ARTICLE

COLLABORATION IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE: CASE STUDIES FROM NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ALASKA

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ABSTRACT

Archaeology is increasingly focused on collaborative research, co-stewardship, community-led scholarship, and the co-production of traditional knowledge and scientific methods. Across the National Park Service in Alaska, there are good examples of collaborative on-the-ground projects occurring

within the boundaries of national park lands. Additionally, NPS is focused on improving and expanding the ways in which we work alongside partner communities off park lands, providing support for community historic preservation and cultural heritage preservation efforts. The authors share a few key illustrations of these efforts to provide potential practical frameworks for archaeologists who are looking toward a collaborative and holistic discipline. These advances in the practice of archaeology show that it is possible for our discipline to "*Yaghelich' q'u t'inluq'"* [intending to do "good work" in Dena'ina].

INTRODUCTION

SHINA DUVALL

> Everything that is made causes us to remember. Let us make our ancestors' ways known to our younger generation, allowing them to see through the eyes of our few remaining elders as they explain the use and construction of these cultural materials.—Andy Paukan, St. Mary's (as quoted in Fienup-Riordan 2007)

The stated mission of the National Park Service (NPS) is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The state of Alaska encompasses over 663,000 square miles and has more miles of coastline than the entire Lower 48 coastline combined. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980 established 104 million acres of federal land in Alaska as new or expanded conservation system units. Today there are over 54.6 million acres within the boundaries of the 15 national park system units in Alaska. Most of these lands are in federal ownership, but there are also private, state, borough, and municipally owned lands therein. Private lands include those held by Alaska Native Corporations, which are the largest nonfederal landowners within the boundaries of NPS units in Alaska.

The vast landscape of Alaska is the current and traditional homeland of hundreds of Indigenous cultures and language groups. The state has 229 federally recognized tribes, innumerable non-federally recognized tribal entities, 12 regional Alaska Native corporations, 11 regional Native nonprofit organizations, and over 200 Native village corporations. Alaska Native people have lived here from time immemorial.

In late 2023, staff from NPS Alaska were invited to participate in a workshop entitled Collaborative Archaeology in the Alaskan Arctic (CAAA). The CAAA Workshop was organized by Hollis Miller, Sven Haakanson Jr., and Lizzy Wessells and hosted by the University of Washington (UW) Anthropology Department. The stated goal of the CAAA workshop was to bring together archaeologists, community members, landowners, and other stakeholders to present, discuss, and share how they have collaborated and worked with communities across Alaska—and to talk through the future of how archaeologists can build and sustain collaborative and ethical archaeological research in a changing Alaska. Participants were informed that the CAAA workshop was born from a question posed by a friend of the UW Anthropology Department. She asked simply, "what would it take to do 'good archaeology' in Alaska?" There we joined some of the brightest minds working in Alaska, Arctic, and Sub-Arctic archaeology and cultural resource management—Alaska Native students, Elders, and scholars; representatives from Alaska Native tribes, communities, governments, and corporations; professional archaeologists, cultural resources, and heritage professionals; archivists and collections managers working across the private, government, and nonprofit sectors; as well as academic professors and non-Native graduate students. Together, we spent two days exploring the topic of collaborative archaeology and considering the question about what it takes, indeed, to do "good archaeology" in Alaska.

While the practice of archaeology in Alaska has not always been so, many of us have been working toward building a more thoughtful and collaborative field to ensure that Indigenous voices and roles are represented in all aspects of our work. The result of this broader exchange of knowledge offers a fuller picture and more genuine approach to understanding, celebrating, and preserving Alaska's remarkable heritage.

> There in the storage rooms were thousands of archaeological and ethnographic pieces that university research expeditions had taken from the island in the 1930s. It was a bit of a reverse culture shock to see and handle these beautiful and interesting objects that came out of my own heritage but that I had known about only from books and family stories. To see them firsthand validated our history, and I knew that other Yupiget would have the same reaction that I did.
>
> I learned that there is a lot of sleeping information within each material piece—language, memories, and cultural meanings. When elder tribal members visited the collection, long dormant words and recollections came to them almost like dreams. It is contact with the actual objects and discussion amongst community members that will awaken the information inside. The more we can facilitate this process, the better off our communities will be.—Jonella Larson White (quoted in Crowell et al. 2010)

Initiatives aimed at being more collaborative and more fully incorporating Indigenous knowledge (IK) systems are occurring in Alaska park units, in the work that we share with partnering communities outside the boundaries of NPS units, and in administrative and programmatic processes. Examples of these commitments are embodied within the NPS Alaska Cultural Resources Advisory Committee (CRAC) strategic plan, ever-evolving best practices, and NPS Tribal and Heritage Assistance Programs.

The NPS Alaska Cultural Resources Advisory Committee strategic plan for 2021–2025 provides a framework for cultural resource projects conducted on NPS-managed lands in Alaska. The plan connects the overarching goal to preserve, protect, and share our history for future generations with an intention to collaborate with Indigenous partners and local communities in all matters related to heritage, cultural resources, and historic preservation. This effort has resulted in dozens of NPS Alaska projects conducted since 2021, some highlighted in this article.

One example of a best-practice recently implemented by NPS Alaska emphasizes the need for collaboration when considering "naming" archaeological sites or other sites of cultural significance. As a body, CRAC decided that before designating a site name on lands managed by NPS in Alaska, it is important to first engage in meaningful discussions with the landowner(s), traditionally associated groups, local community members, tribes, and/or local governments. Perhaps the location already has a name, or perhaps a meaningful name could be provided by community partners. This is a very simple yet meaningful way in which we collaborate before making decisions or establishing designations for sites of cultural significance.

The NPS Alaska Native Tribal Affairs Program and Heritage Assistance Program serve to provide technical guidance and assistance to tribal governments, Alaska Native corporations, and other tribal entities on a variety of heritage-related needs. The ANILCA Section 1318 sets up a statewide cultural assistance program for Alaska Native entities or corporations. Section 1318 states that tribal entities may make a request to the secretary of the interior for heritage preservation assistance. As a result of this provision in ANILCA, NPS Alaska staff have worked alongside tribal and Alaska Native corporate and community partners to conduct noninvasive site surveys using ground-penetrating radar (GPR), to co-develop training opportunities in emerging/specialized methodologies (e.g., archaeological human remains detection dog and handler), to undertake climate impacts assessments and cultural resource adaptation strategies, National Register documentation, and hands-on collections management and preservation assistance. These NPS Alaska programs work intentionally to develop and maintain strong partnerships with tribal partners. As we hope will be demonstrated in the brief case studies that follow, the Alaska Region of NPS has been working to make meaningful changes in the way the agency carries out cultural resource, archaeology, and historic preservation projects and programs.

RECENT ADVANCES IN COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES AT KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

JONATHAN FLOOD

Archaeology at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (NHP) is undergoing a transformation in practice and in discourse. Through tribal consultation and partnerships, the park archaeology program has shifted from federal-only investigations of Alaska Native archaeological spaces (e.g., Tlingit rock shelters, precontact and historic Tlingit sites and settlements) within NPS boundaries and moved towards collaborative fieldwork and curatorial

practices that emphasize tribal sovereignty and tribal research goals. Since 2021, archaeologists at Klondike Gold Rush NHP and cultural resource specialists from local tribal governments have co-authored professional presentations, co-hosted Alaska Native student archaeological interns, and developed a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement that emphasizes tribal involvement and NPS transparency in all archaeological work within the park boundaries. The small collaborative inroads made since 2021 align with a larger transformation in archaeological approach and practice occurring in NPS cultural resource programs across Alaska.

Environmental change has been a catalyst for advances in collaborative research and the deepening connection between NPS archaeologists and tribal cultural resource specialists in the Upper Lynn Canal. Increases in stream discharge have put new pressure on multicomponent archaeological sites within the park boundary, ones central to the Klondike Gold Rush story and rooted in Tlingit history. Sweeping erosional losses of the historic Dyea townsite (SKG-006) motivated documentation and mitigation efforts by the NPS in the late twenty-teens.

In 1898, the Dyea townsite was comprised of over 150 businesses and the leaping-off point for thousands of fortune seekers headed for the gold-rich watersheds of the Yukon interior. The Dyea townsite is now within NPS-owned land and a fundamental component of the Chilkoot Trail and Dyea National Historic Landmark (NHL) (SKG-132). The Dyea townsite developed around long-established Tlingit settlement at the tidewater terminus of the Chilkoot Trail, created and traditionally controlled by the Chilkoot Tlingit. As NPS documentation and mitigation goals at Dyea were discussed in consultation with the Skagway Traditional Council (STC), Chilkoot Indian Association (CIA), and Chilkat Indian Village (CIV), the STC decided to send a tribal observer for the duration of the project, effectively three months in 2021. As weeks passed, trust was built between NPS and STC through total transparency and a willingness to incorporate tribal input. Discovery of human remains in a shovel test along the eroding cutbank further accelerated communication and cooperation between the STC, CIA, CIV, and the NPS. The discovery led to the creation of Plan of Action (POA) in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Input from tribal partners insisted traditional knowledge be the primary method for defining objects of cultural patrimony, which turned out to be several years ahead of and foreshadowed the 2023 NAGPRA updates that give more deference to tribes in NAGPRA processes.

The NAGPRA POA for Dyea established an annual artifact review process for all new artifacts and objects encountered within the Klondike Gold Rush NHP boundaries during NPS archaeological fieldwork. Klondike Gold Rush NHP expanded the artifact review process to include materials from Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail as well as objects from Skagway and the White Pass NHL (SKG-013). A detailed spreadsheet with accompanying object-photographs is now sent to STC, CIA, and CIV in winter or early spring of each year for their review and records. This simple annual review process affirms the central role of tribes in identifying objects of cultural patrimony and respects their autonomy as exclusive retainers of traditional knowledge. This review process has already been successful. Several objects collected by NPS archaeologists in the 2023 Dyea excavations were identified by STC as objects of cultural patrimony and were returned to the tribe through the NAGPRA process in mid-2025.

Erosion of the Dyea townsite was significant in 2021, with 63,965 square feet eroded, and profound in 2022 with 97,273 square feet destroyed. Ahead of the 2022 field season, NPS and STC worked together to co-host two student interns from the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) at the University of Alaska. STC developed research objectives for the interns and NPS provided lodging, tools, and transport. STC and NPS both provided professional supervision and insights. The ANSEP interns conducted metal detection and surface survey of the historic Dyea's Tlingit village site that the 1898 town developed around. Like the majority of the townsite, the remains of the historic Tlingit village area are under erosional threat. Field findings were mapped with GPS and the interns created a cartographic product delivered to the STC. This collaborative effort was the first occurrence of Alaska Native-developed and -executed archaeological fieldwork at Klondike Gold Rush NHP (Fig. 1). NPS worked alongside tribal partners for this project, taking a seat at the table but not leading the discourse.

Traditional knowledge as the defining insight for recognizing items of cultural patrimony and the processual transparency in NPS archaeological efforts formalized in the 2021 NAGPRA POA provided the framework for a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. The Programmatic Agreement defines how future cultural resource work in Dyea and along the Chilkoot Trail corridor will be

Figure 1. Close-interval shovel test pits at Dyea Townsite along actively eroding bank of Tyea River. NPS photo.

conducted, who will be involved in documentation efforts, and how discoveries will be communicated and handled within park boundaries. Tribal sovereignty of material culture and spaces exemplified in the 2022 Alaska Native-led Dyea village survey was distilled into sentence form and integrated into the Programmatic Agreement. The agreement states that when NPS archaeologists encounter Tlingit or otherwise Alaska Native material culture, work will stop, the discovery location will be secured, artifacts left *in situ*, and tribes consulted for how best to proceed. Effectively, the park's tribal partners take a primary role in determining how, who, and if Alaska Native cultural materials, features, and spaces are archaeologically documented.

Beyond Skagway and the boundaries of the park, NPS, and STC have promoted their successful collaborations at professional meetings, co-authoring three presentations. In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association in 2023 titled "Preventing Purloined Grave Goods: Implementing NAGPRA at Klondike Gold Rush NHP," NPS and STC authors highlighted how NAGPRA objects could be "hidden in plain sight" to park archaeologists, yet readily apparent to Alaska Native groups.

From an NPS perspective, recent advances in cooperative management of archaeological resources at Klondike Gold Rush NHP are the result of soliciting and earnestly incorporating input from tribal partners. The new and novel portions of the aforementioned NAGPRA POA and Programmatic Agreement were directly from tribal partners, not from NPS staff. In addition to incorporating tribal input in archaeological research plans and agreement documents, more overt recognition by NPS staff of tribal sovereignty over their collective past, whether on or off land currently owned by the federal government, seems to have been central to inroads made at the park thus far.

COLLABORATIVE ARCHAEOLOGY AT KIJIK ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISTRICT NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK LAKE CLARK NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

JASON ROGERS

Within the Lake Clark region, there is no place of such profound cultural significance as Kijik. For nearly a millennium—and possibly much longer—a constellation of inland Dena'ina villages sat in this special place, where salmon-bearing rivers and streams enter the western shore of Lake Clark. Generations of Dena'ina families settled and lived in this place, and many others visited for short- or long-term stays from other village communities throughout the Dena'ina world. Aptly, the community was long known as Qizhjeh, meaning "a place where people gather." Today it is known widely by the name "Kijik," a standardized, anglicized form of the inland Dena'ina Athabaskan term, which has been spelled and misspelled in so many ways.

This description from the *Kijik Cultural Landscape Report* (Deur et al. 2025), is intended to capture the cultural importance of the most significant ancestral location for the Inland Dena'ina (Fig. 2). Today this location is designated as the Kijik Historic District (XLC-001), Kijik Archaeological District Cultural Landscape (XLC-212), Kijik Archaeological District National Historic Landmark (NHL) (XLC-234), and overlaps with the southern end of the Telaquana Trail Cultural Landscape (XLC-215) (Fig. 3).

Archaeological investigations have been conducted at Kijik starting in 1966, including those undertaken by James VanStone and Joan Townsend (VanStone and Townsend 1970), the Cook Inlet Historic Sites Project (CINA 1975), and numerous NPS projects (i.e., Smith and Shields 1977, Worthington 1996).

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (NPP) was created in 1980, and archaeological investigations by federal agencies, especially the NPS and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), occurred through the 1980s and 1990s, eventually documenting hundreds of habitation depressions and thousands of cache features at Kijik. As a result,

Figure 2. Kijik residents in front of Holy Cross Chapel, 1901. Photo courtesy of Pete Trefon.

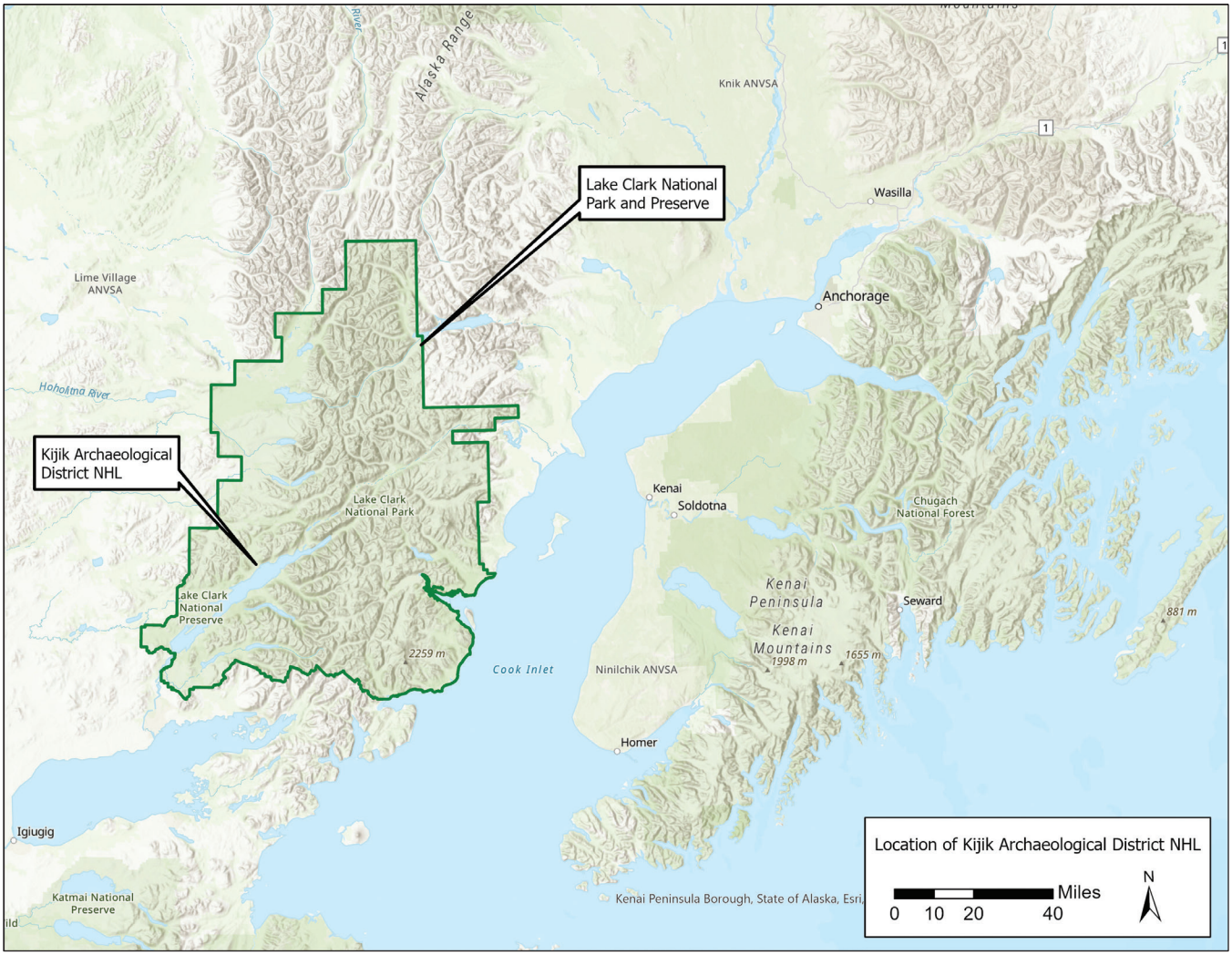

Figure 3. Location of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve and Kijik Archaeological District National Historic Landmark. NPS map.

in 1994 the Kijik Archaeological District NHL (XLC-234) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 1994).

Perhaps the most significant investigations at Kijik occurred during the summers of 2014–2017, when archaeological survey, testing, and data recovery were conducted at numerous locations within the NHL. The activities were conducted under a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the Nondalton Tribal Council and directed by former Alaska State Archaeologist J. David McMahan (Fig. 4). Work in 2014 and 2015 consisted primarily of survey and testing throughout the NHL and included ground truthing of target features identified through examination of LiDAR imagery. The 2016 and 2017 work focused solely on excavation and data recovery at a five-room semi-subterranean house feature (XLC-098) (McMahan 2018). The data recovery was an integral part of the *Quk Taz' Un* Culture Camp hosted by the village of Nondalton.

Testing and block excavations at XLC-098 have revealed that the site dates from the circa 1840–1870s period and was probably inhabited shortly before the settlement at Old Kijik (Kijik Village). The structure at XLC-098 is a traditional Dena'ina style, whereas those at Old Kijik are a transitional style with both Dena'ina and Euro-American attributes. The artifact assemblage from XLC-098 contains trade items from both the late Russian and early American periods as well as traditional items.

McMahan's investigations are emblematic not only of how archaeological investigations at Kijik have changed in type and complexity of research questions and methods, but also in the way local people with roots in Kijik have come not only to participate but to direct and drive the

Figure 4. Nondalton youth and Elders excavating at XLC-098. NPS photo.

project investigations. This not only invigorates the results of research but also serves to honor the ancestors and the place that holds so much meaning to families with ancestral ties to the Kijik area. As noted in the 1994 Kijik Historic Preservation Plan (Johnson 1994), the area has an immeasurable cultural and religious significance to the people of Nondalton, who desire that the land continue to be used as a cultural and spiritual site in perpetuity. The following is a personal reminiscence of the excavations at XLC-098 by Karina Jeffries of Nondalton, who as a young student was a participant of the *Quk Taz' Un* Culture Camp and now returns to the camp as a leadership mentor.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KIJIK

KARINA JEFFRIES

I have been told for as long as I can remember that Kijik is a place where people gather; but to me Qizhjeh Vena is so much more. Kijik is a place that I visit every year, and it never fails to provide me with an overwhelming sense of comfort and home. Every summer I look forward to going to our annual culture camp, *Quk' Taz'un*, that I've been attending for 10 years (Fig. 5).

During my first year at culture camp, one of the major projects was excavating a Dena'ina ancestral home. I distinctly remember my first trip to the historical site. We all gathered to discuss the history and significance of Kijik and the importance of respect as we hiked into the heart of the village, where many of my ancestors lay at rest. At just 10 years old, I understood the need to be appreciative and aware of my surroundings, for something about being on the land fostered a deep connection. I knew everything in the land had a spirit and deserved to be respected. What I didn't realize was how profound that feeling would become as we began to excavate.

The landscape was quiet and still as we hiked, and though the trail was slightly overgrown, it felt familiar. When we reached the site, I saw a clearing where others had been working and where we would continue our efforts. We paused for lunch, and during that time, we discussed the types of houses found in Kijik and the

Figure 5. Karina Jeffries with Nondalton Elder Butch Hobson. NPS photo by Jason Rogers.

vastness of the village that once stood there. They asked us if we could make out the layout of the house, and there weren't many who answered, although eventually we began to cultivate an idea of what lay in front of us. We were shown photos of artifacts that had been uncovered, and soon began our adventure of rediscovering a home our ancestors had lived in.

At first, many of us campers were hesitant to hike to the site, but as the days passed, it became the thing we looked forward to most. The path soon became muscle memory, and with each return, the house began to reveal itself. Toward the end of the week, while sifting through the soil, I found a small bead that I initially thought was just a rock. I remember being told, "The Dena'ina people were very meticulous, and they left little behind. If you think you've found something, don't hesitate to ask—it might be part of a tool or an item your ancestors used." I asked about the small round object, and it turned out to be a trade bead, probably from Russia. The archaeologist was able to date it and share how it might have been used. Though small, that discovery left me excited and with a sense of connection to the house (Fig. 6).

On our last day of camp, we came together as a group to reflect on the progress we'd made. Again, we were asked if we could see the house's layout. My friends and I eagerly shared our vision of the different rooms and spaces we had uncovered. Sharing stories and different ways we'd use or live in the house today or years ago. I could clearly picture the structure in my mind, and I still can when we visit.

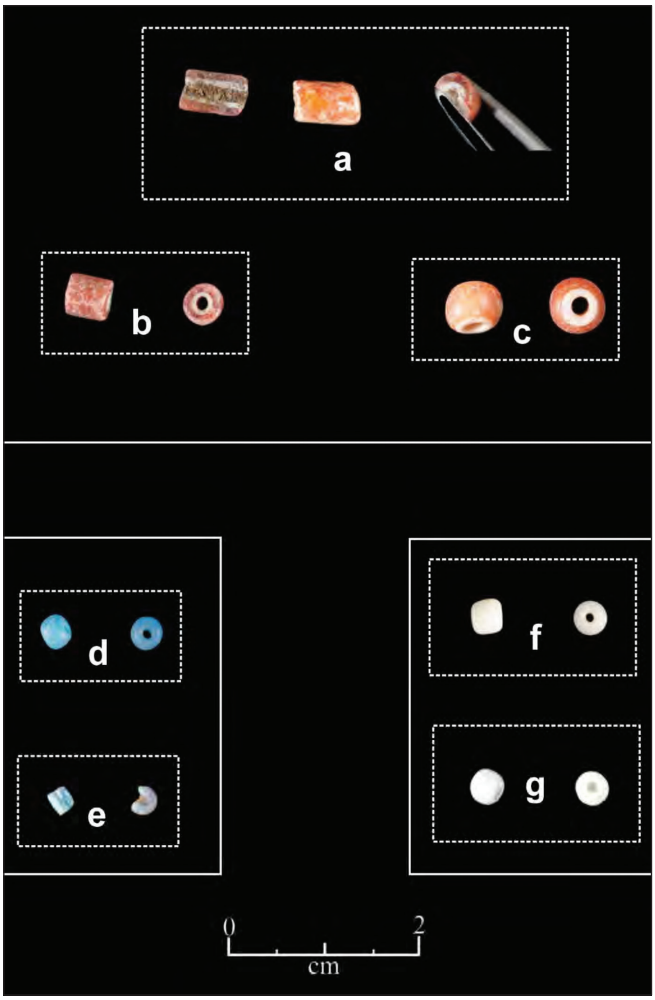

Figure 6. "Cornaline d'Aleppo" trade beads from Kijik site XLC-098, from McMahan 2018.

That was my first year at Kijik camp, and I've returned every year since. Through my experiences, I have grown stronger in my identity and connection to my culture. For the past few years, I have had the privilege of returning as a mentor. Alongside two other mentors, we are able to guide the new campers to the ancestral home, walking along the trail that we and many people before us tracked and sharing the history of the site and emphasizing the importance of respecting the land. The pride I feel in not only preserving our culture but also in passing this knowledge to the next generation is immeasurable. It's inspiring to see the campers so quickly identify the shapes and structures of the house. Some of them have asked if they can one day excavate an ancestral home themselves, and I can only hope that they will have the same opportunity I did.

Being able to see this house that my people used to live in and the way they used to live is an eye-opening experience that provides me with a deeper understanding and connection to the land. I always feel like I'm being welcomed home when I'm at Kijik, and going back to the ancestral house only gives an ineffable feeling of belonging. It is always an experience because I learn something new every time. It has been a staple in my time at culture camp and has brought me various memories throughout the years. I am thankful that I got to participate in rediscovering such a beautiful home, and I look forward to visiting the site again next year.

PROGRESS TOWARDS TAPIĠIIK FOR BERING LAND BRIDGE NATIONAL PRESERVE AND THEIR TRIBAL PARTNERS

JUSTIN JUNGE, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY DENNIS DAVIS (NATIVE VILLAGE OF SHISHMAREF), JULIE RAYMOND-YAKOUBIAN (KAWERAK, INC.), LISA ELLANNA (KAWERAK, INC.), SHELBY ANDERSON (PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY), KATE BARCALOW (PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY), MONTY ROGERS (CULTURAL ALASKA), AND PETER SHNURR (CULTURAL ALASKA)

Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (NP) has some of the oldest documented evidence of human occupation and migration (approximately 14,000 years ago) in the region (Goebel et al. 2013; Moreno-Mayar et al. 2018). Evidence of continued use of this landscape has persisted through changes in environmental conditions and subsistence resources and endures today through the descendant communities of the local Iñupiaq. The deep ancestral knowledge and the research interest therein was captured within Bering Land Bridge NP's Foundation Statement: Bering Land Bridge National Preserve protects and interprets, in collaboration with Alaska Natives, thousands of years of use and occupation by the Iñupiaq people and the continuing subsistence way of life (NPS 2009).

Since the formation of Bering Land Bridge NP with the passage of ANILCA in 1980, archaeological research has focused on systematic surveys (Anderson and Junge 2015; Darwent et al. 2013; Hoffecker and Mason 2010; Powers et al. 1982; Schaaf 1988; Tremayne 2015), the earliest peopling of the Americas (Goebel et al. 2013; Hoffecker et al. 2020; Larsen 1968; Vinson 1993), culture history chronologies (Alix et al. 2015; Anderson et al. 2019; Brown et al. 2021; Mason 2004), and human adaptation to environmental change and other stressors (Hoffecker and Mason 2010; Hoffecker et al. 2012; Junge 2017; Mason and Bigelow 2008).

While much of this archaeological research has involved or incorporated Indigenous knowledge and community engagement, it was not until the early 2010s that the NPS and others began reframing their approach to working with and incorporating more collaborative participation with descendant Iñupiaq communities (Alix and Mason 2018; Hoffecker and Mason 2010; Hoffecker et al. 2012). In the early 2010s, Kawerak, Inc. and Katirvik Cultural Center (including representatives Amy Russell, Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, and Linda Ellanna) approached the NPS about their interest in cultural-resource-focused engagement in the Bering Strait Region (Jeff Rasic, pers. comm. 12–13 May 2025). Between 2014 and 2019, the Nome Archaeology Camp (also known as the Bering Straits Archaeology Camp) brought together NPS staff in collaboration with Kawerak, Inc., Bering Straits Native Corporation, Alaska Geographic, other affiliated entities, and local Iñupiaq youth for a weeklong immersive camp to teach archaeological and anthropological methods, engage with Elders, and share IK from the region (Richie et al. 2021) (Fig. 7). During these camps, local youth and community members raised concerns about the need for transparency between researchers and local communities, as well as the need for career development opportunities for local youth. In the hopes of fostering a new generation of Iñupiaq cultural resource specialists and young professionals, a cooperative agreement between the NPS and Kawerak, Inc., through the Katirvik Cultural Center was executed in 2021. Among other objectives, the agreement aims to hire local youth as cultural resource interns to work with NPS staff on research and environmental and cultural resource compliance needs for the park and affiliated tribal villages: not a new concept, though it has served as one avenue to nurture a mutually beneficial relationship between the NPS and the greater Seward Peninsula region for the betterment of people, as well as to address specific needs at ancestral and cultural resource sites located in the region.

Figure 7. Nome Archaeology Camp students, instructors, and Elders at Salmon Lake, Alaska, 2018. Photo provided by Lisa Ellanna, Kawerak, Inc.

This shift in the nature of partnerships and the development of an approach that engages directly with community members beyond formal government-to-government consultation was embraced as a way to further the co-stewardship of resources. In addition, a recommendation in the park's archaeological overview and assessment report (in review) to create working groups to increase community input and investment in park projects has been carried forward. Modeled after the Nuwu/Nuwuvi Working Group and the Tribal Revegetation Committee affiliated with the Great Basin of the American West (Barcalow and Spoon 2018; Spoon 2014; Spoon and Arnold 2012), two working groups of tribally selected representatives—an Interpretation and Education Working Group and a Cultural Resource Working Group—have been formed to incorporate feedback and insights from those who have the closest connection to and specific cultural knowledge about ancestral sites. These working groups also provide leadership, guidance, and subject matter expertise in the conveyance and interpretation of IK. These working groups have already contributed to park news and social media, as well as significant park projects, including the design of a new visitor center and a community-driven archaeological project developed to document threatened coastal ancestral sites through minimally invasive methods.

These collaborative and co-stewardship partnerships are not new or revolutionary. But they do encapsulate the relationship building and "*Tapiġiik*" (meaning "two things that, together, form something complete" or "something and its enlargement" in Iñupiaq) that the park is accomplishing with tribal partners as we continue to uphold the objectives of the Bering Land Bridge NP Foundation Statement (NPS 2009) to protect and interpret in collaboration with Alaska Natives the continued use of subsistence and cultural resources, and to meet this charge through cooperative agreements, tribal compacts, and working groups to continue to do good work—today and in perpetuity.

REFLECTIONS FROM WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

LEE REININGHAUS, ALLYSON PEASE, BARBARA CELLARIUS, AMBER COHEN, KATHRYN MARTIN, AND M. STARR KNIGHTEN

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (NPP) is considered a remote, difficult-to-access wilderness, however, humans have explored, subsisted, and lived here since time immemorial. Archaeological sites in the park represent more than 13,000 years of human land use (Potter 2008; Reininghaus 2019; White et al. 2022). To document, preserve, and understand these archaeological resources requires a holistic view of the surrounding landscape and past human behavior, with Indigenous Knowledge (IK) playing a key role.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consult with tribes and local communities when planning cultural resources management projects on federal lands or those that are initiated by federal agencies. At Wrangell-St. Elias NPP, the cultural resources team maintains active consultation relationships with 14 Alaska Native villages and three Alaska Native Corporations whose ancestral lands and heritage are tied to the park. One of the most consistent themes emerging from these consultations is a strong desire for increased opportunities for local residents and youth participation in archaeological fieldwork and cultural resource projects. Tribal and community representatives have emphasized the importance of involving younger generations in hands-on experiences that connect them to their ancestral lands and fostering a deeper understanding of archaeological methods and stewardship responsibilities.

Park staff are actively working to involve traditionally associated Indigenous communities in the documentation, preservation, and management of archaeological sites located within park boundaries. A key goal is to promote co-stewardship of cultural resources by providing opportunities for community involvement in project fieldwork, particularly for local youth. Community involvement helps nurture a much-needed connection for people to their traditional homelands and supports the NPS mission to "preserve the natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." Recognizing that youth are the future park stewards, their involvement in park resource management helps to foster a sense of ownership and connection to traditional homelands and provides a context for co-stewardship of park resources into the future.

Conducting field projects in Wrangell-St. Elias NPP is no small feat. With 13.2 million acres of land and only two roads that enter the park, most areas require small bush planes or helicopters for access. Even the simplest of projects requires extensive logistical planning, and often weather foils even the best-laid plans. Incorporating larger numbers of people into fieldwork can be challenging and requires entering project planning with a different mindset; an approach that focuses on quality of work undertaken rather than quantity.

Collaboratively, the park's cultural resources team has worked with local Indigenous communities to provide opportunities to incorporate local residents and youth in archaeological fieldwork. In 2022, the park partnered with Ahtna, Inc., a Glennallen-based Alaska Native regional corporation, to create an NPS-funded internship program designed to develop the next generation of leaders passionate about conserving natural and cultural resources and managing public and traditional Alaska Native lands. The NPS-funded Ahtna interns help staff at the Ahtna Cultural Center during the summer and also have opportunities to learn from NPS and Ahtna, Inc., staff about their jobs and participate in cultural events. The internship program has provided an avenue for Ahtna youth to engage in park cultural resource projects.

During the summers of 2022 and 2023, the park's cultural resource team provided the interns with introductions to archaeology at the park's headquarters visitor center complex in Copper Center. In 2024, the interns participated in two separate projects in remote areas of the park (Fig. 8).

The first project was to conduct a joint, small-scale archaeological survey and inventory of the Long Fire burn area. The Long Fire was a lightning-caused wildfire that occurred on both NPS-managed and Ahtna, Inc.-owned lands in 2019. The area, which was previously unsurveyed, is located near ancestral travel routes and a former shoreline of ancient Glacial Lake Atna.

The survey project was a complex undertaking because the Ahtna, Inc., participants had to complete Department of the Interior basic aviation training and needed appropriate field equipment such as leather boots, flight suits, and rain gear. Partnering with existing internship programs helps park staff coordinate training opportunities

Figure 8. NPS staff and Ahtna, Inc., participants and youth interns at Ch'idah Niig. NPS photo.

and establishes a pathway for ensuring participants have access to field and safety gear.

Helicopter-based fieldwork was scheduled for three days; however, this initial effort was not without logistical challenges. On the first day, just as the weather cleared enough to fly, the helicopter was called away to assist in a search and rescue in another area of the park. On day two, weather hindered the entire scheduled day of flying. Fortunately, the team had an alternate plan, and efforts were redirected toward an opportunity to practice archaeological research and survey techniques while investigating a housepit site located at the park headquarters visitor center. The third try was more successful as the weather lifted enough to safely access the project area. The team was able to conduct subsurface testing while enjoying views of the surrounding terrain and reconnecting with an area that is Ahtna traditional homeland.

The second project during 2024 was part of a larger three-year project to survey Wiki Peak and upland portions of the Beaver Creek drainage for archaeological sites. The project area is the traditional homeland of the Upper Ahtna and Upper Tanana Dene. The Beaver Creek drainage has a long history of traditional use and is a travel corridor from the lowlands to the uplands. High-quality obsidian is located on Wiki Peak and has been used by people to craft stone tools for over 13,000 years. Wiki Peak obsidian has been documented at great distances from its source and at some of the earliest sites in Alaska (Reuther et al. 2011).

The third year of work was focused on providing opportunities for local community and youth engagement within the Wiki Peak and Beaver Creek drainage project area. A youth and Elders site visit was held at an archaeological site on Beaver Creek. This location is known to Upper Tanana Dene people as *Ch'idah Niig* or "something (game) always stays" (Smith and Kari 2023). The visit was planned to be a three-day event for Ahtna and Upper Tanana Dene youth, and a daytrip for Elders, to learn about recent survey results and share stories about area. Participation in the event was facilitated through the Ahtna, Inc., internship program, and Upper Tanana Dene participation was organized in partnership with Northway Village.

Ch'idah Niig is in a remote area of the park, and transporting participants required numerous bush plane flights and two separate air charter services. All community participants flew via a Cessna 206 to the Chisana airstrip for rendezvous with a smaller bush plane (Cessna 180) for final transport to an unimproved airstrip on Beaver Creek. Five youth accompanied by two adult chaperones flew from the Northway and Gulkana airports and camped on-site with park cultural resources staff for three days and two nights. Six Elders were scheduled to fly out to meet the youth for a day trip; however, due to unfavorable weather conditions and concern for the safety of the participants, the Elders were not able to land on-site. They did, however, have an opportunity on the flight to see the project area from the air and were able to meet and chat

with each other in Chisana before they returned home. Although the youth did not get to meet with the Elders on site at *Ch'idah Niig*, they did get to learn about the site's antiquity, archaeological excavation techniques, and stratigraphy, and they were able to identify and learn about surface artifacts located on-site.

The missions may not have gone exactly as planned, but small successes are wins and failures are learning experiences to shape future efforts. Wrangell-St. Elias NPP archaeologists have planned another three-year project to survey areas affected by environmental and other stressors. The project scope is being developed in collaboration with park-affiliated Indigenous communities. Local stakeholders are now the driving force behind the identification of the highest priority inventory areas. This is a shared approach that will help provide opportunities to access areas that are considered traditionally important and should be informative for community members and land managers alike. In addition to ongoing tribal consultations, the park is actively working to broaden community involvement in cultural resource stewardship by partnering with local nonprofit organizations that currently operate youth internship and engagement programs. These partnerships aim to connect existing local infrastructure and interest with meaningful archaeological and cultural fieldwork opportunities in the park. By leveraging these resources, outreach capacity, and established relationships of these nonprofit organizations, the staff at Wrangell-St. Elias NPP hope to create collaborative pathways for youth and young adults to participate in hands-on learning experiences. These initiatives not only support local workforce development but also help foster the next generation of cultural stewards and community leaders with deep connections to the land and its history. This multilayered approach is grounded in consultation, collaboration, and community engagement (Fig. 9).

COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT AT THE CLAM COVE PICTOGRAPH SITE, LAKE CLARK NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

JASON ROGERS

Clam Cove (SEL-006) is a pictograph site on the western shore of Cook Inlet, in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (NPP). The bay where the site is located has the Dena'ina placename *Niłghenk'enulyun* ("mixed vegetation all grown together," possibly referring to the dense undergrowth surrounding several house depressions in the backshore) (Smith and Kari 2023). The site, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017, is one of only three known pictograph locales in the NPS Alaska system (the others being the Tuxedni Rockshelter site [KEN-229, also in Lake Clark NPP] and Salt Chuck Pictograph Site in Glacier Bay National Park [XMF-003]). Clam Cove site descriptions, history of investigations, and analyses results have been extensively described elsewhere (especially Baird 2004, 2006, and Baird et al. 2022) and are briefly summarized below.

Imagery at the site largely consists of anthropomorphic figures, umiak boats, weapons (e.g., harpoons), sea mammals (especially whales), and abstract or geometric designs. The closest ethnographic parallels are drawn from Alutiiq and Unangaŝ material culture (Baird et al. 2022). In 1969, Joan Townsend of the University of Manitoba conducted test excavations at the base of the rock face and recovered lithic materials including two bifaces and a whetstone (Townsend 1969). Three charcoal samples and one marine shell collected from the excavation units were radiocarbon dated in 2002, resulting in age determinations of approximately 1700 radiocarbon years ago (reported in Baird et al. 2022). Analyses of archaeobotanical remains (wood charcoal) were also conducted in 2002 and reported in Baird et al. 2022. The analyses identified six genera and one species: spruce (*Picea*), hemlock (*Tsuga*), Alaska yellow cedar (*Chamaecyparis*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), birch (*Betula*), alder (*Alnus*), and willow (*Salix*). Small pigment samples were subject to

Figure 9. An Ahtna, Inc., employee, Ahtna intern, and NPS archeologist conduct auger testing on a prominent overlook within the Long Fire burn area. NPS photo.

proton-induced X-ray emission (PIXE) analysis, but the procedure was unable to determine the pigment's elemental composition.

The rock art imagery was first comprehensively documented in 1987 by Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) archaeologists, who also documented the backshore house depressions (Griffin 1989). Some 75 images were inventoried, making this one of the richest pictograph assemblages in Alaska (Perrot-Minot 2020). In 1996, Jeanne Schaaf (then Cultural Resources Program manager for Lake Clark and Katmai National Parks) visited the site and noted that "up to 80 percent of the images recorded by the BIA in 1989 were very faint or exfoliated from the rock face" (NPS 2001:2). Schaaf's evaluation led to the NPS seeking funding to document and analyze both the Clam Cove and Tuxedni Bay rock art sites, which eventually led to the development of a conservation and management plan (Shah 2006). Since 2018, park personnel have visited the site on an annual basis to conduct condition assessment updates and monitor ongoing degradation. Increased moisture and water run-off are impacting the pictographs, compounded by lichen growth. rock surface spalling, and exfoliation. In particular, intensified surface moisture and runoff are resulting in increased vegetation growth both above the rock overhang and in cracks and crevices in the panels themselves. These processes are essentially unpreventable and irreversible (Fig. 10).

In view of the site's continued and rapid deterioration, the NPS undertook planning to bring local tribal participants, including Elders and youth, to visit the highly significant locale and in essence provide an opportunity for people to "say farewell" while some elements of the imagery are still visible. The logistics of such a site visit are complicated, as Clam Cove is only reachable by boat or helicopter from across Cook Inlet. In August 2024, four Lake Clark NPP staff joined five Kenaitze tribal members

Figure 10. Pictograph imagery at SEL-006. NPS photo.

on a visit to the site. Tribal members were able to see the pictographs in person for the first time and discuss strategies for preservation, remembrance, and commemoration in the face of unrelenting impacts (Fig. 11).

The project is part of a larger effort to strengthen the park's relationships with tribes in the Cangaeiq/Tikahtnu/Cook Inlet region. Many next steps were discussed while collectively sitting on driftwood on the beach and looking at the pictographs, including using the cove for culture camps, replicating the artwork with Kenaitze youth, and using it help teach the Dena'ina language and traditional use of coastal resources. This was a pilot project the park hopes to repeat in coming summers with other tribes with ancestral ties to the site (Fig. 12).

CONCLUSION

Conversations like those held at the CAAA Workshop and collaborative projects and initiatives—however simple or complex—many examples of which are highlighted in this issue, all serve to cumulatively transform and advance the profession and more importantly to enrich our lives. This kind of work cultivates personal and professional connections as well as mutual understanding. To be sure, challenges persist. Examples include research and collaboration fatigue, communities facing the ongoing stressor of limited personnel and resources, shifting governmental policies and priorities, and of course the distrust and skepticism of outside researchers and the practice of archaeology in general—a position that is understandable given the field's legacy of past transgressions. Despite these, NPS Alaska endeavors to continue to focus on improving and expanding the ways in which we work alongside partner communities both on and off park-managed lands and to provide practical frameworks for archaeologists that are looking toward a more collaborative and holistic discipline.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Hollis Miller, Sven Haakanson Jr., Lizzy Wessells, and everyone else who worked to organize and host the CAAA workshop at University of Washington in late 2023. We also thank the editors of the *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*, Brian Wygal and Ken Pratt, for compiling this issue.

Figure 12. NPS staff and Kenaitze tribal members on the beach at Clam Cove. NPS photo.

Figure 11. NPS staff and Kenaitze tribal members examining the pictograph site. NPS photo.

Thank you to the staff and leadership of the NPS Alaska regional office and parks and to the Cultural Resources Advisory Council who have supported and nurtured these collaborative projects and initiatives.

Most importantly, we wish to extend our most sincere gratitude to our Indigenous colleagues and partners: scholars, community collaborators, governmental representatives, subject matter experts, traditional knowledge bearers, Elders, and youth, who we have had the honor to learn from and partner with on the projects highlighted in this article, and especially to those individuals who contributed to writing this brief and incomplete summary of some of the work we have accomplished together.

Gratitude to First Alaskans Institute for teaching us how to say "thank you" in 20 different Alaska Native Languages: https://www.firstalaskans.org/learn-thanks):

Language	Thank You
Lingít/Tlingit	*Gunalchéesh*
St. Lawrence Island Yupik/ Siberian Yupik	*Igamsiqanaghhaalek*
Unangax̂	*Qaĝaasakung*
Sugcestun/Sugpiaq/Alutiiq	*Quyanaasinaq*
Yup'ik & Cup'ik	*Quyana cakneq*
Iñupiatun/Iñupiaq	*Quyanaq/Quyanaqpak/ Taikuu*
Dena'ina	*Chin'an*
Deg Xinag/Deg Hitan	*Dogidinh*
Denaakk'e/Koyukon	*Enaa baasee'*
Gwich'in and Hän	*Hai'/Mahsi' choo'*
Tabesna/Tanana	*Maasee*
Denak'i/Upper Kuskokwim	*Mosiy'/Tsen'anh*
Benhti Kenaga'/Upper Tanana	*Tsen'ii*
Ahtna	*Tsin'aen*
Dihthaad Xt'een lin Aandeg'/ Tanacross	*Tsin'ęę*
Holikachu	*Xasagidaghisdhoot*
Eyak	*'Awa'ahdah*
Xaad Kil/Haida	*Háw'aa*
Sm'algyax̣/Ts'msyen	*T'oyaxsut 'nüün/Nt'oyaxsn*

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