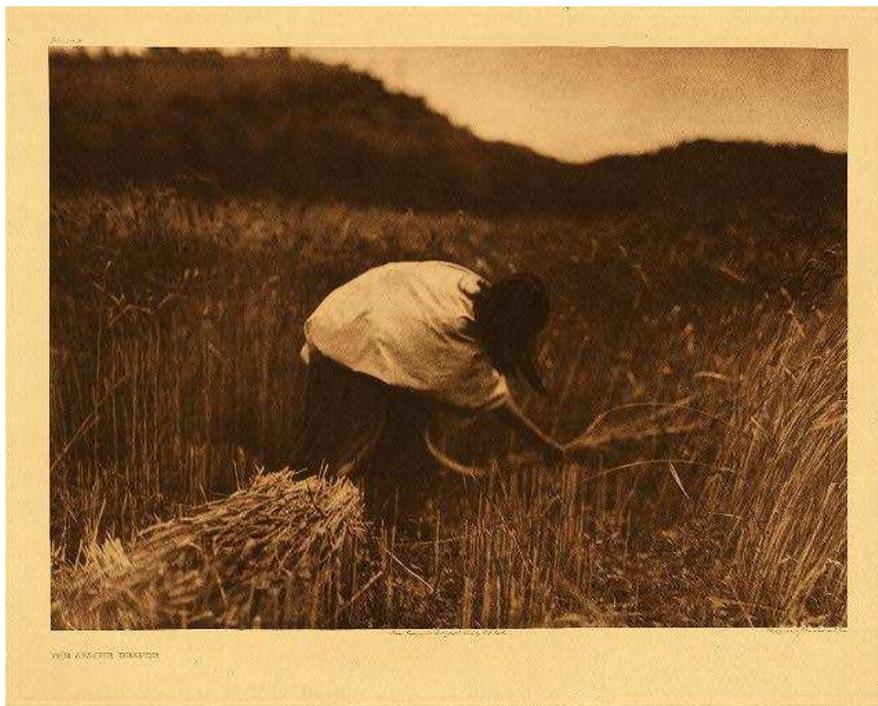


Figure 17, “Apache Reaper”¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.port.00000009.p&volume=1>

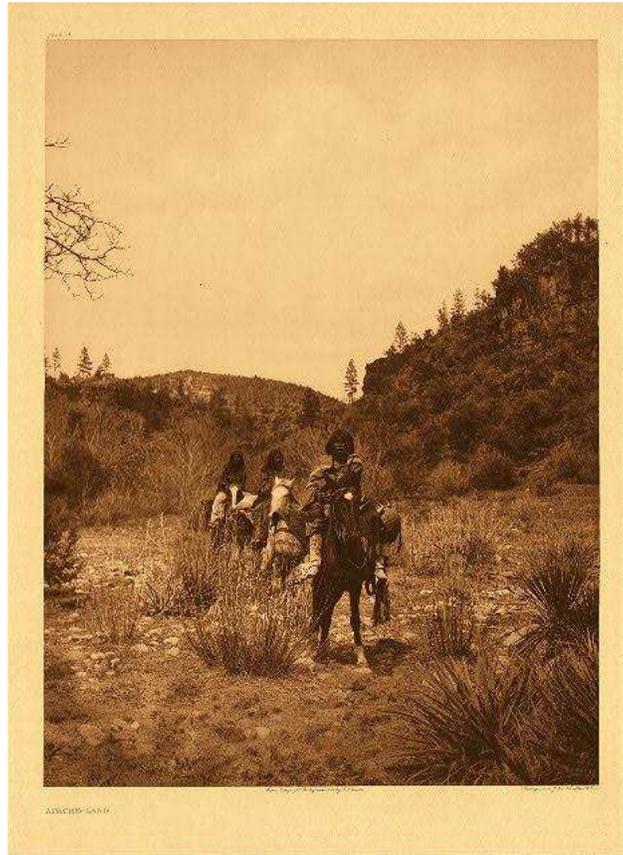


Figure 18, “Apache Land”¹⁴⁴

A photograph comprised of three Apache on horseback entitled “Apache Land,” is followed by this caption: “Apache horsewomen in a small valley of the White Mountain region. The horses are laden with the complete camp equipage, on top of which the women have taken their seats.”¹⁴⁵ Bringing attention to this photograph and title is not to redeem Curtis’ project, but it is to show that if read in a fuller context attentive to Curtis’ larger project, we start to see different themes of land, land occupancy, and Native movements in those lands differently than if only portraits are examined. For, in these three figures above, the Indian face is not the focal point, rather the central focus is on the Indian body as it labors or moves through the land. Additionally, this ratio of photograph content is fairly consistent throughout the volumes of *The North American Indian*, in which portraiture composes only a small fraction of the other collected materials.

While Curtis’ professional employment in his Seattle studio was one of portraits of the white middle-class, he did not bring this exact sensibility to the field whether it was in Alaska during the Harriman Expedition or for his twenty volumes for *The North American Indian*. The popular attention on portraiture and responsive critical literature has perhaps made Curtis strictly a

¹⁴⁴ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.port.00000005.p&volume=1>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

portraiture photographer retrospectively. Certainly, portraiture exists within *NAI*, and it may be read, as others have, as constitutive to the concurrent projects of typologizing Native peoples and other racialized subjects through the photographic evidence of visual anthropology. This collection of visual corporeal human difference was used to classify peoples through certain subsets of civilized status, and in this light, portraits are extremely formative and dangerous. It could be argued that portraits are particularly dangerous and enduring evidences for Native peoples, as portraiture intersects with the desire to see and consume “distinguishable” and “distinct” Indigenous features in ways that corroborate specific stereotypes such as Native American stoicism, nobility, purity, or victimhood. Yet, the portrait is not the only technology that creates colonial control, the documenting of landscapes, cultural items and belongings, and Native peoples laboring and moving through landscapes are also forms of knowledge production that deserve critical inquiry. As Chapter One has demonstrated, early explorers, scientists, anthropologists, and clergy of empire have been interested in the ways that Indigenous peoples are interacting with the landscapes around them in order to measure how landscapes might shape difference across humans. This is also true of the studying and collecting of material culture—that material objects can indicate one’s proximity to civilized status on a hierarchy of social evolution. Put together, these regimes of knowledge production work to incorporate and classify Indigenous land, homes, and objects into a legible order.

Curtis’ project not only sought to visually document Indian features of the face, but also worked to record the land that was, supposedly, producing such faces. *NAI* works to narrate how environment determines Native peoples, and how those people’s labor create their material culture, and how this, in turn, influences their corporeality in a feedback loop. This investment in materiality and the turn to nature for absolute truth is what carries Curtis’ interest in Indian life. For Curtis, to document Indian peoples was to document land, and to document nature was to document truth. He writes in the introduction of *NAI*, “being directly from Nature, the accompanying pictures show what actually exists.”¹⁴⁶ Instead of making sweeping gestures about the racial origins of the Indian, Curtis centers his focus on the specific materialities of Indian lives. According to Curtis’ logic, to know the land of a certain area is also to know the Indian that lives there. To know the land is to also understand the production of material culture, a few examples also taken from the first volume can be found below.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, xx.

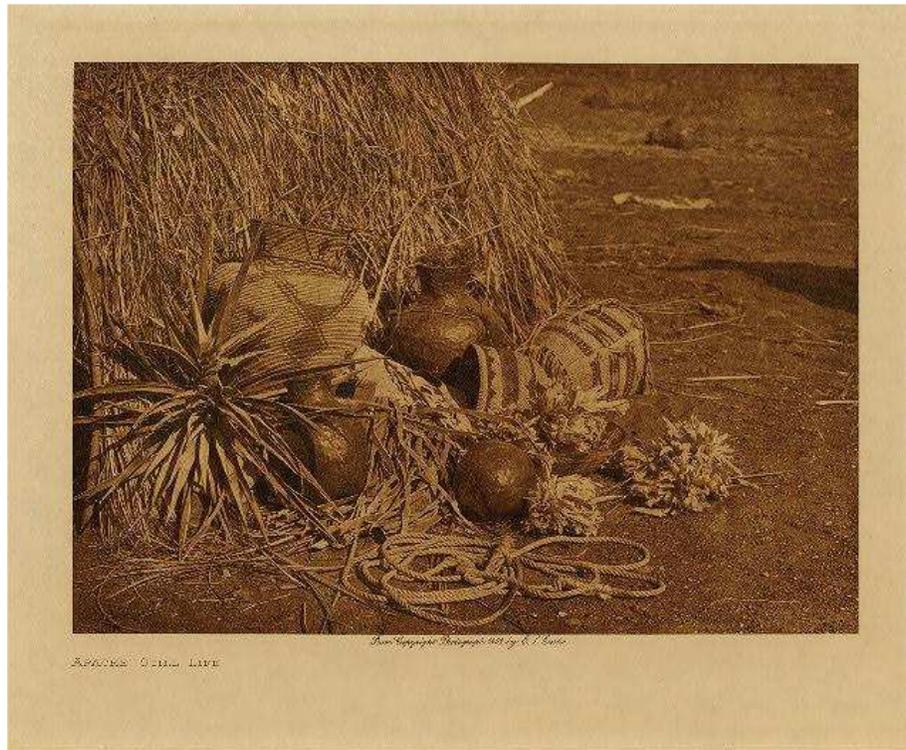


Figure 19, “Apache Still Life.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=3&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000065.p&volume=1#nav>

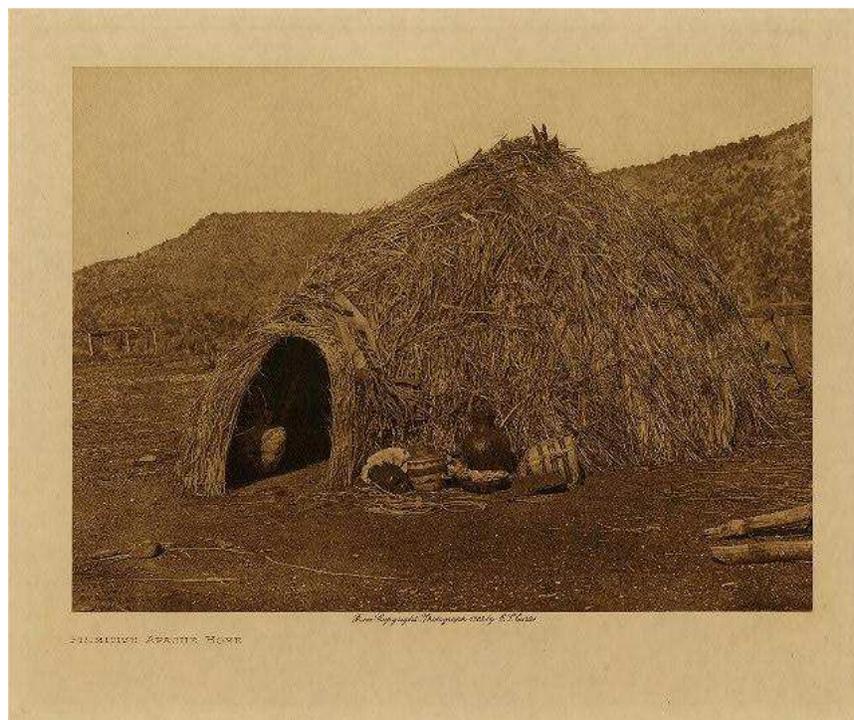


Figure 20, “Primitive Apache Home”¹⁴⁸

As earlier stated, eight images of the “Apache” chapter in Curtis’ first volume are of objects such as the two shown above. An additional twenty-three images are of Apache people laboring and moving through the landscape. To not attend to the thorough documentation of material items and figure-landscape images is to miss much of the work of Curtis’ larger project.

Curtis and Landscape:

Part of situating Curtis in the historical genealogy of anthropology and natural history of the moment in which he produced his materials is to also attend to his photography produced during the Harriman Alaska Expedition. In many of these images, he shows an attachment to capturing images of land, space, and Indigenous material practices and items, which informs his later work on *The North American Indian* briefly covered in the previous section. By situating his HAE photographs within a longer tradition of landscape representations, in this section, I argue that Curtis’ photographic archive from the Harriman Expedition is not only significant, but it is essential to understand Curtis’ larger body of work.

The figures discussed in this section are all Curtis prints and are chosen from the souvenir album created at the behest of Edward Harriman, one album for each member of the voyage. The album consists of two volumes that contain a visual chronology of the two-month journey. Curtis took photographs of landscapes and geological features: glaciers, mountains, sunsets, ocean vistas, rivers, bays and inlets, flora and fauna. There were also many photographs of settlements,

¹⁴⁸ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000050.p&volume=1>

architecture, and Alaska Native homes and belongings. The souvenir was curated and printed by Curtis in his Seattle studio, and 113 of the 253 images included in the souvenir were taken by Curtis.¹⁴⁹ While the souvenirs were created strictly as proto-photo albums for members of the expedition, Curtis' photographs were also printed in the thirteen volumes that Edward Harriman had printed for wide circulation.

The souvenir album largely consists of a scope of Alaskan landscapes, ranging from a small cluster of flower buds, for example, to gargantuan icefields. This scope represents a production of nature knowledge, which obscures the violence of colonialism. As Pratt writes, natural history representations are not passive or benevolent, but act as a totalizing surface mapping that correlated “with an expanding search for commercially exploitable resources, markets, and lands to colonize.”¹⁵⁰ However, unlike navigational mapping, “natural history conceived of the world as a chaos out of which the scientist *produced* an order.” Not only does the production of order via natural history's taxonomy map virtually every inch of surface space, nature knowledge systems have “the potential to subsume culture and history into nature”—in effect eliding social and relational human history.¹⁵¹

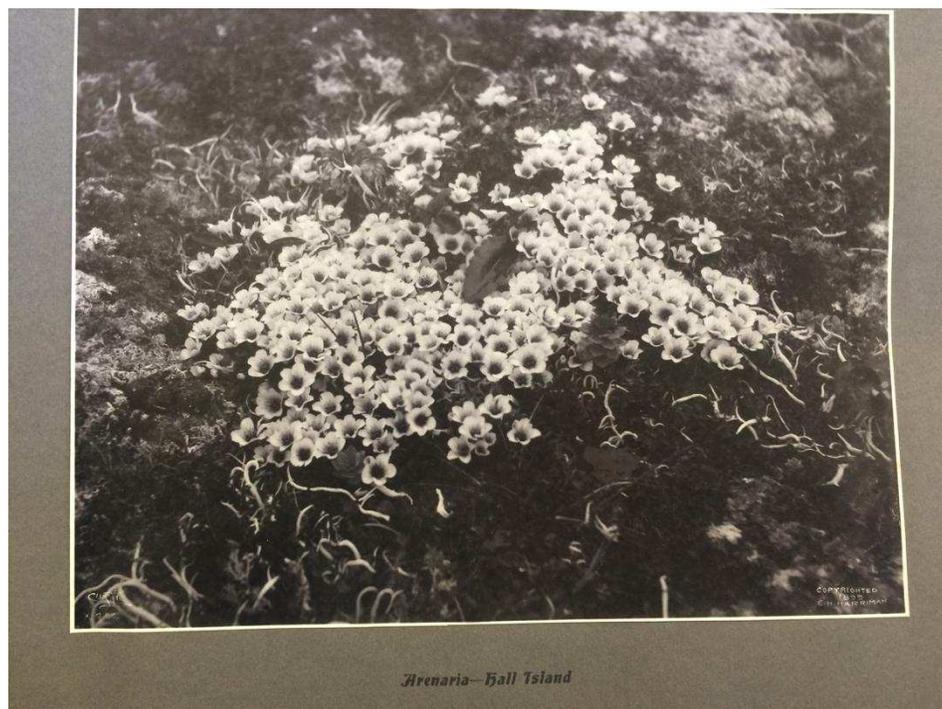


Figure 21, “Arenaria—Hall Island.”¹⁵²

The close-up image of the flower (re)named Arenaria, was photographed on the land mass that was (re)named Hall Island, as the title of the image demonstrates. The photograph centers tiny

¹⁴⁹ Zamir, *The Gift of the Face*, 34.

¹⁵⁰ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 30.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 192, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/211/rec/5>.

blossoms and the moss of the muskeg around them creates a dark frame. These small flowers grow close to the earth's surface and grow in an environment that should not support their existence—if we read this photo in conjunction with the icy landscapes of figures 22 and 23.

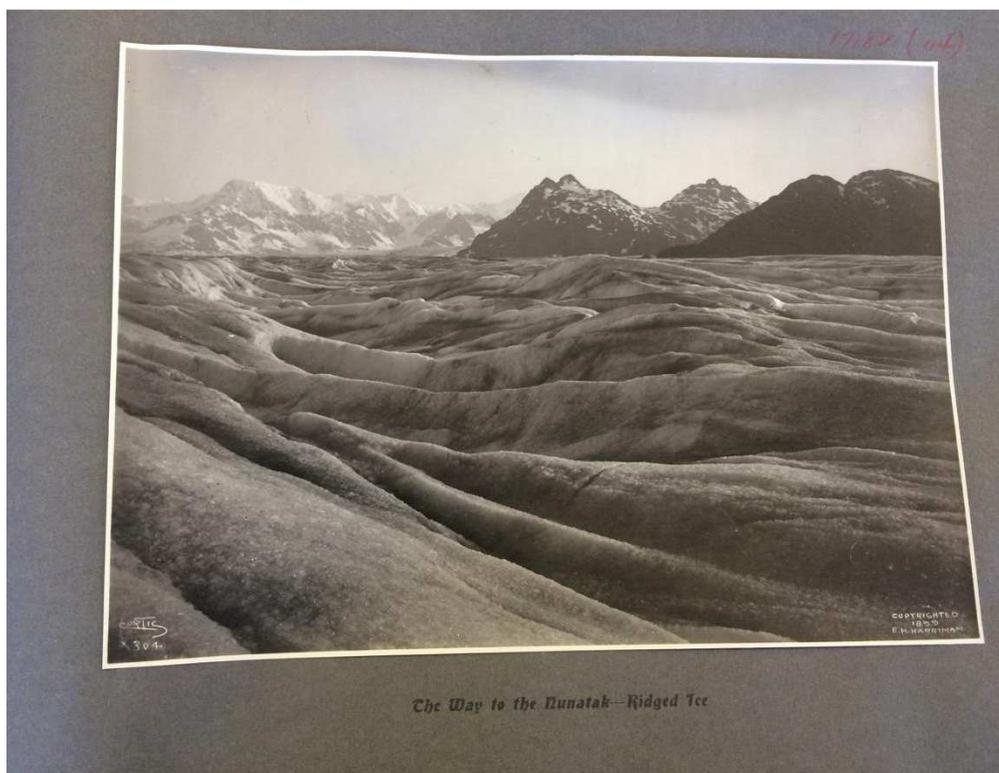


Figure 22, “The Way to the Nunatak—Ridged Ice.”¹⁵³

The figure’s title “The Way to Nunatak—Ridged Ice,” centers the glistening ice of the Nunatak—Inupiaq (nunataq) for glacier or icefield. Similarly to Figure 21, the image follows the conventions of a landscape photograph that interprets land as reduced to “vegetation and form.”¹⁵⁴ The ridges in the ice guide the eye and in following the lines of the glacier, they mimic the movement of waves. The perspective of the photograph is not an aerial view or panoramic view taken from above, like figure 21, but it is low to the ice which creates the illusion that the viewer inhabits the space of the glacier. Curtis’ photograph is one that pleases aesthetically, translating an Alaska Native nunataq to an enchanting icefield for viewers in the continental U.S., who had been familiar with images of the supposedly frozen, barren North for decades based on Arctic exploration. The glaciers of Alaska fell easily into this repertoire; particularly images that presented glacial features as both enticing and passive, both dangerous and beautiful, a sea of ice halted only by a mountain range that reached up toward the sky. Curtis presents a stark contrast between the anxiety-producing glacier that seems endless and impassable, and the domesticated flower buds that have been sorted into taxonomy for the pleasure and ease of the

¹⁵³ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 100, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/109/rec/96>.

¹⁵⁴ Rebecca Solnit, “The Limits of Landscape,” *Orion Magazine*, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/the-limits-of-landscape/>.

viewer. In putting the glacier image in proximity to that of the flower blossoms, Curtis creates a narrative that helps the glacier become just as legible, knowable, and containable as the named *Arenaria* plant.

Moreover, this aesthetic perspective and grouping of glaciers and flowers not only makes entities legible, but it also displaces the relations and histories that exist there. The Latin name *Arenaria* enables an abstraction of this plant to be folded into the universal code of Western botany: making it knowable through taxonomic categorization. This gaze renders the glacier as frozen and inert—not as a moving agent changing the social and material landscape. Julie Cruikshank suggests that “[t]he impact of glaciers on regional history lies not simply in their immense physical presence but also in their contributions to social imagination.”¹⁵⁵ The First Nations women that Cruikshank worked with to coauthor her scholarship understands glaciers as sentient beings, which is reflected in oral narratives wherein glaciers are “conscious and responsive to humans,” and not as inert objects for appropriation or exploitation.¹⁵⁶ The understanding of the glacier we find in Curtis’ photograph is meant for the aesthetic commodification of space without relations. Native people and their socialities, the glacier and its own socialities, are both displaced by the conjured fantasy of a sparkling barren icefield. This analysis is furthered when understood in the context of this image, wherein this glacier was “discovered” by the Expedition and named after Edward Harriman:

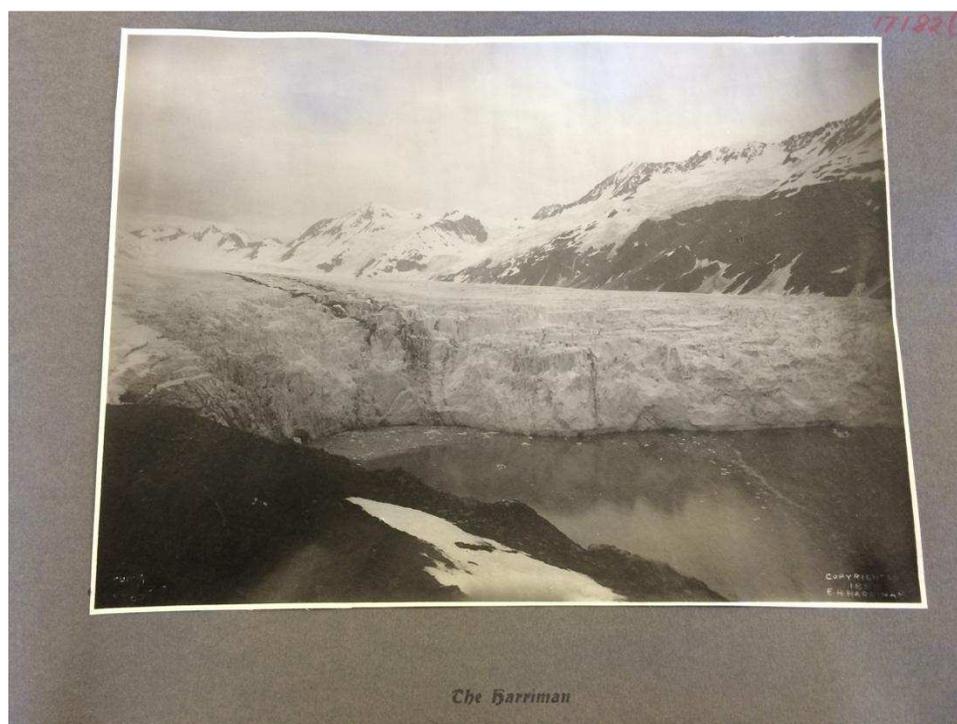


Figure 23, “The Harriman.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press., 2005), 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵⁷ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 122, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/141/rec/82>.

In this instance of Edward Curtis' categorization, and the colonial naming that occurred on the Expedition, the nunataq and the *Arenaria* plant become just as inert as the baskets that appear below in figure 24.

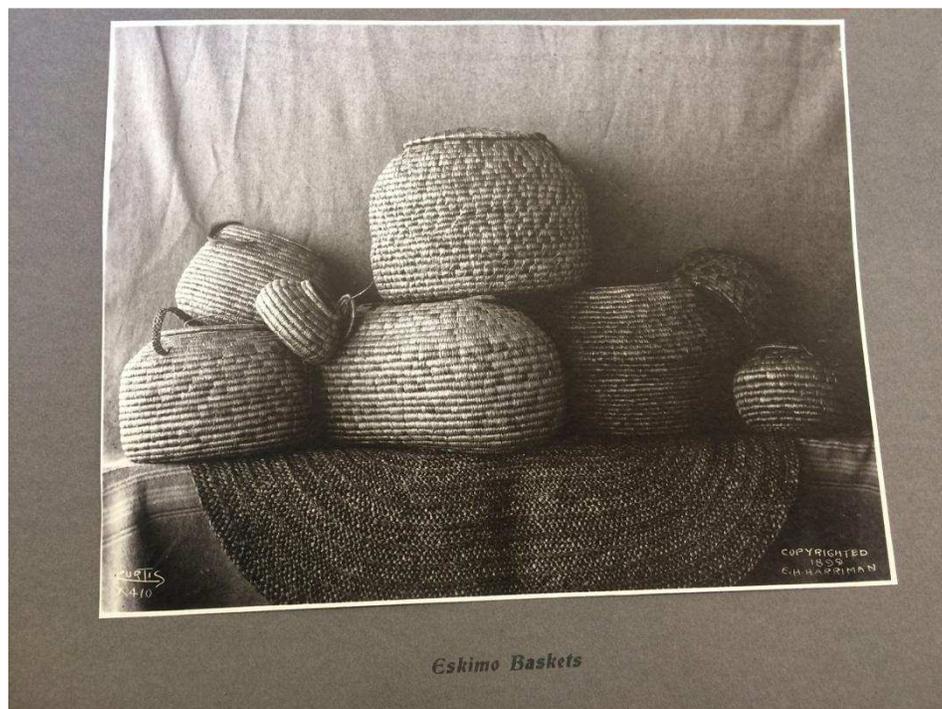


Figure 24, “Eskimo Baskets.”¹⁵⁸

This image of the baskets is meant to convey some information about those who made them, as the title “Eskimo Baskets” suggests. Viewers are meant to discern that these baskets are the craft of Eskimo peoples. In this, there is a presence, a trace, that is not necessitated by ongoing craft or ongoing presence of “Eskimo” people. The word “Eskimo” is used only as a referent bound both temporally and spatially, and not to specific “Eskimo” hands and bodies. This racial referent and image of baskets also demonstrates that although Alaska Native peoples at the time were not recognized legally as Indigenous subjects, as discussed in Chapter One, their belongings and perceived identities were still subject to the appropriation, theft, and misinterpretation by colonial powers and individual settlers. For the image of baskets to convey information about the Indigenous peoples who made them they too must undergo a production of meaning, like the glacier, and be understood through a specific rubric of thought that decontextualizes these objects from their social entanglements. This rubric is one that creates a cut between subject and object: human and nonhuman.

The photograph of the baskets is obviously staged—a table and a backdrop are placed as a setting to display these evidences of material culture. The table and the linen that drapes the table and performs the role of backdrop are also objects—but their meanings are much different from

¹⁵⁸ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, NA2127, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/220/rec/42>.

those objects they are meant to feature.¹⁵⁹ The baskets are stacked with a kind of purposeful haphazardness, thrown together in a chaotic bunch, but they are still highlighted as objects of interest. These baskets are, apparently, worthy of a photograph, but are made to blend together in a perceived sameness; the individual craft becomes a wash of equal, materialized Eskimo labor—a representation of object. In these images, more-than-human entities are lumped together as nonsocial beings, as not only susceptible to human inscription, Indigenous or otherwise, but dependent upon it. However, the glacier, the plant, and the baskets are not only a space of Native history, Native claims, and use. These entities should be understood as productive on their own and constitutively through the surrounding landscape and historical-colonial context. Therefore, landscape scholarship must be complicated in order to think of landscape not simply as “reduced to vegetation,” but to understand ‘vegetation’ itself as an actant in its own form.

A similar critique could be levied to rethink the role of objects and matter, imagining a conceptualization other than simply matter taking form through multiple histories of labor, or seeing matter through passive representationalism.¹⁶⁰ Alternatively, as Karen Barad writes, “matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification...it does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity.”¹⁶¹ “The social,” therefore, must be expanded and complicated to look at how nonhuman actors have capacities that are relational with human sociality, but not defined by or reducible to it alone.¹⁶² Furthermore, the constitution of the category of the human itself is dependent on the nonhuman, as distance from Nature is what determined the status of humanity, and the closeness to Nature is what determined the status of savagery.¹⁶³ The question of representable civilization and spatial practices, like those taken by Curtis in *NAI* and on the HAE, help to determine who and what is human. In turn, the distance from nature that constitutes humanity is what also creates the conditions of possibility for propertied ownership.

Figures 25 and 26, then, offer portrayals of what constitutes proper domesticity and organized settler property.

¹⁵⁹ As Sara Ahmed puts it, “the figure ‘figures’ insofar as the background both is and is not in view. We single out this object only by pushing other objects to the edges or ‘fringes’ of vision” in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 37.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 42; and Karen Barad’s “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 809.

¹⁶¹ Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity”: 821.

¹⁶² I gesture here to Eduardo Kohn’s work *How Forests Think*, which questions not that ‘do they think?’, but states of course they think, but how?

¹⁶³ Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism*.

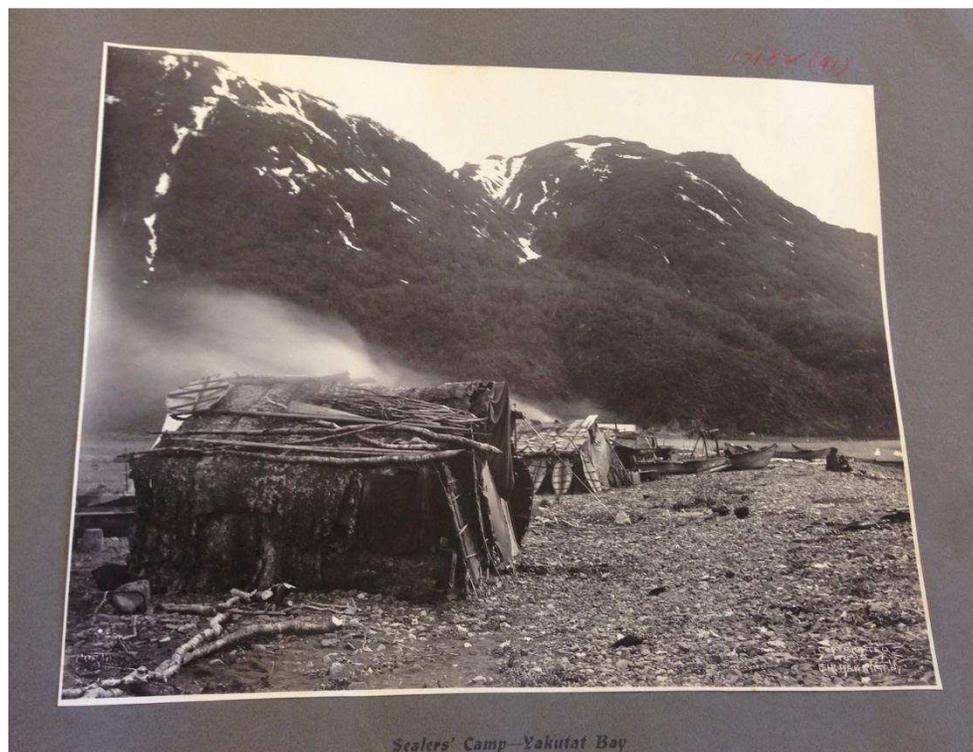


Figure 25, “Sealers’ Camp—Yakutat Bay”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, NA2101,
<https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/83/rec/215>.

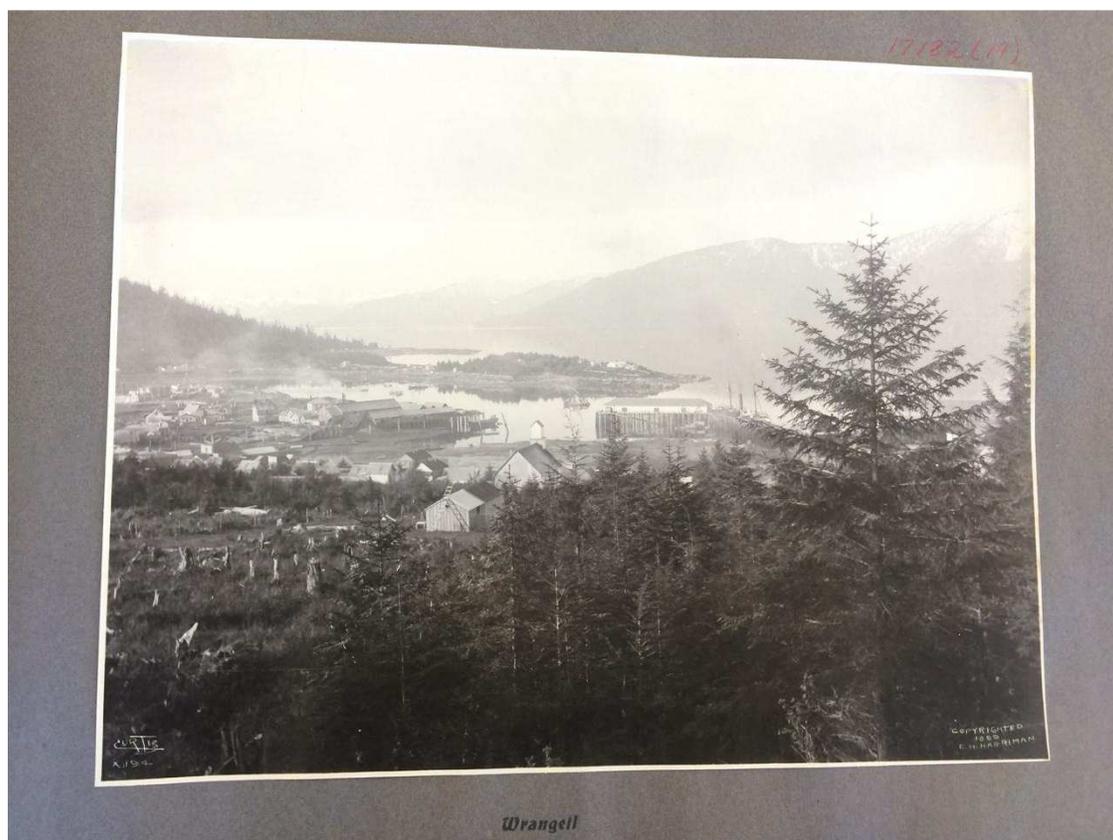


Figure 26, “Wrangell”¹⁶⁵

In placing together the image of a settler town of Wrangell in proximity to a photograph of an Alaska Native dwelling, Curtis is demonstrating that there are at least two types of living in Alaska: an unbridled and budding American settlement, and wayward, unorganized Alaska Native subsistence lifestyle. The Native dependence on seals, as the title of figure 25 suggests, creates the conditions of lowly living via labor designation—food sources are not guaranteed, and so Natives of the area live without the technological advances of agriculture and city planning to order their lives and their spaces. In this way, the objects of the photograph, the labor of the Alaska Natives that inhabit the camp, and their domestic realms are meant to connote human difference.

Furthermore, in the photograph of Wrangell, the landscape and the objects reveal a particular narrative of place. The history of Wrangell is entwined with Tlingit histories, Russian imperial powers, the Hudson Bay Company’s presence, the Presbyterian Church, and the U.S. military. However, what is most obvious in this photo taken by Curtis in 1899, is the growth of the settlement as an American town in the newly acquired territory of Alaska. Yet, there are no bodies to illustrate who has completed the labor and change to the landscape. Due to the form of the alteration (tree stumps), and the form that the spaces of domesticity and architecture take

¹⁶⁵ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 18, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/22/rec/251>.

(visible are several homes of Western architecture and a steeple of a church), it is clear that these are the markers of Western civilization. What is human is clearly separated from what is nonhuman, and in fact, humanity is produced through the drastic alteration of the landscape. There is a transitory feeling about Wrangell in this photograph—half made and half unmade. The tree stumps in the foreground of the photograph constitute half of the frame while untouched spruce trees dominate the other half; one tree constitutes nearly one-third of the photograph. The photograph is remarkably similar to Thomas Cole's 1836 painting, *View From Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*. *The Oxbow* is a well-known work typical of the Hudson River School, a sweeping landscape with the flair of nationalistic Romanticism. The painting, like Curtis' photograph, is divided: one half encompassed by a brightly lit pastoral scene of tamed lands, while the other half depicts a dark and chaotic wilderness. The painting is characteristic of Cole's concurrently produced series, *The Course of Empire*. These two images by Cole and Curtis demonstrate malleability—the landscape may be at once insurmountable and terrifying, but also altered through processes of Western settlement. Houses can be built, economies can be erected, and the often seemingly impassable landscape can be overcome and transformed. However, specific to Curtis' photography, in a way that differs from Cole, is that the image acts as evidence of material change by virtue of its technology. Through these imaginative and scientific representations, Alaska can be incorporated as American space through the material acts of order and of settlement.

Therefore, if Wrangell is illustrative of settler ingenuity and fortitude to succeed in creating economic communities in Alaska, then Figure 25 demonstrates what must be overcome or what is spatially and temporally distinct. The title "A Sealers' Camp—Yakutat Bay," is all the immediate information provided to contextualize this image of a gravel beach and a line of houses. The dwellings are set against a landscape backdrop of a mountain range, a perspective that works to dwarf them. Fog clings to the foremost structure, stretched seal furs are drying in their frames, and boats in the distance of the photograph have been pulled ashore. There is evidence of occupation, labor, and domesticity—but the bodies constitutive of these processes are absent. Yet, without seeing the body, viewers can surmise that the depicted spaces belong to or are associated with those who are not settlers, much like Curtis' early images of "The Clam Digger," and "The Mussel Gatherer" shown above.

While it becomes clear that the objects, homes, and labor of Alaska Native peoples are of interest for Curtis, what is *not* legible through the photograph is just as telling. For instance, the lives of the Alaska Natives as coastal peoples had been conditioned by colonialism of the southeast region of Alaska. White settlement and Alaska Native dispossession of lands, assimilatory education by the Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with federal policy that regulated hunting and fishing without Alaska Native rights-based privileges posed a constant threat of violence to Alaska Native peoples living near the coast. At the arrival of the HAE, the U.S. military had occupied parts of Alaska for over 30 years, and the navy decimated Alaska Native villages: Kake in 1869 and Angoon in 1882. Enforced management came also in the form of policy—the U.S. had passed several pieces of legislation that worked to delimit Alaska Native involvement in politics and in the control of their ancestral homelands. Alaska Native peoples also could not legally participate in land purchase. The threat of violence was embedded into the landscape through American military presence, with naval camps often popping up in spaces that held economic interest in the way of gold, fish, or furs. The lives of the Native peoples that Curtis

portrays are complexly embedded within webs of settler control via settler policy, not just historically, but in an ongoing form. The Native individuals and groups absent, but present in his photographs are being managed, monitored, and policed through various technologies; Curtis' photography being one of those technologies that adds to and is made possible by the juridical.

Furthermore, these actions and policies by settlers and the federal government played out under the guise of "without reference to race."¹⁶⁶ However, "without reference to race" only created a legal vacuum where Alaska Natives did not receive rights to their lands, but were still subject to segregated systems of society, which was later called "Jim Crow in Alaska." Curtis' photograph is meant to convey a visual truth, but in no way can encapsulate the complex intricacies of the colonial conditions endured by Alaska Native peoples. However, in another way, the racial segregation of Alaska is captured in the Curtis' photographs in figures and as Native presence is not explicit in the American settler town of Wrangell, but it is made material in the "Sealers' Camp." The town of Wrangell is not meant to suggest Indigenous presence, in fact just the opposite, though certainly Native labor also contributed to the town of Wrangell and undoubtedly, Alaska Natives lived there when this photograph was taken.

As Rebecca Solnit states, part of creating landscape is to reimagine and manage material relations out of the picture. Solnit writes that landscape photographs become "the habitual way of imagining what's out there," which is troubling "when their version of the world becomes the limits of our imagination."¹⁶⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell similarly posits that landscape must represent itself as the antithesis of land, as a poetic property rather than a material one.¹⁶⁸ However, in the context of the Harriman Alaska Expedition, Curtis' photography ranges from the landscape representations that Solnit and Mitchell problematize to images of colonial settlement and Native domesticities. In each of the figures Alaska is simultaneously represented as what Mitchell calls 'poetic property' *and* 'material property'—Alaska exists not only as the national imaginary of the spectacular nunataq, the domesticated flowers and commodified baskets, but also as a materially changing location of settler colonists and their enactments on the landscape. Alaska also exists in a material way for Alaska Native peoples.

The imperial mode of seeing land works to elide the material existence of land and its use by Indigenous peoples. Bruce Braun argues that visibility acts as legibility, which renders space claimable and open for incorporation through the translation of "land" into "nature": "a space that hold[s] no signs of 'culture' and therefore c[an] be appropriated into the administrative space of 'nation.'"¹⁶⁹ For Braun, part of producing spaces of visibility was not to erase Indigenous presence from land entirely, but to narrate their relations to land as contained and temporal—not as erased, but displaced.¹⁷⁰ In this way, Native peoples are temporally and spatially contained in figure 25 as apart from figure 26. Native belongings are contained as 'culture' in figure 24 as apart from landscape and settlement, and Native domesticities are in aberrant distinction to readily recognizable forms of 'civilization' in figure 26. This displacement and division create a

¹⁶⁶ Don Mitchell, *Sold American: The Story of Alaska Natives and Their Land 1867-1959*.

¹⁶⁷ Solnit, "The Limits of Landscape."

¹⁶⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 15.

¹⁶⁹ Bruce Willems-Braun, "Buried Epistemologies: The Politics of Nature in (Post) Colonial British Columbia," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87, 1997, 12.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 17.

monopoly on how land can be understood, related to, and reduced to Western philosophical cuts between human-and-non.

Following these lines of critique, Edward Curtis' photography aims to displace Alaska Native relations from their environments through the spectacle of aesthetic landscape, the freezing and domestication of flowers and belongings, and the representation of functional and utilitarian settlement: which renders Alaska as territory and as visible, legible, and claimable. Moreover, the role of the object and the landscape become flattened and reduced as incorporable property, items for sale or for theft, and markers of human difference, but not agential beings in their own mode. The figures demonstrate several techniques that translate land as Alaska: the territory of the U.S., translate Alaska Natives as improper stewards, and deflate nonhuman agency. As a group of images, several details about Alaskan space are made legible for viewers: its enormity is awe-inspiring, much of it is seen as uninhabited and empty; it is malleable through the technologies of settlement, naming, and order; and Native presences and their "cultures" can be representationally and spatially compartmentalized. Curtis' photography builds upon a foundation of imperial acquisition, juridical inequity for Alaska Native peoples, and colonial science. It reiterates and expands the process of making land legible for settlement, and demonstrates the philosophical divisions necessary to substantiate and maintain settler innocence and control. Curtis' photography, then, is much more intricate and complex than a series of artistic portraits but is entwined with multiple forms of claiming and making propertied land and therefore the displacements that are embedded within such projects.

Conclusion:

The following images are from the last Volume of *The North American Indian* titled "The Alaskan Eskimo." Here there are repeating themes from Curtis' very first images of notoriety, those photographs taken on the HAE, and images resembling the formal structure of those in earlier volumes of the *NAI*.



Figure 27, “The Umiak, Kotzebue”¹⁷¹

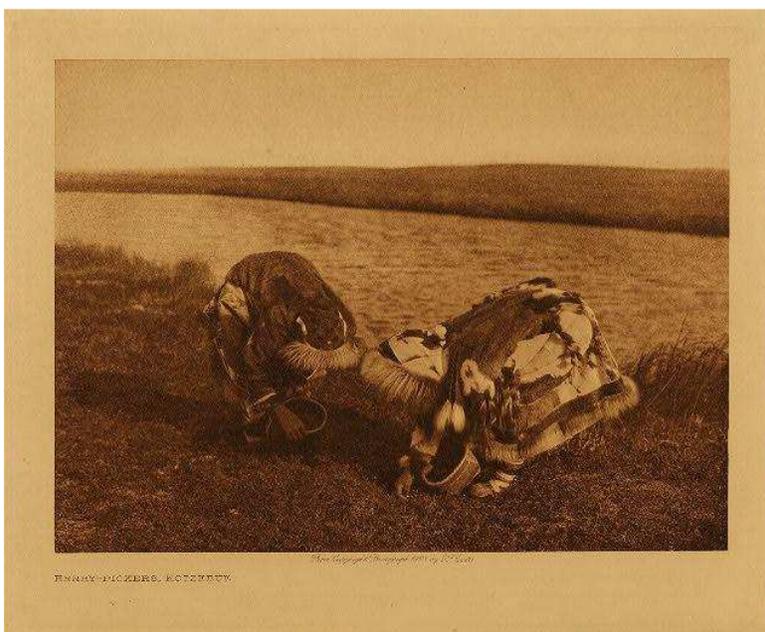


Figure 28, “Berry-pickers, Kotzebue”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis'*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.20.book.00000273.p&volume=20>

¹⁷² Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis'*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=3&size=2&id=nai.20.book.00000239.p&volume=20#nav>

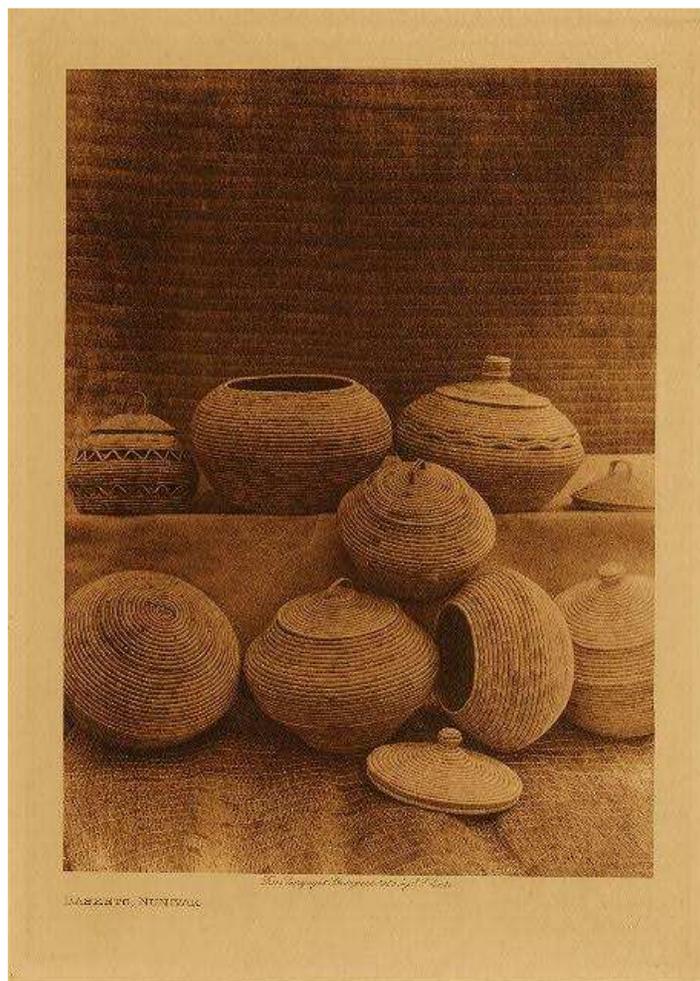


Figure 29, “Baskets, Nunivak”¹⁷³

“The Alaskan Eskimo” is the final Volume in Edward Curtis’ sweeping work. In these three figures, his general interest in Indigenous landscape, laboring body, and objects were present throughout his larger oeuvre. These repeating themes are not coincidental, and in fact overlap with the other men discussed in this Chapter, specifically George Bird Grinnell and William Healey Dall. While Grinnell and Dall are understood largely as scientists, I demonstrated that their work is also imbricated in the production and policing of the aesthetic. Their scientific careers constituted in large part by the sorting and ordering of Indigenous peoples and their beliefs, lands, and material items. These materials were content for their scientific inquiries, careers, and publications, and in their more creative musings on American Indian and Alaska Native life and livelihood. Relatedly, Curtis is widely understood as a portraiture artist; he is critiqued as a romanticizer of Native peoples and representations who capitalized on the narrative of the “Disappearing Indian.” This critique holds, but as I demonstrated, Curtis also needs to be read as a natural historian and anthropologist in his own right. Curtis was deeply interested in the sorting, organizing, and ordering of Native American peoples in ways that are

¹⁷³ Northwestern University Library, *Edward S. Curtis*,
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.20.book.00000124.p&volume=20>

constitutive and just as invested as other men like Grinnell and Dall: not to mention the dozens of other scientists on board the Harriman Alaska Expedition. This scientific and artistic Expedition was a catalyst for Curtis to be introduced to scientific musings about Native American peoples, and also how these narratives could be spun into literary, aesthetic content for circulation and for sale. This Chapter has historicized Curtis' work within a regime of anthropological and natural historian ordering, specifically within the context of the occupation of the Alaska territory in 1899.

Chapter Three

“Blood, Oil, and Identity: Political Indeterminacy in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971”

The very instrument that was to secure the land and a future for Alaska Native peoples may be the one by which they lose the distinct characteristics and status as indigenous peoples.
- Natalia Loukacheva¹⁷⁴

On December 18th, 1971, Richard Nixon signed into legislation the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history. Under the Act, Alaska Natives collectively received over forty million acres of land, payments from the United States Treasury of \$462.5 million given over an eleven-year period, and a royalty of 2% up to a ceiling of \$500 million on mineral development in the state. As Lazarus and West write, “this settlement provide(d) far more money and leaves far more land in native ownership than any previous treaty, agreement, or statute for the extinguishment of aboriginal title in our nation’s history.”¹⁷⁵ With the passage of ANCSA, Aboriginal title to land and Aboriginal right to hunt and fish on these lands would be extinguished.¹⁷⁶ The Act was unusual in that it set up for-profit Alaska Native corporations instead of any other form of tribal or governmental self-determined representation such as those utilized in the continental U.S. by Native peoples. Huhndorf and Huhndorf write that ANCSA was the “first to use corporations to administer resources, [w]hereas treaties with American Indians established reservations held in trust by the federal government... ANCSA transferred fee simple title to settlement lands to new for-profit corporations owned by Alaska Natives.”¹⁷⁷ ANCSA marked a new age of potential relationships between the federal government, state governments, and Aboriginal peoples. As established through ANCSA, Alaska Natives are also no longer under the administrative purview of the Bureau of Indian Affairs—though they had only been so for thirty years prior—and are solely responsible for the success of their for-profit business entities. Moreover, the villages established by ANCSA now count as tribes through subsequent legislation in the 1990’s, so there are now multiple, and arguably incompatible, forms of social organization and administration that Alaska Native peoples must navigate and manage including the regional corporation, village corporation, and village council.

ANCSA created two forms of Alaska Native owned corporations: the village corporation and the regional corporation. ANCSA created over two hundred village corporations that could individually determine their status as for-profit or non-profit, and twelve for-profit regional corporations with a thirteenth regional corporation for Alaska Native peoples that lived out of state, this thirteenth corporation received no land, but received a “pro rata share of \$962.5

¹⁷⁴ Natalia Loukacheva, *Polar Law Textbook* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2010), 203.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁷⁶ Lazarus, Arthur, and Richard West, “*The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: A Flawed Victory*,” *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 40, No. 1, The American Indian and the Law (Winter, 1976), 132-165.

¹⁷⁷ Roy M. Huhndorf and Shari M. Huhndorf, “Alaska Native Politics since the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 110:2, Spring 2011, 385.

million.”¹⁷⁸ While there was the option of being a “non-profit” village corporation, “there could be no distribution of dividends to members of a non-profit corporation” and so each village corporation chose to establish profit-making corporations.¹⁷⁹ Thomas Berger writes, “some eighty thousand Native persons who claimed to have at least one-quarter Native blood became either village or at-large shareholders.”¹⁸⁰ As the names denote, regional corporations hold assets for an entire region of Alaska, often lumping many distinct Native groups under one umbrella corporation. Village corporations were established on a local level and often serve one distinct Native group, but this is not always the case. Paul Ongtoogook writes that:

Regional Corporations are defined by Alaska business law and some of the provisions of ANCSA. There are two major controls on how regional corporations are set up and conduct business. The first set of controls are the state laws of Alaska concerning corporations. The second controls are those found within ANCSA. These regulations are special rules, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world. These particular rules are often difficult to interpret, as well as difficult to carry out.¹⁸¹

Beneath regional corporations stand smaller village corporations.¹⁸² These entities were created to “hold, invest, manage and distribute lands, property, funds and other rights and assets for and on behalf of the Native village.”¹⁸³ Ongtoogook writes on this point that, “The village corporations are under the same restraints as the regional corporations. They are also controlled by Alaska state business law and by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. ANCSA provisions for village corporations differ, however, in some important ways from provisions for regional corporations.”¹⁸⁴ Village corporations received title to twenty-two million of the forty-four million acres that six of the regional corporations divided among themselves sixteen million acres on a formula that was intended to apportion large land claims among the disproportionately small populations of these regions; the other six received small acreages of two million acres set aside for special purposes.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, to balance regional disparities in natural resources, ANCSA required each regional corporation distribute seventy percent of its annual revenues from the sale of timber and mineral resources among the twelve regional corporations on a per capita basis.¹⁸⁶ In essence, the legislation of ANCSA is uniquely byzantine and required multiple legislative and state bodies to produce, manage, and police Alaska Native corporations.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas R. Berger, *Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 24.

¹⁷⁹ Berger, *Village Journey*, 25.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Paul Ongtoogook, “How the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Came About,” *The Annotated ANCSA*, <http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/annancsa.htm>.

¹⁸² For a complete list of village corporations that exist within the regions established for regional corporations see “Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Mining, Land and Water,” *Corporation Index – Div. of Mining, Land, and Water*, <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/trails/17b/corindex.cfm>.

¹⁸³ ANCSA, 4

¹⁸⁴ Ongtoogook, “The Annotated ANCSA.”

¹⁸⁵ Berger, *Village Journey*, 25.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

As noted, ANCSA divided more than forty million acres into 12 geographic regions. These regional designations were based on “traditional use and occupancy” boundaries largely determined through studies done by archaeologists and anthropologists through collecting and organizing Alaska Native oral histories and linguistic and cultural differences across space.¹⁸⁷ Some of these evidences were taken from academic and scientific archives that had long been accumulating, as discussed at length in Chapter One, but many of these studies were called for symptomatically through the need to demonstrate and establish continuity of land use in order for Native peoples to participate in ANCSA. One such sweeping report was requested by Senator Henry Jackson, who was the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and was led by the Federal Field Committee for Developmental Planning in Alaska: “Alaska Natives and the Land.” Published in 1968, this survey created much of the raw data about the public health of Alaska Native peoples, the potentially exploitable resources in Alaska’s lands, and provided much information on Alaska Native uses of the land that were not confined to a description based on economic normative value of said lands. In form and content, this report was very similar to those reports assembled by William Dall and Vincent Colyer discussed in previous chapters.

Following the passage of ANCSA many individuals raised concerns about its efficacy, particularly around the ability of the corporations to distribute generated income equitably across the state to Alaska Native peoples. This legislation was one rooted in the economic opportunity based in pre-existing and ongoing capitalist extraction in the state of Alaska, as at the time of the Act, Alaska’s resources had already been used for over a century to economically support the nation through the extraction of furs, fish, and minerals. Many regions of Alaska were better poised to gain monetarily from resource extractive activities that were already well ingrained into the fabric of the state by 1971. Other central criticisms of the Act were that of adequate Native representation during the fast-tracked passage of ANCSA, as well as competing uses of land. After ANCSA, land was to be used both for resource extraction initiatives as well as ongoing subsistence practices. Subsistence in Alaska is often described by Native peoples as traditional practices of hunting, fishing, gathering and reciprocity with surrounding lands that have been sustained over a millennia through generational learning. The concerns of adequate representation and protecting subsistence use of lands were related in that those who felt most drawn to ensuring ongoing subsistence livelihoods felt least represented by Native groups gathering to help draft, lobby for, and approve ANCSA.

Representation and Extraction:

The original settlement proposed by the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) differed significantly from the version that Nixon signed into legislation. Anthropologist Gary Anders explains that the original version requested 300 million acres of land.¹⁸⁸ These initial claims exceeded the actual size of the state of Alaska by 20 percent.¹⁸⁹ This demonstrates the various

¹⁸⁷ Ongtooguk, “The Annotated ANCSA.”

¹⁸⁸ Information borrowed from Gary Anders’ piece “Social and Economic Consequences of Federal Indian Policy: A Case Study of Alaska Natives.”

¹⁸⁹ As stated in Maria Shaa Tlaa Williams’ article “A Brief History of Native Solidarity” on page 214 of *The Alaska Native Reader*.

overlapping claims to territory shared and contested by Alaska Native peoples around the state. Additionally, Anders goes on to explain, the original settlement proposed by AFN “emphasized a single statewide corporation with social responsibilities going well beyond business functions.”¹⁹⁰

The Alaska Native individuals involved in the land claims arrangements were interested in utilizing a corporate model land claim, but also wanted to ensure an accountability to the social well-being of Alaska Natives throughout the state. Moreover, those leaders mobilizing around land claims were working at the end of what is understood as the Termination Era, wherein the federal government was actively terminating and working to disband federally recognized tribes in the contiguous U.S. There was a general understanding by Native people during this time period that Congress would not permit the recognition of additionally federally recognized tribes or the establishment of new reservations, and so the corporate model of ANCSA might be interpreted as one route to otherwise make claims to land that didn’t utilize pre-existing federal Indian policy that was in danger of dissolution.

Importantly, AFN represented at the time one group of Alaska Native individuals made up of, at best, one representative from each region, but not from each village, who spoke on the behalf of the Alaska Native population at large. AFN established itself in 1966 when over 300 Native leaders from 17 organizations met in Anchorage to unify around interest in land claims, with Emil Notti serving as elected president.¹⁹¹ This meeting is now an annual convention that continues to include one delegate from every regional Native association, plus an additional delegate for every 100 active members over the first 50, and one from each village not participating in any association.¹⁹² At annual meetings, delegates elect officers and directors for two-year terms to serve as voting members of the Board of Directors, and governing authority over the Federation between annual meetings is vested in this Board.¹⁹³ However, as might be expected, from the inception of AFN internal controversies ensued including differing ethnic affiliations, a slow process of finding agreeable proposals, difficulty establishing working rules of order compatible with Native values, hiring of lawyers that were not approved by the majority, and the outstanding concern that not all Native communities had organized representation before the creation of AFN.¹⁹⁴

Some Alaska Natives today believe that AFN was perhaps not the proper political body to be brokering legislation such as ANCSA. Evon Peter writes, “[ANCSA] was not a legitimately negotiated treaty or settlement between the United States and Alaska Native tribes. ANCSA was void of direct negotiation with Alaska Native tribes and was not put to a vote of the Indigenous

¹⁹⁰ Anders, *Social and Economic*, 287.

¹⁹¹ Kornelia Grabinska, *History of Events Leading to the Passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act*, January 1983, [http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/tcc2/tananachiefs.html#A.Early Campaigns 1958-1966](http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/tcc2/tananachiefs.html#A.Early%20Campaigns%201958-1966).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Mitchell, “Alaska Natives and Their Land,” 60.

¹⁹⁴ Grabinska, *History of Events*, <http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/tcc2/tananachiefs.html#A.%20Early%20Campaigns%201958-1966>.

peoples.”¹⁹⁵ According to Peter, Nixon signed the Act into legislation without a legal government-to-government interface between the federal government and Alaska Native sovereigns and was therefore passed without a thoroughly representative voice from Alaska Native peoples around the state. Lillian Liliabas of Akiak who gave her testimony as part of the Alaska Native Review Commission stated in regard to lack of thorough consultation with Alaska Native peoples across the state and particularly in rural villages, “Who voted for ANCSA? Raise your hands? You see, Mr. Berger, no hands! You won’t find 10 people on the Kuskokwim who voted for ANCSA!”¹⁹⁶ Echoing this sentiment William Barr of Shishmaref gave testimony for the *Holding Our Ground* Radio Series in 1985 stated, “When the Claims Act was being drafted, no one came to our village and asked for our input in drafting the act. Every now and then, those of us that listen to news on radio would hear of land claims being debated down at Washington D.C. at the Congressional level. I assume it would be a different act if people from the villages had their input in the draft.”¹⁹⁷ However, Native individuals who devoted their time and money, and compromised their relationships, careers, and personal safety to ensure the settlement of such a considerable land claims should not be miscounted, and especially the Native women of this era who often go unrecognized.¹⁹⁸

Native leaders involved with the settlement were under specific pressures and constraints, combined with a need to include representatives from across Native Alaska. In addition to this, state institutions and oil companies were pushing the urgency of a finalized settlement in order to begin construction for the Trans Alaska Pipeline System that would transport oil from Prudhoe Bay, through the interior of Alaska and to the waters of the Prince William Sound near Valdez. In the late 1960’s, Alaska’s oil became an answer to the emerging energy crisis. Stephen Haycox writes that the pipeline still may not have been authorized had it not been for “the United States stepp[ing] in to aid Israel in a new Arab-Israeli war. In retaliation the Arab states...imposed an oil embargo and Alaskan oil achieved a new popularity with the American public.”¹⁹⁹ Oil companies interested in accessing the oil in Northern Alaska keenly understood that this access and construction of the pipeline would not occur without an attendance to the settlement of Alaska Native land claims. Therefore, they allied themselves with the Alaska Native cause. Although Alaska Native peoples had been organizing locally, tribally, and across the state in intersecting and distinct processes to claim their lands through legal machinations, they were largely being thwarted or caught up in litigation for multiple decades. With the discovery of oil, Alaska Native land claims were finally being addressed and with haste. Alaska Natives found themselves in an interesting position where in order to keep momentum for their claims, if they weren’t already in support of the pipeline, they were pushed to support it in order to buttress their

¹⁹⁵ Peter, 180.

¹⁹⁶ Berger, *Village Journey*, 26.

¹⁹⁷ *Holding Our Ground: Part 1*, “The People, The Land, and The Law.”

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/anca/HoldingOurGround/Holding1.html>

¹⁹⁸ The (small) documented history of ANCSA is a largely a male dominated narrative. The Alaska Native Brotherhood is often given primary significance, while the women of the Alaska Native Sisterhood and other Alaska Native women are given smaller role in these histories. For example, my grandmother, Rose Lankard, was particularly influential in land claims organizing in the Cordova area, but her labors are not recognized in any formal histories of Alaska Native organizing during the time of ANCSA.

¹⁹⁹ Stephen Haycox, *Frigid Embrace: Politics, Economics, and Environment in Alaska* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 106.

own processes of claims. James Clifford put it this way, “the oil companies, fearing that their access to a pipeline could be tied up in court for years, made common cause with the AFN, a potent alliance that produced an outcome that Native pressure alone could never have achieved.”²⁰⁰ In addition to the interests of oil companies, environmentalists and conservationists also became an important voice in the settlement through their concerns regarding pipeline construction, and the potential destruction of invasive oil extraction and its transportation. This urgency and varying registers of investment in ANCSA in part added to its rushed formation.

As noted in a letter to Howard Rock by Naugga Ciunerput, alias Fred Bigjim (Inupiaq), in 1973 he wrote:

my father was a member of a conservation group that opposed the construction of an Alaskan pipeline. I had told him that this stand was anti-Native because half of their land settlement depended on oil revenues from this pipeline...but when I read about the situation in other oil-producing areas of the world, a 2% royalty on oil with a \$500 million dollar upper limit seems to be a bad joke played on Native people. They will be pumping out oil for many years after the money for the Natives has dried up, and the pipeline will be the only monument.²⁰¹

Uniquely, due to the core of ANCSA being about economic opportunity and its intersection with the discovery of oil, the legislation is shaped by and in accordance to the guarantee of oil tapped, and a future of oil extraction in perpetuity. And as Bigjim points out, Alaska Natives don’t get the best deal. Much less of the legislation is aimed toward the articulation of Alaska Native tribal rights or prioritizing the ability of sovereign bodies to operate autonomously.

Alaska Native peoples were given just two years to complete finalized forms of land selections and land conveyance of lands to be held in both regional and village corporations. It should be noted that Alaska is a geographically expansive state, it is roughly 1/5th the size of the continental U.S. Traveling to and from rural villages around the state is expensive, time-consuming, and some locations are only accessible seasonally. Making a point to hear, let alone respond to the various needs, desires, and concerns from Alaska Native communities around the state in this period of time was an extremely difficult, daunting, and unprecedented task. As noted in another letter to Howard Rock by Ciunerput/ Bigjim, he writes, “the State of Alaska has had thirteen years to select the land that was to be taken from us by the Statehood Act...how long will it take for the survey to be done and will any natives be trained to do this work? In the past, they never let us Natives do the simplest things for ourselves and now they give us a task which is so complicated.”²⁰² Ciunerput/Bigjim bring attention here to the temporalized choices of the State of Alaska to the lands held under their purview and the lengthy block of time they

²⁰⁰ James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-first Century*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 216.

²⁰¹ Fred Bigjim and James Ito-Adler, *Letters to Howard/ an Interpretation of the Alaska Native Land Claims* (Anchorage: Alaska Methodist University Press, 1974), 70. Naugga Ciunerput is a pseudonym for Fred Bigjim (Inupiaq) and his co-author James Ito-Adler is Wally. Bigjim and Ito-Adler penned a number of letters that they sent to the Tundra Times and these letters were later collected and published as a compilation entitled *Letters to Howard: An Interpretation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act*.

²⁰² Bigjim and Ito-Alder, *Letters to Howard*, 32.

allotted themselves in relation to the quick choices that must be made by Alaska Native peoples and in relation to the “desperate” need to access oil based on an uncertain energy crisis.

Racial Reorganization and Indigeneity by Blood Quantum

In order to channel land entitlements to regional and village corporations, first these receptacles had to be created. Part of that creation was to legally define a “Native” and a “Native village” through the Act. Section 2(b) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that is concerned with securing a specific kind of relationship between Alaska Native peoples and state and federal governments in ways that are different from pre-existing relationships with American Indian nations. This desire to read Alaska Natives as a divergent legal category peculiarly other than American Indian is resonant with the historical relationship that had existed heretofore as described in previous chapters. In Section 2(b), this “new” relationship between Alaska Natives and the federal government forbids “racially defined” privileges. Section 2(b) reads:

the settlement should be accomplished rapidly, with certainty, in conformity with the real economic and social needs of Natives, without litigation, with maximum participation by Natives in decisions affecting their rights and property, *without establishing any permanent racially defined institutions, rights, privileges, or obligations*, without creating a reservation system or lengthy wardship or trusteeship, and without adding to the categories of property and institutions enjoying special tax privileges or to the legislation establishing special relationships between the United States Government and the State of Alaska²⁰³

Section 2(b) covers a substantial amount of ground. First, what is important to note is the urgency encapsulated in the phrase “should be accomplished rapidly.” As I noted, undergirding this insistence is the push for the completion of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System that would transport oil from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez for its subsequent shipping to refineries. The passage of ANCSA was necessary for the construction of the pipeline, as a land freeze had been suggested by the Alaska Federation of Natives and was supported by the secretary of interior, which he informally imposed in 1966, thereby “suspending issuance of leases and all other proceedings under any of the public land laws under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department.”²⁰⁴ By 1970 the Supreme Court supported the land freeze as well; there were concerns about the ambiguity of Alaska Native claims to land. For example, Senator Ernest Gruening (D) asserted that legislation surrounding land claims should be allowed only if there were “any valid rights” of the Natives. Later, Gruening cited the overlapping claims by Native peoples as supporting his previous theory of the “dubious grounds of aboriginal rights.”²⁰⁵

²⁰³ “Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act,” Government Publishing Office,

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-85/pdf/STATUTE-85-Pg688.pdf>. (emphasis mine)

²⁰⁴ Kornelia Grabinska, History of Events Leading to the Passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, January 1983, <http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/tcc2/tananachiefs.html>.

²⁰⁵ “Senate Proposes Cash Payments for Valid Native Land Claims,” Tundra Times, April 15, 1966. http://www.alaskool.org/projects/ancsa/articles/tundra_times/TT7_Valid_Claims.htm.

Opposition also came from other non-Native Alaskans, particularly those in the Alaska Miners' Association and the Alaska Sportsmen Association who argued, "neither the United States, the State of Alaska, nor any of us here gathered as individuals owes the Natives one acre of ground or one cent of the taxpayers' money."²⁰⁶ Similar sentiments were also expressed widely in opinion letters published across all news outlets in Alaska during this time period. One example published in the Anchorage Daily Times in 1969 is titled 'Down On The Natives,' penned by Bob Sloan from Chugiak. Sloan remarks:

Now I know the natives are underprivileged, only getting free medical care, food, schooling, training and low cost housing... They certainly need \$500 million, all that land and 2 percent on minerals... I am going to go for [a Senator] who wants to really treat the natives equally, for instance on taxes on 40 million acres and \$500 million. He will have to say no more free rides, you have to pay like whites and Negroes and hustle your own jobs. I will certainly give any natives I have a chance a damn hard time, as they cost me a job at which I hoped to excel and make some money.²⁰⁷

Millie Buck, testifying as part of the Alaska Native Review Commission in Gulkana reiterated that mainstream narratives of "the generosity of the settlement had left White people with the idea that an Indian who was driving a new car had not worked for it but had simply bought it from a share of the settlement."²⁰⁸ Lena Dewey in Nenana gave a similar report: "You have a lot of the White community against anything that's Native because of the land claims, because they thought we got so much."²⁰⁹ These archival evidences demonstrate that there was not only pressures from natural resource development initiatives, but also different forms of bigoted public and legislative conditions that shaped the urgency of the Act, and the mobility of Native peoples to make their claims facing both historical, institutionalized, and mainstream daily racialization and racism.

The second significant dimension of Section 2(b) was that the writers of ANCSA were determined not to recreate race-based privileges or institutions for Alaska Native peoples as law. Alaska Native corporations, at the outset, were understood as race-based institutions because stockholder eligibility dictated this restriction—in order to be a shareholder one needed to be Alaska Native.²¹⁰ However, in 1992 as dictated by the Act, that restriction was to be lifted and stocks would be made available for public sale.²¹¹ Paul Ongtoogook writes, "for this reason, the regional and village corporations are not permanently racially defined institutions."²¹² Therefore, Section 2(b) restricts corporations from being racially defined and forbids the creation of any

²⁰⁶ U.S. Congress. Senate. *Hearing before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*. 91st Congress, 1st sess., 1968.

²⁰⁷ Bob Sloan, "Down on the Natives," *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 23, 1969.

²⁰⁸ Berger, *Village Journey*, 28.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ The definition of "Native" is covered in subsequent sections.

²¹¹ While space does not permit for a full analysis in this chapter, it is important to know that the 1991 amendments to ANCSA restricted the sale of shares in Alaska Native corporations. This effectively keeps Alaska Native corporations Alaska Native-owned.

²¹² Ongtoogook, "Annotated ANCSA."

property or privilege specifically for Alaska Native peoples as a racialized group. In a sense, the insistence on creating corporations for Alaska Native peoples without a racial designation reiterates previous narrations of Alaska Natives as non-racial or questionably ethnic groups, and was explicitly intended to assimilate Native people into a capitalist economy. In other words, ANCSA meant to create racial ambiguity if it wasn't there already. The writers of ANCSA here are producing Alaska Native peoples, once again, as de-racialized or as indeterminate subjects.²¹³ More than an abstraction of race or lack thereof, this desire to not extend race-based privileges to Alaska Natives also occludes any form of Alaska Native priorities to hunting, fishing, and harvesting. The absence of these protections has been the source for ongoing litigations around subsistence protections for Alaska Native people that continues into the present and will be discussed in a following section.

A final detail to glean from Section 2(b) is that ANCSA was insistent on ending the status of wardship of Alaska Native peoples, here categorized as the creation of reservations, tax or property privileges, and “special relationships” between the federal government or state government. The creation of for-profit corporations was meant to buoy economic opportunity and support financial independence of Alaska Native peoples, and to sever any preexisting relationships that would continue to understand Alaska Native peoples as “wards of the state.” Put another way, ANCSA was meant to end any social responsibility to Alaska Native groups by the state or federal governments. This is one reason that many activists and scholars of Alaska Native politics have called ANCSA “termination in disguise.”

This is an important detail, for if any Alaska Native corporation were to be bankrupted or unable to generate consistent income, lands supposedly gained through ownership through the settlement would be used as compensation to creditors. Crucially, the lands and resources that were meant to be safeguarded by regional and village corporations established by ANCSA were divided spatially and vertically. Village corporations maintain control of the surface rights of lands and regional corporations control subsurface rights allotted through the Act. As Berger writes:

The surface of the land supports the many kinds of renewable resources used for subsistence. The subsurface of the land holds the non-renewable and exportable resources on which the growth of the state and the Native corporations is predicated. In that way, a bankruptcy of a regional corporation would have potentially devastating effects on any given number of villages within that region: creditors could end up owning the subsurface rights beneath villages.²¹⁴

In a letter to the *Tundra Times*, Ciunerput/Bigjim raises questions about the spatial divisions of surface and subsurface ownership of lands: “our village would not receive subsurface rights, in other words, any valuable minerals in the ground, because these would belong to the Regional Corporation. Why can't the Village Corporation have the subsurface rights to the land that they receive?”²¹⁵ Seeming to answer his own question in a later letter, Ciunerput/Bigjim later writes,

²¹³ Important to note, however, is that ANCSA did not erase previously existing tribal governments and in 1993 Congress federally recognized dozens of Alaska Native tribes.

²¹⁴ Berger, *Village Journey*, 10.

²¹⁵ Bigjim and Ito-Adler, 30.

If the Regional Corporations are getting subsurface rights in the Village land, why can't the Village get subsurface rights in the Wildlife refuges, for example? Wally says that it would destroy the purpose of them, but then what will mining and drilling do to life in the small villages? Maybe they are afraid that if there are rich minerals underneath the ground, there may be rich Natives above it.²¹⁶

Ciunerput raises this question once more in his letters:

I asked Wally what "subsurface" means, and he thought it was anything below the surface...we were wondering if gravel was a subsurface particle or a surface particle...a lot of money has been made from the sale of gravel. In fact, all around our village there are good gravel pits. Will our village be able to claim gravel as surface estate, or will the regional corporation say that it is subsurface particle?²¹⁷

Central to Ciunerput/Bigjim's questions about subsurface v. surface rights are concerns about profit, and in particular that village profit will come at the expense of regional profit, or that extraction will occur proximate to specific villages that will then benefit the regional corporation, not the village and, perhaps, cause destruction of the village. The use of a corporate model that deployed both village and regional corporations thus had the potential to create class stratification and economic divisions within Native communities. Moreover, the vertical spatialization of surface and subsurface rights are also brought into question by Ciunerput/Bigjim as a kind of bizarre organization of understanding land use. As Eve Tuck writes, "Alaska Native peoples are required to adhere to an understanding of land as vertical at the same time that other sections of the act extinguish hunting and fishing rights that traverse *across* land."²¹⁸

When read in this way, the settlement of ANCSA was quite precarious. The Act redefines the terms of land claims as guaranteed only if for-profit corporations established simultaneously to land ownership are financially successful. In one way, ANCSA is divergent from previous nation-to-nation interface in the contiguous U.S. between American Indian nations and the federal government. Congress granted clear title to settlement land "because the Act confirmed that Alaska Natives were the owners of the land that they occupied" as opposed to other Native American lands where "the federal government owns title...and holds it in trust for Native Americans who reside upon it."²¹⁹ This may be interpreted as a success of the Act, but this ownership of title is, again, contingent upon a consistent and continual generation of income, the land is not given outright. Millie Buck for the Holding Our Ground radio series states, "We don't have a settlement. Not if we're going to always be worried about losing our land tomorrow."²²⁰ To that end, the land claims reorganized through regional corporation borders and subsurface v.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 33.

²¹⁷ Bigjim and Ito-Adler, 102.

²¹⁸ Eve Tuck, "ANCSA as X-Marks: Surface and Subsurface Claims of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act," *Alaska Native Studies*, 1(1), 2014, 251-252.

²¹⁹ Eric C. Chaffee, *Business Organizations and Tribal Self-Determination: A Critical Reexamination of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act*, 25 *Alaska Law Review* 107-155 (2008), 123-124.

²²⁰ Holding Our Ground: Part 1,

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/ancsa/HoldingOurGround/Holding1.html>.

surface rights are not only spatially reimagined but are also temporally bound into futurity by necessary and successful development.

Significantly, related and in addition to section 2(b), was section 3(b) and 3(c) is the Act's definition of a "Native" and a "Native Village." Section 3 (b) reads:

"Native" means a citizen of the United States who is a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaska Indian (including Tsimshian Indians not enrolled in the Metlakatla Indian Community), Eskimo, or Aleut blood, or combination thereof. The term includes any Native as so defined either or both of whose adoptive parents are not Native. It also includes, in the absence of proof of a minimum blood quantum any citizen of the United States who is regarded as an Alaskan Native by the Native village or Native group of which he claimed to be a member and whose father or mother is (or, if deceased, was) regarded as Native by any village or group. Any decision of the Secretary regarding eligibility for enrollment shall be final;²²¹

To put Section 3(b) another way, in order to be considered eligible for shareholder status under the Act, willing Alaska Natives who wished to participate were made to evidence a minimum degree of blood in order to be considered a beneficiary. Those who could not evidence their Alaska Native degree of blood would need an individual who was able to evidence their own degree of blood to, essentially, "vouch" for them. Evidence was largely produced by Alaska Native peoples trying to prove their degree of blood through written and verifiable genealogical and ancestry records, most often through census documents archived by the federal government on trips to territories similar to those I analyzed in Chapter One. Through the Act, ¼ degree of "Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut" blood or more defined a person who was born on or before December 18th, 1971 as an Alaska Native for purposes of shareholder status.

This date is not an arbitrary one, the shareholder rolls were closed afterward. All Alaska Native peoples born afterward were not eligible to become shareholders in the corporations established through ANCSA. Generations of Alaska Natives born after December 18th, 1971 can only receive shares through inheritance: by either the generosity or death of a kin shareholder or by court order. This shortsighted flaw of ANCSA has been partially rectified by a handful of Alaska Native corporations that give "descendants" of those original shareholders a percentage of a stock—never the full amount originally allotted to those born on or before this date—so that they may have at least a political voice in their corporate entities to whom they belong. However, today around 60% of Alaska Native peoples are not ANCSA shareholders, which largely includes the youngest generations of Alaska Natives who fall into a similar historical category of neither here nor there and instead within a realm of political indeterminacy.²²² In response to Section 3(b) Ciunerput raises questions about the dangerous rapidity of land claims of deciding

²²¹ "Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act," Government Publishing Office, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-85/pdf/STATUTE-85-Pg688.pdf>.

²²² "Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 1971," University of Alaska Fairbanks, <http://tribalmgmt.uaf.edu/tm112/Unit-3/Alaska-Native-Claims-Settlement-Act-ANCSA-1971>.

lands kept by ANCSA corporations, Native people who may be rendered non-Native through the legislation, and the potential termination that follows. Ciunerput/Bigjim writes:

I worry about those who did not have help before the deadline. Did they become Lost Natives? I guess two years is a long time to some people, but out here in the villages it is a short time in a way of life that has been going on for as long as anyone knows... What is wrong with all our children and grandchildren who are being born since AN ACT was passed? Are babies born after December 18, 1971, to Natives somehow less Native than those born before this date? On paper they are not Natives as far as AN ACT is concerned. As a family ends when there are no more children to carry on, what happens to a people when they do not claim their descendants?²²³

In addition to this problematic temporalizing of Alaska Native identity, before ANCSA forms of belonging as an Alaska Native person in distinct tribal communities had not relied on the use of blood quantum. While this was already a common mechanism of regulating American Indian populations by the federal government for many decades prior, Alaska Native peoples had not been subjected to this technique of parsing identity and belonging through blood fractions. The enforcement of blood quantum regulations would immediately and enduringly transform Alaska Native lives in multiple ways. In an immediate sense, access to hunting and fishing would alter considerably and only be partially rectified through amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1994 that would allow certain populations of Alaska Native peoples to hunt seal and sea otter that met specific criteria. In a less quantifiable way, blood quantum would shape Alaska Native identities in countless forms, for through the stipulations of blood quantum Native peoples are always understood as Native in “diminishing degrees” and that “an Indian who is not an unreconstructible historical relic is no Indian at all.”²²⁴ As Eve Tuck writes, “blood-quantum logics portray contemporary Indigenous generations to be less authentic, less Indigenous than every prior generation in order to ultimately phase out Indigenous claims to land and usher in settler claims to property.”²²⁵

Again, in Ciunerput/Bigjim’s letters, he raises questions about the creation of the term “Native” created through ANCSA and how his non-Native friend, Wally, might fit in:

Wally was wondering if he was a friend of the Secretary could he be enrolled as a Native. As for me, I was wondering if the Secretary didn’t like me could he prevent me from being enrolled as Native? Then I got to wondering what about someone with ¼ Native blood that other Natives did not recognize as Native. I mean is a Native a Native, or is a Native someone the “Secretary” says is a Native? How much Native blood does the “Secretary” need to be able to decide

²²³ Bigjim and Ito-Alder, Letters to Howard 15-16.

²²⁴ Eva M. Garroutte, *Real Indians Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 68.

²²⁵ Tuck, ANCSA as X-Mark, 246.

who is Native? And who were the Natives who decided that the “Secretary” could decide who Natives were?²²⁶

Here, Ciunerput/Bigjim comically pokes holes in the authority and logic of ANCSA in its ability to determine who is and who is not Alaska Native through the machinations of blood quantum and bureaucratic appointments. He similarly critiques the hierarchies of power that place one person, the secretary, with the ultimate responsibility and control of determining Alaska Native identity and belonging. There are also clear allusions to the matters and intricacies of kinship, which play out and are decided not through paperwork, but on the ground in communities by those who claim one another. Alternative to Section 3(b), the politics of identity and belonging are decided through distinct forms of kinship and relationships that vary across peoples, through their own shared knowledges of families and clans, and the daily and continued practices of care, obligation, ceremony, law, contestation, dissent, and argument. To again quote Tuck, “though they have no scientific basis, logics of blood quantum have been forced on tribes and Indigenous communities in ways that have attempted to undermine prior ways of determining tribal membership, an affront to tribal sovereignty.”²²⁷ Thought of in this way, Alaska Native tribal governments’ enrollment processes may not have a blood quantum requirement for membership, but that same tribal member cannot be a shareholder in a corporation meant to serve their interests once because of blood quantum requirements and twice because of the cut-off date of December 18th, 1971. Moreover, Ciunerput’s letter is also bringing attention to the power stratifications across and within Native communities, wherein some Native people operate with more political or social power to approve or decline the respective power of the “Secretary’s” decision making responsibilities—and to recognize the secretary’s power as completely final.

The definition of a “Native” as it is codified in ANCSA remains complicated and far-reaching. However, this definition was not created in isolation and defining a “Native” was primarily important in that “Natives” must be made legible as “Natives” as a building block of the creation of the corporate structure. The Act dictates that in order to create a “Native village” least twenty-five “Natives” must gather themselves into groups, then called “Native Villages.”

Section 3(c) reads:

“Native village” means any tribe, band, clan, group, village, community or association in Alaska listed in Section 11 and 16 of this Act, or which meets the requirements of this Act, and which the Secretary determines was, on the 1970 census enumeration date (as shown by the census or other evidence satisfactory to the Secretary, who shall make findings of fact in each instance), composed of twenty-five or more Natives.²²⁸

This section should be read along with Section 11’s requirements, in particular, Section 11(b)(1) that reads a village “shall not be eligible for land benefits...if the Secretary determines that (A) less than twenty-five Natives were residents of the village on the 1970 census enumeration date

²²⁶ Bigjim and Ito-Alder, Letters to Howard, 13.

²²⁷ Tuck, ANCSA as X-mark, 246-7.

²²⁸ “Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.”

as shown by the census or other evidences satisfactory to the Secretary, who shall make findings of fact in each instance; or (B) the village is of a modern or urban character, and the majority of the residents are non-Native.”²²⁹

I end with an inclusion of the definition of a “Native village” to demonstrate the constitutive nature of both defining “Native” and “Native village,” particularly in that they are at fundamentally at odds. Alaska Native peoples who navigated the requirements of ANCSA in order to qualify as beneficiaries must absolutely be “of modern or urban character,” just like Alaska Native peoples were forced to indigenize Western “modern or urban character” in order to withstand ongoing colonization. These two stipulations construct temporal and spatial conditions for identifying as Alaska Native as necessarily fixed in order to prove authentic belonging. Furthermore, the stipulations of blood quantum construct a system of land access that is rooted in exclusion and based on biological determinism. The institutionalization of biological race through blood quantum constructs notions of difference through biological race and elides more explicitly political and sovereign presence and historical agency. This overwhelming focus on cultural alterity obfuscates the role of colonialism, dispossession, and disenfranchisement experienced by Alaska Native peoples for nearly a hundred years prior by American occupation. I end this section with a gesture toward questions of sovereignty as this is one of the outstanding issues that ANCSA has left unsettled for Alaska Native peoples and is still grounds for debate in the contemporary moment.

Sovereignty and Subsistence

Through the spatial and racial rearrangements of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, two crucial categories of Alaska Native life and politics were left undetermined and in need of attention: sovereignty and subsistence. As previously stated, ANCSA did not extinguish Alaska Native tribal sovereignty or Indigenous legal status, but it left this area of importance particularly ambiguous. Succinctly put, ANCSA “failed to elaborate, one way or another, on the question of aboriginal governance or sovereignty.”²³⁰ Essentially, during the drafting of the legislation and directly following, it became clear that Alaska Native peoples wanted more than corporate entities that owned the title to land, they also or strictly wanted political institutions that reflected their autonomous and distinct governing and law-making structures that had pre-existed and endured American occupation. One limitation of ANCSA concerning sovereignty is the power of “Indian Country” not being extended to Alaska. Eric Chaffee writes that:

the sovereign powers associated with Indian Country include the power to impose taxes, jurisdiction to adjudicate certain disputes, authority over non-members on tribal land, the power to regulate domestic relations, the right to determine rules of inheritance, and the power to permit and regulate gambling activities. Without Indian Country these sovereign powers do not exist.²³¹

²²⁹ “Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.”

²³⁰ Huhndorf and Huhndorf, “Alaska Native Politics,” 385.

²³¹ Chaffee, *A Critical Reexamination*, 137

The lack of Indian Country status has resulted in a lack of protection for Native peoples on their own lands when violence is involved, and particularly so for Alaska Native women.²³²

Many Alaska Natives do not see the forms of necessary tribal government and organizing social structure as inherent or reflected within the ANCSA corporate model. This is accurate and demonstrated in the very language of the legislation, as already shown that Section 2(b) of ANCSA, the writers of the Act wished to completely do away with “race-based” privileges and relationships between Alaska Native peoples and federal and state governments. Importantly, however, Section 2(b) “is not directed at tribal government...both the executive branch and Congress have continued to recognize their special relationship with Alaska Natives, a relationship based on cooperation between the federal government and Alaska Natives as complementary sovereigns.”²³³ This dual relationship has made things even more complicated.

For instance, there is confusion about who should be recognized as the central law-making or decision-making parties, and often the ownership of land by corporations can undermine or be at odds with Alaska Native tribal government decisions, as tribal and traditional governments are often landless. A tribal government may not want development to occur on lands in question, but it is the corporation owns said land and not the tribal government.²³⁴ Furthermore, corporation boards or individuals employed by a corporation may act as they see fit in regard to land management without a vote or meeting with shareholders, let alone a meeting with tribal governments who may call those same spaces ancestral homelands. In some communities, shareholders in corporations established by ANCSA wished to dissolve corporations and make tribal governments the entities of land ownership. Eve Tuck writes, “just after ANCSA was enacted, shareholders in Arctic Village and Venetie (village) Corporations voted to transfer all lands to the federated tribal government of the villages, prompting more than 25 years of litigation regarding the reach of tribal jurisdiction in the state of Alaska.”²³⁵ The actions in Venetie are basically an attempt to institute “Indian Country” in Alaska, to which the Chaffee quote above alludes, but the Supreme Court ruled against Venetie as part of Indian Country because ANCSA lands had not been ‘set aside’ for tribes but for corporations.²³⁶ The concern over sovereignty rights of Alaska Native tribal government remains a concern into the present moment. My argument that indeterminacy is an organizing analytic with which to describe the unique turns of Alaska Native history and resulting politics can also be applied in this context: Alaska Natives once again face the precarity of indeterminacy, in this context political indeterminacy. Neither understood fully as American Indian legal subjects in special relationships with the federal government nor read in a totalizing non-racialized legal framework of economic subject, Alaska Natives and their claims to sovereignty float in an indeterminate space.

Nonetheless, Alaska Native communities across the state have been politically innovative in their use of their corporations and tribal governments, more often than not Alaska Natives work to

²³² See the Violence Against Women Act and the peculiar status that Alaska Native women have under this legislation.

²³³ Berger, *Village Journey*, 141.

²³⁴ See Tuck, and Chaffee.

²³⁵ Tuck, *ANCSA as X-mark*, 253.

²³⁶ See Tuck; Huhndorf and Huhndorf.

align themselves in their shared and common goals, which often take the form of social responsibilities to place and communities. As Huhndorf and Huhndorf write, “ANCSA offered the prospect of another form of self-determination by according Alaska Natives unprecedented opportunities for economic advancement and hence a measure of political power, which they have used to support cultural and social agendas contrary to the assimilationist objectives of the settlement.”²³⁷ While the responses, innovative imaginings, and failures of ANCSA have been mixed and varying across the state, there is one other outlying concern that also has yet to be successfully contended with: the matter of protecting subsistence practices. Again to quote Huhndorf and Huhndorf, “in short, the settlement aimed to integrate largely rural, subsistence-based communities into the mainstream capitalist system.”²³⁸ While the economic opportunities of ANCSA are unmatched in the contexts of Indigenous land claims in the U.S., the ongoing concern of hunting and fishing rights for Alaska Native people also remains a considerable issue.

For subsistence concerns under ANCSA, this issue was more explicit than sovereignty: Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights were to be extinguished. While the Act did place more land in Native ownership than any other land claims agreement that preceded it in American history, access and longstanding relationships with those lands were considerably altered through the legislation. Only 1/10th of Alaska was delivered into ownership of Alaska Native corporations, and the selection of these lands was most often with economic opportunity as the central priority in mind, in order to ensure that corporations were self-sustaining and making money for shareholders. This priority meant that lands used for hunting and fishing were not as often prioritized in land selection, so after ANCSA many Alaska Natives no longer had Aboriginal rights to hunt and fish outside of the borders created by the Act. As Huhndorf and Huhndorf write, ANCSA’S “failure to adequately address vital sovereignty and subsistence rights engenders conflicts between Native, state, and federal interests that occupy the center of contemporary Alaska Native politics, making these the most actively litigated Native issues.”²³⁹ James Clifford writes with a similar sentiment saying “four decades after ANCSA the economic viability of traditional village life remains precarious.”²⁴⁰ If at the core of ANCSA was the idea of economic prosperity through development ultimately to support Alaska Native autonomy, then the question of subsistence has remained a seemingly incommensurable one. Caleb Pungowiyi, president of Kawerak, said as part of the Alaska Native Review Commission reported at Nome, “one of the things that I feel that was a major mistake made by our Native leaders in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was the extinguishment of aboriginal fishing and hunting rights.”²⁴¹

Adeline Raboff, narrator for the radio broadcast, *Holding Our Ground*, a compilation of testimonials of Alaska Native shareholders recorded in 1984 and 1985 states, “the lands became a corporate asset, privately owned real estate. It created new pressures on a timeless bond between people and the land.”²⁴² Raboff’s analysis gives insight into the transformation inherent in the legislation of ANCSA. She continues in a later part of the radio broadcast to say, “I never

²³⁷ Huhndorf and Huhndorf, “Alaska Native Politics,” 286.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid, 386.

²⁴⁰ Clifford, *Returns*, 281.

²⁴¹ Berger, *Village Journey*, 60.

²⁴² *Holding Our Ground*, Part 1.

heard the word subsistence until 1971 under the Native Land Claims Act. Before that time, when I was brought up in the culture of my people, it's always been our culture and our land."²⁴³ Nelson Frank echoes Raboff saying that subsistence and the "perpetuation of subsistence resources was part of the way of life and was mandated by the traditional law and custom. The traditional law was passed from generation to generation, intact through the repetition of legends and observance of ceremonials which were largely concerned with the use of land, water, and resources contained therein."²⁴⁴ Subsistence as livelihood forms are central to many Alaska Native peoples, particularly in rural Alaska.

Alaska Natives practice subsistence in that they "harvest, process, distribute, and consume millions of pounds of wild animals, fish, and plants through an economy and way of life."²⁴⁵ As Tom Thornton writes, "collectively, these varied subsistence activities constitute a way of being and relating to the world, and thus comprise an essential component of Alaska Native identities and cultures."²⁴⁶ Similarly Thomas Berger writes that "subsistence is more than a means of production, it is a system for distribution and exchange of subsistence products. The system is not random: it operates according to complex codes of participation, partnership, and obligation."²⁴⁷ What became coded as "subsistence" through ANCSA legislation, however, has received very little protection under the law. Through ANCSA, corporations "secured no riverine or offshore rights. Fish and marine mammals are not ancillary to land-based resources" and in fact have been heavily policed rather than protected beginning with the Purchase of Alaska, in large part by U.S. agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.²⁴⁸ Alaska Native hunting and fishing and the ceremonial laws therein, particularly in rural Alaska, has nonetheless continued and endured even as its multiple forms it was made illegal. A survey in 1998 quoted that:

92-100% of surveyed households in rural Alaska use wild fish and 75-98% harvest fish. Given Alaska's rural population of 116,653...subsistence is by far the state's largest employer. Moreover, annual fish, wildlife, and plant harvests among rural Alaskans average 375 pounds per person, or about a pound a day, versus 22 pounds per person per year in urban areas. Subsistence is a critical sector of Alaska's rural economies.²⁴⁹

Not only do an overwhelming number of rural Alaska Native residents continue to share sustaining relationships with lands that feed not just themselves as individuals, but entire families and communities, these relations are compromised by earlier described concerns of surface and subsurface rights. Where village corporations control surface rights to lands nearby villages where shareholders may continue to practice subsistence activities, regional corporations control

²⁴³ Holding our Ground, Part 3, "Subsistence--A Way of Life," <http://ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/ANCSA/HoldingOurGround/Holding3.html>

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Thomas F. Thornton, "Alaska Native Subsistence: A Matter of Cultural Survival" CSQ Issue: 22.3 Crisis on the Last Frontier (September 1998), 1.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Berger, Village Journey, 56.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 60.

²⁴⁹ Thornton, "Alaska Native Subsistence," 4.

the subsurface rights to those same lands. Those lands, therefore, are always at risk of regional corporation use for forms of potentially destructive resource extraction. In this way, there is a repeated paradox of the same land being vertically divided to meet different and most times incommensurable ends. Furthermore, many Alaska Native people felt that they didn't get as much land as they needed to continue practicing subsistence. Weaver Ivanoff, then president of Unalakleet's tribal government said, "many valleys and rivers are lost to us. You can see our markers still. We fished there, we hunted there—but it's not ours anymore."²⁵⁰ Henry Aghupuk from Shishmaref mirrors the sentiment stating, "the amount of land we received is only a small portion of what we actually used for subsistence purposes...we definitely don't have our prime subsistence grounds within our village land selections."²⁵¹ Not only are village corporation lands at potential risk, but there is now significantly less land for Alaska Native peoples to hunt and fish in continued forms.

Following ANCSA there has been multiple additional state and laws meant to protect subsistence use for Alaska Native peoples. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, among other important moves, "mandated a subsistence priority [and] defined an allocation preference for rural Alaskans in time of scarcity."²⁵² Without the space in this chapter to fully analyze a "rural preference," it is important at least to note that "rural" preference often gets coded for "race-based" preferences. "Rural" preference becomes a weak stand-in for Alaska Native priority to subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering. This indeterminate definition that, again, shies away from race is unfamiliar given the history of Alaska Native categorization that has always been ambiguous. Moreover, the rural preference is an ongoing source for continuing litigation that often must be settled on a case by case basis. Yet, there is legal wiggle room in this indeterminacy, in that the combination of ANCSA and ANILCA together are fundamentally at odds. ANCSA requires that no special relationship between Alaska Natives and the federal or state government be created, and ANILCA is an extension of Congress supporting federal protection of Native rights. As Tom Thornton writes, "ANILCA is Indian law, regardless of a 'rural preference,'" and that "Alaska Native subsistence rights are a federal trust responsibility."²⁵³ However, in any case, "it is no more than a declaration. Legislation has yet to follow."²⁵⁴ Once again, Alaska Native legal categorization of both sovereignty and protection of subsistence are unclear, ambiguous, and indeterminate as it continues into the contemporary moment.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have outlined some of the main mechanisms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 that continue to render Alaska Native peoples and their lands as ambiguous figures. I have shown that a political indeterminacy that issued forth from this legislation was not anomalous to the Alaska Native experience, but historically contingent and symptomatic of the racial legal categorization that preceded it. One particularly salient example

²⁵⁰ Berger, *Village Journey*, 91.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Berger, *Village Journey*, 64.

of this discussed briefly in this chapter is the Venetie decision, in which Native claims to sovereignty were denied precisely because of the status of land under ANCSA. I demonstrated through close readings of three specific sections of ANCSA that race, indigeneity, and space were all remade in relation to one another. Through the borders drawn by ANCSA through the regional corporation maps, the defining of “Native” and “Native Village,” and a close attendance to the ongoing precarities of Alaska Native sovereignty and subsistence practices, I argue that political indeterminacy is central to the functioning of the legislation.

Chapter Four

“Joan Naviyuk Kane’s poem ‘Exceeding Beringia’: Disrupting Universal Human Events in Arctic Ice-Geographies”

“The contrast between nomad and settled life is also in general strongly emphasized among the Eskimo of the Behring district. It is clear, however, that in countries which do not allow of agriculture, settled life can never completely arrive at a sharp distinction from nomadism...”
-Friedrich Ratzel, *“The Arctic Races of the Old World”*²⁵⁵

“I remember the birds ever so many of them when I hunted with the weapons of a child. The water was covered in their numbers, red as the flowers of summer on the mountain. The red phalarope were our prey of choice, there were so many. Today, these birds return yearly, but now only a few return home in spring to show us they remain a part of the land, as we are.”
-Herbert Agiygaq Anungazuk, epigraph to Joan Naviyuk Kane’s poem *“Exceeding Beringia”*²⁵⁶

Reports concerning the Arctic are often alarmist. Images of calving glaciers and emaciated polar bears floating atop singular icebergs are splashed across front-page news and book covers. As ice melts, familiar questions of state-sovereignty and property materialize. A transitioning geopolitical Arctic offers evermore extraction of resources and therefore resource battles, seas rise consequentially due to a disappearing polar ice cap, and the emergence of new shipping lanes give the term “ice-free corridor” new meaning.²⁵⁷ These are easily recognized narrations of changing material qualities of Arctic ice. Additionally, there exists an Anthropocene-as-new-geologic-epoch conversation, which places the blame of a rapidly changing climate as human-induced. In the Anthropocene, the Arctic is operationalized as a barometer for planet health—melting ice is a danger at a global level. Yet, leveraging the Arctic as a universalized indicator of human history and human futurity is anything but original.

In this chapter, I excavate a racial history of Arctic ice-geographies. I historicize ice as it was capitulated by philosophers from the Enlightenment onward to 19th century anthropologists who linked differences among humans as induced by climate and geography. I demonstrate how Arctic ice-geographies have also been implicated in enduring diffusionist musings about one-way human migrations across the globe, particularly those involving what’s known as the Bering Land Bridge—a landmass supposedly once spanning between present day Alaska and Russia. In keeping with the unilinear directionality of the Bering Land Bridge, Indigenous peoples living in ice-geographies were exceptionally excluded from social evolution frameworks. This is because theories of social evolution hinge on a hierarchy of civilization grounded in the presence of what I am calling *temperate-normative* agricultural livelihood. Due to a curated understanding of ice

²⁵⁵ Friedrich Ratzel, *The History of Mankind*, vol. 2, (London, Macmillian & Co. 1897).

²⁵⁶ Joan N. Kane, “Exceeding Beringia,” Poets.org. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/exceeding-beringia>.

²⁵⁷ Since the late 1930’s the “Ice Free Corridor” hypothesis has been an accepted route for human migration after passing across the Bering Land Bridge. As ice melts in a current moment, new routes emerge giving unprecedented access for shipping commodities.

as hostile to settlement, Indigenous peoples of Arctic geographies have been read and coded as racialized subjects—migrant peoples incapable of civilizational fixity.

The racialized temperate-normative understanding of ice and its ambiguity continues into the present and emerges in contexts of Anthropocene rhetoric as well. Similar to the land bridge theory that flattens distinct socialities of place for a universal understanding of human migrations, the Anthropocene also overlooks relationalities and histories of place in the Arctic in favor of a grand crisis of humanity, often that can only be adequately addressed through an exclusive and colonial climate Science. To disrupt these co-optations of Arctic ice-geographies, especially as ice figures into the Bering Land Bridge Theory and the Anthropocene I turn to Inupiaq poet, Joan Naviyuk Kane, and her poem entitled “Exceeding Beringia.” Through the poetic form, Kane’s work effectively undermines the universal narrations of humanity’s migration story across a phantomatic bridge into the modern moment of climate crisis. The poem centers a kinship of seasonal transit among the red phalarope, the Inupiat, and Arctic ice-geography that upends temperate-normative ideals of unilinear directionality of both geologic time and space. In “Exceeding Beringia,” obligatory relations to more-than-human entities and disruptions caused by forced migrations sanctioned by both government and climate intermingle as they coincide with a racialized Arctic ice-geography.

Ice and the Anthropocene: A Universal Human Crisis

Arctic ice has long been researched and recounted by much scholarship that covers the representation and reportage of ice as blank, barren, and empty—as essentially ahistorical and disconnected from ongoing socialities.²⁵⁸ Paradoxically, the Arctic has also been writ as a space of archaeological research to evidence large-scale theories of human migrations through the Arctic to other climes, originating in Africa or East Asia. Other work has intervened to rewrite the Arctic as an important ecological ecosystem,²⁵⁹ a space where white masculinity and nationalism is to be tested²⁶⁰ and either verified or foiled,²⁶¹ or a geopolitical zone that defies bureaucratic clarity as neither land nor water.²⁶² Much material data is taken from the Arctic in the form of the ice-core through geocryology as well as by satellite data that tracks ice melt and rising seas. These newer contributions to ice-analytics offer a characterization of ice that I interpret as uneasily categorized by perceptions of the colonial: ice does not produce agriculture, it does not give root, it does not generate arborescence, it is not rhizomatic. Ice also confounds an aesthetic determinacy by lens or by brush. The immensity of glaciers and icefields remains to be an artistic conundrum and representational bane. Ice is slow and plodding as it shifts, breaks, melts, and hardens, though scholars and artists often dramatize its immediate precarity.

²⁵⁸ Sherrill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2002).

²⁵⁹ Michael Bravo and Gareth Rees, “Cryo-politics: Environmental security and the future of Arctic navigation,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13.1 (2006): 205-215.

²⁶⁰ Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

²⁶¹ Adriana Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²⁶² Philip E. Steinberg and Jeremy Tasch, eds., *Contesting the Arctic: Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North* (IB Tauris, 2015).

Arctic scholarship has also taken up the inclusion of Indigenous histories and politics, and often these contributions arrive in the form of assessing traditional ecological knowledge or alternative Indigenous literary narrations.²⁶³ Yet, the history and ongoing concern of how Arctic Indigenous peoples have been historically racialized in relation to ice-geographies, and how that racialization continues in moments of climate change and talk of Anthropocene by way of a geologic scale of time have yet to be discussed. The crisis of climate change animating the Anthropocene discourse appears as explicit and straightforward: human-made changes are causing immediate identifiable destruction. Yet, many analytical offerings of Anthropocene rhetoric are inadequate as they authorize a liberal, universal truth of how the Arctic must be known, depicted, and managed. In so doing, this rhetoric subsumes Indigenous presences, knowledge sets, and historical and ongoing interfaces with coloniality.

Specifically, I see the rhetoric of the Anthropocene as constituted by three overlapping formations. First, as Science that works to “save humanity” from a self-induced catastrophic crisis.²⁶⁴ Second, as bureaucracy that works to attend fully to the sovereignty claims of primarily colonial nation-states and secondarily, if at all, to Indigenous polities.²⁶⁵ And third, through a liberal multiculturalism that allows for multi-dimensional portrayals of the Arctic to exist simultaneously and equally.²⁶⁶ Within the latter is a niche narration of Indigenous peoples as apolitical and often ahistorical through tropes of alternative qualities of Indigenous lifestyles within Arctic spaces. This inclusion of “the alternative” articulates Arctic Indigenous peoples not as sovereign subjects or polities, but instead as a potential resource of land-based knowledges that can assist the global “we” in the salvation from self-inflicted destruction.²⁶⁷ It is suggested that the death of a planet looming on the horizon might be soothed by an orchestrated return of a set of once subjugated knowledges.

²⁶³ See Susan Kollin’s *Nature’s State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier* UNC Press Books, 2001; and Igor Krupnik, Claudio Aporta, Shari Gearheard, Gita J. Laidler, and L. Kielsen Holm. *SIKU: knowing our ice*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2010.

²⁶⁴ I am thinking of ubiquitous climate science that takes the fore, but also works such as Chakrabarty’s “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” which re-authorizes climate science as a savior of globe and human. See *Whose Anthropocene?: Revisiting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “Four Theses”* edited by Robert Emmett and Thomas Lekan (2016); and Slavoj Žižek’s response to Chakrabarty in *Living in the End of Times* for a more dimensional argument to which I allude.

²⁶⁵ I nod here to the abundance of political science and policy scholarship that attends overwhelmingly to concerns of normative nation-state sovereignty in a materially transforming Arctic, and secondarily to texts such as Barry Zellen’s texts *On Thin Ice: The Inuit, the State and the Challenge of Arctic Sovereignty* (2009) and *Breaking the Ice: From Land Claims to Tribal Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2008); and Jessica M. Shadian’s edited collection *The politics of Arctic sovereignty: oil, ice, and Inuit governance* (2015).

²⁶⁶ As an example see Guernica Magazine’s three-panel conversation series co-sponsored with the New York Society Library titled “The Art and Activism of the Anthropocene,” wherein nine artists and writers share a conversation that satellites around a generalized human subject’s concern about a changing climate or a multicultural concern that does not attend to question of race, gender, or class in relation to experiences of a changing climate.

²⁶⁷ Recent book by Gleb Raygorodetsky, *The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change*, offers an example of this phenomena in which Indigenous communities are explained as an “‘archipelago of hope’ as we enter the Anthropocene (backflap).”

The Anthropocene as the latest geologic epoch that is characterized by measurable human-made environmental change to the globe,²⁶⁸ has been problematized across disciplines.²⁶⁹ Most relevant to this discussion are those Indigenous and feminist critiques that dispute the Anthropocene as a neo-colonial term, a kind of continuation of the “last five hundred years of dispossession and genocide.”²⁷⁰ Zoe Todd and Heather Davis “call for the consideration of Indigenous philosophies and processes of Indigenous self-governance as a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by a white supremacists, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene.”²⁷¹ The pair argue that the “ecocidal logics” that have created human-induced climate change must be read as emerging within conditions of coloniality.

Kim TallBear writes against the lumping in of Indigenous peoples as major culprits of a changing climate. She posits that imposing an epistemological split from more-than-human “kin” is a colonial violence embedded within the rhetoric of the Anthropocene.²⁷² Scholars moving in similar modes suggest that one method of undermining the universal humanist position used by much Anthropocene scholarship is to cultivate practices that serve and attend to particularities and distinct historicities that are embedded in place. This disallows a managerial Science from maintaining and retaining authority and requires an acknowledgement not only of the sovereignties of Indigenous polities, however they take shape, but also the histories of coloniality that have informed specific social geographies of place.

I add to these important interventions that within this practice there is an urgent need to be particularly attendant to Arctic ice-geographies, as within Anthropocene conversations these spaces often get de-linked from their social histories and are made to serve as evidence of a shared global humanity experiencing crisis. To better serve Indigenous Arctic polities in ice-geographies, historicizing the racialization of peoples and ice is crucial. Arctic ice-geographies are not empty and asocial—they do not only come to matter through global crisis. Rather, critiques of the Anthropocene must be grounded in specific landscapes and socialities—and one of the most readily utilized landscapes of precarity is that of the melting Arctic. As I demonstrate

²⁶⁸ P. J. Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” in *Nature* (2002), 415.

²⁶⁹ See Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016); and Nicholas Mirzoeff’s “It’s Not The Anthropocene, It’s The White Supremacy Scene, or, The Geological Color Line,” *After Extinction*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2016). As well as Jason Moore’s edited anthology *Anthropocene or Capitalocene* (PM Press, 2016); and Kate Raworth’s “Must the Anthropocene be a Manthropocene,” *The Guardian* 20 (2014). Importantly also Françoise Vergès, “Racial Capitalocene,” *Futures of Black Radicalism*. ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, (New York: Verso, 2017): 72-82.

²⁷⁰ Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 16.4 (2017): 761. Also see Kyle Powys Whyte’s many works on the subject, but especially “Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises”; Laura Pulido’s “Racism and the Anthropocene”; and Michael Simpson’s “The Anthropocene as colonial discourse.”

²⁷¹ Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 16.4 (2017): 763.

²⁷² Kim TallBear, “Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking and the New Materialisms,” *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World* (2017): 179-200.

in the following section, descriptions of ice as a spatial entity produce a kind of racialized, uncivilized person and a definition of what ice, as a materiality, comes to be. These tracing of the historicities of ice lend an important lens to the disruptive power of Kane's poem taken up in the final section. Kane's poetry is not a floating critique of the Anthropocene or the Bering Land Bridge theory, but is grounded within the histories and materialities of Indigenous ice-geographies of the Arctic.

Temperate-Normativity

The ambiguity of landscape and race in the Arctic has long been a concern for Western thinkers—beginning with those of the Enlightenment who worked along a spectrum to map human difference to geography. Before the rise of scientific racism in the mid-19th century, which biologized race as something measured through supposedly innate characteristics of the body, a common theorization of explaining human difference was made in relation to geography and climate. Human differences were mapped as emerging from the landscapes wherein peoples lived. For example, Georg W. Hegel writes in his piece “Geographical Basis of History”:

Groups who lived in certain climatic zones should not be considered as historical actors...first take notice of those natural conditions which have to be excluded once and for all from the drama of the World's History. In the Frigid and in the Torrid zone the locality of World-historical peoples cannot be found.²⁷³

For Hegel, entry into the History of the World was disallowed to those who inhabited specific geographies with certain climate conditions; of note here is the characterization of the “Frigid zone.” Yet, Hegel's characterization of History as arising and being fostered within primarily from particular geographies was not created in a vacuum. As Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze writes, “Hegel...had available to him a far greater amount of anthropological reports from missionaries and explorers than any of his predecessors.”²⁷⁴ In a way, Hegel's work actually synthesized race-space theorizations of the Enlightenment and eighteenth century typified by European thinkers and missionaries that preceded him.²⁷⁵

For instance, Comte de Buffon wrote in 1748 that “both cold and heat dry the skin” and so “nothing can afford a stronger example of the influence of climate than this race of Laplanders, who are situated, along the whole polar circle.”²⁷⁶ Relatedly, in 1754 Hume continues this line of thought by writing, “all the nations, which live beyond the polar circles or between the tropics, are inferior to the rest of the species, and are incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind.”²⁷⁷ Later in this piece Hume quotes Francis Bacon who claimed, “the native of a cold climate has genius” but “the northern geniuses are like melons, of which not one in fifty is good;

²⁷³ Georg Hegel, “Geographical Basis of History” in *The Philosophy of History* [1837] (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004).

²⁷⁴ Emmanuel Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 7.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 22, 26.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

but when it is so, it has an exquisite relish.”²⁷⁸ Similarly, Kant’s lectures from the 1750’s-1790’s gave this quote, “in the hot countries the human being matures in all aspects earlier, but does not, however, reach the perfection of those in the temperate zones. Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites.”²⁷⁹ Simply put here by Kant, temperate zones offer the apex of humanity as it materializes in the white race. While these excerpts demonstrate the perceived superiority of whiteness, they also illustrate the supposed nongenerativity and inferiority of both landscapes and peoples in regard to a non-temperate “frigid zone” or “polar circle.”

This is in part related to what I am calling *temperate-normativity*: the supposed non-generative features of ice as understood in relation to a Western ideal of agriculture, which is meant to act as both a civilizational and government-making activity. The normalized and undergirding understanding is that “proper” civilization begins with agricultural lifestyles that then allow for the written word, and organized religion to prosper in urban hubs. Ice has been maligned because it does not adhere to temperate-normative requirements of land, measured by one form of fertility that manifests as temperate agriculture. As Bravo writes, “the earth’s frozen states have received bad press for a very long time—from societies whose agrarian and pastoral values are rooted in systems of value that looked back to the classical world of temperate Mediterranean ecosystems.”²⁸⁰ Similarly, Raymond Williams suggests that the etymology of civilization, as opposed to barbarity, is entirely bound up with that of methods of cultivation, and by relation, culture. He writes “civilization, from late 18th century, is a specific combination of the ideas of a process and an achieved condition. It has behind it the general spirit of Enlightenment, with its emphasis on secular and progressive human self-development. . . alternative words were developed to express other kinds of human development and other criteria for human well-being, notably, culture.”²⁸¹

Knotted up in this concept, then, is the importance of fixed settlement that agriculture supposedly provides for the emergence and success of correct civilization. The counter then to refinement and civilization is movement, migration, and transit. To turn once more back to Hegel in this context, he writes, “agriculture, by its very nature, requires that the nomadic existence should come to an end. It necessarily entails a settled way of life, and demands foresight and provision for the future.”²⁸² The implication here then is that peoples of certain geographies are not only racially inferior to those who occupy temperate zones, but that they are constitutively peoples of *transit*. Temperate locales provide settlement whereas ice-geographies, supposedly, force constant mobility. However, this was not for want of trying to force temperate-normative productivity from Arctic ice-geographies. For instance, Linnaeus attempted to make Arctic landscapes useful in an agricultural sense in 1732 when he was the first to create plans of rendering the Arctic as profitable through four Lapland strategies: “to improve reindeer herding; to harvest natural resources; to support dairy and grain farming; and to introduce exotic

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 33.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 63.

²⁸⁰ See Michael Bravo’s introduction to *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, ed. Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (MIT Press, 2017).

²⁸¹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24.

²⁸² Hegel, “Geographical Basis of History,” 79-102.

cultivars.”²⁸³ However, his desires did not transpire as hoped and ultimately, he regarded Scandinavia’s Arctic as “totally useless.”²⁸⁴ Importantly, Linnaeus also authored a hierarchy of humans sorted by racial characteristics, similar to his taxonomical project of ordering plants. Based on his ethnological notes on Arctic Indigenous Laplanders in the early 18th century, his hierarchy that includes an Arctic figure clearly demonstrates the ways that the Arctic ice-geographies have been racialized in Western imagination, in this case by way of botanical Science.

In a similar fashion, Kant’s 1775 piece “On the Different Races of Man,” he also groups four different races of men into a hierarchy, including those “displaced into the arctic zone.”²⁸⁵ Kant hypothesizes that this race is not only of “smaller stature” due to the risk from cold, but also that “most of the now-known inhabitants of the arctic zone seemingly are but late arrivals there...and have taken up their present seat only since the emigration from the eastern part of Asia.”²⁸⁶ The Arctic here being crafted as a geography that is antithetical to the temperate potential of civilization and whiteness as superiority, and those living there are simultaneously rendered as uncivilized, recent migrants having arrived from an elsewhere. These early moments demonstrate the entangled nature of human migration concerns to temperate-normative notions of livable landscape. This is to say that an excavation of the ways that Arctic ice-geographies have been racialized is entwined with concerns of origins—temperate-normativity is bound to theories of migration from Asia, if not other places. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, in his 1787 *Notes on the State of Virginia* wrote:

[d]iscoveries, long ago made, were sufficient to shew that a passage from Europe to America was always practicable, even to the imperfect navigation of ancient times...discoveries of Captain Cook...have proved that, if the two continents of Asia and America be separated at all, it is only by a narrow streight. So that from this side also, inhabitants have passed into America: and the resemblance between the Indians of America and the Eastern inhabitants of Asia, would induce us to conjecture, that the former are the descendants of the latter, or the latter of the former...²⁸⁷

Scholarly uses of this excerpt often end here and focus on the potential openness of Jefferson’s statement in terms of descendant directionality. However, the latter part of this sentence, often omitted, is particularly crucial. Jefferson continues, “...or the latter of the former: excepting indeed the Eskimaux, who, from the same circumstance of resemblance, and from identity of language, must be derived from the Groenlanders, and these probably from some of the northern parts of the old continent.”²⁸⁸ Within Jefferson’s characterization, “Eskimaux” transits don’t

²⁸³ Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 77.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 126.

²⁸⁵ Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, 44.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 44.

²⁸⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* 1787, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/jefferson/jefferson.html>.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 101.

match the human migrations that move south into the Americas, but are in transit throughout the “northern parts” of the globe—perhaps even from “the old continent.” Arctic Indigenous peoples, for Jefferson, are held in a geographic-racial category that is exceptionally ‘of the North.’ Whereas Kant puts forward a recent migration from Eastern Asia, these thinkers don’t necessarily need to agree for their musings to be influential, damaging, and enduring. The undergirding concern of mapping human difference to geography is the concern of human migration and the origins of racialized peoples continue in the contemporary moment of archaeology and within genetic research.

Figures like Franz Boas and Lewis Henry Morgan were also concerned with these enduring questions, and their careers involved in furthering ideas of difference as related to space, though their projects were coded as “cultural relativism” and “stadial development,” respectively. Boas’ career began in the Arctic, wherein his analytic of cultural relativism was tested and decided accurate.²⁸⁹ A student of Friedrich Ratzel, who coined the term *Lebensraum* or “living space,” which fixes human groups in spatial units that later served Nazi ideology; Boas published multiple pieces following his influence. His first ethnographic trip to the Arctic at Baffin Island from 1882-84 was concerned “with an investigation of the dependence of contemporary Eskimo migrations upon the physical relationships on their land.”²⁹⁰ Carol Knotsch writes that Boas’ Arctic scholarship agrees “with Ratzel’s statements on the causes of human migrations and the environmentally conditioned choice of settlement sites...the maps accompanying the articles also corresponded to Ratzel’s demand for a historical-critical ‘cartographic representation of the ethnographic conditioned choice of settlement sites.’”²⁹¹ Following Ratzel, Boas looked to document how the Inuit of Baffin Island made intentional transits to temperate locales to establish a more-settled lifestyle. It follows, then, that Boas’ next project researched this question on a larger scale. He directed the Jesup North Pacific Expedition from 1897-1902, financed by the founder of the American Museum of Natural History, Morris K. Jesup. The organizing principle of the Jesup Expedition was to answer the enduring question of the origins and migration routes of the American Indians and Eskimos.²⁹²

Somewhat recursively, in 1897 Ratzel drew upon Boas’ research in the Arctic to fashion his own conclusions that begin with an Eskimo exceptionalism, which posits that “all Americans with the exception of the Eskimo form a single main race.”²⁹³ Ratzel goes on in his 28th section to write that Arctic life for the exceptional Eskimo is “a meagre, easily shaken, hazardous existence. He is not surrounded, like the Polynesian, by water, but by ice; if it advances, it cuts him off from

²⁸⁹ George W. Stocking, *The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911. A Franz Boas Reader*. (University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁹⁰ Douglas Cole, “‘The Value of a Person Lies in His Herzensbildung’: Franz Boas’ Baffin Island Letter-Diary 1883-1884,” in *Observers observed: Essays on ethnographic fieldwork*, ed. George W. Stocking, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

²⁹¹ See Carol Knötsch, “Franz Boas’ research trip to Baffin Island 1882–1884,” *Polar Geography* 17.1 (1993): 3-54.

²⁹² Igor Krupnik and William W. Fitzhugh, *Gateways: Exploring the Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1902*, Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 2001.

²⁹³ Friedrich Ratzel, *The History of Mankind Volume II* (London, Macmillan & Co. 1897), 11.

his sources of supply. Between sea-ice and land-ice the basis of his life is tightly straitened.”²⁹⁴ Attributing the hazardous existence in the Arctic to the materiality of ice itself, Ratzel goes on to supplement this discussion to also be an argument about the slowness of time. “An existence of this kind demands an enormous amount of time, force, and life. Think only of the process of melting ice or snow in a stone kettle with a train-oil lamp. A whole year under this zone means little more than a month in ours... There can be no doubt that the severe climate has a directly destructive effect.”²⁹⁵ The undergirding idea is that due to the severity of Arctic ice-geographies, Indigenous peoples of the Arctic are less likely to move toward an arrival at civilization, following the unilinear directionality of social evolution à la Lewis Henry Morgan.

While Boas and advisor Ratzel are often delinked from developmental evolutionary anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan, these men all similarly read space as an indicator for racial or “cultural” characteristics, particularly those of Indigenous peoples. Morgan’s 1877 work *Ancient Society* mapped material production to stages of evolutionary development through savagery, barbarism, and an ultimately an arrival at civilization.²⁹⁶ Crucially, Morgan’s schema is one of universal human social evolution based on a unidirectional movement out of savagery and toward an achievement of civilization. Taking Ratzel’s inclusion of Arctic time as moving slower than temperate locales, one can assume that Arctic ice-geographies are so entirely backward that including them in the unilinear theory of social evolution isn’t necessary. Morgan writes, “the fact that mankind commenced at the bottom of the scale and worked up, is revealed in an expressive manner by their successive arts of subsistence.”²⁹⁷ In Morgan’s framework, modes of production are linked to a spatiality of living—the objects one made were connected to the foods and places where one lived. The stages of development, then, are not only temporalized and spatialized, but are thoroughly temperate-normative in the focus on agricultural and sedentary lifestyles that are meant to act as the vessel of movement through his developmental stages to arrive at civilization.

Due to the temperate-normativity at the core of Morgan’s theory of social development, peoples who live in ice-geographies are nearly absented from *Ancient Society*. He writes, “the great number of dialects and stock languages in North and South America, which presumptively were derived, *the Eskimo excepted*, from one original language...”²⁹⁸ When explaining the “Ganowanian family” (American aborigines), the only mention of Arctic Indigenous peoples are listed here: “the Eskimos belong to a different family,” and “their occupation of the American continent in comparison with that of the latter family was recent or modern” and “the aborigines, one stock in blood and lineage, *with the exception of the Eskimos*, had gained possession of the great continent...”²⁹⁹ For Morgan, “the Eskimos” and their lives in ice-geographies are so contrary to his temperate-normative developmentalism that he does not even bother to attribute to them a developmental stage.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 101.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ This framework garnered interest by Marx and Engels who went on to publish *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* with the subtitle *In Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan*.

²⁹⁷ Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress From Savagery, Through Barbarism to Civilization* (H. Holt, 1877).

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 104. (emphasis mine)

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 152, 177, 464. (emphasis mine)

However, what Morgan does make clear, similar to Kant’s musing, is that “Eskimos” are recent arrivals from elsewhere and that non-temperate geographies prompted human migrations. Morgan writes, “the occupation of the earth occurred through migrations from an original center...in quest of better area.” He continues imploringly that understanding the “range of human distribution is absolutely necessary to a proper comprehension of Ancient Society...the real history of mankind is contained in the history of the growth and development of institutions...the most material influence upon human affairs.”³⁰⁰ For Morgan, the cultural evolution of humans can be seen in the migrations of humans out of ice-geographies. The linking of the origin story of human migrations, as one that moves intentionally away from intemperate lands, to the study of human development read through material production is demonstrative of the historical connections between temperate-normative racialized geographies and the universal narratives of arrival and transit.

As this collection of excerpts demonstrates, it is clear that Arctic landscapes are dismissed as incapable of generating agricultural civilizational settlement, and therefore Arctic peoples are denigrated as racially inferior. Constitutive to this dismissal is that ice-geographies are also simultaneously read as places of transit and migration and those Indigenous peoples living there are then consequentially interpreted as migrant peoples having recently arrived from elsewhere and always-already ex-situ. Part of this, as can be seen, is due to the migration origin story that is caught up within the racialization of ice-geographies. Beringia as migration story, then, is implicated in these early musings of ice racializations—not in the least part by the matching the unilinear directionality of Morgan’s ubiquitous theory of social evolution that had less influence on anthropology than it did on social policy, and across the land bridge theory that evokes a secular human history. Similarly, this history of racialization via geographical determination is also embedded within the rhetoric of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene actively overlooks Indigenous histories and politics in Arctic ice-geographies in favor of not only a shared global humanity, but also a shared geologic timescale—a similar strategy of a constitutive discourse of Arctic space that has become readily accepted as part of the fabric of human history, which is Beringia.

Bering Land Bridge: Human History of Intentional Transit

Transit, as it is embedded in the human migrations of the Bering Land Bridge theory, is couched within the supposed motivation to move away from ice-geographies. This transit occurs through an “ice-free corridor” and toward temperate locales—an intentional transit as seen in multiple theorizations in the previous section. The theory of human migrations from “Asia” to “North America” across a land bridge originated with a Jesuit missionary, Fray Jose de Acosta, stationed in Mexico and Peru in 1589, more than a century before Russia (re)named the Bering Strait.³⁰¹ It wasn’t until 1937 that Eric Hulten, Arctic botanist and plant geographer, published extensive accounts linking plant life of Eastern Siberia to Alaska and coined the term *Beringia*. The

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 379.

³⁰¹ See David H. Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (Basic Books, 2001).

archaeological discovery of Clovis spear points found in the early twentieth century, along with other geologic archaeological evidence are meant to support the Bering Strait theory.³⁰²

This origin story as an objective scientifically evidenced theory utilizes the geologic timescale to demonstrate how the globe came to be populated. The Bering Land Bridge theory offers human history as secular and unilinear, narrated in chronological “waves” of migrants, settlers, and usurpers in transit from East Asia. Yet, Indigenous polities have their own distinct articulations of transit, arrival, and emergence, which are geographically and socially specific. These articulations go omitted in favor of an overarching story of human historical unilinear transits—much like the social evolution schema belonging to Lewis Henry Morgan. These narratives are not just exclusive and colonial in their intentional omissions but can be dangerous to legal navigations of indigenous claims to land. As discussed in Chapter One, and as Jodi Byrd writes, “these theories... provide a means to question aboriginal title to lands—if they were prior migrants from Asia, they had no aboriginal rights at all.”³⁰³ Though often imbedded within many distinct Indigenous creation stories, transit and migration are often at odds with legal structures of land claims settlements that require a strategic essentialism and boundedness to place. Yet, Joy Harjo writes, “The Bering Strait Theory assumes that a land bridge was marked one way. The logic of that notion is so faulty as to be preposterous. There is no such thing as one-way land bridge. People, creatures and other life will naturally travel back and forth. Just as we will naturally intermarry, travel up and down rivers, cross oceans, fly from Los Angeles to Oklahoma for a powwow.”³⁰⁴ Beringia subsumes the multiple Indigenous articulations of migrations into a universalizing narrative of human transit.

While Beringia as a universal origin story obscures all North American Indigenous transits and distinct narratives of arrival (if not beyond), it is important to note that this narrative operates uniquely in Arctic spaces, as Arctic Indigenous peoples’ prolonged presences and relationships to land are continually questioned in ways that American Indian polities of the continental, and one might argue “temperate” United States, is not. It is necessary to call attention to the ways that Beringia and the Anthropocene narratives operate in similar modes of favoring a universal, global human history and human modernity in ways that eclipse Arctic Indigenous histories and ongoing socialities within racialized ice-geographies. In the section that follows, I read Joan Naviyuk Kane’s poem “Exceeding Beringia” as a disruption to these universal narrations. Kane’s work is attentive to ongoing narrative and material coloniality in Arctic spaces, particularly those of Beringia and climate change.

Joan Naviyuk Kane: Exceeding Beringia

This section analyzes Joan Naviyuk Kane’s poetry as a form of storytelling that is situated and emplaced within ice-geographies, particularly the space that is understood as where Beringia once was. While Kane’s poem is set in an ice-geography, ice is not the central focal point. In a space overdetermined by ice tropes, Kane focuses on different relationalities, specifically those

³⁰² Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 200.

³⁰⁴ Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poems and Tales* (WW Norton & Company, 2001).

that work against the operationalization of the Arctic by the myth of Beringia and the Anthropocene. Kane's poem "Exceeding Beringia" brings together a critique of colonialism as it inheres in universal origin stories and a conjured human-induced catastrophe of climate change as her poem centers overlooked forms of transit and kinship specifically in the landscape of what is supposed to have been the bridge of Beringia. "Exceeding Beringia" was commissioned by the Academy of American Poets and funded by the National Endowments for the Arts in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) for the "Imagine Your Parks" grant. This partnership commissioned fifty poets in fifty states to write poems about a national park in their home state.³⁰⁵ Joan Kane was commissioned to write a poem about a national park in Alaska, specifically, she was asked to write a poem about Denali National Park, but elected to write about the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve.³⁰⁶ This federal preserve overlaps with the lands, communities, and histories to whom Kane is connected: King Island (Ugiuvak) and Mary's Igloo.

The Bering Land Bridge National Preserve was first recognized as the Bering Land Bridge National Monument in 1978 via presidential proclamation. In 1980, through the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act, the Preserve was established with allowances for both subsistence and sport hunting and trapping. In its multiple mutations of land ownership and titles, Alaska Natives of this area have been extended little involvement in determining the ownership and management of their homelands. To address this sordid history, Kane leaves a remark in the "about this poem" section of the online interface:

Indigenous people continue to be dispossessed of our homelands through various policies (relocation, conservation, economic development and countless other paternalisms). As an Inupiaq woman, it can be a challenge to celebrate aspects of the problematic history of this country, especially ones that are so closely yoked to my identity: land and place. I wrote this poem to honor sites in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve whose importance is impressed upon me by relatives and community members, though I haven't yet been fortunate enough to spend time in all of these places. This poem also allowed me to draw upon the beautiful intricacies of rhetoric, observation, and sensibility embodied in the life work of Herbert Anungazuk (NPS Native Liaison) and contrast those with those of John Muir.³⁰⁷

In this note to the reader, Kane brings attention to the histories of dispossession acutely felt by Indigenous peoples that are entangled with multiple processes of governmental colonialism. She states that writing a poem to honor a space now managed by the National Park Service was not an easy task as an Inupiaq woman who is familiar with and shaped by such historical and

³⁰⁵ Academy of American Poets, "Imagine Our Parks with Poems," <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/imagine-our-parks-poems>

³⁰⁶ Skype Meeting with Poet, April 8th, 2018.

³⁰⁷ Kane, "Exceeding Beringia."

ongoing colonial processes of colonialism that implicate the NPS. Kane makes it clear that she is writing the poem to honor sites in the preserve “whose importance is impressed upon [her] by relatives and community members,” directing attention away from the normative histories celebrated by NPS, and instead concentrating her efforts on valorizing Inupiat relationality as a way of knowing and claiming. Echoing her title “Exceeding Beringia,” the content of the poem exceeds normalized narrations of Beringia: as a bridge of transit by which migrations of humans moved across in a temporally linear fashion intentionally out of ice-geographies and to more temperate climes. Kane’s poem centers Indigenous relations to lands and histories of colonialism that have otherwise been obscured by universalities conjured of an icy, melting Arctic, of Alaska, and specifically of the area re-named Beringia. Kane also tethers this disruption of Beringia to the problematic tendencies at the center of the Anthropocene by relaying emplaced experiences of Inupiaq peoples and their relations to the more-than-human as they move under conditions of a warming landscape.

“I remember the birds ever so many of them when I hunted with the weapons of a child. The water was covered in their numbers, red as the flowers of summer on the mountain. The red phalarope were our prey of choice, there were so many. Today, these birds return yearly, but now only a few return home in spring to show us they remain a part of the land, as we are.”

—Herbert Aġiyġaq Anungazuk

Nimiqtuumaruq aktunaamik: bound with rope.

This land with its laws that serve as wire
and root to draw us together. Sinew, snare,
the unseen growth of the green tree
many rivers south whose stump now shoals

into use. Through layer upon layer of land
submerged, of ice, of ash, through lakes
that cannot be the eyes of the earth.

The phreatomagmatic blue sprawl
of the Devil Mountain Maar, the *Kuzitrun*

drained by inland veins scrawling tributaries

with name upon vanishing name.

The giant granite tors at Serpentine:

Iyat, the cooking pot sentineled

by unscoured stone as it towers

endlessly into the flickering sky.

Auksruaq, like the blood that seeps

across such hot and dim and strenuous

times where one still cannot be serene:

red phalarope, might we follow,

leaving the meadow wet with tears?

From nest to fledge and then to move again

right out to sea, circling tight vortices

to upwell food. Let us lose our grief

in great rafts as we translate the renamed

straits. Our limbs, like yours, are burnt

and broken. Let us at last make noise

of this truth as we return together

to wear another furrow, to make portage,
to make our land our home anew.³⁰⁸

Kane sutures together missions of the park service to the enduring geological legacy of John Muir's work—a history that is both celebrated and, less often, undermined as a crucial narration of conservationist ethic pertaining to Alaska's lands. Muir, a participant on the Harriman Alaska Expedition, and a well-known figure held dear to many Californians and Alaskans wrote now canonical texts of nature writing. Muir authored *Travels in Alaska*, a celebrated collection of nature writing and scientific glaciology published posthumously in 1915. *Travels in Alaska* was a reporting back to the USGS on the exploitable resources of the newly acquired territory of Alaska and a pleasing read for burgeoning conservationists in the continental United States. Pivoting away from this well-known naturalist who encouraged settler capitalism, and therefore displacement of many Alaska Native peoples and polities, Kane instead turns to Herbert Anungazuk, an Alaska Native NPS liaison. Anungazuk was hired as a cultural anthropologist by NPS in 1984 but held a previous occupation as a whaling captain for fourteen years. His time working with the park service has been lauded as exemplary of the importance of Native and non-Native collaboration between experts in Arctic anthropology.³⁰⁹

Kane begins her poem with an epigraph written by Anungazuk, and by opening with this epigraph Kane's poem foregrounds a sustained Alaska Native interaction with this preserve. The piece thereby privileges a set of relations that are typically not permitted in preserves: hunting. Anungazuk is hunting migratory birds—who also might be called birds of transit—red phalaropes, as they were the “prey of choice” for Anungazuk when he was young, and presumably for his community as he writes “our prey of choice.” He continues, it is revealed that “now only a few return home in spring.”

The “Beringia” geography—as opposed to a spectacular representation of a melting ice cap or through a narration of historical human migration—is read through experiences of change that are distinct to Anungazuk's own forms of measurement. The marked change from “so many” to “only a few” red phalaropes is a noticeable difference which would a decrease in population. Yet, for Anungazuk's records this is but one form of measurement and description. Instead of focusing on the indicated difference in phalarope numbers, one could also turn attention to an element that remains constant and, in fact, overriding: the red phalaropes continue to “return home...to show us that they remain a part of the land, as we are.” Change is not the most prominent variable; the central tenet of this epigraph is the persistence of presence to demonstrate that they, the red phalarope and the peoples of that area, are a part of the land—whether or not numbers indicate some other interpretation of health. The authority is not in the expert's ability to measure and record change in landscape, but instead, the focus is a maintained kinship even in times of perceived destruction. Presence of migratory return of the phalarope and

³⁰⁸ Academy of American Poets, “Imagine Our Parks with Poems,”

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/imagine-our-parks-poems>

³⁰⁹ See Igor Krupnik, Kenneth L. Pratt, and Carol Zane Jolles, “Aġiyġaq Herbert Anungazuk and Ernest S. Burch, Jr.: Remembering an Iñupiaq Anthropologist and His Mentor,” *Arctic Anthropology* 49.2 (2012): 213-220.

Anungazuk persists, and though the dimensions of that presence may be different, it continues. Within the dominant rhetoric of geologic epochs, the melting ice as a global event and universal one-way migrations, this kinship of seasonal return that presents a disruptive form of time and transit through space is an overlooked dataset, one not particularly worthy of measurement by normative sciences. Nor is there a method to chronicle such information—other than, perhaps, a poem.

A crucial element that obligates both the red phalarope and the Inupiat of this region to one another and to the land is communicated in Kane's poem through the intentional use of Inupiaq language, which punctuates "Exceeding Beringia" from the outset. The first words of the first stanza are in Inupiaq, "Nimiqtuumarauq aktunaamik" and are followed by ": bound with rope." It is unclear if "bound with rope" is the direct translation of the preceding Inupiaq words, or if "bound with rope" is a related statement or description, an ambiguity heightened by the grammatical use of a colon. This intentional lack of clarity immediately sensors this poem to non-Inupiaq readers; they are bound in this moment by the disruption of the dominance of the English language. The very opening is closed; orientation to space is obscured. This deliberate destabilization signals that the world offered here is not the world of the non-Inupiaq, this is not a familiar space of a shared universal human event. The speaker of the poem opens and closes spaces from the assumed universal English speaker-reader's consumption and belonging. In this sense, the non-Inupiaq reader is bound with rope, captive by the choice of the speaker.

Is this a benign or malicious binding? The next lines reveal: potentially both. The first stanza can be read in two ways that exist simultaneously. "This land with its laws that serve as wire / and root to draw us together. Sinew, snare, / the unseen growth of the green tree many rivers south whose stump now shoals / into use." These lines offer a multi-dimensional understanding of being bound, as the laws of the land fasten "us" together. The use of many verb-nouns such as wire, root, sinew, and snare suggest that the "us" in the poem is drawn together by materials that offer potentially incarcerating and fruitful circumstances. Wire and snare can be interpreted as materials that are meant to bind in ways that trap and fasten; root and sinew offer dimensions of binding that are generative and symbiotic. Therefore "[t]his land with its laws that serve as wire/ and root" offer both confined, enforced fixity and the promise of connectivity. Furthermore, the "us" drawn together of the poem, is also imbricated with "the green tree many rivers south" whose assumed destruction, in that it is a stump, emerges into benefit. Perhaps, there is growth far off that is not immediate, or spatially proximal, but nonetheless behaves as a binding actant.

The non-Inupiaq reader is brought in to an "us," but also not given access to full comprehension. The "us" is bound together, but not equalized or universalized. Moreover, the "land with its laws that serve as wire / and root" can mean entirely different things for Inupiat and non-Inupiat peoples. While contemporary non-Inupiat readers might interpret being bound to the land and to an "us" in a time of climate change as meaning that we are all at the mercy of potential destruction, an Inupiaq reader could interpret the laws of this land much differently. Particularly in that Indigenous peoples might experience the "land with its laws" not as some new-fangled form of destruction or plight in potentia but as ongoing violence. In the U.S., Indigenous peoples are one of the most legally regulated groups—whether it be through the legal processes of forced governmental relocation; incarcerating communities through bureaucratic land claims processes of dispossession; generating certificates demonstrating degrees of Indian blood (CDIB); legal

regulations on hunting, fishing, and gathering, to name but a few conditions of coloniality. This is particularly salient in Alaska as there are currently no legal protections for harvesting practices that mandate an Alaska Native priority, and through an unprecedented form of land claims in the State, Alaska Natives are not conventionally understood as sovereign polities as discussed in the previous chapter. The laws of the land are not simply that material landscapes shape and form material conditions of possibility through things such as carbon emissions, but that the laws of Alaska and federal Indian policy actively work to dispossess Native peoples.

One might entertain a different reading of the “us” drawn together by the laws of the land. “Us” are the people to whom Herbert Anungazuk belongs as well as the red phalarope. In which case, the red phalarope is distinct from Inupiat, as Inupiat is distinct from the red phalarope and it is their differences that make them accountable to the kinship they share with one another and with the land. They are not the same and it is actually this distinction that obligates them to one another and to the “Beringia” geography. In continuing with this read, that the Inupiat and the red phalarope bound and drawn together by the laws of the land in both carceral and generative forms, the following stanzas can be read as a description of the shared space, histories, and present interface with a changing world.

What constitutes this shared geography? This space is, at the very least, one that refuses transcendentalist renditions that curate land as vital Nature, and calls into question geologic time as universally applicable, whether by Muir or discourse of the Anthropocene. The speaker of the poem in “Exceeding Beringia” delivers a characterization of landscape that works against normative formulations of geology and the romantic nature writing and the “sublime,” such as that deployed by Henry David Thoreau. The poem reads: “Through layer upon layer of land / submerged, of ice, of ash, through lakes that cannot be the eyes of the earth.” In *Walden*, Thoreau wrote, “A lake is a landscape’s most beautiful and expressive feature. It is Earth’s eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.”³¹⁰ The speaker of the poem informs the reader that the “us” is not bound through the vertical space of mineral layers and submerged ice and ash that correspond to a geologic form of memory-keeping. These methods of relations exist, and may even be useful, but they are not universally applicable—they *cannot* be the eyes of the earth.

The following stanzas offer less familiar forms of intimacy. As the poem continues, the reader is pushed not to take sedimented landscape as indication of veracity, but to grapple with continual movement and the transit of the landscape itself. The ground moving beneath feet through the “phreatomagmatic blue sprawl,” the eruption and movement of the earth as its expanse grows, although it is narrated by another colonially given name “Devil Mountain Maar.” The reader follows the Inupiaq-named lake Kuzitrun as it is “drained by inland veins scrawling tributaries / with name upon vanishing name.” The motion of the landscape here is linked to alteration—not by a changing climate but colonial forces of dispossession that drain Inupiat places of their fullness. In this landscape that works against Thoreau and against frozen vertical space of Muir’s geology, one will not find purity or a clear substantiation for the beholder to measure his own internal nature. In fact, desires of clarity and purity actively work to subsume a land otherwise punctuated by the movement and change of Inupiaq places like the *Kuzitrun* and the *Iyat*.

³¹⁰ See Henry Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Writings* [1847], Digireads.com, 2005.

While the poem destabilizes dominance of geological time as measuring space and relationship to land and to self, and the related idealizing effects of romanticized nature writing as a totalizing organizing structure of knowledge, it does not work to redeem this space as unscathed. Kane does not offer us a pristine, untouched space that conjures an unrealistic “purity” of indigeneity or some idealized return to a pre-contact Native homeland preserve that is outside imperial and colonial history—rather, her work makes them constitutive in modernity. While the poem draws attention to Inupiaq language and place names that conjure a history of sustained spatial relationships and practices, these relationships are not unmarred. In the fourth stanza, the second line begins “*Auksruaq*, like the blood that seeps / across such hot and dim and strenuous / times where one still cannot be serene: / red phalarope, might we follow, / leaving the meadow wet with tears? From nest to fledge and then to move again / right out to sea, circling tight vortices / to upwell food. Let us lose our grief / in great rafts as we translate the renamed / straits.” In these stanzas the historical loss of land and ongoing forms of dispossession continue to create strain and stress contributing to a contemporary moment when “one still cannot be serene,” even the *auksruaq* conjures images and memories of blood.

These stanzas hold themes of transit, migration, and movement, not just of the red phalarope that migrate, or of landscape itself as it continues to grow and diminish through ice and ash, but also the transit of peoples. However, in “Exceeding Beringia” we do not find the easy neat tale of migrations “across” (a bridge) or “to” (a warmth) found in the normative narrations of Beringia by Kant, Jefferson, or Morgan. The only movement “across” is by “blood that seeps,” and movements “to” are “from nest to fledge and then to move again / right out to sea.” The transits of peoples in this poem are purposeful departures from violence. A forced movement “from the meadow wet with tears” and “in great rafts” where grief can be released for the places renamed by others. This is not a migration, but an involuntary relocation in the heat and change of “such hot and dim and strenuous times.”

Kane’s poem ends with a gesture to the most modern form of forced relocation experienced by both the Inupiat and the red phalarope: “Our limbs, like yours, are burnt / and broken. Let us at last make noise / of this truth as we return together / to wear another furrow, to make portage / to make our land our home anew.” Forced relocation historically and contemporaneously in the Arctic and specifically, Alaska is particularly relevant. Kane’s own community was made to relocate from their homeland at King Island in 1937 by the federal government, which resulted in the community dispersing across Nome, Kotzebue, and Anchorage. For example, many Alaska Native villages along the coast of Alaska have consistently faced the challenge of responding to rising seas near their homes. Villages such as Shishmareff, Newtok, and Kivalina have been pushed to consider and plan for the relocation of their villages with little to no economic assistance from either state or federal governments. These forced governmental relocations are but a few examples among many, of which now stretch into the current moment of the Anthropocene.

Kane’s poem does not offer climate science as a solution to the problem of a changing landscape for the red phalarope and the Inupiat. The speaker of the poem suggests that the way forward is to “make noise / of this truth as we return together . . . to make our land our home anew.” The transits of Indigenous peoples are not new—both the Inupiat and the red phalarope move through

space without compromising their relations to one another and to the land, sea, ice, and air. Yet, under these conditions of change and the cost of modern, forced migrations and relocations: a concerted effort of narrating experience is required.

Conclusion

Travelers to the Arctic often compared icefields and glaciers to some otherworldly space. Led by temperate-normative ideas of what proper landscapes should look and feel like, the metaphors of the celestial abound in early reports of the Arctic. These descriptions conjure up a lifeless landscape, one unsettleable and terrifying especially in contrast to some fertile verdant homeland of a temperate metropole.³¹¹ As the polar ice cap melts and sea levels rise, along with other catastrophic environmental change shaking, burning, and twisting the landscapes around the globe, a mutation of ice as otherworldly gains a new purchase. For several years the presence of ice in the form of a polar ice cap on the planet Mars has blipped through the headlines as conjuring of a potential future home for a human contingency. Relatedly, a NASA led mission, the Haughton Mars Project, which prepares crewmembers for an eventual venture to Mars is held in the Canadian Arctic on Devon Island, a landscape that supposedly “mimic[s] the environmental conditions that crewmembers are likely to encounter on Mars and other planets.”³¹² Devon Island was chosen due to its “barren terrain, freezing temperatures, isolation and remoteness” that “offer NASA scientists and personnel a number of unique research opportunities...such as Arctic day and night cycle and restricted logistics and communication capabilities.”³¹³

Perhaps these trainings will come in handy sooner rather than later as *Science Magazine* reports that “Liquid water spied deep below polar ice cap on Mars,” akin to the subglacial lakes found on Earth whereas previously water “surviv[ed] frozen in polar ice caps and in subsurface ice deposits.”³¹⁴ Similarly, and in even closer proximity to planet Earth, the *New York Times* reports, “Ice on the Surface of the Moon? Almost Certainly, New Research Shows.” The article informs, “It appears that this ice—very muddy ice, mixed with a lot of lunar dust—exists inside craters where direct sunlight does not reach it.”³¹⁵ This dusty ice “could even be a resource for human visitors—perhaps to be used for drinking water, or even to make rocket fuel.” I end this chapter with a gesture toward the necessity of further analysis of ice as it is remade as a material that measures, as opposed to precarity and human danger, the promise and hope for the human race in the moment of climate change and potential space travel and the occupation of extraterrestrial worlds. How is the historical excavation of ice-geographies addressed here playing out in the imagination of colonizing otherworlds at the presence of ice as frozen water?

³¹¹ See Mary L. Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* for an argument how comparison of a visited space to the metropole offers a reinsantiation of proper civilization and also an extended dominion of places traveled.

³¹² “Haughton Mars Project,” NASA, February 06, 2013.

https://www.nasa.gov/exploration/humanresearch/analog/research_info_analog-haughton.html.

³¹³ Ibid. Read more at: “Mars Institute,” <https://www.marsinstitute.no/>.

³¹⁴ Daniel CleryJul, “Liquid Water Spied Deep below Polar Ice Cap on Mars,” *Science*, July 25, 2018. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/07/liquid-water-spied-deep-below-polar-ice-cap-mars>.

³¹⁵ Jacey Fortin, “Ice on the Surface of the Moon? Almost Certainly, New Research Shows,” *The New York Times*, August 22, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/22/science/ice-moon.html>.

Who will be those humans using lunar ice as drinking water and rocket fuel and who will be those watching sea levels drown their homelands?³¹⁶

³¹⁶ See Smithsonian Magazine's article "Is Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin the Future of Space Exploration?" <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/rocketeer-jeff-bezos-winner-smithsonians-technology-ingenuity-award-180961119/>

Chapter Five

“Intimacies of Extinction: Land, Language, and Law in Eyak Territory”

“Loss gives rise to longing, and in these circumstances, it would not be far-fetched to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will ever receive.”

-Saidiya Hartman³¹⁷

Those Who Count

The imperial history of Alaska begins with the Eyak. Vitus Bering’s first contact with the landmass of America in 1741 was in Eyak territory. One wouldn’t know it, though, particularly through the way Eyak comes to be known, or overlooked, in Alaska’s history and ongoing narration of itself. There is strength in numbers, as the saying goes. More deliberately, there is legibility in numbers, and Eyak people have always been small in numbers. Multiple modest villages dotted the coastline from Alaganik, to chiish qi’kuuLeh (Cordova) to yaagdaad (Yakutat), djiLqahya’d (Bering River), and qaataalah (Katalla). Yet, peoples of small numbers do not record well, particularly for ethnological inquiries. To those documenting the Eyak, the idea that such small groups of people might have their own language and way of doing things that was distinct from their neighbors did not quite follow. This unthinkability was cause for much mis-recognition.

Part of the ambiguity arose because Eyak people were multilingual. When Bering’s successors, so to speak, such as Cook, Malaspina, Meares, Wrangell, or Dall asked for a translation of an object or phrase, an Eyak interlocutor would first say the words in the Eyak language. When met with confusion, they would then translate the object or phrase into Tlingit, Athabaskan, and/or Chugach until the man making the record could understand. Although skilled communicators, Eyaks were often ordered as everyone but themselves, and the few Eyak words taken down in travel journals became anomalies that later elided in the standardization of regional vocabularies, resurrected only reading original field notes.

This is a list of the many men, and one woman, that documented and often misread the Eyak, both people and language:

Uglachmuten, Grigori Ivanovich Shelekhov 1788;
Ugalak mutes, William Coxe 1791;

³¹⁷ Saidiya Hartman, “*Venus in Two Acts*,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 4.

Wallaamute, Nathaniel Portlock 1791;³¹⁸
 Tauglekamute, John Meares 1791;³¹⁹
 Ugalachmiuti, Alexander von Humboldt 1811;
 Ugljiachmutzi, Nikolai Rezanov for King Mithradates III 1815;
 Ogalachmioutsy, Albert Gallatin 1836;
 Ugalyachmutizi, James Cowles Prichard 1836;
 Ugalenz, Ferdinand von Wrangel 1839;³²⁰
 Ugalenzi, John Scouler 1848;
 Ugalyachmutsi, Robert Gordon Latham 1845, 1854, 1857;
 Ugalenschen, Schott 1849;
 Ugalakmutski, Richardson 1851;³²¹
 Ugalanzen, Henrik Johan Holmberg 1855;
 Ugalachmut, Leopold F. Radloff 1859;
 Ugalenz, H.E. Ludewig 1858;
 Ugaljachmujuten, Johann Carl Eduard Buschmann 1859;
 Ugalentses, Johan Hampus Furuhjelm 1862;³²²
 Ugalents, Fedor Karlovich Verman, 1863;
 Oogalentz, George Davidson 1867;
 Oogalenskie, H.W. Elliott 1875;
 Ugalakmutes, William Healy Dall 1870;
 Chilkhak-müt, William Healy Dall 1877;³²³
 Ugalenzes, A. H. Keane 1878;
 Ougalakhmute, Petroff 1882, 1884³²⁴
 No name, Joan Adrian Jacobsen 1884;

³¹⁸ “Portlock places Eyak in Controller’s Bay. These are probably the Eskimo group called ‘Shallow Water People,’” quoted in Kaj Birket-Smith and Frederica De Laguna, *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska* (1938), 328-9.

³¹⁹ “Identified by Coxe, notes Ugalak-mutes, apparently without warrant,” Ibid, 328-29.

³²⁰ “Wrangell calls Kayak Islands “Kadjack” following an orthographic error made originally by Shelekhov,” Ibid, 330-31.

³²¹ “Has confused these people with the Prince William Sound Eskimo, following the error of Humboldt and Gallatin. He places the “Atnaer” at the mouth of the Copper River,” Ibid, 330-31.

³²² “On February 17, 1868, President Andrew Johnson called for information about what was still called ‘Russian America,’ and on May 27 a suggestion was made to send an expedition to document ethnological data “as language remains one of the readiest and perhaps most certain mode of tracing affinity among the races of men, it is particularly desired to collect accurate vocabularies of a sufficient number of words in common use...the most important tribes remaining are those extending from Copper River along the coast to Cape Fair-weather, especially those known as Ugalentes...” Ibid, 51; “History of Eyak Documentation,” Michael Krauss from Joseph Henry “Suggestions relative to objects of scientific investigation for the expedition under Captain Howard, along the coast of Russian America, from the Smithsonian Institution.” Russian America (40th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Executive Document No. 177, pp. 192-195, 1868, 193.

³²³ “He proposes to abandon the name Ugalentsi as applied to the Ahtannah at the mouth of the Copper River. In 1885, he no longer uses either Ugalakmut or Ugalentsi” quoted in de Laguna and Smith, *Eyak Indians*, 332-33.

³²⁴ “Ascribes to Tlingit the territory from the bank of the Copper River through Controller Bay,” Ibid, 334-35.

Ugalenzen, Aurel Krause 1885;
 Lakhamit, Hubert Howe Bancroft 1886;
 Eyak, Edward Harriman 1899;
 Agalignuite, C.P. Elliott 1900;
 Eak tella, Emmons 1903;
 Ugalakmuit, J.R. Swanton 1905;
 Eyak, Frederica de Laguna 1930;
 Eyak, John Peabody Harrington 1940;
 Eyak, Fang-Kuei Li 195;
 Eyak, Robert Paul Austerlitz 1961;
 Eyak, Michael Krauss 1961.

On Rendering and Being Rendered



Figure 1 “Orca—Prince William Sound”³²⁵

It is an early afternoon in mid-July, 2015. I am attending the third annual culture camp for Eyak language revitalization. I am sitting at a long wooden table, waiting for a presentation on Eyak language history to begin. This language camp is hosted at what is now called the Orca Adventure Lodge, a few miles outside of my hometown of what is now named Cordova, Alaska. Cordova built itself from the materials of a displaced Native village of Eyak people. The town stands atop burial grounds, sacred sites, and hunting and fishing places. Orca, now Orca Adventure Lodge, in its peak use at the turn of the century, housed a salmon cannery, a post office, and about 200 souls. The image above illustrates the extent of its architectural structures.

³²⁵ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 89, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/105/rec/2>.

There are twenty or so individuals spread out across the cafeteria, quietly visiting with one another while they also wait for the presentation to begin. The majority of participants have flown in from where they elsewhere reside: Anchorage, Valdez, California, Hawaii. My family, who lives locally, does not attend language camp. Some are working, fishing, or out of town. Others are deterred by the presence of video recording devices perched in the corners of the room that survey the space—a condition of the language revitalization grant awarded to camp coordinators by the Administration for Native Americans.³²⁶

As a result, I sit alone with a notebook and a pencil. The director of the camp introduces linguist Dr. Michael Krauss, and he begins telling us a brief history of the documentation of the Eyak language. Dr. Krauss learned Eyak in the 1960's in large part from my great-Grandmother, Lena, when she was one of a handful of Native speakers with knowledge of the language. Today, there are no living fluent Native speakers of the Eyak language. In 2008, the last living Eyak speaker, Marie Smith Jones, passed on and the language was declared extinct.³²⁷

I'm at language camp to ask Dr. Krauss about my great-Grandmother Lena. She was born in 1912 and was taken as a young girl to the Chemewa Indian boarding school in Salem, Oregon. My mother was young when Lena passed on and has but few memories of her; the most lasting of which is the way that Lena would wear her long hair swirled into a bun that sat on the very top of her head, which was almost always hidden under a hat. I wanted to know from Dr. Krauss a set of non-linguistic-related questions. What kind of a woman was she? Was she warm? Or had she been hardened by rulers on wrists when she was young? Had she been sharpened by the many recording devices pointed at her when she grew old? Did she enjoy having Krauss around as a language companion, or did she have other things on her mind?

Dr. Krauss speaks to a big room filled with few people. He tells us that Russian navigators in the 1700's were the first to document Eyak people as they recognized them to be distinct from Tlingit, Eskimo, and Aleut tribes. He says that many other documentarians—Spanish, British, Dutch, German, and American—misread the Eyak, ordering them as a small sect of Northern Tlingit people, the most southern dialect of Athabaskan, or as another village of Chugach Eskimo. If it hadn't been for one anthropologist, Frederica de Laguna, who accidentally rediscovered Eyak in the 1930's, any additional ethnological and linguistic information about us and our language may have been lost forever.

In researching Frederica de Laguna, last student of Franz Boas, I learned that she spoke in vehement opposition to the 1990 passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), positing “our ancestors went to the stake for the right to do

³²⁶ Due to the severe Eyak language loss, part of the grant stipulations from Administration for Native Americans (ANA) were that the language camp must be recorded for future use. In addition to the ANA video cameras, a French film-maker also filmed the language lessons of the camp as part of his documentary regarding the extinction of Indigenous languages.

³²⁷ See “Last Fluent Speaker of the Eyak Language Dies,” NPR, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18391658>.

science...now we have to kowtow to the superstition of Indians.”³²⁸ She first passed through Eyak land on her way to the Shumagin Islands to do archaeological research there, even though Boas explained to her that if working in Alaska she “would have to move a lot of shelly midden material to find only a few specimens.”³²⁹

My attention returns to Krauss as he pauses in his story, raises his arms to gesture to the space around him, and says that this very place is also part of the history of Eyak language documentation. As it happened, between the recordings of early Russian navigators in the 1700’s and de Laguna’s graduate student scribblings in the 1930’s, the earliest known voice recordings of the Eyak language were made by a man named Edward Harriman in the summer of 1899, here, at Orca. My eyes move around the room. The cafeteria’s west-facing wall is made of windows, through them it’s possible to see out into the inlet, also named Orca. The greens and blues and grays of the landscape blur when seen through the thick glass.



Figure 2 “Orca Harbor at 11 p.m.”³³⁰

Dr. Krauss tells us that a steamer ship named *George W. Elder* docked at this very harbor in 1899 as one stop among many in a journey around the coast of Alaska as part of the Harriman Alaska Expedition. I am surprised by this mention, but I have already learned this information. Just one month prior I submitted a seminar paper written on this expedition, which, as I learned, held an academic coterie of over 50 specialists invited on an Alaskan cruise ship to collect, order,

³²⁸ See Margalit Fox, “Frederica De Laguna, 98, Arctic Anthropologist, Dies,” *The New York Times*, November 28, 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/28/obituaries/frederica-de-laguna-98-arctic-anthropologist-dies.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share>.

³²⁹ Michael E. Krauss, “A History of Eyak Language Documentation and Study: Fredericæ De Laguna in Memoriam,” *Arctic Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2006): 172-217.

³³⁰ University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Harriman 90, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/harriman/id/101/rec/1>.

and record information as they wished.³³¹ The course objective for the class was to grapple with the concerns of accounting for missing voices and gaps within archival documents. Bewitched by the draw of the archive and the potential of unearthing something of self and of home, I searched for a sign of Eyak as I knew this boat had stopped so close to the village of my people. This desire was not met; I did not find them there. Instead, I wrote about a series of black-and-white photographs that illustrated the theft of Tlingit items from the village of Gaash by expedition participants. Three lines of experts posed for a photograph with their newly acquired artifacts and pointed them toward the camera, doing science. These items are still held by major university museums across the country.³³²

The ship, Krauss tells us, carried onboard famous figures like John Muir, Edward Curtis, George Bird Grinnell, John Burroughs, and William Dall. More important for his story, however, was the man that many overlooked because he was an uneducated railroad tycoon, a simple man of new money from a working-class background. Clearly not a trained scientist and without any knowledge of rigorous method. Krauss is referring to the financier of this expedition, Edward Harriman. Harriman's importance to Krauss lies in that he had brought onboard the most expensive recording device the era could offer. Operated by Harriman, this phonograph recorded and played Alaska Native songs and speeches, including those in the Eyak language.

The *Elder* broke a propeller and made its way to the shallow inlet of Orca for repairs. A salmon cannery was built at Orca in the 1880's, which served as a place of employment for mostly Chinese-American workers but also Eyak and other Native peoples from nearby areas.³³³ It went belly-up in the 1920's due to overfishing and a subsequent earthquake in 1964 debilitated the infrastructure from further operation. What little remained sat unused for decades until a local man purchased the land and buildings and transformed it into a lodge-cum-tourist destination. His family runs the lodge and opens their doors to our summer language camp so that we may learn and practice our greetings, verbs, and nouns in Eyak.

While the propeller was being mended, Edward Curtis, later famous for his wistful portraits of Native Americans west of the Mississippi, took photographs of the landscape. John Muir, "father of national parks," hiked in the surrounding hills after rebuking the cannery and its workers, characterizing the space with "a fearful smell, a big greasy cannery, and unutterably dirty, frowsy Chinamen. Men in the business are themselves canned."³³⁴ George Bird Grinnell, "the father of conservation," walked the cannery's slime line and advocated for an enforced management of a fishery where cannery workers needed to be regulated from working "in a most wasteful and thoughtlessly selfish way."³³⁵ John Burroughs picnicked in the meadow and wrote down his

³³¹ The Washington Academy of Sciences partnered with private financier of the expedition, Edward Harriman, to outfit the *Elder* with state of the art scientific equipment for the team of traveling scientists to procure and analyze a multitude of collected materials.

³³² See Alex DeMarban, "Tribe Seeks Return of Artifacts Taken from Abandoned Alaska Village," Anchorage Daily News, April 19, 2014, <https://www.adn.com/arts/article/tribe-seeks-return-artifacts-taken-abandoned-village/2014/04/20/>.

³³³ Jim Lethcoe and Nancy Ramey, *A history of Prince William Sound Alaska* (Valdez: Prince William Sound Books. 1990), 84.

³³⁴ Nancy Lord, *Green Alaska Dreams from the Far Coast* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 1999), 77.

³³⁵ Grinnell, *The Harriman Expedition to Alaska*, 345.

responses to the Eyak lands: “such a look of age, and yet the bloom and dimples of youth! Bearded decrepit dwarfed spruces, above a turf like a pillow decked with flowers! I walked along a margin of open woods that had a singularly genial, sheltered, homey look, and listened to the dwarf hermit.”³³⁶ In the same moment, Edward Harriman made the first voice recordings of the Eyak language on his Columbia Graphophone Grand. During the expedition as the *Elder* approached a port, possibly to the chagrin of fellow expedition participants, Harriman would blare patriotic songs from his phonograph such as John Phillip Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever” to announce their arrival.³³⁷ The cylinder containing Eyak language added to a catalogue of recordings, perhaps sandwiched between LPs of Yankee Doodle and Stars and Stripes Forever.

Yet, no Eyak person or speaker of the Eyak language has listened to this cylinder made by Harriman. This five-inch diameter cylinder is missing, lost in the archives. All that remains is an empty cylinder case with a typewritten label, which describes two Eyak Indians telling a story in the dining hall of the *Elder*. In the quarters of a steamship outfitted for the academic elite of the time, two Eyak Indians gave speech into the phonograph. They presented a vivid description of a white man drowning after he fell from a ship in the Orca harbor. The man was cleaning a fish and then fell overboard. The efforts to rescue him came too late and the man threw up his hands and drowned.³³⁸ The body was not recovered. Krauss tells us that he searched for this artifact at the Indiana archive, the Heye Museum, the Smithsonian Museum, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Arden House, but his efforts have been met with failure.³³⁹



Figure 3 “View from Mountain behind Orca and Looking towards Observation Island, Alaska”³⁴⁰

Absence and Recovery

This final chapter will not be a recounting of a quest to locate or recuperate the Eyak language. This chapter cannot be about the contents of the cylinder or the way it moved the world when it was heard. It cannot center the experiences or voices of Eyak people in 1899 as they worked in

³³⁶ Ibid, 75.

³³⁷ William H. Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, *Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899* (New York: Viking, 1982), 12.

³³⁸ Krauss, “A History of Eyak Language,” 63.

³³⁹ Ibid, 64.

³⁴⁰ Albert K. Fisher for the Harriman Alaska Expedition, 1899, <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/15714/>.

salmon canneries alongside Chinese-Americans.³⁴¹ Nor can I recreate Eyak perspectives as the railroad was built over their walking and hunting paths—maybe they wept, perhaps they helped its construction as paid wage-laborers. This cannot be an iteration of Eyak resistances as the materials of their homes were repurposed for the hospital, school, or grocery stores—none of which could they find at their disposal or find employment within.³⁴² I have never heard or read these stories; their absences allow me only to speculate, to gesture, and inevitably to fail.³⁴³ As Saidiya Hartman writes of her own labors of recuperation in the archive, “my account replicates the very order of violence that it writes against by placing yet another demand upon the girl, by requiring that her life be made useful or instructive, by finding in it a lesson for our future or a hope for history.”³⁴⁴

In other ways, this chapter grapples with this set of irrecoverable impossibilities,³⁴⁵ as Hartman puts it “listening for the unsaid...redressing violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse.”³⁴⁶ Atlantic slavery and freedom studies has inquired as to the limits of recovery and recuperation when drawing from the archive. This new turn probes the material correlation between historical recovery and contemporary freedom, as many have argued that liberal inclusion as freedom fails descendants of the enslaved and invite a reconsideration of the role of the historian in bringing about freedom.³⁴⁷ Native studies scholarship, too, has worked to lay bare the violences of the archive in its doubled role of keeper of hyper-documentation coupled with the intentional elision of Indian subjects and their ways of knowing that were made into “culture” or translated as primitivity, savagery, or barbarism. In both fields, archival recovery combats legalized forms of Black and Native exclusion from public life by recuperating cultural agency and everyday forms of resistance by historical enslaved persons and Native peoples. In this way, “the detailed recovery work that historians do might be the best armor against the technocrats and statisticians that systematically devalue black life,”³⁴⁸ and one might add Native life, in contemporary America. Similar to the ongoing necessity of recovery in slavery and freedom studies in its importance to a contemporary political moment, the use of the anthropological archive is also central to land and language reclamation processes for Native communities and federal recognition processes in which dozens of Native polities are embroiled. Such uses of the archive demonstrate that the past can often reduce the present to its mere repetition,³⁴⁹ or the past can be considered a “living history” with contemporary ethical and

³⁴¹ For critical work on this topic see Juliana Pegues’ dissertation, “Interrogating Intimacies: Asian American and Native Relations in Colonial Alaska”; and forthcoming book *Settler Space and Time*.

³⁴² Constitutive to Alaska’s explicitly racist past is what historians call “Jim Crow in Alaska,” in which schools legally segregated Alaska Natives from whites, and establishments could legally choose not to hire, serve, or sell to Alaska Natives until 1945 with the passing of the civil rights bill headed by Tlingit woman Elizabeth Peratrovich.

³⁴³ Hartman, “Venus,” 12; Stephen Best; On Failing to Make the Past Present. *Modern Language Quarterly* 1 September 2012; 73 (3): 455.

³⁴⁴ Hartman, “Venus,” 14.

³⁴⁵ Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” (2014).

³⁴⁶ Hartman, “Venus,” 2-3.

³⁴⁷ Laura Helton, Justin Leroy, Max A. Mishler, Samantha Seeley, Shauna Sweeney; The Question of Recovery: An Introduction. *Social Text* 1 December 2015; 33 (4 (125)): 5.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

³⁴⁹ Stephen Best, “Failing to Make the Past Present.”

political implications as related to reparations,³⁵⁰ and I would add Indigenous land reclamations. These recovery projects offer radical disruptions and potential futurities.

Yet, as the turn in slavery studies suggests, it is also important to heed Hartman's suggestion to temper the "romance of resistance."³⁵¹ Mishuana Goeman similarly posits that "recovery has a certain saliency in Native American studies; it is appealing to people who have been dispossessed materially and culturally."³⁵² However, a desire for the recovery of the "pre-contact," often implies a desire for a return to the "pre-contact," which effaces the multiple and multiply-sited struggles that Native peoples have and continue to endure in "post-contact" moments. Also obscured is the historical and ongoing trans-tribal tensions and sharing of land, language, goods, ceremony, and kinship that amount to a refusal of some "pure" moment of which to "return." This move to recover and return also ultimately offers up the anthropological gaze what it desires most: a voyeuristic peek in at the unsullied indigene. As Hartman writes, "The loss of stories sharpens hunger for them. So it is tempting to fill in the gaps and to provide closure where there is none."³⁵³

There are many ways with which gaps are reckoned. One is through prolonged historical archival research, reassembly, and recovery; another is through an intentional re-making. Deliberately "missing" histories are often creatively reimagined, rewritten, retold through fiction and poetry by Black and Native authors. This turn toward and strategic use of narrative rebuilds that which was obliterated or absented from the records garnered both interpersonally and by the state. Creative narrative also functions through forms of articulation that are normally disallowed from conventional data collection and the rendering technical of information through anthropology, linguistics, law, and science unless these narratives demonstrate something specific about "culture" or lend themselves to a more robust linguistic documentation (i.e. oral tradition, origin story, etc.). This chapter is less interested in recuperation or a creative re-making of what is perceived as loss and lost. Instead, I move to find the contours of what can come to matter, what must go overlooked, and what is not and cannot be rendered traditionally legible. Hartman guides us to reckon with the limits of what cannot be known, but this chapter is interested in how the limits were made and how such limits continue to reinforce normative formations of loss.

Translations

There are a few details I learned from Dr. Krauss that day at language camp. After his presentation, I sat with him and we visited. When I asked him about my great-grandmother Lena, he told me that she took joy in the grammar of her language. He would ask her to double check his work to make sure that it was correct. He said that Lena liked to tease, especially when he would become fatigued and slow, she would chidingly insist that he was dim-witted. He told me that he once asked her for the Eyak name of a berry and that she replied with a recipe for berry

³⁵⁰ Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Student Reader* (New York: New Press, 1991).

³⁵¹ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁵² Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.

³⁵³ Hartman, "Venus," 8.

pie. A recipe that he did not transcribe. Her complex response was, for him, interpreted as a quaint aside, a good story for her great-granddaughter but ultimately an absence of precision. When looking up the word for berry in the limited digitized dictionary accessible to the public, I read it aloud: *la'mahd*.³⁵⁴ Though a breathy, beautiful word, to me it also sounds a bit hollow, tinny and canned. Mbembe writes, “the archived document is one that has to a large extent ceased to belong to its author, in order to become the property of society at large.”³⁵⁵

Krauss also informed me that Lena and the few other Eyak speakers with whom he worked listed to him Eyak place names around the lake and down the river where they fished. They told him the name of where they moved camp to dig clams in the spring. Such as yahGayuuya'aan, the *stream-where-menstruating-women-go*. *Menstruate, menstruating, menstruated*. He added that it was the name of this stream he recorded that allowed for the land claims selection process to begin at the local level in this region in the mid-1970's.

The organization of land claims in Eyak territory began under the auspices of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, the legislation required that Alaska Natives move through certain processes in order to claim lands.³⁵⁶ These original organizing labors should be attributed in large part to Lena's daughter and my grandmother, Rosie Lankard, who formed the original council and co-wrote NVE's constitution and bylaws. Rosie organized the land claims in Eyak territory while raising seven children. She oversaw the multiple-stepped process of incorporating the village Eyak Corporation, which required an enrollment of 25 people who could demonstrate their Alaska Native ancestry of a distinct tribe through genealogy and at least ¼ blood quantum.³⁵⁷ If 25 people could be gathered and verified as “Native,” it was then possible to petition for recognition from the BIA. Once the Native village was approved, a Native village corporation could be formed to hold assets to land, in this case, 25 people afforded the very minimum land claims of 69,120 acres. Rosie made sure that 37 Eyak people completed the enrollment process to verify their Eyak identities. Where most other Native villages, whose enrollees numbered in the hundreds, were ushered swiftly through this process and moved on to the remaining steps of land selection and conveyance. Yet, Rosie's paperwork for the Eyak was halted. There was trouble in deciding whether or not Eyaks were appropriate subjects to receive a land claim, seeing as how only thirty-seven Eyak people identified themselves through enrollment proceedings.

As Arthur Lazarus Jr. and W. Richard West explain, the Act listed 205 Native villages as eligible for land selections and monetary benefits. Yet, the Secretary of Interior could “declare ineligible any village with less than twenty-five native residents or one possessing a modern, urban character.”³⁵⁸ Moreover, the regulations under ANCSA required that a village possess an “identifiable physical location” and “that location need be evidenced by ‘occupancy consistent

³⁵⁴ “Berry,” Eyak People, <http://www.eyakpeople.com/dictionary/berry>.

³⁵⁵ Achille Mbembe, *The Power of the Archive and its Limits*. In: *Refiguring the Archive* (2002), 20.

³⁵⁶ NVE now operates as a federally recognized tribal government after Alaska tribes were added in 1993.

³⁵⁷ See *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* by Eva Marie Garrouette for an accessible and critical work on blood quantum.

³⁵⁸ Arthur Lazarus Jr. & W. Richard West Jr., *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: A Flawed Victory*, 40 *Law and Contemporary Problems* 132-165 (Winter 1976), 139

with the Natives' own cultural patterns and life style.”³⁵⁹ What was the “occupancy consistent with the Natives' own cultural patterns and life style” for the Eyaks, and where was their “identifiable physical location”? In this moment, Frederica de Laguna and Michael Krauss became expert witnesses. The stream-where-menstruating-women-go became the catalyst that rendered Eyak people eligible for land claims.

This process was not straightforward, as the two experts had not only recorded word stems and cultural identifiers, but also codified Eyak life as near the brink of extinction, as a people and a language both disappearing and worn away by loss. The majority of information taken by de Laguna in her brief fieldwork near Cordova was not legible as support for juridical land claims. Her monograph had codified and calcified loss.³⁶⁰ By the time she had arrived at Cordova in the 1930's, she wrote that the traditional villages had been destroyed. Almost every artifact had been picked off. The village near Yakutat had since been assimilated by the Tlingit, she published. The graveyards known to Eyak people were not considered “traditional” because there were Native people from other tribes buried there as well as other non-white people.³⁶¹ Neither were the village sites near Cordova legible because they had undergone transformations not “caused by natural disaster or by government intervention within the last 10 years.”³⁶² These sites did not demonstrate distinct “consistent occupancy with the Natives' own cultural patterns and life style.” By writing and publishing her book, a seemingly benevolent offering meant to document the Eyak people “before they disappeared,” de Laguna nearly rendered her documented subjects illegible to the juridical recognition needed to maintain a political position and control over the lands in their own territory.

Similarly, the unpublished Eyak-English dictionary compiled by Krauss, taken from the mouth of my great-grandmother and proofread by her eyes, was tried as evidence to demonstrate an unmistakable distinct character of “cultural pattern and life style.” Yet, this too was questioned, as there were “but a few old women” who spoke the language. In the end, it was the stream-where-menstruating-women-go that fit the requirements. Only Eyak women had utilized this place for over 500 discernible years: it was fixed and pure. According to the stipulations of ANCSA, this place had not been disturbed by shared use with other non-Eyaks, it had not been destroyed through colonial overhaul. The stream-where-menstruating-women-go demonstrated uninterrupted “temporal continuity of traditional Eyak land use.” The women menstruating at the river, rendered technical by an expert linguist-witness, demonstrated legibility to another set of technical renderings. It was only *one* ‘landmark,’ the material land codified and abstracted as read through a juridical lens offered and verified by the rule of experts.³⁶³

Tanya Murray Li, drawing on Nikolas Rose, writes that rendering technical is a “whole set of practices concerned with representing ‘the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Smith and de Laguna, “*The Eyak Indians*.”

³⁶¹ The cemeteries in Cordova, Alaska were segregated. There were separate burial locations for white “pioneers,” and everyone else.

³⁶² These were stipulations that rendered change in “traditional sites” allowable, and therefore legible for land claims processes, see Lazarus Jr. and West.

³⁶³ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

specific limits and particular characteristics...defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed.”³⁶⁴ Making a field “intelligible” renders it an appropriate space for the intervention of experts. Multiple experts traffic this context, they are both pre-formed, maintained, and newly made in moments of land claims: the ethnologist, the linguist, the BIA, the Secretary of Interior. Such experts make decisions in this scenario about *who is* and *who isn't*, *what is* and *what isn't*, which information comes to matter and that which doesn't, much in the same fashion that explorers and travelers documented in their narratives. In their publications, de Laguna and Krauss made decisions in their incorporation and exclusion of details about Eyak people and their language, and in another frame and scale, the Secretary of Interior decides whether their accounts dictate the proper information for another form of legibility. Many scholars have taken up the fraught processes of appealing for federal recognition by tribes and others who refuse the politics of recognition.³⁶⁵ Building on that work, I'm interested in how the discourse of loss becomes codified and reified in these processes, and how, in the context of the Eyak, circulating ethnographies of loss, accumulations of recognition and misrecognition of difference come to stand in for distinct forms of humanity.

Samera Esmeir writes that in the making of what she calls juridical humanity, “the law did not subordinate, but inscribed, created, animated, and *gave qualified life* to forms that seemed to lack it.”³⁶⁶ For the Eyak, did the land claims process give them qualified life? Did federal recognition save them from the brink of extinction? In this context, the law does both: *subordinates* and *gives* qualified life. In this moment of juridical translation for land claims, the stream becomes an identifiable physical location, and the women who menstruate there become, just barely, distinctly Eyak humans. It is the perceived inanimate and fixed materiality of the stream that allows for this abstraction—a site that can be touched, felt, and measured. As it is rendered substantively legible for land claims to be completed, the law becomes a “birthing ground” for recognition of living indigeneity—and as Esmeir might contend, the birthing ground for humanity.³⁶⁷ In rendering Eyak land intelligible as assets of a Native village under ANCSA, the stream and the women are split from one another and their kinship goes overlooked. Li writes that rendering contentious issues technical is a routine practice for experts, but that this operation should also be seen as an ongoing project, not a secure or settled accomplishment: “questions that experts exclude, misrecognize, or attempt to contain do not go away.”³⁶⁸

There is a house built on the bank of the stream where menstruating women go. A man and his daughter live there; his wife died when his daughter was young. By the house is a road built atop the stream. The stream where menstruating women go moves through a steel culvert and lets out

³⁶⁴ Tania M. Li, *The Will to Improve Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 7, Li quoting Rose's *Powers of Freedom*.

³⁶⁵ Many NAIS scholars have covered the fraught processes of appealing for federal recognition including James Clifford, Brian Klopotek, Kent Lightfoot, Olivia Chilcote, Sara-Larus Tolley. Others have taken up the stance of refusing the politics of recognition including Glen Coulthard, Taiiiake Alfred, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Audra Simpson.

³⁶⁶ Samera Esmeir, “At Once Human and Not Human: Law, Gender and Historical Becoming in Colonial Egypt.” *Gender & History*, 23 (2011): 239. (emphasis mine)

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Li, “*The Will to Improve*,” 10.

into the lake. As kids, we jumped into those dark green waters thick with weeds. A decaying building slumps to the right. The stream where menstruating women go is a slow and wide trickle.

Upon learning that I was interested in the Harriman Expedition, Dr. Krauss has since sent me several follow-up emails to ask if I have yet located the cylinder in my archival research. I do not have the heart to tell him that I am not looking for it, nor do I have an intention to do so. I do not have the heart to tell him because I am meant to be grateful for his life's work documenting Alaska Native languages, and Eyak in particular. I can't tell him that to search for the missing cylinder would be to concede to loss, it would be to continue to discount what is 'impure' or illegible: to admit to decline and its inevitable conclusion. To believe in the teleology of the brink and to feed a narrative of disappearance. It would be to again overlook that which the rule of experts exclude, misrecognize, or attempt to neatly contain. I can't tell him that I believe these forms of documenting languages and peoples meant to salvage and store against decline, produce loss in their overlooking. Not in the obvious way like an empty cylinder case on the museum shelf. But in that: what were the women doing at the stream when they rested there, how were they caring for one another, and what were the songs that they were singing? The Eyak word for berry, *la'mahd*, does not give me my relative's recipe for pie.

The Language of Extinction

In 1992, almost a century after the Harriman Alaska Expedition traveled around the coast of Alaska and Siberia, Krauss wrote a short piece titled, "The world's languages in crisis," published in Language Society of America (LSA). Krauss states:

I consider it a plausible calculation that...the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind's languages...now let us compare the biological world situation...Why is there so much more concern over this relatively mild threat to the world's biological diversity than over the far worse threat to its linguistic diversity?...Should we mourn the loss of Eyak or Ubykh any less than the loss of the panda or California condor?³⁶⁹

Krauss' article altered the field of linguistics as it began to readily employ the discourse of extinction, endangerment, and rescue following his argument. Also taken up en masse, is the suggestion in Krauss' article that there is a serious correlation between biodiversity and linguistic diversity. This became popular among academic circles, anti-colonial politics, and in mainstream environmental organizations. As Bruce Braun writes, the conflation of *cultural* diversity with the preservation of *biodiversity* is also a conflation of indigenous peoples with nature, as related to and in service of nature, and as such necessarily anti-modern.³⁷⁰ I echo Braun in his concern that within this discourse "indigenous identities are defined and contained within the environmental imaginaries of European environmentalists," and would add linguistic imaginaries as well.³⁷¹ In

³⁶⁹ Krauss, "The World's Languages In Crisis," 7-8.

³⁷⁰ Bruce Willems-Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 81.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

this sense, “Eyak” becomes untethered to any historical, spatial, or temporal relationality—it is a floating signifier, signifying at once language and a people. The metaphor of “Eyak,” delinked from territory and ongoing complex socialities, is leveraged and operationalized for global-scale crisis. Similar to the stream as it becomes a material site, split from the women who become recognized as Indigenous. This is further demonstrated by “Eyak” held in comparison to the extinction of a panda or condor—more-than-human entities also abstracted and plucked from their contexts of space, time, and kinship.

Bernard C. Perley writes that the documents collected by expert linguists “are artifacts of a living language and not the living language itself...the confusion between the living language and the documentary artifacts has misplaced expert attention on the language as a code rather than language as the conduit and catalyst for social relationships.”³⁷² This contextual sociality is obscured by “metaphors that capture the popular imagination; specifically, language is articulated as a biological organism that is undergoing species endangerment from outside forces...this rhetoric validates the expert intervention of saving the language through documentation.”³⁷³ Bringing attention to the problematics of the crisis-expert-intervention trope of language saving, or what Perley calls “mortuary linguistics,” which is “more interested in the code than the people,” he demonstrates that the documentation of languages often runs counter to language use in a community by Native peoples to whom that language belongs.

I would add to Perley’s critique, that the slippage in Krauss’ article between the Eyak language and the Eyak people, in this instance, is a dangerous one. “Should we mourn the loss of Eyak or Ubykh any less than the loss of the panda or California condor?” The biological death and rhetorical disappearance of Eyak people is implied within the loss of language in this statement. The coupling of biology and extinction is one that should be read skeptically, especially in that often the violences of colonialism are often read as a causality from biological weaknesses—certain bodies are coded as inherently susceptible to death, diseases, and extinction while others are read as inherently immune and superior.³⁷⁴

However, this addition I make to Perley’s work is hardly original. The disappearing Indian—both as narrative device and biological “fact”—is a common trope, stereotype, and figure of American culture and a staple of the American imagination.³⁷⁵ There are far too many examples and instances from which to draw to discuss the trope of the disappearing Indian, and more importantly, the multiple ways that Native peoples are pushed to articulate their continued existence. As many scholars suggest, as living Indians “disappear” their images, their perceived land ethics and the land itself, their languages and expired bodies are appropriated for universal

³⁷² Bernard C. Perley, *Zombie Linguistics: Experts, Endangered Languages and the Curse of Undead Voices*, *Anthropological Forum* 22 (2012): 134.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ See Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

³⁷⁵ See Jean O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* for a contemporary take on extinction as a colonial curation that happens at a national and local scale. Also see Shari Huhndorf’s *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*; Joan Barker’s *Native Acts*; Mark Rifkin’s *Erotics of Sovereignty*; and among many, many, many other Native American and Indigenous Studies scholars that must take up the incorrect and heavily circulated notion of Indian disappearance as constitutive to the field.

study and use. The vanishing Indian not only furnishes scientific knowledge and economic production, but many have argued that this narrative constitutes the core of settler American identity. However, this important and critical reading of the vanishing Indian tends to make land a foil—as a material entity shuttled between ownerships either (in)correctly tended or at risk of exploitation. When, rather, it seems that the documentation, the knowing and narrating of both Native peoples, their languages, and landscapes are happening and being split from one another simultaneously. The loss that inflects disappearing/transformed Indian peoples, their “culture,” and their lands are being made simultaneously. Land is made inert, languages are made a code, and peoples are upon the brink of extinction and made into rarities.

Loss as Method

While not looking for the cylinder there are many other things that I have found and that I have pondered. My grandmother Rosie is not acknowledged for her work organizing the land claims in the Cordova area. The Native man who is written in the records as the broker for land claims in the Cordova region is named Cecil Barnes (Aleut). Cecil did a considerable amount of work making sure that the Native Village of Eyak was created, and in so doing, collaborated with Rosie so that many other non-Eyak Native people could be added to the land claims enrollment process who live(d) around the Cordova area. Rosie complied—and the Native Village of Eyak as it is understood today is a traditional council that represents four tribes: Eyak, Aleut, Athabaskan, and Tlingit. The Eyak Corporation’s description merely pays homage to the once existing Eyak people:

The original act did not include reference for the Native village in the Cordova area. Cecil Barnes was the Native leader who pushed the petition and enrollment drive that resulted in the formation of the Eyak Corporation. Eyak was incorporated in 1973 representing 326 original shareholders. The majority of which were of Aleut descent. Eyak was so named at the suggestion of Cecil Barnes to honor the area's Eyak Natives who had as a group been decimated by disease and poverty as a result of the development of Cordova by peoples of European descent.³⁷⁶

However, as this chapter demonstrates, in order to become a traditional council and in order for the incorporation of Eyak, it was necessary for the Eyak people to establish an original, continuous claim to land around Cordova, as previously described.

Before the Native Village of Eyak and the Eyak Corporation were approved and incorporated, Cecil was in communication with Henry M. Jackson, Chairman of the Committee on the Interior and Insular Affairs in 1966. Cecil lobbied to convince the Chairman that monetary compensation for lands appropriated by the U.S. was not an adequate settlement. Leveraging the lands of the Eyak people and their interface with colonialism around the Cordova area as an example to demonstrate the historical atrocities that require an immediate land claim, Cecil writes:

³⁷⁶ “About Us,” The Eyak Corporation, <http://www.eyakcorporation.com/about-us>.

the Eyak Indians...who are on the fringe of extinction as a tribe. That is, there are 3 elderly language-speaking Eyak adults now living. As is related to me from the Old People, in the early days of the Copper River Northwestern Railroad, the programming of these Indians to white man's culture was and still is, totally lacking or ineffective if intended. The principal Eyak village, 22 miles south of Cordova, known as Alaganik, and the Eyak River Village, 6 miles from Cordova, Alaska, died overnight, so to speak, by the first introduction of big business into Alaska. Guggenheims' pioneers of Alaska laid track over the now defunct village sites and the Copper River Northwestern Railroad was born. However, to the glee of the policymakers in Washington...the copper from the Kennicott Copper Mines in the interior, routed to Cordova over Eyak Indian and Chugach Native lands, let alone the very village sites of the Eyak Indians, paid for in revenue to the U.S. government many times over the purchase price of Alaska. By contrast for many years there have been programs for the prevention of the extinction of our natural resources. Recently, Secretary of the Interior Udall said, 'What we allow to happen to rare and endangered species of wildlife may become our destiny too.' I feel that Secretary Udall's recent statement fits very well to the near extinct Eyak Indians in Cordova, Alaska. I do not feel that the dwindling of this tribe is primarily attributed to assimilation except to some extent in this generation...The social and economic endeavors of the Indian/Native people in Alaska is, I feel, from within ourselves as a people seeking to gain recognition and identification to organize to those ends to enable us to stand on our own two feet.³⁷⁷

The language used here, of loss and extinction, specifically as it pertains to Eyak people and language, has been leveraged in multiple ways in multiple contexts. The perceived "plight" of Eyak people is being used a kind of strategic essentialism to create urgency and validity of land claims in Eyak territory. This is a double-edged discourse—it at once can galvanize political change, move funding and attention in important directions, and stir emotional response from popular media and legislative audiences alike. However, it can also create illegibility and support rhetoric of extinction and disappearance that is not accurate in that it places far too much importance on the role of numbers to demonstrate strength, vitality, or "survival." In order for land claims to be legible, for language to be systematized, and for language loss to be noticed, much has to be overlooked and elided. The curated spectacle of Native disappearance, death, and extinction is an old tale, one that constitutes the historical and ongoing scientific, aesthetic, and political fabric of a settler colonial U.S.

When my great-grandmother Lena sat with Krauss and rehearsed her language, I do not believe that this was in the spirit of panic. I believe that she enjoyed practicing her language with precision, being asked for her expertise, and I also believe that she enjoyed the \$5 per word stem that she received for sharing her knowledge. In the mid-1960's when she sat with him, Lena had more than 6 grandchildren who she babysat, but she made time for Krauss. It would have been quite simple for her to shuffle off this task.

When asking my mother about her own activist use of loss and disappearance as a political strategic language and whether she would, in hindsight, utilize a different discursive route into gaining political purchase, she said: No. Crisis was not unusual. We grew up in households of crisis, in a time of violence: every day was chaos. There is not one moment of loss, but instead

³⁷⁷ Alice E. Brown papers, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage.

an accumulation of losses that amount to a frenzied energy, something that can be traced with a fingertip like the line of a ship's movement on a map.³⁷⁸

Of the many stories those two Eyak men had to choose from in 1899, what was it that prompted their narration of a white man drowning? With a landscape changing right under their feet—as Muir, Curtis, and Grinnell all opined through photographs of melting glaciers and impassioned stories of over-harvested salmon—these two men narrated another different kind of disappearance. Not one strung with expectations of gratitude or protégé, materials to defend against crisis or decline. Maybe the cylinder is a gift from two Eyak men who spoke into a device because they hoped it would be for us.³⁷⁹ A story about how our waters swallowed a white man who butchered a fish.

A Fish

It is mid-July 2015 and I am standing at a long wooden table, with a knife and a sharpener. I am wearing a blue vinyl apron and rubber boots, both covered in fish scales. The running hose at our feet moves water through gravel. Two women by a stream. My mom and I stand by a cart filled with ice and more than a dozen sockeye salmon. These fish were caught by their gills in a net strung with translucent multifilament web. As the fish hits the net a row of bobbing corks seen from the surface signals their entrapment. The fish often struggle to break free and bunch themselves into a ball of web that must be detangled once it's brought back on board. The web's imprint remains on the fish's body where it struggled until becoming stuck and immovable. Many fishermen cut holes in their web to detangle a salmon, but few know how to mend them back up.

The sockeye run is just about over. Each of us holds a curry horse comb in our hands, but neither of us has ever ridden a horse. We use these horse combs to brush our fish, with each stroke scales fly and stick to our cheeks and fleck our hair. Some guy from Arizona suggested that my mom try a curry comb to scale her fish, and now we can scale them twice as fast and we don't need to dull our knives doing the same job. These fish are slimier than king salmon, she tells me, they aren't as fat and need more protection. These fish travel many miles, up and down rivers to eventually arrive at the safe, spawning beds where they first started as little red blobs nestled in river gravel. They need their slime to protect them from cold ocean waters, sharp-teethed predators, and sneaky opaque fishing web. You could dull a dozen knives on this slime trying to get rid of it all, she says and smiles at the exterior excess of this fish.

Not too long ago she would only smoke the fat-bodied king salmon that weighed at least 40lbs or more. She wouldn't mess around with these smaller sockeyes. Fishermen would have gillnets built for the sole purpose of snagging up these big fish. I remember working with these nets,

³⁷⁸ See Paul Carter, *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design*, “scientists as well as artists have found it hard to connect the ideal lines they carry around in their heads with the actual appearance of the world.” (79)

³⁷⁹ Following the argument offered in Cutcha-Risling Baldy's book *We Are Dancing For You: Native Feminisms and Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-age Ceremonies*, wherein she articulates that information told to anthropologists by California Indian peoples was a gift, not to anthropologists or to anthropology, but to those Native peoples to make use of in a different time under different conditions.

large five-inch meshes would make a mending job go so quickly. I would spend more time flaking through a net than patching up the holes. The call to build and mend these nets has now passed, and Mom and I rarely see more than a couple of kings an opener early on in the season. The sounds of scraping scales from skin and the nearly silent pushing of our knives against slimy fish bodies mingles with soft caws from the crows in the nearby trees. They are waiting for all of my little mistakes, my turn of a knife into flesh too soon which becomes a meaty meal for a crow baby.

When she first taught me to fillet I couldn't bring myself to work on king salmon. A 40lb king is more than a \$200 delivery at the cannery and this kept me from raising my clumsy knife to its silver-gold body. You have to learn on the big fish, it's easier, she told me, this will taste good if it's pretty or not. But I wanted my cuts to be exacting, a precise row of clean white ribs bearing no trace of an unskilled hand. So she filleted the king salmon while I watched. She passed me the hefty head to cut in two, but I wasn't strong enough. So I watched as she did that part for me too. After feeling skilled enough to fillet a king salmon, I understood how much it was easier to fillet a big fish. You can feel so immediately the blade of your knife cut where it shouldn't, it's much easier to follow the bones of the salmon as they guide your hand in the arch of the ribcage, down the bump bump bump of the vertebrate. The heavy fillets unfurl, they curl open and twist away from the backbone of the salmon. Just like she said.

After scaling and sliming my fish, I rinse it with hose water and sharpen my knife. I make a cut into the fish's vent between two fins on its lower belly. I make a line with my knife up to its stomach and find a sac of eggs tucked between the swim bladder, stomach, liver, and spleen. Eggs! I cry gleefully and detach them delicately so that the egg sac doesn't break. The eggs are my favorite. I'm already imagining boiling them in a pot with onions and potatoes. The crows watch me closely. Maybe they are a crow favorite, too.

I hear footsteps on gravel as someone approaches our table. My mom turns around to see who it is, and welcomes a new neighborhood friend with a warm greeting. He responds like he is surprised to see her. This guy is always sniffing around for "extra" fish parts. I see him peer into the cart of fish, making a not so discrete tally. I say a quiet hello and turn back around to my fish. My mom has more patience and generosity than I ever extend. She asks him how his mother is doing, how his summer is going, and if he's enjoying all the warm weather. He exclaims that he loves the warm weather and that if he knew Alaska was this warm, he would have moved here years ago! He asks it must be a nice change for you, right? My mom responds that in fact she prefers very cold, rainy days—it's better for the fish. He looks puzzled and responds: Oh, is that how your smoked salmon turns out so good? The reason I came over here, actually, was to ask you about how long you brine your salmon.

This is a common question. Especially for those just starting out smoking fish, but even seasoned smokers will call my mom with more carefully crafted questions. Such as: How much salt do you use in your brine? Do you use any brown sugar in your brine? How long do you leave your fish in the smokehouse? What kind of wood do you use? These are certainly all important questions when it comes to smoking salmon, but these are logistical questions that are easy to answer, easy to accommodate, easy to modify. An even more common inquiry—what do you add to your salmon to make it taste so good? My mom finds this question endearing because she

knows people want an answer that sounds like this: you know, it's this liquid smoke I found at Pike Place Market, or it's this state of the art smoker that I bought on QVC; I'll send you a link.

My mom responds helpfully that she brines red salmon for 19 minutes and she brines kings for 27 minutes in 100% brine. But, she adds, these numbers change with the weather. He laughs a response that she is trying to hide some trade secret. She ignores his comment and continues, these numbers also depend upon how the salmon flesh feels and its color. The feel and color of the salmon meat will tell you how it will respond to both salt and smoke, and its freshness in terms of how long it has been out of the ocean.

By this point in her description, I have taken the head off my fish, pulled out the guts, and with a spoon scraped out its bloodline that runs along its back behind its internal organs. I am starting to fillet the first side and I hear the curious man ask her about how long she smokes her fish. I am surprised by his question that sounds so familiar to the first: how long? Did he not hear her first response that was essentially to ask the fish? Along the de-scaled skin I make a long, shallow cut just below the backbone of the fish from the head to the tail. I turn the fish at its tail to make a square cut and continue from its tail down to the vent where I opened its stomach. I turn the fish back around so the head is pointing away from me and start to make a deeper cut, pulling the knife toward me slowly. I push my knife down and its sharpness moves through the meat until I feel it touch the vertebrae. I run my knife down the full vertebrae of the fish to its tail and the first fillet is half done. I switch the direction of my knife, instead of pulling it toward me through the fish, I push it away following the curve of the ribcage. When I first began learning to fillet, I always fucked this part up overthinking it and wanting it to be perfect. Just follow the bones, my mom explained. Once I trusted the body of the fish to guide my knife with just a little bit of encouragement on my end, the knife seems to move on its own accord as it follows the bones. Just like she said. My first fillet parts from the backbone and it's beautiful, clean and perfect.

She again responds cheerfully to her visitor, certainly there to visit her and not her prickly daughter. Depending on the stage of the season, the stage of the run, they could be in the smokehouse for only a day and night or up to two days and two nights. Take little pieces out and cook them up—you'll know. If it's really hot out, like today, the fish will smoke quickly and it will probably come out dry. You'll need to check it frequently. When it's cold and rainy, that will be the best smoke you'll get. But, you need to make sure that your smokehouse stays dry, or there is a possibility that your fish could mold.

I've flipped the fish over and started on the second fillet which is a little bit trickier because it's not lying as flat and the knife must go in the opposite motion from the first fillet. I make the same incision around the fish from head to tail, tail to vent. This time I push the knife away from me for all the cuts, but the vertebrae and rib cage guidance remains the same. The red meat curls as I hug the knife to the bones. In a few quick gliding motions, I pull the second fillet away from all that remains: the backbone and the tail. I place my second fillet next to the first and they are a perfect pair. My mom looks over and tells me, great job! But, she adds, they don't need to be perfect, they'll taste just as good with a few blemishes. She takes her knife and cuts a piece off near the tail and throws it to the crow-moms. Annoyed, I take the hose to the backbone and start to rinse out the remaining blood and guts.

So, the more heat and smoke the better? The novice man asks my mother and I smirk as I imagine him shoving dozens of rolled up Cordova Times newspapers into his too-hot fire. No, she replies, you don't want the fire to cook your fish through. What I'm guessing you want is a kipper. This is a small fire with no more than 3-4 small logs at a time. While she responds, she grabs a plastic grocery bag from a nearby hook and takes the fish head and backbone I just finished cleaning and tosses them into the bag. Okay, so if I use an electric smoker, he asks, what setting would you suggest? She leans across me, grabs the eggs and despite my small nearly inaudible gasp, carefully places them in the bag too. She extends her arm to give the plastic grocery bag of treasure over to him and says with a smile, can't help you there.

Conclusion

“Cryogenics: The Ice Core and Little Raven Girl”

“The potential for scientific modelling of past climates has increased enormously during the last decade, but so has our understanding about the richness of oral traditions from circumpolar northern regions.”

-Julie Cruikshank, Do Glaciers Listen?³⁸⁰



Universal History Archive/ UIG/Getty Images

Did the mass death of indigenous Americans cool down the planet?

Figure 1, “How Colonization’s Death Toll May Have Affected Earth’s Climate: Did the mass death of indigenous Americans cool down the planet?”³⁸¹

At the end of January 2019, a report published in *Quaternary Science Reviews* by Alexander Koch, Chris Brierley, Mark Maslin, and Simon Lewis titled “European colonisation of the Americas killed 10% of the world population and caused global cooling,” was picked up internationally by various news outlets including the New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, and History.com. The summarized finding “clarifies the size of pre-Columbian populations and their impact on their environment,” and contends that the historical depopulation of Indigenous peoples wrought by colonial violence in the Americas cooled the climate. The report suggests that colonization of the Americas left very few people to tend to their fields and vegetation quickly reclaimed huge expanses of land previously used for agriculture. That vegetation regrowth, or reforestation, effectively removed enough carbon from the atmosphere so that the planet was cooled, thus contributing to what has been called the Little Ice Age from about 1300-1870.³⁸² As the authors write, “human actions at that time caused a drop in atmospheric CO² that cooled the planet long before human civilization was concerned with the idea of climate change.”

³⁸⁰ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 23.

³⁸¹ Sarah Pruitt, “How Colonization's Death Toll May Have Affected Earth's Climate,” History.com, <https://www.history.com/news/climate-change-study-colonization-death-farming-collapse>.

³⁸² Ibid.

While the publication of this article received a set of critiques from a range of readerships, not the least of which raised a concern that there is a potential argument here for depopulation as a climate solution, the fundamental findings are useful in thinking through multiple inquiries posed in this dissertation. First, this report lends itself to a project of destabilizing a narrative of human crisis in the Anthropocene as an event caused by equalized human destruction. As addressed in Chapter Four, there have been considerable critical moves in recent scholarship to demonstrate the production of climate change has vastly unequal contributors in relation to gender, race, and class across the globe. Relatedly, the report pushes a divergent temporal understanding of climate change that does not hinge upon Western markers of human history as they intersect with climate, and more specifically the Industrial Revolution as a beginning place for the Anthropocene, but takes into account the violences of Empire and colonialism enacted by Western powers.

The report further evidences that Indigenous peoples widely practiced agriculture in multiple forms before contact, which brings into question the notion of the Americas as simply a vast untamed wilderness needing proper management and governance and thus necessitating dispossession. In the report's version of history, Indigenous peoples in the Americas were intentional agriculturalists changing and shaping landscapes to nourish large populations living in what might be understood retrospectively as settled city centers. Moreover, the "failure of Indigenous civilizations" in the Americas in the article's version of history is not climatically determined, i.e. by drought, but instead by immense colonial violence via depopulation. The article, then, potentially contributes to a political project that is interested in reframing discussions around Indigenous historical land use and management, genocidal tactics of colonization, and, in particular, retooling the discussions of the Anthropocene in ways that account for the climatic influences of colonization.

However, there are pieces of this reconstructed climate history that are worthy of greater pause. The first is the implicit appeal to agriculture as an indicator of proper civilization. Perhaps unintentionally, the report makes an argument for purposeful, settled Indigenous presence that is comparative to Western forms of agriculture and fixity of settlement. According to the data, Indigenous peoples were producing levels of carbon dioxide from agricultural activities in ways that are quite literally legible in the records in their comparison to Western forms of cultivation. This dissertation has already problematized an attachment to temperate-normative forms of cultivation and the ways that these investments racialize and dismiss particularly Arctic and sub-Arctic Indigenous socialities. Moreover, the data analyzed for this report is not examining the levels of CO² produced by Indigenous peoples in America, but the halt of such production. This is essentially a measurement of CO², not a multi-dimensional measurement of human life and/or lifeways. These measurements are made through the abrupt "Great Dying" of Indigenous peoples of the Americas—not lived practices. This finding is even less about Indigenous peoples who did not practice agriculture in normative senses, for instance, the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic and sub-Arctic who are at the center of this dissertation. The presupposed path of human civilization and progress achieved by agriculture "excludes or marginalizes Indigenous groups living in cold regions."³⁸³

³⁸³ Alessandro Antonello and Mark Carey, "Ice Cores and the Temporalities of the Global Environment," *Environmental Humanities* 9:2 (November 2017), 193.

This brings me to the second related point: what data is being examined to arrive at this scientific finding? Authors of this article analyzed what is called “proxydata,” which is taken up when there are no historical records that can be turned to for long-term records.³⁸⁴ Proxydata are used for climate and environmental reconstruction and are sourced through pollen analysis, raised or drowned beaches, tree ring dating, and, most relevant to this discussion, the use of ice cores.³⁸⁵ The finding in this article is based off ice cores drilled and extracted from an Antarctica ice sheet.



Figure 2, Section of ice core drilled in December 2010 from West Antarctic Ice Sheet.³⁸⁶

Air bubbles trapped between ice crystals in frozen samples, such as the one above, can indicate a fall or rise in the concentration of carbon dioxide.³⁸⁷ Often ice cores are taken from ice sheets in Greenland or Antarctica as ice there can extend for over two miles in depth and are said to have the most uninterrupted data and spanning the farthest back into the past. As Antonello and Casey write, “since early efforts in the 1950’s, and especially since the 1980’s, drilling into the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, as well as mountain glaciers, to retrieve ice cores has become a critical practice in constituting knowledge, understandings, representations, and politics of the contemporary global environment.”³⁸⁸ Ice core samples, then, are taken from all glaciers and on all ice sheets across the globe in order to provide a range of data that is local in scientific interest or pertains to global research, like the article discussed here.

³⁸⁴ K. Jan Oosthoek, “Reconstructing past Climates,” Environmental History Resources, June 05, 2015, <https://www.eh-resources.org/reconstructing-past-climates/>.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Antonello and Carey, “Ice Cores and the Temporalities of the Global Environment.”

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 182.

Ice cores are drilled using a mechanical or thermal drill depending on the hardness of the ice and depth needed for study.³⁸⁹ Each year of snowfall forms a layer of ice in the glacier, making it possible to reconstruct chronological layers, like tree rings. Ice-trapped gases hold information about the glacier's or ice sheet's structure, physical mechanics, rate or growth of decline, mean surface temperature, contents of the atmosphere at the time of formation, and air temperature when snow originally fell.³⁹⁰ The ancient ice is analyzed to reveal the earth's climate history by measuring sea salt concentration and presence of methane sulphonic acid, which can determine patterns of sea ice and comparative levels of greenhouse gasses and temperature.³⁹¹ This reconstruction of the past via ice core data allows scientists to single out narratives about the environmental history of the globe, and human interaction upon it, or what geologist Richard Alley has called the "two-mile time machine."³⁹² Ice core data is widely used in a range of scientific studies to make both sweeping and more precise arguments about what the earth's climate was like hundreds and often thousands of years ago.³⁹³ One might anticipate the critique here in that "ice cores have tended to universalize and create a single timeline or temporality for the Earth...[as] ice cores from Greenland and Antarctica synchronize Earth's two hemispheres."³⁹⁴ The ice core as a technology lends itself easily to the creation of a notion of "human time," and ice core research has a basic tendency to ascribe "civilizational collapse to climatic factors" wherein "the societal is subsumed into the climatic."³⁹⁵ Put another way, measurement of trapped air bubbles cannot reconstruct Indigenous socialities that were living in non-agricultural ways, or in ways that aren't leaving a significant mark on non-human entities that then become records.

As this dissertation has shown, ice is not a simple, untouched materiality or objective data resource that is without its own complicated history of being produced and being weaponized. In the ice core, ice is being taken as an inert materiality and spliced by scientific technologies to tell specific kinds of stories, similar to the ways that ice was used to dictate racial difference in the Enlightenment and in Edward Curtis' landscape photographs. The glacier, the icefield, is mined for particular data sets, to tell grand narratives about human history that come to matter on a global scale. Kathryn Yusoff echoes a similar sentiment writing, "the value of ice, and of the Polar regions more generally also passes through this black box; spaces formerly on the periphery become crucial to the possibilities of knowledge and the future. Ice is changed by the activities of this cold room knowledge practice—how we relate to the Polar Regions and how we pass by or take notice of ice sheets, shelves, glaciers and cold places."³⁹⁶ The spatiotemporal aspects of the ice core allow for the trafficking of this data across genres and spaces of human import: "ice core discourses, discussions, reporting, representations, and narratives have also shaped temporalities, the senses of time, in the contemporary world."³⁹⁷ If the compressed ice

³⁸⁹ "About Ice Cores," NSF Ice Core Facility, <https://icecores.org/about-ice-cores>.

³⁹⁰ Antonello and Carey, "Ice Cores," 182.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² See Richard Alley, *The Two-Mile Time Machine: Ice Cores, Abrupt Climate Change, and Our Future*.

³⁹³ However, ice cores extracted from tropical and temperate high mountains point out a "tropical asynchrony" which tell different stories about the earth's climate history. See Antonello and Casey.

³⁹⁴ Antonello and Casey, "Ice Cores," 186-188.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, 192.

³⁹⁶ Kathryn Yusoff, *Core Histories: Visual Scanners*, U.S. National Ice Core Laboratory, Boulder, 2007.

³⁹⁷ Antonello and Casey, "Ice Cores," 183.

stories extracted and analyzed in the ice core can be read as an archive to narrate violences of empire and colonialism, largely taking place in temperate locales, then ice as a materiality itself must also be problematized and complicated as data, as this dissertation has argued.

To conclude this analysis then, I would like to pose this question: How do we take into account other sets of histories that necessitate understanding ice as historically produced and constitutive of other kinds of violences such as racialization and dispossession that occur(ed) in ice-geographies? Ice is utilized to remake scientific-historical narratives and therefore to influence climate policy around the globe, but to those who the materiality of ice has been most consequential remain obscured in this new ice core climate history and futurity. As Antonello and Casey argue, the use of ice core data in research “often neglects the people who actually live near ice coring sites,” and I would add, those who have intimately historical, relational, and colonial entanglements with ice more broadly conceived. So, what different kinds of emplaced stories might ice tell?

In Julie Cruikshank’s *Do Glaciers Listen*, she asks a similar question as she attends to the social lives of glaciers in the time of the Little Ice Age as articulated by Indigenous peoples, mostly Indigenous women. The oral stories that she collects about the social lives of glaciers take place in the region near what’s for now called Mt. Saint Elias, spanning from the Copper River to Yakutat, down to Lituya Bay, across the international settler border of the U.S. and Canada. Cruikshank writes in juxtaposition to these oral narratives about glaciers that scientists now are taking ice cores from near Mt. Saint Elias in hopes of reinterpreting the history of the Little Ice Age and the Holocene in this era. Cruikshank demonstrates that Indigenous peoples’ articulations of the Little Ice Age involve multiple migrations of distinct peoples across glaciers and places where glaciers both surged and retreated, and that this history is eventually corroborated in ice core data extracted by said geologists.³⁹⁸

As demonstrated in this dissertation, the Mt. Saint Elias area, the first portion of Alaska to be visited by Russian explorers led by Vitus Bering, is originally Eyak territory. Cruikshank recounts that the earliest inhabitants on the shores of Yakutat Bay “were Eyak speakers, never a large nation, who were settled at Yakutat Bay when others arrived,” the place name Yakutat was adopted “from the Eyak word Ya.gada.at (a lagoon is forming), referring to open water that appeared as glaciers melted.”³⁹⁹

Cryogenics

Surfaces move and respond. One (in)forms the other, ice and rock, silt and river, sketching shapes in a dance careful and delicate, chiding and friendly, long and lustful. Glacier moves earth and earth shudders a reply.

This glacier of ancient remains. Color and feel of fiberglass, insulation in crosshatches of clothes and arm-hairs. This glacier itches.

³⁹⁸ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 31.

This glacier scratches an itch. It gleams a heart flutter. Snow blind, it terrifies. An ice pick away from adventure. This glacier makes the news. It makes men, men, men.

This glacier has a face. Eyes that stare down the barrel of a grandfather's gun. *Squeeze the trigger*. Give 'em hell. Calve baby calve.

This glacier is a host. Astronaut, military training site, a blue Avatar, dry, unvegetated, cold, polar desert. Other-world for Martians, a red-planet, the arctic plains.

This glacier is named General Philip **Sheridan Glacier**. General Henry Clark **Corbin Glacier**. General William Tecumseh **Sherman Glacier**. General Theodor **Schwan Glacier**. Generals of Civil War fame, historians say. But these are also generals of Indian Wars. Indian Killers. War Criminals. Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation the same day that he ordered the hanging of 38 Dakota men.

Sheridan Glacier was named in 1884 after General Philip Sheridan. Captain William Abercrombie named this glacier after his wartime friend. How much does it cost to be frozen after death? Philip Sheridan, the ~~Civil War General~~ Indian War Criminal is most famous for saying: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Some say: it was actually Teddy Roosevelt who said: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," but Dee Brown said: Sheridan said it. Bury my heart at **Sheridan Glacier**.

We used to drive to the glacier at least once each summer. It was 52 miles from town, gravel road, unpaved, unkempt. As teenagers, we would pack into a friend's truck and hotrod out the road. We drove out to the glacier to smoke weed. Try chew for the first time and get stomach aches, end up on the bed of the truck letting the air roll over our bodies in hopes of being cured from the poison we packed in our lips. An occasional straggler from the Sierra Club, or Patagonia, or some other environmentalist group touring the glacier would approach us and asked to get smoked out. That tree hugger got high as shit. We built palette fires near the glacier's edge and roasted hot dogs and grilled hamburgers with flannels pulled high around our necks to shield from the glacier air that sighed in our direction. Sometimes we got so baked that we couldn't get out of the truck, paranoid that the glacier would calve big enough to trigger a tidal wave to swallow us up, malicious at the sight of us. GERONIMO! White boys called as an icy piece plunged from the glacier's face into the river below. Other times we pulled guns on the glacier, shot up all our bullets and giggled, laughed, held our bellies, screamed in delight. We brought gangions out with us, sat by the glacier and tied knots, knot after knot after knot after not asking anything, but that each piece of metal and twine lure something up from the briny deep one gilled mouth at a time. Once we were hungover and the only cure was to submerge ourselves in the silty blue river water that kissed the glacier's face. Other times we were pensive. Walking the beach looking for good skipping rocks. Building maze designs in the glacier's boulder garden. Squinting out at the glacier across the slow-moving river between us, wondering what was it like to travel this land in the cottonwood canoes we saw at the museum, carved by a relative, not allowed to touch. They say: it's the last one like it.

I say: I'm sorry for my arrogance, glacier, I'm sorry for laughing as the gunshots rained down around you, your blue face, my transgressions alone deserve the consequences of your rapid

transition. Myself, at fault for your shift. I don't put all the blame on the carbon emissions, the global-conglomerates, though they too are culpable, just like the Indian killers that never met you, but live in your skin. Please forgive me glacier—I have no teacher. I have no guide other than readings by the anthropologists who recorded stories told by old Native ladies who you know and I never met.

Anthropologists say: “A thoughtless remark could have devastating results because according to oral traditions glaciers listen and make moral judgments and punish infractions.”

One day, little raven girl was bored. Her father had taken the dogs out hunting, her mother was gathering roots in a place too steep and dangerous for little raven girl. Her old aunty had fallen asleep. The small girl sang to her doll that her mother made out of lichen covered spruce bark. She fed her doll dried blueberries, asked her if she would like to dance but the doll did not respond. Little raven girl grew restless, she flung her doll to the ground, and crept the short distance from her play place to where she could see the left face of the glacier. A mischief curled the edge of little raven girl's lips into a tiny smile and she said:

HEY, GLACIER!

Just as her doll did not respond, glacier remained unmoved.

HEY, YOU, GLACIER! Little raven girl called more loudly and with a frustrated need.

GLACIER!!

Glacier turned an ear lovingly to the little raven girl, the one who glacier had watched be born and walk and play along glacier's fringe.

HEY GLACIER, YOUR EYES ARE TOO CLOSE TOGETHER! Little raven girl cried brazenly, hoping to elicit some response.

HEY GLACIER, I CAN SEE YOUR BALD SPOT!

Glacier stared at her and breathed in deeply. Glacier exhaled, and surged forward, its body screamed, cracked, and thundered. In its bolt forward it displaced an icy lake and shards of glacier ice daggered down from the sky. Glacier did not stop there: it swamped the little raven girl's village, rolled over the homes of her people and her little doll. Glacier stopped salmon as they swam, froze fins against fishy bodies. Glacier turned on little raven girl and out of its icy blue slits emerged what she most feared but had never spoken, she saw that her fears had married her most secret desires. Her most murderous ideas had bred with her truest intentions and their offspring came for her.

Anthropologists say: The same glacial advances are documented in geoscience records.

Glacier leaves in its path sediments rich and vital, pollinating a green that coats this valley in lichen—a plant that takes carbon and persuades it into air for breath. Glacier forges a soil that grows cabbages the size of planets, thousands of pounds. They weigh them every year at the fair.

I say that glacier says: I shaped this landscape. I melted this part of myself, changed my form for you. I showed you where the seals would open, generous and giving, during their pupping season. I shrank so that you might share with me this place.

Anthropologists say: Glaciers do not like to be looked at directly in the face. The natives say you must avert your eyes.

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