

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

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The thesis and dissertation abstracts below describe recent research on: communication between Alaska Native elders and health and social service organizations; emergence of Northwest Coast ground slate points; the interaction of Pribilof Islands social and ecological systems and fisheries management; the role of museums in Alaska Native language preservation and revitalization; ancestral Koniag tool-stone procurement; Kotzebue-area osseous tools; and the response of Tłı̨ch̨ Dene of Canada's Northwest Territories to recent caribou scarcity. These abstracts detail research by students of Arizona State University, Portland State University, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Denver, and University of Michigan.

Contact Monty Rogers to submit an abstract of a recently completed thesis or dissertation that deals with topics of interest to *AJA* readers.

A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN ALASKA: EXAMINING THE CULTURE-COMMUNICATION NEXUS SALIENT TO ALASKA NATIVE ELDERS AND CONVENTIONAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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Ph.D. dissertation, 2014, Joint Doctoral Program in Social
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ABSTRACT

Research shows severe health and social disparities exist among particular groups in the U.S. Foremost among these are American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples, who represent approximately 2% of the U.S. population. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, AI/AN peoples are a health disparity "priority population" (National Health Care Disparities Report, 2012). Further, AI/AN health disparities are enduring. For example, suicide has been consistently higher among Alaska Native peoples in Alaska than among any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. with no substantial change between 1979 and 2008 (State of Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin, 2012). Yet, the U.S. government

has spent billions of dollars to address AI/AN health and social disparities.

This study aims to ameliorate AI/AN health and social disparities thereby improving the wellbeing among AI/AN peoples. Such disparities are typically addressed through conventional health and social service organizations, whereby communication is a vehicle that influences service outcomes. In Native North America, these organizations are culturally pluralistic settings and will continue as such. Therefore, this ethnographic study investigates the culture-communication nexus relevant to Alaska Native peoples, particularly older adults, and conventional community-based health and social service organizations in Alaska.

This multisited, ethnographic study resulted from twelve months of fieldwork in Alaska. An integrated theoretical lens comprised of a human rights framework, ecosystems theory, and a dialogic model of culture guided the study. Qualitative data collection methods were used, including formal and informal interviews, field notes, and documents. Formal interviews were conducted with 22 Alaska Native Elders and a state-wide community leader with expertise in the study topic. Most formal interviews were conducted collaboratively with Alaska Native Elder cultural consultants and involved initial visiting sessions as well as follow-up sessions. Data collection occurred

in urban, rural, and remote village sites and across individual, community, and social, legislative policy levels. Informal interviews occurred with many stakeholders. Among these were service providers, service recipients, Alaska Native peoples and peoples from the wider community. Field notes and documents were collected from community venues and activities, including the Alaska Native Languages Roundtable and Alaska Federation of Natives annual conferences. Older adult participatory action research, community engaged research, and relational research principles were incorporated throughout this study. Data analysis involved qualitative methods and ATLAS.ti.

Findings indicate conventional health and social services in Alaska evidence a cultural disjuncture present among Alaska Native peoples, particularly older adults. This cultural disjuncture is based on rhetorical ruptures—gaps between the rhetoric of care service provided and Alaska Native cultural communication practices. This cultural disjuncture is evident across multiple service areas and levels, thereby exacerbating intercultural anxieties. Study findings suggest collective accountability and responsibility are necessary to reduce intercultural anxieties and health disparities among Alaska Native peoples. Recommendations emphasize promoting a paradigm of intercultural care. In doing so, AI/AN colonial histories connect to contemporary healing, cultural ideologies to communication codes and rhetorical ruptures to violations of Indigenous human rights. Thus, within context of an intercultural care paradigm, cultural communication hindrances and solutions are illuminated.

THE GROUND SLATE TRANSITION ON THE NORTHWEST COAST: ESTABLISHING A CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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M.A. thesis, 2014, Department of Anthropology, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon

Online at: http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3076&context=open_access_etds

ABSTRACT

This thesis establishes the earliest appearance of ground slate points at 50 locations throughout the Northwest Coast of North America. Ground slate points are a tool

common among maritime hunter-gatherers, but rare among hunter-gatherers who utilize terrestrial subsistence strategies; ground slate points are considered one of the archaeological hallmarks of mid-to-late Holocene Northwest Coast peoples. The appearance of ground slate points in the archaeological record is frequently marked by a concurrent decline in the prevalence of flaked stone points, a phenomenon often referred to as “the ground slate transition.” Until now, the specific timing of the appearance of these tools has been ill-defined, and a number of competing theories have arisen to explain the apparent preference for ground slate points over flaked points by prehistoric peoples. By drawing upon a sample of 94 artifact assemblages from 50 sites in Alaska, British Columbia, and Washington, I have constructed a database of artifact counts, provenience information, and radiocarbon dates which allows for inter-site comparisons of the earliest appearance of the technology. My research has identified a general north to south trend in the appearance of slate points; which begin to appear in the archaeological record around 6,300 cal BP in southeast Alaska, to 2,900 cal BP in Puget Sound. There are notable exceptions to this pattern, however. Given that these data are drawn from both cultural resource management reports and academic literature, I have qualified these findings by addressing some of the common problems of making inter-site comparisons, such as the comparability of radiometric dates, which I address by undertaking a radiocarbon hygiene program. The chronology constructed here provides an important tool for evaluating theories about the ground slate transition, and thereby aiding in untangling the link between aquatic subsistence strategies and technological decision making.

UNDERSTANDING PLACE IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS, ALASKA

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Ph.D. dissertation, 2015, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, University of Alaska Fairbanks

ABSTRACT

Holistic approaches toward fisheries management are widely considered a more sustainable option than standard single-species frameworks. This project uses the

holistic frameworks of ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) and place-making to examine the ecological and social systems of the Pribilof Islands and the ways in which fisheries management decisions have structured these systems. In Chapter 1, we sought to understand potential ecological constraints of temperature, fish predation, and interactions with a congener (red king crab; *Paralithodes camtschaticus*) on blue king crab (*Paralithodes platypus*) recovery. These examinations suggest that blue king crab juveniles switch strategies from predator avoidance to a strategy of predator deterrence in situations where predation is more likely. In addition, this research suggests that predatory interactions between crab congeners may be more likely than fish predation to inhibit blue king crab recovery. In Chapter 2, we sought to understand local place-making efforts and how they differed between the two Pribilof Island villages, as well as how these place-making efforts articulated with development programs. We found that place-making efforts in both communities were based on maintaining residence in the islands and an appreciation of the way-of-life that residence provided. The way place-making efforts articulated with development programs, however, differed between the communities. In St. George, Alaska, residents selectively embraced development, only supporting initiatives that would help realize the goal of maintaining residence in the community, as opposed to integrating into a regional economy. Residents of St. Paul, Alaska, in contrast, had more autonomy and were able to control development projects in their community to support local place-making efforts. In Chapter 3 we used these data to develop a framework for assessing the vulnerability of fishing communities based on holistic, ethnographic understandings of local social systems. This framework showed St. George to be a highly vulnerable community, while St. Paul was only moderately vulnerable. These assessments challenged previously published, quantitative vulnerability assessments. The results of our investigations into the social and ecological systems of the Pribilof Islands support the idea that holistic perspectives provide important information that can drastically alter management understandings of both fish resources and the people who depend upon them.

LANGUAGE AND MUSEUMS: SUPPORTING ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE NETWORKING

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ABSTRACT

With the ever-increasing risk of language loss and possible extinction of the world's Indigenous languages, museums are quickly becoming active supporters and valuable resources for communities engaged in revitalization initiatives. Although working with language material is inherently difficult for museums because of their traditionally object-based nature, it is imperative for museums to focus on the documentation and preservation of language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) because of the vital connection between language and culture. This thesis examines how museums in Alaska, particularly the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, Alaska Office, are supporting Alaska Native language and cultural revitalization through collaborative networks and the adoption of methodologies to successfully develop and implement language-based programming.

TOOLSTONE PROCUREMENT IN MIDDLE–LATE HOLOCENE IN THE KODIAK ARCHIPELAGO AND THE ALASKA PENINSULA

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ABSTRACT

The Norton tradition (2300–950 BP) in the Alaska Peninsula and the Late Kachemak phase (2700–900 BP) in Kodiak are distinct cultural traditions yet contain some similarities in lithic assemblages and house form, suggesting some contact or influence occurred. The subsequent Koniag tradition (900–200 BP) is present in both the Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak, indicating direct influence or migration. While the Koniag tradition is found in sites located throughout the North Pacific region, the Koniag

tradition in Kodiak is characterized by changes in social climate and subsistence strategies including greater warfare/raiding and resource consolidation. In order to obtain these resources, Koniag populations living in Kodiak may have traveled farther distances than previous populations. In contrast, Alaska Peninsula populations did not experience significantly different subsistence strategies over time and therefore would not need to travel as far as Kodiak populations or significantly alter subsistence patterns. Determining the probable origins of toolstone materials in late prehistoric sites can reveal changes in the ways people in this region obtained their resources and give a more comprehensive understanding of the degree to which the Koniag lifestyle differed from the preceding cultural traditions in the region.

Due to the eruptive history in the Alaska Peninsula, the presence of volcanic toolstone in Kodiak sites, and the close proximity between the two locations, central Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak sites are optimally located in order to determine possible changes in the direction where volcanic toolstone originated. This thesis explored differences between volcanic toolstone procurement locations in late prehistoric sites on the Kodiak Archipelago and the central Alaska Peninsula by comparing samples according to size and abundance of tool types, site location, cultural affiliation, and time periods using element values obtained from X-ray fluorescence (XRF) technology. Results show possible geographic boundaries of toolstone containing similar element values using Alaska Peninsula samples, which were subsequently compared with Kodiak samples. Data presented in this thesis show the geographic range of likely toolstone procurement locations increased over time in Kodiak sites, while Alaska Peninsula sites contain evidence that toolstone remained locally procured over time.

**FAUNAL AND OSSEOUS TOOL
ANALYSIS FROM KTZ-036 (KOTZEBUE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISTRICT), A LATE
PREHISTORIC SITE IN KOTZEBUE, ALASKA**

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ABSTRACT

Osseous tools are often recovered from coastal archaeological sites in Alaska due to favorable preservation conditions. In northwest Alaska, outside of harpoon typology, these osseous tools are not well analyzed. In 2008, the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) excavated a multi-component site adjacent to the shore in Kotzebue, Alaska. Organic materials and lithic tools were recovered from three components dated to AD 600, AD 1200–1600, and within the last 300 years. The Shore Avenue collection extends the documented archaeological record of Kotzebue by nearly 750 years. Osseous tools and debitage consisted of 175 artifacts within the collection, while an abundant amount of archaeofauna provided a sample of raw materials available at the site for the manufacture of osseous tools.

This thesis focuses on the probability of raw materials being sourced locally, or through the use of long-distance travel, or trade, at KTZ-036. Such analyses identified caribou antler as locally-available raw materials for tool production. In contrast, walrus and ivory occurred in much lower frequencies. The archaeological findings were compared with contemporary harvest numbers by modern Native hunters from Kotzebue; the result corroborated the archaeofaunal inferences.

Analyses of the recovered osseous tools revealed a relatively high amount (26.3%) of ivory tools ($n = 23$) and debitage ($n = 23$) for what would be expected through the results of the faunal analysis where walrus made up only 4% ($n = 22$) of the identified sea mammal remains. To determine potential contributing factors for this anomaly, the osseous tools were classified into functional and morphological groups to note possible trends within each group. This was coupled with a literature review of the structural and mechanical characteristics of the osseous material to identify selective pressures for the manufacture of osseous tools that may push tool-makers to look beyond what is locally available.

Finally a cross-site comparison was completed of eight sites in the Arctic and Subarctic to reveal similarities of use in osseous materials spatially and temporally. When few or no forces are applied to a tool, selection pressure releases, and any osseous material is used in manufacture. Aesthetics of ivory should also be considered, where sheen and carving detail can provide more artistic appeal. These trends are fairly consistent across the Arctic but should be considered in more depth to confirm this observation.

TŁİCHŲ DENE FOODWAYS: HUNTERS, ANIMALS, AND ANCESTORS

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Ph.D. dissertation, 2015, Department of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, Arizona State University

ABSTRACT

The indigenous Tłıchų Dene nation of subarctic Canada maintains subsistence lifestyles based on their traditional foods. Caribou are the primary Tłıchų food animal and their reliance on caribou culminates in a complex relationship of give and take. Tłıchų demonstrate reciprocity for the caribou to give their flesh to hunters. Caribou populations in Canada's Northwest Territories have rapidly declined and the government of Canada's Northwest Territories implemented hunting restrictions in 2010 to protect caribou herds from extinction. Some Tłıchų, however, maintain that caribou are in hiding, not decline, and that caribou have chosen to remain inaccessible to humans due to human disrespect toward them. Many Tłıchų have responded to hunting restrictions and the lack of caribou by calling for respectful hunting practices to demonstrate to caribou that they are needed and thus resulting in the animal continuing to give itself.

I examine Tłıchų responses to contemporary caribou scarcity through three stages of Dene foodways: getting food, sharing food, and returning food and caribou remains back to the land. Analysis of Dene foodways stages reveals complex social relationships between hunters, animals, and other beings in the environment such as ancestors and the land that aids their exchange. Food is integral to many studies of indigenous religions and environmental relations yet the effects of dependence on the environment for food on social dynamics that include human and other beings have not been adequately addressed.

Foodways as a component to theories of indigenous environmental relationships explain Tłıchų attitudes toward caribou. I draw from my ethnographic research, wherein I lived with Tłıchų families, studied the Tłıchų language, and participated in Tłıchų foodways such as hunting, fishing, and sharing food, to explicate Tłıchų foodways in relation to their worldviews and relationships with beings in the environment. I demonstrate how foodways, as an analytical category, offer a glimpse into Dene perceptions of non-human entities as something with which humans relate, while I simultaneously demonstrate the limits of environmental relations. My attention to foodways reveals the necessity of sustenance as a primary motivation for indigenous relationships to other beings, culminating in complex social dynamics.