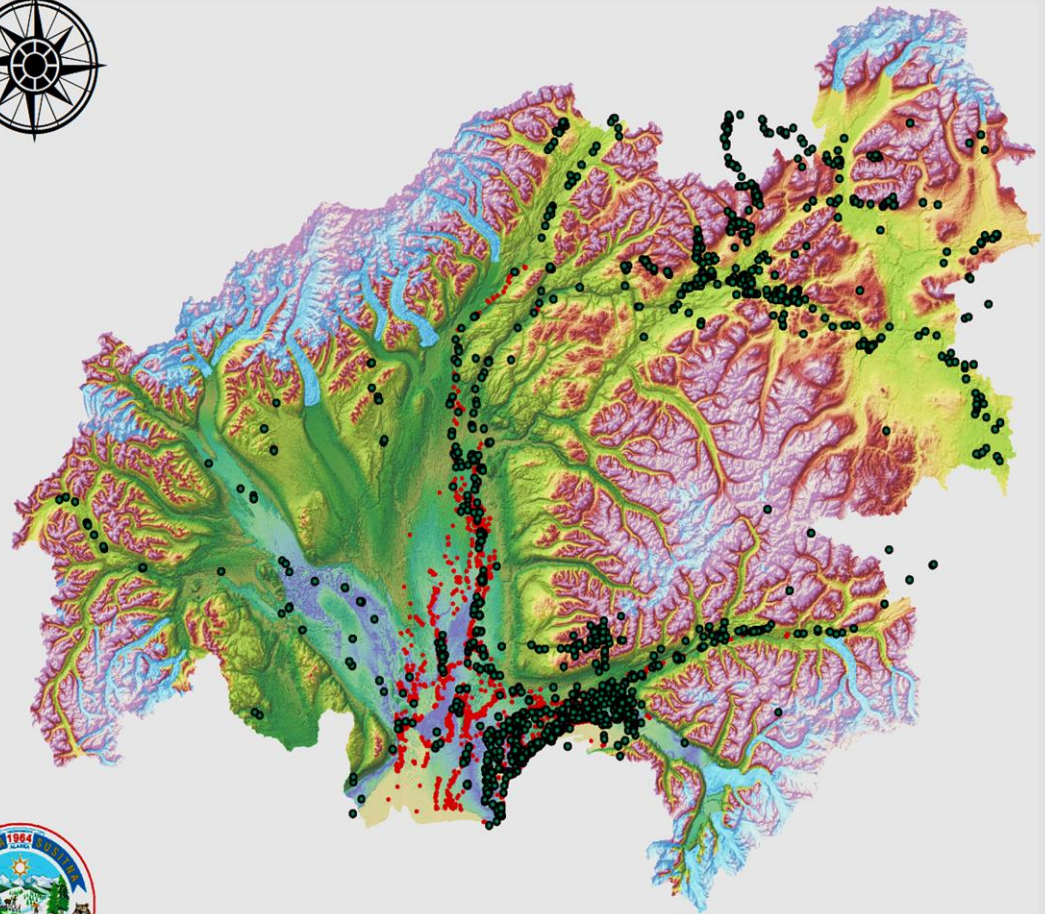


# Indigenous Dene Sites & Fishing in the Matanuska & Susitna Valleys



Presented by  
Fran Seager-Boss,  
Archaeologist M.A.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES within Matanuska & Susitna Watersheds



Nature Conservatory Matanuska-Susitna River  
drainage graphic courtesy of Mat-Su Borough

0 10 20 40 60 80  
Miles

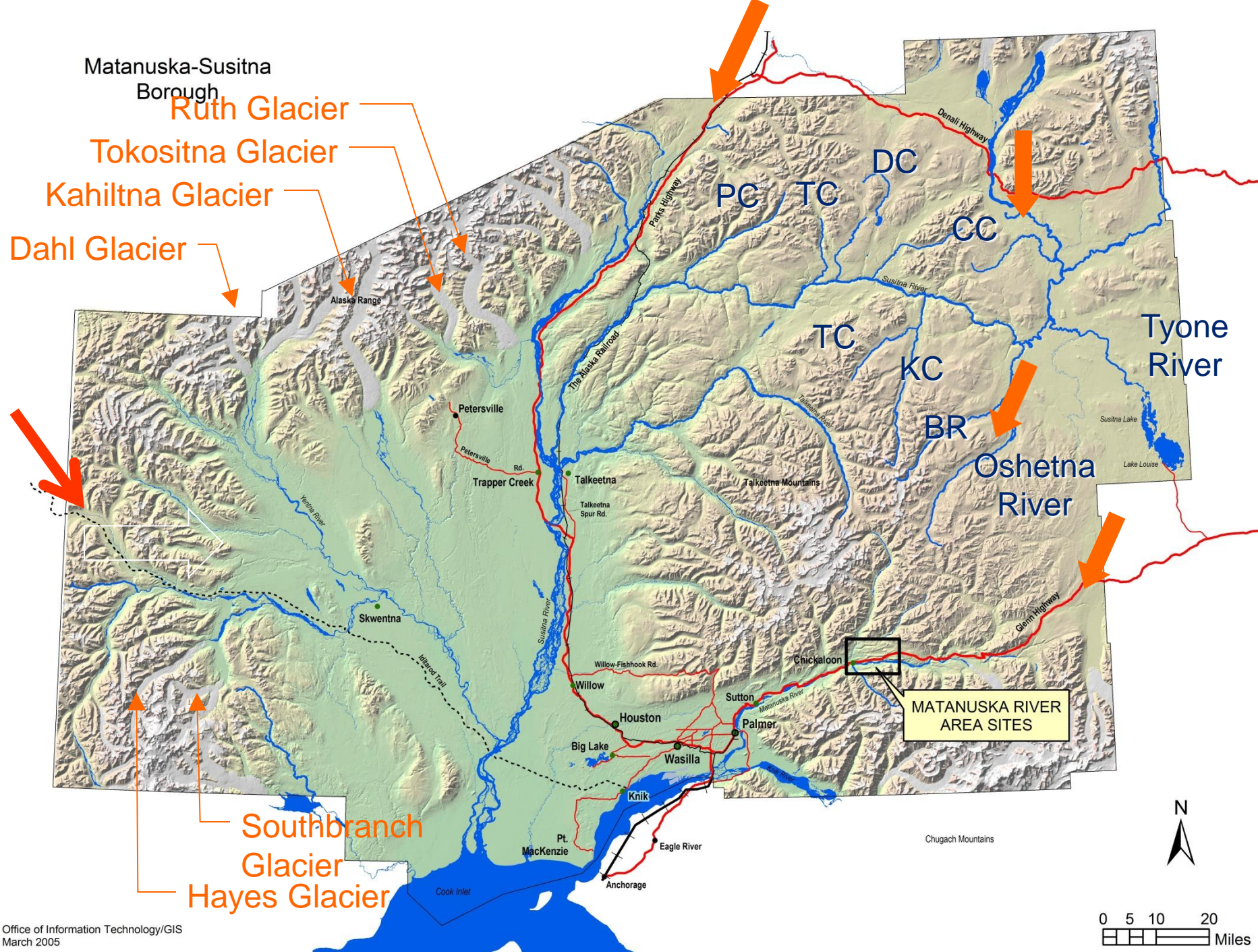
## Legend

- 2014-12-2\_Knik\_Tribe\_locations\_pt
- Cultural\_Features

Richard L Martin  
Tribal Mapper  
2/27/2015







Matanuska-Susitna  
Borough

Ruth Glacier

Tokositna Glacier

Kahiltna Glacier

Dahl Glacier

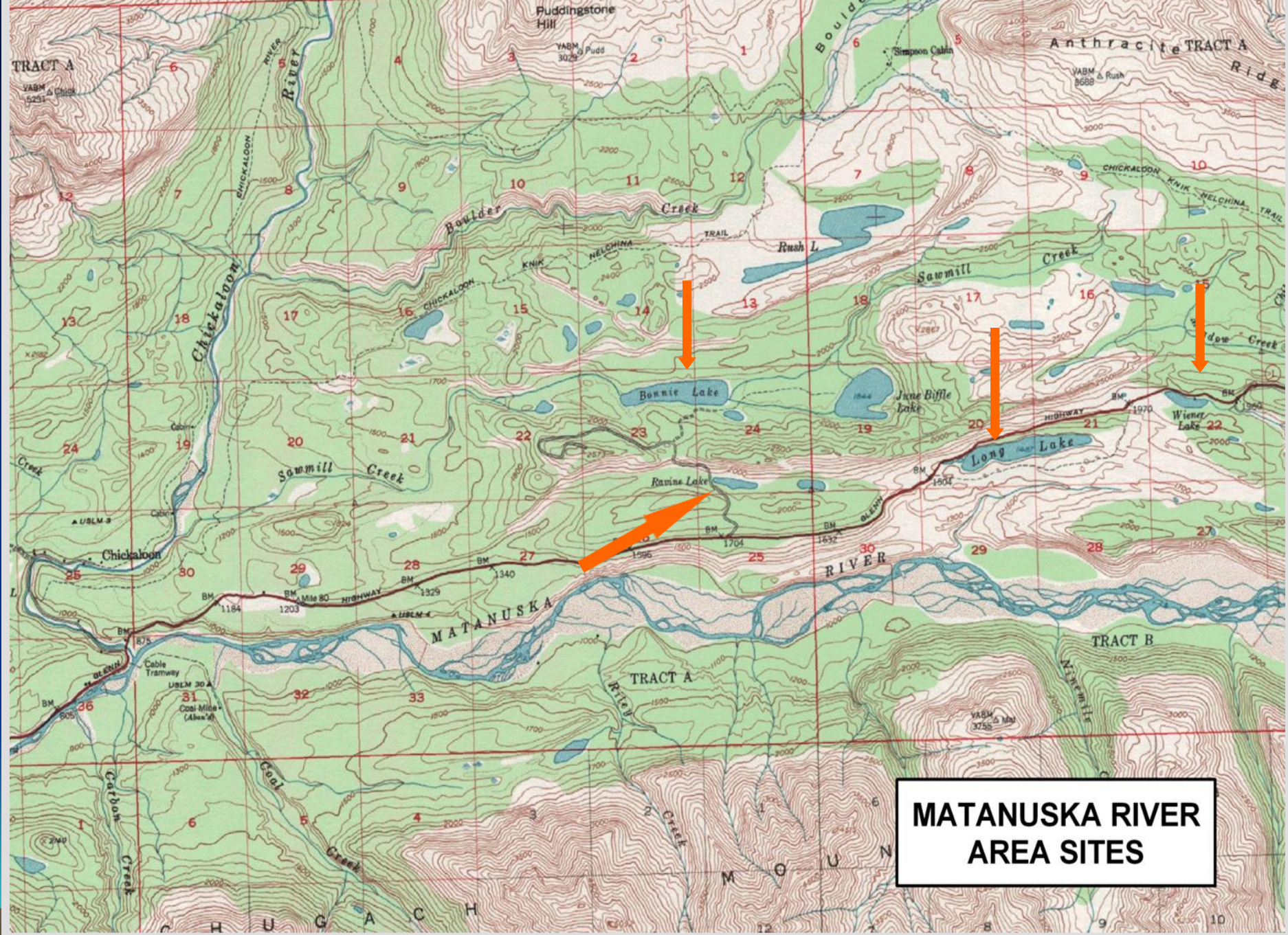
Southbranch  
Glacier

Hayes Glacier

MATANUSKA RIVER  
AREA SITES

0 5 10 20  
Miles





**MATANUSKA RIVER  
AREA SITES**

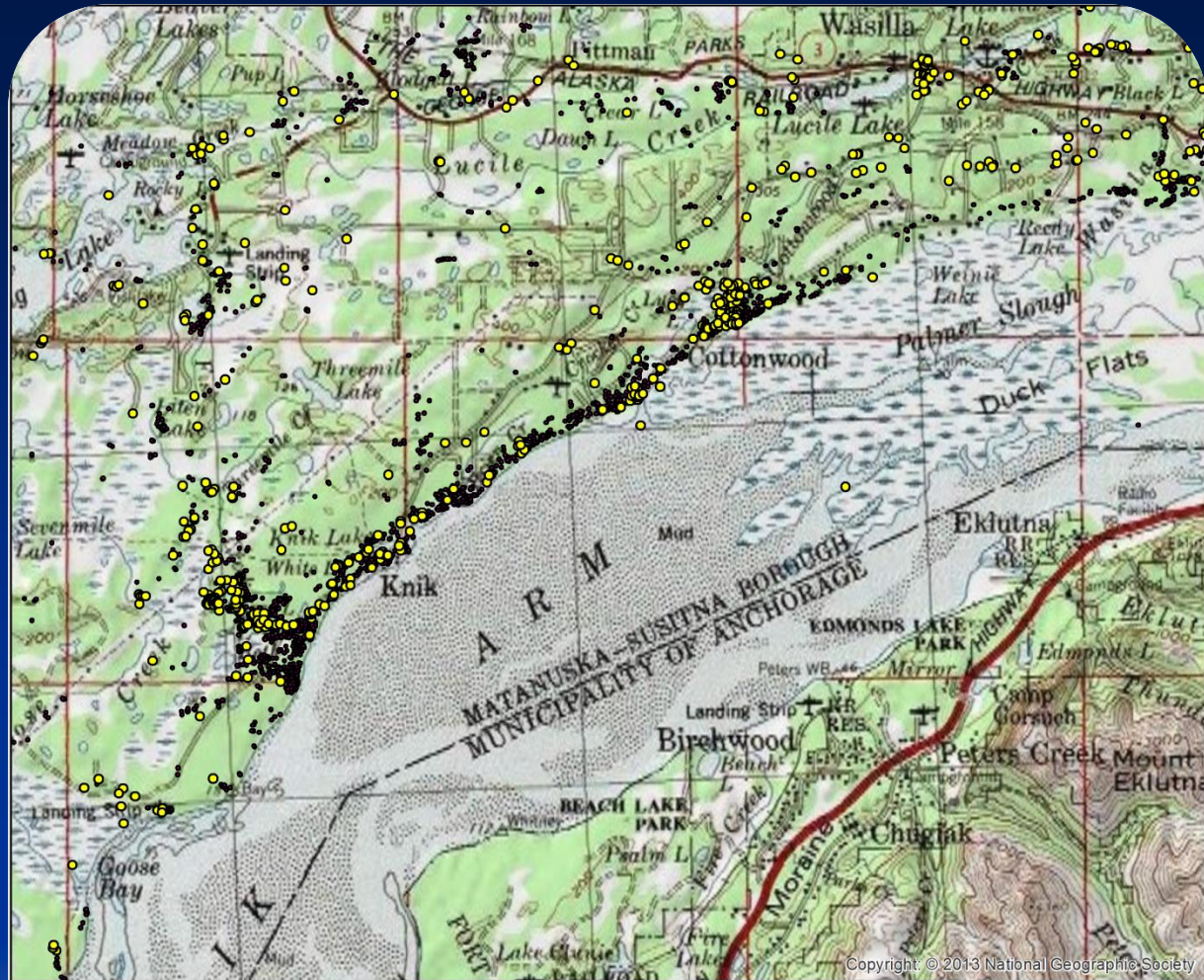




## The Northern Archaic Tradition from 5,500 B.P. to 2,500 B.P.

- Between 8,500 and 5,000 B.P. the boreal forest became fully established.
- By around 6,000 B.P. salmon may have started to spawn in the waterways of the Susitna drainage.
- Northern Archaic Tradition sites have been discovered along the Susitna River east of Talkeetna, and on bluffs above the Matanuska River dating to around 5,000 – 3,000 B.P.
- People migrating into the valley During the Northern Archaic period are most likely ancestors to the Dene (Athabaskan) Dena'ina and Ahtna people who live in the Valleys today.

# NORTH & WEST KNIK ARM Dena'ina Sites



## Legend

- AHRs\_pt\_clip
- Cultural\_feature

Richard L Martin  
Tribal Mapper  
2/27/2015



# Construction of a Dena'ina House

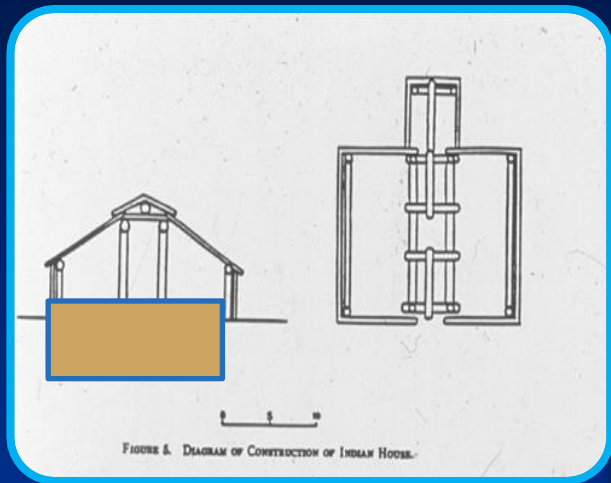


FIGURE 5. DIAGRAM OF CONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN HOUSE.

Elevation & roof design

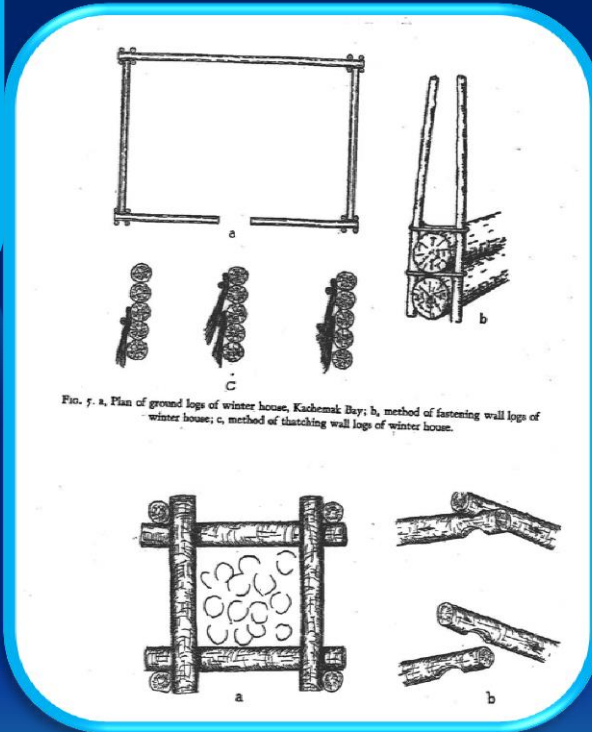


FIG. 7. a, Plan of ground logs of winter house, Kachemak Bay; b, method of fastening wall logs of winter house; c, method of thatching wall logs of winter house.

Construction of walls & Hearth

Plano view of house with sleeping benches

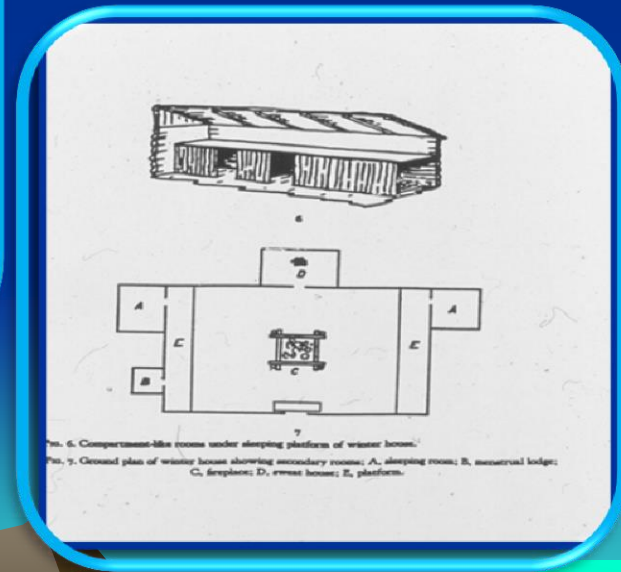


FIG. 6. Compartment-like rooms under sleeping platform of winter house.  
FIG. 7. Ground plan of winter house showing secondary rooms; A, sleeping room; B, entrance lodge; C, fireplace; D, eaves house; E, platform.



# Plano Views of Dene House Construction



FIGURE 3. DIAGRAM OF CONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN HOUSE.

## HOUSE RUINS ON COOK INLET

Owing to the short time spent at most of the sites, our information about the houses on Cook Inlet is very scanty. Including the Indian houses of Kachemak

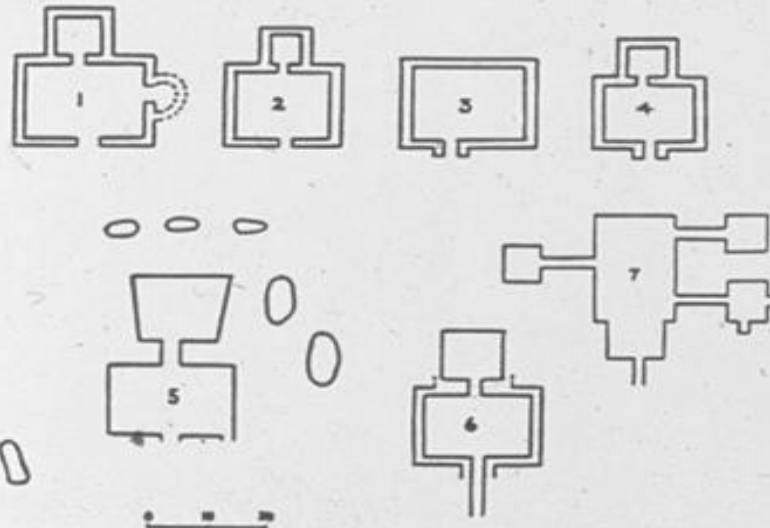


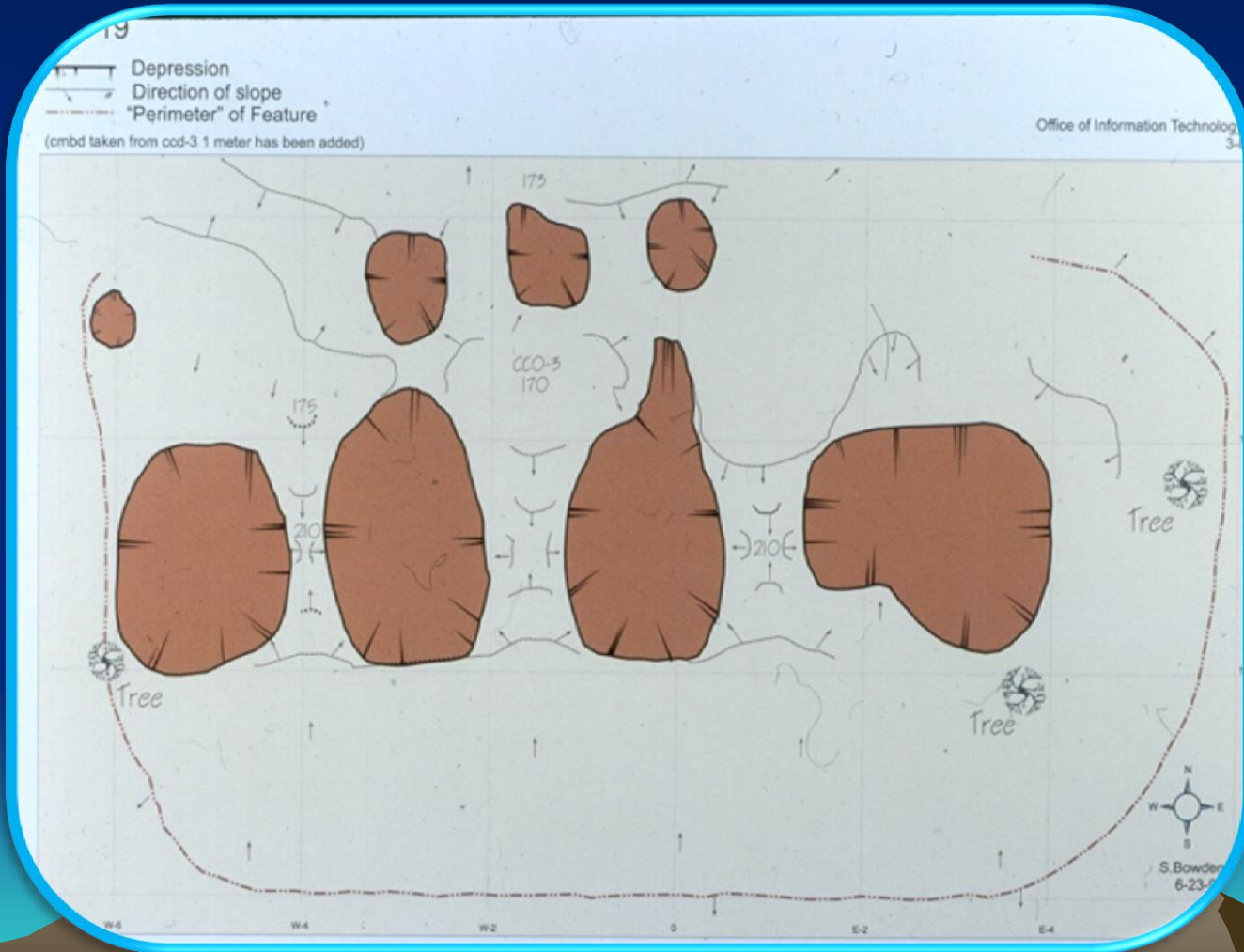
FIGURE 4. INDIAN HOUSE RUINS ON COOK INLET.

1. POINT WEST OF HALIBUT COVE; 2. CAPE STARBUCK; 3. HOUSE II, KARLOV;
4. HOUSE IV, KARLOV; 5. NIKISHKA III; 6. POLLY CREEK; 7. CRINITMA BAY.

(Taken from de Laguna)



# PLANO VIEW OF CACHE PITS at Knik



Above:  
small  
depressions  
for dried  
berries.  
Below:  
larger  
depressions  
for large  
game & fish

# Cross Section of a Cache Pit

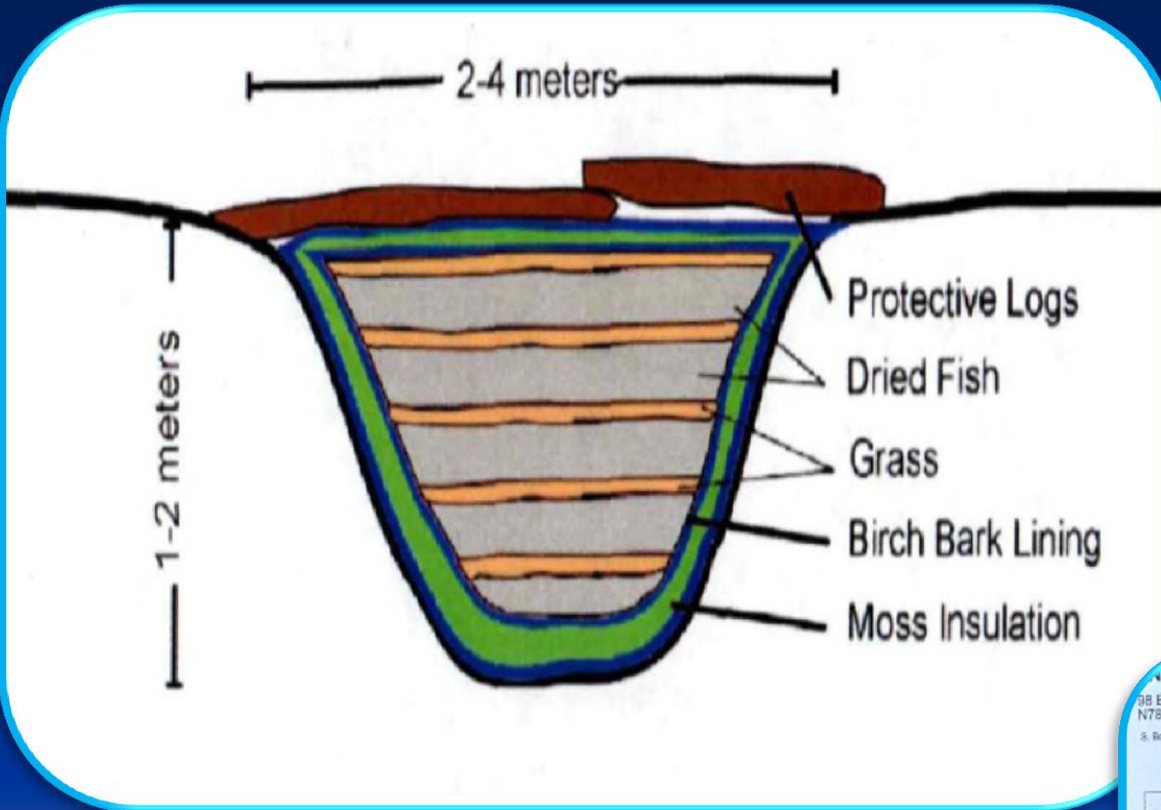
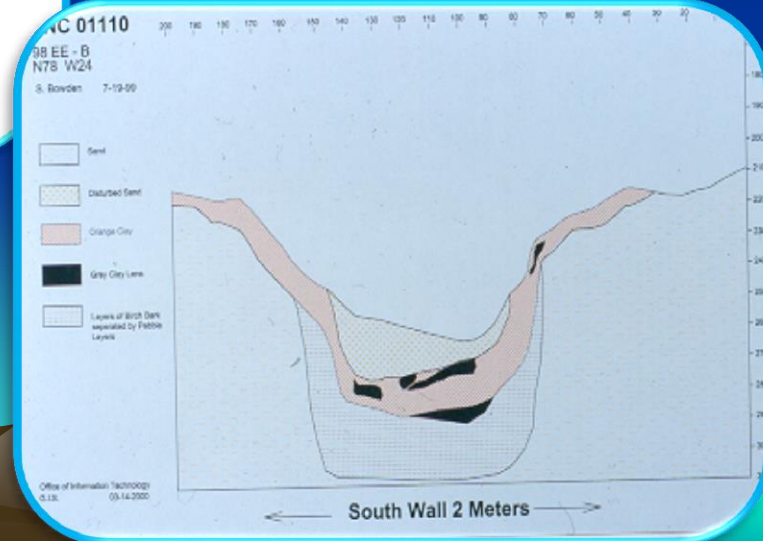


Diagram taken from Alan Boraas

Below:  
Cache pit  
excavated  
at Knik





# Knik: Foundation of Nichil/Large Winter Qesh'qa House





# Evidence of a Hearth





# Student with Antler Harpoon



# Partial Large Harpoon







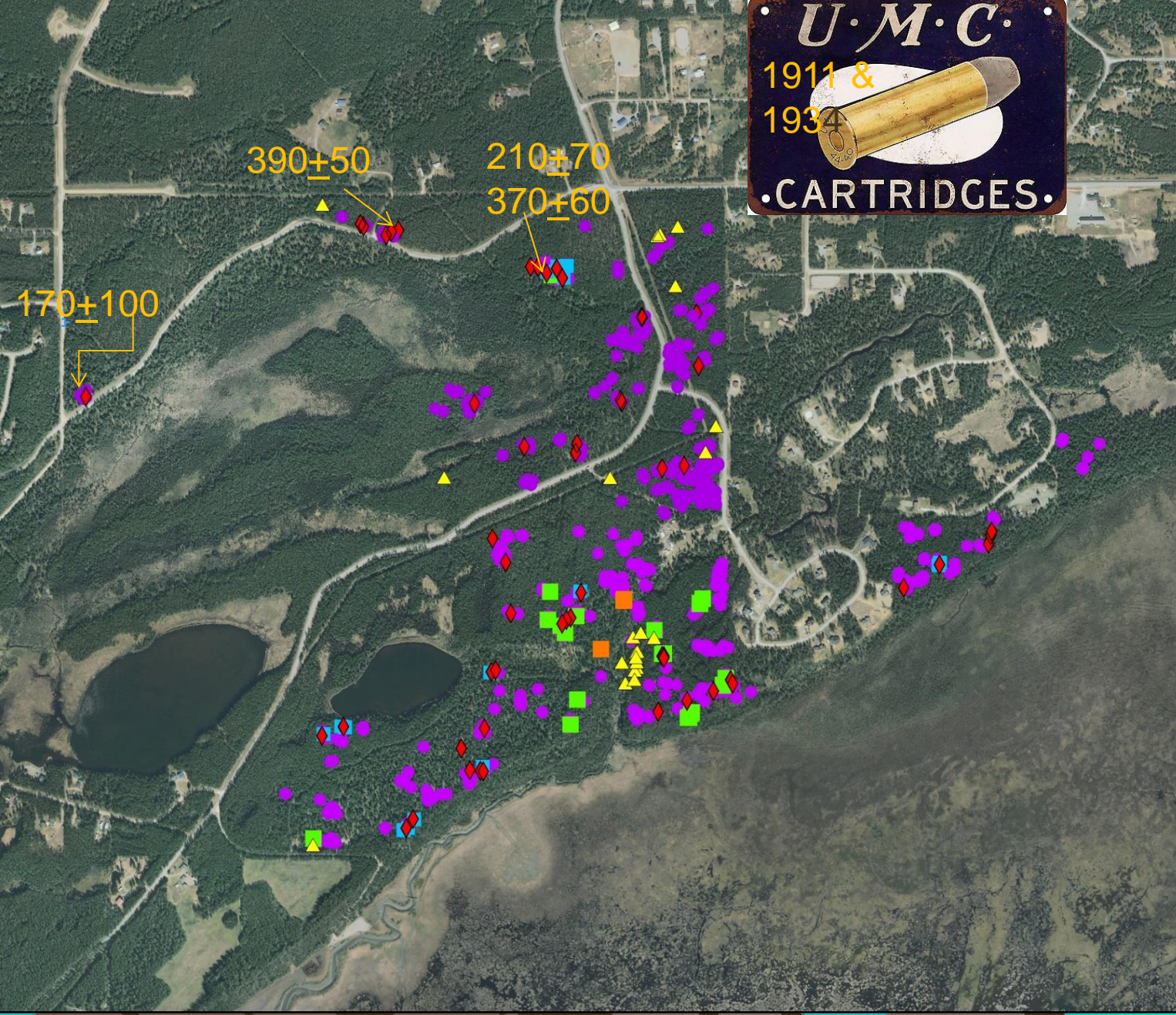
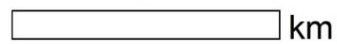
Dates on houses are cal. BP

Cottonwood Creek Village Contributing and Non Contributing Resources

- ◆ House Pits
- ▲ Non Contributing
- Historic
- Side Rooms
- Cultural Depressions
- Cache Pits

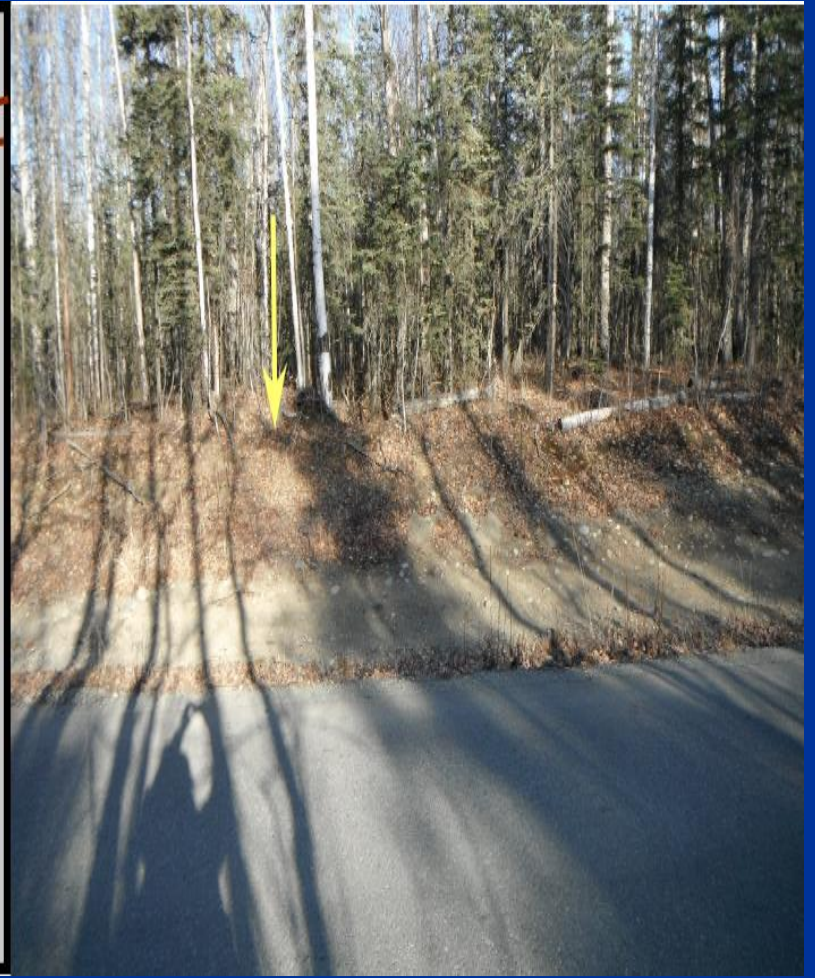


0.5





# House Foundations & Caches on Knikatnu Land





# Several Cache Pits



- **Dene Tradition from 1,500 to present.**



- **Between 5,000 – 500 B.P. the Dena'ina people displaced the Alutiiq people in the Susitna Valley. The Dena'ina maintained annual seasonal subsistence activities**
  - **which included:**
    - **Spring and Summer: waterfowl, egg collecting, collecting feathers,**
    - **freshwater fish**
    - **Spring and Summer: salmon harvest (all five species were harvested)**
    - **Summer: harbor seals and beluga whales**
    - **Summer and Fall: harvest berries**
    - **Fall: special trips made for caribou, bear, and sheep, moose**
    - **Fall and Winter: beaver and fur-bearers**
    - **Throughout the year: small game, ptarmigan and grouse**



# Dene Fishing Techniques

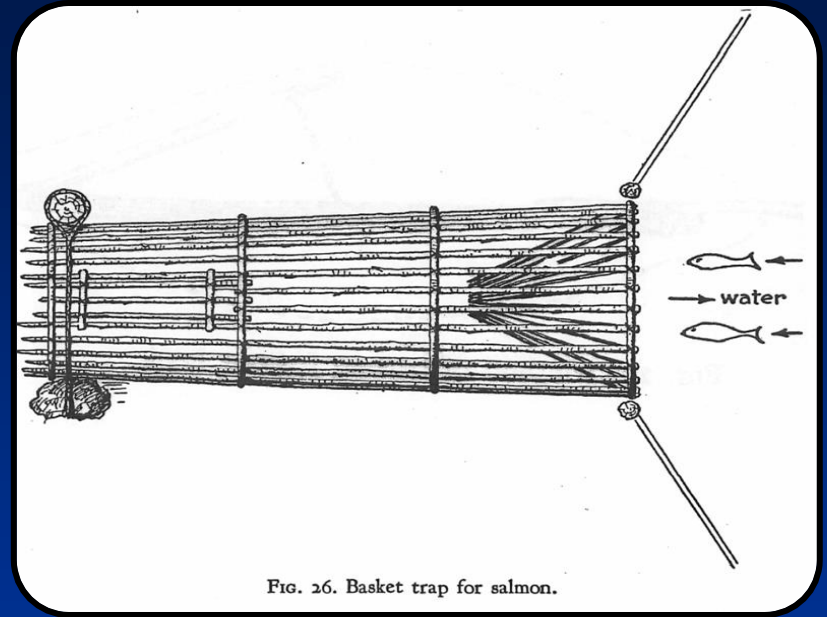
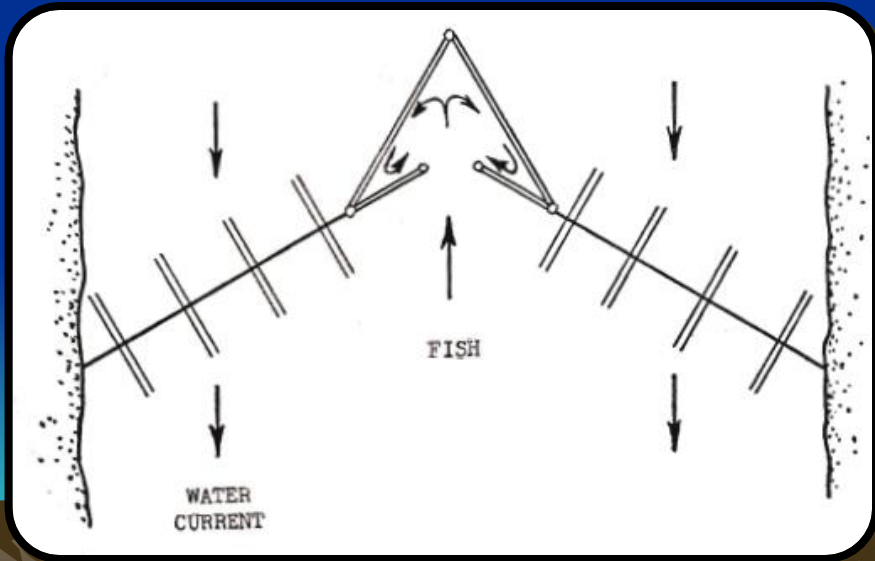
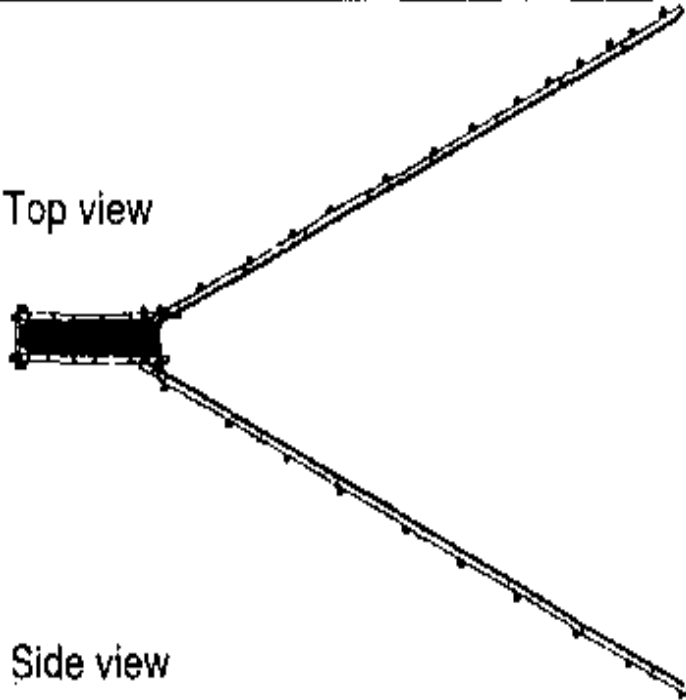


FIG. 26. Basket trap for salmon.

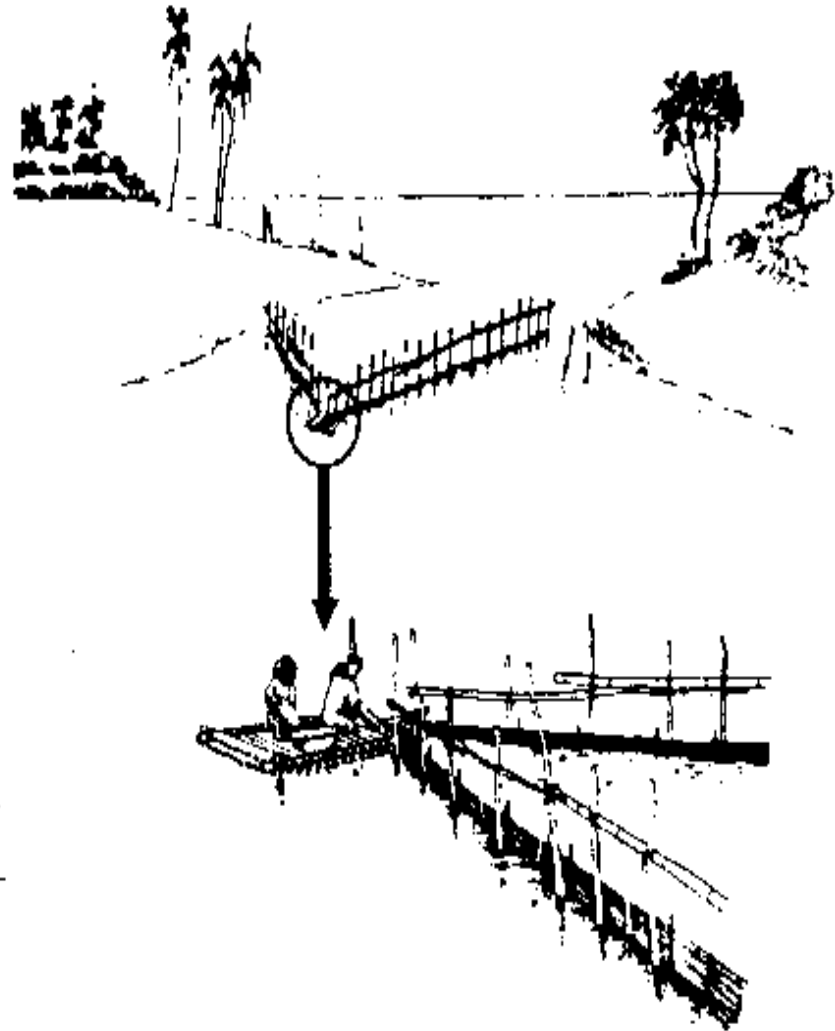


# Types of Fishing Weirs

Top view



Side view



Source: Villaluz et al, 1982.



# Catching Fish on Knik Arm





## Drying, Trapping & Storing Fish





# Catching Fish Along the River Bank



Dimi Macheras (Ahtna)

Dimi  
08

# Knik Elder Sharing Knowledge with the Next Generation



Knik Culture  
Camp/ Fish  
Drying



Courtesy: Knik Tribal Council



# Shem Pete



An elder who shared his encyclopedic knowledge of the Region



# Contributors

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- Dan Stone-Joanna Wells
- Angela Wade, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
- GIS Department MSB
- Knik Tribal Council
- Richard Martin Maps, Knik Tribal Council
- Images provided by: KTC, MSB & Anchorage Museum
- References
  - Alan Boraas Phd                      - Cornelius Osgood Phd
  - James Kari Phd                      -De Leguna Phd
  - Artist: Dimi Macheras (Ahtna)





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Courtesy of Frankie Barker