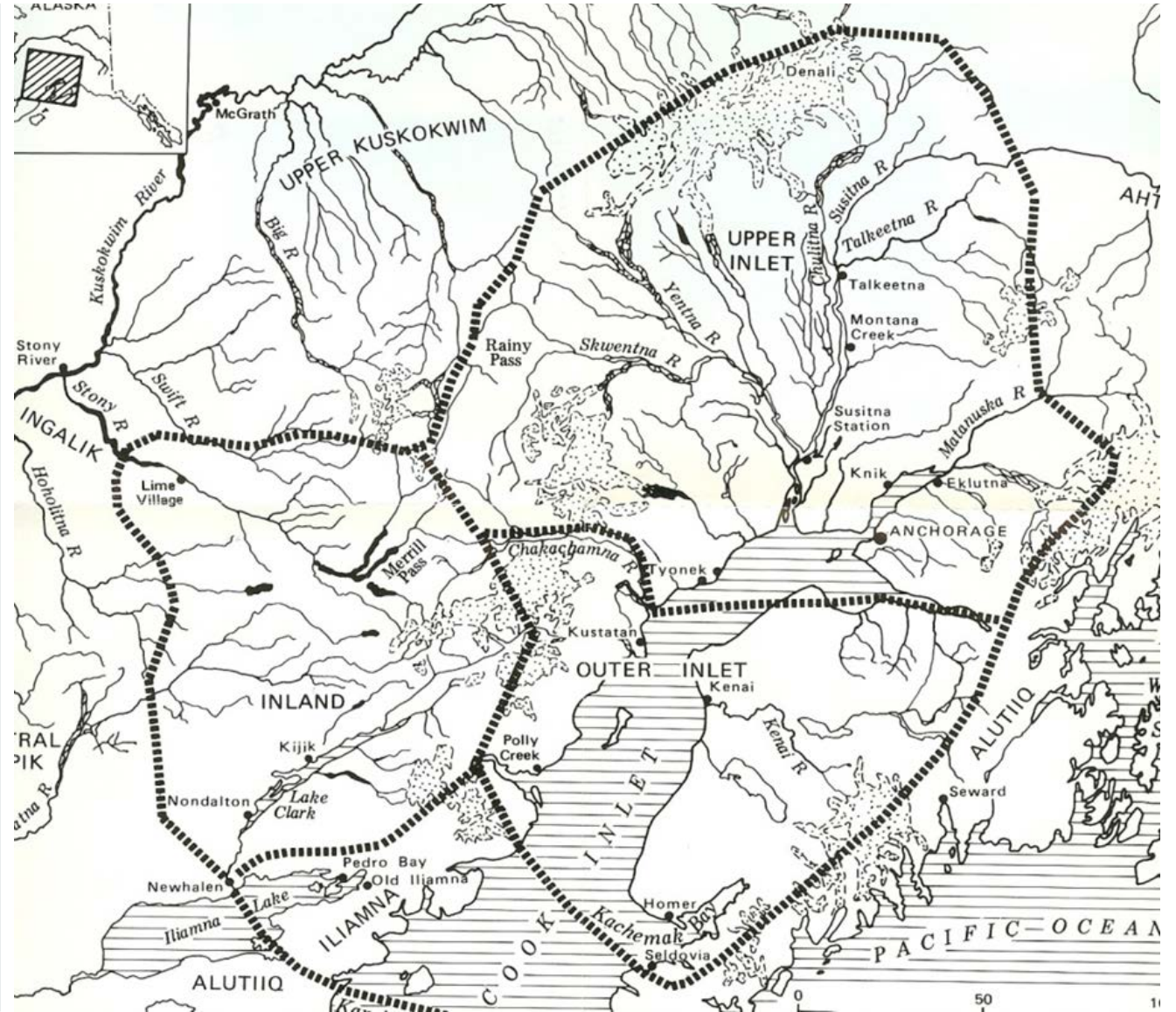


THE UPPER INLET DENA'INA



A History



Upper Inlet Dena'ina

Naming Names:

To the Dena'ina & Ahtna Athabascan (or Dene) knowing placenames were critical to their survival, because that knowledge helped them understand where they were. The Dena'ina did not have maps, their placenames were the maps. The placenames had great "...affection for the associations between the names, the ancestors, and the land..." according to Shem Pete's Alaska. The names were reported from memory and not learned from maps or records (for Shem Pete's Book over 45 Dena'ina speakers agreed with the placenames).

A huge tenant for the Dena'ina is that "...new names are never coined by individuals, and Dena'ina places are almost never named after people."

The Dena'ina & Ahtna are fond of the placename, in part because the meanings are usually analyzable. Their placenames were essential for orientation and boundary marking. "The names are applied in a systematic way and *parsimonious* way over entire drainage systems and regions." Shem Pete's Alaska.

"Sequences of names are a stimulating mix of fact and imagery and can be enjoyed as folk poetry"

- "Nutul'iy –Object That Stands in the Water" – Fire Island
- "Dnal'iy, Denal'iy (Dena'ina) Tnel'aay (Ahtna) The One that Watches Us" – Pioneer Peak

Upper Inlet Dena'ina

Lidar (Light Detection And Ranging) imagery allows us to examine both natural and manmade environments with accuracy and precision. The topography below the trees, the ground plan becomes clear with this 3-D imagery.

Upper Inlet Dena'ina

Tuqentnu, Dashq'e Betnu "Clearwater Creek" or "On the Shoal Creek" Kroto Creek, Deshka River

Both Dena'ina and English names are interchangeable...

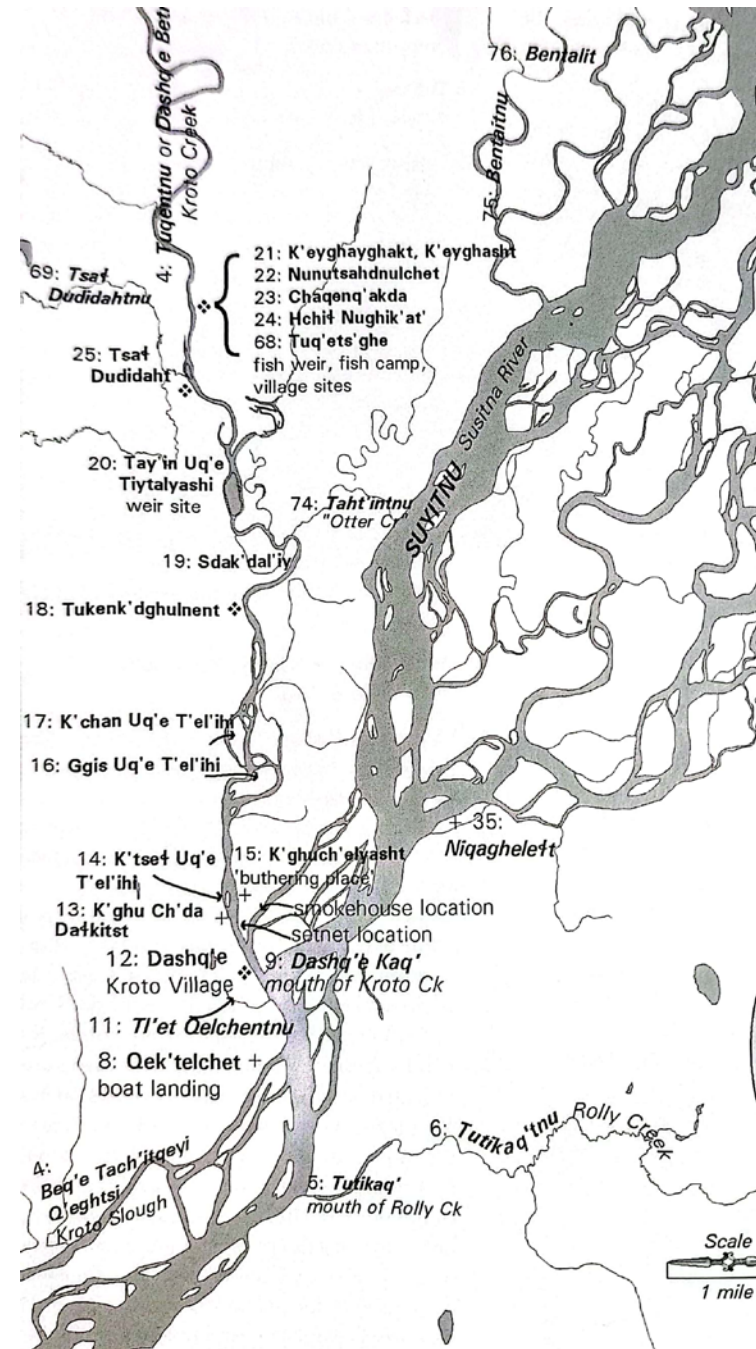
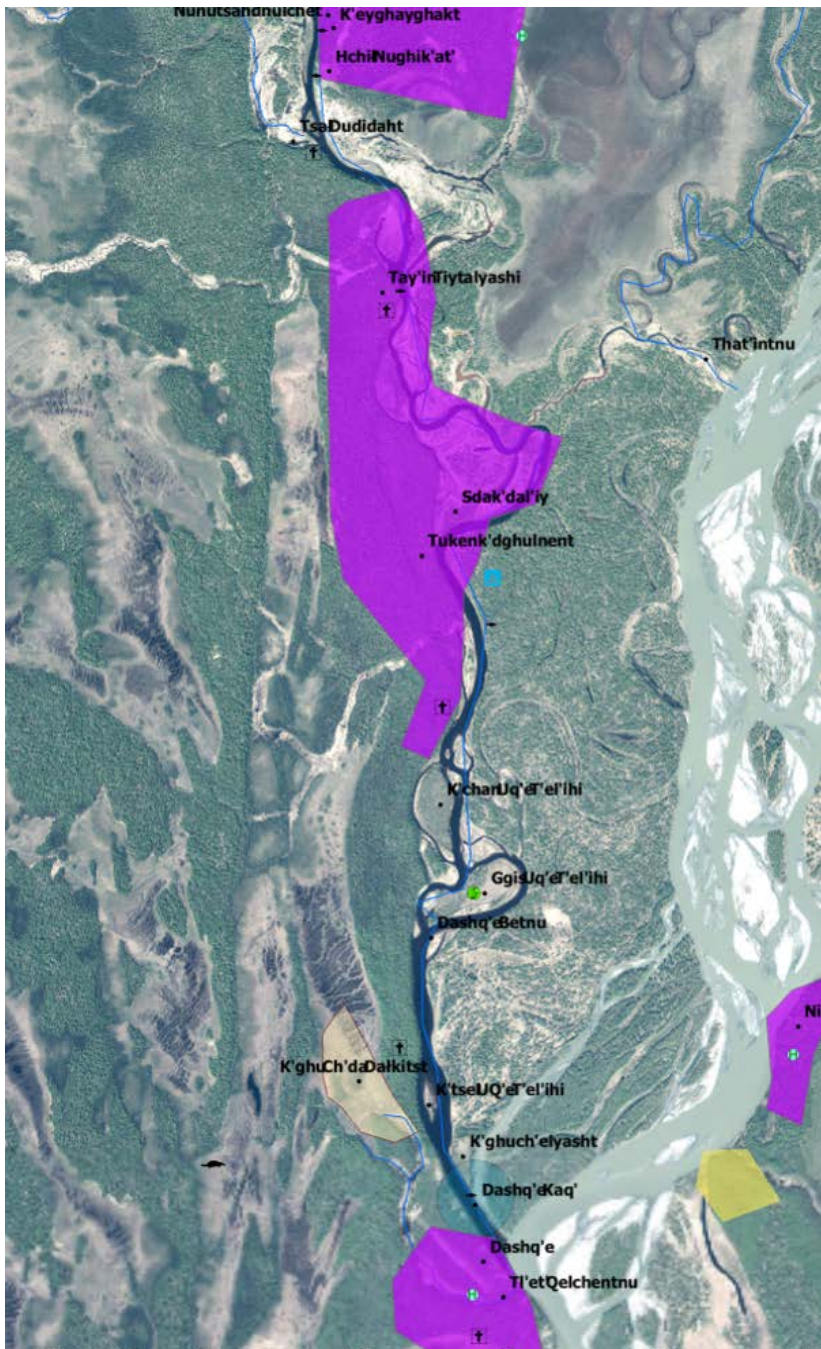
Shem Pete also said that winter houses were once found all along the lower 4-5 miles on the bluffs, with fish camps down the hill along the stream.

Dashq'e "On the Shoal" Kroto Village

1st recorded as "Tishku" in Wrangell's notes in the 1830's. In the 1910 census 20 people lived here.

About 5-6 miles up the Deshka river was a Summer fishing village with a fish trap that thousands of people used according to Shem Pete.

This area was very rich in resources needed back then to survive. Salmon were harvested and smoked in this area. It was so rich in resources that it was a frequent target of raids from the Alutiiq or Ulchena. So much so it was named, "On It Someone Went In Fear"



Upper Inlet Dena'ina



Dashq'e "On the Shoal" Kroto Village

This was the last Dena'ina Village occupied on the Susitna River. The last 2 Qeshqa in the area: K'ghundu and Chijuk both had houses at Kroto.

K'ghundu was considered a rich man and the white men called him Kroto. He was a "good man on this earth" and had lots of people staying with him...maybe 100 or so. "About a hundred years ago they stayed in one big community hall with partitions between the families."

Chijuk and his family were the last residents of Kroto Village in the 1930's. **Chijuk** was referred to in many places about this area on the Susitna river.

When it was booming, there were actually two villages at Kroto Village, Northern Kroto people and Southern Kroto People. They were about two miles apart.

"Those Kroto People looked like white men, white skin with red, curly hair and whiskers. Long before the Russians. That was the only around Cook Inlet where there was curly haired, red-headed people."

Upper Inlet Dena'ina

The Salmon Ceremony

One time a rich man had a daughter whom he told not to go near his fish trap. But being a determined girl, she insisted that she wanted to know what was in the trap and ignored the admonition, promised soon to return. When she arrived at the fish trap, she saw a king salmon and began to talk to him. As the conversation went on, she gradually transformed into a fish and, slipping into the water, disappeared with him. The rich man did not cease to look for her but she was never found.

The next year when the salmon began to run, the rich man visited his trap and collected a number of fish which he threw upon the grass. Then he picked them all up but one little one which he forgot. After he had finished cleaning his fish, he returned for the small one which he left behind. He was surprised to find, however, that instead of the little king salmon which he had forgotten, there was a small boy sitting in the grass where the fish had been. The boy only nodded his head. Then the rich man saw a resemblance to the daughter he had lost and, after walking around the boy three times, he realized that he was his grandson. Finally the boy spoke to the rich man and told him the things which should be done if the people wished to have plenty of salmon every year. He told how to cut the sticks to dry the salmon, how by putting fresh water they could keep the fish from falling off the drying poles.

(Once a man let his fish fall off the drying pole and "ZIP!" a little man just like to fish swam out into the water and never came back. Since then when one falls off, people say, "You come back again!")

He explained the ceremony which he said should be made every year and warned if these things were not done. He would never return.

This Ceremony was important to Knikers on the Susitna River...