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Copper River Native Places

A report on culturally important places to Alaska Native tribes in Southcentral Alaska

Dr. James Kari and Dr. Siri Tuttle

BLM

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Cover

Ahtna caribou hunting camp on the Delta River in 1898. From Mendenhall 1900: Plate XXI-A.

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By
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U.S. Department of the Interior
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Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Field Office is compiling information on areas of special concern to village and tribal members who live in areas affected by the *East Alaska Resource Management Plan* (RMP*)*. There has been no management plan for East Alaska since the early 1980s. This work is being done between January and October, 2004.

The federally-recognized tribes that are in or near the *East Alaska RMP* are Mentasta Lake Village, the Native Village of Chistochina (Cheesh-na), Gakona Village Council, Gulkana Village Council, the Native Village of Tazlina, the Native Village of Klutikaah (Copper Center), the Native Village of Chitina, the Native Village of Cantwell, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, the Native Village of Eyak (Cordova), and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. The first draft (June 2004) was sent to 15 tribal councils and Native corporations in the area.

The final draft (April 2005) is being distributed among the tribal groups who are proximate to the East Alaska BLM region, to several individuals who were interviewed, and to the Bureau of Land Management (the federal agency sponsoring the work) and several other agencies. Copies of the final report may also be placed at several community and Alaska public libraries. References to traditionally important places are being kept confidential among these parties or are made in fairly general terms.

This report has five sections: sections 1 through 4 have discussions of sources of information on Ahtna, Eyak and Tlingit territorial knowledge and culturally-important areas that are of relevance to the recognized tribes that are proximate to the *East Alaska RMP*. Section 5 has several suggestions for the *East Alaska RMP* and for some cooperative agency-tribal initiatives

The numerous consultations conducted in preparing this report have given us the opportunity to review and summarize some hard-to-find sources on Native territoriality and geography of the region and to engage in discussions with many local persons on contemporary issues that relate to the *East Alaska RMP*. The final *East Alaska RMP* will make reference to information presented in this report and present a summary of the main concerns expressed in the final report.

1. Data sources on Ahtna territorial knowledge and culturally important areas

This section summarizes both the published and unpublished sources that relate to Ahtna territorial knowledge.

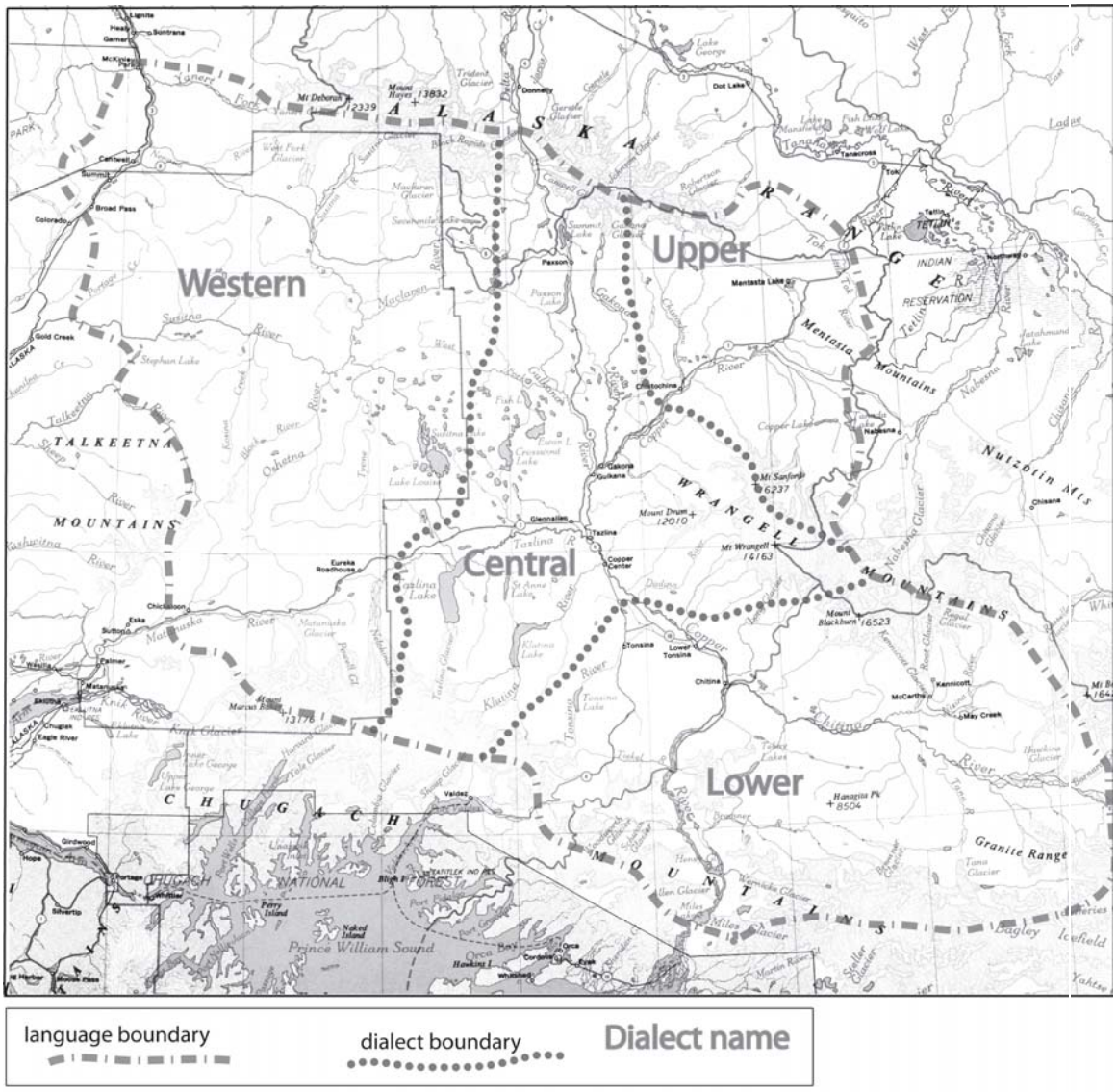
The most thorough ethnographic source for Ahtna is the 1981 survey article by de Laguna and McClellan. Two reports by Reckord (1983a, 1983b) are on Ahtna village and historic sites and subsistence use, and two recent studies by Simeone and Kari (2002, 2004) have extensive information on the Ahtna salmon and non-salmon fisheries. There are several sources on the Ahtna language, the most comprehensive being Kari's 1990 *Ahtna Athabaskan Dictionary.* There are two versions of topical dictionaries (Buck and Kari 1975, and Smelcer, Kari and Buck 1998) and several collections of stories (Billum 1979, Tansy 1982, Kari 1986). In addition, for Ahtna there is a large body of unpublished information such as Kari's unpublished notes and recordings, as well as notes and reports by several scholars (de Laguna, Simeone). Also there is an archive of audio and video recordings of Ahtna elders at the Ahtna Heritage Foundation office in Glennallen and a set of Ahtna audio recordings that is at the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The two large data sets that directly pertain to Ahtna territoriality are:

(1) The portrayal of language and dialect boundaries through the filing and marking of features of the Ahtna language. The Ahtna language boundaries and dialect markers are presented in the introduction to the *Ahtna Athabaskan Dictionary* (Kari 1990:20-29) and a system of dialect abbreviations is employed throughout the 468 pages of main entries in that dictionary. (See Map1.)

(2) The cumulative record on Ahtna place names and sites is from an array of sources. These include de Laguna (1970), the first compilation of Ahtna village sites and place names from her field work in the 1950s and 60s which contains about 220 place names and/or site references for Ahtna. West (1973) is a report based upon interviews with Ahtna elders in 1973 that lists 138 historic places and trails. There are also six audio tapes made by West during that project. The main published source on Ahtna place names that has been available is Kari (1983) with two accompanying wall maps. This report presented 1,383 Ahtna place names in 23 drainage-based sections. These lists have been maintained by Kari and have gradually been refined and the December 2003 draft had 2,007 names in 20 sections, many of which are mapped on sets of laminated field maps.

Map 1. The Ahtna Language and dialect map



Also chapters 10, 11, and 14 of Kari and Fall (2003) have information on Ahtna place names on the Matanuska, the Talkeetna, and the upper Nenana and Susitna rivers. In addition, there is the 1996 Copper River Native Association digital mapping presentation of various themes in Ahtna land use. However, this digital source cannot be accessed without proprietary software.

As an historical note, the earliest European contact in the Copper River was as early as 1785-86 and is known mainly via Ahtna oral tradition. The Samoilov party is likely the large group of Russians and Creoles who were killed by the Upper Ahtna near Batzulnetas (Kari 1986:75-87).

The earliest historic record of travel on the Copper River is the 1776-78 journal of Dmitrii Tarkhanov. In 1797, Tarkhanov stayed for several months in the vicinity of Chitina, mainly at the Ahtna village on the west bank called "Takekat," which is clearly **Hwt'aa Cae'e** the Ahtna name for an Ahtna site at the mouth of Fox Creek. This is the same site called *Dakah De'nin's Village* in Shinkwin's 1979 report. Grinev (1997) has translated and published excerpts from Tarkhanov's journal. Hallamaa (2001) is a draft translation of the full Tarkhanov journal. In 1797, Tarkha-nov recorded identifiable Ahtna place names for Fox Creek, Tonsina River, Tazlina River, Tazlina Lake, Nelchina River, and Matanuska River. Significantly, these are the same place names used for these places by contemporary Ahtna speakers.

Several Ahtna place names are on the 1839 Wrangell map via Native-drawn sketch maps (Wrangell (1980), Kari and Fall (2003: 85-86)). The famous 1885 journey of Lieut. Henry T. Allen and two others up the Copper River is a detailed portrayal of Ahtna presence at the time. In the spring of 1885, Allen recorded the downstream Ahtna place names on the Copper River Tatáhená (**Dadaa'i Na')** for Bremner River and Tasnuná (**T'aghes Nuu' Na'**) for Tasnuna River (Allen 1887:44). These early sources (Tarkhanov and Allen) on Ahtna geographic names provide evidence of aboriginal title via the presence of Ahtna speakers calling place names in their language and Ahtna land use at the times of the first historic contacts.

Two other sources that relate directly to Ahtna geography that are not organized or analyzed are the large corpus of Ahtna personal names and genealogical information and a large body of Ahtna song recordings. For experts on Ahtna culture, such as the late Chief Jim McKinley or Martha Jackson, the inventories of personal names and songs are indexed to specific geographic places and events.

We draw the Ahtna language and dialect boundaries (Map 1) as we know them at the onset of historic contact in the 1880s. The language area is approximately 35,000 sq. miles in area and includes all of the Copper River drainage above Childs Glacier, most of the Tok River drainage and the upper Nabesna River in the northeast, the upper Delta River above Black Rapids in the north, the upper Susitna River above Devil Canyon, the upper Nenana River above Healy River in the northwest, and the upper Matanuska River above Chickaloon River in the west. We can support this with extensive information about former band, family and individual territories. The patterns that are portrayed in these sources are based largely upon human foot travel without major dependence on motorized vehicles. This portrait of Ahtna territory precedes all historic and contemporary land ownership patterns and

the various land management jurisdictions in Copper River basin and adjacent areas in the Ahtna language area.

The *Ahtna Athabaskan Dictionary* (Kari 1990) is an alphabetical morpheme list with examples. As presented in the dictionary and in Map 1, there are four Ahtna dialects. These are the Lower, Central, Upper and Western dialects. Ahtna is a very homogeneous Athabascan language. None of the dialects is radically different or hard for an Ahtna speaker to understand.

We draw the dialect boundaries based upon clusters of features (known as isoglosses). For example the Lower dialect has a noticeable sound change that produces many more **gg** sounds in words, where **d+gh** become **gg,** as in *mountain* in Lower Ahtna **ggalaay** vs. Central Ahtna **dghilaay**.

Dialects are also marked by distinct vocabulary items. The Upper dialect has many distinct words. Most Ahtna say **'eł deyaani** for *spruce hen***,** but the Upper dialect speakers use the word **deyh**.

The links with the Ahtna dialects and other surrounding Athabascan languages demonstrate that the Athabascan languages have great antiquity in the region. There are large numbers of shared words between Upper Ahtna and the Tanana River languages. Also many Ahtna-wide features are shared with the Dena'ina language of Cook Inlet, and especially the Upper Inlet dialect of Ahtna. Ahtna and Dena'ina have been closely associated neighbors in Southcentral Alaska probably for more than 2000 years (Kari 1977).

These "comparative Athabascan controls" add other levels of patterning and prehistoric perspective. For example, when fish terms are compared in several contiguous Athabascan languages, we can recognize archaic vocabulary and regional innovations (Kari 2002).

1.1 Summary of the Ahtna place names corpus in 2004

The cumulative record on Ahtna territoriality (if all sources were compiled) is based upon materials contributed by more than 150 Ahtna speakers. The Ahtna place names corpus is one of the most comprehensive for an Alaska Native language area. With the exception of the Chitina River drainage, we feel that the coverage is quite thorough for what we reconstruct as traditional Ahtna territory. The major place names and features are known by virtually all Ahtna speakers as a shared geographical name tradition. Virtually all major drainages and all accessible hills, mountains, and ridges are named. There is overwhelming consistency as to how specific places are named in the Ahtna language. There are virtually no names that appear to be non-Athabascan in origin. Sources such as Kari (1989), (1996a), (1996b) and Kari and Fall (2003) discuss many aspects of the Ahtna and Dena'ina place names, such as the naturalistic and functional aspects of the names, and the transmission and memorization of place names.

Table 1. Ahtna place names data in 2004 by drainage

Sec.	*Drainage*	*No. of names*	*land status, BLM planning area*	*nearby federally recognized tribe*
0	Extraterritorial and regional	23		
1	Copper River, mouth to Chitina	90	NPS, BLM Tiekel, US Forest Service	Chitina Traditional Village, Native Village of Eyak
2	Chitina River	72	NPS	Chitina Traditional Village
3	Copper River above Chitina to Klutina River	166	NPS, BLM Tiekel	Chitina Traditional Village, Native Village of Klutikaah
4	Tonsina River	68	BLM Tiekel	Chitina Traditional Village
5	Klutina River	78	BLM Tiekel	Native Village of Klutikaah
6	Copper River, Klutina River to Tazlina River	14	NPS, BLM Tiekel	Native Village of Klutikaah
7	Tazlina River	129	BLM Tiekel	Tazlina Village Council
8	Matanuska River	138	BLM Nelchina	Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
9	Copper River, Tazlina River to Gulkana R mouth	35	NPS, BLM Gulkana-Delta	Tazlina Village Council, Gulkana Village
10	Gulkana River	314	BLM Gulkana-Delta	Gulkana Village
11	Delta River	37	State, TLAD, BLM Gulkana-Delta	Gulkana Village
12	Copper River, Gulkana to Gakona R and up Gakona R	47	NPS, BLM Gulkana-Delta, BLM Chistochina	Gulkana Village, Native Village of Gakona
13	Copper River, Gakona River to Chistochina R and up Chistochina R	98	NPS, BLM Chistochina	Native Village of Gakona Chees-na Tribal Council
14	Copper River, Chistochina to Slana River	49	NPS, BLM Chistochina	Chees-na Tribal Council
15	Slana River	126	BLM Chistochina	Mentasta Lake Tribal Council
16	Tok River	77	BLM (Fairbanks district)	Mentasta Lake Tribal Council
17	Upper Copper River above Slana R	52	NPS	Mentasta Lake Tribal Council
18	Nabesna River	35	NPS	Mentasta Lake Tribal Council, Northway Village
19	Nenana River, headwaters to Healy area	112	NPS, BLM Denali	Native Village of Cantwell
20	Susitna River, headwaters to Devil Canyon	247	BLM Denali	Native Village of Cantwell
	Totals as of Dec. 2003	2,007		
	Totals as of Oct. 2004	2,069, +55 changes in location, + 20 changes in spelling		

Table 1 summarizes the Ahtna place names lists that were transmitted to BLM in December, 2003, and then revised in 2004. This table notes the sections in the database, the BLM planning district or other land status, and the proximate recognized tribes. Since the onset of this project, various additions, refinements and changes in locations in these lists have made, and as of early 2005 there are 2,069 names in the corpus.

There are some unique precedents and opportunities with the Ahtna place names research materials. The Ahtna place name materials have been refined for more than 25 years. The work has received no major funding. The mapping of the data in 1983 was on mylar quad maps. Since then mapping has been confined to marking of names on laminated maps. In the past Kari has circulated drafts of the lists and sent copies of some maps to several Ahtna communities (such as Mentasta and Cantwell) and to the Ahtna Inc. Lands Dept., but there has been no opportunity or funding to distribute the Ahtna place name and maps to all the villages.

When we transmitted the Ahtna place name data base to the BLM field office in December, 2004, this created some unique methodological and ethical issues. In the context of this project for BLM, we have found that Ahtna place names materials can contribute to the location and verification of sites along the Gulkana River as well as in other portions of Copper River Basin that have had little or no archaeological survey work. Also, there has been an understanding to maintain confidentiality about the Ahtna place names materials. We have been hesitant to engage in computerized GIS mapping of the names because we lack the software and skill to maintain such a mapped data base.

1.2 Nine career Ahtna place name maps

A useful way to introduce Ahtna geography is through what can be called "career place name maps." In Map 2 we present career maps for nine persons that we consider to be the foremost experts on portions of Ahtna territory based upon Kari's recollection of who reported names in specific areas. It is noteworthy that only seven or eight persons can represent the entire range of the language area as well as some adjacent Athabascan language areas. If we added the career maps of other experts, Map 2 would be more complex and less informative. As we profile each of these experts, we can introduce aspects of Ahtna band territories and land use. Also, for each person we try to characterize the extent of supporting documentation. The depth of coverage for each person varies from very extensive (for Jake Tansy or Frank Stickwan), to a basic outline (for Frank Billum). We survey these career maps from west to east and then down the Copper River.

Table 2. Summary of nine contributors to Ahtna career place name maps

	person	*home*	*range*	*sources*	*documentation*
1	John Shaginoff	Chickaloon, Sutton	Knik Arm/ Mat. R/ mid Sus R.	Tucker 1978, Kari 1983, Kari & Fall 2003,	1 recording
2	Jake Tansy	Valdez Ck, Cantwell	Nenana R/ Upper Sus R	Tansy 1982, Kari 1983 & Kari 2004, Kari 1999, Simeone & Kari 2002	20 + interviews; sketch maps; 12 recordings 4-5 interviews; recordings
3	Jim Tyone	TyoneVillage; Gulkana	Yanert R./Mat. R/ Gulkana R	Kari 1983, Kari & Fall 2003	4-5 interviews; 5 recordings
4	Adam Sanford	Chistochina	Upper CR, Isabel Pass to Tanana R	Kari 1983, Kari 1986:161-180	2 interviews, 1 recording, 1 sketch map
5	Fred John	Mentasta	Upper CR, Slana R, Tok R	Kari 1983, Kari 1986	6-7 interviews, 5 recordings
6	Jack John Justin	Nabesna, Chistochina	Upper CR/Nabesna R/Chisana R/ White R	Reckord 1982, Kari 1983, Kari 1986	8-9 interviews, 7+ recordings, sketch maps
7	Frank Stickwan	Dry Creek, Tazlina	Central CR	Kari 1983, Simeone & Kari 2002	20 interviews; 15 recordings; sketch maps
8	Jim McKinley	Copper Center	Central CR, Lower CR	Kari 1983, McKinley 2000	12+ interviews; 10+ recordings
9	Frank Billum	Chitina	Chitina R	Kari 2004	2 interviews; 3 recordings

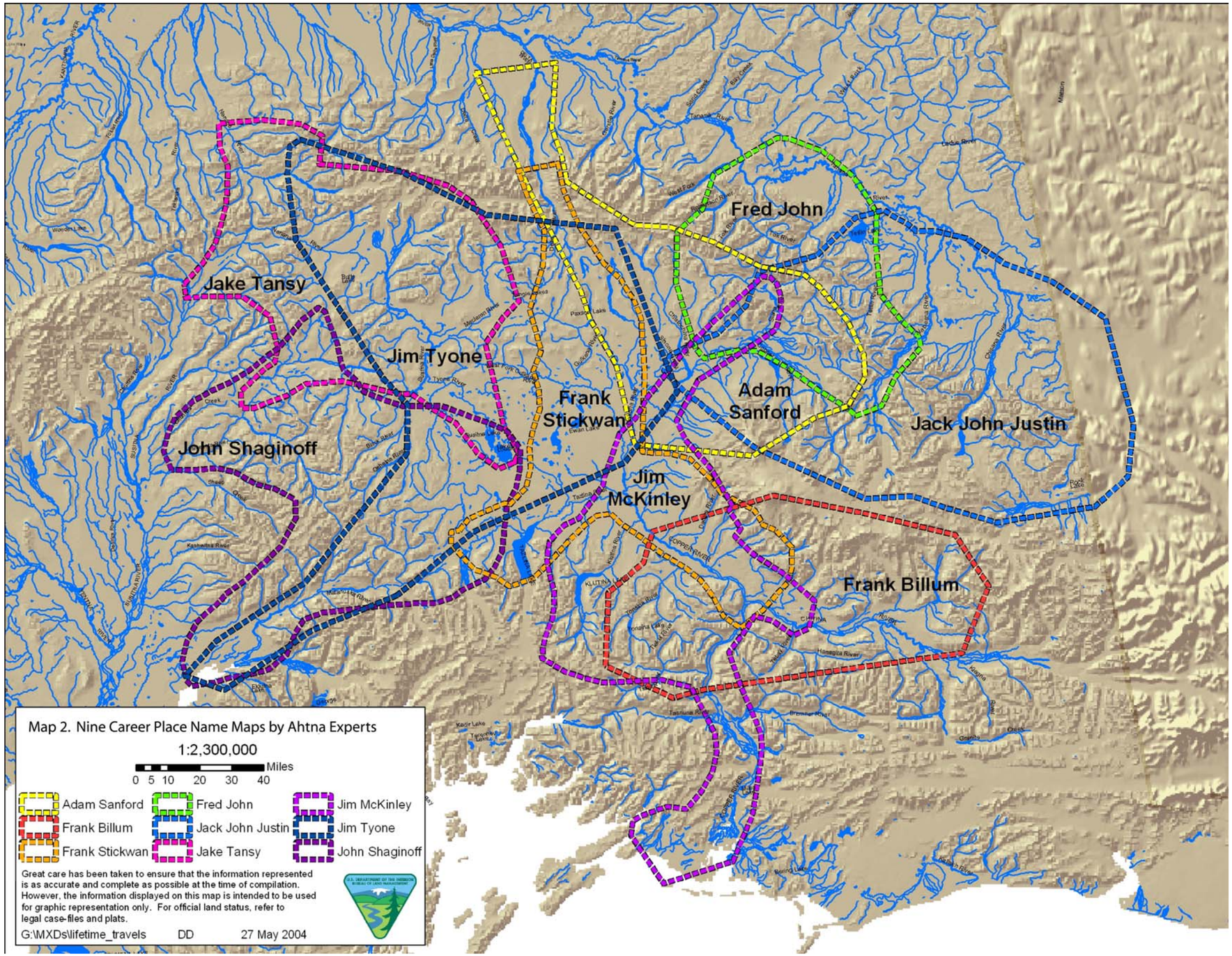
1. Johnny Shaginoff (1909-2001)

John Shaginoff lived in Sutton in his later life and contributed place names and land use information for a large part of the Western Ahtna dialect area. A renowned traveler and packer, Shaginoff spoke both Ahtna and Dena'ina. Shaginoff was a major contributor to Kari and Fall (2003) where he is profiled on page 257. In one session in March, 1985, Johnny mentioned about 70 place names, many in both Ahtna and Dena'ina. John Shaginoff passed away in 2001 at the age of 92.

Shaginoff's career travel map represents the southwest edge of Ahtna territory and overlaps with Dena'ina territory in lower Matanuska River and Knik Arm. From his personal travels as a hunter and trapper he knew a very large area from Knik Arm, the Matanuska River valley, and the Talkeetna Mountains between the Talkeetna River and the Tyone Lake area, and north of the Susitna River to the Deadman Lake area. He was the main source on trail systems throughout the Talkeetna Mountains and the Matanuska River.

Map 2. Nine career place name maps by Ahtna experts

Map 2. Nine career place name maps by Ahtna experts



Sources for John Shaginoff and Chickaloon territory include annotations throughout Kari and Fall (2003: chapters 11, 13 and 14, several publications of Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (such as CVTC 1998), including Wade (2002), one audio recording, and an article that appeared in *Ruralite Magazine* (Tucker 1978).

2. Jake Tansy (1906-2003)

Jake Tansy was born in 1906 at Valdez Creek and resided in Cantwell for many years where he passed away in the fall of 2003. Jake was the expert on the uplands of the upper Nenana and Susitna RiversBthe traditional territory of the Valdez Creek-Cantwell Ahtna band. The Ahtna place name corpus for Jake's area was refined for more 20 years. Jake had a rare combination of experience and skills as an outdoorsman and raconteur. Tansy 1982 is a fine collection of Ahtna **yenida'a** legends.

Tansy's career Ahtna place name network represents the northwest edge of Ahtna territory and extends from the upper Nenana River above the Healy River and along the upper Susitna River to Devil Canyon. In this Western Ahtna area, we have more than 350 names recorded. Tansy's area of expertise overlaps with that of John Shaginoff between Stephan Lake and Tyone Lake.

Tansy provided the most detailed travel, land use and place name materials of any Ahtna speaker. Sources for Jake Tansy include numerous tape recorded interviews by Kari (1999, 2005), Bob Betts (1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1993), and others. Kari has transcribed several of these, but most are not transcribed.

Jake Tansy was also one of the main sources in the 1988 BLM report by Dessauer and Harvey. Rebne (2000) is a synopsis of the history of the community of Cantwell. Extensive comments by Jake Tansy on Ahtna fish and fishing are in Simeone and Kari (2002 and 2004). Also Jake Tansy drew several detailed sketch maps (see Map 5). We consider Jake Tansy's ethnogeographic narratives to be among the best ever recorded in Alaska.

3. Jim Tyone (1898-1988)

Jim Tyone was born at Tyone Lake and lived for many years in Gulkana. His career place name map represents the Tyone Lake band territory in the early twentieth century. He traveled on fall hunting trips to the head of the Susitna River and into the Yanert River Valley (as did Jake Tansy). He also traveled the foot trail from Tyone Lake to Knik down the Matanuska Valley, a trail that was about 170 miles in length. In Tyone's travel narrative of the Matanuska River trail in 1912 (Kari and Fall (2003:223-225)), he mentions 37 different places in Ahtna or in English. In addition, Tyone knew the main areas used by the Gulkana band, where he lived with his wife, Annie Ewan Tyone's family, from Summit Lake, to the West Fork of the Gulkana River, to Crosswind Lake and to the Copper River.

Jim Tyone's career map is one of the largest recorded for an Ahtna speaker. He contributed many place names to the lists, including some in Dena'ina territory.

Tyone's central Copper River knowledge overlaps with that of Frank Stickwan and Jim McKinley and his western area overlaps with that of John Shaginoff and Jake Tansy. He taped several travel and land use narratives that are unpublished.

Further information on the Tyone Lake band can be drawn from Irving 1957, the 1904 Moffit map, and the 1899 Johnston and Herning map (see Kari and Fall (2003:231-233)). At the turn of the twentieth century it routine for well-traveled men of the Tyone Lake band to range from the Upper Susitna River, to Copper River, to Knik Arm.

4. Adam Sanford (1887-1983)

Adam Sanford was born in the Chistochina area in 1887 and he died in 1983 at the age of 96. He had cabins and camps throughout the Upper Copper River. In 1981 he recorded one remarkable travel summary that appears in Kari (1986:161-180). This is a wonderful "bird's eye" summary of the Chistochina band territory in which he summarizes four routes and 66 place names including a route up the Chistochina River, turning west through Isabel Pass, and then north to Salcha on the Tanana River.

5. Fred John (1910-2001)

Fred John was born in Mentasta in 1910 and he passed away in 2001. He was traditional chief of Mentasta and an expert on the Slana River, the Upper Copper River, the Tok River and adjacent areas in Tanacross and Tetlin. Two detailed travel narratives are in Kari (1986:127-158, 194-207), as well as a potlatch speech to Mentasta Mountain (ibid:13-14). Fred was noted for his potlatch oratory and singing ability.

6. Jack John Justin (1906-1995)

Jack John Justin was born at Chisana in 1906 and he passed away in 1995. He spoke the Nabesna dialect of Upper Tanana in addition to Upper Ahtna. A true **Dze≈ Tahwt'aene** *(among the mountains person),* Justin was an all around expert on the natural history and place names of the Nutzotin Mountains. He was well known as a traveler, packer and hunter, and he was considered to be one of the best dancers in the area. On several occasions he provided names and trail information on the Upper Copper River, the upper Nabesna River to Northway and on to Scottie Creek, the upper Chisana River, and to the White River and beyond to the Donjek River in Yukon Territory.

7. Frank Stickwan (1902-)

Frank Stickwan's home territory is Dry Creek Village and the Crosswind Lake area to the west. He is intimately familiar with other drainage systems that feed into Crosswind Lake from the north including the West Fork and Middle Fork of the Gulkana River. In our fisheries interviews of 2000-2002, Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologist Tom Taube was highly impressed by the array of factual knowledge Stickwan has of the hydrology, fisheries and climate of the area between

the Gulkana and Tazlina rivers. His career travel map extends north to the Delta River and Tangle Lakes areas. He also traveled to the upper Dadina River on a hunting trip in 1923. Like Jim McKinley, Fred John and other Ahtna experts, Stickwan has a very broad second-hand knowledge of other areas through the Ahtna oral traditions.

8. Jim McKinley (1898-1989)

Jim McKinley was born in Copper Center in 1898 and died in 1989. Jim held leadership roles throughout his life as interpreter, minister, **tsisyu** clan leader, storyteller, and singer. In the last years of his life he served as the first traditional chief of the Ahtna Region. Kari worked regularly with Jim McKinley in the 1970s and early 1980s and he tape recorded about four hours of stories and extensive vocabulary and place names with Jim McKinley. In addition, McKinley worked with Frederica de Laguna and other researchers.

In our place name sessions McKinley discussed the local areas that he knew as well as his wider knowledge of regional geography and history. He was familiar with central Copper River and the Klutina and Tonsina River drainages. He knew details about Ahtna travel and sites all along the Copper River. He as well as Andy Brown were the sources of most of the 115 Ahtna names on the lower Copper River below Chitina. Both Brown and McKinley traveled the Copper River and Northwestern Railway so modern travel reinforced the prehistoric Ahtna place name sequence.

In 1981, Jim McKinley (McKinley 2000, Kari 2005) gave a beautifully-paced 32-minute lecture on the major Ahtna villages that were located along the Copper River. McKinley listed and explained 70 places, most of which are village sites in an upstream succession, from below Taral to Mentasta, a distance of about 160 river miles. For each name McKinley mentions what the name means or where a site was located. The narrative is a bird's eye view of the sequence of Ahtna settlements as of approximately 1875. At one point McKinley notes in English, "That's where people living, that's all I talk about." For today's elders McKinley's narrative is of real interest and fascination.

9. Frank Billum (1914-2000)

Frank Billum was from the Chitina area. He knew Ahtna locations on the Copper River from Lower Tonsina to below Taral. He was also a miner and he knew the country on the east bank of the Copper River, in the Kotsina drainage and up the Chitina River to beyond the Nizina River. The Chitina River area is under-represented in the Ahtna place names corpus. Frank Billum's names and comments are the most extensive we have for these areas. Billum recorded some comments about Ahtna travel up the Tana River and over the glaciers toward Yakutat. Ken Pratt's 1998 article on the Chief Nicholai era has a good synopsis of Ahtna presence at early historic contact on Chitina River and the lower Copper River.

1.3 Ahtna place names: systemic features, distribution, and density

Systemic features of Athabascan ethnogeography are important for the study of Athabascan prehistory (Kari 1989, 1996a, 1996b, Kari and Fall 2003). The following generalizations apply to the Ahtna place name corpus. Athabascan place names are logical, functional and readily memorized and have been essential to Athabascan land tenure and navigation since antiquity. The conventions for memorizing and transmitting the names and the many patterns in the structure and the distribution of names indicate that the Athabascans have an Aofficial@ geographic names system. For example, there is a common set of names that extends across Athabascan language boundaries. Some overt boundary-marking place names can be detected. There are cases of patterned repetition in names. For example, both Paxson Lake and Lake Louise at the heads of two drainages have the same Ahtna name: **Sasnuu' Bene' (***sand island lake)*. The most striking features are the regional patterns in Northern Athabascan hydronyms (stream names) and oronyms (mountain names). This scoring of "stream" and "mountain" in central and southern Alaska is very conspicuous. For stream names the term **na'** is used in western Alaska Athabascan (including Ahtna) whereas the term **ndiig, niign, nik'e** is used in eastern Alaska Athabascan (Tanacross and Northway). The Ahtna term **dghelaayi** (*mountain)* is shared with Dena'ina and Upper Kuskokwim and is extended in meaning from the Tanana River Athabascan term for *Alaska Range*. Such place name patterns predate language differentiation and reflect ancient Athabascan geopolitical decision-making.

The general distributional patterns in Ahtna geography are summarized in Map 3, a scatter- plot of about 2,000 mapped Ahtna place names. At this size (11x17) the dots are quite congested. If Map 3 is fully enlarged, each dot has a number from the Ahtna place names data base. In 2004, there were 33 percent more names in the Ahtna place names corpus than there were in Kari (1983). Some facts about the Ahtna place name distribution are summarized as follows.

(a.) The Ahtna language area is a cohesive region that can be defined by the distribution of names reported by Ahtna speakers. Stated succinctly the Ahtna language area is entire the Copper River Basin above Childs Glacier plus these adjacent drainages: in the north, the upper the Delta River to Black Rapids; in the northeast, the Tok River and the upper Nabesna River; in the northwest, the upper Susitna River and the upper Nenana River: and in the west, the upper Matanuska River.

(b.) The Ahtna band territories and place names sets are organized by watersheds. The place names sub-divided by streams convey the typical ways in which the names are memorized and reported.

(c.) There is a recurrent pattern in the Ahtna band territories and place name networks: (1) a segment of the main stem of the Copper River and (2) upland lake districts that are mostly west and north of the main stem of the Copper River.

(d.) There is thorough coverage of features along the main stem of the Copper River.

Almost every side stream of any size above Bremner River has an Ahtna place name. By our count, there are about 430 names along the main stem of the Copper River--streams, stream mouths, clearings and flats, and nearby bluffs and hills

(e.) The area with the greatest density of names is the Gulkana River drainage with 351 recorded names at this time. There is a very comprehensive naming system for the lakes and streams south of the West Fork of the Gulkana River. There is an extensive network of camps, cabins, foot trails and canoe trails throughout the area. Gulkana village has been the nexus for Ahtna use of the West Fork of the Gulkana River. The Chitina River drainage has a skeletal set of names. The Ahtna have not used these areas extensively since early in the twentieth century.

(f.) As reflected by the name distribution, the Ahtna made greater use of the areas west of the Copper River. We can trace Ahtna trail systems from the Copper River to all of the larger lakes (such as Tonsina, Klutina, Tazlina, Crosswind, Ewan, Tyone, Tanada, and Copper). In contrast, on the Wrangell Mountains side of the Copper River, we have a more basic set of names for major side streams and some ridges and mountains. This reflects the basic facts of accessibility, village site locations, and access to resources. All historic Ahtna villages have been located on the west bank of the Copper River.

During the course of the 2004, project the drainage that received the most advance in place names documentation was the Delta River. Thanks to the expertise of Ben Neeley, the coverage for the upper Delta River and Tangle Lakes area increased from 37 names to 48 names with numerous changes and refinements in locations. We can show that the network of Ahtna names on the Delta River goes to Black Rapids and Gunnysack Creek. For example, Ben Neeley clarified that a place name on the Delta River, **Deniigi Ts'edle' Tayene'** *(moose brush river stretch),* is the stretch of Delta River between the mouth of Phelan Creek and Black Rapids. This area was a traditional Ahtna hunting area throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

1.4 Paleo-environmental and archaeological research in the Ahtna language area

The two sources summarizing Copper River Basin archaeology, Jangala and Keating (2004) and Potter (1997) observe that the archaeological record for Copper River mainly derives from work on the Denali Highway corridor in the 1950s and the pipeline corridor in the 1970s.

In 2003 BLM's Glennallen field office began a five-year project to survey cultural resources along the Gulkana River. The paper by Jangala and Keating (2004) has an excellent synopsis of the paleo-environmental research in Copper River Basin. The implications of the strandlines of ancient glacial Lake Ahtna are outlined and a model for surveying for undiscovered cultural remains along the Gulkana River is proposed. The Glennallen BLM office has been circulating a computer-generated geological reconstruction of ancient Lake Ahtna strandlines between the 2,000-foot and 2,400-foot elevation levels. This paper also has a summary of the extensive

archaeological work in the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD) which contrasts with sparse and uneven archaeological record from the remainder of the Copper River basin. The model for the current BLM survey of the Gulkana River is promising in that it will incorporate the paleo-environmental model of the lake strandlines and the implicational information of the Ahtna place names.

It is possible to identify many locations on BLM-managed lands that have specific types of Ahtna land use but have never been surveyed previously for archaeological evidence. Two locations that we recently mentioned to the district archaeologist John Jangala are a reported moose fence on a hill near the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River, called **Uk'ey'ghi'aade,** and a weir and village site, **Hwtsiiłgha,** above the mouth of the West Fork. The latter site is well known to Gulkana elders and is the most upstream salmon weir location on the Gulkana River, having been used as recently as 1927.

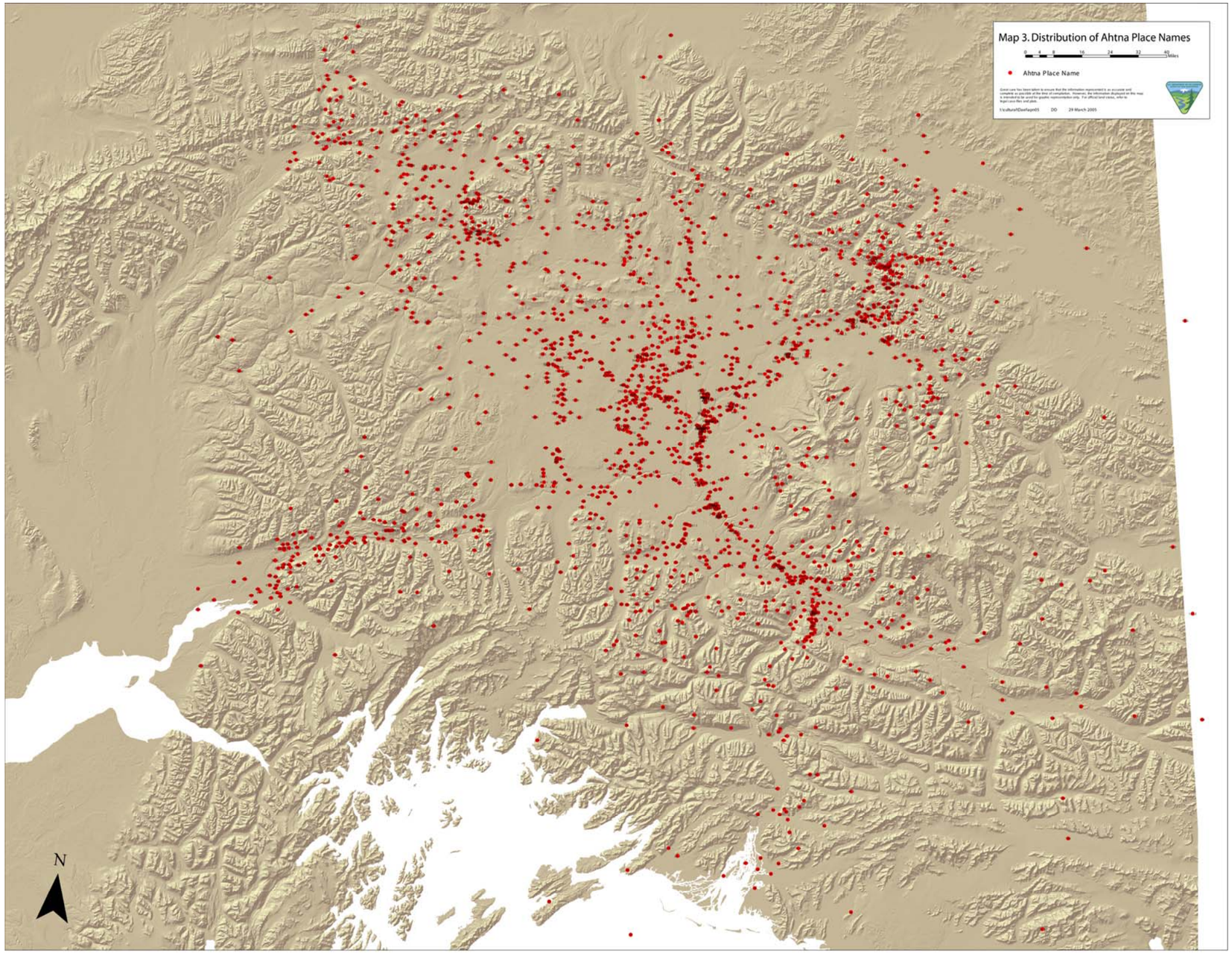
Ben Potter's 1997 UAF masters thesis, *A First Approximation of Ahtna Archaeology*, provides a history of archaeological research in the Ahtna area and an overview and analysis of the archaeological sites that are on file in the AHRS and the BIA-ANSCA files, and many unpublished site and survey reports. Potter tied this coverage to the Ahtna language area as defined through place names research in Kari 1983. Potter developed a data base for intersite analysis of 692 reported sites (and 713 total sites) with codes for environment, resource, seasonality, and site type. Potter excluded from his survey the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District.

Among Potter's conclusions are that the American Paleoarctic Tradition is the earliest that is evident and that there are some gaps in the radiocarbon dates, e.g., prior to five thousand years. The recognizable early historic Ahtna riverine archaeology and settlement pattern, with a high density of salmon pit caches, only date from about 700 years b.p. This site is Gul-077, near the mouth of Bear Creek near Gulkana (Workman 1977). Potter notes the lack of salmon-based sites older than this date. However, there have been no systematic archaeological surveys along the major salmon bearing rivers of the Copper River.

Potter's "coarse-grained" intersite approach is very useful as a heuristic device for framing questions and discussing the strengths and limitations of the archaeological record for the Copper River area. Potter's thesis is also a good starting point for making comparisons of archaeological site data for the Copper River area and the Ahtna place name data set. The Copper River Basin archaeological record ranges remains uneven and regionally skewed between the depth of coverage for the northern areas versus the paucity of coverage everywhere else in the basin. The reported sites and clusters of sites differ in degree of research, varying between those that have been formally researched with some radio-carbon dating (Shinkwin (1979), Ketz (1983), Workman (1977)), to sites that have been mapped and surveyed for surface features (BIA-ANSC 1993 on the large group of sites at Batzulnetas); to sites that are known through written sources such as de Laguna (1970) or Reckord (1983a) but that have not been surveyed, to putative sites that derive from the place names and associated comments by Ahtna elders, to areas where sites are likely but for which

Map 3

Map 3. Distribution of Ahtna place names



there is no associated place name or use information, to areas where sites are unlikely to be located.

Some points of comparison between the archaeological record in the Ahtna language area and the Ahtna place names database are:

(a.) Ahtna place names are distributed systematically and evenly on salient streams, accessible ridges and hills and overall documentary coverage for the language area is extensive. Some areas with a high concentration of Ahtna place names (notably Crosswind Lake, Ewan Lake and the Slana River area) have very few recorded archaeological sites. Most of the major Ahtna fall-spring fishing and hunting locations do not appear as sites in the AHRS records at this point.

(b.) For an Alaska Athabascan or Ahtna use area there should be few place names but many specific sites. One named village site might encompass several local use areas some of which might be verifiable as archeological sites

(c.) The concentration of recorded archaeological sites along highway corridors, the pipeline corridor, and the Susitna River hydroelectric survey area (above Devil Canyon) reflect the development-driven sponsorship of most of the archaeological work in the area.

(d.) The lifetime place name maps (Map 2) show that knowledge of several band territories was routine among the active Ahtna men. What appear as discontinuous outlier site districts from the point of view of archaeological site distributions, such as sites in the Tangle Lakes and the Valdez Creek areas, from the vantage point of the place name system can be shown to be entirely within the sphere of regular Ahtna territorial use.

(e.) The Ahtna place names are linked by trail networks. The specifics of the Ahtna trail systems are not precisely mapped, but they can be inferred from place names sequences, travel narratives, such as those of Fred John or Frank Stickwan, and sketch maps by various Ahtna speakers. See sec. 2.3.

One goal for the *East Alaska Resource Management Plan* is to develop the appropriate level of awareness of sites and site districts between the Native villages and Native corporations and the BLM agency. It is also important to retain confidentiality about sensitive archaeological sites and about culturally valued or sacred Ahtna sites.

Dense vegetation and difficult terrain hamper archaeological reconnaissance in the southern parts of Ahtna territory. In 1992 and 1993 there was a survey of archaeological sites on the Copper River below Chitina conducted by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The report by Buzzell et al. (1993) states that they located 21 possible prehistoric sites in five subdistricts, most of which are on or near the former railroad corridor. Other than pipeline corridor surveys of the 1970s, this is the only survey that has been done in southern drainages of the Ahtna language area. It is important to have a better handle on sites along the lower Copper River.

The Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD) poses many challenges for management. Bowers (1989) reported 424 sites in the TLAD, and some specific sites are summarized in West (1996). As of 2002, there were close to 500 sites in TLAD. The TLAD is in the twentieth century Ahtna land use area. We have been refining the

locations of Ahtna geographic names in the TLAD. There is a body of untranscribed narrative materials that pertains to the Tangle Lakes, McLaren River and Delta River areas. The Ahtna people generally do not know much about specific archaeological sites or the research that has taken place in TLAD. The archaeologists familiar with the sites may not know the Ahtna elders.

It may be possible to have greater common understanding of cultural and management concerns for the Tangle Lakes area. Both the state and BLM have lands in the general area along the Denali Highway. Recent finds in the Amphitheater Mountains, reported in a recent paper by VanderHoek et al. (2005), underscore some of ethical and legal issues about antiquities on public lands. As defined by National Historic Preservation Act, Sec. 106 (King, 1998) there are common state-federal-Ahtna concerns about archaeological sites on public lands.

Many persons we interviewed are concerned that some frequently-used ATV trails are expanding and are transecting areas that have concentrations of undetected archaeological remains. One area that is heavily used by ATVs year round is the 3,000-foot to 2,500-foot ridge system that trends north-south between the Glenn Highway at Alasta House and the West Fork of the Gulkana. The south ridge is known as **Tes Dghilaaye' (***hill mountain*) and the lower north ridge is called **Nen' Yese'** *(land ridge)*. The ridge area probably was a shoreline for ancient Lake Ahtna, and it has not been adequately surveyed for archaeological remains. For the prehistoric and modern Ahtna this ridge area has been a central corridor for north-south and east-west connections. From place names information we infer that it has had a dense network of traditional Ahtna foot trails, camp sites, lookouts, and unmarked graves.

2. Ahtna traditional cultural properties: the familiar, the famous and the sacred

Traditional cultural properties (TCPs) are an emerging topic in the field of cultural resource management (King (1996)(2003), Parker (2004)). In Alaska, we see increasing discussion of TCPs and "ethnographic landscapes." Many relevant articles are in Krupnik, Mason and Horton (2004). How the Ahtna define and categorize traditional cultural properties is excellent topic for further discussion and research with Ahtna experts. The modern sense of territory in the Ahtna community derives from several levels of knowledge and association with the traditional territory. Ahtna cultural identity remains very strong. The Ahtna have clan leaders. Ahtna identity has been strongly reinforced by the corporation, Ahtna Inc. and the village corporations, which have lands throughout a large portion of the traditional Ahtna language area. The Ahtna have had land-based "visual access" to most sub-regions of their traditional territory. It is common to hear middle-aged Ahtna express strong ties to village and camp sites and land use areas, even if many of these places are no longer occupied or regularly used.

Several generalizations about Ahtna traditional cultural properties can be made based upon the ways the experts on Ahtna culture and territory typically know and report places. When we have surveyed places with experts on an extensive basis, we have developed in-depth sets of names and annotations for the expert's area. These *familiar areas,* for example, for Jake Tansy on the Upper Susitna/Upper Nenana Rivers or for Frank Stickwan for Dry Creek and Crosswind Lake, are known intimately from their personal experience for resources, climate, hydrology, travel conditions and so forth. Men and women know Ahtna places in distinct ways. Men know larger areas, in two, three or four band territories whereas the women usually know a single band territory.

The Ahtna elders have a well-established custom of caucusing to discuss regional geography, history, geneaology, songs, and the fine points of Ahtna culture and history. From these "cultural caucuses" the Ahtna have a shared knowledge of famous places, events and people. One could assemble 100-200 famous place names that virtually all Ahtna speakers would and should know.

Several of Jim McKinley's unpublished narratives are some of the best examples of this shared Ahtna cultural knowledge. As a chief and storyteller, McKinley would expound upon people and places in his language that he was informed about by his elders. He would lecture about the famous village sites, about clan histories, about chiefs and well-known men and women from specific villages. McKinley could range in his lectures from the story of when the Ahtna discovered copper at the site **Tsedi Kulaenden**, or the midget chief **Cuuy** from the Bear Creek site near Gulkana, or the time of the clan partitioning of Paxon Lake, or when the Upper Ahtna killed a group of Russians near Batzulnetas, or when Lieutenant Allen came up the Copper River.

It is noteworthy that almost all Ahtna speakers are familiar with a core of set of stories and songs that are tied to places and events in Ahtna history. These stories and songs can be thought of as the classic works of the Ahtna oral tradition.

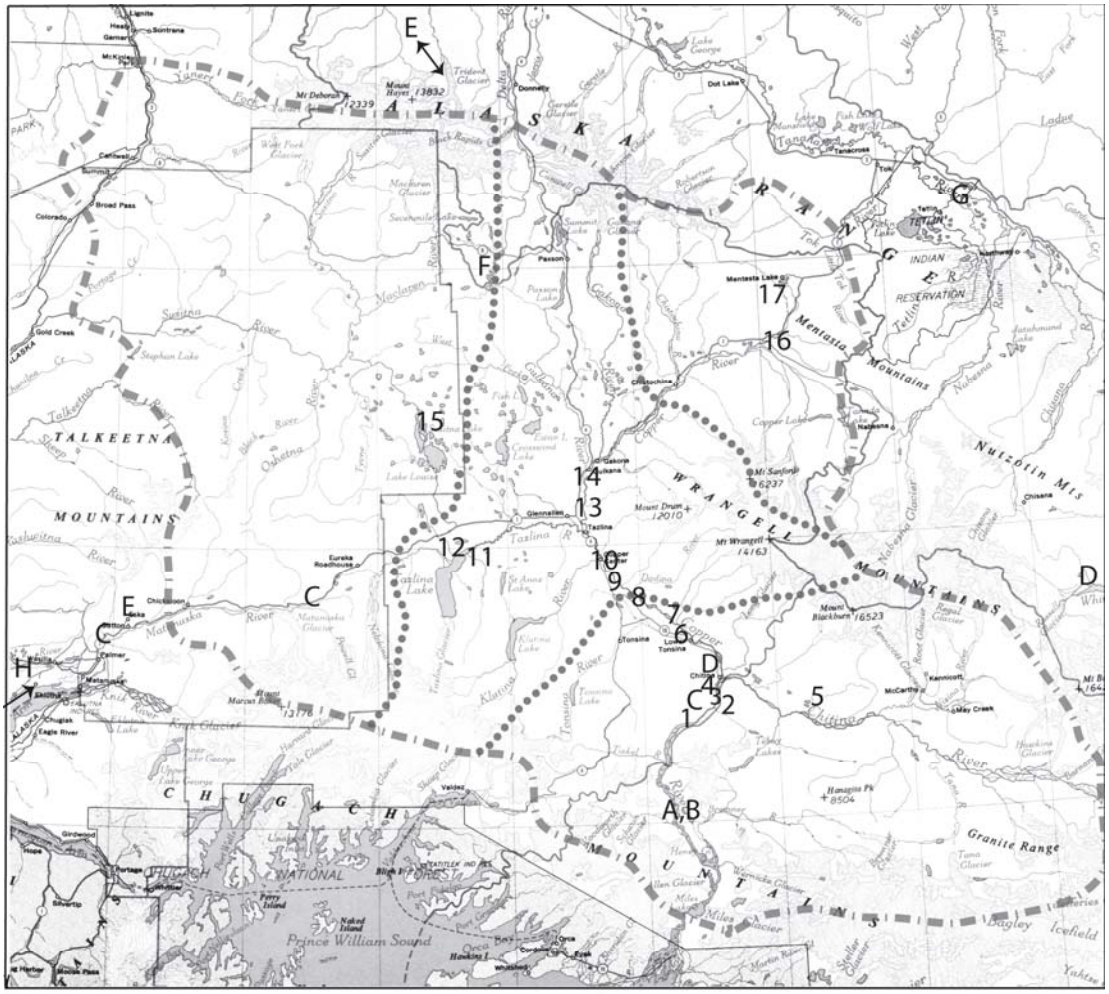
To give one example of how Ahtna personal names relate to places, Frank Stickwan, Fred Ewan and others have mentioned that there was overlapping territory between the Ahtna of the Gulkana River drainage and a band of Athabascans that formerly lived on the lower Delta River, called the **ba'aaxe hwt'aene** *(the outside people).* Several well-known men from the middle Tanana River area married Ahtna women or came into the Copper River for seasonal use of resources. Doc Billum the famous chief and ferry operator in the Lower Tonsina area was actually from Salcha and married into the Copper River in the early 1890s. One well-known man was **Ba' K'a' Kol Ta'** *(father of he has no gun)*, an **Alts'en' Tnaey** man from the Tanana River who died before 1850. **Ba' K'a' Kol Ta'** had locations on both sides of Isabel Pass: one location at Hogan Hill and another on the west bank of the middle Delta River.

Certain places are made famous by the Ahtna system of inherited titled chieftainships, which we have documented for seventeen village sites. This is discussed in Reckord (1983a:40), Kari (1986:15), and Simeone and Kari (2002: 41). There are seventeen villages which have this inherited chieftainship title that is based upon the place name of the village: *place name* + **denen** or **ghaxen.** These titled chiefs are shown in Table 3 and in Map 4 presented from downstream to upstream.

Table 3. Ahtna titled chieftainships

#	Chief Name	Translation + (Location)
1	**Tats'abaelghi'aa Denen**	*Person of Where Spruce Stands in Water* (chief of village opposite Canyon Creek)
2	**Taghael Denen**	*Person of Barrier in Water* (chief of Taral)
3	**Ts'es K'e Denen**	*Person of on the Rock* (chief of site on W bank at Mile 127)
4	**Hwt'aa Cae'e Denen**	*Person of Beneath (the mountains) Stream Mouth* (chief of Fox Creek village)
5	**C'elax Denen**	*Person of Fish Run Place* (chief of Long Lake/Lakina village)
6	**Bes Cene Ghaxen**	*Person of Riverbank Flat* (chief of Riverstag village)
7	**Sdaghaay Denen**	*Person of End of the Point* (chief of village north of mouth of Chetaslina River)
8	**Tsedi Kulaen Denen**	*Person of Copper Exists Place* (chief of Copper Village, five mi. below Dadina River on east bank)
9	**Hwt'akughi'aa Denen**	*Person of Area Extends below a Place* (chief of site 1 mi. below Dadina R on W bank)
10	**Nic'akuni'aa Denen**	*Person of Where Land Extends Out* (chief of Stickwan's village south of Wood Camp)
11	**K'aay Denen**	*Person of Ridge* (chief of Kaina Ck site on Tazlina Lake)
12	**Bendil Denen**	*Person of Where Stream Flows into Lake* (chief of Mendeltna Creek site on Tazlina Lake)
13	**Sday'dinaesi Ghaxen**	*Person of Long Point* (chief of point site near Glennallen)
14	**C'ecae'e Denen**	*Person of the River Mouth* (chief of site near Gulkana River mouth)
15	**Sałtigi Ghaxen**	*Person of Sałtigi* (chief of Tyone Lake)
16	**Stl'aa Caegge Ghaxen**	*of Rear River Mouth* (chief of Slana village)
17	**Mendaes Ghaxen**	*Person of Shallows Lake* (chief of Mentasta)

Map 4. Map of titled chieftainships and clan origin sites



language boundary

dialect boundary

A-H = clan origin locations or clan congregation places
1-17 = village sites with titled chieftainships

While there are many other well-known prehistoric Ahtna village sites, it seems that only these places had titled chiefs. Ten of the titles were in the Lower Ahtna dialect area. Four were below the mouth of the Chitina River in the Taral area, one was on the lower Chitina River, and five were between the Tonsina and Klutina rivers. Above here the sites with titled chiefs were more widely dispersed; two (#13, 14) are on the central Copper River, three (#11, 12, 15) are in the west on Tazlina and Tyone lakes, and two (Slana and Mentasta) are in the Upper area. It seems that the concentration of Ahtna chieftainships on the lower Copper River was at the best salmon fisheries. The chieftainships in the west, north and east were at key nodes on the major trail systems to the upland hunting territories and trade routes. Several of these chief titles are still held by Ahtna elders. Chief Fred Ewan of Gulkana is the modern-day **Hwcae'e Denen** (*Person of River Mouth*). Such a system of inherited titles is unusual for Alaska Athabascans, although apparently the Upper Inlet Dena'ina also had such a system which diffused there via the Ahtna.

In addition to these familiar and famous places, it is possible to discern various types of Ahtna sacred places. To advance this discussion we list out some examples of places and place-based behavior that have been mentioned in our research over the years and that seem to indicate elevated cultural and spiritual focus about specific places or areas.

(a.) **K'elt'aeni**, *the Wrangell Mountains*, is dominant throughout the Ahtna and Upper Tanana Athabascan cultures. It is said to be the home of the dead. The volcano smoke from Mount Wrangell is said to be the fires of the deceased, **c'eyuuyi lede'**, *(ghost's smoke)*. The place name is mentioned in potlatch speeches.

(b.) Several of the Ahtna clans are associated with specific places and points of origin. The configuration of clan origin sites are highly symbolic of Ahtna prehistory and are considered to be sacred places. This is discussed below in sec. 3.1.

(c.) Places that are well-known settlements in Ahtna prehistory may be considered sacred sites to varying degrees. Some examples are **Tsedi Kulaende**, the village site where copper was discovered and developed; Taral village, the largest lower Ahtna village; **Nay'dliisdini'aaden** said to have been on both side of the Copper River near Silver Spring; or **Natae≈de** (Batzulnetas) which figures in many stories, such as the killing of the **Cet'aeni** *(the monkey people)*. The Ahtna frequently state that village sites should be left undisturbed.

(d.) The Ahtna first salmon ritual and the Salmon Boy story **Bac'its'aadi** (Simeone and Kari 2002:45-47, 151-163) imbue the salmon harvest with a sense of religious practice. Fishing sites are kept in good order in order to honor the fish. To quote Martha Jackson in translation, "Thus now the salmon run well only for those who work on them carefully."

(e.) In most Alaska Athabascan areas there are some recognized votive places where people leave some objects in their possession when they pass by to promote safe travel or good luck. For example, at **Nekets'alyaexden**, Tahneta Pass, at the head of Matanuska River, Ahtna elders say that people used to carry a handful of soil from their

homes as they left to go down the Matanuska River. At **Nekets'alyaexden** *(where we turn around*), they had their last look at the Copper River country. Here the travelers would turn around and scatter the handful of soil and make a prayer for a safe journey, (Kari 1983:viii). We assume that there were many votive places in the Copper River Basin but very few of these have been identified.

(f.) Some hills and mountains proximate to village sites have special status as sacred hills for that village. These landforms were mentioned by visitors in potlatch oratory to honor their hosts. For example see Fred John's potlatch speech in Kari 1986:13-14. The Wrangell Mountains have also been recognized in potlatch oratory.

(g.) Some Ahtna landforms may be thought of as tacit sacred places. We have noted that **Yidateni,** Reindeer Hill at Cantwell is the axis point for Ahtna grave orientation in two different cemeteries; one is the modern Cantwell cemetery, the other is the 1915-1950 era cemetery that is west of the railroad tracks. Note however when we discussed this point with Bud Carlson, he stated that orientation of the graves in cemeteries is not specifically toward the hill **Yidateni,** but is due to beliefs about having the dead face the rising sun at certain angles.

(h.) Secret sacred places (ones that cannot be divulged to outsiders) which are prevalent in Pueblo cultures of the Southwest do not seem to be prominent in Ahtna culture, but may have some status.

(i.) There are specially recognized graves, non-standard burial places, cremation sites, or other commemorative places. For example a well-known Ahtna man is said to have been buried somewhere on top of Hogan Hill. The Ahtna are instructed to be careful around such burial places or cremation sites.

This presentation of Ahtna traditional cultural properties is preliminary and is presented to promote discussion of these important topics. Katie Wade states that the Athna consider every-thing around them to be sacred and her 2002 book offers many examples of a generalized Ahtna spirituality toward nature. Also it seems that Tlingit culture has several other categories of sacred places including more overtly-recognized and commemorated sacred places (Thornton 1995, 1997). In Sec. 4.0 below we make some comparisons between Ahtna and Tlingit geographic knowledge.

2.1 Summary of clan-origin locations

Clan origin locations have special significance to the Ahtna. The main published sources on Ahtna clans are de Laguna 1971 and de Laguna and McClellan 1981:653-654. They present a chart of eleven Ahtna clans grouped into two moieties, **saghani** *(raven)* and **nalbaey** *(seagull).* They state, "There was some feeling that certain villages or their chiefs should 'belong' to certain clans. This suggests that Ahtna clans were semi-localized groups, the origins of which were probably and traditionally traceable to certain areas," (ibid.:653). The two most extensive Ahtna language discussions on the subject are a Jim McKinley narrative from 1977 and a Fred Ewan narrative from 2004, both of which are unpublished. The Ahtna clan names and a consensus on origin locations or places of concentration are presented in the following chart and on Map 4.

Table 4. Summary of Ahtna clan origin locations

Map	*Clan name*	*Origin or concentration*
	Second paint clan, **Nitsiyu**	*Vague*, Western or northern variant of Red Paint Clan
	Canyonberry people, **dengige' tahwt'aene, nige' kulaen hwt'aene**	*Extinct, Vague*, possibly on E bank of CR, across from Wood Camp
	Snow bunting clan, **Ggaexyu**	*Extinct, vague* lower CR, or Matanuska R
A	Down from the Sky Clan, **Naltsiine**	Seems to be the oldest clan, landed at **Uti'sneldziits'i** to form the **Dits'i'iltsiine**
B	Out of canyon people, **Dits'i'iltsiine**	Lower CR, at **Uti'sneldziits'i (**the Peninsula, at mouth of Tasnuna R)
C	Red Paint clan, **Tsisyu**	on Lower CR, Chitina area; spread to Matanuska R, two girls leave Tazlina Lake; **Natsede'aayi** on Matanuska R; also at King
D	Cotton clan, **Dik'aagiyu**	Lower CR, spread to White R into Tanana R
E	Fish Tail clan, **C'caelyu**	on Tanana R; on Matanuska R, near Eska Ck
F	Caribou clan, **Udzisyu**	South Tangle Lake
G	Single-minded clan, **Alts'en' tnaey**	Midway Lake
H	Water clan, **Taltsiine**	from lower Cook Inlet, coming to Tazlina L

Two clan-origin locations that imply long-term occupation of Copper River Basin by ancestral Ahtna people are: **Uti'sneldziits'i,** The Peninsula, at mouth of Tasnuna River. This mountain name means "*the one we dance out to."* Here the **Naltsiine** clan descended from the sky and created the **Dits'i'iltsiine** or Canyon Clan. **Nitiil Bene',** South Tangle Lake, at the head of the Delta River, was the site of the origin of the Caribou Clan where a human baby was found among caribou. Thus, two major clans of opposite moieties originated at two ends of the Copper River. One could argue that the Caribou Clan origin is evocative of Ahtna presence in the Tangle Lakes during ancient times, and that the founding of the **Dits'i'iltsiine** at The Peninsula implies Ahtna ceremonial investigation of the lower river some time after glacial Lake Ahtna discharged. Note that the Caribou Clan is a Central Alaska Athabascan clan in Ahtna and the Tanana Valley languages, but that only Ahtna among the Alaska Athabascans have a **Dits'i'iltsiine** or Canyon clan. When Ahtna experts discuss famous sites and events, such as the origin of the Caribou Clan, they

assume long-term occupation by Ahtna or other Athabascans, "*by people who talk like us"* (p.c. Fred Ewan). This geographic symbolism is suggestive of ancient occupation of the entire Copper River drainage by the Ahtna.

2.2 Research on Ahtna land use and resource harvest

Much recent research with Ahtna elders has been on land use, especially on the salmon and non-salmon fisheries. There are many levels of formality to the Ahtna practice of resource use. Especially important are concepts of Ahtna management of the fishery resources. In our fishery studies (Simeone and Kari 2002 and 2005) we discuss some of the governing principles of resource use, of values that are imparted in stories and codes of behavior. For example, Simeone and Kari (2002:45-46) state:

> To ensure a sustained yield the Ahtna followed a set of rules regarding the treatment of salmon which were embedded in a cosmology in which fish, birds and mammals, were recognized as social beings who were controlled by powerful forces and protected by elaborate systems of rules that men transgressed only at their peril (de Laguna 1969:18). Like big game and fur bearing animals, salmon were believed to be sentient beings who freely gave themselves to humans, but only if the rules regarding their treatment were strictly observed.
>
> However, salmon and other fish were considered distinct from other animals. There is a concept in Ahtna called **c'uniis** (Kari 1990: 308), *"an animal spirit that can cause sickness"* which means literally *"it takes something."* Traditionally this sickness comes from the mishandling of animals as they are harvested. The animals that can cause this disease include moose, brown bear, black bear, wolverine, lynx, and the other furbearers. However, Ahtna elders note that fish and salmon do *not* cause the **c'uniis** malady. While there were many rules for the proper care and processing of harvested fish, it appears that the handling of fish is not marked by the same sense of anxiety and strict taboo as is the harvesting of the animals that can cause **c'uniis.**

In our forthcoming report on the Ahtna use of resident-species fish (Simeone and Kari 2005), we summarize the known fishing sites for salmon and non-salmon species throughout the Copper River Basin, the upper Susitna River and the Matanuska River. Of 2,007 place names on the Ahtna Place Names list (Kari 2003, draft), 495, or nearly 25 percent, have some reported fishing sites. We list these in a table noting which type of fishery has been practiced at the named places. The Ahtna place names system is overtly parsimonious and specific fishing locations, for example, wheel or dip net sites along the Copper River, do not necessarily have distinct place names. Therefore, the figure of 495 fishing sites represents generalized fishing places and not specific fishing locations.

These two fishery studies give extensive detail on traditional Ahtna harvest practices and harvest locations and summarize what is known about the Ahtna use of salmon and non-salmon in the BLM planning regions. For the Chistochina planning region, there is extensive discussion of salmon harvest on the Copper River and Slana River and whitefish harvest off the Gakona River and on the Slana River in the Mentasta area. For the Gulkana-Delta planning region, there is discussion of salmon

harvest along the Copper River and the lower Gulkana River, and considerable detail about the fisheries in the lakes south of the West Fork of the Gulkana River. For the Nelchina planning region, there is information on the Tyone Village-Lake Louise fishery and some mention of the Tazlina Lake salmon harvest locations. For the Tiekel planning region, there is mention of the many salmon sites along the Copper River, which were mainly on the west bank, and the winter fishing at St. Anne Lake and Tonsina Lake. For the Denali planning region, we have extensive description of the whitefish fishery at specific lakes off the upper Susitna River by the expert outdoorsman, the late Jake Tansy (see Map 5).

2.3 Sources on Ahtna travel and trail systems

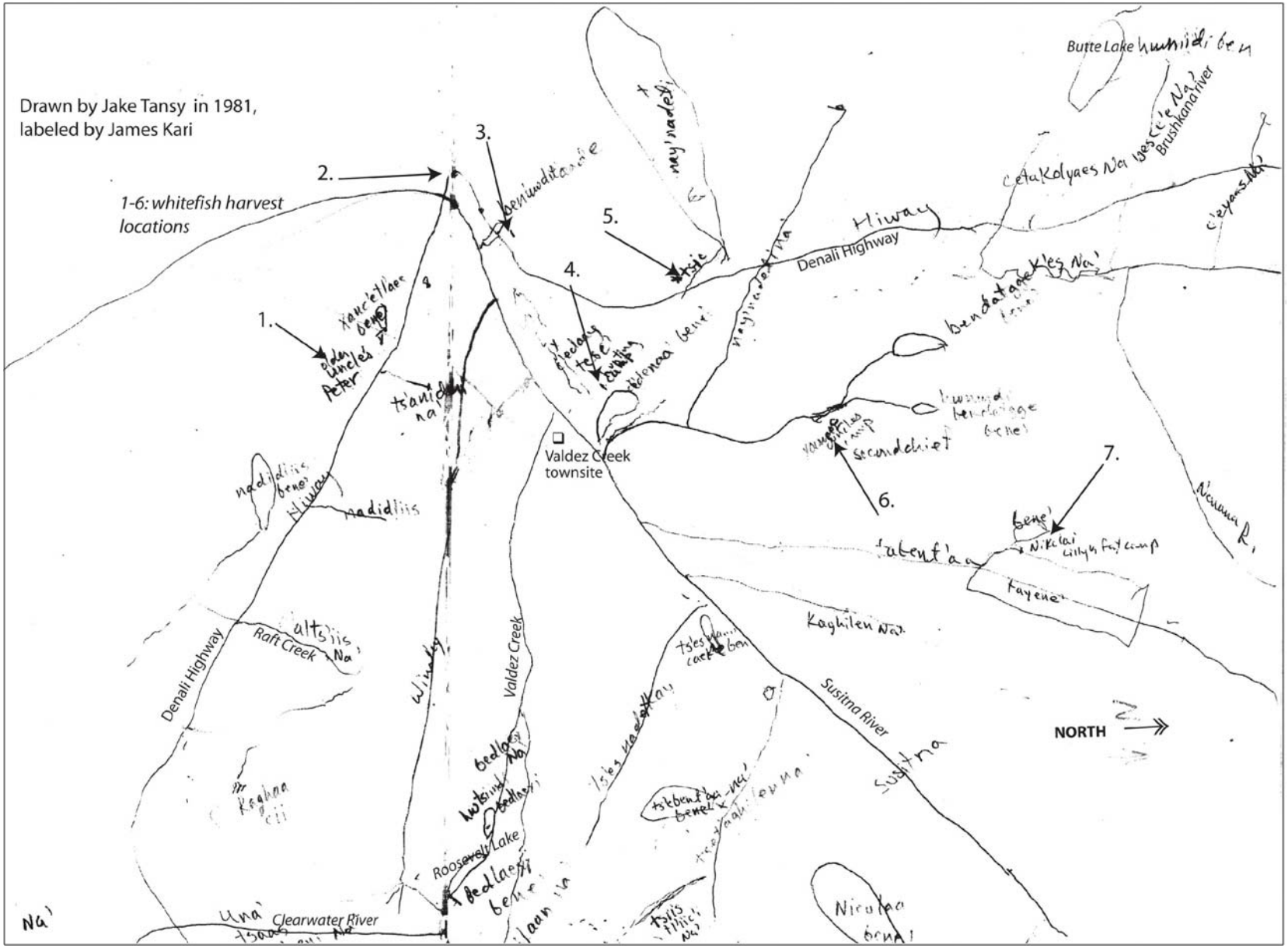
The Ahtna place names are linked by trail networks. The specifics of the Ahtna trail systems are not precisely mapped, but they can be inferred from place names sequences, by travel narratives, and sketch maps by various Ahtna speakers. Sources on Ahtna trails include 1) routes as depicted in detailed travel narratives, such as those by Jake Tansy, Adam Sanford and Jim Tyone. 2) listings of sequences names in notes and recordings; 3) trails as depicted on early historic maps; and 4) sketch maps by Ahtna speakers depicting land and water features interconnected by trails and sets of names.

Ahtna travel narratives provide some of the best evidence on trails, but the vast body of this material is not published. Kari (1986:153-216) has six narratives about travel, trails and place names in the Upper Copper River by Fred John, Katie John, Jack John Justin, Adam Sanford and Andy Brown. Another source is the Jake Tansy travel story and map in Kari (1999:36-39). One Jim Tyone travel story and map is in Kari and Fall (2003: 223-225).

Kari has collected sketch maps by Ahtna experts at various times. These sketch maps are sources on place names, cabin and camp locations, and trail systems. One example from Kari's files is presented in Map 5. In 1981, Jake Tansy drew this detailed map of lakes, streams, trails and landforms centered around Valdez Creek village on the Upper Susitna River. Numbers 1 to 6 on Map 5 are whitefish harvest locations mentioned by Jake Tansy.

Various sources for Copper River Basin depict aboriginal and early historic trails. These range from the 1839 Wrangell map (Kari and Fall 2003:86-87); the maps in Allen 1887; Rohn's excellent 1900 report and maps; the Mendenhall and Schrader maps of 1903; the Basil Austin sketch maps that are at the Valdez Museum (also Austin 1968); the 1904 Moffit map (Kari and Fall 2003:231-233), and Addison Powell's 1901a map and 1901b report, and the 1898 Joseph Bourke map of the Copper River (both Powell's and Bourke's maps are at the Valdez Museum), and Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938.

Map 5. Sketch by Jake Tansy drawn in 1981 of Upper Susitna River area



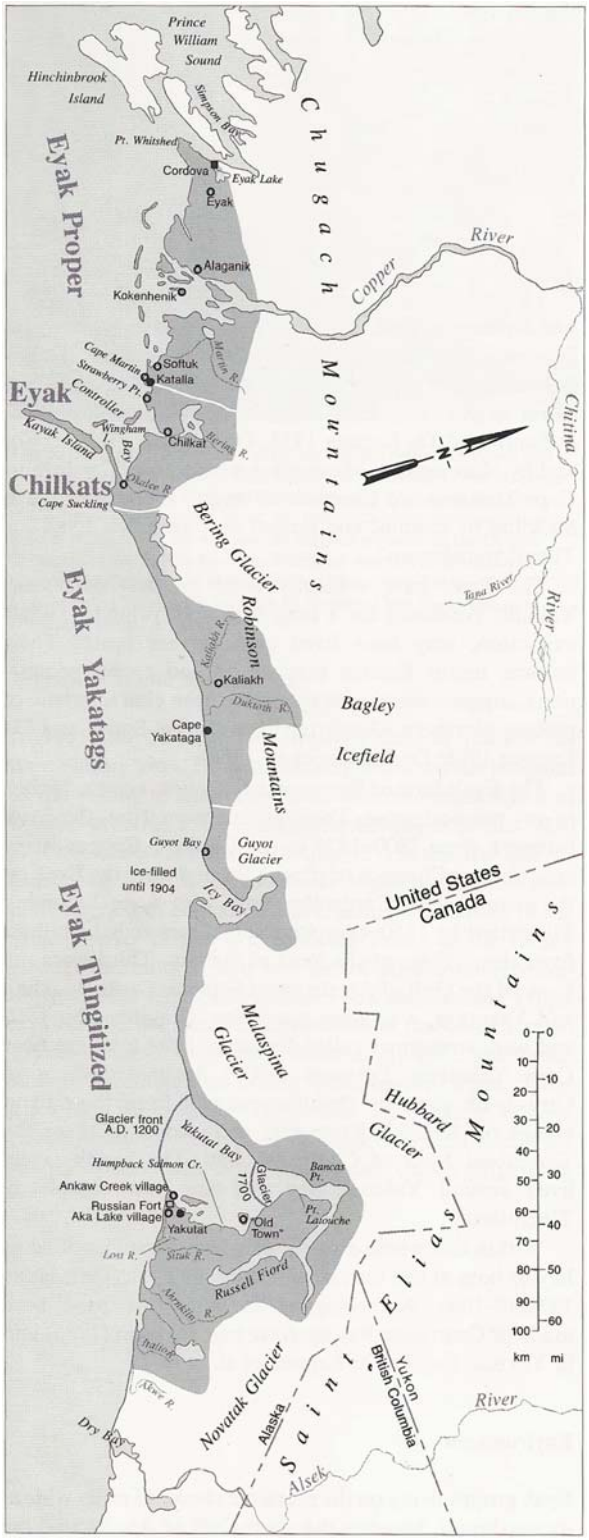
3. Data Sources on Eyak territorial knowledge and culturally important areas

The three main themes in Eyak cultural history are (1) the nature of the ancient relationship between Eyak and the distantly related Athabascan languages and Tlingit and Haida (the so-called Na-Dene hypothesis); (2) the territory of the Eyak as it can be traced in proto-historic and historic times; and (3) the modern history of the Eyak and the neighboring peoples of the Cordova and Yakutat areas such as the Alutiiq (or Chugach) and the Tlingit as reflected in the modern tribal councils, corporations and organizations. The history of Eyak language work and the place of Eyak in the Na-Dene linguistic phylum have been discussed by Krauss (1973:932-35, 950, 1982). Eyak had a long period of isolation from the Athabascan languages. Krauss (1982:13-15) has a summary of the effects of early contact on the Eyak. By the early twentieth century, Eyak population had rapidly declined. For about three weeks in 1930 and 1933, anthropologists Kaj Birket-Smith and Frederica de Laguna worked in Cordova with Eyak speakers Galushia and Anna Nelson on the ethnography of the Eyak that was published in 1938. English versions of Eyak stories collected by de Laguna and Krauss appear in Johnson 1988.

The most succinct source on Eyak traditional territory is de Laguna (1990:189-190) with an accompanying map (see Map 6, also see Birket-Smith and de Laguna (1938) and de Laguna et al. (1964)):

> In the eighteenth century the Eyak were living on the 300-mile long shore of the Gulf of Alaska between the Tlingit-Athapaskan people of Dry Bay and the Chugach Eskimo of Prince William Sound. Their original homeland extended from Italio River, east of Yakutat, westward to Cape Suckling and probably included the mainland shores of Controller Bay, although the Chugach held the islands… By the late eighteenth century the Yakutat area Eyak were dominated by the expanding Tlingit.
>
> In the early nineteenth century Tlingitized Eyak from east of Cape Suckling drove the Chugach from Controller Bay, while more purely Eyak people pushed on to the Copper River delta and to Cordova, just inside Prince William Sound.
>
> By the late nineteenth century, the only relatively pure Eyak were those living in this last area where they had a village named Eyak. Evidence for these movements is provided by historical records, traditions of the Tlingit proper, the Yakutat Tlingit, and surviving Eyak of Cordova (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938; De Laguna 1972, 1:210), and by place-names. Many place-names from Cordova to Cape Suckling are Chugach in origin; those from Cape Suckling to Yakutat and farther east are often Eyak (or Tlingit translations).
>
> The Eyak have evidently lived on the Malaspina Yakutat Forelands for a long time and, prior to Tlingit expansion, may have lived even farther south. Their culture, minus Eskimo borrowings and recent acquisitions, suggests what once may have been characteristic of present Northern Tlingit territory.

Map 6. Territory and settlements of Eyak in the 19th century (de Laguna 1900: 190)



When meeting in Cordova in June, several persons mentioned the overlap in the tribal and ethnic affiliations of the Native community in Cordova. People in Chugach Inc. and Eyak Corp, and in the Native Villages of Eyak and Tatilik are of mixed ancestry, (Alutiiq, Eyak, Tlingit and non-Native). The new Ilanka Cultural Center reflects this multiethnic Native heritage in its programs and displays.

We have assembled many of the materials on Eyak ethnogeography that are on file at ANLC at UAF. The place names that have been provided by Eyak speakers are cited here as Krauss (1982-1997) and Abraham, Ramos, and Krauss (1983). These are four handwritten lists of Eyak place names and one annotated type-script. These overlapping lists contain about 120 names extending west from Port Gravina through the Cordova area to beyond the Yakutat Bay area. Other attestations and comments on Eyak place names are in Krauss' slip files, in the Eyak dictionary typescript (Krauss 1970, 1981), and in de Laguna's Eyak and Tlingit field notes. The 1998 SENSC place name lists for the Yakutat Tlingit area presents 41 names (out of 286 names) as being of Eyak or possible Eyak origin. We were not able to locate a consolidated Alutiiq place names list for Eastern Prince William Sound. A recent source is the 2003 map by Chugach Alaska for the Nuchek area place names.

Here are some generalizations we can make about the Eyak geographic names corpus. The Eyak place names need to be consolidated and annotated as to source, location, distribution, and etymology. This is a skeletal and fragmentary record. No well-traveled Eyak man was ever surveyed for place names. For example, there is no recorded Eyak name for McKinley Lake near Aleganik village and few Eyak names extend up the lower Copper River. The Gulf of Alaska has a strata of Eyak, Chugach and Tlingit names that need to be consolidated and interpreted. De Laguna and Krauss note that the Eyak-origin names extending south of Yakutat are indicative of Eyak occupation preceding the Tlingit in the Yakutat area.

There is a need for a publication that annotates Eyak place names and that represents what is known about Eyak land use in the early historic period. Dr. Krauss is the person who can provide a thorough interpretation of the Eyak ethnogeographic and historic data. It would be appropriate for the Ilanka Culural Center in Cordova to develop an Eyak-centered place name map and booklet that includes multilingual sources and a complete record on local Eyak, Chugach, Tlingit and Ahtna place names.

Eyak's linguistic position within Na-Dene makes the problem of the archaeological evidence for prehistoric Eyak extremely interesting. In a research model of Copper River Basin prehistory and paleo-environments, it may be possible to model which drainages and sections of gulf coast line would have been available to a small population of Eyak speakers at various intervals, for example at 500-year intervals.

For the Eyak language area de Laguna (1990:189) states "within this whole area 47 sites have been identified as having been at one time occupied by the Eyak." However, most putative Eyak sites remain unverified. Archeological reconnaissance in the overall area has been very cursory, the main source being the unpublished

report by Ketz and Johnson (1983). Buzzell et al. (1993), a survey of sites for the proposed Copper River Highway, has a summary of Eyak sources but this group's on-the-ground survey reported no sites in Eyak territory below the glaciers. An up-to-date compendium of archaeological site reports for the Eyak language area would be useful. Various persons in the Cordova and Gulf Coast areas know the country rather well. Also these persons comment on special problems of glacial outwash, silting and flooding that make locating sites very challenging.

4. Data sources on Yakutat Tlingit territorial knowledge and culturally important areas

The literature on Tlingit geography is rich and complex and includes early sources by Harrington, Goldschmidt and de Laguna and recent sources such as the Southeast Native Subsistence Commission Tlingit Native place names project (SENSC 1998). The most comprehensive source on Tlingit geography is Tom Thornton's 1995 dissertation. There are several sources on traditional Tlingit territory in the Yakutat area. The most important sources are de Laguna et al. 1964, and de Laguna's 1972 ethnography of the Yakutat Tlingit. In addition, there are the sections on Yakutat in Goldschmidt and Haas (1998:45-52,194), a 1946 study of Tlingit and Haida land use and land rights.

Thornton (1995:75-88) has a thorough discussion of places in *Yakutat Kwaan,* the Yakutat tribal territory. Judy Ramos, historian and planner for the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, has transmitted various documents to us including portions of Ramos 1995, the historic and cultural preservation plan for the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. McNeary (1977) is a report on subsistence uses in the coastal areas of the proposed Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Another useful source, Cruikshank (2001), examines references to glaciers and climate change in the area of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park in the oral traditions of the Tlingit, the Southern Tutchone and the Ahtna.

A recent publication from the Yakutat Tlingit is Judy Ramos' 2003 report *TEK, Mapping the Traditional Subsistence Territories of Yakutat Forelands.* Ramos (2003) has a restricted distribution. She cites published, unpublished, and locally-archived sources. She also has an overview of Tlingit values and social organization and she surveys the Yakutat territory for clan and house ownership and use of specific resources and territories.

Of relevance to BLM-managed lands are the sections on the most northeast territory that of the Eyak-Galyax Kwaan (ibid.: 18-32 who are presented in three subgroups, the Eyak of the Copper River Delta; adjacent and to the east are the Jeesh-kweidi of Chilkat and Katella, and the Galyax Kaagwaantaan of Controller Bay and Cape Yakataga to Icy Bay. The next section of the report is on subterritories of the Yaakutat Kwaan, whose territory is from Icy Bay to Yakutat Bay and Italio River (33-55). Ramos 2003 cites some sources from local archival tapes and records.

The 2002 map, *Yakutat Area Native Place Names*, and the Yakutat place names list in SENSC (1998) are the two best sources on Yakutat place names. This 2002 map presents about 270 place names between the mouth of Copper River and Lituya Bay, most being in the Yakutat area. There are 27 names in the Bering Glacier area and 23 names in the Controller Bay-Copper River Delta area. The 1998 SENSC list for the Yakutat area presents 286 place names. This map and list are the key documents for future work on Eyak territory and place names. Tom Thornton, who coordinated the SENSC place names project told us, (p.c.), "We did not successfully integrate all of the Eyak names with the Tlingit ones, especially those above Icy Bay. Jeff Leer reviewed the ones in Yakutat Bay area. He said, 'There were supposedly

tapes and draft maps that covered the coastline from Icy Bay to Cape Suckling.' Krauss was also to provide lists of Eyak names (copies of note cards, we think) in the Yakutat area, but I don't think we ever got them."

It would be useful to have a working agreement between the Yakutat Tlingit, the Native Village of Eyak, and Chugach Corp. to achieve full editorial consolidation of Native place names in the Gulf of Alaska area.

Several places associated with the *Yakutat Kwaan* territories in the Gulf of Alaska are important to the Yakutat Tlingit for their historic and contemporary associations. One is the Duktoh River trail, which served as the prehistoric trail route to the Chitina River via the Bagley Ice Field (Moffit 1918, de Laguna 1972:100-101, 214). This trail is important as an Ahtna-Tlingit diffusion corridor especially relating to the copper trade. This trail could be explored as to its physical condition and challenges and it could be featured in publications and in tourism. Another is the Icy Bay area where Judy Ramos tells us that various accounts and records of Tlingit presence remain to be consolidated. Perhaps NPS and BLM can collaborate with the Yakutat Tlingit on some research projects.

Several prominent places in Tlingit cosmology are between Controller Bay and Yakutat. "Kayak Island is the whale Raven tried to kill. Cape Staint Elias is its head. Okalee Spit is the harpoon line… Wingham Island is Raven's kayak. All of these things turned to stone except Raven… At Yakataga is Raven's landing place, 'canoe road.'" (de Laguna 1972:101, Map 17) Another place of interest is Kultheith Mountain on the Kaliakh River which is the landform that was sighted by displaced group in a flood story (op. cit.). In this legend the group is moving in canoes from northwest to southwest. This Kaliakh area is surrounded by Eyak place names and the story may depict Eyak expansion from Copper River Delta south to the gulf coast.

We can make some comparisons between the Ahtna place name materials for Copper River Basin and the Chugach-Eyak-Tlingit geographic materials for the Gulf of Alaska. In the entire Ahtna corpus of 2,000 or more names, there are virtually no non-Ahtna or non-Athabascan appearing place names. There are no hints that the Ahtna ever shared portions of the Copper River drainage with any non-Athabascans. It is striking that the Ahtna place names inventory extends continuously down Copper River to the Copper River Delta. In contrast, the general character of the Gulf of Alaska names reflects territorial shifts and the borrowing of names via multilingualism and cultural contact between Chugach, Eyak and Tlingit. The Eyak corpus is fragmentary and has a high percentage of names borrowed names from Chugach Eskimo or Tlingit. The distribution of the Gulf of Alaska Native names is confined mainly to the narrow strip of coastal forelands, with only occasional stretches of upland being named. It would be meaningful to see an analysis of the full set of Tlingit place names of possible Eyak origin.

From Thornton (1995 and 1997), we can make some general comparisons between Ahtna and Tlingit geographic knowledge. The most noticeable differences are due to the obvious contrasts between the Tlingit coastal and insular geography and the lake-studded Ahtna Copper River Basin and plateau. For example, the Tlingit place name distributions are closely bound to coastal bays and forelands, were

connected by boat transport, and are mainly in discontinuous clusters with few inland/upland place names. In contrast, the Ahtna place names are fairly evenly distributed throughout the Ahtna language area and have been connected by foot trails.

There are cultural contrasts too. The Tlingit have a large number of socio-geographic clans (60 to 70 according to Thornton (1995)) with numerous origin stories at specific places. The Tlingit overtly reconfirm clan geographic associations through oratory and ceremony and claim territories in distant places due to clan stories. The Ahtna have about 11 clans (see Table 4) and the clan and geographic associations are not that prominent nor are they overtly commemorated. Also an Ahtna would not state that he owns a territory because of his clan affiliation. For the Ahtna, as was typical of most Alaskan Athabascans, the territory belongs to the person who knows and uses it.

5. Suggestions for cooperative agency-tribal initiatives or for the East Alaska Resource Management Plan

(a) There are numerous ways in which a fuller sense of Ahtna, Tlingit, Chugach or Eyak history, culture, and place can be developed in Copper Basin and the Gulf of Alaska. It is desirable, through discussions, to have greater mutual understanding between the tribes and state and federal agencies about the tribes' cultural and management concerns. We think that the MOU being developed between BLM and Ahtna Inc is salutary.

(b) Several persons, including John Craig, chairman of the Ahtna Inc. Board, commented on the need for an Ahtna Archive to house rare documents relating to Ahtna history and lands as well as audio recodings and photographs of Ahtna people. There are ways in which the University of Alaska, and state and federal agencies can contribute to an Ahtna Archive.

(c) Several persons we met with are involved with cultural tourism. In Yakutat Elaine Abraham and her family work at in the interface of research, education and tourism with the cruise ship industry. Author and Copper Center businessman Ron Simpson, an Ahtna from Chickaloon, is the author of an historical novel of the Kennecott copper mine era. Simpson feels that Native cultural tourism has great potential in Copper River Basin.

Many types of publications are needed. For example topics such as Eyak place names in Tlingit and major trails such as the Duktokh River trail to the Chitina River should be featured in future publications or brochures.

It would be appropriate for the Ilanka Cultural Center in Cordova to develop an Eyak-centered place name map and book that presents a complete record on local Eyak, Chugach, Tlingit and Ahtna place names.

The 2003 map of Nuchek place names promulgates Native place name information very nicely (Chugach Alaska Corp. 2003).

The Ahtna village project on the Klutina River can be enhanced by various types of brochures and publications on Ahtna traditional territory.

Perhaps the Ahtna Heritage Foundation and agencies such as NPS, BLM and DNR and tourism entities such as Princess Tours can coordinate for some signage, brochures and publications.

(d) Several persons asked about how Native place names can be made official on USGS maps. There are interesting opportunities to promote Ahtna language and to preserve names, especially for unnamed features on BLM managed lands. Ahtna Lands Dept. should take the lead on establishing Ahtna place names. Both the Alaska State Board of Geographic Names and the U. S. Board on Geographic Names support proposals for authentic Native place names with accurate spellings.

(e) It would be salutary if there were closer communication and better coordination about archeological research in the Copper River Basin and the Gulf of Alaska between the tribes, Native corporations and three agencies: BLM, NPS and DNR. Moreover, all parties need to keep informed of legal precedents regarding Traditional Cultural Properties (see especially King (2003) and Parker (2004)). Many issues that have come to our attention communication about the recent Amphitheater Mountains finds or ATV trail proliferation in putative site districts straddle Native, state, NPS and BLM lands. Close cooperation would benefit all parties as well as research efforts.

(f) We hope this report will stimulate cooperation and discussion that will lead to some co-operative research initiatives. The paleo-ecological research on Glacial Lake Ahtna that is being conducted by the BLM Glennallen Field Office is promising (Jangala and Keating 2004). It is possible to envision a multi-year interdisciplinary research effort in Copper River Basin that combines ethnography, language, archaeology and paleo-environmental research. NSF has initiatives that promote capacity building in Native America communities and the Ahtna community can be a partner in such a research design. We discussed some of these research issues in our recent meeting with staff from Ahtna Lands and BLM. The next step would be a planning meeting with several potential participants in such a research program. Three agencies that could be involved in this research program are BLM, DNR and NPS as well as the University of Alaska.

(g) A few people in Copper River Basin have read Ray Bane's 2001 report *Shredded Wildlands, All-Terrain Vehicle Management in Alaska.* This report remains relevant to the RMP. It has sections on ATV usage in Wrangell-St.Elias National Park (pp. 25-30), on BLM lands in the Glennallen district (pp. 48-52), and on USFS lands in the Yakutat district (p. 58) and includes many photographs of degraded trails. Bane notes that the use of ATVs in Wrangell St. Elias is more frequent and unregulated than in any Alaska national park. Bane offers several constructive suggestions (pp. 66-71). One of his suggestions concerns joint state-federal agency cooperation to release information to the public on the impacts of ATVs.

(h) BLM has guideline documents on OHV (off-highway vehicle) usage on public lands (BLM 2001). Given the growth in OHV traffic in the Glennallen District, these guidelines should be subjected to careful public review. It is reasonable for the Alaskan public to have access to summaries and photographs of ATV trail conditions at regular intervals, perhaps through satellite and aerial photography. The forthcoming RMP should address how BLM will work with other state and federal agencies to handle management and coordination of OHV/ATV traffic impacts.

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