

Acknowledging Landscape:
Walking Paths Towards
Indigenous Urbanism

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Abstract

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In North America, all cities have beneath them Indigenous land and are set within Indigenous landscapes, and yet this connection is rarely explicit in the physical environment. Much of urban development has been constructed as part of the settler colonial project that has sought to replace Indigenous land tenure through destruction of Indigenous lifeways on the landscape, in order to build something new as settler colonialism has always destroyed to replace (Wolfe 2006). But the lands on which cities reside continue to remain Indigenous lands so long as Indigenous people continue to relate to them. Landscape architecture as a field and discipline works with the land as its medium, and yet the discipline has yet to truly acknowledge the implications of Indigenous tenure on the lands on which they work and shape in North America, and have failed to examine the discipline's role in the settler colonial project. As a student of landscape architecture and an Indigenous person, I have sought to first situate myself in the lands I live in as a visitor as a first step in acknowledgement of Indigenous lands and people of Dgheyey Kaq' as a means to interrupt the dominant narratives of the history of our cities. In doing so, I have attempted to get to know the city through a different lens and through embodied experience by walking three of its urban streams that were important to Dena'ina peoples who shaped and named this landscape. Walking through ancient pathways through a contemporary city revealed opportunities for an already emergent Indigenous identity to grow into an Indigenous urbanism that could help shape how people see and live in the city and give an Indigenous voice to the narrative of the city as a place.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Critical Stance	1
Chapter 2 – Acknowledging Landscape	4
Indigenous Land Acknowledgements	
Land(scape) Acknowledgements	
North American Landscape Concepts	
Situated among relatives	
Indigenous Land Management, Knowledge and Ecological Theory	
Chapter 3 – Settler Colonialism and the Landscape	12
Indigenous Urbanism	
Chapter 4 – Dena’ina Ełnena Background and Context.	16
This is Dena’ina Ełnena	
Dena’ina Seasonal Round	
Orientation System	
Dena’ina Sukdu and “Pre-History”	
Dena’ina in the Archeological Record	
Dena’ina – After the Whites	
Russian Influence	
The US Purchase of Alaska	
At Dgheyay Kaq’	
Dgheyay Kaq’ - Anchorage	
Alaska Land Claims	
Chapter 5 – Walking and Orienting in Dgheyay Kaq’	28
Ch’atanaltsegh	
Chanshtnu (Grass Creek, Chester Creek)	
Qin Cheghitnu	
Chapter 6 – Looking Forward	50
Ch’atanaltsegh – Łikaqa Betnu	
Chanshtnu	
Qin Cheghitnu	
Chapter 7 – Reflections	58
Bibliography	62

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Critical Stance

All lands in North America are Indigenous lands. The United States and Canada are settler colonial states that have appropriated their lands by removal and separation of Indigenous peoples through multiple methods, in order to secure uncontested tenure on the land. The stolen lands provide the natural resources that, in combination with stolen Black and Brown bodies, have generated wealth for a privileged few and in combination with external imperialism, have made the United States and Canada leading world powers.

The Indigeneity of lands extends to the Indigeneity of landscapes in North America, and is an unseverable fact of the existence of landscape and Indigenous people who have survived over 500 years of attempted removal. These truths have been obscured by dominant historical narratives, including those that contribute to the discipline of landscape. Landscape architecture has been an agent of the settler colonial state, in many instances destroying Indigenous relationship to land in order to build the settler state and its identity-laden landscapes. Through survival and resistance, Indigenous, Black and People of Color are reminding us of our troubled past, and demanding work be done to reveal histories and break down the damaging structure of settler colonialism.

Landscape Acknowledgement could be a first step towards breaking the discipline away from settler colonial motivations, and requires individuals and institutions to radically interrogate and situate themselves to the landscapes in which they live, practice and teach. Landscape acknowledgement can begin at any level and requires deep consideration of Indigeneity, landscape processes, nonhuman others, relationality and responsibility and how the discipline has contributed to unjust and unsustainable structures expressed by built environment that continues to design us back (Escobar 2018).

I use my experience and consider my own Native American identity while living on the lands of the Dena'ina as a case study on one person's attempt to situate themselves on the lands they grew up in and continue to reside in, but are not Indigenous to, as a settler of sorts. Dgheyay Kaq' is a city, more widely known as Anchorage, in southcentral Alaska. Dgheyay Kaq' is on the homelands of the Dena'ina people, who have cultured and maintained these lands for at least the last 1500 years, according to their own history, written on the tongue for generations. This landscape emerged after multiple glaciations that covered what is now the surface of Anchorage, finally retreated, and the Dena'ina people have been on these lands for as long as these lands would resemble what they look like today. The Dena'ina people and the land are inseparable for as long as Dena'ina hold relationship with the land, no matter any degree of urbanization or settler colonialism. I live on these lands and grew up here, my mind has been invisibly and unknowing to me, shaped by these lands as well.

Critical Stance – Indigenous land occupation and tenure must be acknowledged and incorporated into landscape thinking, process and design. Acknowledging Indigenous stewardship and tenure as a prior condition, at all levels, from the individual to the project to the institution, can help the relationship of landscape architecture to Indigenous landscapes by considering a broader perspective of world making, beyond the Eurocentric that has heretofore been its basis. Indigenous land acknowledgement can lead to Indigenous urbanism, by making access to the production of urban space available to sovereign Indigenous communities and by urban Indigenous peoples everywhere, to limit the damaging effects of settler colonial landscapes on Indigenous, Black and People of Color.

This thesis has been structured to provide background and literature reviews on relevant subjects, followed by a contextual exploration, a method of situating oneself in the landscape, and resultant reflections. Chapter 2 focuses on the practice of land and territorial acknowledgements, by examining their Indigenous activist roots and how they are, or are not, transforming dialogue and perception of land in spaces of privilege, such as the University. Chapter 2 also considers the extension of land acknowledgements to landscape, and also discusses concepts related to Indigenous landscapes, including Indigenous knowledges, management and false landscape narratives, such as wilderness. In Chapter 3 I review settler colonialism in the US and Canadian contexts, and discuss concepts related to decolonizing strategies (that are not in themselves acts of decolonization), and Indigenous urbanism. In Chapter 4, a contextual overview of Dena'ina Ełnena is provided, ranging from lands to Dena'ina worldview to the development of Anchorage at Dgheyay Kaq. In Chapter 5 I explore Dgheyay Kaq along its streams, in an attempt to embody ways of knowing in the urban landscape inspired by landscape lessons from my readings of Dena'ina literatures. In Chapter 6, opportunities for new Indigenous urbanism in Dgheyay Kaq' are identified as a result of walking the streams. Finally in Chapter 7, I conclude the thesis with reflections from the work and how a personal attempt at situating myself in the landscape has changed how I perceive landscape.

Chapter 2 – Acknowledging Landscape

*I'd like to acknowledge that we are on stolen land.
I'd like to acknowledge that we are on borrowed land.
I'd like to acknowledge that we are on overdue land.
I'd like to acknowledge that we are on pickpocketed land.

I'd like to acknowledge academic colonialism.
I'd like to acknowledge activist colonialism.
I'd like to acknowledge that we are on bureaucratic land.
I'd like to acknowledge poetic colonialism.
I'd like to acknowledge drinking a glass of water ten minutes
ago and not having to boil the water first.
I'd like to acknowledge the ice on the inside of the walls when
I lived in
Labrador in the 1970s as part of the military occupation of Innu/Inuit/Indian land.
I'd like to acknowledge not having mould in my son's room.*

—Clint Burnham, excerpt from *No Poems on Stolen Native Land* (2010)

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

A land acknowledgement is a statement recognizing an Indigenous people and their homelands. The acknowledgement is often spoken to open an event, such as a meeting or a conference, and can also be written or otherwise performed. Land acknowledgements are more common in Canada where they are typically known as territorial acknowledgements. In Canada, statements of recognition may be read aloud at the beginning of a school day or even before a hockey game. The increasing prevalence of land, or rather “territory” acknowledgements in Canada has been connected to the influence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that released its final report in 2015 (Coletta 2019, Wilkes et al. 2017). The Commission findings included that the Canadian government’s policies of dismantling family structure and sending children to residential

boarding schools amounted to cultural genocide with its goals to “eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada” (RCC 2015).

The US has not undertaken an equivalent truth and reconciliation endeavor as in Canada, but the two countries share a common legacy of uprooting and dislocating Indigenous peoples from their lands as part of the systemic process of settler colonialism that sought to eliminate Indigenous title to land so that it could be acquired by whites. The Canadian residential school system that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigated, was, after all, developed in a similar time and colonial space as, and was heavily influenced by, the emerging American boarding school system in the US (TRCC 2015). US veteran of

the Indian wars, Captain Richard Henry Pratt helped establish the first off-reservation boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the Carlisle Indian School. Pratt’s vision was born out of the US military ventures while overseeing Native prisoners of war and some of the first attendants to boarding schools were indeed prisoners of war (Rose and Fear-Sagal 2016). Pratt’s philosophy has been famously summarized in his response to the notion that the only good Indian is a dead Indian, instead writing that “In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”(TRCC 2015). Territory acknowledgements are a recent phenomenon, and there is a small, but growing, amount of inquiry and literature on the subject. In a study of the practice at Canadian universities, Wilkes et al. (2017) traced the practice as coming from the work of Indigenous activists, primarily for Indigenous studies programs at Universities during the era when work was being conducted and national reconciliation events were occurring for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From there, the practice has spread to beyond universities, but still has a foothold primarily in privileged progressive spaces.

Indigenous land acknowledgements have been born out of Indigenous survival of attempted genocide on the part of the state. They are now undertaken by individuals and institutions as a way to establish a more truthful narrative of the colonized lands of North America and beyond. As such, land acknowledgements can be a useful tool in unsettling the typical historical narratives of places and communities in North America that revolve around the first white settlers that arrived to an area, or perhaps to those who “discovered” the land. According to a guide to land acknowledgements, the practice is “a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth” (USDAC 2017).

Some Indigenous people are critical of the potential impact of land acknowledgments as they become more prevalent if they just because a routine way to open an event, becoming more rote than thoughtful and impactful (Coletta 2019, Marche 2017). Some Canadian Indigenous scholars and scholars of Indigeneity have voiced similar concerns and argue that land acknowledgments often work to center the dominant power structure by providing a mechanism to relieve individual guilt,

often in privileged spaces such as universities and art galleries. Other critiques point out that many land acknowledgements also operate to maintain colonial narratives of Indigenous pasts, while not working toward making space for Indigenous futures in mainstream narratives of place (Stewart-Ambo and Yang 2021, Wilkes et al. 2017, Robinson et al. 2019).

Despite concerns with the efficacy and meaning of land acknowledgements, the consensus of a roundtable discussion was that such statements need to go beyond recognition, to create space for the forgotten and uncomfortable histories that can lead to a grounded understanding of oppression and theft, which gave rise to the privileges afforded to a few, while also being a major factor leading to the current state of gross social and economic inequality in North American societies. An honest look at true and encompassing histories can open the door to actions to alleviate the imbalances of power between the colonizer and colonized (Robinson et al. 2019). Alleviating actions can include the development of visions of the future that are based on an honest reassessment of our collective pasts, that can lead to changes to day to day activities through spaces that can help shape more truthful worldviews

Land acknowledgements are typically for non-native audiences, and often delivered by non-native people, although there is a conception that they originate in Indigenous protocols of greeting, or visiting another Indigenous group’s territory as a guest (Asher et al. 2018). Indigenous protocol often is inclusive of how you might introduce yourself to others. An appropriate introduction will situate the person in relation their families, clans and lands. This is important so that it is understood where a person is coming from and to understand the relations that tie people to place and others (Hill 2019). Although there is typically a protocol that would be honored by both guests and hosts in Indigenous culture to appropriately begin a visit (Joseph 2016), the land acknowledgement cannot be considered to be of a similar nature (Stewart-Ambo and Yang 2021). And to suggest that settler deliveries of acknowledgement are fulfilling visitor responsibilities would imply they are guests on agreed upon to terms of both parties, which is simply not the case within settler colonial occupation of lands. So it is imperative that land acknowledgements situate the settler as a visitor, not as a guest, and to acknowledge the uninvited nature of settlers and the

harm that has been inflicted over time (Stewart-Ambo and Yang 2021).

Indigenous protocol could be used as a model of what a land acknowledgement can be, requiring those eliciting one to consider their own relationship to the lands they are on, benefitting from, utilizing, etc. and also determine what responsibility that may entail (Vowel 2016, Stewart-Ambo and Yang 2021). In order for land acknowledgements to be more meaningful than rote, work has to be conducted on the part of those acknowledging. This will mean research into the relationship to lands of the peoples on whose traditional territories they are residing, but also reflection on one's own situation of coming into that land through their personal life and historical trajectory. Such research and reflection allows the settler or institution to situate themselves within the landscape and interrogate their own connection to the land. Situating can directly lead to revealing responsibilities. Land acknowledgement begs the question: What next? This question highlights a thread weaving through much of the writing on the practice, is that the acknowledgements are only a first step, and that further reflection and action is needed as subsequent steps to go beyond land acknowledgements if there is going to be any progress on reconciliation, unsettling or decolonization. In my estimation, they are an awkward first step, but will hopefully prove useful.

Land(scape) Acknowledgements?

“What happens when we formally acknowledge in a department meeting the lack of decolonized core curricula? I name ‘core curricula’—the core history, the theory, the artistic practices—in particular, since it serves as a ‘ground’ for the discussions we want to build on with our students. If we think of our curricula as the ‘the ground,’ we might then also consider core curricula as the educational equivalent of land.” - Dylan Robinson (in Robinson et al. 2019)

A review of literature for current ideas on the concept of land acknowledgments within the discipline of landscape architecture have so far proven to be lacking. The same can be said of landscape architecture' and the fact of Indigeneity of land in North America, despite the obvious connection of the

discipline with land, of which all is Indigenous land in that it is all part of the “traditional territories” of Indigenous peoples, from rural Indian reservations to Manahatta (Lenape). Although there has been research and work done on working with Indigenous people on Indigenous-specific projects, the general question of the historically contingent status of land has gone more or less unaddressed. Three resources were found and summarized individually below.

In the first, an article in the journal *Places*, Rod Barnett argues that landscape architects contribute to the “political landscapes that all things dwell in”, and whose work has largely maintained the notion that relegates “Indians” to the past and unable to recognize or see contemporary Indigeneity and its implications on the land (Barnett 2016). Indigeneity is generally allowed to exist in limited forms in contemporary discourse, but more often than not, the Indigeneity of the land is more or less ignored. At times the narrative may seem friendly or even allied with Indigenous peoples, but is based on romanticized ideas and images of a noble savage, or ecological Indian, but it is nonetheless in the past. In this way, Indigenous expressions and creations are perceived of as traditional craft, but not as design, a view summarized as either “its over or its art” (Clifford in Barnett 2016).

Barnett argues the discipline of landscape architecture has more or less willfully ignored the fact that designing on American landscapes is done within contact zones between Western European-centered philosophies and displaced Indigenous peoples, whose traces are ever present on and in the landscape. Barnett calls for more provocative work from the discipline that engages within the contact zone, which would not just acknowledge a past human occupation of space, but an engagement with contemporary Indigeneity. This would help make space for Indigenous people in the public realm to be free to be who they are, without fitting into tidy and acceptable roles prescribed by the dominant narrative in North America. Overall, Barnett calls for more exploration and work that confronts Native pasts, present and future in North America (and anywhere living with a settler colonial legacy).

Pierre Belanger has been more explicit in condemning the discipline of landscape architecture, as both a practiced

profession and through its formalized education, for being an agent of settler colonialism and capitalism, and upholding mechanisms of white supremacy and environmental racism by ignoring the issue of colonialism and race altogether (Belanger 2020). Belanger identifies all lands as treaty lands, and urges landscape architecture students and professionals to begin researching their own positionality on the lands they are occupying. Belanger's audience targets the practitioners and educators of landscape architecture, at the same time, it is clear the his intended audience is also very much not a diverse crowd, consisting primarily of white, Eurocentric landscape architects, charging that a diverse representation from Black, Indigenous and People of Color has been very limited. He identifies the space of design as alienating to anyone that is not from the dominant, Euro-American and typically white communities. Belanger ends by asking landscape architects who they are responsible to and what they are fighting for, in their practice of designing on the land.

Finally, the third reference found related to Indigenous lands and landscape architecture is an article in *The Field*, an ASLA blog from those in professional practice focusing on the Doctrine of Discovery (Edgecombe 2020). Edgecombe highlights the influence of Papal bulls, or letters from the Pope, on how European imperialists were able to view lands in the new world as lands for taking from savage, or heathen, people. Lands were taken for imperial interests, but also in the better interest of the heathens themselves. Although not intending to be comprehensive, the article neglects to mention landscape architecture's predominant practice of upholding settler norms within the practice, and the militaristic and genocidal nature of the government's actions towards Indigenous peoples, while still discussing some of the mechanisms of the governments destructive efforts (i.e. near extermination of the buffalo).

Although there is limited literature on the topic of Indigeneity, be it land and territory acknowledgements or otherwise, within landscape architecture, the setting is changing constantly. At the beginning of attempting a literature review of this topic in 2017, no articles were easily found, and now there are at least some to refer to, and certainly this upward trajectory will continue.

North American Landscape Concepts

Landscape architecture is not alone in ignoring the presence and influence of Native peoples in North America, but is part of the broader Eurocentric culture when regarding the importance of Indigenous lands. This is in large part due to narratives of contemporary Indigenous insignificance and of Indians existing solely in the past, which is in part a legacy of the modern environmental movement that has helped inform landscape concepts, including conservation and wilderness concepts.

Environmental philosophy in North America has many origins, but is characterized by a concept of pure nature, or ‘wilderness’ state that was confronted by early European settlers. Wilderness needed taming, inspire awe, and helped shape notions of pioneer ingenuity and spirit in conquering the wildness. However, a respect and veneration of a seeming wild nature developed as lands became more under development and tracts of ‘wilderness’ were diminished across the landscape, especially as rapid environmental change accompanied industrialization, and capitalistic enterprises required more raw resources for growth (Adams 2003). Out of this view (humans in opposition to nature) emerged the conservation and preservation movements that aimed to set aside places where nature can exist untouched by human hands. This movement is dependent on a dichotomy of human and nature. It also relies on false notions of wilderness, and an untouched North American continent prior to the arrival of Europeans, wherein Indigenous peoples were a part of nature/wilderness, and thus not civilized humans. This notion held, despite the fact that much of the continent was intentionally managed or cultivated to provide many functions and benefits to its inhabitants (Cronon 1995). Not only was it managed, but the managed and cultivated nature of the land allowed Europeans to readily move in, especially along North America's eastern seaboard, the site of early colonial and Indigenous interactions (Mann 2005).

Aldo Leopold, considered one of the founders of the environmental movement, suggests in the seminal *Sandy County Almanac*, that there “is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it.” This may have been the case within conventional, ‘Western’ notions

of nature but came from a worldview with a very limited view of who is considered “man”. If he were able to extend humanity to the Indigenous peoples who had shaped the landscapes in which he gained his ecological insights, then perhaps he would have learned about cultures that had indeed extended ethics and responsibilities to ‘the land’ and those living on it. Instead, western conservation and restoration science continue to forget Indigenous tenure on landscapes and heralded Leopold’s insight of ethics related to land and the animals and plants, as novelty of the American frontier.

The dominant European settler colonial society was able to view a wild nature devoid of humans in part because much effort was taken in removing Indigenous peoples from their lands, through land acquisitions and extermination. This not only enabled settlers to view nature as untouched wilderness, but also fundamentally altered the way Indigenous people were able to interact with the world in the process of colonization and subjugation that were enacted toward the goals of eradication or assimilation (Plumwood 2003). In addition to deliberate attempts to remove people from lands, infectious disease had great impacts, often decimating populations that had little immunity to diseases brought by Europeans. In some cases, diseases struck communities before the actual arrival of settlers, as extensive trade networks connected vast areas, enabling the spread of disease ahead of settler expansion.

Situated Amongst Relatives

The dichotomy of human versus nature does not exist in most indigenous knowledge systems. Essential personhood is extended to non-human entities including plants, animals, mountains, stones, and the earth as a whole. This inclusive worldview does not support a human versus nature view, but situates humans within nature. This worldview also engenders rights of nature and peoples’ responsibilities towards nature (Kimmerer 2013). With responsibilities toward the rest of the world also comes the value of reciprocity, and the notion that human interactions have direct consequences, which can be good or bad, but are inextricably linked towards a set of responsibilities, illustrated by the comment below

“We do not embrace a rigid separation of the religious or spiritual and the political. We have extended kinship networks. Our relations are premised on sets of responsibilities (instead of rights) among individuals, the people collectively and toward the land” (Mann 2003, 21)

Recognition of the agency of the ‘other’, be it human and non-human alike, is necessary to reform the arena of landscape and community planning. Because when recognition is not present, we do not give credit where it is due, do not recognize the critical services that are provided by the biospheric ‘other,’ and not only take them for granted, distorting perceptions of human interaction with ‘nature’, while simultaneously and falsely extricating humans from nature.

Recognition of Indigenous agency in landscapes, past and present, can help inform how landscapes operate, identify responsibilities, and lead to more inclusive design. Porter and Barry have written of the asymmetrical power relations that have existed in arenas of planning with Indigenous communities, and about the need for reframing planning process in ‘contact zones’ for spaces of coexistence between the Indigenous and the settlers, who have colonized Indigenous land. The idea of contact zones, is described as “the social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other.” Barry and Porter contend that colonization is a present and continuing phenomenon but also that “Indigenous peoples are demanding not the right to be included in someone else’s order, but the authority to co-determine that very order.” Indigenous people are fighting to encourage a dialogical process, rather than a monological one that operates to extinguish the identity, but one that can encourage acknowledgement of overlapping values and jurisdictions to promote respectful co-existence, and the continuity of Indigenous identity through land-use planning (Porter and Barry 2016). Barnett similarly called for designs for the contact zone within landscape architecture, as a form of reckoning with true past narratives and current Indigenous identities (Barnett 2016).

Indigenous Land Management, Knowledge and Ecological Theory

Indigenous people have been living on and shaping landscapes for thousands of years, having developed ways of life and passing on knowledge that has enabled long-term presence and continuity. Indigenous knowledge, enmeshed with many generations of dwelling in a place, may hold critical information about how landscape ecosystems operate and what role humans have in maintaining an ecosystem in a particular stable state. The phrase “traditional ecological knowledge” has become a common phrase in contemporary discussions of land management and provides a means within which settler society sees Indigenous knowledge as legitimate. But this term is problematic in that it compartmentalizes environmental knowledge out of a more holistic context in which it developed, and also only acknowledges validity towards ecosystem-related information, while holding invalid what would be viewed as ‘other’ kinds of information (e.g. emotional, ethical, spiritual, etc.) and values and relegates this information to myth, folktales or superstition.

Traditional knowledge is gained through experience in the world by direct participation, observation, reflection and communication. Cajete situates what he terms “Native science” as part of a creative process relying on sense, perception and creative participation (2000).

“Native science... unfolds through the general scheme of the creative process of first insight, immersion, creation, and reflection. Native science is a reflection of the metaphoric mind and is embedded in creative participation with nature. It reflects the sensual capacities of humans. It is tied to spirit, and is both ecological and integrative.” (14)

Participation in the world is how humans are able to achieve this knowledge, and through this construction, indigenous knowledge has similarities with phenomenology that focuses on human lived experience, perception, sensation and understanding as the foundational basis of all knowledge (Wylie 2013, Escobar 2017, Barker and Pickerill 2020). A phenomenological approach blurs the boundaries between humans and their environment and does not relegate nature to an otherness, or necessarily

elevate nature above humans. However, Indigenous knowledge systems differ from phenomenology in the importance placed on the social context of lived experience, and the way in which it is augmented by transference of knowledge through time and through performative acts of story but also in typical daily interactions and conversations. Meaning is derived not just from an immersion in place, but through a refraction of lived experience from others in the community, and journeys through the world with them (Basso 1996). In other words, derived meaning is highly contextual, cultural, developing with other people.

Cajete discusses the holistic nature of Native science that does not separate the rational mind from the metaphoric mind. Rather, these different types of thinking should be maintained in a balance, where one informs the other in the formation and acquisition of knowledge and truth through the interaction of body, mind, soul and spirit in relation with the land and all it encompasses. Cajete compares Native science to theories that have developed non-equilibrium systems science, which have developed partially as the deterministic sciences have proven too simplistic and static to explain observed, real world phenomena. Systems theory, described as the way nature develops structures from disordered material and energy, is a creative process, by creating order out of disorder. History and stochasticity play an important role in the form of structures derived from chaos. The first setting possible system trajectories, while the latter helps determine what directions are traveled, but in a way that is unpredictable.

Unpredictability is an important factor in Indigenous knowledge, and is represented frequently in the form of the trickster, or the ‘sacred fool,’ an important animate shaper of the world, who reminds cultures of the central role of disorder in the creation of the world. This notion and respect of disorder and uncertainty lends to an Indigenous worldview that does not include efforts to control and dominate an external nature, but makes space for adaptation to unknowable future events. In cultural perceptions that do not separate humans from nature, or the metaphoric mind from the rational mind, control of an ‘other’ is a foreign idea. However, relationships and reciprocity with the world (human and non-human) begin to form a central role in determining appropriate actions in the world.

Indigenous knowledge is embedded in languages in a way that illuminates cultural and environmental histories and relationships to places through naming practices. Place names can provide a wealth of information about a region, or an ecological site, but also include layered meanings and ethical responsibilities that cannot be understood through translation into English. In Keith Basso's work with a western Apache community, he recounts conversations that are made up almost entirely of spoken place names. Initially confounded on what meaning was being communicated, time with community members slowly revealed that the placenames were used to efficiently and poetically conjure up stories of events that had transpired there, along with their associated cultural lessons and meaning, resulting in very illustrative visualizations of places that were determined important at some time in the past by the ancestors who came before on the land. These visualizations allow participants to travel in their mind and recount the words and actions of their ancestors, and relate that meaning to their current social context allowing many layers of communication to be effected at once that connects the past and the ancestors to present and future, delivering lessons that can help someone make wise decisions in their and their communities lives. Basso writes "landscapes... can be 'detached' from their fixed spatial moorings and transformed into instruments of thought and vehicles of purposive behavior" (1996, 75).

Knowledge and values embedded in language is also evident by extending personhood to entities that are non-human through grammatical ways of referring to them that is not translatable to English (Kimmerer 2013). Whereas in English 'it' is ascribed to all non-human things, in many Indigenous languages, the defining characteristic that determines how to address the personhood of something is whether it is animate, or alive. What is alive and animate can also differ than what is commonly conceived of in the settler ways of thinking in western-based societies. Encoded within Indigenous languages are grammatical tendencies that enable ethical relations with and prescribe responsibilities to non-human entities. Even where native languages are less commonly spoken, or not at all, ideas and philosophies about the right ways to treat non-human entities may yet persist. Such conceptions will seem antithetical to the tenets of Western science and the English language, which has at its basis the separation of humans from a nature, and to

categorize and identify according to abstracted, and sometime arbitrary, concepts.

European settlers did not view Indigenous land management as an actual practice because it did not resemble European norms, and took the form and state of the landscape largely to be the workings of an exclusively non-human nature (Cronon 1995). Forcing Indigenous natural management strategies out by separating peoples from land to increase power and wealth within capitalistic framework has proven detrimental to ecosystem types throughout the world. It has also led to a perception of resource mismanagement by Indigenous peoples that appeared to call for interference by a paternalistic, Eurocentric hand, thereby further solidifying the mechanisms of capitalism and colonization into the physical landscape. A frequent tool used to this end was to remove people from 'nature' or 'wild' areas, because in those areas it appeared that people were disrupting the balance of nature (Adams 2003). However, a closer look at practices of land management often reveals a dynamic framework that allows landscapes to adapt to changing conditions as shown by Adams in the case of pastoralists where nomadic practices moved diverse herds (instead of monospecies herds) across a landscape according to present condition, and knowledge of change on the land. But because these practices did not align with conventional views of maximizing a resource according to the carrying capacity of the land, it appeared a backwards and primitive strategy.

The interconnectivity of all things also has corollaries with complexity in systems science (Black Elk 2016). Many indigenous knowledge systems portend ideas of constant motion and flux that results in a "spider web" network of relationships (Cajete 2000). This emphasis on a web illustrates the interconnectedness and agency of humans and non-human entities alike, leading to an understanding of complexity in the natural world that is similar to that discussed by scientists of complex systems. This view also has implications towards resource management regarding flexibility and adaptability of practices, such as practices that result in a patchwork heterogeneity on the landscape in systems dependent on frequent, low-intensity, anthropogenic fire as a disturbance (Mason et al. 2012).

Coupled human and natural systems is a term developed

to describe systems whose key structures and interactions can be characterized as dominated by both people and "nature" driven dynamics with associated complex feedback loops. The necessity of such a term reflects the inability of Western worldviews to perceive humans as related to and a part of nature. This perception has resulted in a study of systems that generally considers the natural, or the human, but less often includes the dynamic relationships that are both precipitated between nature (e.g. hydrologic system, successional ecosystems, etc) and humans (e.g. market systems, political systems, etc).

Complex adaptive human-natural systems exhibit feedback loops, non-linear path dependent dynamics that can result in multi-equilibrium states, and heterogeneity over spatial and temporal scales (Liu et al 2007). The entire continent of North America had a wonderful and diverse heterogeneity of management systems that, beyond any cultural geographic region, would have weaved an intricate web of landscape adaptability, of which humans were a central part, especially of large biogeographical systems. When you look at maps of Indigenous cultural regions over the State of Alaska, or even the country, cultural groups often overlap biogeophysical landscape types, as these people were in essence the caretakers of the boreal forest, of the great plains, the high desert, etc. Different worldviews developed from and represent different worlds, and they all coexisted and had the potential to reinforce each other (Escobar 2018). According to Levin, heterogeneity is the key component of resilience of an adaptive system because it enables adaptation. These elements and their interactions can help determine the resilience of a system, even at a global level. Resilience can be described as the ability of a system to maintain basic structures and function in spite of disturbances, allowing continual system development along a relatively similar trajectory. Escobar (2018) argues against the dominant capitalistic system that have activated global resources to enrich the wealth of a few as creating a one-world world, and it has proven to be devastating to lands across the globe and has put humanity and the earth in a state of crisis.

As discussed in previous sections, Indigenous knowledge is developed through direct engagement with the non-human world, and is filtered and conditioned through culturally imbued practices and communicative methods. Design would benefit

by incorporating stronger values of participation in all phases of determining the built environment. This is obvious on explicitly Indigenous land, that local knowledge should be sought for a well-rounded holistic approach. But even in urban sites, there are still important aspects of Indigenous knowledge that apply and stem from a deep relationship with the local landscape. Design and planning must be open to other ways of knowing, which also implies that conventional participation models need to shift to better incorporate diverse knowledge sets with a more symmetrical balance of power between communities, and between communities and designers.

Indigenous knowledge, being a product of generations of human interaction with places, has much to offer in the realm of designing the landscape in ways that acknowledge human society as situated within nature, in a reciprocal and participatory way. The corollaries with contemporary systems science suggest there is way that Indigenous knowledge can inform and shed light on the investigations into the workings of the world, including large systems. A first step is acknowledging human agency within the large global economic and ecological systems within which all communities are situated.

Chapter 3 – Settler Colonialism and the Landscape

The settler colonial context and history in North America must be taken into account when considering the matter of lands across the continent (and by extension, landscape architecture). Settler colonialism is a type of colonialism where the colonizers came to these lands to stay on lands where there were already people living on and with them (Wolf 1999). Settler colonialism has always been about acquiring land for territorial expansion for resources and wealth generation. Tuck and Yang (2012) write that settler colonialism combines elements of both internal and external colonization. Internal colonization refers to strategies of control and management of people and lands within the borders of an imperial nation, employing methods including imprisonment institutions, minoritization, surveillance and divestment, in order to assure the position of a powerful (and historically white) elite. External colonization is more readily understood, as its not made invisible in typical history discourses and includes imperial modes of wealth generation through extraction of resources from other Indigenous lands to bring back to a home base, and typically is operationalized at a frontier, pulling lands and bodies into military operations. As a useful illustration of a militarized frontier and the stories used to mobilize warfare, the US militarily has used the term “Indian country” to describe what is behind enemy lines, not just in past jargon but in contemporary campaigns. These American “heritage metaphors” referring to Indigenous peoples were commonly applied to the Iraq war, and to describe the killing of Osama bin Laden by president Obama (Silliman 2008, Tuck and Yang 2012). The use of a term like “Indian Country” and Indigenous names for military equipment (e.g. the Apache and

Comanche military helicopters) reflect how deeply ingrained North America’s Indigenous people have been portrayed as an other and an enemy, and ultimately expendable for the goals of the settler colonial state.

This usage sheds light on a common slogan for the state of Alaska, emblazoned on the longest standing license plate design, The Last Frontier. Another testament to this military posture towards Indigenous peoples, in the first travels to Alaska to survey the lands that were just “purchased”, the American expeditions were by the military who were fresh off the Indian wars, and though the military sought to avoid similar interactions (Allen 1887), they came prepared with weaponry nonetheless (Boraas in Grantham 2017).

Settler colonialism is not an event, it is on-going and through time has developed complexities that have ensured its continued reproduction. Settler colonialism’s main goal has been the acquisition of land and its resources for economic and imperial gain of the settlers. Indigenous peoples who were a part of the land, were what stood in between the settlers and the acquisition of that land. Because Indigenous people were in the way, settler colonialism has used many tactics in efforts to eliminate the Native. Wolfe has drawn solid lines between frontier homicide mass killings to assimilationist endeavors such as allotment, division and marketization of Indian lands and separation of children from Indigenous lifeways in the boarding school, as different mechanisms of genocide aimed at eliminating the threat of a Native presence. He argues against qualifying

these efforts as a different kind of genocide, as some, such as in the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, attempt to portray assimilationist policies merely as a “cultural genocide” in contrast to more obvious events such as the Jewish Holocaust. Wolfe points out a defining feature of settler colonial genocides are their sustained duration. In North America, this continues as a direct line from frontier homicide that began when Europeans landed on its shores, to spatial removal to beyond the frontier (i.e. removal of the Cherokee on the Trail of Tears), and then when the frontiers have closed the methods of elimination of the Native lies either in homicide or in assimilation, of which US policies have overtly been attempting well into 1970s (Dawes Act, Indian Termination policies). But all these tactics have at their core the same goal of elimination of Indigenous peoples.

Though many of the actions of settler colonialism have been overt through history, settle colonialism itself remains relatively hidden in dominant historical narratives. This apparent invisibility is a mechanism of its effectiveness, as described by Blatman-Thomas and Porter, “Settle colonialism relies on the promise of its own demise and the naturalization of settler’ presence, such that the perpetual creativity of settler privilege itself must remain inconspicuous.” Examples of this are portraying colonialism in the past, while negating its continued effects on Indigenous, Black and People of Color, and as Tuck and Yang (2012) put it “settler moves to innocence” that co-opt the language of inclusion and even decolonization, but that do not decenter or give up settler privilege.

Decolonization is used to describe a wide variety of activities, potential and realized, from those that attempt to alleviate the condition of colonization through social justice activism to the call for returning land back to its Indigenous peoples. Tuck and Yang state emphatically, however, that much of what is described as decolonization instead describes activities whose purpose is to alleviate settler guilt or that claim a sort of ally-ship by activists for liberation or equality, thereby making decolonization a metaphor. Tuck and Yang clearly state that decolonization is not a metaphor and that “in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land”, considering land as land, water, air, subterranean earth and all the relations to land that are involved (Tuck and Yang 2012).

The history of settler colonialism in North America is undoubtedly violent and horrendous, and at the same time, this history has been invisibilized, or deemed something that has occurred in the past and no longer takes place. But as Wolfe has pointed out, settler colonialism is a structure that has been sustained over centuries, and there is an ever present need to be watchful for symptoms of a resurgence in more overt settler colonial activities that aim to ensure a particular segment of society has control over important lands and resources. In this contemporary age, with the rise of white nationalist groups who espouse violent rhetoric, the history and lessons of settler colonialism cannot be swept under the rug, especially as the only settler colonial strategies (of separating people from lands and resources) remaining within closed frontiers is assimilation or removal through murder, or incarceration.

Dominant historical narratives hide the ties between western development’s wealth (disproportionately enjoyed by a privileged few today) that is derived from a legacy of theft, theft of land from, and genocide of, Indigenous peoples, and theft of Black bodies through slavery. These dominant landscape narratives continue to do harm to lands and also to the bodies and minds of the survivors of the settler colonial system. As Belanger notes, the discipline must fully consider its whole history and role in settler colonialism, and not just focus on the stories that make the discipline seem to be on the side of social justice, for example celebrating Olmsted’s role in Central Park, while only recently telling stories of Seneca Village, an area home to predominantly Black people, that was cleared for the Park. The lesson of glossing over the displacement is that landscape architecture has followed a common settler colonial trope, in that “settler colonialism destroys to replace” (Wolfe 2006). The history demands more from the discipline than a simple acknowledgement of this displacement before going on to celebrate the achievement of the park, because one is not possible without the other and has been created on repeatedly stolen lands and the expense of Black people. It is a story of settler colonialism, and we must interrogate who has benefitted from it and who has been tossed aside. Revealing truths of history and elucidating on whose backs and on whose lands wealth and privilege was generated, the bare injustice and violence of the settler colonial structure can be made plain. Steps toward reconciliation, reparation and decolonization cannot happen without laying bare these ties.

The discipline, both professional and academic, of landscape architecture has a responsibility to address its formative history head on, and confront its own complicity in the destruction and dismantling of Native lands to be refashioned into landscapes and cities based on ideals born out of Europe and European imperialism in confrontation of supposed savage wilderness. The structures that have been laid down over centuries continue to exist, and as humans continue to shape landscapes many questions should be at the forefront for landscape architects: What is being broken when land is made into something else and what functions do new landscapes communicate to a contemporary and future generations? Does the work of landscape architecture enable reflections on historical trajectories and decenter settler privilege? Does design honor the legacy of the peoples who managed the living lands prior to their appropriation by settlers? Does a project or a lesson further the settler colonial project, erecting frontiers and battlegrounds between a civilized nature and socially constructed savage wilderness, or even between human-made and nature? Is there room in the discipline for those that have been heretofore othered — can Indigenous, Black and People of Color bring their values to landscape architecture, or must they be suppressed and whitewashed enough in order to be deemed legitimate by the current gatekeepers of the discipline? At what point will landscape architecture cease to be dominated by white people?

Landscape Acknowledgement will not answer these questions, it will not decolonize landscape architecture, but it can be a first step to reconciling landscape mythologies and methodologies that have previously destroyed (Indigenous landscapes) in order to build something else. Landscape acknowledgement can help center land-based cultures and model a value system that requires a practitioner to consider their responsibilities to communities, land, other than human persons, and beyond.

Indigenous Urbanism

Getting us to cities was supposed to be the final, necessary step in our assimilation, absorption, erasure, the completion of a five-hundred-year-old genocidal campaign. But the city made us new, and we made it ours. We didn't get lost amid the sprawl of tall buildings, the stream of anonymous masses, the ceaseless din of traffic. We found one another, started up Indian Centers, brought out our families and powwows, our dances, our songs, our beadwork... We did not move to cities to die. The sidewalks and the streets, the concrete, absorbed our heaviness. The glass, metal, rubber, and wires, the speed, the hurtling masses — the city took us in. (From There There, Tommy Orange , 9)

As Blatman-Thomas and Porter (2019) note, the dialectic between invisibility of colonialism and the necessary creativity of colonialism combine to continue the colonization of urban lands at the expense of Indigenous land. They write of three ways to conceive of property in the urban setting, as object, as redress, and as land. Property as object is the delimited piece of the physical terrain, to be bought and sold, in theory, by anyone as an open-access opportunity. The methods of surveying and gridding the landscape are employed as a means of dispossessing land from Indigenous peoples, and makes possible the acquisition of “real property” by settlers. Property as redress is that that allows sanctioned Indigenous landholding in spaces that have already been assessed as having less value to the settler regime, such as those with little resources, far away from urban centers (i.e. the reservation). In this way, colonialism is set as thing of the past, while redress has been enacted to make right with Indigenous peoples, but, even in contemporary form, is an extension of negotiations between disparate levels of power, an extension of brutishness of past treaty making. But finally, property as land considers the intrinsic relatedness of Indigenous peoples and the land itself, both being co-creative of the other, and thereby making impossible total severability of Indigenous land, no matter the legal owner or how tall a skyscraper may be, or any state-sponsored act of termination of Indigenous land rights.

To reiterate, in the authors consideration of property as land, they stress the existence of bonds between Indigenous

people and land that are constitutive of each other, such that even the settler colonial project of urbanization that has dispossessed people from their lands in material fashion, has not done so in the relationship of Indigenous people to the land. “This ontology of land exists as an autonomous space, even despite the apparent conclusion of settler possession of that same land” (Blatman and Porter, 2019). I stress this point as the city appears to be a form of development furthest away from its Indigenous managed past contingency, and yet, in the making of landscape through inter-relationality, the bonds still exist so long as Indigenous people still exist.

Nejad et al. (2019) argue that Indigenous people in the city have a right to Indigenous urbanism, meaning that they should have access to the means of spatial production that honors their original occupancy and sovereignty, and right to difference that is derived from their relation to the lands that posit them more than simply as “stakeholders” or similar to other minoritized groups in the city. In their study with Indigenous residents of the Winnipeg, one conclusion was drawn that original occupancy within traditional Indigenous territories “underpins any effort towards reconciliation and collaboration”, thus clearly stating the need for landscape acknowledgment as a basis from which to develop Indigenous urbanism. Indigenous people, as the original residents of the territoriality of a city, are not just mere stakeholders in city planning and design processes, but are sovereign entities of the land through a continuance of practice of contemporary presence and finding and making place in the city. Indigenous participants in the study related that Indigeneity should be visible in the city, beyond a reference to a historical Indigenous occupation, but highlight contemporary modes of being Indigenous and being urban. Some participants in their study voiced a feeling of not belonging in certain types of urban landscapes revealing the colonial legacy in the built environments and its effects on Indigenous minds. For example, a participant felt that unwelcome and her presence targeted as other in suburbanized neighborhoods that typically are designed with a specific, homogenizing aesthetic that responds to no particular place in its design and materiality. In addition, Indigenous Winnipeggers overall felt that Indigenous urbanism is expressed more in Indigenous community mobilization rather than expressed in the built environment through city sanctioned planning or design, but overall, people felt that Indigenous

residents should have more access to place making in the city, concerning their particular and situating histories related to the territory.

In an article Doings with the Land and Sea, geographers Barker and Pickerill discuss the need to do geography differently now that the discipline has somewhat seriously considered its implication in implementing settler colonialism, providing a potential for a path for other disciplines, such as landscape architecture in relation to Indigenous urbanism. The authors call for a difference in the way research is conducted, to center complex, relational and affective ways of knowing and knowledge generation that is embodied through doings on the land and sea, with others including non-human agents. Indigenous people and communities should not only be involved as participants in research, but as in driving research designs and decisions, in part to ensure that work and research is aimed at benefitting the community, and does not center the researcher or settler institutions that provide funding, for instance. While centering Indigenous, Black and People of Color in their discipline is noted as in its infancy, there is also a role for non-Indigenous and settler researchers because decolonizing methods of knowledge generation is a heavy burden and shouldn't just be on the shoulders of Indigenous people. The authors point out the need for non-Indigenous to carefully advocate for Indigenous perspectives, while avoiding acts of appropriation and co-opting of Indigenous knowledge, which has too often been the relationship between settler interactions with Indigenous knowledge.

Chapter 4 – Dena’ina Ełnena Background and Context

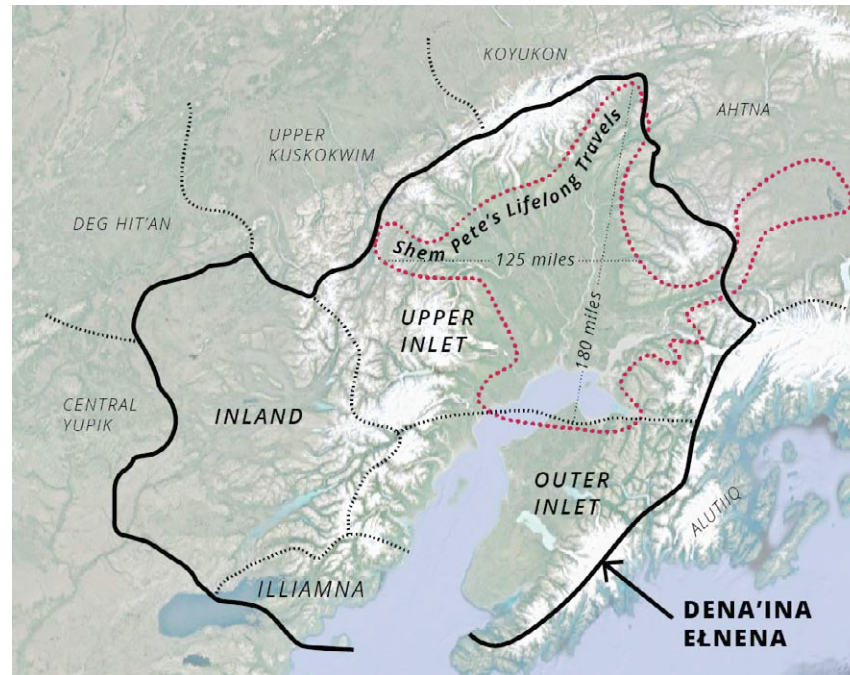
They may have been starving and may have barely survived [the winter]. Wherever they had stopped in the uplands — Yentna, Susitna or Kichatna — when some of the people feel sorry for themselves, they drag themselves down here and they become really satisfied. At that Degheyay Leght we save ourselves nicely. Those Knik Arm Dena’ina bring themselves there and survive on needlefish. After the needlefish they put up salmon. That is the only place like this.

Shem Pete (Kari et al. 2016, 332).

This is Dena’ina Ełnena

Dena’ina Ełnena, or Dena’ina lands, surrounds what is commonly known as Cook Inlet (as Tikahtnu in Dena’ina), in southcentral Alaska. The city of Anchorage, Alaska’s most populous, sits in the middle of Dena’ina Ełnena. The Dena’ina have occupied this territory for at least 1500 years, but possibly longer, while Anchorage has its beginnings in 1914. The Dena’ina people live in this area and share a common language, and thus the language defines the borders of its lands. The language has developed and grown in these lands, and with these lands. The language and the people that speak it cannot be separated from these lands, and neither can these lands be removed from what is Dena’ina.

The Anchorage area was covered by ice during the most recent glacial periods, becoming ice free around 14,000 years before present (BP). Different cultural groups had periodic and short duration of presence in the area. By about 1500 BP, the Dena’ina peoples came into the region, which coincided with the time when peat lands began to develop after thousands of years of vegetation accumulation, emerging into the boreal forest and bog system. The Dena’ina people have been in the region for as long as the region would have had an environment similar to



Map showing Dena’ina Ełnena boundaries and the four Dena’ina dialect regions. Shem Pete’s travels encompass most of the Upper Inlet area, aside from the tallest mountain peaks (including Denali, known in Dena’ina as Dgheley Ka’a) (Info from Kari et al 2016 and Jones et al 2103, base image from Google Earth).

the one that can be observed today (Smith et al. 2020). Dena’ina origin stories tell of a coming into this country from a mountain area. In Dena’ina stories, the people did not displace another group, but came into the country and became Dena’ina at the same time the land was becoming itself, which in the Dena’ina case indicates the people and the land have developed in relationship, together.

Dena’ina Ełnena comprises 40,000 square miles and can be further subdivided into four dialect groups, of which Anchorage resides within the Upper Inlet. The Upper Inlet dialect is the most divergent of all the Dena’ina dialects, indicating more sustained separation from the original areas the Dena’ina spread to (Fall in Jones et al. 2013). Trading networks and partnerships would have pierced these separations, and all dialects are mutually understandable.

The Dena’ina language is part of the larger Northern Athabascan language family, whose groups occupy much of interior Alaska and Canada, while Athabascan languages extend into the US southwest, including Navajo and Apache. In Alaska, the Dena’ina are the only Athabascan group to reside in an area that includes salt water, providing a vast and varied resource base from which to live. James Kari, a linguist who has worked extensively with Dena’ina speakers has described Dena’ina as “mountain people on salt water” (Kari 1988).

Athabascan groups in Alaska’s interior utilize mountain areas extensively for hunting large game, and by becoming Indigenous to this area, the Dena’ina adapted many marine resource strategies into the culture, some borrowed from neighboring Inuit, marine-based cultures. Being the only Athabascan group on salt water, many of its marine terms are only found in the Dena’ina language, and appear to be relatively recent to the language (1988). Because of recent marine adaptations in technology, language, and previous skill on land-based resource use, Dena’ina people were the most populous of any of the northern Athabascan groups (Kari 1988).

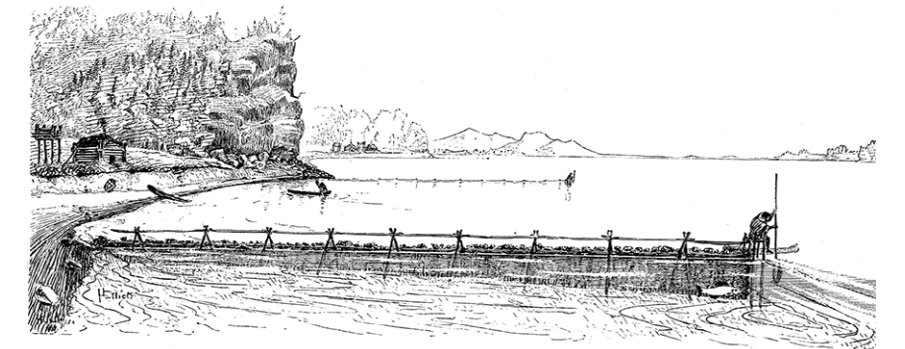
Dena’ina Seasonal Round

The rich resource base on Dena’ina Ełnena was actualized

by the people continuously throughout the year, as people pulsed through the landscape according seasonal rhythms. The Dena’ina, prior to European and American intrusion were semi-sedentary. Relatively permanent winter village sites would form a central locus from which the seasonal activities would occur. The winter village sites would have numerous nichit, or semi-subterranean, multi-room log houses, not dissimilar to a contemporary log cabin. These would be located near areas with good fishing, a source of wood and good water. Come spring time, or lit’len, in Geese Month (April) and Baby Month (May) a busy season would begin by travel to sites for returning fish runs, areas to harvest beaver, porcupine and bear, as well as migratory fowl. Dgheyay Kaq was an important site where people “saved themselves” from winter hunger, as food stores ran low, as it was a reliable source of the tiny needle fish, dgheyay, that people could survive on until the next surge arrived from Tikathnu’s waters, the eulachon, or candle fish, dilhi.

In summer, King Salmon Month Liq’aka’a N’u (June) through to Month of Ripe Berries Benen K’enedlidi (August), people were busy harvesting and preserving runs of salmon, and gathering berries and other plants in mass quantities for the winter.

Month it Turns Yellow Benen Hdidchiqi (September) and Month Birds Fly Back Benen Nuk’nedeli (October) would be busy harvesting big game such as caribou, moose, Dahl sheep, and both black and brown bears. As the dark depths of winter set in, it was a time for rest, set aside for visiting, trading and



A drawing depicting a Dena’ina tanik’edi, or fishing platform. Such platforms were used around Anchorage, including at Takat, Nuch’ishtunt and Nutul’iy. Drawing from Elliot 1896.

potlatching beginning in Month Going House to House *Benen Qatgge Ntdalna* (November) and Month for Going about Singing *Benen Q'ank'elich'deldili* (January). Less intense harvests would continue, through ice fishing, trapping and hunting. But much of the winter months are spent reinforcing knowledge of landscape through story, visiting and ceremony, and working on tools and clothing needed to travel and live with the land.

All the resources throughout the landscape are crucial to maintaining the lifeway of the Dena'ina, but there was no animal resource more important than the salmon. All five species of Pacific salmon spawn in the streams emptying into Tikahtnu.

The seasonal activities would occur at points throughout the landscape, requiring travel of many miles, and if travel cannot be by boat, then it is by foot. In winter, Dena'ina perfected the art of making the snowshoe and have various designs for traveling in different winter conditions, as snow changes

markedly depending on conditions. Children are trained from a young age for strength and endurance, necessary for travel in a challenging landscape. A Dena'ina phrase describing the old ways is *deshishch'idnulk'et' l nltu qghich'ex* "they lived for durable breath" (Kalifornsky 1991). As breath would equate with health, this would be required to live the life of the Dena'ina, to travel great distance, erect temporary shelter out of local materials, harvest plants and animals, and all in a commonly harsh sub-arctic environment.

Breath is just one of three essences that comprise the Dena'ina self: body, breath and shadow. The body is the physical body, with a life force emanating just below the skin. Breath, equating to good health, would be necessary to tackle every day tasks and fortified with endurance training and through engaging in daily life in the landscape. Both body and breath will disintegrate and dissipate at death. Shadow spirit does not die when the breath leaves the body, but continues on in a

cycle of reincarnation after certain rituals are performed for the deceased (Fall in Jones et al. 2013).

Orientation System

Rivers are the basis of the intricate Northern Athabascan directional system, reflecting the importance of resources, especially salmon, and transportation that riverine systems provide (Boraas 2004). The riverine directional system is used to describe places in extreme detail and can provide an absolute frame of reference and reflects the importance of rivers to Northern Athabascan, including Dena'ina, culture. In Northern Athabascan languages ways of describing moving through space, there is no corollary to the four directions - all positional and geographic descriptors are in relation to rivers and the landscapes shaped by rivers (Kari 2011). Even structures or objects that enclose a space are described as having a flow. A house, for example flows from a rear wall, towards the opening

In the Upper Inlet Dena'ina, the riverine directional system but adapted to the marine environment, as the lands surround and rivers and streams drain into Tikahtnu, which itself is viewed as a large river (shown by the suffix of *tnu*, indicating a place named river or stream). Directions could be both related to local streams and rivers, but also regionally extended to the inlet, treating Tikahtnu as flowing downstream to the south out to the open waters of the Pacific.

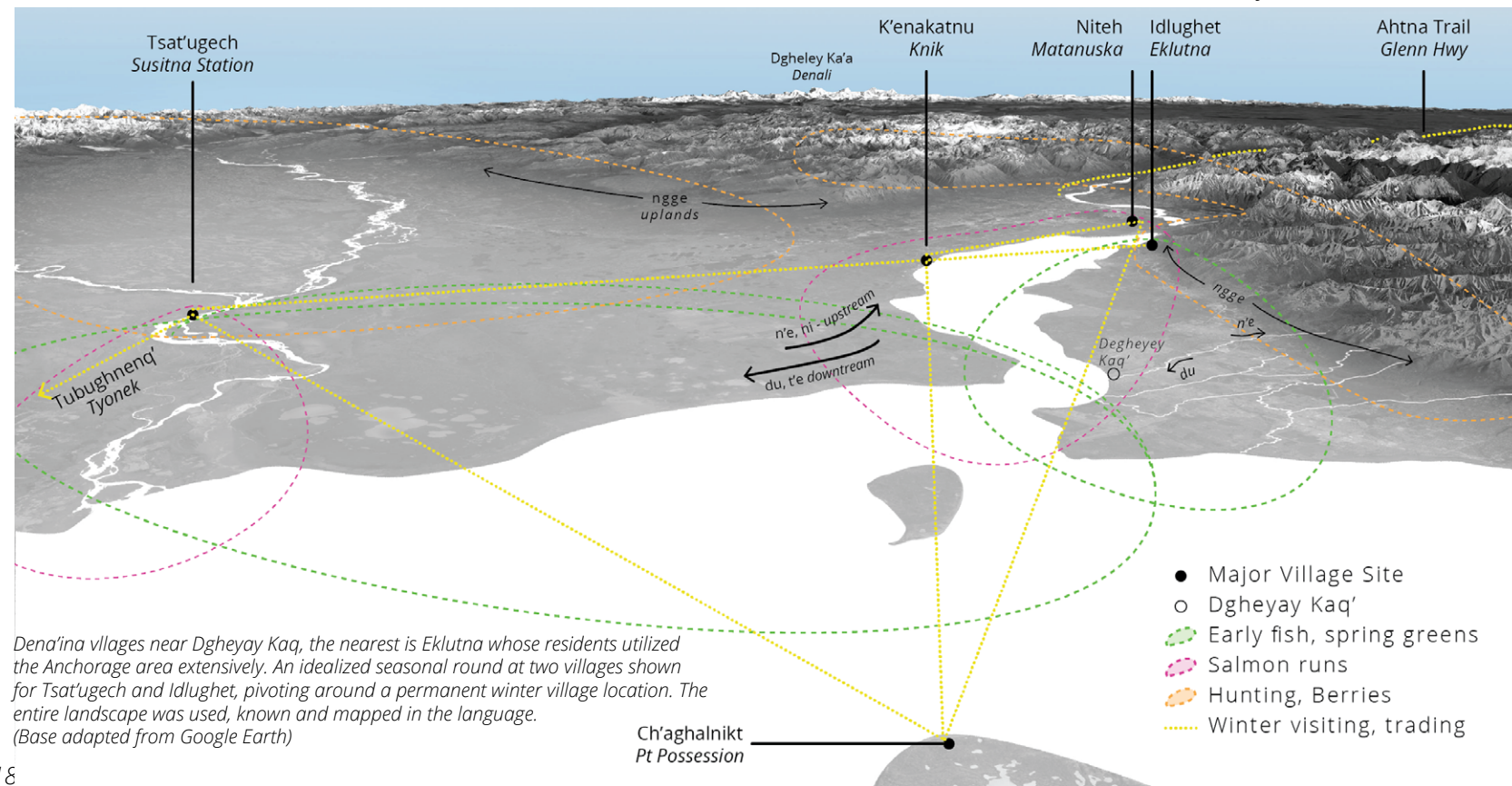
Place Names are an integral part of Dena'ina geographical knowledge and they represent lived history on the land. Dena'ina placenames are systematically structured in a way that provides a mental map in their speaking among Dena'ina people. The book Shem Pete's Alaska is compendium of placenames throughout Upper Inlet Dena'ina Elnena, with extensive context on the eliciting of the names. Although Shem Pete was not the only Dena'ina person to work on this project, his was a major contribution. Of the 1002 placenames in the book, Shem Pete knew 650 of them, and was the sole provider for about 350 of the names (Kari et al. 2016). His personal geographical knowledge bank was a result of living a Dena'ina life on througout a large homeland where knowledge of features of resources were essential to life.



Shem Pete as a young man in Anchorage in the early 1920s (Kari et al. 2016, 335). Shem Pete was raised in the traditional Dena'ina way at a time when American expansionism arrived in the region. He was well versed in traveling between both (and other) worlds.

Dena'ina Sukdu and "Pre-History"

In Dena'ina Sukdu, the traditional stories, there are three major eras, the oldest is when the animals could talk, followed by the coming of the campfire people, and the era we're in now, after the coming of the whites (Boraas and Peter 1996, in Jones et al 2013). When the animals could talk, four categories of living beings were outlined - the warm-blooded animals, *ggagga*; fish, *tuq'a*, insects, *ggih*; and plants, *ch'wala*. Stories tell of partnerships formed amongst the animals, and sometimes animals and plants. There are stories of raven, who is both very smart and powerful, but also extremely foolish, and who brought light to the land. There are stories that have provided instruction to the people on how to appropriately and respectfully handle



the animals and plants. One such story instructs the people on the first salmon ceremony. Such instructions are given by the animals themselves and have been carried through stories ever since.

In the second era, stories describe a time after the coming of the campfire people. The “campfire people” are how the animals describe the Dena’ina people amongst themselves. Stories of this era often include lessons on how to maintain balance in daily life, and how not to disrupt the proper order of things. Stories such as these hold valuable lessons in maintaining ecological sustainability through generations, by animating concepts and ethics for how to treat animals and plants, in both thought and action. Maintaining balance on the landscape is a strong Dena’ina value and results for the intrinsic inter-relatedness of the people and the lands. It is believed that animals can sense the thoughts and intentions of humans. People work diligently on their minds and their attitudes, thoughts and actions towards all things, whether at rest in the village or out on the lands. In the Dena’ina worldview, humans are in partnership with the biological world to maintain creation, with both having great responsibilities in relation to the each other. Part of a being a human is learning your responsibilities to others beings and performing them everyday, in body and mind. Other beings include the land, animals, plants, rocks, etc, anything (which is most things) that are imbued with spirit.

Dena’ina in the Archeological Record

In part because the Dena’ina hold strong beliefs about the appropriate treatment of animals, in their harvest and even in thoughts toward them, there is little in the archeological record that is ascribed to them because very little was left behind in the era before the whites came. In following the instructions of the animals, after an animal was harvested and utilized, what little remained was ritually disposed of so the animal’s spirit could continue on its journey to reincarnation, in order to return to the land to maintain the resource and the system. Land animal bones were typically burned in a fire and disposed of. The remains of fish were returned the water, which returned is nutrients to streams, which in turn nurtured the ecological system that provides the habitat for salmon spawn to survive and thrive.

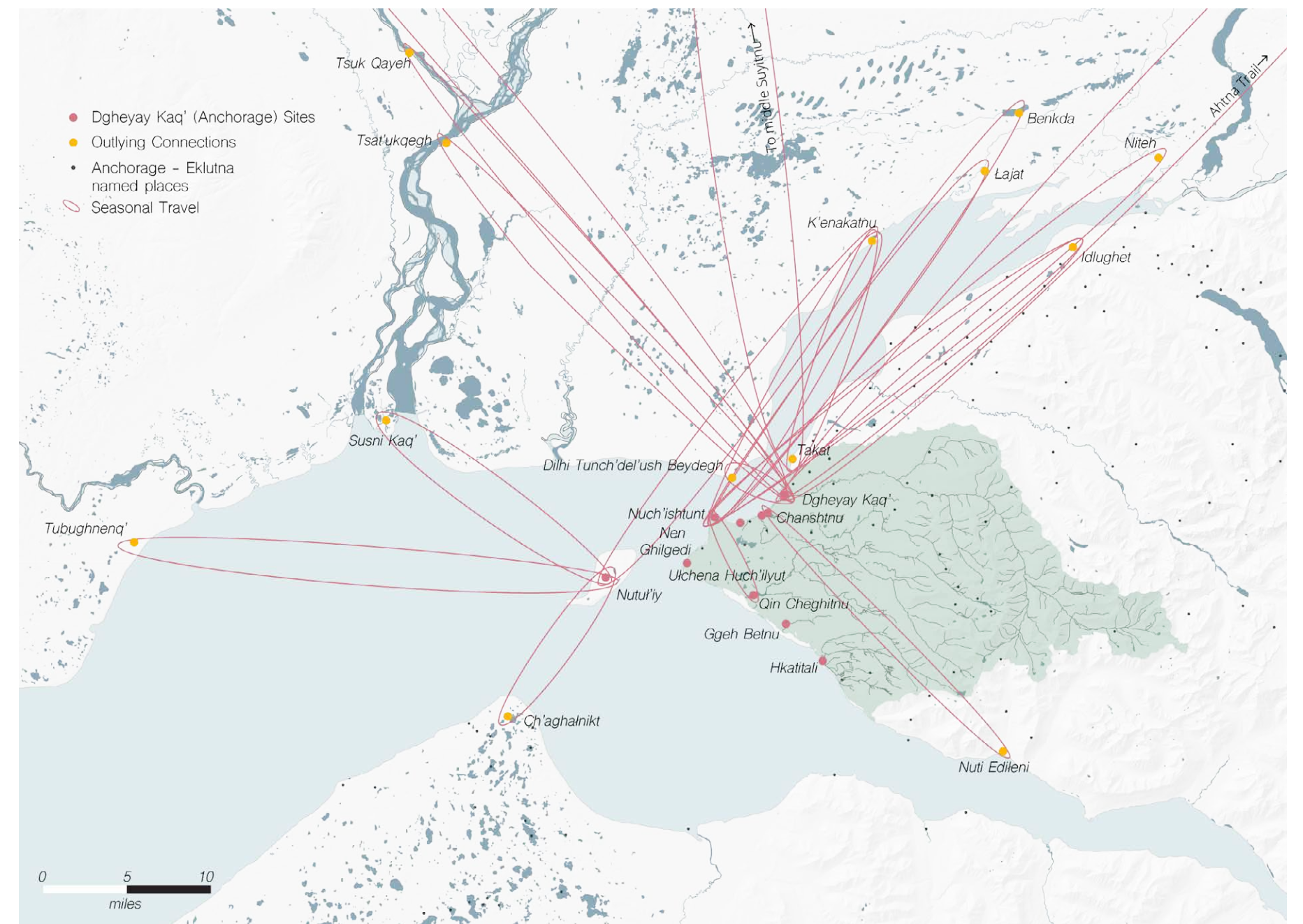
These were lessons taught by the animals. When a person’s breath dissipated from their bodies, they were cremated, along with all their possessions to release from this world, as they’ll need them on the next step of their journey (Gaul 2007, Fall in Jones et al. 2013).

In Dena’ina Elnena, there is more “archeological evidence” for the cultures that passed through the area prior to Dena’ina occupancy than there is from the Dena’ina, despite their continuous presence in the landscape for over a thousand years (Kari1989). A more recent study documents Dena’ina trail making through the landscape that marks trees and vegetation to show the way, which would require a trained eye to locate trails in the landscape (Deur et al. 2020). This also portrays the ephemerality of physical imprint on the land, as these markers pass on as the trees do, but are maintained by living on and traveling the landscapes. The Dena’ina lifeways are truly embedded in the landscape in ways that are invisible to settler ways of seeing and knowing, but their values and lessons make up what the landscape is and what it has enabled. As settler culture and its disciplines look to material objects to define people, Dena’ina ways of living with landscape, and the accompanying management and care of these lands, gives us an alternate way of thinking about cultures, objects and processes, or rituals that remake the world as we know it.



A counting cord was used as a type of calendar, to record days or special events. (Jones et al. 2013, 139).

Dgheyay Kaq’ - Seasonal connections throughout Dena’ina Elnena



Dena'ina – After the Whites

The first recorded visit to Tikahtnu, in Sukdu and in western accepted history toms, was Captain Cook's voyage in 1778, in search of the Northwest Passage. The inlet at Tikahtnu was eventually named for Captain Cook, despite his annoyance that the jaunt up the inlet was a waste of previous time in that there was no passage to the northwest. Captain Cook never got off the boat, but sent Lt James King and two boats of men to land at Ch'aghahnikt to claim the land for England. In a ceremony that would undoubtedly be curious to the Dena'ina, Captain Cook's men claimed the land by burying a beer bottle with some coins and a note, and named the area Point Possession (Wohlforth 2014, Kari et al. 2016). Unfortunately, in common parlance it is still known by its English-given name.

The story also is recorded in multiple Sukdu as it marks the beginning of a new era. Two elders, Chief Jimmy Nicolai and Doris Nicolai, related that the Dena'ina thought the arrival of the large ship might mean war, and the village readied its weapons. Through meeting and negotiation, the Dena'ina ended up trading goods with the visitors, and were puzzled at the burying of the bottle. Centuries later, kids still excitedly check the contents of bottles or cans that wash up on the beach in case it might have the coins. Other stories describe that first visit too, and scientist Josiah Spurr noted in 1898 that the Indians "preserved the tradition of Captain Cook entering the Inlet" (Kari et al. 2016).

Russian Influence

Shortly after Cook's two-week visit mapping the area and claiming the land for England, Russian influence began to percolate into the Upper Inlet area. Vitus Bering was sent to discover lands east of Russia, particularly after the furs in eastern Russia began to be depleted. The Bering expedition found land in southeastern Alaska in 1741, but it would be decades before any substantial Russian presence was on any shores in Alaska. Although Russian influence and subjugation was strong in some areas, particularly in the Aleutians, they never had much of a foothold in Dena'ina Elnena.

Prior to Russian arrival to the region, it is likely Dena'ina were at least somewhat familiar with European trade goods

obtained through network contacts from regions that were contacted prior to Upper Inlet Dena'ina (Gaul 2007). Russian trading posts were established in the Dena'ina region first on the Kenai Peninsula, in the Outer Inlet area, on what is now known as the Kenai Peninsula, and subsequently at Tyonek on the western shore of Tikahtnu in the late eighteenth century. The main post was at Kenai. Russian trading posts existed to obtain furs and food goods from the natives, to generate wealth in its home territory.

According to Dena'ina historical stories, the Russians did not engage with the Dena'ina in a respectful and fair way, but attempted to intimidate Dena'ina through acts of violence, particularly involving Dena'ina women, and even children, who were frequently taken and kept as concubines and sexually abused. In addition, different Russian trading posts were competing for resources and trade contacts with the Dena'ina, and Russians would attack the Dena'ina bands that were trading with other posts, which developed more bad relationships between Dena'ina and the intruders. It did not take long for Dena'ina to retaliate, and the period between 1786 and 1797 was marked by frequent skirmishes between Russians and Dena'ina, which culminated in three key battles. The Dena'ina



Chief Nikolai and his family at Knik (across inlet from Dgheyey Kaq', 1918. Photo from H. G. Kaiser, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives.

attacked and destroyed the Russian stations, or artel (Russian) at Tyonek and Iliamna. The Battle of Kenai, at the main Russian post, followed this and the Kenai artel was destroyed. Many Russians were killed, but also about 100 Dena'ina, presumably because of a sympathetic stance with the Russians. Following their defeats by the Dena'ina, the Russians largely departed the region. For the near century after the Battle of Kenai, and prior to the American "purchase" of Alaska, just a handful of Russians remained in the territory, probably numbering less than twenty, to operate a few trading posts. The region was firmly in control of Dena'ina leaders, who were middle men who managed trading with interior Athabascans and other Indigenous groups, so that the Russians had little to no contact with territory beyond the coast (Boraas and Legget 2013, Kari et al. 2016).

Despite not having much in the way of control of the region, the Russia period did have major impacts on Dena'ina life, particularly in the adoption of the Russian Orthodox religion. Resistance to Russian influence characterized much of the period, but following devastating small pox epidemics, Dena'ina made room in its belief systems for a new spirituality as they accommodate and adapted to the changing realities on the landscape. But rather than forsaking Dena'ina beliefs and traditions, aspects of Orthodox Christianity were incorporated into the existing belief system, developing into syncretic spirituality drawing from both traditions (Kari et al. 2016)

The US Purchase of Alaska

In 1867 the US 'purchased' Alaska from Russia for the amount of 2 cents per acre, in what became known as Seward's Folly. Russian influence was concentrated on the southern coasts of Alaska, and the Russians had remarkably few interactions or even explorations into Alaska's interior. So what did the US purchase? There was no agreement or negotiations with the Indigenous inhabitants of the state, which represent an extremely diverse landscape and peoples, from the Arctic down to Southeast Alaska rainforest. The one reference in the Treaty of Cession regarding the Indigenous inhabitants was contained in a single sentence.

"The uncivilized tribes will be subject to such laws and

regulations as the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes in that country."

The assets of the companies that operated trading posts in the region were purchased by what would become the Alaska Commercial Company (still in operation today, operating groceries in rural hub communities throughout Alaska). For the Dena'ina, life after the purchase would remain fairly similar as American ownership was implemented, until the arrival of various gold rushes that utilized Sushitna Station as an outfitting post and with the development of salmon canneries at the turn of the twentieth century (Boraas and Legget 2013). For Dena'ina living along the upper Tikahtnu, life would change dramatically with the construction of the Alaska Railroad.

At Dgheyey Kaq'

At its earliest urban beginnings, a three-mile square town site was established by congress at Dgheyey Kaq', as part of the effort to build a railroad to connect a southern water port to a supposed resource-rich interior. The town site was entirely surrounded by the Chugach National Forest, itself established by executive order signed by President Roosevelt in 1908 (Wohlforth 2014). Situating the new town site within a national forest established a now familiar tension that pits interest in conservation of public lands against those seeking to commodify



Ezi family at their fish camp at Nuch'ishtunt (Kari et al. 2016, 338). Photo courtesy of Alberta Stephan.

natural resources for private gain by opening up land for development. This narrative has been repeated multiple times throughout the state of Alaska, as well as with the much of the US, but Alaska’s relatively vast federal holdings have accentuated this divide and have made plain the fraught territory of questioning who owns the land and who should benefit from extracting its resources (Haycox 2002).

The location at Dgheyay Kaq’ was selected for its accessibility by boat as it bordered Tikahtnu, and the Alaska Railroad Commission selected the shores of Dgheyaytnu as the headquarters, from which to manage the building of the railroad that would connect the town of Seward on Prince William Sound, with the interior town of Fairbanks. From 1914 onwards, there would be a continuous American presence at the mouth of Dgheyaytnu, which would become known as Ship Creek. The growing town would become known as Anchorage, a rather generic name describing a place to drop anchor. The name was shortened from Knik Anchorage, as in the boat anchorage to serve the then demographic center of the region, at Knik, an established large Dena’ina winter village across Tikahtnu. The area became a tent city overnight as people flocked to the area to take advantage of employment and opportunities that would arise with the new railroad and its headquarters.

Dgheyay Kaq’ already had a strong identity as an important place for the Dena’ina of the region to save themselves from the long winter, as it had a strong run of needlefish in the Spring. Needlefish are small, spiny fish, but would run in great quantity and could scooped out of the river and used to make soup to power people to prepare for the busy, coming harvest season. After the needle fish, hooligan fish would be running in the region next, followed by King Salmon as the first of the salmon to return at Dgheyay Kaq’. People from the entire region could mark their Spring calendar as a time to travel miles, in some cases over a hundred miles from neighboring regions, to make do at Dgheyay Kaq. It was also the traditional fish camp territory for families at Idlughet (its contemporary name Eklutna village) and Kenakahtnu (contemporary name Knik).

Just up the inlet, at Tak’at (now Port of Anchorage), at Nuch’ishtunt (Point Woronzof) and Nutu’iy (Fire Island), Dena’ina families had erected wooden platforms as part of their harvest system to dipnet and trap returning salmon runs throughout

the summer. Fish camps were known to be at all of these locations, where families would return yearly to put up their most important seasonal food source, the salmon. Fish camps would typically consist of smokehouses to process the fish, and numerous underground cold storage pits, elnen tuh.

These important Dena’ina places were known throughout Den’aina Elnena, and Degheyay Kaq’ and surrounding locations were well connected to the entire region, as the lands had concentrated resources at specific times of year. Dena’ina people from the Upper Inlet and beyond would travel to what is now Anchorage frequently. The Ahtna people had a regular trail that connected their interior region around the Copper River to Dena’ina,. In essence, families would travel great distances, even hundreds of miles to share in the resources and for trading with the Upper Inlet Dena’ina bands.

The traditional camps at Dgheyay Kaq were displaced early in Anchorage’s history, as the railroad claimed the space for its operation. The camps at Tak’at were burned down and the land used for a refuse dump after the military took over the land in what is now Joint Based Elmendorf-Richardson, a joint Army and Air Force installation. As families were pushed out of the Dgheyay Kaq’, many families set up houses along Chanshtnu, a little ways down the inlet, a place to get good water and fish. Fish camps still existed at Nuch’ishtunt into the nineteen fifties (Kari et al 2016).



Mouth of Chanshtnu in the 1950s prior to damming the outlet to create a lake. Dena’ina families had homes here as Anchorage was developing (Kari 2007, 120).

As Anchorage developed, Dena’ina incorporated elements of the new activities into their economy. They worked as labor on railroad, provided food for the new migrants, worked as commercial fishers, as well as in the canneries. While at the same time, maintaining the resources of the area through seasonal rhythms across the landscape. But native life in Anchorage was only authorized in certain areas. Early ordinances aimed to keep native people out of Anchorage under the auspices of keeping disease out of the railroad labor camps, their mere existence being illegal. The Alaska Engineering Commission began to serve medical services at Eklutna (a days journey up the inlet from Dgheyay Kaq’) to deal with crises and epidemics, and to keep natives out of the new town. A native boarding school was established at Eklutna to further keep natives out (Wohlforth 2014). At the boarding school, the Dena’ina language would not be allowed, and the children made to speak English only. Dena’ina children would not be allowed to participate in ceremony, and were cut off from their culture as happened in boarding schools across the continent (Hirshberg 2008, Woolford 2015).

Dgheyay Kaq’ - Anchorage

In 2021, Dgheyay Kaq’ - Anchorage has grown to a population of about 350,000. The state is now connected by the one railroad built in the early 1900s, a small collection of highways, and, most importantly, airports as much of the state is inaccessible to contemporary travel modes otherwise. Anchorage is not just a state hub, but an increasingly important global transportation hub, providing a necessary stop on cross-pacific journeys to get things from Asia to the rest of the world. Cargo jets seem to land and take off here every minute of the day.

Anchorage has a number of major and minor streams draining the terrain, from the Chugach mountains to watersheds that exist entirely in the lowlands. Along some of the more notable streams, or that pass through the most developed areas of the city, are a network of trails that allow non-motorized options for getting around town. The streams are host to salmon runs, if they are healthy enough water bodies to support them.

Anchorage has an Indigenous population, self-identifying as Alaska Native or American Indian, of 12 percent according

to the 2010 census, making it one of the most Indigenous cities in the country. Anchorage also serves as a hub community for the entire state, especially as a Native hub. There are many community organizations that support Native advocacy with office in Anchorage. Indigenous activity has found a home in many western, colonial institutions in Anchorage, in a sense unsettling typical institutions like the Museum and prominent health care facilities. As a population and service hub for all of Alaska, Anchorage is home to a number of centers that specifically serve Indigenous peoples, notably at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) / Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) campus in the “U-med” district. The ANTHC campus operates a number of nested organizations that have been established to promote the health of Alaska Natives and the environmental health and wellness of homes and communities throughout Alaska. The oldest university in Anchorage, Alaska Pacific University initially founded by an Unangax man, Peter Gordon Gould, has recently partnered with ANTHC to become a tribal university after reaching a threshold of having at least 20 percent of its registered students being Alaska Native or American Indian, required to be considered a “minority serving institution” (ANTHC 2020).



Watersheds in Dgheyay Kaq’ - Anchorage

Alaska Land Claims

Anchorage is home to some of the headquarters of numerous Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) that were created with the federal passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971. ANCs have been incorporated at two levels, and the regional level, of which there are 12 in Alaska that cover the general boundaries that are associated with distinct regional Indigenous cultural groups. The regional corporation for Dena'ina territory is Cook Inlet Region Incorporated (CIRI). The second level is at the village level (most villages are also recognized as federal tribes). In the Anchorage region, the nearest village corporation is established for Eklutna Village, Eklutna Inc.

ANCSA is federal legislation that sought to extinguish aboriginal title to lands in Alaska, and its urgency was brought by the discovery of vast oil fields in Alaska's Arctic, and the need to bring that oil to market via an overland oil pipeline to a southern sea port (at Valdez), all of this requiring that the question of land status of all lands in Alaska, and particularly the oil rich ones and the lands being crossed by the pipeline. ANCSA resulted in the extinguishment of the Aboriginal title, while establishing ownership of 44 million acres of land to be held within the corporate structure (Haycox 2002). This corporatization of Indigenous land is a stark departure from the reservation system that holds lands in trust for federally recognized tribes. The ANCSA process and outcome was and is complex and controversial. There are certainly criticisms from those who see this as corporatizing native life more than supporting self-determination and sovereignty. For the purposes of this thesis, I will point out this is still contested territory in many ways.

ANCs are involved in a wide array of industries that stretch across the US economy, particularly with government service contracts. Naturally, some ANCs are much more profitable than others. ASRC, for instance, has considerable wealth derived from oil extraction in the Arctic region, while Sealaska has gained financially from logging North Pacific rainforest in Southeast Alaska. Regions with relatively little extractable resources have not had as much economic success. There is a profit sharing mechanism amongst the corporations to help alleviate some of the disparities related to the location of extractive industries.



The Afognak Alutiq building in midtown (Ch'atanaltsegh watershed). Photo copyright Ken Graham Photography.



New residential complex in downtown (Chanshtnu watershed). Photo copyright Ken Graham Photography.

I discuss the ANCs because their economic influence has enabled a different form of Indigenous urbanism than would perhaps be seen in other regions of North America. Some of the largest buildings in the city are ANC buildings, such as the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and multiple buildings related to CIRI's diverse operations. Suffice to say, some ANCs have considerable resources that have shaped the urban form of Anchorage, although more or less in a corporate manner. Some of the ANCs have non-profit organizations as well that provide community services that are definitely shaping how Anchorage is developing as a city. Cook Inlet Housing Authority, for example, has undertaken many affordable and market rate housing projects that aim to increase density compared to typical residential neighborhoods in Anchorage, and definitely represent distinct and new forms of development to Anchorage.

The relevance to ANCs in Anchorage is that there is an additional capacity than typical to effect urban development in a regionally important city, and this is being seen in the corporate office and new residential redevelopments. In addition, the naming of buildings and developments often represent Native identity, through naming for important historical figures (such as Elizabeth Place, a new housing mid-rise block in downtown Anchorage developed by CIHA, named for Tlingit civil rights leader Elizabeth Peratrovich), and Indigenous language names are beginning to percolate through the city on the sides of large buildings. These undoubtedly are bringing more of a Native identity to the built environment.

Despite the corporate presence, an engagement with landscape specific developments that would bring more of an Indigenous identity to the city through its open spaces is not readily apparent. But there does seem to be potential to activate some Indigenous related corporate funds through partnerships to implement larger scale developments as Native corporations and organizations are power brokers in Anchorage and the state.

Return to Dgheyay Kaq'

Anchorage is beginning to be known as Dgheyay Kaq', as a recognition of the original place name for the location where Americans first settled with tents in the summer of 1914. Indigenous activism, let alone the simple presence and residence of Indigenous people, does lend to a visible Indigenous urbanism in a number of ways. The Indigenous Placenames Project is the result of a partnership between Anchorage Parks Foundation, the municipal Parks department, and the Eklutna Tribe to develop strategies to put physical acknowledgement in the landscape at a handful of sites that are important to the Dena'ina and that are well-known within the city. One installation is already completed (at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park). The Anchorage museum has put an Indigenous land acknowledgement on the front face of their building in large, bold font. It is impossible to miss. The museum is also host to events and curates exhibits from a contemporary Indigenous perspective, and is elevating Indigenous identity in the city specifically. This is part of a resurgence of Indigenous culture and thanks to Indigenous and Dena'ina activists in Anchorage and Alaska at large, a resurging Indigenous urbanism is organically forming.



The Anchorage Museum of History and Art in downtown has displayed this message since 2018, which is highly visible on a heavily trafficked road. Photo from Anchorage Museum website.

Chapter 5 – Walking and Orienting in Dgheyay Kaq’

As I had been doing research on the Dena’ina lifeways in the region, two main things had stood out to me. The first is the vast distances that people had traveled to get to seasonally important resources, if no by boat then by foot. The distances traveled revealed a range of knowledges that would be put into play: of places distance and near, of the best way to travel, of dangers to always watch out for, packing provisions for the journey, to name just a few. The second aspect of the culture to strike me is the Dena’ina directional system that is oriented to bodies of water in the landscape. Within northern Athabascan cultures, a riverine directional system is used to describe places, routes and parts of a house, for example. Things are described as upstream, or downstream rather than east or west, north or south.

This way of orienting makes sense to me, a person that grew up in this landscape. I have always had a tenuous relationship with the cardinal directions, and at my childhood home where my parents live, I still have trouble with it. But I know where the mountains are almost always, and from the mountains and higher elevations flow the streams. Once streams get to lowlands, the routes can be quite circuitous, but in places like Dgheyay Kaq’, in general streams flow from the mountains to salt water, more or less in an east to west direction. This orientation of landscape has helped me immensely in figuring out cardinal directions, because I use this landscape as a way to orient in my brain. Because I know mountains are east, and that is to the right of north. I use Dgheyay Kaq’ landscape to translate east and west when I’ve been in Seattle, or anytime I need to figure it out regardless of where I am. It may circuitous mental route but it works for me.

With these two tenets, one as a way of traveling through space with human-powered means (my legs) and the other by orienting my path to the streams that flow through Dgheyay Kaq’ to salt water I have sought to continue situating myself in the landscape I call home, by attempting to embody a relational way of existing on the landscape. I do not want to claim appropriation of Dena’ina knowledge, but I am inspired by the lifeways that developed with this landscape. This landscape has shaped me and my world views more than my schooling, and was there for me when my childhood lacked instruction from the relatives, the aunties and grandmothers who should have been teaching me, and I’m sure would have had the conditions been right.

Following Barker and Pickerill (2020) have promoted, I have embarked on a “doing” with the land and sea. The Dena’ina orientation to streams and rivers shows how important these entities are in the landscape, and are imbued with their own spirit and have their own right to exist. As humans living in this landscape we use the water from the streams that are a surficial representative of the water lying in soils beneath our feet, we drill wells to it, reorient its passage through and over lands, pipe it underground into our homes where it comes out of a tap clean and ready for our bodies (if you’re lucky as many homes in Indian Country lack running water).

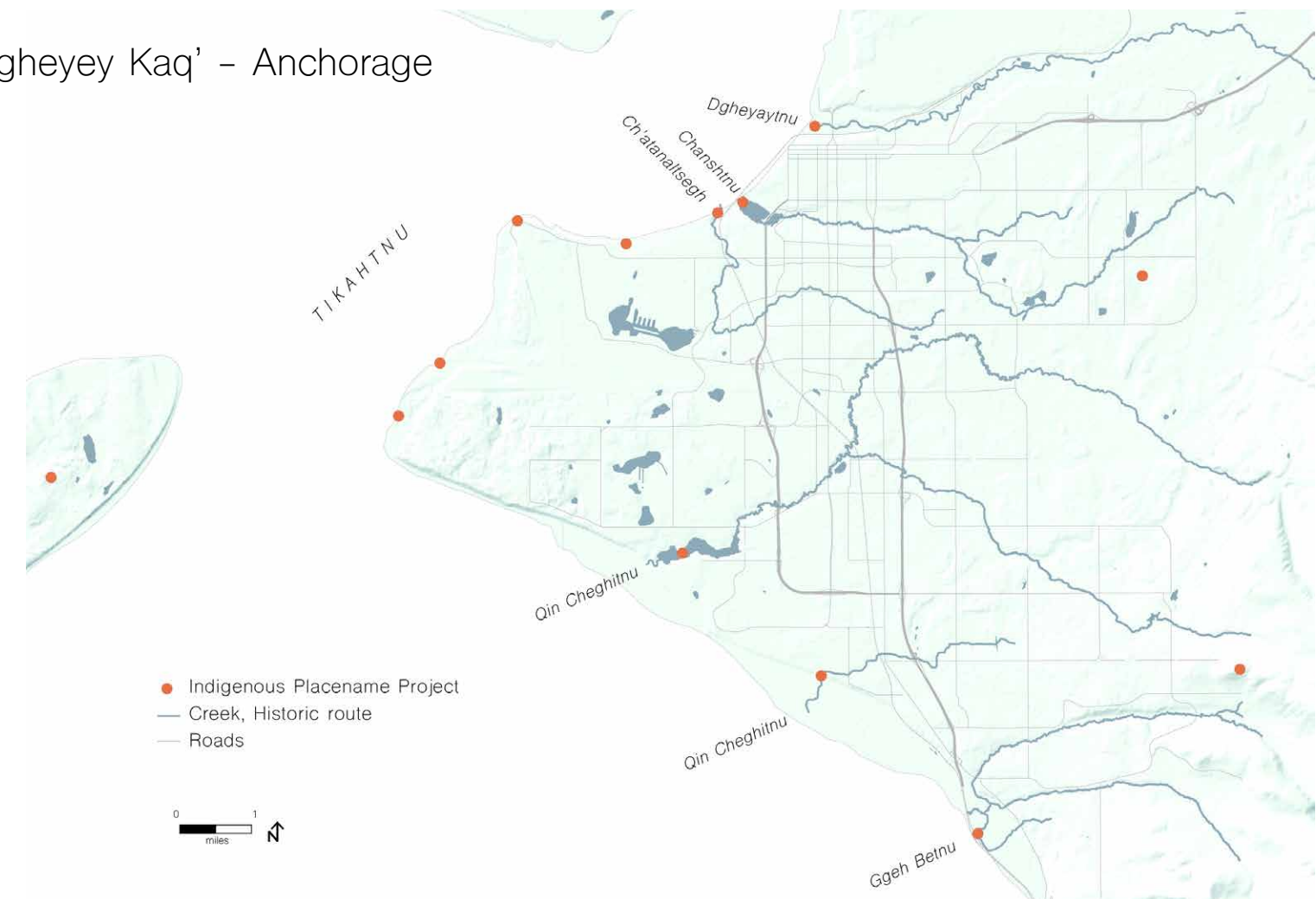
We cannot live without water. As has finally become present in American consciousness, the concept that water is life, or *Mni Wiconi*, through the resistance of the Lakota to having corporate extractionist oil pipeline threaten their sacred and life-giving waters (Estes 2019). In Dena’ina too, water is central to life, flowing water forms the basis of an entire directional system. This directional system has enabled Dena’ina people to have extraordinary precise geographical knowledge of their entire cultural region inscribed in their brains and written on the tongue (a phrase from Peter Kalifornsky). This has been exemplified and documented as in the case of Shem Pete, who could recall and locate places on western maps that he had not even been to before, but that he learned as part of growing up Dena’ina in Dena’ina Elnena (Kari et al 2016). The landscape looms large and must be ever present not just as seen and experienced, but as lives in the minds and bodies of people. These memories of experience don’t just stop and end when settler colonialism devises ways to remove people from their lands, because memory lives on in our bodies and in the

landscapes. To enact “doings” to put bodies back in relation to landscapes, no matter how urban they are now, is a way to have access to alternate ways of knowing that are derived from the landscape, and to generate new knowledge. It is the interaction with land, and all it entails, that is the radical inter-relatedness that is required of humans by the landscapes in which they live. It is how humans can learn their responsibilities to the lands and waters. And in the urban setting, it is away to reworld our cities, to allow placemaking of difference from dominant culture and typical ways of doing.

In my doings, I sought to explore the built environment of Dgheyay Kaq’ by traversing the lands between the mountains

the Tikathnu, locally referred to as the “Anchorage bowl” by means of walking three of the main streams that course through the city. These streams have been altered, some dramatically so, but they still express themselves in the landscape. I know them through my typical dwelling in the city, but I sought to know the city through the streams. These streams were here prior to Anchorage. They have their own names, some of which connect to places distance places in the mountains (Qin Cheghitnu – Crying Ridge Stream) or describe their environments (Chanshtnu – Grass Creek). I wanted to see what they have to say now and perhaps intimate what they may want from the city, to recognize its responsibilities to its streams and peoples that first named them.

Dgheyey Kaq’ – Anchorage





Drainage ditch in commercial parking lot, near headwaters

The waters of Ch'atanaltsegh emerge from beneath Lake Otis Drive, with a yellowish tinge

Grassy, low area adjacent to wetlands

Ch'atanaltsegh (Yellow Water Comes Out, Fish Creek)

April 24, 2021 - Nut'aq'l N'u (Geese Month)

Starting out on my bike from my home, I went upstream. By reviewing watershed maps I had a sense of where the headwaters of Ch'atanaltsegh were. This stream is a little challenging because it is the most impaired stream in Dgheyay Kaq, in that much of its course has been piped underground to make way for development in a previously boggy area.

Near the corner of Lake Otis and Tudor roads, a major intersection marking a southern boundary of the city's university and medical district (U-Med), the waters of Ch'atanaltsegh emerge in narrow, linear drainage swale in the large parking lot of an office building. At the time of the visit, in the month that geese and migratory birds return to the area, there was still snow in shady zones, but the parking lot ice had melted away and water slowly flowed through the vegetated swale. Traveling with the water, I came to wetlands whose outer border was shaped by parking lots and roads, and to a larger branch

of the stream in another drainage ditch. Perhaps this is the headwaters branch? Upon following the water upstream along the larger drainage ditch, it appears the actual headwaters of Ch'atanaltsegh emerged from a culvert flowing beneath Lake Otis Drive along a cross street, E 42nd Ave. Indeed, the water did have a yellow appearance as soon as it emerged from a culvert, becoming somewhat murkier beyond as meltwater and surface runoff from the parking lots added themselves to it.

I followed the water further, coming to a place labeled on some maps as University Park. The area is undeveloped, but there are no indications it is a public park. In fact I feel like I'm a trespasser, and so I move through the space rather directly, along the border of a gravel lot that provides easy passage. Beyond the border of the gravel, the area is mostly flat and low. It is toward the end of break-up season so green things aren't growing yet, and last year's tall grasses lay disheveled throughout, showing the area is likely sometimes inundated, but for now is dry, with water ponding only in the lowest areas.

Someone and their dog are moving a lot of things from wooded areas to the gravel area. They are either moving their



Ch'atanaltsegh expands into the wetland, with Moose on opposite shore

Wetland on downstream side of Tudor Road

Grassy, low area adjacent to wetlands

belongings, or taking away someone else's belongings from a "homeless" camp. As there are few people around this seemingly abandoned place, I don't inquire and continue on.

I've been walking downstream with my bike, which I decide to stash behind some bushes to explore the area unencumbered. I follow what appears to be a dike covered in trees that intrudes upon the low-lying area. Just on the other side of the dike is a real, actual wetland with emergent vegetation, water and a moose! I feel like I've found something special. It's just a marshy area, but it's a landscape type that has been eradicated from much of Anchorage to make way for development. There are two magpies harassing the moose, for what reason I will never know. The moose is annoyed, its hackles are up and it jumps and huffs. If there weren't water between me and the moose, I might be concerned since it is agitated, but I feel safe. I move along the bank to try and get a picture of them. There's still ice at the water's edge and I step out just a little to get the frame beyond branches. Just as I am about to snap the photo, my foot crashes through the ice and into the cold, mucky water below. I don't have a photo, but instead a short blurry video with some curse words, and a cold, wet foot. I decide to move on.

On my way back, I see a man walking quickly within sight of my bike. I doubt he sees me, and my bike must seem abandoned lying in the bushes. I rush back and try to be visible. Luckily he walks on by. I'm a little on guard, alone in strange, mostly unpeopled places, so quietly in my mind I thank him for not taking my bike and pick it up to see where else Ch'atanaltsegh goes. As I do, I see my first pair of dark-eyed juncos for the year, a welcome sight.

I follow a culvert across Tudor road, which is built on an embankment about one and half times taller than me through the wetlands. I have passed by car on this road so many times, and it barely registered that I was passing through wetlands. I think all I noticed is that it didn't have buildings in this space, but that's it. At the edge of the road embankment, tall trees have sprouted up taking advantage of the drier environment, and so the wetlands have been mostly shielded from view. And it is from the road, traveling 45 to 50 miles per hour, that people most view this space, or rather don't view it and just go by. And it's beautiful! It could just be that it's one of first days warm enough to head outside with just a hoodie for protection that is contributing to my elation of a fairly standard looking wetland.



Turning back towards Tudor Rd

Footpath through black spruce bog

Berry from last year, preserved through the winter uner snowback and in a bed of moss

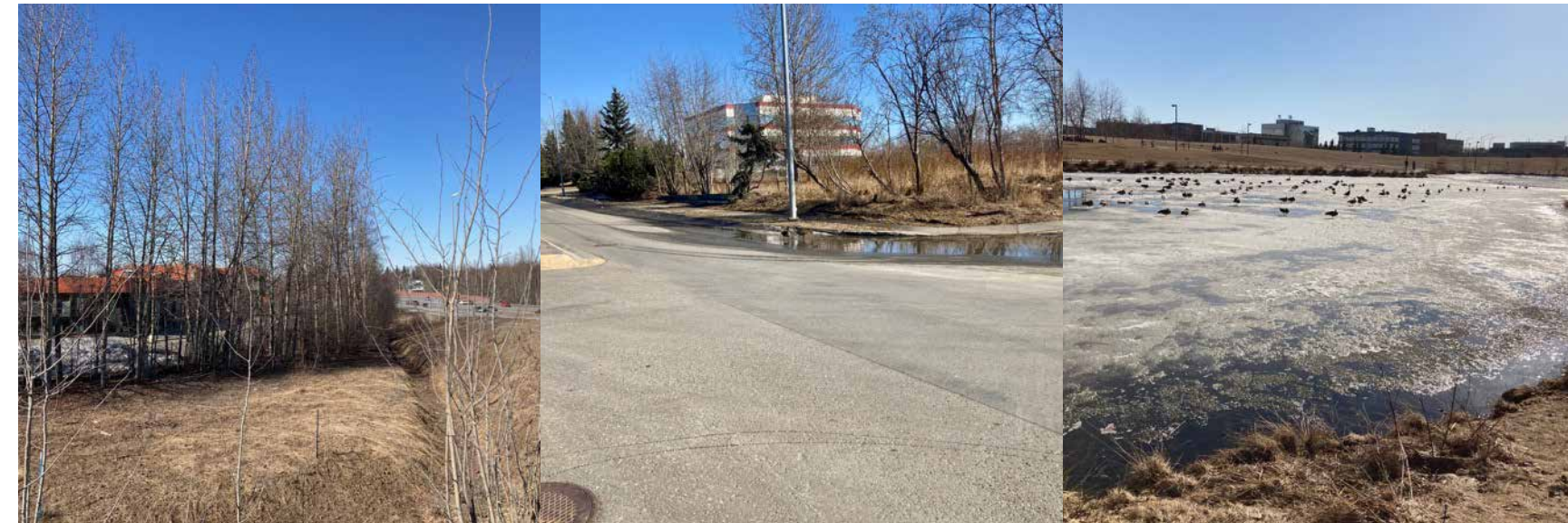
Finding this space fills me with wonder that it even exists in the middle of Anchorage, seemingly unencumbered by streets and buildings around it. So this is what it was like before it was Anchorage! I would like to cross the wetland to keep following downstream, but one wet foot is enough. I know I'll have to jump ship and move upslope to try and get around the other side. If it were winter, like it is half of the year, it would be no problem to cross on skis, or foot and I could make my own trail.

Back to Tudor road, heading away from the creek and up to a conspicuous hill, a high spot surrounded by the floodplains of two watersheds. A retaining wall borders the road, and there's always been some public art there that caught my eye when growing up, a raven pulling a ribbon through stars. Maybe it's a reference to a story of Raven bringing light to the world. I bike up the hill, a church campus, and cruise through the church access road, passing signs warning of 'no through traffic'. I was hoping there was a way I could stay on Ch'atanaltsegh side of the hill without trespassing, but unfortunately I had to dip down into the Qin Cheghitnu territory! After a small detour on the Campbell Creek trail, I climbed back over the other side of the peculiar hill to the Ch'atanaltsegh watershed. I found a small foot trail

to follow through the black spruce bog and ended up looking across wetlands back at the culvert under Tudor Road where I had just been. At least I'm back on my Ch'atanaltsegh journey. I found a low-bush cranberry just uncovered from melted snow. It would be from last year, but I ate it anyway, and quick pop of awakening flavor helped give me a boost of energy to continue down stream.

By this time I am starting to get tired and the cranberry alerted me to my now empty water bottle and the realization I have no food with me. I had taken a roundabout path to get to the headwaters of Ch'atanaltsegh on my bike, trying to find paths through unfamiliar neighborhoods, and now I'm losing steam. I'm considering veering off to the Campbell Creek again, because I could get a good salmon burger nearby. It takes a little will power to stay in this watershed, but I manage and continue along some old informal paths that border the wetlands of Ch'atanaltsegh until I get to the point where the waters disappear again.

The waters of Ch'atanaltsegh dive unceremoniously underground at Shelikof St, across the street from the Alaskan Samoan Seventh Day Adventist church. Despite it being Saturday,



A line of cottonwood trees along the New Seward Highway - a clue of expression of Ch'atanaltsegh

Puddle with geese close to historic route of Ch'atanaltsegh

The detention pond at Cuddy Park, where waters of Ch'atanaltsegh re-emerge

the lot was empty. Now I have to go downstream by finding the lowest areas possible, looking for manhole covers, cotton wood trees, or any other clue. From here, business buildings, highway embankments and pavement are the primary features of the landscape.

I cross the New Seward Hwy, the busiest road that crosses Ch'atanaltsegh with its 6 lanes and on and off ramps at Tudor. A guy with the sleeves torn off his t-shirt is picking up trash on the other side. It is the time of year when a winters worth of detritus emerges from the snow pack as it melts, to welcome our returning visitors, the migratory waterfowl. Couldn't we be better hosts?

My best bet is to follow cotton wood trees and hope they are pointing me to areas that water flows to. I see a row between the highway and the US Fish and Wildlife building. There are signs warning me of surveillance cameras – it is ok with me if they see me trying to find the creek.

At this point I'm totally unsure if I'm on the right track, but I continue across the old Seward highway following a cottonwood

trajectory, but now have very little to go on now as its all paved and adjacent lots graveled or paved over. I pass a liquor store and am headed for Home Depot, but right before I get there, some manhole covers in the road give me hope and I follow them. People appear to be camping out in their cars here. I spy a nice looking stool I could use at my desk that appears to be abandoned amongst the debris and take mental note. At the next corner at Fairbanks St and E 40th Ave, I spot a pair of amorous geese in a puddle. Next a couple holding hands walks by. I am starting to see more people, and begin to feel I am in a city again. I am also starving and thirsty, so I take a detour of 2 blocks to a grocery café, but stay within the watershed.

I finally make it to Cuddy Park after my diversion, and it is here that the waters of Ch'atanaltsegh reappear in the form of a retention pond that also serves as a duck pond at the park, which is adjacent to the city's main library. Ducks stay here all year because the water that comes out from the storm drains keeps the pond unseasonably warm and doesn't freeze over in winter. Good for overwintering ducks, not so good for salmon.

The park is abuzz with people who have been itching to get



The parking lot and ASRC office building, built over Ch'atanaltsegh

A historic floodplain wetland of Ch'atanaltsegh, now sometimes a wet lawn at Springer Park

Ch'atanaltsegh shortly after it emerges in the Kathy O Estates trailer park

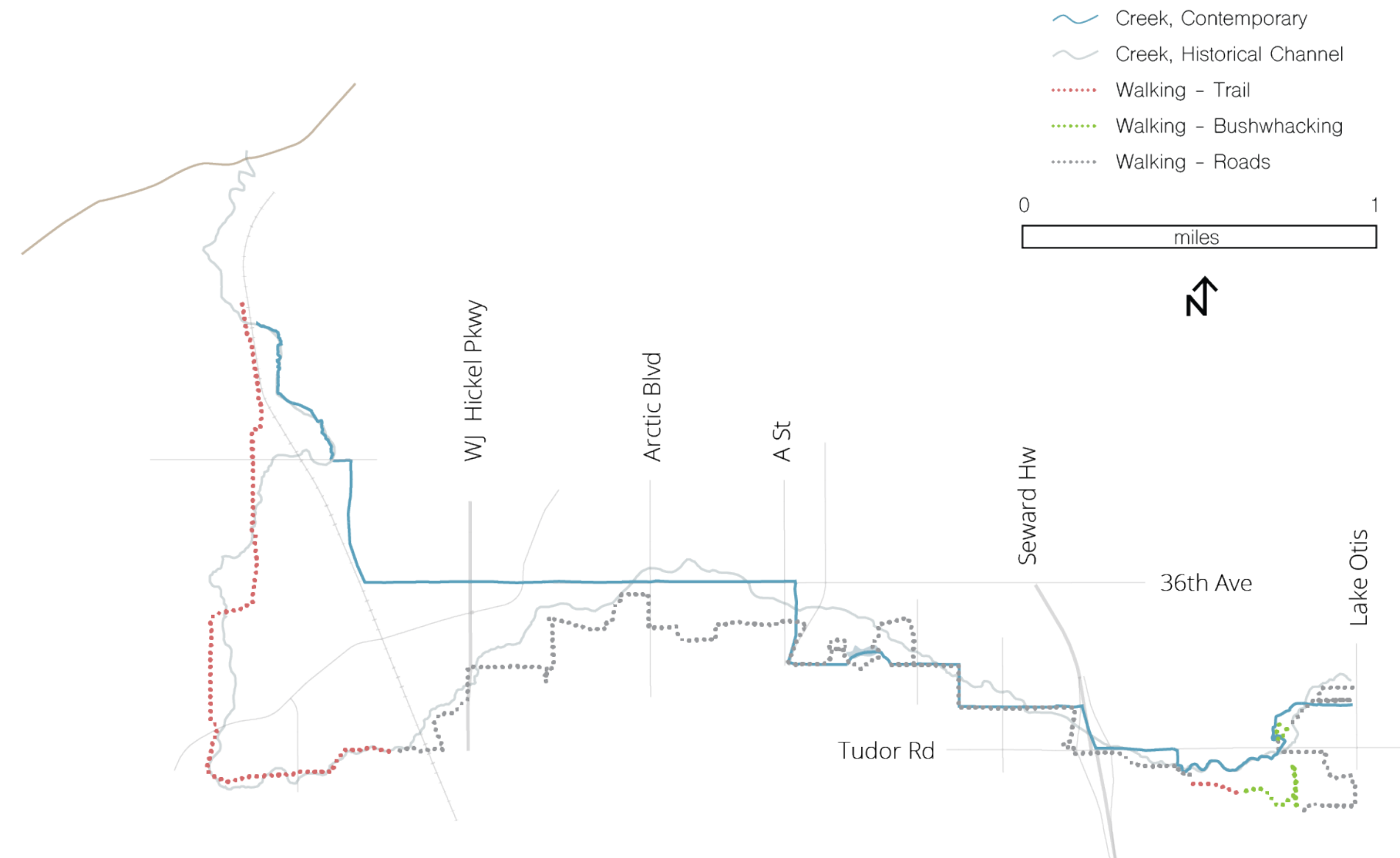
out without having to bundle up. I am surprisingly exhausted even though I'm only about half way back. On heading back downstream, I'm really unsure where to go. I cross large corporate parking lots, including one that serves the largest Alaska Native Corporation building in town, and undoubtedly the most profitable, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. It must be built square on top of Ch'atanaltsegh. I decide to pop on my bike, because I can't see what's to gain by walking the parking lot, and there are some people on one of the edges that I'd like to give distance to. I'm pedaling to where I know the water is visible, in the heart of the Spenard neighborhood where I lived when I first moved to Anchorage. I used to think the headwaters of Fish Creek were in Spenard, which I got a kick out of because it likes to portray itself as Anchorage's most colorful neighborhood, but I didn't know the creek was buried back then, I just thought that's where it began.

At this point, I'm in familiar territory. I used to bike through this neighborhood on my way to work. I spot the drainage ditch that usually has a bit of water and borders a line of cottonwood trees. I'm not sure where Ch'atanaltsegh reemerges, somewhere in the Kathy O Estates trailer park, but nowhere visible from

easily accessed spaces. Lots of eyes seem to watch the outsider biking through the trailer park, and I didn't linger, although I didn't feel unwelcome. Once Minnesota Boulevard is crossed, Ch'atanaltsegh appears like a normal creek again, with a pedestrian/bike trail and everything. I stay on my bike because my body is already wore out from padding the pavement. Part of the Fish Creek trail is pretty new, through a wetland adjacent to an area that used to have homes on it but not anymore, but there are plenty of homeless camps here. The creek spreads out through the wetland, and this is what I used to think the creek must have been like when it flowed freely. But I feel I have a better idea now that I've seen its hidden wetlands.

I take the winding trail to Barbara Street. From here the trail ends and the creek flows on between private lots and is inaccessible until it pops out the other side of the railroad tracks. Aside from a quick jaunt in Old Hermit Park, the creek is shrouded by private property and accessing its banks would be trespassing. Sometimes I'm up for it (usually on skis in winter), sometimes I'm not, but for now I go home.

Walking with Ch'atanaltsegh





The edge of Anchorage development along border with JBER lands



Chanshtnu enters the urban space after having been ditched. Barking dog tells me to move on.



The creek begins to sound like a creek as it has room to act like a creek too



The creek begins to sound like a creek as it has room to act like a creek too.



Chanshtnu flowing through moose pruned saplings



Chanshtnu has been rerouted around a central park space at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park

Chanshtnu (Grass Creek, Chester Creek)

April 28, 2021, still Geese Month.

Just after noon I was dropped off at almost the edge of town at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park. There is still snow on the ground in places, and on the whole the deciduous vegetation has yet to emerge. I have never been to this place before, and I can't quite figure out what has happened to the land here. I have to climb up a relatively large elongate hill that makes up the vast part of the park. I don't know why there would be a hill here, unless local area wetlands were stripped of their surface organics and it was dumped here to form this new terrain.

At the border of military lands, those of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) there's water ponded at the edge of the embankment as it meets the undeveloped terrain beyond, but no creek in sight. So I turn south towards a low area, and there Chanshtnu enters the urban realm of Anchorage in a ditch bordering a rectilinear subdivision. At the corner two dogs are fiercely barking from a gravel filled back yard. I feel unwelcome as these dogs have communicated to me I am in hostile territory.

As I travel downstream along the straight stretch the dogs continue to bark at me, and I feel no relief until I can finally hear the sounds of the creek over anything else. Chanshtnu doesn't sound like a creek until it gets to act like one and can stretch side to side, winding itself out and through black spruce, recovering from its ditched experience. I realize at this point that I never heard Ch'atanalsegh make any creek sounds when I walked with it. Downstream, it turns in to a bit of bushwhacking, so I climb back up on the strange hill that travels the length of this multi-block linear park space. Some ornamental trees that aren't invasive dot the land. I feel a sense of relief just to be able to see better. I know it's a time when bears are out, and it's always possible to see them, especially in Dgheyay Kaq' green spaces.

Chanshtnu enters more open space and straightens out, with more ruderal vegetation that have been heavily moose pruned. It's a curious space, so I use a log crossing to see the other side where a walking path goes around a detention pond. There are a two family groups watching ducks and throwing rocks in the water. The kid seems most interested in crossing over to the outlet of the pond, where the water joins the creek, but that is too out of bounds for the mothers. I head back to

where I left the creek. A grebe appears in a shady meander, but it quickly scoots away as soon as I enter the space.

Shortly after crossing a makeshift bridge, I regret it because now I'm on the wrong side of Chanshtnu Muldoon Park proper, the part that feels like a park and not just forgotten space, with playground, open green, and in the winter an ice skating ribbon. I can only view it from the other side, unless I backtrack half a mile or go around another long way. With so much creek ahead of me, I decide to move downstream and cross over Muldoon road with the creek. There is no cross walk where the creek flows, and no pedestrian access beneath the road.

This entire area was recently redeveloped and some creek restoration took place while a subsidized housing project went in adjacent, followed by a new elementary and middle school as well as some retail. And now Anchorage has a Krispy Kreme. Whenever Anchorage gets a new fast food restaurant, people will line up for hours just to get a taste of fast food they remember from wherever they came from because most people that live here are recent transplants, from the lands of many more fast food options.

At awayfinding post at a bridge structure, the signage indicates this is a Dena'ina land. Its the first pillar of this type that I have seen. I had heard about this project from an artist who had helped develop the design of a firebag to adorn the pillar to mark the trail as a Dena'ina space. The firebag represents life outdoors, as it was designed to hold tinder and fire-making implements. I'm glad to see it made it to the real world.

Anchorage, as many places do, has seen an increase in homeless population and people tend to make camps along the green belts. I expect to see this as I go and just walk around things. But, I allowed this to dissuade me from taking an undeveloped green belt through which Chanshtnu flows, because of a group of people hanging out at what appeared to be a narrow entrance to it. I didn't feel comfortable going through, so I rerouted to a suburban development from the 80s that appears to relatively high end (for Anchorage anyway). Everyone's yards are too similar in style, too well kept, makes me feel unwelcome. All traces of a previous landscape are gone and reformed into something more familiar to the recent settlers, not unlike the bringing lower-48 fast food here. I try and follow the green belt by keeping track of the treetops of birch, cottonwood



Wayfinding pillar on Dena'ina Ehena



Walking path in easement in what feels like peoples backyards



The sight when emerging from backyards, entering public park space



The traces of an old stream channel are visible inside of a bend of a channelized Chanshtnu



University Lake



Bridge over Chanshtnu on UAA campus

and spruce, but they get further away. I have no choice but to follow pointlessly winding roads.

It feels like cheating, but I get out my phone to figure out how to escape the suburb. By the time I get to Tudor Rd I am already getting tired and I'm not even near Chanshtnu's waters. I can't even think about the miles I have left to walk to Tikahtnu. But I trudge along on the sidewalk of a busy road for blocks and blocks until at last, I see the waters come through a triangular greenspace sandwiched between a residential neighborhood and a megachurch. My elation fades quickly as I see the waters pass under Tudor Rd to be fully surrounded by residential backyards with no access. My residential walk continues, but in a more comfortable feeling neighborhood. I don't feel out of place here. The houses and yards show a mix of character. People smile and say hello as they pass. I turn to my phone again to try and figure the quickest way to Chanshtnu. I spot a concentration of green on my phone screen next to what appears to be a school and head for it and finally, we're back together.

At the school I can walk along Chanshtnu, but its on the other side of chain link fence. But just after the school grounds

end, so does my ability to walk with the creek. It makes an abrupt turn between more houses. I feel deflated, ready to call someone for a pickup as I'm not even half way. I pull my phone out again.

In this residential area, there is at least an easement surrounding the creek. And even though I feel like I'm walking in people's back yards, I'm thrilled to be able to do so and cut through the suburban street layouts. Though I didn't see anybody else walking the easement, there was a worn footpath so I'm sure people do it. At least the kids. My brother used to live in this neighborhood, and for some reason that allowed me to pretend I was a local and pass through the backyards with relative ease, because I used to know people that live here.

Finally I popped out of the easement into a park space I already knew. I used to visit this park with my nephews who lived a block away. Not 50 feet from where I stood my sister-in-law saw a lynx on top of a shed when she was very pregnant with my youngest nephew, it hissed at her. She named her youngest son Lynxton, inspired by the encounter

But this site proved a bit tricky on which route to follow:

a channelized Chanshtnu or an old meandering creek bed still visible? I opted for the old beds. Its in a public park that I visited often with my nephews when they were little, but they now live in Arizona. I step off the designated path to walk in an old stream channel. Its not very big, compared to the channeled stream bordering the park, but maybe there were multiple channels here, now obscured from time. The channel comes to an abrupt end as it meets the new channel that has been dug several feet deeper. It finally makes sense to me how the wetlands of Anchorage were drained to make way for urbanization. Wetlands must have drained in part by diverting streams into new and deeper channels that puncture the water's previous confining soil layers so that all the water table drops significantly, land dries up, soil can be consolidated, construction fill added from somewhere else and now what once was a bog is ready for sprawling multistory buildings. This seems especially present in the U-med district where some of the largest buildings in town reside as hospitals, clinics and university buildings, associated parking lots and roads.

At the time I used to frequent this space, I was unaware of the hydrological alterations that now are glaring. The clues

are everywhere apparent. Chanshtnu empties into University Lake, which I had never questioned its origin before, but now I seriously doubts its very old. I walk along its banks. Beavers have made their mark here, many of the trees stumps have the characteristic conical shape belying who was responsible for their demise. It's a little slippery along this edge, there is still ice on the trail in the shady spot. I manage to stay upright. I see at least one other person go down, having been too eager to leave winter and its careful foot falls behind.

The lake eventually pours its waters back into Chanshtnu as it continues through the U-Med, this time through the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) campus, with a short stint on the Providence medical campus and then back to UAA. A pedestrian path gets a separate tunnel beneath Elmore Drive and Chanshtnu gets a double culvert. A couple is walking and the guy diverts to the tunnel as well. I'm sure he's seen me, so I was very surprised to find him peeing in the tunnel, and I think he was a little sheepish to see me too. I just don't get it, plenty of woods to duck into around here, and this guy decides to stink up the tunnel.



"Hobo Bridge" over Chanshtnu



Idyllic stream area, a beautiful setting for camps in the area



Footbridge over Chanshtnu leading out of black spruce covered floodplain

Once on the UAA campus, I expect there to be more interaction with creek as far as access trails, and there is for a little bit, but I find myself in back parking lots, skirting through woods, and walking beneath a major skywalk, from where you can see the creek, but no trail to actually visit with Chanshtnu. So I continue to make my own path next to Chanshtnu until it diverts further from the campus development and it is clear to me I would have to trespass on what appears to be a private residence. Such a weird spot, maybe it's the UAA president's house, because it looks kinda fancy. I take a back campus road that parallels Chanshtnu until we both cross Northern Lights Blvd, me jaywalking above grade and Chanshtnu in new culverts below the road.

Four wooden bollards are stuck in the ground where I cross, which I think marks a public access park? There is no formal trail here, but I follow footpaths beside Chanshtnu, and cross at "Hobo Bridge". I find camps but no campers, possibly abandoned. At this stretch of the creek, Chanshtnu really seems like it gets to be itself, and the evening light bounces off the creek makes an idyllic scene, meandering bends and a babbling creek. It is truly lovely and a part of Chanshtnu rarely seen, except probably by neighborhood locals that know the foot trails and of course

those that have made camps here.

I continue I follow footpaths, some quite icy. I'm not familiar with the space, but I know the actual Chester Creek trail is nearby. I assumed I would have been on the trail for more of this journey, but it apparently follows another branch of the creek. I turn around where I know I cannot follow the paths any more, because they are going through the wetlands and crossing at this time of year wouldn't work, plus I'd have to wade across the north branch of the creek. I'm not interested in that. I backtrack all the way across Hobo Bridge to where I crossed Northern Lights, where I figure I'll have to take the road. But by the four bollards, I see another footpath and cross my fingers. It's already past the time I thought I would have completed the day's journey, and I've got a few miles yet. This path skirts the edge of Chanshtnu's flood plain, on the bottom edge of a steep valley, in dark black spruce forest. It's cool here, and I start to get cold. But the space seems private, I feel it's a neighborhood walking route. I can see the edge of back yards up on the top of the bluff and hear general back yard noises. A burn barrel in the woods, and dog poop bags from their walks. I am surprised anyone comes here to collect this trash, but some generous person must do it.



Picnicking on the trail, typical wayfinding bollard in foreground



Bikers speed by



The lagoon or lake that was formed after Chanshtnu Kaq' was dammed

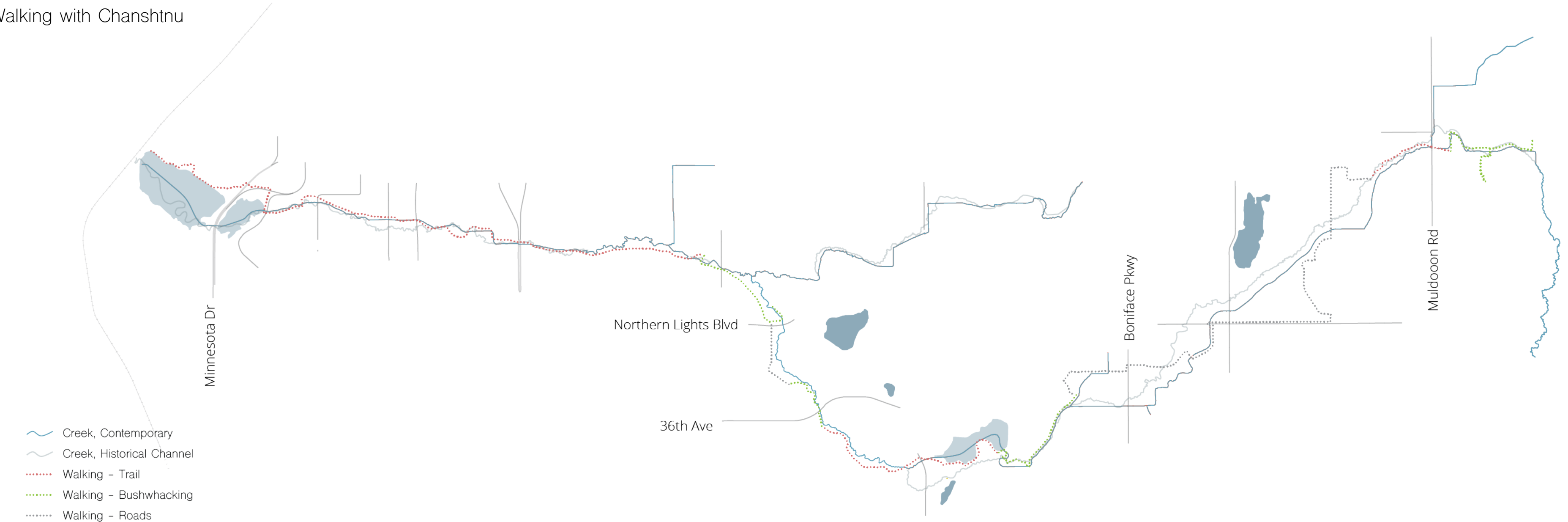
I worry about crossing the creek, but it turns out there have already been little footbridges put in place in an area where Chanshtnu forms smaller channels. I'm back in the light, and have made it to the paved Chester Creek trail. I am relieved that my last few miles will be pretty easy going.

I pass people picnicking and a few out for a stroll. I notice most people I see on the trail are on bikes, no walkers. It coincides with an area where there are a lot of people camping in the woods next to the creek. I don't feel in danger, but I am very watchful as there are not many non-campers here. I pass by some pretty big camps. I've been walking for over six hours when I thought the whole thing would take at most 4 hours. I am tired, my feet ache, my compromised knee is protesting, but I force myself forward. Approaching Valley of the Moon Park, I'm starting to see more people on the trails, and kids in the park, as the last of the camps are upstream. I move along, too tired to make much note of Chanshtnu, but it's been there all the while moving a few times to my right or left.

I finally reach Spenard crossing, marking the first of the lagoons. A sign here informs that the lagoons were created in the

seventies for bird habitat. Prior to this, Chanshtnu maintained its creek form until it reached tidewaters. There were many Dena'ina homes on Chanshtnu Creek, near its mouth, but they've long since been removed. As I make way to the second and final lagoon, I'm just about done for. I am fortunate enough to have my partner meet me here with pizza. It's really windy at the open area of the lagoon this evening, and eating in the wind proves to be a chilling experience. I make it through a piece, thankful to have food and to be able to give my feet a break. We see our disgraced former Mayor chatting with neighbors on the very popular trail at West Chester, I know he lives somewhere around here in what is now a tony neighborhood. I doubt Chanshtnu cares much about the mayor's foolish misdeeds, it has seen a lot as it wound and rewound through Dgheyay Kaq. I'm thankful to have seen Chanshtnu in some of its more free forms, just beyond Hobo Bridge.

Walking with Chanshtnu





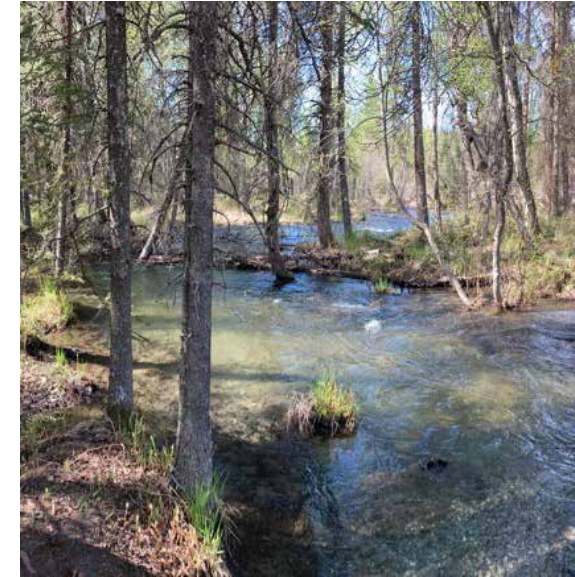
At the trailhead to start the days journey



Meeting the creek off the trail



New spring leaves illuminated



A view of creek from the trail. The creek is full from fresh snow melt of spring



Off trail, but easy passage in this area



Wet, grassy area looking towards area where creek is flowing, far from trails, difficult bushwhacking

Qin Cheghitnu (Crying Ridge Creek, Campbell Creek)

May 25th, 2021 – Baby Month

On this day, towards the end of Baby Month I was dropped off at the South Bivouac trailhead at the Far North Bicentennial Park. I think its officially the warmest day we've had yet, so spirits are high in town. In winter I cross-country ski here but I've never visted during the warm months. Every few years someone gets mauled by a bear here, so I stick to winter visits. It's a little early for the salmon, so I think bear interactions are less likely.

I quickly cross Qin Cheghitnu and go upstream along a ski trail. I go off trail to get a better look at the creek. I get my bear spray in easy access, ready to discharge, just in case. I'm not travelling far off the trail, but trees and shrubs have leafed out diminishing visibility and I like to be "bear aware." I make my presence known in the woods so as not to surprise anyone, I call out, "hey-o!" and get used to making noise in the woods. I like to be quiet when on my own and don't like to hear the sound of my voice talking to no one in particular, but I keep it up. I have found

that saying hello to plants by the various names I know for them are good ways to be audible when in the woods. It is after all baby month, K'gguya N'u, and mom brown and black bears could be out with cubs, and possibly moose with their calves. I try to be a good guest and announce my presence .

I move carefully and smell a little bit of funk, and greet rusty menziesia (*Rhododendron menziesii*) for the first time of the season. I only see this plant on the east side and wonder why. I get to the creek and see it rushing down, and decide to head back to the trail where traveling is much easier. Downstream, the path leads to Rovers Run, where people th bear interactions happen.

I find I am as joyful as I've been at any time this year, its bordering on hot, its absolutely beautiful, the air is scented with fresh new leaves and I must be in a forest bath utopia right now!

You can't always see Qin Cheghitnu while on the trail, but for the most part its close enough. After a while when I can no longer hear it, I decide I should be closer. So I bushwhack it over and begin following along the flood plain banks. There are small

footpaths in most places on the bank. They may be maintained more by wildlife than people, but I acknowledge I am walking in others footsteps. I find some high bush cranberry from last fall and taste the sour sweetness. I put the large seeds from the fruit in my pocket, because they've been eradicated from most yardscapes, butv I like them. I'm sure I'll forget the seeds, but maybe they'll find their way to soil even so.

Bushwhacking takes a while, but I feel I'm in an Anchorage rarely seen and so don't mind. I finally get to the main trail system again where walkers are out enjoying the trails and families exploring the river. Most access to the stream bank is blocked off for restoration. I think the whole area is closed to people when the salmon are running and bears are eating them.

After a little ways, Qin Cheghitnu veers away, but the trail crosses again soon where I see paths following the creek and can't help but follow it. I'm in the woods again on tiny trails, but the passage is fairly easy. At some point the trail just dies out, I figure I'll pick it up again soon and trudge ahead, following whatever visual clue that leads me. I do this for a while until I find myself clumsily attempting to find the tops of grassy hummocks

to walk on the ground is saturated. I almost can't remember how I got here. I can hear the creek rushing off to my right. I am barely moving because of the terrain. I hear cracking and crashing towards the creek. My nerves were already on guard, being alone in the woods, and now my heart is racing. I don't want to see what is making all that noise (I kind of do actually, but I don't need to be stupid). I'm already moving dreadfully slow in this terrain, and do my best to get to higher and dryer ground where I can at least see where my foot is going to land. Once on stable ground, I try and take stock of where I am, but I'm not sure how far away I am from trails and roads. I get a cloying sense I need to turn around. I may be close to a road, but I have a feeling there will an obstacle to get there. I follow my instincts and turn around, but stay on the high ground. I need to go back and cross the creek at the last bridge, and just try and stay on the trail.

I am pretty disappointed. I feel like I should have the courage to go on, but maybe the landscape is telling me that now is not the best time. On the way back I notice vegetation coming up, sweet woodruff and spirea. Its so nice to see them, as the settler residential neighborhoods have ripped out anything native, save for the spruce and birch trees.



On trail through spruce forest



Biker passes as we both approach bridge over Qin Cheghitnu, where trail and stream again share space



Anchoragites enjoying warmest day of the year so far, by cooling off in icy waters.

Once I cross the creek again I'm in black spruce forest, which smells so different than the mixed deciduous woods I've been in. I can't help but feel I am not doing what I set out to when I'm not by the creek. I'm far from the main channel by now, and I just have to let it go. I end up taking what I hope is a short cut through the woods, it ends up joining a utility easement, and though a little wet, does not get close to the creek. I rejoin society at some ball fields while a game is going on, and I wonder how often the spectators see people just emerge from the woods.

I find my way to the main Campbell Creek trail. As has been the case, the actual creek is off meandering somewhere else to the left as I go downstream. Bikers pass by me frequently, constantly yelling "on your left!" even when I preemptively wave at them so they could pass me in peace. Nothing short of eye contact works. I know they're trying not to startle me. I think if I hadn't just come out of the woods, I would be less annoyed at their yelling.

I do make one more off-trail attempt to find where Qin Cheghitnu flows, but I am back on the trail shortly after coming across multiple camps in the woods with people and fires.

Fortunately, it doesn't take long for Qin Cheghitnu to join me, as the trail crosses over a bridge and I find the creek on my right. There are a few more bridge crossings, as trail and creek meander together. As it is the warmest day yet, people are out in the water! I don't ever see this in any other creek in town, They're wading in, in their normal clothes, some are floating by on various watercraft. I am grateful that this creek has been spared the fate of the others in town, and it can be itself. As itself, it can flow freely enough and be clean enough that people can be in it. It has the healthiest natural salmon runs of any in town too, hence all my worry about bears.

I walk knowing Ch'atanaltsegh is close by, as I stumbled on to this trail during my Ch'atanaltsegh walk. As I emerge into a sunny opening, the trail continues to be enlivened by walkers, bikers, and skateboarders. I walk past two ladies walking with wine cups enjoying the evening. The space between backyards and the trail are filled with raspberry bushes, and I imagine kids go crazy here in August.

I take a little side trail to look over Qin Cheghitnu. I consider following it further, but its getting to be evening and I'm getting



Grassy open area adjacent to trail



Me and the wine ladies approach the Old Seward Hwy



Awning near road underpass where I couldn't place myself.

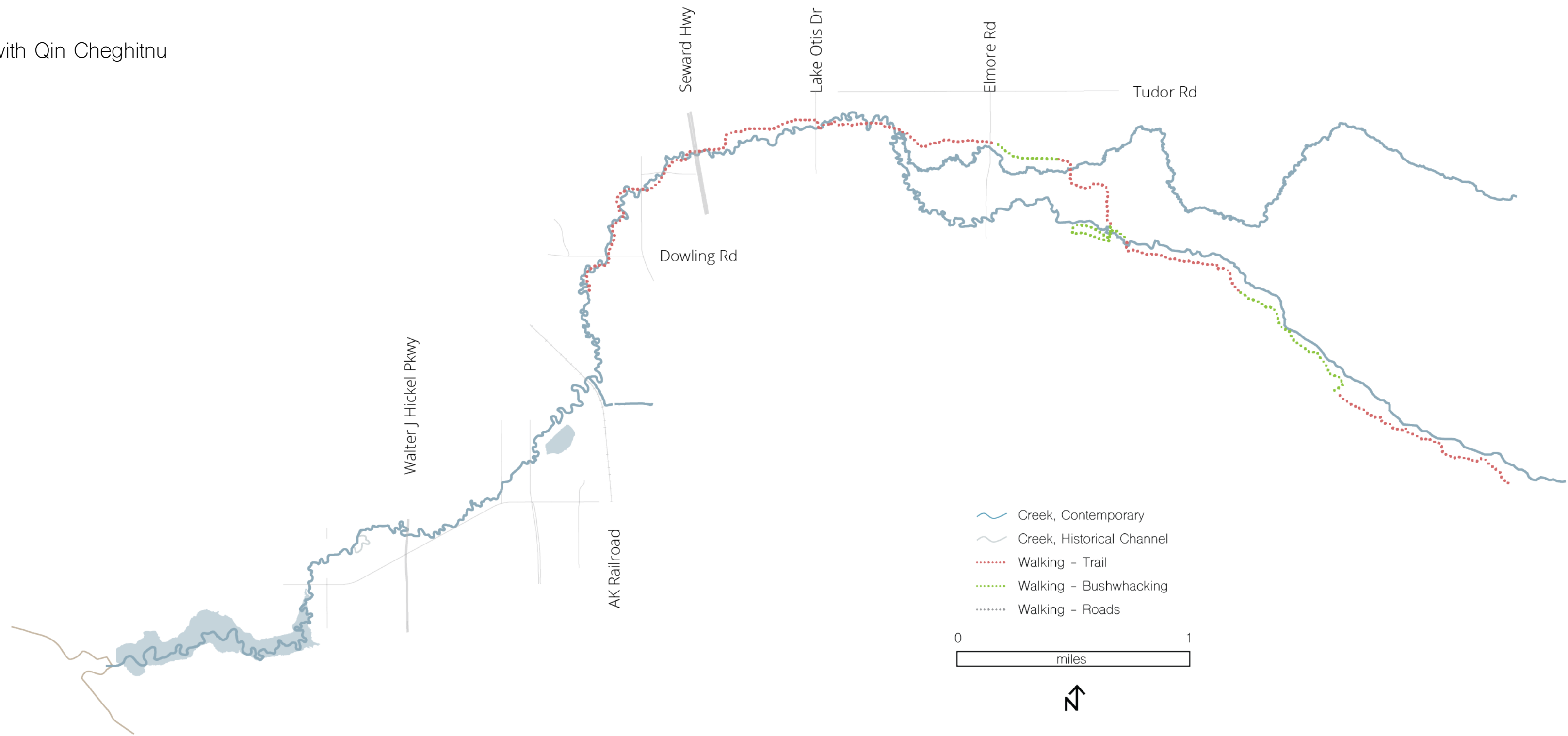
hungry. Back on the trail, I see the wine ladies ahead of me. How did that happen? I wasn't off trail long, and last I saw them they were going the other way. I start to hurry along, as I'm going to meet a friend who is bringing tacos about a mile downstream. Just after crossing under the Old Seward highway I pass the wine ladies and they stop me. My notebook was about to fall out of my bag, and they save me from that devastation. On sending me on my way they say "we're all friends on the creek!" Its cheesy, but I appreciate it. A woman passes playing the flute, whom they stop because they know her too. The amount of industrial buildings that back on to this wonderful little green belt is surprising. It would be nice to stop in at a café if one existed. I know I would stop in right now. My legs are definitely getting weary and I'm focusing on getting one foot in front of the other. On and off the trail over six hours, plenty of miles, a lot of bushwhacking, some unfounded fear for my life, and I am exhausted.

I come to a major road underpass and I can't place it. I have no idea what it is or where I'm at. As I continue downstream, I find my mind wandering to other matters more often. There's less to scrutinize here than on some of my other creek ramblings. There is simply a creek here and a trail, and finally the two do

not separate much. I guess that's why I ended up disoriented, my mind traveled elsewhere. That's not an option in the woods so much, but in the city I can check text messages and walk, and nearly lose my notebook. Its kinda nice, like floating. I wish I was floating on the creek, I think that would be a legitimate way to explore these paths but I hadn't previously considered it. This is the only creek you could do that on, the others go through small culverts, disappear altogether, or are dammed.

I get to the meeting place and look for a good picnic spot. I head for one, but out of nowhere some women, who by their dress appear to be Russian Old Believers, nab the spot! That's ok, there's plenty of places. But where did they come from?

I am not making it to the Campbell Lake today, near the outlet of Qin Cheghitnu. My body just isn't up for it. But I feel Qin Cheghitnu is well taken care of, more than the other creeks. It has been allowed the space it needs to be a creek. That is until it gets to the end, where rogue homeowners dammed the outlet and made a lake over the whole floodplain. But the lake is inaccessible, because of said homeowners; I couldn't walk there anyway.



Chapter 6 – Looking Forward: Opportunities for Indigenous Urbanism

My walks through Dgheyay Kaq' are in a lot of ways unremarkable, in that they were simply walks taken alone by one individual in lands I'm trying to understand better. A major component missing from explorations are that they are primarily conducted by myself, or without other humans and their perspectives on the lands, their stories. But I was not entirely alone. My walks, or my doings were amongst relatives, some I don't know very well and some I count as regular acquaintances, such the birch and the spruce, the raven, the and the chickadee. Some I respect and I fear, but I value sharing space with (such as bears and moose). Many I would like to see more often on my day to day, as mentioned on my walks in Qin Cheghitnu as the vegetation leafed out and I met for the first time in spring many of the native plants that have been scraped off the urban landscape, piled up in incomprehensible hills (as in the beginning of the Chanshtnu walk), to dry out the once wet land and make it habitable for American colonial expansion as an urban environment. So much has been destroyed to replace, and I would hope that in city-making humans could do less destruction in order to make anew. I think it is not enough to plant native plants, but instead there must be room made for Indigenous ecologies, entire systems of relations, and not disjointed parts spread across the city, for instance to showcase native plants in a small plot.

It seems landscape architecture is more apt to consider the Native when it comes to native plants and has a harder time inviting partnerships with native people on urban projects. But even with plants there is struggle, and so much of my discomfort that I felt in some neighborhoods can be attributed to the wholesale absence of Indigeneity right down to the plant level. There is work yet to be done that could be decolonial in nature (though not decolonizing) in allowing plants to have the space and

relationships needed to thrive in an urban environment (Mastnak et al. 2014). In the one plant related landscape architecture class I took, the utility of native plants in the urban landscape was more or less tossed out the window, with the argument that the urban environment is nothing like the primordial natural landscape (which is arguably a myth, see previous), and does not have the conditions that will allow native plantings to thrive, let alone survive. This argument makes sense given the settler colonial legacy of urban development that has always sought to destroy in order to replace, but also landscape architecture's complicity in destroying dynamic interrelations to coexist in a city, and in the process ascribing a Native nature to a long gone past. Native plants are not people, but they are certainly related within the landscape, and in Indigenous worldviews, plants were granted essential personhood, or agency.

It wasn't just the absence of native plants that make some places seem inhospitable to me, but also the design on the land that erects borders around privileged spaces to demarcate them as civilized. Part of my discomfort is undoubtedly from being a brown person walking through overwhelmingly white spaces, with plenty of capital, labor and chemicals to maintain them. There are markers in that landscape that tell me that it was not built for me and I should move along as quickly as possible. An Indigenous urbanism could counter spaces of exclusion and show the value of relationships with people and land, to make people feel welcome on Indigenous lands and invite people to be good guests on the land as well.

Even within what is already built there are opportunities to acknowledge Indigenous landscapes. The creeks that already have signs written with their English names could also show the Indigenous name, at crossings and typical points of encounter

with the stream. Similarly, wayfinding bollards along the creek-named trails should also display the Indigenous creek name. The bollard already exists at almost every half-mile along the creek trails, it just needs a plaquard to show that Chester Creek is Chanshtnu, as it has been known for generations before the railroad changed this place. The placenames themselves can provide a marker to indicate the presence of different worldviews that have shaped the land. These additions will not replace how the landscape is typically viewed, but will add to how the landscape is interpreted. This type of intervention is already being called for in the aforementioned Anchorage Placenames Project.

There is much remaining in the landscape that could be a reference for an environmentally and culturally related landscape in Anchorage, where landscapes weren't entirely destroyed to be made into something else. Some of these locations appear to be ripe for implementing open space design with and for Anchorage's Indigenous residents. As a hub for the whole state, and with a significant population identifying as Indigenous, opportunities for Indigenous placemaking should always be explored as new projects are implemented in Dgheyay Kaq', as part of acknowledging Indigenous urban landscapes and developing relationships with the land and its people.

A few sites on the landscape that I noticed during my walking, but also from my residential knowledge of the city, are worth mentioning.



A typical wayfinding bollard along a creek trail in Anchorage could easily display the Dena'ina name, Chanshtnu.

Ch'atanaltsegh – Łikaqa Betnu

As described in the walk, much of this creek has been re-routed and piped underground as part of the designed run-off drainage network. Much of the piped route also coincides with sewer lines transporting sewage to the primary treatment plant at Point Woronzof, also known as Nuch'ishtunt (HDR 2019). Bringing the creek to daylight where it is paved over and piped is the goal of a community group that has formed as the Friends of Fish Creek (FOFC). A daylighted Fish Creek will bring back an ancestral landform to the city, having the possibility of also bringing back salmon species that the Dena'ina managed in their harvesting practices. A reintroduced landform and waterscape from time immemorial has the potential to transmit information from a long and storied past that can provide much needed grounding in time and space for a relatively young city that has been too eager to forget its home is on Indigenous lands. Ch'atanaltsegh can help form a basis to a resilient and storied future by enabling socio-ecological habitats and functions within a potentially growing, sub-Arctic city in a time of rapid environmental change.

The project of daylighting Ch'atanaltsegh would also provide an opportunity for a 'lessons learned' in urbanism, in relation to the importance of allowing space for riverine systems to work within cities, along with the benefits they can provide to a city. Wrapped in the lesson would be the importance of acknowledging and honoring Dena'ina Ełnena. As the daylighting project moves forward and as there are opportunities to rethink open spaces along the proposed or ancestral creek routes, Dena'ina people should be consulted with and involved with the conception of its design. The FOFC has acknowledged the creek flows through Dena'ina Ełnena, and uses the Dena'ina names for the creek, but more work towards partnership to identify opportunities for Indigenous placemaking are needed.

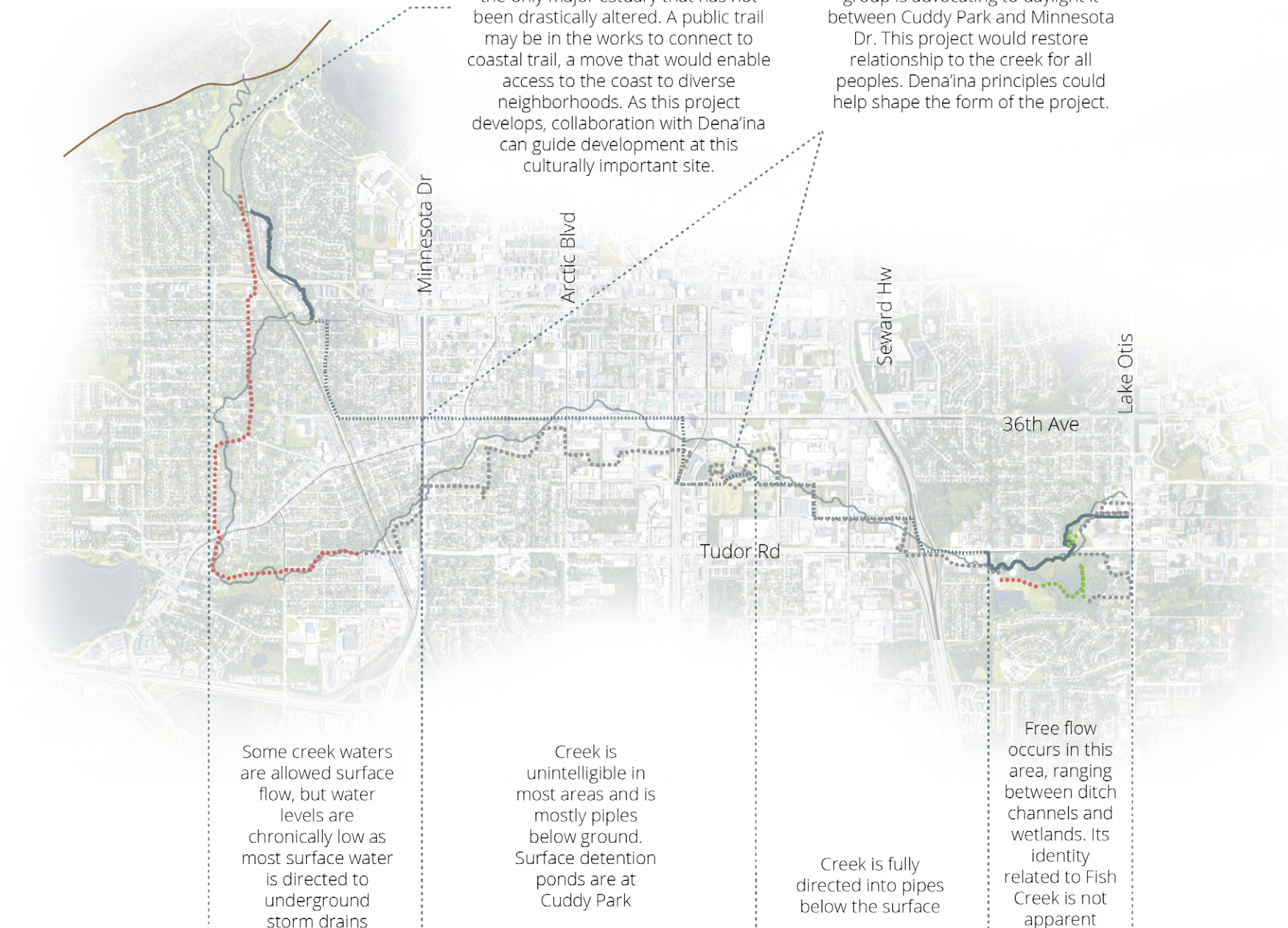
The portion of the creek known as Łikaqa Betnu, translated to King Salmon Creek, can be viewed from the popular coastal trail, but otherwise there are no legitimate access points to it and any access involves trespassing on Alaska Railroad lands. It is the only estuary within Anchorage that has not been drastically altered and provides opportunities to interpret the natural landscape as an important place for Dena'ina people who caught salmon that returned to spawn in the creek. Its

name alone indicates this place as important to Dena'ina, as King Salmon or Łikaqa, were an extremely important resource. In a recent city election, a bond was passed that provided funding to extend the Fish Creek trail to the coastal trail, which would activate the entire estuary and should be seen as an opportunity to work with Dena'ina peoples to inform the designed intrusions into this existing space, and to be sure that no more of this place is destroyed in the making of a new community resource. This project can show how it is possible to accommodate place when makin something new, rather than destroying its essential essence. It can be decolonial.



The outlet of Ch'atanaltsegh, known as Łikaqa Betnu, or King Salmon Creek. The view is upstream from the coastal trail bridge.

Ch'atanaltsegh – Łikaqa Betnu Opportunities for Indigenous Urbanism



Chanshtnu

As Chanshtnu emerges from the East Anchorage residential complex of neighborhoods, it flows into a hydrologically altered space, but one with traces of its riverine past at the same time. The juxtaposition of an ancestral river bed that can be traced and walked, until you are confronted with the human-made, simplified channel is another location that shows how urbanization affects landscapes, or that shows how historical events have reinterpreted and re-engineered the landscape. Although the stream here has been reoriented, it still functions as a stream as it bisects a past riverine morphology that still remains through topography. In revisiting this space a second time after my walk, I approached the area from what is the ANMC medical and ANTHC office campus, that at any day of the week (except for maybe during Alaska Federation of Natives convention), more Indigenous people from the whole state are congregating for medical care and for employment in health and public health industries. It is also a major employment provider for Indigenous peoples, as a set of tribally run organizations, primarily for the benefit of Alaska Native peoples.

The opportunities along the floodplain of Chanshtnu as it flows adjacent to the ANMC/ANTHC campus are palpable. Although the campus itself expresses Indigeneity by its mere existence and sheer size, and through its architecture, there is little in the way of open space designed for the campus aside from roads and parking lots. There may be some grounds accessible to those receiving treatment or staying at the long term housing at the campus, but I have not personally had access to any of these. I think a park or open space designed with Indigenous values and largely as an outdoor gathering space for Indigenous people from all over the state could be precedent setting. In many Indigenous cultures in Alaska, time for gathering was traditionally a winter activity, and many events are held indoors and are now accommodated by contemporary and common architecture, for small gathering and large intertribal gatherings (such as the Alaska Federation of Natives convention held at the Dena'ina Center). But contemporary modes of Indigenous urbanism invite new ways to think about public urban space.

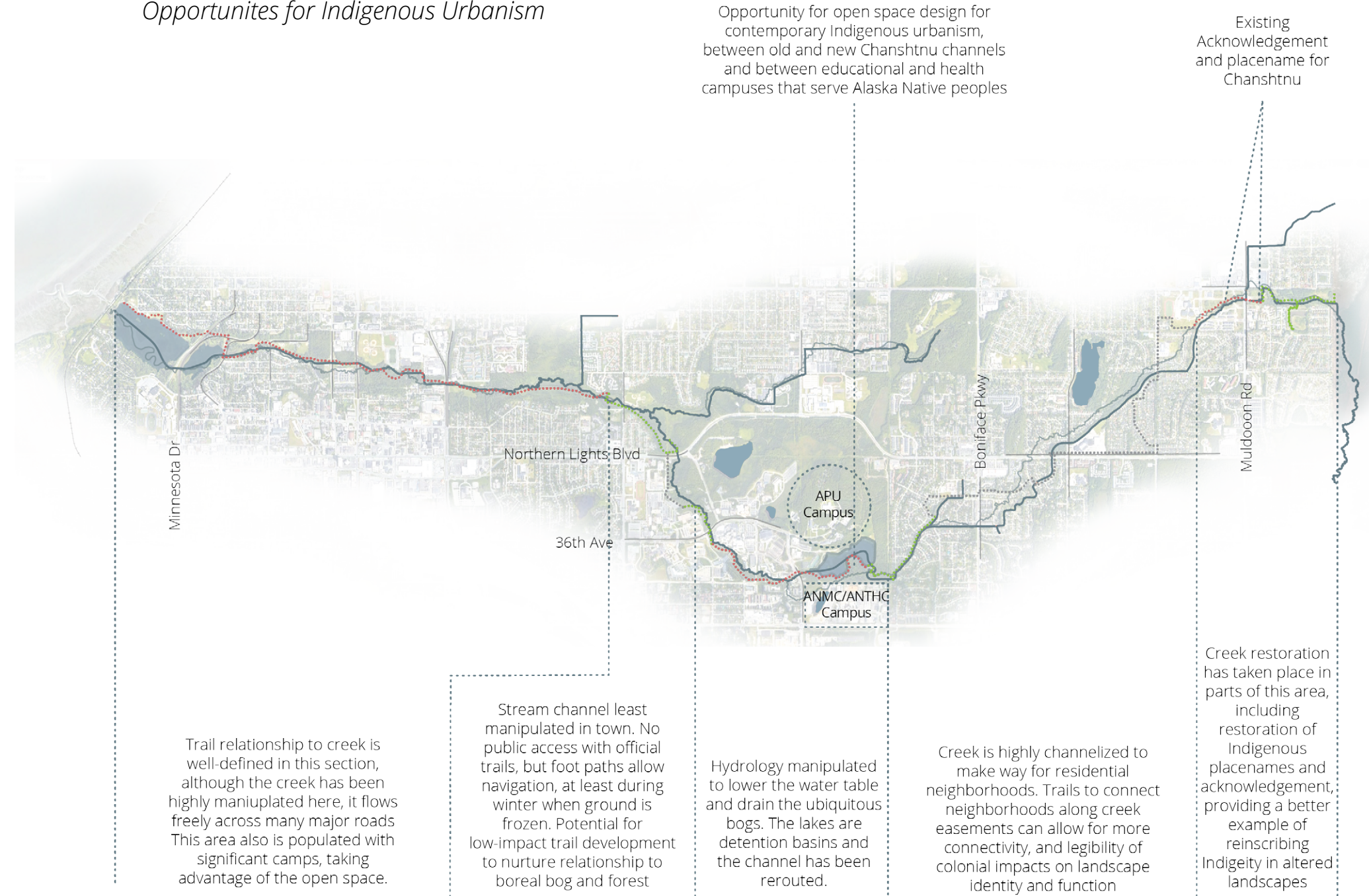


View shows the only solid (not informal) path transition from the ANMC/ANTHC campus that joins the Campbell Creek Trail at the edge of the ANMC campus.



An informal path near new and old Chanshtnu channels.

Chanshtnu Opportunities for Indigenous Urbanism



Qin Cheghitnu

On walking through Qin Cheghitnu, I walked through terrain that was undeveloped and had many relatives still living there that could help people foster relationships to the landscape by being able to observe areas that had not been subsumed by urban development. I had trouble navigating this area because of a lack of contemporary infrastructure, but I don't think that is all a bad thing. I think its good to have opportunities to get lost in the woods while in the city, to be aware of the potential of wildlife encounters. I don't know if I would recommend solidifying the trail to creek relationship extensively. The creek has been allowed to maintain its space in its upper reaches and supports important habitat for resources that are important to Indigenous lifeways. I do think, however, that there could be some way to orient people along select new paths or where the stream is not obvious, or in determining how the branches of the stream come together. I have passed through this area before, and I didn't realize the different branches I was crossing until I tried to follow just one.

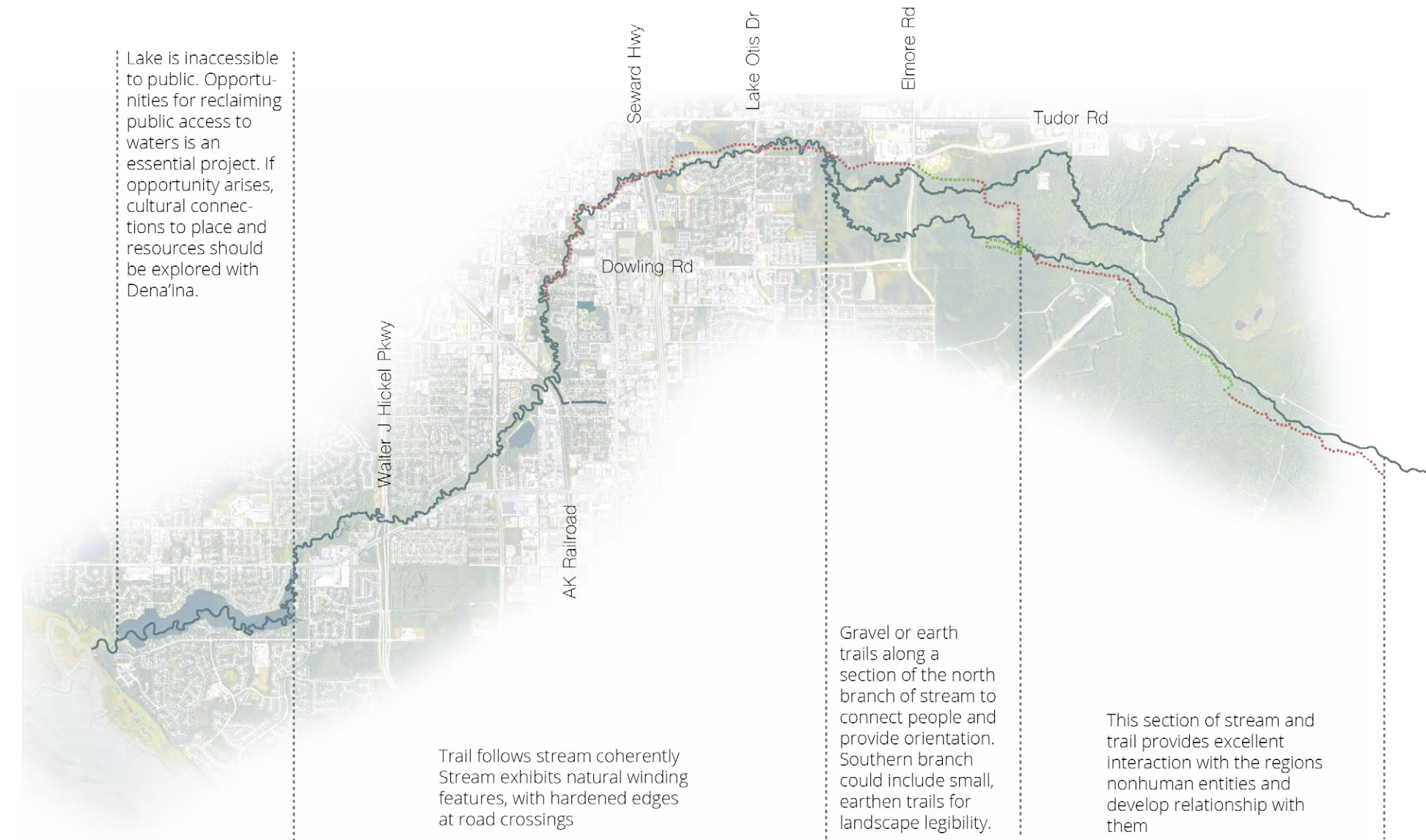
Although my walk along one of the main branches of Qin Cheghitnu was not fully complete because I didn't walk all the way to its outlet, I would like to point to Campbell Lake as a hopeful option for an interjection of Indigenous identity. As mentioned, private homeowners have attempted to privatize a public resource by blocking off access. The lake is a public resource because it has been determined a navigable waterway by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and is managed with public resources and even stocked for recreational fishing. These public resources should not be spent on an elite minority that is blocking access to the general public (Landfield 2019). The homes around this lake, as many waterfront properties, are home to the relatively wealthy. As in all lands in Anchorage, they are Dena'ina lands. If an opportunity arises to secure public access to this resource (currently all surrounding land is privately held), Dena'ina people should be involved to remind those that have attempted to not just separate Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters, but all peoples to a local, valuable resource. Qin Cheghitnu is the least impaired creek of its size in Anchorage and hosts salmon populations that help create urban bear populations, and foster relationships between humans and their non-human relatives.

These sites of potential Indigeneity were identified with a close walking and reading of the landscape. Surely, more involved explorations of place, with the people of that place, will lead to greater insights. I optimistically selected sites that I would like to see expressed through a contemporary Indigenous urbanism. But it must be emphasized that I am one person, who is not Dena'ina, but is Native American who shares a history of settler colonialism. Actual design of these hypothetical sites are beyond the scope of this thesis, but any such project must be done in partnership and collaboration with Dena'ina and all Alaska Native peoples, and preferably led with Indigenous values to benefit Indigenous communities, to enable more relationships between people and land in urban landscapes to work against the separations and the dialectical nature of modernity and settler colonialism that has proved to be a devastation to all humanity, extending to the global scale, and rendering very possible humanity's demise on our shared Mother Earth.



Anchorage residents during a "Storm the Lake" event at the lake at the outlet of Qin Cheghitnu, organized to demonstrate public should have access. Winter conditions made access and gathering easier than is possible in summer, without watercraft or personal float plane. Photo from Anchorage Daily News.

Qin Cheghitnu Opportunities for Indigenous Urbanism



Chapter 7 – Reflections

The first time I heard the term Dgheyay Kaq' would have been in summer 2019, after living in Anchorage since 2004. Prior to that I grew up in Wasilla, about an hours' drive north, and attended university in Fairbanks. I was vaguely aware of Anchorage as a Dena'ina place, the new convention center was named after the first people in 2008. Inside the center for the first time, I struggled with the names of the conference rooms, named for Dena'ina villages in the region, such as Tubughna and Ildughet. The sounds I was trying to make felt awkward and weird as my mouth had to make shapes and forms I was unaccustomed to. I had trouble even conceiving the letter configurations, as I had to try and put consonants together in a new way. The naming of the conference center was probably when I first heard the term "Dena'ina". I was familiar with "Tanaina", which is an outdated term that you find in anthropological papers from last century. Even the elementary school I went to was named Tanaina Elementary, and we were the Tanaina Timberwolves. I didn't know the people whose homelands I were on were Tanaina, let alone Dena'ina. Wasilla was named for Chief Wasilla, one of last Dena'ina chiefs from the country I grew up in. I didn't really know this either, as there were various stories floating amongst kids at school about it being a Russian name, or about it being an Indian name. I didn't know. There certainly weren't any adults telling us about the lands that we were living in and the people who helped shape them, not in school and not at home, not at friends homes. It was not knowledge that was ever spoken of.

And this coming from a Native American household. In my memory of my family growing up, we seemed to be fairly aware of Native rights issues in the state in far away places concerning the lands of the Inupiaq in the Arctic and the debates over Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or the Ahtna where Katie John took her case all the way to the supreme court to ensure her family and all Alaska Natives maintained access to traditional fishing and hunting areas. We knew the big stories of the time, but I didn't

know a thing about the Dena'ina, or even the name. I look at my life and I wonder how this could be. I have struggled with my Native identity for as long as I remember, and its an important and integral part of who I am and everything I do and every breath I take. How could I be so oblivious to the people whose lands I've lived on most of my life?

Aaron Legget, the current chief of the Eklutna tribe, who grew up in Anchorage around the same time I grew up in Wasilla has a story that sheds light on my own awareness of the immediate Indigeneity of the lands I lived on and shaped me into the person I am. He writes that he had a revelation coming home from a Thanksgiving lesson at school. He excitedly told his grandma that they dressed up like Indians and he gave her a jar of cranberry sauce they made. His Grandma replied, "Aaron, you are Indian." Before this he had no idea. Legget goes on to recount a continuing narrative in his life where he constantly was discovering his Indigenous identity and ties to family, local history and the land that surrounded him, and eventually shaping his life's work.

As Indigenous peoples, our stories and our languages have been squeezed and beaten out of us over generations. In some cases we are moved by forces, visible and invisible, far away from our homelands (as in my case). In some cases our homelands are removed from right beneath our feet, and we don't even know, or perhaps we were made to forget. But still we eventually remember. Something in the world just gnaws at you, so much so that its always there to the point you almost forget it, like an aching joint you've learned to accommodate by not using it. But more and more, Indigenous people are remembering and uncovering our stories, revealing the most often painful truth of what has happened to us and our lands, our animal and plant relatives. This can obviously be painful as many generations of hurts and wounds are laid uncovered.

What unites many Indigenous people in North America, and all over the lands of the colonized is an urgency to speak truths and reveal histories and show how it has led to the world we know today, but most importantly there is an urgency to begin to heal. In my experience in the world, growing up on Dena'ina lands, the Dena'ina were made invisible to me. What I was offered instead was a story of an unpeopled wilderness that offered a frontier, explorers to discover it and have individual insights into nature and wild things, and pioneers to pierce and tame it and mark a boundary between nature and humans, wildness and civilization.

A different landscape should be made visible to people. The Indigenous landscapes should be made visible. I shouldn't have to wonder where I am when I visit a place, the landscape can tell me, if a broader set of narratives are allowed to inform and shape how we see landscape. It may be said this is what landscape architects and planners do. If that so, then, as Barker and Pickerill point out for geography, we need to do landscape architecture differently.

This is important everywhere, but no less than in the cities. Contemporary cities have often been built on top of well used, already formed landscapes that people have been shaping for generations, but its all been made to be invisible, to allow people to forget, and has allowed one historical narrative to carry on unabated. That history is extremely damaging to many people, not just Indigenous people, but our black and brown communities as well, who have been inextricably tied up in the project of settler colonialism that stole Native lands and Black bodies for white wealth.

The dominant and invisibilizing narrative is alive and well in the discipline of landscape architecture as well. I naively started my landscape architecture education excited to learn ways our cities can be designed to function more in tune with local landscapes. I was fed linear trajectories of places like Seattle that consisted of a past where once there were native people, then they were gone, and the city developed, and that's where the focus lay. I think we have to find ways of healing within landscape architecture. The discipline must identify ways of truly situating where we are on in the landscape and how our landscapes had been cultivated for centuries by our Indigenous relatives. Part of

that process needs to center Indigenous narratives of place and Indigenous people, real live, living humans. Because every act of manipulation of the land will involve relationships, some of which have been cultured for thousands of years. It is important to begin to understand the relationships that form the landscape and responsibilities they encumber, by developing relationships with Indigenous land and people.

As a first step in healing, we must acknowledge where we are and who was here before, and what we're going to do about it now. There will not be definite prescriptions of how to properly acknowledge landscape. As individuals we need to start where we are at in terms of place, in terms of what we know of history, and start from there with good intention.

I started from my position, within Dgheyay Kaq'. I had to search for where I was because it was not obvious. And there are undoubtedly a million better ways to get to know and to acknowledge the landscape than what I have done, but I did honestly undertake a mission of getting to know Dena'ina Etnena in ways I could identify, which would open new paths. I can honestly say I see everything different now, and knowledge of Dena'ina lifeways in this landscape comfort, astound and humble me. I like knowing the names of places, I feel good when I becomes more comfortable with pronunciation. It makes me excited to start learning my own native language, my mother's first language. A language there was no way I was going to learn in how I grew up. Dena'ina Etnena is helping me to heal, and I hope I can bring some of that to my family and limited community.

I undertook this thesis as the project I needed to do to move forward, to reconcile with my education in landscape architecture, and understand more about the landscape that has shaped my worldview. It is my hope that all practitioners of landscape architecture can situate themselves in the landscapes that provide for them, and to those who provided for the landscape. It is through greater understanding of the radical interdependence and relationship humans have with landscape, not over landscape, that is needed to coexist with landscape in a way that honors those who came to it before, shaped it and have survived settler colonialism to today. Indigenous peoples should have more than a stakeholder's connection to placemaking in cities, but should be helping shape it by enacting the relationships with landscape that together constitute each other.



A view of Dgheyay Kaq', from the mountains looking toward the inlet.

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