



# ***Middle Koyukuk River of Alaska***

***An Atlas of Fishing Places and  
Traditional Place Names***

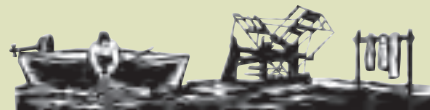


YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION



# ***Middle Koyukuk River of Alaska***

## ***An Atlas of Fishing Places and Traditional Place Names***



Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association  
Anchorage, Alaska



©2008 Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the consent of  
the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, 725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3B,  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

This atlas was prepared by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association under award  
number NA07NMF4720091 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
U.S. Department of Commerce; under agreement number 701818J554 from Kanuti Wildlife Refuge,  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and with funding from Lannan Foundation. The statements, findings,  
conclusions and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of  
the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce,  
Kanuti Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or Lannan Foundation.

Printed by Northern Printing • Anchorage, Alaska

Publication design: Tracy Schwartz of Southfork Graphic Services  
GIS map design: Melanie A. Smith  
Editing: Judy Griffin of Word Wrangling, Caroline Brown, David Andersen, Eliza Jones, Stanley Ned  
Project Coordination: Bob Dubey, Catherine Moncrieff, Jason Hale, Lauren Sill, Allison Huntington



# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgements

This atlas would not have been possible without the support and assistance of the people of Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket. In addition, the authors would like to thank Eliza Jones and Larry Edwards for sharing their ideas of talking with Elders and knowledgeable fishers about changes in salmon spawning grounds. Those ideas sparked this project. Eliza Jones made a special contribution to this project through her decades of work dedicated to the Koyukon Athabascan language. With that background, she guided the researchers from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) in the salmon interview research. In addition, Ms. Jones facilitated the partnerships between the Kanuti Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; YRDFA; the Yukon-Koyukuk School District; and Lannan Foundation.

The Kanuti Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service supported this atlas by providing funding and maps. Susan Paskvan of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District assisted with work on the original place name interviews. Lannan Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provided essential funding for the project.

Special thanks to Bertha and Johnson Moses, Ann Edwards, and Lydia and Lindberg Bergman for so generously selecting and sharing their photographs of the people in the region.

Finally and most importantly, we would like to thank the salmon interview participants for sharing their knowledge.

### HUGHES

Alice Ambrose  
Henry Beatus  
Rita Koyukuk  
Martha Oldman  
Ella Sam  
Lester Sam  
Bill Williams  
Madeline Williams

### ALLAKAKET & ALATNA

Donald Bergman  
Lindberg Bergman  
Lydia Bergman  
David David  
Kitty David  
Bertha Moses  
Johnson Moses  
Harding Sam  
Julia Simon  
Pollock Simon  
Edison Williams

## Lannan

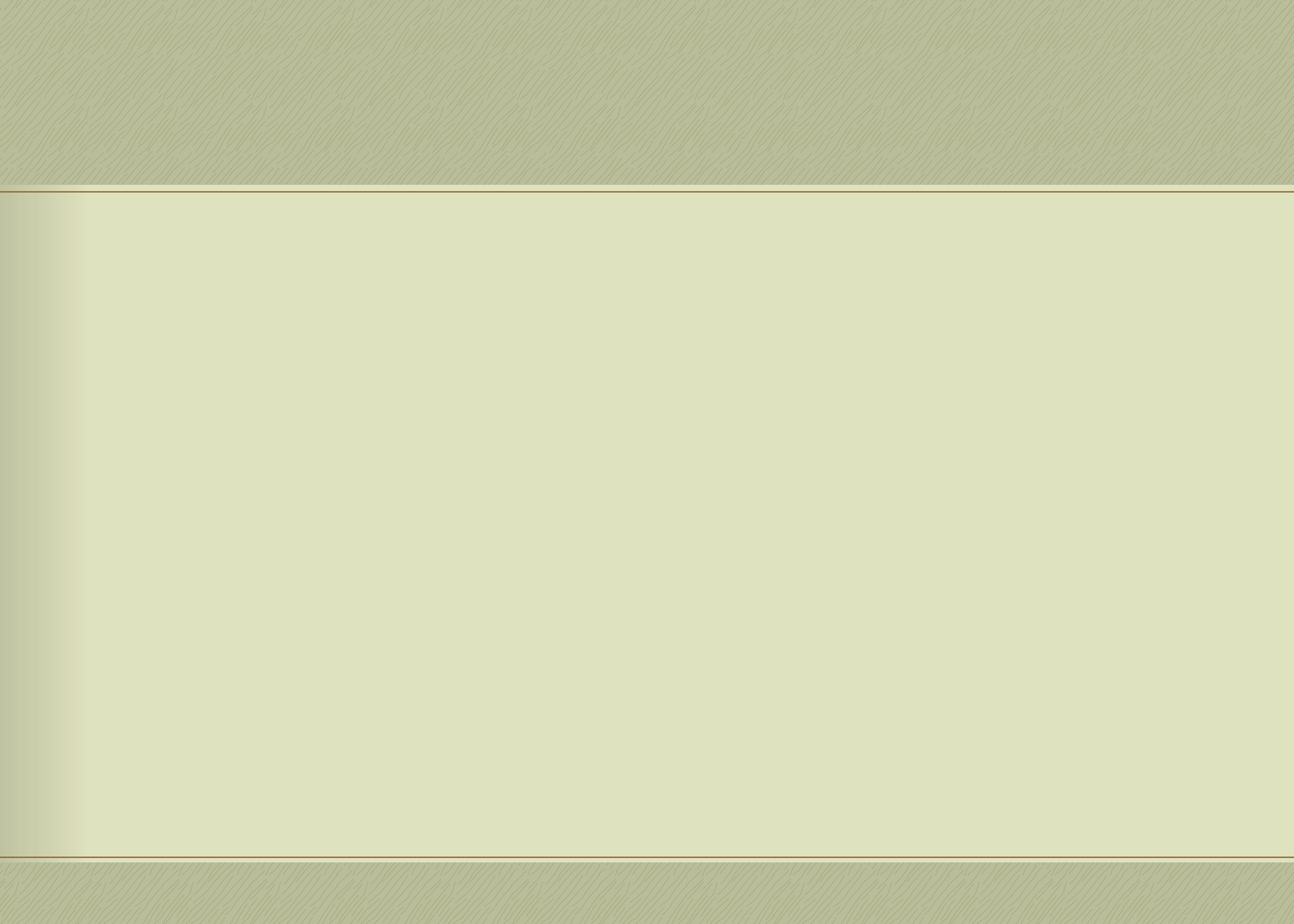


*Enaa Baasee'*



*Fishing boats ready for action on the Koyukuk River.*







# Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	1	<b>THE MIDDLE KOYUKUK RIVER</b> .....	18
<b>THE KOYUKUK RIVER</b> .....	2	<b>Overview of Villages in the Middle Koyukuk River Drainage</b> .....	18
<b>Introduction to the Koyukuk River</b> .....	2	Hughes .....	19
Environment, Climate and Vegetation of the Koyukuk .....	5	Alatna .....	20
Fish of the Koyukuk River .....	6	Allakaket .....	21
Animals of the Koyukuk River Area .....	7	<b>Traditional Place Names of the Middle Koyukuk River Region</b> .....	23
<b>The Indigenous Peoples of the Koyukuk River Area</b> .....	8	The Koyukuk River Below the Village of Hughes .....	24
Koyukon Athabascans .....	8	The Koyukuk River Between the Villages of Hughes and Allakaket .....	26
Kobuk Eskimos .....	9	The Koyukuk River Above the Village of Allakaket Including the South Fork .....	28
The Language .....	11	The Alatna River Between the Village of Alatna and Helpmejack Creek .....	32
Subsistence Practices .....	11	The Kanuti River .....	34
Fishing Practices .....	15	<b>Traditional and Contemporary Knowledge of Fish</b> .....	38
Oral History .....	16	The Koyukuk River Below the Village of Hughes .....	40
<b>Non-Indigenous Peoples of the Koyukuk River Area</b> .....	17	The Koyukuk River Between the Villages of Hughes and Allakaket .....	42
Early Explorers .....	17	The Koyukuk River Above the Village of Allakaket Including the South Fork .....	44
Miners .....	17	The Alatna River Between the Village of Alatna and Helpmejack Creek .....	46
Missionaries .....	17	The Kanuti River .....	48
		Eliza Jones, Primary Researcher of Native Place Names .....	50
		<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	52
		<b>MAP INDEX</b> .....	54



## REFERENCE MAP FOR THE KOYUKUK RIVER



*Cesa Bergman checking a fish net on the Koyukuk River at Lydia Bergman's fish camp. Early 1950s.*



### KOYUKUK RIVER FACTS

- The Koyukuk River is a tributary of the more than 2,000-mile-long Yukon River.
- People have inhabited the region for more than 10,000 years.
- The Koyukuk River stretches almost 600 miles, from the Brooks Range to the Yukon River.
- Three salmon species are present in the Koyukuk River: Chinook, chum and coho.



# Preface

The Koyukon Athabascan and Kobuk Eskimo people who live in Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket have been salmon fishing in the Koyukuk River and its tributaries for generations. Today, young people fishing with their grandparents can learn about both traditional fishing practices and place names. Place names are a way to share information and pass on knowledge about the land and its resources. Through this sharing, Koyukuk and Kobuk cultures are preserved and continued. Sharing ties the culture to language and traditional practices. Because place names and local observations of fish reflect relationships of the people with the land, they are important components of cultural identity.

As Alaska Native languages continue to disappear at an alarming rate, publications such as this one become extremely valuable. Documenting Native place names links language to the land and preserves important information encoded in the Koyukon Athabascan language. Koyukuk River residents asked the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) to document changes in salmon spawning grounds before their Elders pass on because they fear that the young people are not learning all that the Elders have to teach. YRDFA wanted to create this atlas as an attractive and practical way to preserve some of the Elders' important knowledge for all to share.

This atlas includes important information provided by Koyukuk River Elders and fishers from two key sources. The information on Koyukon Athabascan place names come from the language

mapping and interview work in the late 1990s of Eliza Jones and Wendy Arundale with Koyukuk River residents. The maps of salmon fishing areas are from Koyukuk River fisher interviews conducted by YRDFA in 2005 and 2006. Each map in the atlas includes written descriptions of the information visually displayed.

We hope the Elders of the Koyukuk River will feel that this book honors their knowledge and life. We also hope the people of the Koyukuk River will regard this book as a treasure that can be proudly displayed and shared with their children. Another aim is to provide a document that educators and school districts will find useful as an education resource.

Wolverine  
*Gulo gulo*



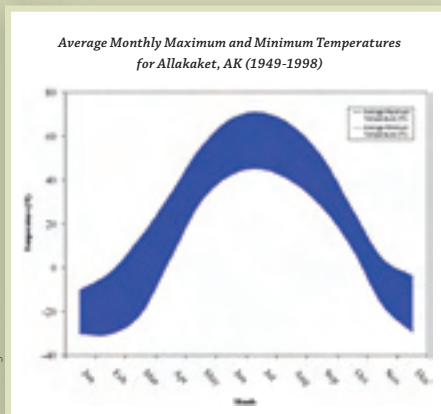
“I THINK THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT WE’RE SEEING EVERYTHING BEING PUBLISHED. I THINK IT’S PRETTY IMPORTANT BECAUSE AFTER WE LOSE SOME OF OUR PEOPLE AND THEN WHO’S GOING TO TELL THEM THE STORY AND WE’LL HAVE SOME SORT OF RECORD.”

—Harding Sam



# The Koyukuk River

Western Regional Climate Center



## Introduction to the Koyukuk River

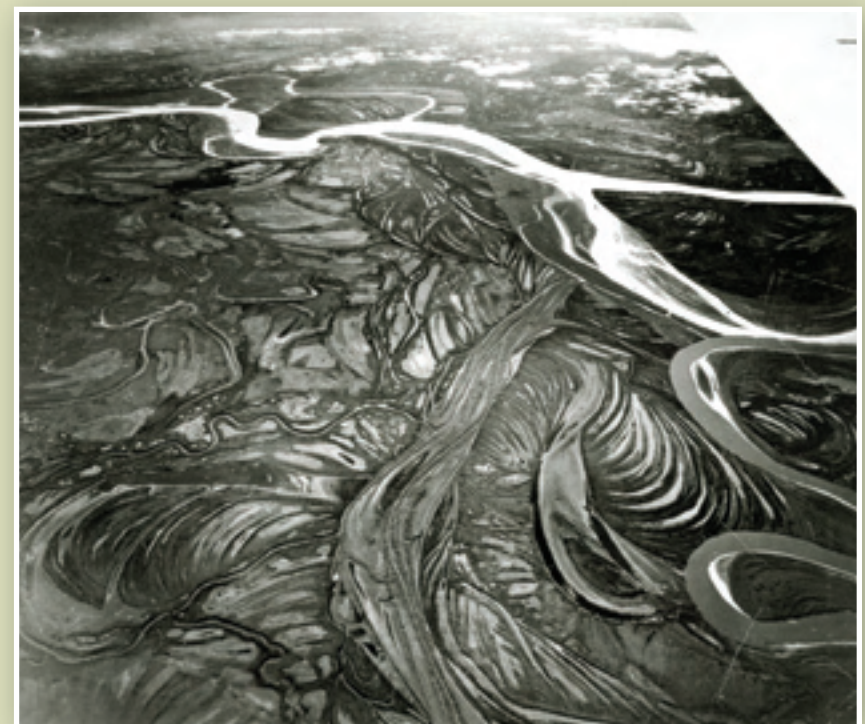
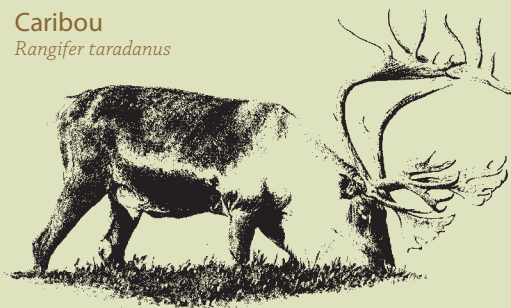
In Northwest Alaska, between the Brooks Range and the Yukon River, more than 600 people in eight villages make their homes on the banks of the Koyukuk River. The Koyukuk River drainage provides for a diverse array of life, and is commonly divided into three subregions. The communities of Bettles, Evansville and Wiseman make up the subregion known as the upper Koyukuk River; Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket lie in the middle Koyukuk River; and Huslia and Koyukuk are considered to be in the lower Koyukuk River.

This atlas begins with an overview of the landscape and people of this dynamic region (the Koyukuk River drainage). Once the stage is set, the spotlight narrows to the villages of the middle Koyukuk River. First, a brief description of the three featured villages is presented. Next, the traditional knowledge shared by local residents of Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket is presented in maps, photographs and other exhibits.

The focus of the atlas is limited to the middle Koyukuk River. While there is valuable information to be learned and recorded throughout the entire Koyukuk River drainage, the challenging

logistics of surveying such a large geographic area precluded a more inclusive study. Because middle river residents approached YRDFA with their interest in obtaining local fish-based research to record the knowledge of their Elders, a suggestion that launched development of this publication, YRDFA concentrated our efforts on the middle Koyukuk River. In addition, because resources and budget were limited, the focus on three Koyukuk River villages was better suited than a more comprehensive geographic area for the project scope.

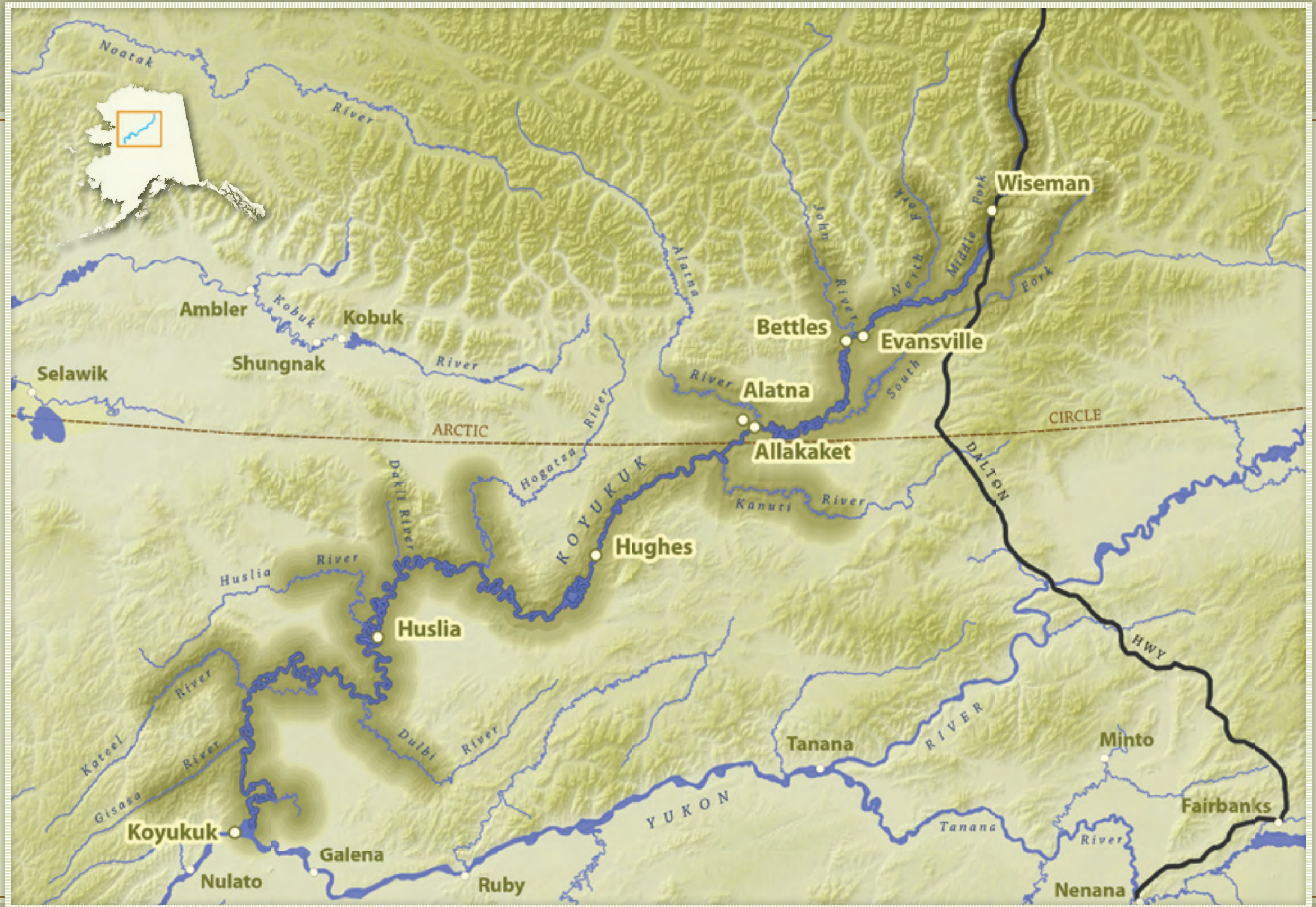
Caribou  
*Rangifer tarandus*



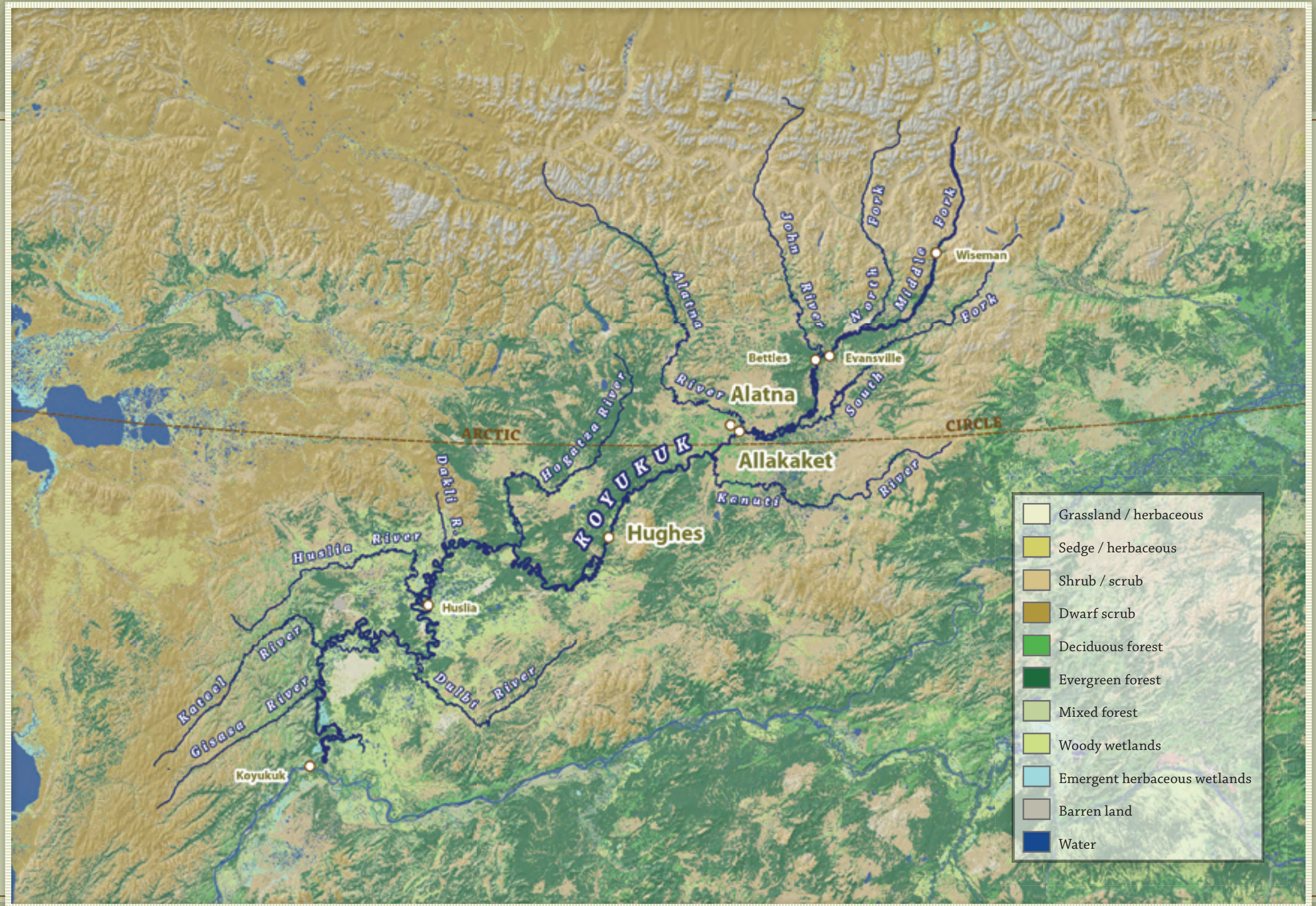
Confluence of Yukon and Koyukuk rivers, 1941.



THE KOYUKUK RIVER DRAINAGE









# The Koyukuk River

## Environment

**Environment, Climate and Vegetation of the Koyukuk.<sup>1</sup>** The headwaters of the Koyukuk River begin in the center of Alaska's Brooks Range, about 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The river then flows south and west almost 600 miles to join the Yukon River, which eventually ends in the Bering Sea. The headwater terrain is dominated by bare rock at elevations above 2,000 feet, along with less prominent tundra meadows of arctic grasses and scrub brushes. Forests of birch and stunted spruce are restricted to valley bottoms at lower elevations. The Koyukuk River within the Brooks Range is made up of three main branches, the North, South and Middle forks, and many smaller tributaries. The North Fork starts on the alpine slopes and tundra meadows of the arctic divide and travels 120 miles before joining the Middle Fork. North Fork tributaries include the Glacier, Alatna and John rivers.

The Middle Fork, in contrast to the steep gradients of the North Fork, is a large braided river flowing through glacial plains. The Middle Fork begins at the confluence of the Dietrich and Bettles rivers and descends about 200 feet in elevation before its waters meet those of the North Fork.

The South Fork flows from the foothills of the Endicott Mountains through flats into tundra lowlands of spruce and birch. In those lowlands, it joins the mainstem Koyukuk River just above the villages of Alatna and Allakaket.

The Koyukuk River continues through tundra meadows dominated by wide expanses of lowland marshes and thousands of lakes and ponds until it meets the Yukon River at the village of Koyukuk. Major tributaries of this lower section of river include the Kanuti, Hogatza, Huslia, Dulbi, Kateel, Gisasa and Dukli rivers.

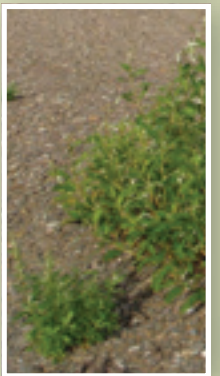
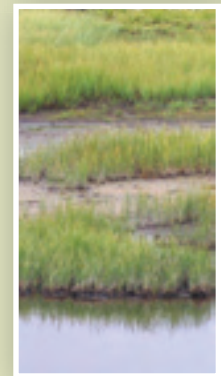
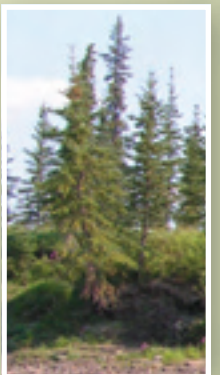
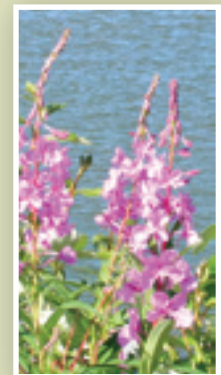
The Koyukuk flows through Alaska's continental climate zone, which extends from the arctic divide in the north to the Alaska Range and Kuskokwim Mountains in the south. This area is characterized by hot summers and very cold winters, and generally sees less than 30 inches of total precipitation. July is the warmest month, with temperatures usually ranging from 36 degrees Fahrenheit (° F) to 68° F. Winter temperatures usually range from -60° F to 16° F. Extremes of 90° F have been recorded at Wiseman in summer, and -80° F was observed at Prospect Creek Camp southeast of Bettles in January 1971.

<sup>1</sup>Information on pages 5-7 comes from Henning 1983.



*Confluence of Koyukuk and Kanuti rivers in the fall.*

### PLANTS OF THE REGION



**Clockwise from top left:**  
*Fireweed (Epilobium angustifolium);*  
*black spruce trees (Picea mariana);*  
*willow (Salix sp.); grasses (Poaceae)*



# The Koyukuk River

## SALMON OF THE REGION

Photos by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



**From top to bottom:**

Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*);  
Chum salmon (*O. keta*);  
Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*)

**Fish of the Koyukuk River.** The streams and rivers of the Koyukuk drainage provide an extremely productive breeding area for both resident and migratory cold-water fish. The region provides spawning and rearing areas for three species of salmon: Chinook (king; *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), chum (dog; *O. keta*) and coho (silver; *O. kisutch*). All three salmon species found in the Koyukuk are anadromous. In other words, they hatch in fresh water, spend part of their life in the ocean, then spawn in fresh water, and like all Pacific salmon, die after spawning. The eggs usually hatch in late winter or early spring. Chinook and coho salmon juveniles in fresh water feed on plankton, then later eat insects. The juveniles typically remain in fresh water until the next spring and migrate to sea as smolts. On the other hand, chum juveniles begin their journey to sea soon after hatching in the spring. The Chinook and coho salmon in the Koyukuk have primarily been used as a subsistence food for Alaska Natives while chum salmon are a traditional source of dog food and dried fish for winter use. Chum salmon are the most abundantly harvested salmon species in Interior Alaska.

Non-salmon species are also an important component of the subsistence harvest, largely due to their year-round presence and



Susan Paskvan

the low availability of edible salmon in the Koyukuk River.

the low availability of edible salmon in the Koyukuk River.

Whitefish, the most abundant group of fish, inhabit almost every type of river and freshwater habitat in the Koyukuk River drainage. Because they are a major food item for many predatory fish, whitefish are important in the food chain of the aquatic community. Whitefish species in the Koyukuk include the humpback (*Coregonus oidschian*) and broad (*C. nasus*) whitefish, least cisco (*C. said*) and sheefish (inconnu; *Stendous leucichthys nelma*). Sheefish is the largest member of the whitefish family. In the Koyukuk, sheefish seldom exceed 25 pounds. Interior Alaska sheefish typically overwinter in the lower Yukon Delta and migrate in the spring to feeding grounds and spawning grounds in the Koyukuk and other tributaries of the Yukon River. The sheefish has been used chiefly as a subsistence food for Alaska Natives and their dogs. However, its popularity as a sport fish is increasing. Sheefish taken during September at Hughes and Allakaket provides some of the best sport fishing on the Koyukuk River.

Northern pike (*Esox lucius*), arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*), Alaska blackfish (*Dallia pectoralis*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*) and burbot (*Lota lota*) are also important resident freshwater species in the Koyukuk. They are utilized by residents as a source of fresh food and are also dried for winter use.

**Left to right:** Spawning habitat of Chinook (*O. tshawytscha*) salmon in the headwaters of the Koyukuk River drainage; an assortment of





**Animals of the Koyukuk River Area.** The Koyukuk region is home to more than 140 species of birds and more than 30 species of mammals of the boreal forest. The region's mosaic of forests, woodlands, tundra and grasslands are home to many northern mammals, from majestic moose (*Alces alces*) to tiny shrews (*Soricidae*) and voles (*Muridae*). A portion of the caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) from the migratory Western Arctic Herd, which numbers more than 450,000, often move through the region in spring and winter months in search of lichens that lie beneath the snow. The Koyukuk region also supports a resident non-migratory caribou population, the Ray Mountain Herd, which numbers about 300. Caribou have historically played an important role in human survival in arctic regions, and subsistence users of the region still rely heavily on caribou.

Wolves (*Canis lupus*), marten (*Martes americana*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and other furbearers, as well as black (*Ursus americanus*) and grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*), are found year-round. The populations of some animals, such as lynx and Arctic hare (*Lepus arcticus*), are characterized by ups and downs called cycles. Beaver (*Castor canadensis*), mink (*Neovison vison*) and otter (*Lutra canadensis*) are present, but are limited by suitable aquatic habitats. Red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), including the silver, black and cross fox color phases, occur throughout the area, and arctic foxes (*Vulpes lagopus*) occur occasionally in the northernmost region. Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) are present throughout. The most important species trapped by subsistence users are marten, lynx, beaver, fox and wolf. Moose, Dall sheep (*Ovis dalli*) and bear are also important animals for subsistence users and sport hunters.

Migratory songbirds and raptors depend on the rich resources of the Koyukuk region for breeding and raising young. Thousands of waterfowl, including wigeon (*Anas americana*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), scaup (*Aythya marila*), greater white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons*), Canada geese (*Branta Canadensis*) and tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*), inhabit the Koyukuk's lush breeding grounds each spring.

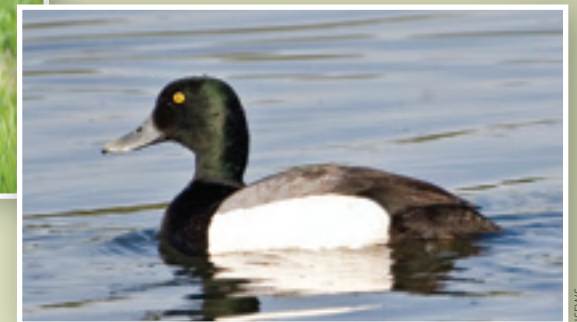
National Biological Information Infrastructure, John J. Moressio



USFWS



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)



USFWS

**Clockwise from top left:** Moose (*Alces alces*); grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*); marten (*Martes americana*); scaup (*Aythya marila*); beaver (*Castor canadensis*); black bear (*Ursus americanus*)



# The Koyukuk River

## KOYUKON ATHABASCAN TRADITIONAL DRESS



*Cesa and Billy Bergman with son  
Christopher dressed in traditional  
Athabascan clothing, 1930s.*

### **The Indigenous Peoples of the Koyukuk River Area**

The Koyukuk River drainage is inhabited by two main groups of indigenous people, the Koyukon Athabascans and the Kobuk Eskimos. The Koyukon Athabascans make up the vast majority of the population within most villages in the Koyukuk region. The exception is the village of Alatna, which is a Kobuk Eskimo village.

**Koyukon Athabascans.** The Koyukon Athabascans are the northwestern-most Athabascans of Alaska. They live in the lower and middle portions of the Yukon River, along the Kantishna River to Lake Minchumina and the Koyukuk River as far as the south slope of the Brooks Range. (Information in this section is largely derived from Clark [1974 and 1981], except where noted otherwise.)

Three divisions have been identified to distinguish the Koyukon Athabascans by geographic location:

- 1) Upper Yukon – along the Yukon River from Stevens Village down to the village of Koyukuk, just below the mouth of the Koyukuk River.
- 2) Lower Yukon – along the Yukon River from Nulato to Blackburn Creek and the Kaiyuh Slough-Khotol River area.
- 3) Koyukuk River – along the Koyukuk River and its tributaries. This atlas primarily discusses this division of the Koyukon Athabascan (referred to as Koyukuk Athabascan hereafter).

Koyukon Athabascan of both the Lower Yukon and the Koyukuk River divisions have interacted with their Yup'ik and Inupiat neighbors for as long as they have been living close to each other, and their cultures bear marks of this influence. The Koyukuk Athabascan people traded with the Inupiat Eskimos of Kotzebue Sound, the

Kobuk and Selawik rivers and the Anaktuvuk Pass area. They also occasionally married people from the Kobuk or Selawik area (Clark 1981:582).

Further subdivisions of the Koyukuk Athabascans have been established to reflect the people of more specific locations. These subdivisions are referred to as bands.

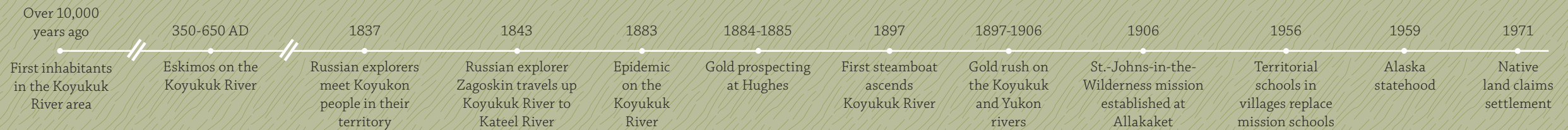
Before they settled permanently in villages, the Koyukuk Athabascans traveled in bands of 50 or more people. Each band had a territory stretching roughly 50 to 75 miles. The bands were made up of several extended families and a few unrelated people. Two families usually shared a dwelling and formed a household in a semi-permanent village. In some cases a great hunter may have had more than one wife and the combined families occupied one dwelling (Clark 1981:585). During caribou migrations, villages cooperated by allowing some caribou to pass to reach other villages and winter feeding grounds.

Parts of the territory used by a band were shared communally, other parts were considered private or family-held property (Clark 1981:585). Examples of privately held land included beaver houses and ponds, muskrat swamps, fishing locations and berry picking grounds next to fish camps.

Although there was no centralized political authority among the Koyukon Athabascans, strong leaders emerged as spokespeople for bands. People considered themselves to be affiliated with their bands and with those who spoke the same language as themselves. The Koyukuk River and Upper Yukon divisions sometimes intermarried and made alliances for trade or war, but both considered the Lower Yukon division to be a hostile tribe (Clark 1974, 1981:585).

Village chiefs have only been elected since 1906 (cf. Loyens 1966:179). A notable exception was the role of Chief Moses as a





spokesperson for the upper Koyukuk people just before the gold rush of 1898. When advice was sought, people turned to rich men, big traders, caribou fence and fish-trap bosses, medicine people and important warriors.

**Kobuk Eskimos.** Although Allakaket and Hughes are populated by residents of Athabascan descent, the residents of Alatna are Kobuk Eskimos, who immigrated to the Koyukuk River in the early 1900s (Nelson 1978:8). Eskimo is a term used to describe the people who live in the circumpolar north, including Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. This group is made up of Inupiat, Inuit and Yup'ik people. The Eskimos of Northern Alaska are Inupiat, and the Kobuk Eskimos fall into this group. The two terms, Eskimo and Inupiat, are generally used interchangeably.

The upper Kobuk Eskimo is one of the 10 “tribes” or “societies” that moved into the Kotzebue region in the early nineteenth century (Burch 1981:303). Each of these 10 societies consisted of self-sufficient family groups who frequently intermarried within their society or tribe. A society owned its territory and outsiders were excluded. Each family group within the society followed an annual cycle of movement within the territory that was dictated by seasonal subsistence activities. Each society also used its own subdialect of the Inupiat language (Burch 1981:304).

The Kuuvaum Kangianigmiut, or the upper Kobuk River society, lived very far inland and had no access to sea mammals, a prime source for oil. To obtain their oil, this society would send a few traders and their families to the Sheshalik fair on the coast, north of Kotzebue.



**Arctic Fox**  
*Alopex lagopus*

While the traders were traveling the upper Kobuk, women would stay home and fish. Because Kobuk Eskimo men avoided working at the fish camps (Clark 1974), the men who remained behind and did not travel to the fair would walk north into Nuataagmiut territory to hunt. All residents of this territory traveled en masse to the annual Sheshalik fair, allowing the Kobuk men to take advantage of the abandoned country to hunt (Burch 1981:307).

At the time of the gold rush, Kobuk River Inupiat had already moved into the upper Koyukuk drainage, including the Alatna River, and had begun to live in Athabascan villages (Clark 1974:85-86).

## KOBUK ESKIMO TRADITIONAL DRESS

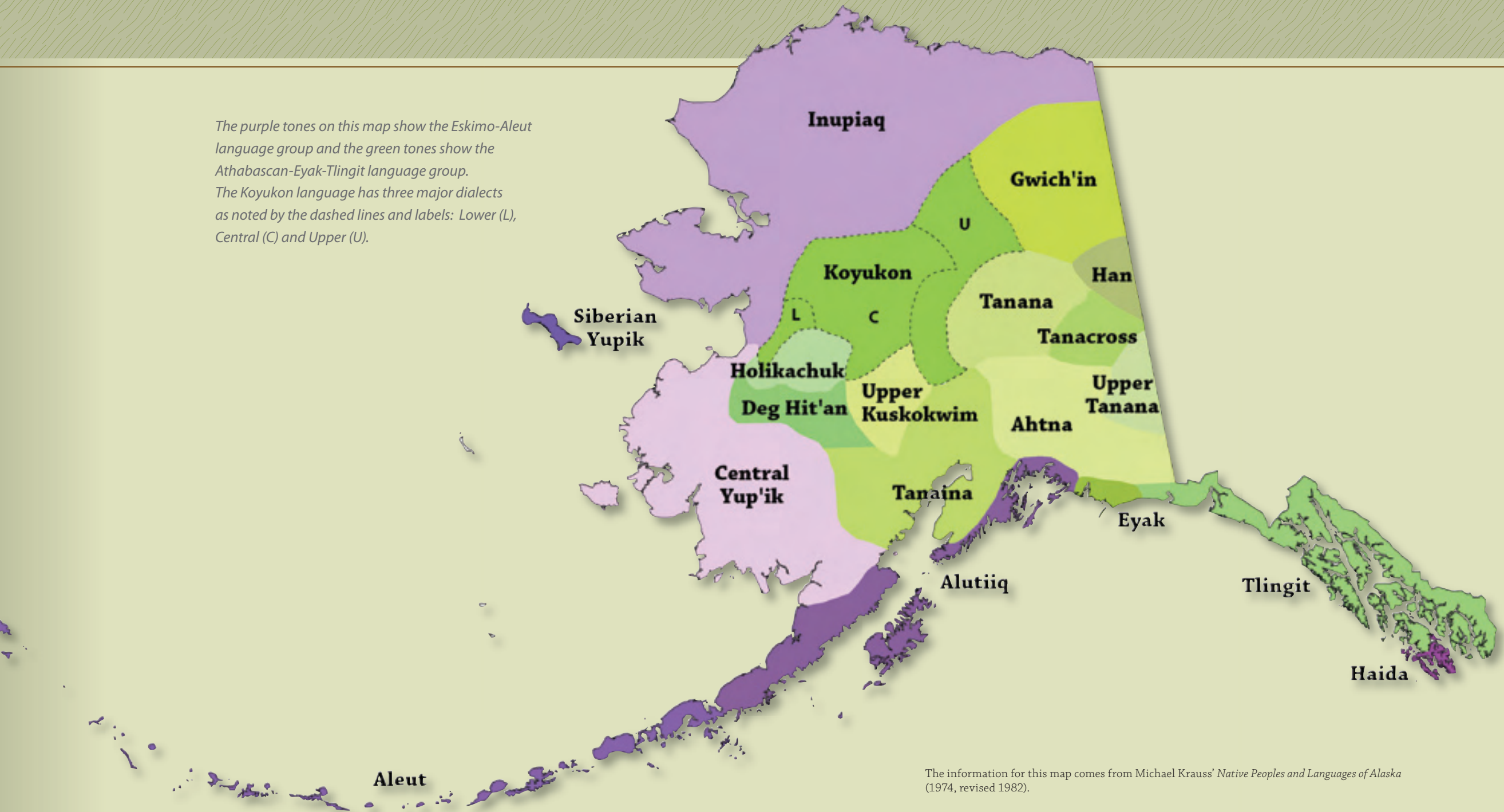


*Peter Nictune and wife, Dic'ajok, in front of their cabin in Alatna, dressed in traditional Kobuk Eskimo clothing.*



# ~[ NATIVE PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES OF ALASKA ]~

The purple tones on this map show the Eskimo-Aleut language group and the green tones show the Athabascan-Eyak-Tlingit language group. The Koyukon language has three major dialects as noted by the dashed lines and labels: Lower (L), Central (C) and Upper (U).



The information for this map comes from Michael Krauss' *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (1974, revised 1982).



# The Koyukuk River

**The Language.** The Koyukon Athabascan language is considered part of the Athabascan language family, the largest Native language family in North America. The Athabascan language family has spread throughout Alaska, northern Canada, the Pacific Coast, and the southwestern United States and includes about 35 Athabascan languages. These many languages developed within the last 2,500 years from the ancestral language of Proto-Athabascan, which was spoken from central Alaska to central British Columbia. During the last 2,500 years, the Athabascan language family expanded in two groups. One group migrated into Oregon and California; the other group traveled southwest and became the Navajo and Apache languages (Kari 2000:xlvi).

The Koyukon Athabascan language area is about 78,000 square miles, roughly the size of the state of Minnesota. The boundary of the Koyukon Athabascan language is determined by the traits and dialects of the language, traditional settlements, land use areas and place name networks (Kari 2000: xlvi). Reflecting significant internal diversity, this language is characterized by three major dialects and several distinct subdialects. The three dialects are Lower Koyukon, Central Koyukon and Upper Koyukon. Central Koyukon is spoken by the three lowermost subdivisions of the Koyukuk Athabascan people. Upper Koyukon is spoken by the South Fork Koyukuk Athabascan people (Clark 1981:583).

Eskimo-Aleut is the other major language family in Alaska. Inupiaq is a part of this language family and is spoken across the arctic regions of North America, from Alaska to Greenland. The Kobuk Eskimo of Alatna immigrated to the Koyukuk River around 1900 and spoke the Malimiut dialect of the Inupiaq language (Krauss 1980b:49).

**Subsistence Practices.** Alaska Native people have lived off the land for thousands of years. To meet their annual needs, they traditionally followed a subsistence round – a year of activities traveling from trapping camps to fish camps to hunting sites and back to a central gathering place to meet other families for ceremonies and celebrations. The subsistence round has evolved in our changing world. Like the nature of subsistence, the subsistence round continues to be flexible, allowing the people living this lifestyle to react and adapt to fluctuations in abundance of resources.

Harvest of whitefish and other non-salmon species is presently of more importance to residents of this region than salmon (Andersen et al. 2004). In the 1960s, a study found that the people of Allakaket and Alatna subsisted equally on salmon fishing and on caribou and moose hunting. Their diet was supplemented by bear, rabbits, ducks, geese, ptarmigan and wild berries and roots, as well as items purchased from the store (Clark 1974:34-35).

In the middle Koyukuk River area, the annual subsistence round begins with the salmon that appear in the first half of July. Traditionally, when the salmon arrived the entire village would depart for the summer fish camps. The men would go to camp first to set up tents, stoves and other gear. They then returned to deliver the women, children, dogs and remaining equipment. Before arrival of the salmon runs, the women and older children would repair the fishing nets and make new ones. The men made new boats and canoes or repaired old ones (Clark 1974:35). At camp, the women and older



*Traditional camp on the Koyukuk River, 1898.*

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)



# The Koyukuk River

## THE PAST IN PICTURES



Lydia Bergman



Bertha Moses

**Top:** Man chopping wood by the Koyukuk River.

**Above:** Lydia Bergman and Millicent Evans Gray display a muskrat trap, 1947.

## TRADITIONAL SUBSISTENCE ROUND





girls were responsible for placing and tending the fishing nets. They also cleaned and prepared the fish for drying (Clark 1974:38).

The traditional annual subsistence round was similar for the Koyukuk Athabascans and the Inupiat living in the Allakaket and Alatna area, except the Inupiat men did not usually accompany the women and children to fish camp. In the Kobuk Eskimo tradition, the women, children and old men went to fish camp and the men and older boys traveled to the mountains to hunt caribou (Clark 1974:92-93).

The Koyukuk Athabascans stayed at fish camp from June through August. The men set basket traps at the mouths of small streams, and the women set gillnets in eddies and sloughs. The Kobuk Eskimo women also set gillnets in the eddies and sloughs, but they switched to large seines during the peak of the salmon run (Clark 1974:93).

On the Fourth of July, a celebration that has become the modern equivalent of a traditional gathering and a shared feast for the two communities of Allakaket and Alatna is held to honor the arrival of the first salmon. The celebration includes visiting, sporting events and dancing (Clark 1974:37).

Berry picking has been and continues to be an important part of the subsistence round that takes place during the latter part of the summer. The women, or entire families, pick blueberries and high- and low-bush cranberries for entire days. During the summer, men spend a lot of time cutting wood for winter fuel. Near the end of summer, the men and older boys often hunt moose. Moose hunting is predominately a male occupation on the Koyukuk River. Historically, the moose hides were prepared for tanning by the women.

The summer ended with a return to the village after Labor Day for families with children in school. If the family did not have obligations to school, they might have stayed at fish camp until freeze-up at

the end of September (Clark 1974:40). Some fishermen and women stayed at fish camp after freeze-up to hunt bear and look for animals for later trapping.

Seining for fish on the Alatna River still takes place in late September just before freeze-up by both Kobuk Eskimo and Koyukuk Athabaskan families. Traditionally, women went to their favorite sites and the men moved to other promising areas. The fish caught would be strung up for the dogs' winter food. Species caught included suckers, sheefish, whitefish, pike, grayling and dog salmon (Clark 1974:40).

As in the past, after the fall fishing but before the river freezes, men go to the mountains to hunt sheep and caribou. Rabbits are snared after the first snowfall. Once the river freezes, both men and women fish through holes in the ice. Ice fishing is done both through smaller holes with hooks and lines and through larger holes with gillnets. The latter method is used to catch whitefish and grayling, as well as some sheefish, pike and other fish. In the 1970s, the Kobuk Eskimos set fish traps in the river channel to feed their larger dog teams.

In November the men hunt for caribou and ptarmigan. They also trap wolves and small, fur-bearing animals. Bear hunting takes place during the mid-winter period, which is also the season of festivity and community potlatches.

During the winter, most people stay in the village for Christmas, but trapping still occurs. By February, beaver trapping begins.

As break-up approaches, some people move to spring camp. Equipment is loaded onto sleds and families travel overland to the spring camp site. Men might return to the village to gather their fishing equipment. With the arrival of the salmon in the summer, the subsistence round begins again.

"SALMON WEREN'T THAT IMPORTANT TO THE ALATNA RIVER PEOPLE. WE WERE OUT IN CAMP ALL SUMMER AND THE FOUR SPECIES OF WHITEFISH PROVIDED MOST OF OUR SUBSISTENCE FOOD. WE SEINED EVERY DAY, ONE DAY UPRIVER, ONE DAY DOWNRIVER. THIS WENT ON FIVE TO SIX DAYS A WEEK. BUT, HOWEVER, WE ARE MORE DEPENDENT ON SALMON NOW, AND WE NOW TRADE WITH [THE] YUKON RIVER FOR RICHER FISH."

—Ronald Sam



# The Koyukuk River

## MIDDLE KOYUKUK RIVER FISH SPECIES AND HABITATS

*According to local fishers interviewed by YRDFA in 2005 and 2006, the following fish species are found in the areas listed.*

### CHUM (DOG) SALMON

- Koyukuk River – mouth of Henshaw Creek, below Allakaket between Discovery and Henry creeks, 20 miles above Hughes, 12 miles upriver of Hughes, at Hughes (spawning), Batza Creek (spawning), below Hughes at Rock Island Point, Matthew Slough
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River – at Jim River (spawning) to Gold Bench
- Alatna River – at Steamboat (not many 1934-36), at Sinyalak Creek, to Helpmejack Creek (spawning)

### CHINOOK (KING) SALMON

- South Fork of the Koyukuk River – at Jim River (spawning) as far as Gold Bench
- Alatna River – to Helpmejack Creek (spawning)
- Koyukuk River – below mouth of South Fork of the Koyukuk River, at Batza Creek, Rock Island Point below Hughes

### SALMON SPAWNING (unknown variety)

- Henshaw Creek
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River – at Jim River, at Fish Creek
- Little Indian River
- Pocahontas Creek
- Batza Creek
- Hughes Creek
- Sinyalak Creek

### JUVENILE FISH, INDETERMINATE SPECIES (K'ETLEHONE)

- Grayling Lake/ Huntington Creek
- Hughes Creek
- Alatna River – Steamboat, Buzodoc Slough
- Fish Creek Lake
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River – mouth of Henshaw Creek
- Koyukuk River – Rock Island Point

### WHITEFISH

- Alatna River – Blackjack, Chebanika Creek, Putu's Bar
- Koyukuk River – below Allakaket between Discovery and Henry creeks, 20 miles upstream of Hughes, at Hughes, 8 miles below Hughes, Batza Creek, Rock Island Point, below Matthew Slough, Fish Creek below Matthew Slough
- Kanuti River – in August as far as Mint Creek, Lake Creek
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### HUMPBACK WHITEFISH

- Kanuti River
- Alatna River – Buzodoc Slough

### BROAD WHITEFISH

- Kanuti River
- Alatna River – Buzodoc Slough

### PIKE

- Koyukuk River – upstream of Kanuti River, Duck Slough, below Matthew Slough
- Pocahontas Creek
- Kanuti River – nearby lakes
- Alatna River – Chebanika Creek
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### GRAYLING

- Grayling Lake – near Huntington Creek
- Hughes Creek
- Henshaw Creek
- Alatna River – Chebanika Creek, Putu's Bar
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River – at Jim River
- Koyukuk River – 8 miles down from Hughes, Pocahontas Creek
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### SHEEFISH

- Koyukuk River – 20 miles above Hughes, above and below Hughes, at Hughes, Rock Island Point
- Alatna River – Budisbar (spawning), between Sinyalak and Chebanika Creek (spawning)

### BLACKFISH

- Kanuti River – nearby lakes
- Koyukuk River – in lakes 30 miles below Hughes
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### LONG-NOSED SUCKERS

- Koyukuk River
- Alatna River – Chebanika Creek
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### CISCO

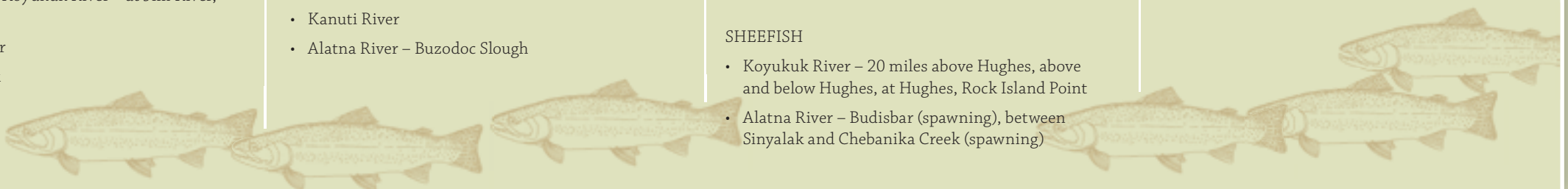
- Kanuti River

### BURBOT (LOCHE)

- Koyukuk River – upstream of Hughes
- South Fork of the Koyukuk River

### ARCTIC LAMPREY (EELS)

- Reportedly came up Koyukuk River rarely, once in participant's lifetime





**Fishing Practices.** Summer fish camps are individually owned and are located up and down the Koyukuk River and its tributaries. Koyukuk Athabascans continue to use their traditional camp sites on the South Fork of the Koyukuk River and the Koyukuk River south of Allakaket and Alatna. Kobuk Eskimo fish camps are located on the Alatna River and on the Koyukuk River south of the Kanuti River.

The Athabascan fish camps are generally owned by men but passed down through the women. In earlier times, the Kobuk Eskimo fish camps were completely operated by women and men only stayed if they were too old to hunt.

There are many methods by which to catch fish. In the winter, gillnets are used to fish under the ice. Holes are cut in the ice, and the gillnet is threaded through and tied to willow poles. In the fall, seining nets (large nets, 150 feet or longer with a small mesh size) are sometimes used to catch large amounts of fish for dog food. Seining requires a person on the bank to hold one end of the net while the other end is secured in a boat that travels to the center of the river to stretch the net out. The boat then comes slowly in to the shore. The fish caught are brought up on the bank of the river (Clark 1974:67-68). The fish are cleaned and cut before drying. To dry, they are hung on drying racks over smudge fires to keep the bugs away. In the winter, fish are not cleaned but rather are stored frozen.

The geography of the Hughes vicinity restricts most fishing to the Koyukuk mainstem. There are no tributaries nearby and few lakes. In Hughes, fishing takes place year-round, interrupted in the spring when the river is breaking up and in the fall when the river is freezing. September is a very important month for fishing in Hughes.<sup>2</sup>

The people of Hughes also fish for burbot during the middle of the winter when the burbot are moving upstream, using under-the-ice traps. Burbot are winter spawners, and are valued for their large eggs and oil-rich liver. Burbot traps often catch suckers as by-catch.

Alatna fishers focus their fishing effort during the summer and fall months from July to November. Whitefish makes up two-thirds of the subsistence fish harvest. In the summer, whitefish are caught using gillnets in open water, and in the fall, gillnets are used under the ice. The fishers of Alatna have a strong history of seining, which is largely done in the upper Koyukuk River and the Alatna River because the gravel bottom conditions produce fewer snags.

In interviews, fishers in Allakaket described fishing for dog and king salmon, as well as whitefish, burbot, pike, grayling, sheefish, blackfish and long-nosed suckers (Moncrieff 2008). Fishing takes place year-round in Allakaket. In the fall, burbot traps are constructed and put in the river to freeze into the ice. These traps can be fished through the winter. There have been as many as five burbot traps in the Allakaket area, but usually only one is in operation at a time. Contemporary gillnets are used in open water and under the ice to catch many types of fish, both salmon and non-salmon species. Often, they are set and left overnight. The traditionally made gillnets incorporated willow bark that had been twisted by hand; commercially made nets are more prevalent now. Seine nets are an important method of subsistence in Allakaket for catching whitefish and sheefish.

<sup>2</sup>Information on current fishing practices in Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket comes from Andersen et al. 2004 except where noted otherwise.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE



*Kitty David cutting salmon with traditional ulu knife.*



Bertha Moses

*Small willow bark net made by Bertha Moses. The mesh is made of twisted willow bark. The floats and weights, made by Johnson Moses, are driftwood and caribou antler.*



# The Koyukuk River



Ruffed Grouse  
*Bonasa umbellus*

**Oral history.** In the traditional Athabascan culture, information is passed down orally, often through stories. These stories have meaning, teach values and relate history. The story that follows

was told in Allakaket by Johnson Moses in 2005 and Sam Henry in 2008. It is a traditional tale for this region.

## Two Old Women

Way back long ago, two old women used to live right by Fish Creek Lake where it ran into Fish Creek. One of these two old women was blind, but could still get around, and one could see. The one who could see was called Hutone.

There is a long story about those two old women. In fall the people had to move around the land in this area to hunt for caribou and other animals. When it was time to leave, they couldn't take the two old people because the group wouldn't survive if the women slowed it down. So the group left them, which was not an unusual practice at the time. After the people left, the old woman who could see made a fish trap and set the fish trap in Lake Creek. Her fish trap caught fish, and she cut the fish and dried them until it got cold. Then the two old women froze the rest.

All winter long their people moved around looking for food. The group came back to Fish Creek Lake after spending the winter traveling around. They were surprised to see that the two old women were alive and still there with a lot of food—all kinds of food.

During the winter, a man and his son arrived where the two old women were camped. The man and his son had started in the fall time from far away. They were from the Dalbi and Huslia area. They had tracked a brown bear all the way up to the South Fork of the Koyukuk River from the Dalbi River near the village of Huslia. They were hunting that bear with a bow and arrow and a spear. They went all the way up to the big high mountains. They caught the bear in its den and then ran into the two old women, one who was blind and

one who could see. They decided to give the meat and the fat to the two old women. Overnight those two women made two sets of boots for the men. The men's boots had worn out because they had walked so far. The blind woman could do anything with the help of the other woman, so she could sew. Making the boots overnight was something that people could do then.

When the old women's people came back, they were short of food and hungry, near starvation. The food the old women had put away saved the people until the fish started running in the spring.

As a small child, Johnson Moses saw the place where the two old women lived. He saw their birch bark canoe. His grandfather told him to leave the canoe and the place alone.



### Non-Indigenous Peoples of the Koyukuk River Area

While Athabascans and Eskimos have lived in the Koyukuk River drainage for hundreds of years, the history of white settlers dates back only to the 19th century. There have been three distinct phases of exploration or settlement, each of which has altered the character of the region. Russian, then American, explorers constitute the first phase, miners in search of gold the second, and missionaries the final phase. (The information in this section is derived from Dissler 1979, except where noted otherwise.)

**Early Explorers.** By the late 1700s, Russian traders were exploring Interior Alaska in search of valuable furs. A Russian trading post was established in Nulato in 1839, providing the first direct contact with people of the area on Koyukon soil. The 1842 journey of Lieutenant Zagoskin of the Russian Imperial Navy through the Koyukuk drainage would be one of the last Russian expeditions.

American exploration was already under way when the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, first by fur traders, then by the U.S. Army. Once the Klondike gold rush began in 1898, the nature of exploration in the Koyukuk region changed. Individuals arrived in the area hoping to strike it rich, and government expeditions began focusing mainly on resource reconnaissance.

**Miners.** Although gold was discovered in 1893, the first “rush” didn’t begin until 1898. The villages of Hughes and Bettles sprang up as barge landings and supply posts for the local gold fields because river travel was the preferred means of transport. Hundreds of prospectors flocked to the region, but many did not stay. Harsh arctic conditions and gold strikes in the Klondike drew prospectors away from the Koyukuk after a few years, but another big strike on

Nolan Creek (near Wiseman) started a new rush in 1908. The Koyukuk was booming until 1914. With the beginning of the first World War and the start of Prohibition, many miners left the region. Although no longer the driving economic force, mining continues and miners can still be found on the Koyukuk and its tributaries.

**Missionaries.** The first missionary to the middle Koyukuk River region was the Reverend Hudson Stuck. He founded St. John’s-in-the-Wilderness Episcopal Mission in 1906, at the site that would become Allakaket (Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs 2008b). The mission encouraged people to settle in town and acted not only as a church, but also provided a school, nursing facilities and lodging for women missionaries. Reverend Stuck was an effective and forthright church leader who believed strongly in the preservation of customs, skills and ways of life of the indigenous people of Alaska (Phillips 1995). He was known for traveling throughout the Koyukuk region by dogsled.



USFWS



USFWS

*Top to bottom: Horses pulling a scow and miners up the shallow waters of a tributary to the Koyukuk; the mining city of Bergman; summer view of St. John’s-in-the-Wilderness Episcopal Mission.*



Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



# The Middle Koyukuk River

## Overview of Villages in the Middle Koyukuk River Drainage

The people of the middle Koyukuk River drainage reside in the villages of Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket. As described in the introduction, the project to develop this atlas evolved from residents' suggestion to preserve the knowledge of Elders. Two bodies of research focusing on the middle river area and local places provided important information that supported development of this atlas: the "Allakaket-Alatna Area Native Place Names" research (Moses et al. 1997) and the "Changes in Salmon Spawning Grounds on the Koyukuk River" project (Moncrieff 2008). Another important source of information was the members of the three villages who were generous in sharing their knowledge with previous researchers and our staff. This atlas is a tribute to them.

As shown in the map on page 3, the village of Hughes is the most downstream; Alatna and Allakaket, situated across the river from each other, are farther upriver. Residents of the three villages include Koyukuk Athabaskan and Kobuk Eskimo people.

Before they settled in the villages, the Koyukuk Athabascans and the Kobuk Eskimos traveled nomadically from camp to camp throughout the year, following fish and game to meet their annual



The South Fork of the Koyukuk River.



Marten  
*Martes americana*

needs. The people of the middle Koyukuk region continue to rely heavily on subsistence activities to meet their annual needs. Other means of support include fire fighting, hunting and trapping. Some sources of employment are also available within the communities; for example, in the schools and health facilities.



## THE VILLAGE OF

# Hughes

**Hughes.** Located on the east bank of the Koyukuk River on a 500-foot bluff at the approximate midpoint of the river, Hughes has a current population of 76 people. Hughes is mainly a Koyukuk Athabascan village, but Kobuk, Selawik and Nunamiut Eskimos have lived in the area. (Information in this section is largely derived from Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs 2008c, except where noted otherwise.)

An early center for trade between the Athabascans and Eskimos of the region, Hughes later served as a riverboat landing and supply port for the Indian River goldfields until 1915. By that time, the mining industry had declined and many people had left the area. The local Alaska Natives remained, however, and eventually a post office was established in 1942. More than a decade later, in 1956, a school was built to serve the Hughes population. A large flood in the fall of 1994 destroyed nearly all of the buildings and food caches in Hughes. Since then, the community has rebuilt homes and facilities.

Traditional ways of life continue and include subsistence activities and potlatches. Fishing occurs year-round, as do moose and caribou hunting, berry picking and waterfowl hunting. Seasonal and part-time jobs are available in town to augment the subsistence lifestyle.



Susan Paskwan



Susan Paskwan



U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

**Top right:** Two young girls check a fish net outside of Hughes.

**Above:** Photograph of Hughes from the Koyukuk River, 1911.

**Left:** Full fish rack at camp.



# The Middle Koyukuk River



USCS



Anne Edwards

**Top:** View of a street in Alatna in wintertime, 1924.

**Right:** Aerial view of Alatna.

**Above:** Anne Edwards and Ella Sam in front of Oscar Nictune's house in Old Alatna, 1943.



USFWS

**Alatna.** Approximately 30 Kobuk Eskimos reside in Alatna, just across the Koyukuk River from Allakaket, home of their Koyukuk Athabascan neighbors. The two communities were once incorporated together as a city, but today, although adjacent, the villages are separate entities with independent tribal councils. (Information in this section is largely derived from Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs 2008a, except where noted otherwise.)

The old site of Alatna was a traditional center for trading between Athabascans and Eskimos. The Alatna population mainly descends from Kobuk Eskimos who migrated to the Koyukuk River around 1900 (Nelson et al. 1978). Residents are active subsistence participants, relying on whitefish, salmon, moose (and caribou when available), bear, small game and berries for food sources.

Flooding has been a problem in the community. Ice jamming caused a large flood in 1964, and flood waters rose again in 1994, sweeping away nearly all homes and buildings in the community. Residents rebuilt near the old site of Alatna, but some have moved across the way to Allakaket.

THE VILLAGE OF

Alatna



## THE VILLAGE OF

# Allakaket

**Allakaket.** According to recent population figures, 130 people live in Allakaket. Like those in Hughes, the people of Allakaket are Koyukuk Athabascan. Allakaket is situated near a low, swampy, floodplain just about on the Arctic Circle. During spring break-up and the August rains, the river may overflow its banks and erosion is a problem. In the spring of 1964, a flood caused by ice jamming inundated 85 percent of the community (Clark 1974:50). Another flood in 1994 destroyed most of the buildings, homes and winter food caches in Allakaket. After the 1994 flood, the community rebuilt its houses on higher ground. (Information in this section is largely derived from Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs 2008b, except where noted otherwise.)

The first mission on the Koyukuk River, St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, was established in Allakaket in 1906. In the 1960s, Allakaket had a mixed population of Inupiat and Athabascan ancestry, although primarily Koyukuk Athabascan from the middle and upper Koyukuk drainage (Clark 1974:56, Nelson 1978:8).

Subsistence is still the focus of the local economy. Salmon, whitefish, moose, bear, small game and berries provide much of the food eaten by people in Allakaket. Allakaket is an exciting place with gatherings for traditional potlatches, dances and footraces, attracting visitors from other villages. One such event is the annual Fourth of July Festival.

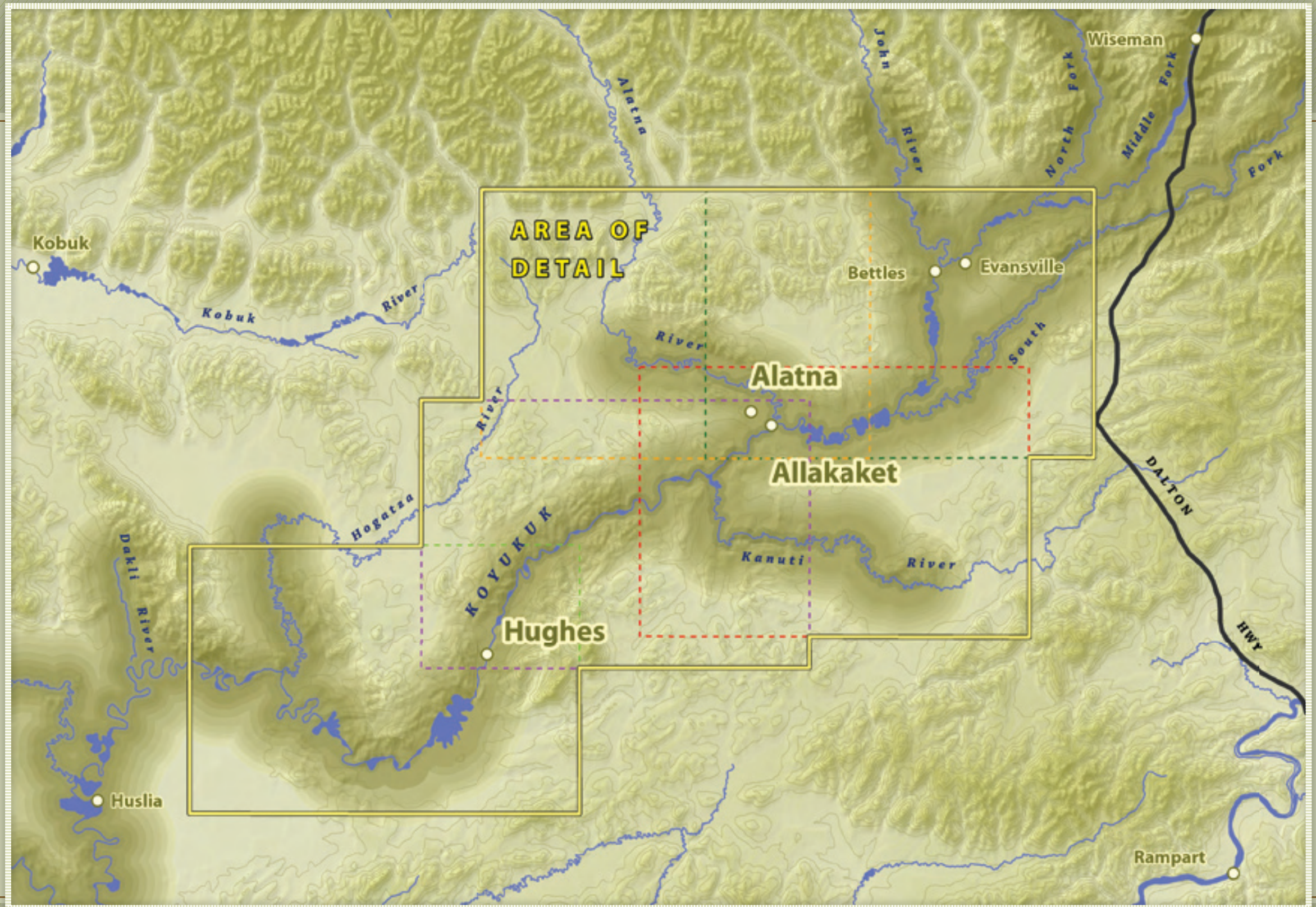


**Top left:** Houses along the beach road in Allakaket.

**Above:** An aerial view of Allakaket.

**Left:** Attendees of the annual Fourth of July festival in Allakaket, 1928.







# The Middle Koyukuk River

## Traditional Place Names of the Middle Koyukuk River Region

The Koyukon Athabascan place names highlighted in this atlas come from an unpublished document compiled by Eliza Jones, who at that time was with the Alaska Native Language Center. Wendy Arundale of the Institute of Arctic Biology of the University of Alaska Fairbanks contributed to Ms. Jones' compilation. That document, "Allakaket-Alatna Area Native Place Names," includes information from interviews with the following Koyukon Athabascan speakers and residents of the area encompassing Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket: Johnson Moses, Oscar Nictune, Lee Simon, Susie

Williams, William William, Moses Henzie, Henry William, Alice Ambrose, Lavine Williams, Joe Beetus and other Native Elders from Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket.

The place names were gathered during interviews using tape recorders and mapping. The tapes are archived at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Ms. Jones was the primary researcher on this project and has been gathering place names for more than 20 years.

The place names are organized by stream along which they occur, moving from the mouth or downstream toward the headwaters. To display the place names in this atlas, these areas were used on maps: the Koyukuk River below the village of Hughes, the Koyukuk River between the villages of Hughes and Allakaket, the Koyukuk River above the village of Allakaket including the South Fork, the Alatna River between the village of Alatna and Helpmejack Creek and the Kanuti River.



Fish cutting table and fish rack on the bank of the Koyukuk River.



Muskrat  
*Ondatra zibethicus*

"I THINK THAT THE MIDDLE KOYUKUK RIVER IS PROBABLY THE LAST ONE TO BE EXPLORED. WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN A PRIVATE PEOPLE. I THINK THIS IS A GOOD THING."

—Ronald Sam



# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE  
KOYUKUK RIVER  
BELOW  
THE VILLAGE OF  
HUGHES

**KOYUKON NAME**

*Kk'uyelt'ots'ene*

*Hut'eloyghedeggoyh*

*Hut'oldeekkaakk'et*

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

Koyukuk River; river with willows toward its headwaters

Place where white rock extends down the bluff (face)

Village of Hughes \ mouth of the Hut'odleetno' - a creek on the opposite bank of the Koyukuk River

LAND IS SO IMPORTANT. [THE LOCAL PEOPLE'S] CONNECTION TO THE LAND IS  
SO IMPORTANT. IT'S OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE.

—Eliza Jones



Brown Bear  
*Ursus arctos*







# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE KOYUKUK  
RIVER BETWEEN  
THE VILLAGES  
OF HUGHES AND  
ALLAKAKET



**Black Bear**  
*Ursus americanus*

**KOYUKON NAME**

*Tlaa Nedeggaadle'*, *Tlaa Nedeggaadle Ghunh*  
*Tleghelbaay Benkk'et*  
*Donok'edeleh Denh*  
*Hudokkaakk'et*  
*Naagheleel Denh*  
*Hughu Gheelenh Le'one*  
*Tlaakk'e Dodeeleeyh Denh*  
*Taaseze Ghunh*  
*Hoolgoyh Denh*  
*Alaakkaakk'et / Neleghetluhdlee T'oh*  
*Hut'odleetno'*  
*Kaazen Nozegheelkk'onh Denh*  
*Baats'e T'oh*  
*Too Naalel Denh*  
*Tledok'edeenaal Denh*  
*Hut'odleetne Dlele'*  
*Soos Geda Dlele'*  
*Tlaabaas Ghunh*  
*Neeldoggu Taal'oyee/ Needledoggu Taal'oyee/ Needze Doggu Taal*  
*Guhgaahy Dzaaye'/ Guhguyh Dzaaye'/ Guyhguyh Dzaaye Ghunh*  
*Nogheelenh Denh*  
*Neek'elehno'*  
*Nonts'ednaaye*  
*Kk'oonkkaakk'e Le'onee*  
*Tlaalool Yeet*  
*Baats'e Dlele', Bekk'e Nohok'eldaaghee*

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

Rocks that are standing like big tree roots, at the rocks that are like standing tree roots  
Grayling lake  
Place where fish customarily pile into annually  
River mouth  
Place where the current makes a big circle  
Hill surrounded by water / Hill where the current flows through the land  
Place where current flows over rocks, bedrock riffle  
Broad whitefish lake  
Eroding sand bluff  
The mouth of the Alatna River / Under or at the foot of Neleghetluhdlee (bluff)  
Mountain creek  
Place someone burned down (a tree with a) lynx  
(Lake) under Baatse' Dlele' Mountain  
Hot springs or place where the water is hot  
Long river peninsula, also called Twelve Mile Camp  
Hut'odleetne Hills  
Mountain with an important grave on it, Big grave mountain  
At the tlaabaas (circular knife)  
(Mountain range) heights that parallel the river  
Of guhgaayh or guhguyh (uncertain) dzaaye' (heart)  
Waterfall place  
Something (salmon) stops (to spawn) river  
Place where we usually cross the river (in our winter travel)  
That (hill) which is at the mouth of Kk'oonootne River  
In the throat of the bluff or canyon  
Obsidian mountain, on (mountain) which something (caribou) shed its antler velvet







# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE KOYUKUK  
RIVER ABOVE  
THE VILLAGE OF  
ALLAKAKET  
INCLUDING THE  
SOUTH FORK

**KOYUKON NAME**

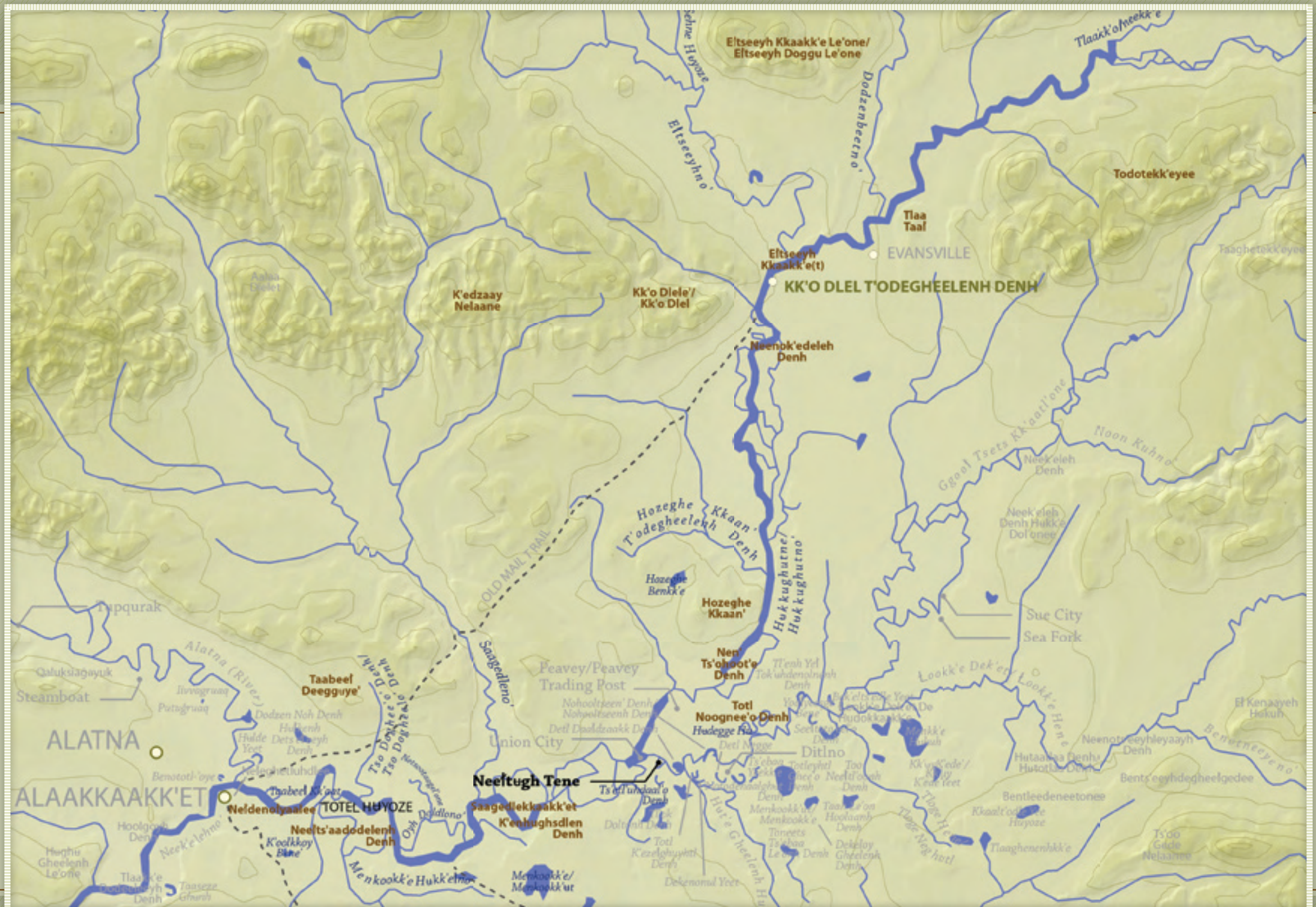
*Neldenolyaalee*  
*Taabeel Kk'aat*  
*K'oolkkoy Bene'*  
*Totel H̱yoze*  
*H̱lkenh Dets'el'eeyh Denh*  
*Tso Doghee'o' Denh, Tso Dogheelo' Denh*  
*Menkookk'e H̱kk'elno'*  
*Oyh Doldlono'*  
*Neelts'aadodelenh Denh*  
*Netsootaagel'one*  
*Taabeel Deegg̱ye'*  
*Saagedleno'*  
*Saagedlekkaakk'et*  
*K'edzaay Nelaane*  
*Menkookk'e, Menkookk'̱t*  
*K'enhughsdlen Denh*  
*Neelṯugh Tene*  
*Totl Nooghee'o Denh*  
*Nen' Ts'ohoot'e Denh*  
*Hozeghe Kkaan' T'odegheelenh Denh*  
*Hozeghe Benkk'e*  
*Hozeghe Kkaan'*  
*Neenok'edeleh Denh*  
*Kk'o Dlele' / Kk'o Dlel*  
*Kk'o Dlel T'odegheelenh Denh*  
*Eltseeyh Kkaakk'e(t)*  
*Eltseeyhno'*  
*Eltseeyh Kkaakk'e Le'one, Elseeyh Doggu Le'one*  
*Sehne H̱yoze*  
*Tlaa Taal*  
*Dodzenbeetno'*  
*H̱kkughutne, H̱kkughunto'*  
*Todotekk'eyee*  
*Tlaakk'olneekk'e*  
*Neek'elehno'*  
*Ts'etl'uhdaal'o Denh*  
*H̱degge Hu*

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

One (peninsula) that is continually growing longer  
Fishnet place  
Pike lake  
Little portage  
Place from where we get sled wood (birch)  
Place where there used to be a cache; place where there used to be caches  
Outlet of Menkookk'e Lake  
Creek or slough where there are snowshoe frames hanging (to dry)  
Place where the river forks  
Slimy sculpin creek  
Fishnet float  
Creek of Saagedle' (big mountain) Mountain  
Mouth of Saagedleno'  
One that is heart (shaped)  
On the big lake  
Place to be wary of or avoid  
Portage trail  
Place where island (of timber and lake) lies across the river peninsula  
Place where the land is bad or haunted  
Hozeghe Kkaan' (hill) creek  
Tor lodge hill lake, Hozeghe Kkaan' (hill) lake  
Tor lodge  
Place where something (fish) stops (to spawn)  
Arrowhead mountain  
Place where current (creek) flows from the Kk'o Dlel mountain  
Mouth of Eltseeyhno'  
Ochre colored spruce river  
That which sits at the mouth of Eltseeyhno (John River) and that which sets over Eltseeyhno' (John River)  
Little creek  
Rock plateau, rock plain  
Common loon river  
Swift water river  
Mountain range between two rivers  
River through rocky mountains  
Something (salmon) stops (to spawn) river  
Place where grass lake extends out to the river  
Upper place

(listing continued on page 30)







# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE KOYUKUK  
RIVER ABOVE  
THE VILLAGE OF  
ALLAKAKET  
INCLUDING THE  
SOUTH FORK  
(CONTINUED)

<i>Taabeel Deegguye</i>	Mountain that is shaped like a fishnet float
<i>Dekenonul Yeet</i>	Lake within timbered area with bunches or clusters of branches
<i>Totl K'ezelghuyhtl Denh</i>	Place where we throw something (a stick) over the portage (across the narrow part of the river peninsula)
<i>Nohooltseen' Denh / Nohooltseenh Denh</i>	Place where the river is blocked with a weir (for fish)
<i>Detl Negge</i>	Behind the drift pile
<i>Notodenaalghwt Denh</i>	Place where the water is crescent shape
<i>Totleyhtl Ghee'o Denh</i>	Place where snare fence goes across the narrow strip of land between bodies of water
<i>Ts'ebaa Yeekk'e</i>	Creek or slough through timber
<i>Menkookk'ut, Menkookk'e</i>	On the big lake
<i>Toneets Ts'ebaa Le'onh Denh</i>	Place (lake) with spruce island
<i>Dekeloy Gheelenh Denh</i>	(Lake) that is the source of the stream through wooded area.
<i>Taah Le'on Hoolaanh Denh</i>	Place where there are rocks in the water
<i>Too Neeltl'ooh Denh</i>	Place where the water is clear
<i>Ggool Tsets Kk'aatl'one</i>	Cut bank covered with rhubarb
<i>Seeltoto'eel'o Denh</i>	Odd shaped body of water
<i>Yoolyeesge Bene'</i>	White-winged scoter lake
<i>Tl'enh Yel Tok'uhdenolnenh Denh</i>	Place where the river eroded with bones
<i>Hut'e Gheelenh Hu</i>	Creek that has water running into it from the hills
<i>Lookk'e Dek'et, Lookk'e Hene</i>	Fish river / Hardy fish creek
<i>Bek'elts'edle Yeet</i>	Lake with thick willow growth on it
<i>Tloge Hene / Tloge Neghutl</i>	Old river / old slough
<i>Neek'eleh Denh</i>	Place where something (fish) stops (to spawn)
<i>Neek'eleh Denh Hukk'e Dol'onee</i>	That (hill) which sets over Neek'eleh Denh
<i>Noon Kuhno'</i>	Big animal (bear) river, big porcupine river
<i>Taaghetekk'eyee</i>	That (mountain) between (rivers) waters
<i>Delt Daaldzaakk Denh</i>	Place where there is a drift pile, place where drift accumulated
<i>Neleghetluhdlee</i>	One that is continually eroding
<i>Benotneeyeno'</i>	Creek of the thing that says "benot" (fish meat), possibly a bird
<i>Lookk'e Dek'et De Hudokkaakk'e</i>	Mouth of Lookk'e Dek'et
<i>Menkk'e Hukuh</i>	Big lake
<i>Kk'uy K'ede' / Kk'uy K'ede' Yeet</i>	Strong tying willow lake
<i>Kkaalt'odle Yee Huyoze</i>	Little water lily lake
<i>Tlaaghenenhkk'e</i>	Rocks or bluffs along the course (of the creek)
<i>Hutaatlaa Denh/Hutotlaa Denh</i>	Place where rocks have chop marks, Place where rocks were roughly hewed
<i>Bentleedeneetonee</i>	That mountain which has a well worn trail over it
<i>Neenots'eeyhleyaayh Denh</i>	Place where canoes are customarily left under the big mountain
<i>Bents'eeyhdegheelgedee</i>	One (mountain) that has canoes rotting on it
<i>Ts'oo Gede Nelaanee</i>	One that is the tallest mountain peak (in the area)
<i>El Kenaayeh Hukuh</i>	Big area under spruce trees with boughs with a wide spread



~[ THE KOYUKUK RIVER ABOVE THE VILLAGE OF ALLAKAKET INCLUDING THE SOUTH FORK ]~  
(CONTINUED)





# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE ALATNA  
RIVER BETWEEN  
THE VILLAGE OF  
ALATNA AND  
HELPMEJACK  
CREEK

**KOYUKON NAME**

*Alatna (River)*  
*Benototl-'oye*  
*Hulde Yeet*  
*Dodzen Noh Denh*  
*Iivvagrueq*  
*Putuġrueq*  
*Qaluksiaġayuk*  
*Tupqurak*  
*Qaagliuraq, Siyaaq Cabin*  
*Aalaa Dlelet*  
*Qaaglitchiaq*  
*Tupiġrueq*  
*Argumisrugiksaaq*  
*Siigaaq/Alatna Tsaalaakkaakk'et*  
*Alatna Huk'emenkookk'ut, Alatna Huk'emenkookk'e*  
*Bekk'e Kets'oolaaye*  
*Napagiagruuralik*  
*Akilliġiik*  
*Argumusuk/Argumsuisaaq*  
*Paal/uk's Cabin*  
*Ts'ebaa Negge/Sivaanaqa*  
*Qatchallavik*  
*Aakuraiyaġvik*  
*Pituqqiq*  
*Quġluurat*  
*Ikiġġaġrualik*  
*Akiġrueq/Hulteeyee/Qulitigiik*  
*Iñukuq*

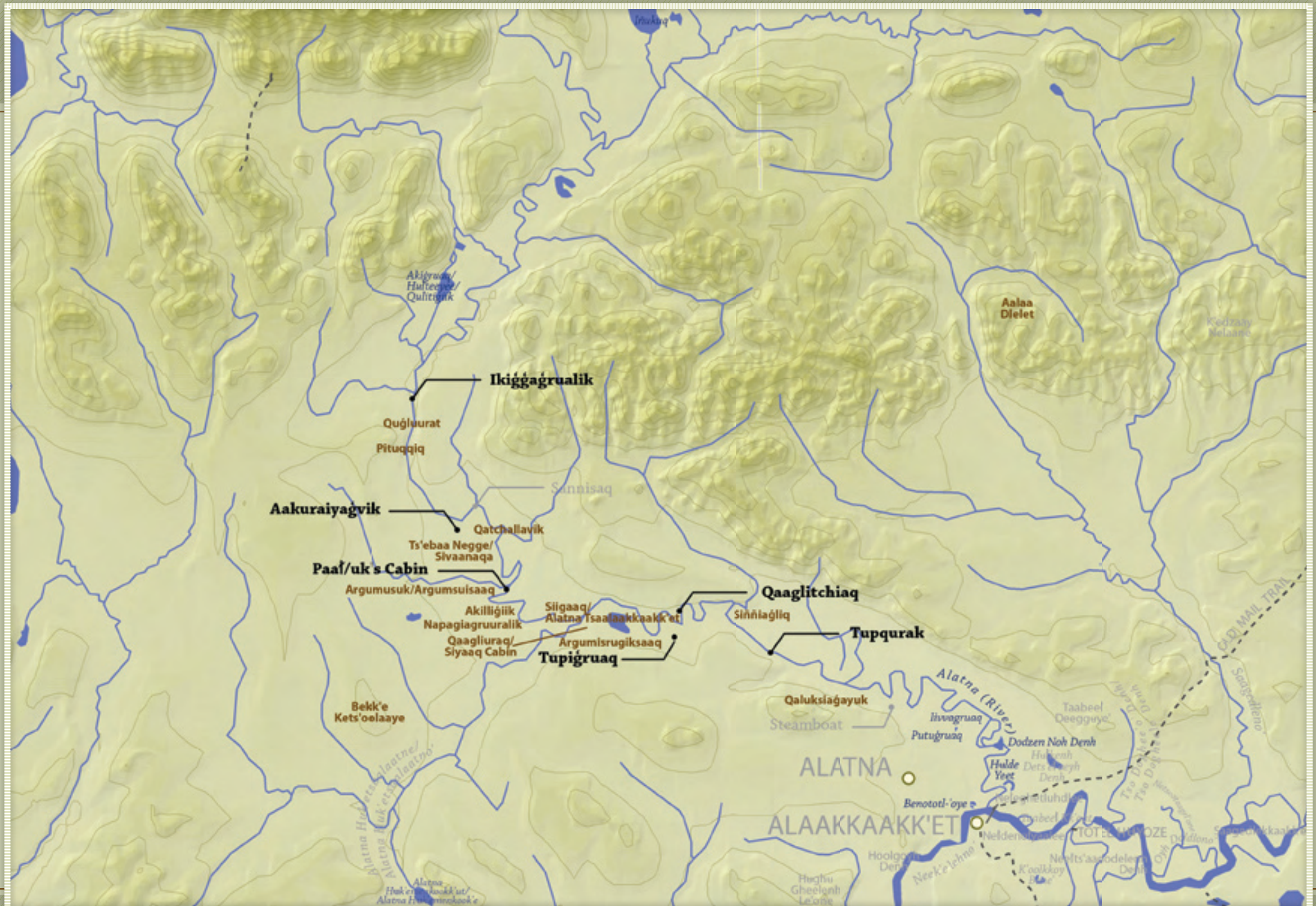
**ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

There are other people (Indians) on the 'river' + tne means river in Koyukon Athabaskan  
(Lake) surrounded by water  
Lake with standing spruce around it  
Common loon look out place  
Old bend  
To bore through (to cut through the bank)  
You'll catch fish or something  
Little house  
Little place to seine  
Alatna River hills  
Where you seine, New one  
Big old house  
Fine beach, upper end  
Young sheefish / Mouth at Alatna Tsaalaatna (creek)  
Big lake on Alatna River, Lake Menkookk'e on Alatna River  
(Hill) on which we trap something (martin)  
The name denotes something about posts or poles driven into the ground  
Across from each other  
Part of this name denotes traveling into or being exposed to the wind  
Poor door  
(Creek) behind the timber or timber all the way from the mountain to the river  
Place where people holler  
Place where Aakuraq taken away  
Path or trail  
Canyon  
Old cache  
It's a hook  
The name denotes something about a person



The steamer Luelle, which transported miners on the Koyukuk.







# The Middle Koyukuk River

## THE KANUTI RIVER

### KOYUKON NAME

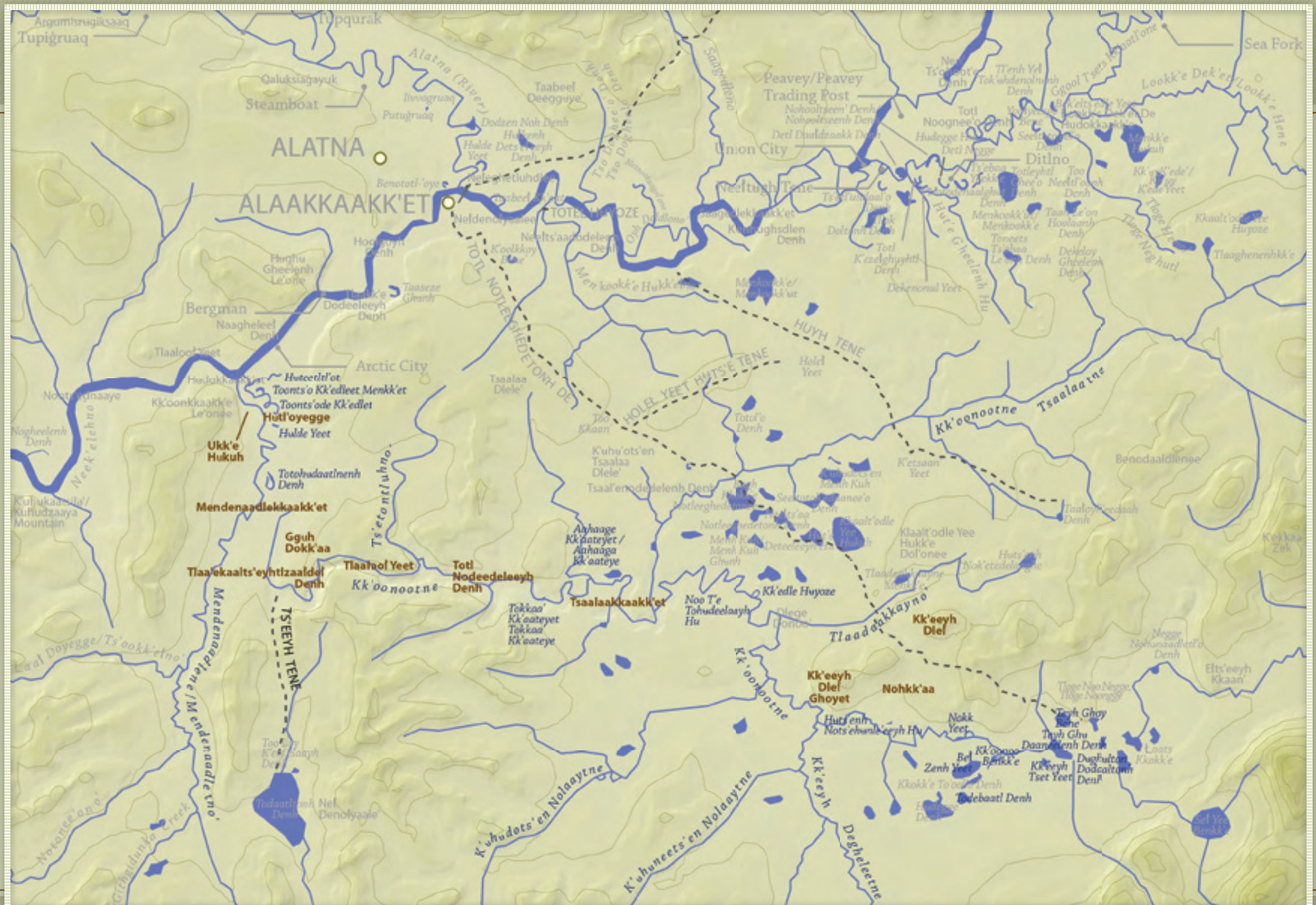
*Kk'oonootne*  
*Toonts'ode Kk'edlet*  
*Toonts'o Kk'edleet Menkk'et*  
*Huteetlil'ot*  
*Hutl'oyegge*  
*Ukk'e Hukuh*  
*Gguh Dokk'aa*  
*Mendenaadlekkaakk'et*  
*Mendenaadlene, Mendenaadletno'*  
*Totohudaatlneenh Denh*  
*Ts'eeyh Tene*  
*Tlaa'ekaalts'eyhtlaaldel Denh*  
*Tlaalool Yeet*  
*Ts'etontluhno'*  
*Totl Nodeedeleeeyh Denh*  
*Tokka' Kk'aateyet / Tokkaa' Kk'aateye*  
*Aahaage Kk'aateyet / Aahaaga Kk'aateye*  
*Kk'oonootne Tsaalaatne*  
*Tsaalaakkaakk'et*  
*Noo T'e Tohudeelaayh Hu*  
*Kk'edle Huyoze*  
*Tlaadaakkayno'*  
*K'uhudots'en Nolaaytne*  
*Kk'eeyh Dlel*  
*Kk'eeyh Dlel Ghoyet*  
*K'uhuneets'en Nolaaytne*  
*Kk'eeyh Degheleetne*  
*Huts'enh Nots'ehunle'eeyh Hu*  
*Nohkk'aa*  
*Kkokk'e To'ool'o Denh*  
*Bel Zenh Yeet*  
*Nokk Yeet*  
*Kk'oonoo Benkk'e*  
*Todebaatl Denh*  
*Kk'eeyh Tset Yeet*  
*Hudegge Denh*  
*Teyh Ghu Daaneelenh Denh*  
*Teyh Ghoy Bene'*  
*Dughulton Dodaaltonh Denh*

### ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Kanuti River/ Oldman River/ Well-traveled river by both man and animals, fish roe river  
Sucker fish creek  
Sucker fish creek lake  
Memorial ceremony creek  
Fishtrap opening  
Big eddy  
Rabbit habitat  
Mouth of Mendenaadlene  
Creek with lots of lakes along its course  
Lake brought close to the river by erosion  
Canoe (packing) trail  
Place where we travel close to the bluff in boats  
In the throat of rocks or canyon  
River with eroding banks  
Place where the current runs across country, river peninsula (during high water)  
Habitat of red-necked grebe, Red-necked grebe lake  
Habitat of old squaw / Old squaw lake  
Kanuti - Meaning of tsaalaa uncertain + tna "river, creek," Tsaalaa Dlele' Mountain Creek  
Mouth of Tsaalaatne'  
Area where drift accumulates behind the river peninsula  
Little creek  
Deep creek through rocky mountain  
Lower Nolaaytne (nolaay - fish, tne - creek)  
Birch mountain  
Point of Kk'eeyh Dlel (Birch Mountain)  
Upper Nolaaytne (nolaay - fish, tne - creek)  
Birch river  
From where we occasionally look over the country  
Look out place  
Linear or long lake  
Lake with high banks and black spruce around it  
Mud lake  
Kk'oonootne Lake  
Round lake  
Dry birch lake  
Upper place (lake)  
Place where the current flows through the hill  
Lake at the point of the hill  
Place where a (meat or fish) drying pole is up

(listing continued on page 36)







# The Middle Koyukuk River

## THE KANUTI RIVER (CONTINUED)



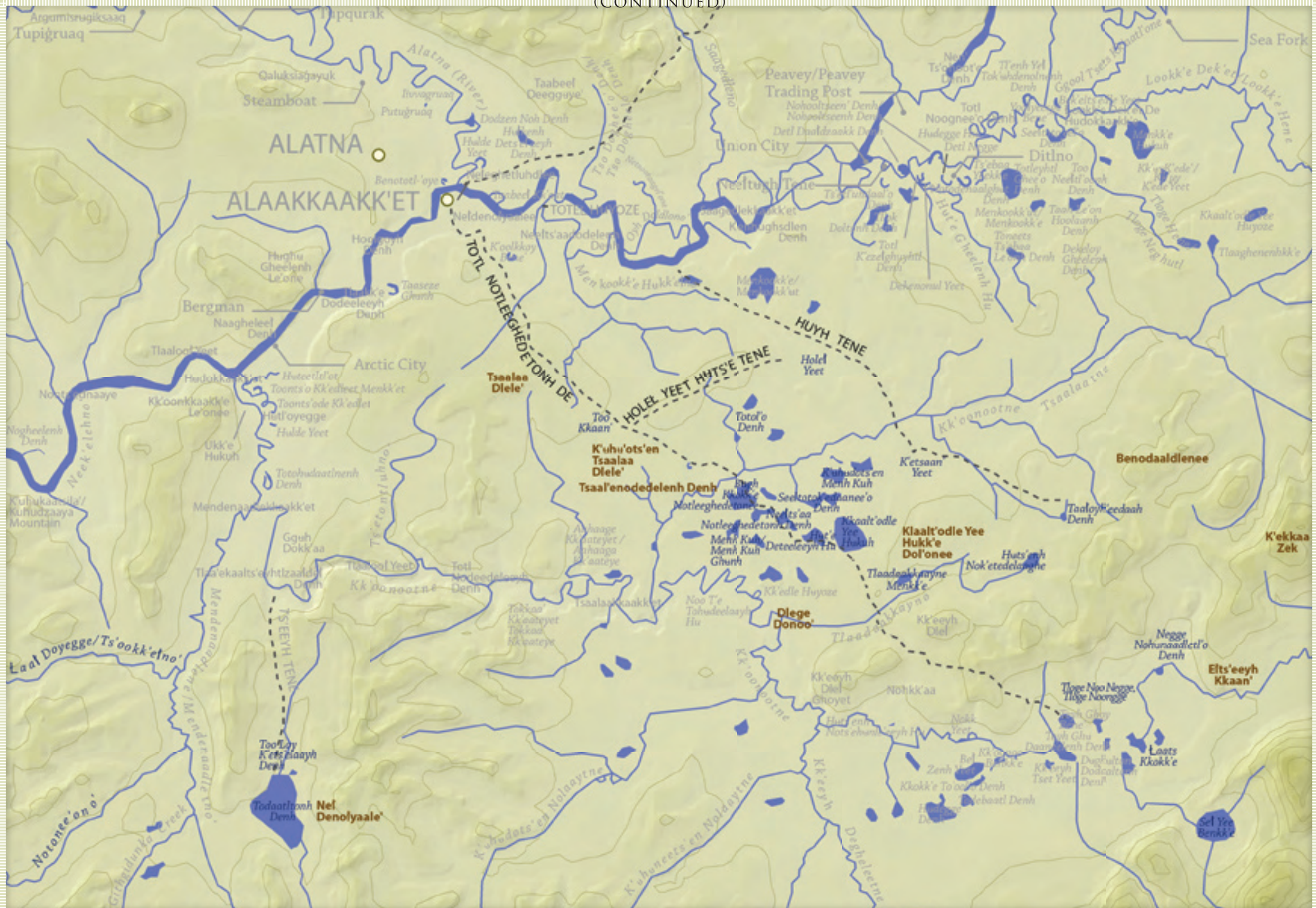
**Porcupine**  
*Erethizon dorsatum*

*Laats Kkokk'e*  
*Negge Nohunaadletl'o Denh*  
*Tloge Noo Negge, Tloge Noongge*  
*Benodaaldlenee*  
*Elts'eeyh Kkaan'*  
*K'ekkaa Zek*  
*Sel Yee Benkk'e*  
*Holel Yeet*  
*Hudegge Denh*  
*Notonee'ono'*  
*Eaal Doyegge/Ts'ookk'elno'*  
*Too Loy K'ets'elaayh Denh*  
*Todaatltonh Denh*  
*Nel Denolyaale'*  
*Totl Notleeghedetoh Denh*  
*Holel Yeet Huts'e Tene*  
*Huyh Tene*  
*Dlege Donoo'*  
*Tsaalaa Dlele'*  
*Totol'o Denh*  
*Too Kkaan'*  
*K'uhu'ots'en Tsaalaa Dlele'*  
*Tsaal'enodedelenh Denh*  
*Taaloyh'eedaah Denh*  
*Huts'enh Nok'etedelaaghe*  
*Klaalt'odle Yee Hukk'e Dol'onee*  
*Tlaadaakkaayne Menkk'e*  
*Bugh Kkokk'e Notleeghedetonee*  
*Neelts'aanotleeghedetoh Denh*  
*Menh Kuh/ Menh Kuh Ghunh*  
*Hut'e Deteleeeyh Hu*  
*Kkaalt'odle Yee Hukuh*  
*Seeltotok'edaanee'o Denh*  
*K'uhudots'en Menh Kuh*  
*K'etsaan' Yeet*  
*Hulde Yeet*

Sand bar lakes  
Place where the lakes extend back into the hills or valley  
Old slough  
One (mountain) with current flowing all around it or current on both sides of it  
Wind lodge  
Body of animal tracks  
Lake in the mountain, mountain lake  
Floating moss lakes  
Upper place (lake)  
Water that extends across (country) creek  
Entranceway to sod house or underground house, Tunnel, Mountain creek  
Place where we come to water carrying things (canoes)  
Place where there is a big body of water in the hill  
One that is continually growing outward  
Over land trail  
Trail to Holel Yeet (lake)  
Winter trail  
Squirrel hill  
Uncertain mountain  
Place where there are a line of lakes  
Water lodge  
Outer Tsaalaa Dlele' Mountain  
Place where the current flows against the Outer Tsaalaa Dlele' Bluff  
Place where gravel hill erodes in the water (lake)  
Place from where fish start their run (downstream)  
Hill over Kkaalt'odle Yeet Hukuh Lake  
Tlaadaakkaayno' (Creek) Lake, place from where fish starts its run downstream  
Ones (lakes) that has the trail on them  
Place where the trail forks  
Big lake, at the big lake  
Area that turns to stream now and then  
Big water lily lake  
Place where the water extends on and on  
Lower big lake  
Grass lakes  
Dry spruce lake, dead standing spruce lake



(CONTINUED.)





# The Middle Koyukuk River

## Traditional and Contemporary Knowledge of Fish

The maps and information presented on the following page were developed during interviews with the fishers of Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket. This interview project began in 2004 when the YRDFA board held its annual meeting in the Allakaket community hall. The

board asked the communities of Allakaket and Alatna to share their concerns about the fisheries. Residents asked the YRDFA board to focus on salmon in the Koyukuk River. The interview project developed because Eliza Jones

and Larry Edwards asked YRDFA to come and interview the Elders about changes they've observed in salmon and salmon spawning grounds during their lifetimes.

Through the years, salmon spawning grounds and fishing sites on the Koyukuk River and its tributaries have changed. Some years there are many salmon and some years there are few. Community members are concerned about decreased productivity in their salmon spawning grounds and wonder how many spawning areas exist. Although salmon in the Koyukuk River are not as abundant as in the Yukon River, they are important in the culture and as a subsistence resource (Clark 1974). The main goal of the project was to identify the habitat used by salmon and other subsistence fish species at different stages of their lifecycle through interviews and site reconnaissance in the Koyukuk River drainage.

In July of 2005, 17 knowledgeable elders and active fishers of Hughes, Alatna and Allakaket were interviewed about places they have seen salmon and other fish in their lifetimes (see summary chart on page 14). This information was mapped and recorded.

Interview discussions revealed that salmon, in general, are smaller today and that salmon numbers have fluctuated through time. On all the rivers discussed, participants experienced low salmon abundance in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The community fish experts told interviewers that the numbers of small



**Above:** Bertha and Johnson Moses display a good day's catch, late 1960s.

**Right:** Fish box.





# Fishing Spots

whitefish and salmon fry are lower today than they were in the 1940s and 1950s.

Participants said that there is less water today and that creeks and lakes are drying up. Water levels affect how far one can travel up rivers such as the South Fork of the Koyukuk River. The waters in the Koyukuk River and the South Fork of the Koyukuk River were described as having changed color. Interview participants in 2005 recalled that the rivers used to be clearer and described the current river water as silty or brown. Eddies in the rivers have changed, causing fishing sites to change. One area that was fished extensively in the past, but whose use had been abandoned, is the mouth of the South Fork of the Koyukuk River.

In 2006, YRDFA staff returned to the Koyukuk River to share draft interview results with the communities of Allakaket and Alatna. The information included locations of salmon and other subsistence fish species that interview participants had observed during their lifetimes. Community members who attended the meetings offered comments, corrections and new information about locations of subsistence fish species.

In these community meetings, YRDFA learned that Chinook (king) salmon spawn in the rock bottom area above Helpmejack Creek, farther up the Alatna River than had been understood from the 2005 interviews, and that they also spawn 4 to 5 miles above the weir on Henshaw Creek. New information was also learned about pike in the lakes around Union City on the South Fork of the Koyukuk River and in Dosennaughten Lake, grayling in Oldman (Kanuti) River, cisco in the Koyukuk River across from Allakaket and blackfish in areas around the South Fork of the Koyukuk River.

Other new input pointed out that long nose suckers and burbot (loche) are found all over, not just in the few areas that had been listed in the draft results. In both Allakaket and Alatna, meeting participants explained how sheefish gather just upstream of Chebanika Creek prior to spawning.

Following the meetings, Harding Sam, an Alatna fisherman, guided YRDFA biologist Mike McDougall 240 miles up the Alatna River to see the sites discussed in the interviews. Together they took pictures and recorded global positioning system (GPS) coordinates of Helpmejack Creek, the mouth of Chebanika Creek, Putu's Bar, Sinyalak (Sinniagliq) fish camp, Blackjack, Steamboat and Putugruaq or Buzodoc Slough, as well as other sites along the Alatna River. Mr. Sam and Mr. McDougall also documented fish by catching them in beach seines and by visually surveying the side channels or streams. Species documented on this trip include slimy and coastrange sculpin, juvenile pike, arctic grayling, arctic char and chum salmon. Most notably, Mr. Sam and Mr. McDougall documented rearing juvenile arctic char. They also saw grayling in various life stages and many adult chum salmon.



Beaver  
*Castor canadensis*



# The Middle Koyukuk River

## THE KOYUKUK RIVER BELOW THE VILLAGE OF HUGHES

NAME ( <i>Koyukon Name</i> )	COMMENTS	SPECIES
Simon fishing area	Pollock Simon, Sr. would seine this area for sheefish in August.	Sheefish
6-mile fish camp	The family of Rita Koyukuk and Bill Williams built this fish camp in the 1950s, just upstream of their other camp. First fish camp that Ella Sam remembers. She stayed here for years and they had their nets just downriver. Alice Ambrose's mother moved them to Hughes around 1932 and this was their fish camp.	Juvenile fish
Rita Koyukuk, Henry Beatus fish camp	Rita Koyukuk used this fish camp until 1949. Henry Beatus used this fish camp in 2005. Medium-sized whitefish found here. In nearby streams, Henry Beatus found pike and grayling.	Whitefish, grayling, pike and juvenile fish
Pocahontas Creek	Henry Beatus fishes here. This was his great grandmother's camp. Bill Williams also used to fish here in the fall.	Grayling and spawning salmon
Rock Island Point	Rita Koyukuk and Bill Williams fished here as children with their mother and grandmother (late 1930s-1940s). The quantity of chum salmon varied by year. Harvests ranged from 5 to 100 fish per day, depending on the year.	Chinook and chum salmon, sheefish, whitefish, and juvenile fish
Indian River dog (chum) salmon spawning area	Henry Beatus' grandfather told him that chum salmon spawn before reaching the canyon. Bill Williams is also aware of salmon spawning here.	Spawning chum salmon
Batza Creek ( <i>Batza Creek</i> )	Pollock Simon's father used to take him up this river. They would set a fishnet in August at mouth and would seine for juvenile whitefish.	Spawning chum salmon and whitefish
12-mile fish camp	Pollock Simon's mother's fish camp was here but washed away in a slide. Second fish camp that Ella Sam remembers. This was her Grandpa Lee Simon and Grandma Sarah's fish camp. There is a bluff here, which is a good fishing spot. Site also has lots of berries. Bill Williams used to fish here in the fall.	Chinook salmon and spawning salmon
Williams family fish camp	Bill Williams fished here as a child. This was his family's late summer fish camp. He and his wife (Madeline) used this fish camp in 2005.	
Little Indian River	Bill Williams used to fish here in the fall.	Spawning salmon
Matthews Slough	Maggie Williams' fish camp. A place where Rita Koyukuk saw lots of dead and spawning chum salmon. In July 2005, Henry Beatus said best fishing was here.	
25-mile cabins	Bill Williams saw fish here in fall when he was younger.	Pike and whitefish
Bill Williams spring camp	Bill Williams' spring fish camp.	
Blackfish lakes	Group of lakes where Rita Koyukuk's parents set blackfish traps while beaver trapping. Blackfish in the lakes make the ice thin in the spring.	Blackfish
Bill Williams spring camp	Another of Bill Williams' spring fish camps.	
Fish Creek	Another of Bill Williams' spring fish camps.	Whitefish







# The Middle Koyukuk River

## THE KOYUKUK RIVER BETWEEN THE VILLAGES OF HUGHES AND ALLAKAKET

NAME ( <i>Koyukon Name</i> )	COMMENTS	SPECIES
William fishing area	Area where Pollock Simon, Sr. fished with William and Efe William.	
Lake Creek	Martha Oldman's birthplace and Donald Bergman's fish camp. Sandbars have caused fish camp to move from north to south side. Good berry picking here.	
Donald Bergman fishing site	Donald Bergman set nets in spring.	Longnosed suckers and pike
Bergman Fish camp	Donald Bergman's grandparents' fish camp on island. Lindberg Bergman grew up here and fished until he got married.	Whitefish and sheefish
Kanuti River Fish trap site	Site where Johnson Moses used to dam river and catch fish in fish trap.	
Kitty and David David's fish camp ( <i>Nonts'ednaaye</i> )	Bertha Moses used to fish here with her kids, dogs, and Kitty David in early and mid 1960s. Harvested chum salmon in Bertha's eddy and Chinook in Kitty's eddy.	Chinook and chum salmon and whitefish
Henry Beatus' first fish camp	Henry Beatus fished here prior to being married. Used to be a good camp.	
Martha Oldman's fish camp	Martha Oldman learned to fish here.	Chum salmon, sheefish, and whitefish
Henry Beatus' fish camp	Henry Beatus first fish camp. Chum salmon not plentiful until 1946-1947.	Chum salmon
Oldman loche (burbot) fish camp	Martha Oldman's family set burbot trap here in December.	Loche
Huntington Creek Mouth	Bill Williams used to fish here in the fall. Lester Sam saw juvenile fish here in fall of 2005 while seining.	Juvenile fish
Koyukuk River fishing	Area where Pollock Simon, Sr. used to seine for sheefish in August.	Sheefish
Martha Oldman's second fish camp	Martha Oldman stayed on island and fished here with her husband Abraham.	
Grayling Lake ( <i>Tleghelboay Benkk'et</i> )	There were more grayling in lake when Martha Oldman was younger.	Grayling
Hughes Creek mouth	There were lots of grayling and juvenile salmon when Martha Oldman was younger.	Grayling and salmon
Hughes Creek	Bill Williams saw salmon spawning here.	Spawning salmon
Fish camp	Martha Oldman fished here with kids.	Whitefish, sheefish, and chum salmon
Koyukuk River at Hughes	Lester Sam seined at end of airstrip in Hughes on Koyukuk River (2005).	
Simon fishing area	Pollock Simon, Sr. would seine in this area for sheefish in August.	Sheefish





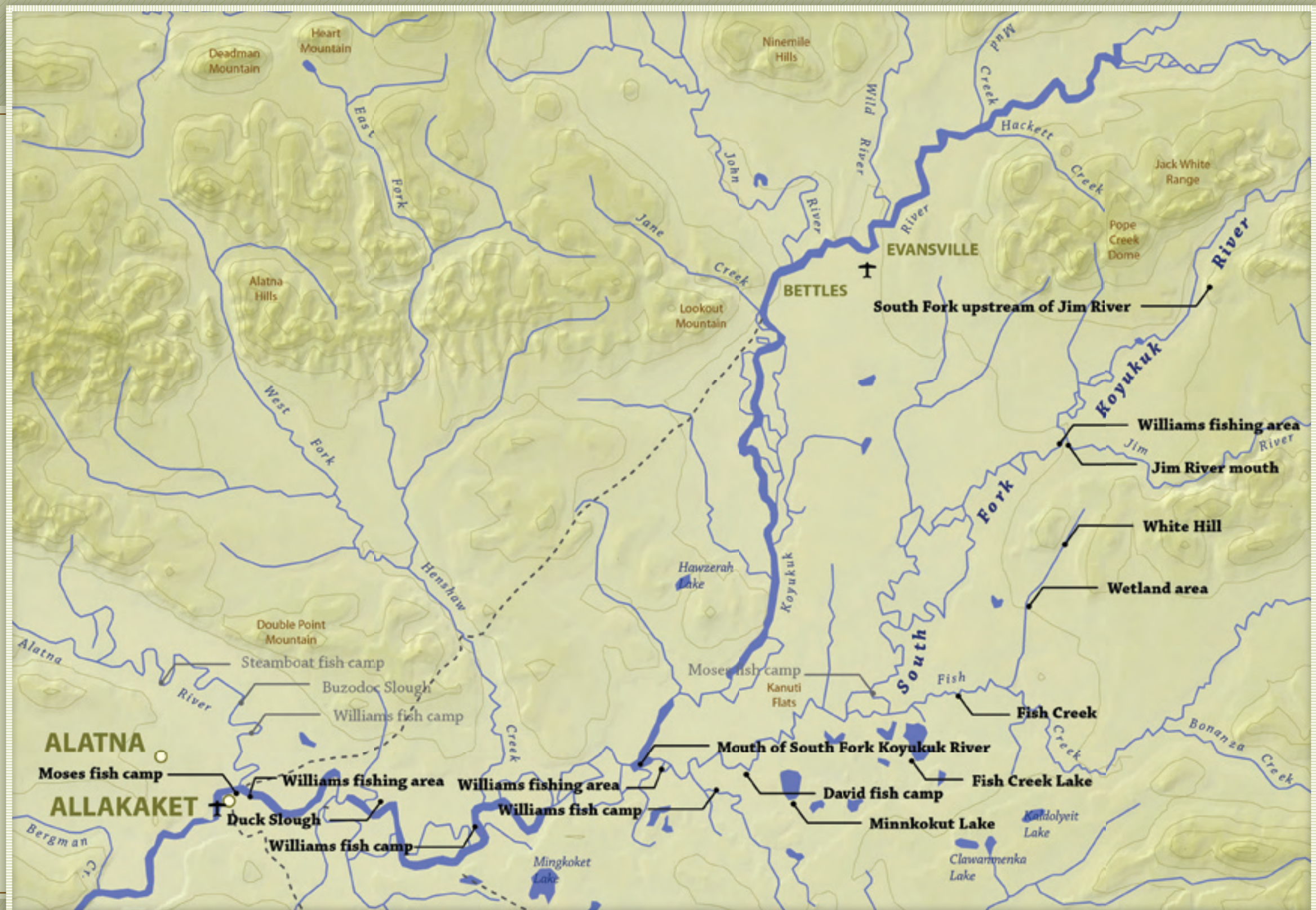


# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE  
KOYUKUK RIVER  
ABOVE  
THE VILLAGE OF  
ALLAKAKET  
INCLUDING THE  
SOUTH FORK

NAME ( <i>Koyukon Name</i> )	COMMENTS	SPECIES
Moses fish camp	Johnson Moses used to dam river to catch fish in fish traps here.	
Mouth of South Fork Koyukuk River	Julia Williams Simon and Edison Williams' family set fish trap here when they were children. Where David David stayed with his family as a child (5 cabins with 4 other families).	
(Edison) Williams fishing area	Edison Williams fished here when he got back to Allakaket after working at a mining company in 1966.	
(Edison) Williams fish camp	Edison Williams set fish trap 1958-59.	Chinook and chum salmon
David fish camp ( <i>Nohooltseen' Denh, Nohooltseenh Denh:</i> )	Site where David David's family set a fish trap with the help of 4 other families camped in this area when he was a child.	
Minnkokut Lake	David David was born here May 2, 1932, while his parents were traveling to spring camp.	
Fish Creek Lake ( <i>Menkk'e Hukuk</i> )	Two old women were left here by their people for the winter.	Juvenile fish
Fish Counting Weir	Donald Bergman worked here.	
Fish Creek ( <i>Lookk'e Dek'et Hene</i> )	Edison Williams saw salmon spawning here.	
Wetland area	Where salmon go up to spawn.	Chinook and chum salmon
Jim River mouth ( <i>Neek'eleh Denh</i> )	Where Johnson Moses grew up with Big William. Edison Williams saw salmon spawning.	Grayling, pike, and spawning salmon
White Hill	Lydia and Lindberg Bergman went upstream almost to salmon spawning site.	Salmon
(Edison) Williams fishing	Edison Williams saw salmon and got winter food supply here when he was a child.	Salmon





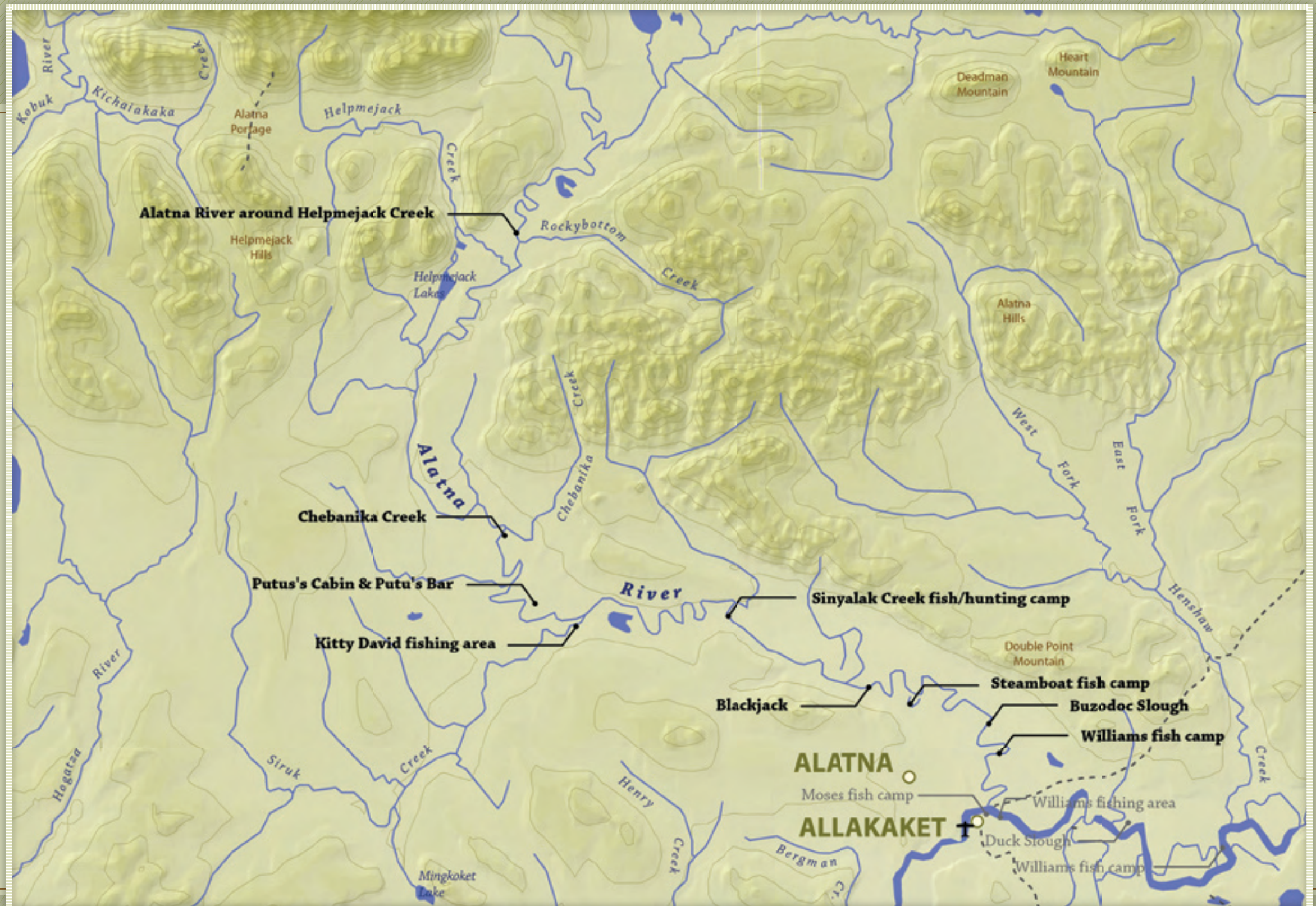


# The Middle Koyukuk River

THE  
ALATNA RIVER  
BETWEEN THE  
VILLAGE OF  
ALATNA AND  
HELPMEJACK  
CREEK

NAME ( <i>Koyukon Name</i> )	COMMENTS	SPECIES
Williams fish camp	Edison Williams fished here.	Sheefish
Buzodoc Slough ( <i>Putugruaq</i> )	Kitty David used this site for a fish camp. It was good for catching fish all year. The wind kept snow cover light here in the winter so it thawed out and the plants came up early in the spring. Old Ned used this area as a summer camp, and Tuvaaq and Napoleon used to have cabins here, but their sites have now caved in.	Juvenile salmon, young broad whitefish, and humpback and other whitefish
Steamboat fish camp	Bertha Moses grew up here at her paternal grandparents' fish camp. There is a steamboat sunk in the ground here.	Chum salmon and whitefish
Blackjack	Lester Sam grew up fishing in this area, which was also used by Oscar Nictune's parents. There were not many salmon here when Lester was a child.	Chum salmon and whitefish
Sinyalak Creek fish/hunting camp ( <i>Sinniagliq</i> )	Bertha Moses went here as a child with her mother. There were lots of salmon in her grandmother's time. Lester Sam also went here as a child.	Spawning salmon and whitefish
Kitty David fishing area ( <i>Qaaqliuraq, Siyaaq cabin</i> )	Kitty David seined for salmon in this fishing place with a double eddy.	Salmon and spawning sheefish
Putu's Bar/ Putu's cabin	A portage ran from here to Uluqa's cabin.	Spawning sheefish in September
Chebanika Creek ( <i>Ts'daa Negge</i> )	Bertha Moses' whitefish camp.	Whitefish, pike, suckers, and grayling
Alatna River around Helpmejack Creek	Johnson Moses described this as a spawning area.	Chinook and chum salmon







# The Middle Koyukuk River

## THE KANUTI RIVER

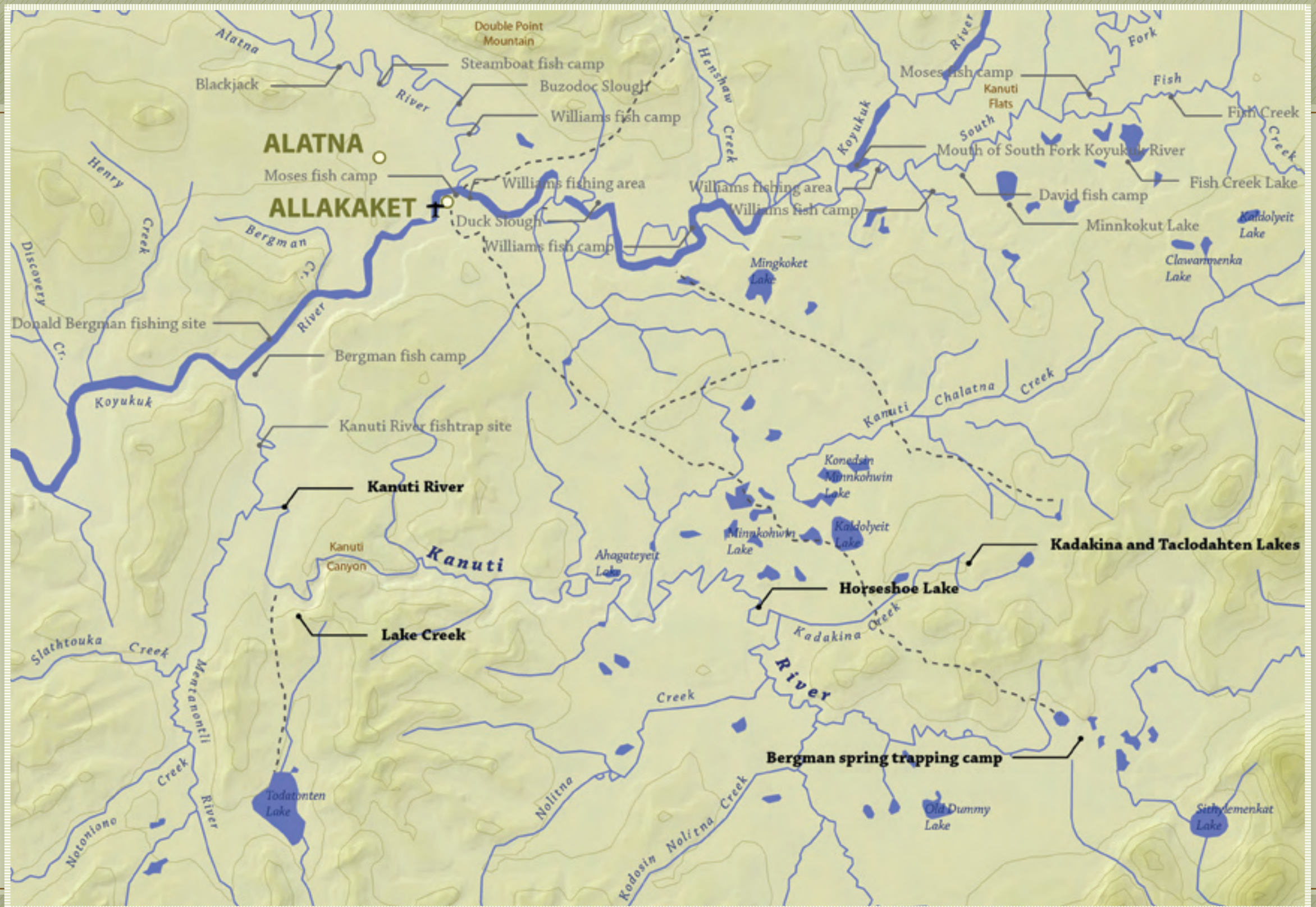
NAME	COMMENTS	SPECIES
Kanuti River	Donald Bergman sets fish traps here.	Whitefish, broad whitefish, humpback and cisco
Lake Creek	Bertha and Johnson Moses set fish traps with Johnson's father in 1948 and 1951.	Small whitefish
Horseshoe Lake	Donald Bergman's fish camp.	Blackfish
Kadakina and Taclohahten Lakes		Pike, blackfish
Bergman spring trapping camp	No fish observed during spring trapping.	



Moose  
*Alces alces*



❧ [ THE KANUTI RIVER ] ❧







# Eliza Jones

PRIMARY RESEARCHER OF NATIVE PLACE NAMES

Eliza Jones recorded the place name information included in this atlas through interviews with Koyukon Athabascan speakers along the Koyukuk River. The interviews took place in the mid-1990s, and the results have not been previously published. Her work is very important because of the connections between culture and language. The Kanuti Wildlife Refuge is using the place name data to produce maps with locally recognizable place names. As Janet Bifelt of Hughes described, “This is a great thing because my son goes out hunting with his grandparents and he knows all the places by their local name.”

Ms. Jones has been working with the Koyukon Athabascan language for many years. She began by assisting Wycliffe Bible translators in Koyukuk as a language consultant and later worked with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). At the Alaska Native Language Center she worked with Jules Jette’s unpublished dictionary of Koyukon Athabascan.

Ms. Jones also teaches Koyukon language classes and cross-cultural communication. She continues her research on Native place names and genealogy and collaborations such as the effort to develop this atlas. She retired from UAF in 1990 and was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of her accomplishments and years of service to both UAF and her language.

Ms. Jones grew up in the village of Cutoff. This community moved to its present location and was renamed Huslia in the 1950s, during the period when the traditional subsistence-based lifestyle was changing. Her family followed the annual subsistence cycle of activities based on available resources. Ms. Jones married Benedict Jones in 1959 and moved to his village of Koyukuk, where she resides today.

The contribution of Ms. Jones to this project was essential. She was one of the people who encouraged YRDFA to conduct interviews with fishers to capture

place names and changes in salmon habitat. Ms. Jones accompanied YRDFA staff to Allakaket, made important introductions and guided project staff in local etiquette.



Catherine Moncrieff

David David and Eliza Jones at fish camp on the Koyukuk River.







# Bibliography

Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs

2008a Community Database Online—Alatna. Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Available online at [http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF\\_BLOCK.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.cfm) (October 2008).

2008b Community Database Online—Allakaket. Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Available online at [http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF\\_BLOCK.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.cfm) (October 2008).

2008c Community Database Online—Hughes. Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Available online at [http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF\\_BLOCK.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.cfm) (October 2008).

Alton, Thomas L.

2000 Eliza Jones, a Biography. *In* Koyukon Athabaskan Dictionary. J. Kari, ed. p. xlv. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Andersen, David B., Caroline E. Brown, Robert J. Walker, and Kimberly Elkin

2004 Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Contemporary Subsistence Harvest of Non-Salmon Fish in the Koyukuk River Drainage, Alaska. Anchorage: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Research North, Tanana Chiefs Conference.

Burch, Ernest S. Jr

1981 Kotzebue Sound Eskimo. *In* Handbook of North American Indians. Vol 5: Arctic. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute.

Clark, Annette McFadyen

1974 Koyukuk River Culture. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.

1981 Koyukon. *In* Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 6. pp. 582-601. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute.

Dissler, Kathleen

1979 An Ethnohistory of the Koyukuk Drainage Region, with Emphasis on River Usage. Anchorage: Alaska Department of Natural Resource, Division of Research and Development.

Henning, Robert A.

1983 Up the Koyukuk. *In* Alaska Geographic. Vol. 10. Edmunds, WA: The Alaska Geographic Society.

Kari, James

2000 The Athabaskan Language Family and the Koyukon Language Area. *In* Koyukon Athabaskan Dictionary. J. Kari, ed. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Fairbanks.



Krauss, Michael E.  
1980 Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present and Future.  
Fairbanks: University of Alaska.

Krauss, Michael E., and Mary Jane McGary  
1980 Alaska Native Languages: A Bibliographical  
Catalogue. Part One: Indian Languages. Fairbanks: Alaska  
Native Language Center.

Loyens, William J.  
1966 The Changing Culture of the Nulato Koyukon  
Indians. Ph.D dissertation. University of Wisconsin.

Moncrieff, Catherine F.  
2008 Koyukuk Fish Investigations, Parts I and II.  
*In* National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Final Report. Anchorage: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries  
Association.

Moses, Johnson, Oscar Nictune, Lee Simon, Susie Williams,  
William William, Moses Henzie, Henry William, Alice  
Ambrose, Lavine Williams, Joe Beetus, and other Native  
Elders from Allakaket, Alatna and Hughes.  
1997 Allakaket-Alatna Area Placenames. E. Jones, ed.  
Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center. Unpublished  
document.

Nelson, Richard K., Kathleen H. Mautner, and G. Ray Bane  
1978 Tracks in the Wildland: A Portrayal of Koyukon  
and Nunamiut Subsistence. Fairbanks: University of Alaska.

Phillips, Carol A., *ed.*  
1995 A Century of Faith: Centennial Commemorative,  
1895–1995, Episcopal Diocese of Alaska. Fairbanks:  
Centennial Press.



# Map Index

Reference Map for the Koyukuk River .....	(vi)
The Koyukuk River Drainage .....	3
Landcover of the Koyukuk River Drainage .....	4
Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska.....	10
Detail of the Koyukuk River Drainage .....	22

## TRADITIONAL PLACE NAMES MAPS

The Koyukuk River Below the Village of Hughes .....	25
The Koyukuk River Between the Villages of Hughes and Allakaket.....	27
The Koyukuk River Above the Village of Allakaket Including the South Fork .....	29
The Alatna River Between the Village of Alatna and Helpmejack Creek.....	33
The Kanuti River .....	35

## TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE OF FISH MAPS

The Koyukuk River Below the Village of Hughes .....	41
The Koyukuk River Between the Villages of Hughes and Allakaket.....	43
The Koyukuk River Above the Village of Allakaket Including the South Fork .....	45
The Alatna River Between the Village of Alatna and Helpmejack Creek.....	47
The Kanuti River .....	49



