

LEAVING KING ISLAND:
THE CLOSURE OF A BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS SCHOOL
AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

By

Nicole M. Braem

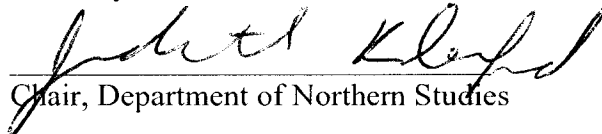
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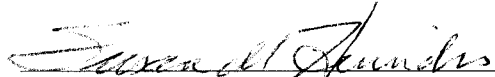


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THESIS

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of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
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MASTER OF ARTS

By
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Abstract:

By 1966, the King Island Inupiat had moved from their island village and lived at Nome. Little has been written about the de facto relocation of the King Islanders – and how and why it happened. What follows is an ethnohistory of the relocation based on the anthropology and history of the Bering Strait region, archival records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and interviews with King Islanders in Nome. The heart of the matter was the village's school. Based on the evidence, the BIA closed the school because of the expense and inconvenience of operating at King Island. This accomplished what the BIA had been unable for decades to do by persuasion – to move the village to the mainland. The immediate result of the closure, the resettlement of the villagers in Nome, fits within the established pattern of BIA policy over time, one that had assimilation as its ultimate goal.

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Preface

Fresh out of the University of Detroit, I moved to Nome, Alaska in the summer of 1992 for what was to be a one-year service trip at KNOM-Nome. That one year somehow stretched into ten.

Typically, when an outsider thinks of Nome, two topics come to mind: the Gold Rush and the Iditarod. But spend a little time there on the ground and one can not help but notice that there is a great deal of history there waiting to be written. One such part of the region's history is that of how the King Islanders came to live in Nome.

My first introduction to their story came from Tom Ellanna, who talked about his family's history and the island while we worked together at the Safety Roadhouse in the summer of 1993. A few years later, I took a brief course in the Inupiat language that was taught by Bernadette Alvanna Stimpfle, who taught us the King Island dialect. Her class included not just language, but also an introduction into their culture and history. The island figured largely in both their stories and sounded a great deal like a "Paradise Lost."

But no one could tell me exactly why they had ended up in Nome, or when. Checking in town, I heard a number of explanations. Some said it was because most of the King Islanders moved into Nome for medical reasons, or to get jobs, or to live more easily. Others said the school was the reason – that it had been closed because too few children were left after families began moving in to Nome – or because the Bureau of Indian Affairs had shut it down because of a rock hazard at the island. So I grew interested in finding out, "What exactly happened?"

What follows is my attempt to answer that question. It is by no means a final, exhaustive look at the subject. More information no doubt resides in archived material in Washington D.C,

and the Association on American Indian Affairs archives. This thesis relies heavily on archived federal documents. Those who wish to pursue this topic further would do well to interview more of the King Islanders in Nome and Anchorage; I could only include a limited amount of their interview comments due to space and time limitations.

No one can complete a thesis without a great deal of help. I am indebted to a number of people:

The King Island Elders Advisory Committee for allowing me to do this project, and those who consented to be interviewed: Cecilia and Edward Muktoyuk, Sr., Tom Ellanna, Agatha Kokuluk, Lucy Koyuk, Rose Koezuna, and Gabriel Muktoyuk, Sr. Gabriel also served as the project monitor for the EAC and helped edit the drafts. Thanks to Renee Carlisle, (who did a great deal of work), Lisa Ellanna-Brandt, and Janet Muktoyuk for their help in coordinating events, interviews, and insight. To all of you and the rest of the community, I am grateful for the opportunity to tell this story.

Thanks to the Northern Studies Department and Judith Kleinfeld for the teaching assistantship that made the financial burden less burdensome. Lael Morgan should be held responsible for my decision to stay in graduate school thanks to her encouragement and faith in me early on. Other students in the department let me bounce ideas around and listened patiently to me talk about King Island and the relocation. Lisa Morris deserves special credit for coffee and friendly advice about writing, editing, and working with the subject matter.

Also due is Father John Staudenmaier, S.J., of the University of Detroit Mercy for friendship, insight, the “dead elephant” theory, and an excellent education in the work of a historian.

My committee members, William Schneider, Lawrence Kaplan, and David Koester. A

special thanks to Father Louis L. Renner, S.J. and Deanna Kingston for becoming impromptu, unofficial committee members.

Dorothy Jean Ray is an excellent historian and her contribution to the understanding of northwest Alaska can not be understated. My understanding of the region's history comes largely from her work.

To all of you, Quyaana!!

Leaving King Island: the Closure of a BIA School and Its Consequences

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the summer of 1966, when the last families settled in Nome, the Inupiat Eskimo village on King Island ceased to exist except in the memories of those who had lived there. That summer, as their people had been doing prior to the existence of Nome and the state of Alaska, the remaining villagers made the long trip by skinboat¹ to the mainland – except this time there would be no return trip in the fall. So ended a community and lifestyle extraordinary even by Arctic standards.

That people occupied the island at all attests eloquently to the powers of human adaptation. King Island lies 40 miles west of Cape Douglas in Bering Strait, south of the village of Wales. The island, mostly granite, stretches nearly two and ½ miles long and one and is ½ mile wide. It rises steeply 1200 feet out of the Bering Sea. Boats can be landed in only three locations because most of the shoreline consists of steep embankments with no beaches. Most of the year, pack ice prevents any arrival or departure except by helicopter. The most recent village site on the south side has a 45 percent grade. There, on long driftwood poles gathered nearby, perched the homes the King Island people built into and lashed to the slope with braided walrus hide. [Figure 1.]

Newcomers, even the most seasoned Arctic adventurers, had a common reaction at the sight of the island. Usually, they marveled that anyone managed to live there. In 1924, the

¹The Inupiat used two types of skinboat: the *qayaq* and *umiaq*. Both consisted of a hand-made wooden frame; the former was covered with bearded seal hide, the latter with split walrus hide. The *qayaq* was a smaller, covered craft for a single man, while the *umiaq* was a much larger open boat that could carry several dozen people. Spellings used in this paper are in Inupiaq; the anglicized terms are kayak and umiak.



Figure 1. The village at King Island in 1964. In the right foreground is the school, which closed in 1959, ultimately leading to the abandonment of the island by the King Islanders. Photo by Joseph S. Rychetnik,

explorer Knud Rasmussen, who had just seen most of the North American Arctic during a three-year sled journey from Greenland to the Bering Strait, went to the island after meeting the King Islanders, who were summering in Nome. He was so impressed by them that he included them in his description of Alaskan Natives. Of King Island, he wrote:

It is beyond question the most inhospitable island I have ever seen. In calm weather it is generally wrapped in fog; and when clear; harried by fierce winds, with a heavy swell that makes landing difficult among the broken rocks and churning waters at the foot of the cliffs. For a great part of the winter the place is cut off from the mainland altogether.²

Clearly, the island was not an easy place to live. Bureau of Indian Affairs Specialist Martin N.S. Holm, writing up a school site visit in 1951, was amazed that the Bureau managed to operate a school there at all. "Getting the supplies up to the village is backbreaking," he wrote:

They are lightered ashore by skinboats, and placed on the rocks. Most of the cartoon (sic) supplies are carried up the steps and the slope to the school and the village. A small cable pulls up the oil barrels. It takes two weeks to get everything up and stored away. The space on the rocks is very small and the supplies are handed from man to man far enough up the slope to make room for everything, and to get them above high water mark. It is the most difficult operation I've seen, requires the most work, the most time.³

To the King Islanders, however, the rocky outcropping was home, concerning which they

²Knud Rasmussen. *Across Arctic America*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1998, 344.

³Martin N.S. Holm, BIA Education Specialist, to Max Penrod, Area Educationalist, "Supervisory Visit, King Island, October 4 and 5, 1951." Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, (BIA) Juneau Area Office (JAO). General Subject Correspondence 1933-63. File: 056, Reports of Field Trips [1.2] Education, June 1, 1948 to December 31, 1950. [April 24, 1950 to Nov. 24, 1950. RG 75, Box 12, 04/01/13/(1). National Archives and Record Administration, (NARA) Anchorage, AK.

built up centuries of specialized knowledge about the birds, marine mammals, plants, weather conditions, and ocean currents. The historic purpose of their annual migration to the mainland had been several-fold: to get resources they could not get at the island, such as caribou, salmon, and berries; to trade and socialize; and once the city of Nome had sprung to life, for the men to work seasonally in town for wages.

Every year until 1959, the entire King Island village would transplant itself to a makeshift village just east of Nome for the short summer of the region. Like most Bering Strait Natives, they had already for decades incorporated a variety of European goods and technologies into their lifestyle. King Island men had earned a reputation as particularly skillful ivory carvers. They sold their carvings to local tourist shops. Many women added to the family income by skin-sewing. Some men earned wages working as longshoremen or general laborers. The cash income derived from summer jobs in Nome allowed them to purchase basic goods such as flour, and the gasoline and ammunition used in their subsistence lifestyle, one which still depended nearly entirely on the success of the village's hunters. As fall approached on the Seward Peninsula, the entire community would again pack up their belongings, board the Coast Guard cutter, and make the voyage back to their homes some 90 miles northwest of Nome. [Figure 2.]

Leaving the Island

In 1966, this yearly cycle ended. The end of the island community was made all but a foregone conclusion several years earlier, when the BIA decided to close down the school it had operated there since 1931.⁴ When the BIA shut down the school in the fall of 1959, families with school age children had no choice but to remain in Nome year-round. A dwindling number of residents returned to the island in the following years, but eventually the rest of the community trickled into Nome permanently as well. The closure of the school made the move inevitable.

⁴While the school was constructed in 1929, some evidence suggests the school opened in 1931.

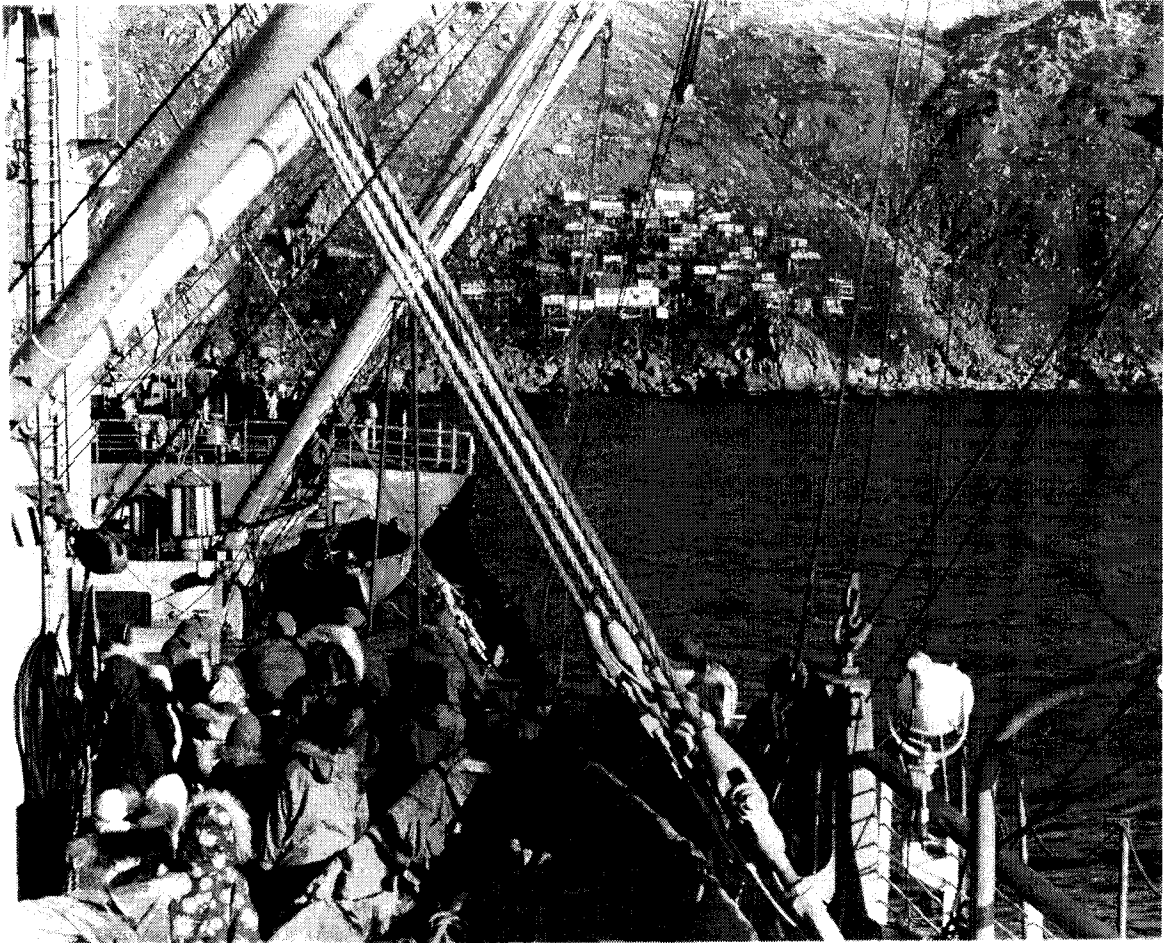


Figure 2. The King Islanders return to the village in 1950 on the Alaska Native Service barge, *North Star*. In the fall, villagers, school teachers, skinboats and supplies for the winter went back to the island after spending the summer on the mainland. Supplies had to be lightered via skinboat to the rocks below the village. Photo: courtesy Juan Munoz.

Whether the King Islanders would have eventually abandoned the island on their own is a subject for speculation, but it is telling that many small villages in rural Alaska persist to this day despite nearly a century of predictions that Alaska Natives inevitably would abandon them.

The Problem

To date, very little has been written about the de facto relocation of the King Islanders, although as a group they have drawn a great deal of attention from the press and researchers. There is considerable confusion even among tribal members regarding the agency's decision to close the school, both in terms of the reasoning behind the action – its intent – and the chain of events. No attention seems to have been paid to what the King Islanders themselves may have wanted. Even more important than the “why” of the school closure and the issues arising from that decision is the impact of the move on the King Islanders and Nome. King Island is one of only a few villages of more recent times that was essentially required to move – if it wanted a school for the education of its children – to a larger regional center like Nome. What was, what *is* the impact of the move on the King Island community, which still retains a distinct identity and dialect in Nome and Anchorage? Other Alaskan Native villagers who have moved to regional centers like Nome, or even further away to Anchorage and Seattle, can return to a functioning village located on their homeland... but King Island is no longer a viable community.

What follows is a history of the ‘relocation’ of the King Island village. As such, it relies heavily on documentary evidence from BIA archival materials. In an attempt to provide a balanced perspective on the events, I, in 2001 and 2002, conducted interviews with several King Islanders of different age groups. Archival oral history from former King Island residents has also been used. It is important to note that, in 1959, the King Islanders were living a lifestyle that, for the most part, resembled that of their ancestors, no matter the inclusion of European

goods and technologies. For that reason, an attempt has been made to leaven this history with anthropological considerations – in particular when considering the impacts of the move to Nome. To that degree, this can be considered an ethnohistory⁵ of the move from the village at King Island.

At first glance, the answer to the question, “Why did the BIA close the school?” seems a simple one. Depending on whom one reads, it is either the rock slide hazard on the island or the declining number of residents wintering there in the late 50s. Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., sums it up in his biography of Jesuit missionary Bellarmine Lafortune:

For countless generations, King Island had been the permanent home of the King Island people, but around 1950, more and more families began to make Nome their year-round home. Nome offered job opportunities, better medical care, and a less arduous and hazardous way of life. By the summer of 1966, the island was completely abandoned, and the village has become a ghost village on a ghost island except for a few weeks, usually in late spring, when several boatloads of King Islanders visit the island to hunt walrus, gather greens and eggs, or simply visit their ancestral home again.⁶

Neither explanation holds up upon further examination of the evidence. Based on a careful reading of the BIA archival material and other histories of the Bering Strait region, the BIA shut down the school because of the expense and inconvenience of operating at King Island. Doing so accomplished what the Bureau had been unable for decades to do by persuasion – to move the

⁵The *American Heritage Dictionary*, Fourth Edition, 2000, defines ethnohistory: The study of especially native or non-Western peoples from a combined historical and anthropological viewpoint, using written documents, oral literature, material culture, and ethnographic data.

⁶Louis L. Renner, S.J., in collaboration with Dorothy Jean Ray. *Pioneer Missionary to the Bering Strait Eskimos: Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J.* Portland, OR: Binford and Mort, 1979, introduction, xiv.

village to the mainland. In a wider context, the immediate result of the school closure, the resettlement of the villagers in Nome, fits well within the established pattern of BIA policy over time, one that has assimilation as its ultimate goal; and to go a step further, within the established pattern of how dominant cultures have dealt with unassimilated indigenous groups around the world.

The story of the King Island villagers did not end with their move to Nome. At first, they created another “village” of sorts right next to Nome. Their dissatisfaction as a group with the mainland, and Nome in particular, was evident – so much so that for years afterwards they lobbied the BIA to relocate them yet again to a site at Cape Woolley. This movement, which drew the attention of Outside press and interest groups, appears to have died out after years of broken promises by federal officials, although it has resurfaced time and again. The long-term impacts of the move include the accelerated loss of culture and language, a rise in alcoholism, and a loss of solidarity as a group.

The move had one other major consequence for the King Islanders. In 1974, when a severe fall storm battered Nome, their second village at East End was completely destroyed, and they again had to relocate. Yet, their story does not end there. After the storm, new homes were built for them in the center of Nome by the federal government. To this day, the majority of them live in Nome and Anchorage, perhaps half of the estimated 500-plus King Islanders. Unlike many

Alaskan Natives who moved to the Nome area, they have not chosen to join the local tribe⁷, Nome Eskimo Community. To this day, the *Ugiuvangmiut*⁸ retain their own tribal

⁷While the term tribe is commonly understood to mean Lower 48 reservation groups, the U.S. government formally recognized many Alaskan Native communities and groups as “tribes” in 1995. Nome Eskimo Community is one such group. Many of these groups were already organized with Indian Reorganization Act councils, or IRAs. At present there are more than 220 federally recognized tribes in Alaska.

⁸*Ugiuvangmiut* is the King Islanders name for themselves. Its spelling in the Latin alphabet, like that of many Inupiaq words, has varied over time. I have chosen to use the spelling used by Alaska Native

government, Inupiaq dialect and identity – although that identity may now rest upon their experience of dislocation. Central to this story are the concepts of identity and home.

Language Center linguist Lawrence Kaplan in his collection of King Island stories, *Ugiuvangmiut Quliapyuit*.

Chapter 2

Background

Strangest of all the strange places visited, members of the crew agree, is King Island. This cliff-guarded spot lies west of Nome and for four months of the year fog draws a curtain, hiding the Island from the eyes of the few mariners who travel these waters. For the other eight months, the Island is engulfed in ice. Less than a mile long, and rising steeply out of the sea, there is no safe anchorage around the Island's shore. Here is the winter home of the King Island Eskimos who in summer go to Nome to sell their ivory carvings to the townspeople and tourist visitors, and to hold native dances.⁹

Prior to their relocation to Nome, the *Ugiuvangmiut* had occupied the island from somewhere between 200 and 2000 years.¹⁰ Oral accounts indicate three other village sites existed on the island in prehistoric times. In 1732, Russian surveyor Mikhail Gvozdev was the first European to sight the island.¹¹ The community appears as “Okibian” on the map he produced in 1743. (Ivan Kobelev¹² was the first European to go ashore at the island in 1791.) Upon official “discovery” by Captain James Cook in 1778, it was given its current name in honor of Lieutenant James King, a member of Cook’s party. The King Islanders, of course, had a name in their own

⁹Craig Dinsmore, “Bering Sea Patrol.” *The Alaska Sportsman* (March 1941): 23.

¹⁰Linda Ellanna, “Ukiuvungmiut: Cliff Dwellers of the Bering Strait.” *Alaska Fish Tales and Game Trails* (1981): 2.

¹¹Dorothy Jean Ray. “The Kheuveren Legend” in *Ethnohistory in the Arctic*, Kingston, Ontario: the Limestone Press, 1983, originally published in *The Alaska Journal* (Summer 1976): 146-53.

¹²Dorothy Jean Ray. *The Eskimos of the Bering Strait: 1650-1898*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975, 53.

dialect for their home, *Ugiuvak*¹³, which may be translated as “place for winter.”¹⁴ [Figure 3.]

Despite the misgivings of newcomers, the location had much to recommend it. A deep cave 1/4 mile from the village provided a natural deep freeze, allowing the islanders to store large quantities of food against lean times. A small stream, or *kuuk*, near the village provided fresh water. Researcher Frances Ross, who wintered on the island in 1931, concluded that outsiders had completely misgauged the value of the location:

One question may be asked: why do these Eskimos live on this isolated rock? Why are 9 to 10 months of the year spent under the most trying conditions of severe weather and ice conditions? The answer is found in one of their legends (page (sic) There is never a shortage of food at Ukiuvak. Although the emphasis throughout this report has largely been placed upon marine mammals, seals, walrus, and polar bear, several varieties of fish as well as crabs and shrimps are found in abundance in the waters surrounding the island. Thousands of sea birds and eggs are obtained from the rookeries. When unfavorable weather conditions prevent daily hunting, the community falls back upon a great supply of food stored in their natural freezer: *kitekok*.¹⁵

One might ask, what does a people living in the Arctic need with a natural freezer? The obvious answer is that few places in the region remain frozen year-round. More significant was the

¹³The “correct” spelling has varied over time, one finds Okibian, Ukivok, and Ugiuvak. I have again chosen to use the form given by the Alaska Native Language Center.

¹⁴In the course of her research in the early 1960s for “In Eskimo Place-Names in Bering Strait and Vicinity”, Ray’s informants responded that *Ukivuk* or *Uivuk* was just a name, without special meaning. Only one of her informants, a Cape Prince of Wales man, suggested that it translated to ‘winter’ or ‘winter place.’ Ray writes, “Apparently no one else on King Island had connected *ugiuvauk* with *ugiuk* (“winter”), but after learning of the relationship, others agreed that this might well be the meaning of the name.” See “Eskimo Place-Names in Bering Strait and Vicinity.” *Names* 19 (1971): 1-33.

¹⁵Frances Anna Ross. *The Eskimo Community House*, Stanford University, 1958, 86.

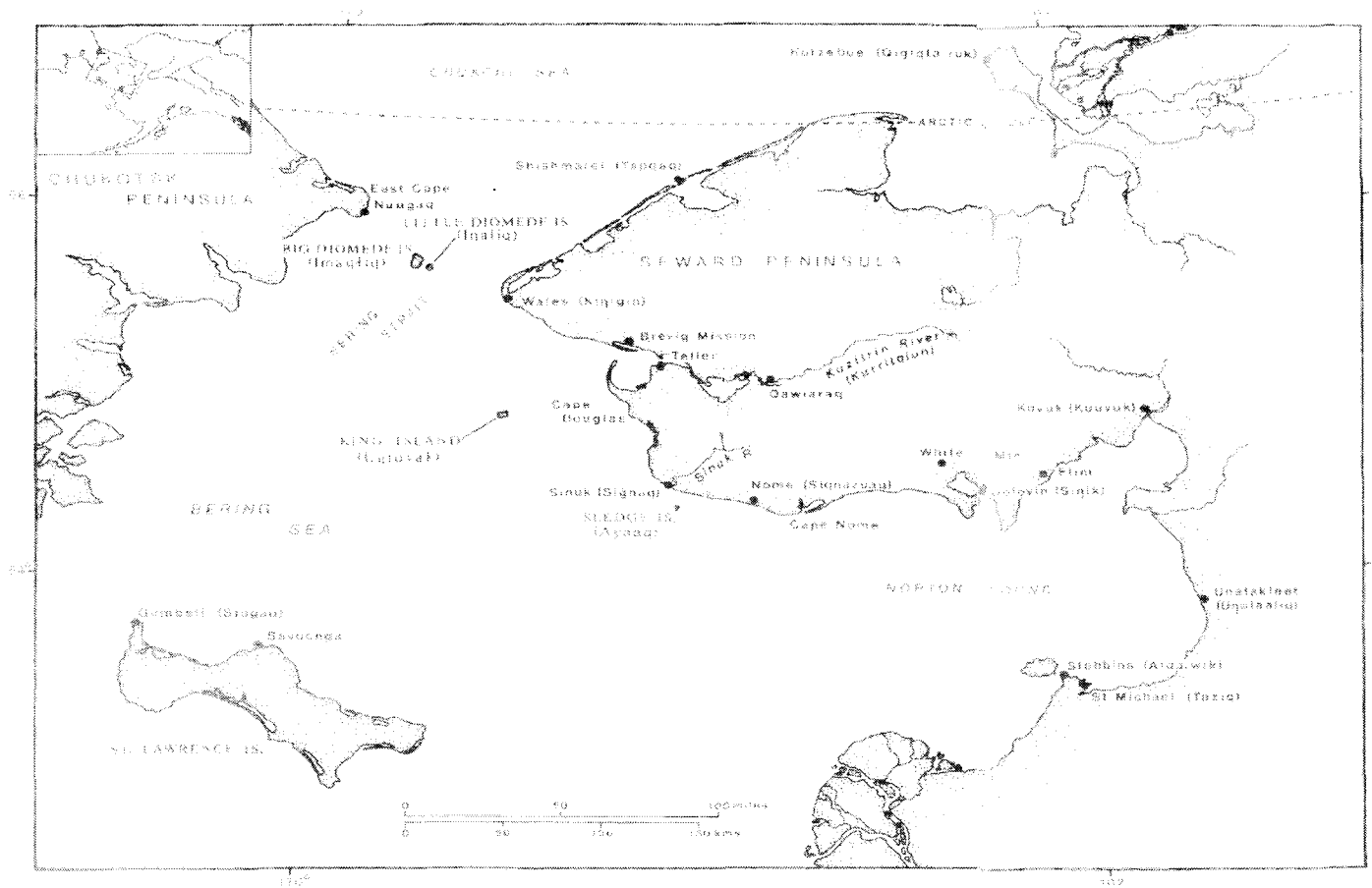


Figure 3. Map of Bering Strait. Courtesy of Alaska Native Language Center.

particular importance of the spring hunt for seals and walrus in the region's traditional economies. Should that hunt fail because of poor hunting conditions or other factors, a village could face the specter of starvation. One of the first ethnographers in Bering Strait, Edward Nelson, mentions such an instance. While aboard the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Corwin* in March 1880, he found a mixed village of Sledge and King Island people between Cape Nome and Sledge Island. "These people had united there and were living peaceably together in order to fish for crabs and tomcods and to hunt for seals, as the supply of food had become exhausted in at their homes," he wrote.¹⁶ Being able to store foods for an indefinite amount of time tipped the scale in favor of remaining on the island.

However steep and rocky the geography of King Island, its location in Bering Strait, with its strong currents, made it an ideal place from which to pursue the most important good in their subsistence economy: the Pacific walrus. [Figure 4.] The area is an excellent place for hunters to pursue the herds of walrus during their spring and fall migrations through Bering Strait. Walrus provided meat, blubber, waterproof gear, rope, and most significantly, the skins for *umiat*.¹⁷ The largest portion of harvested resources came from *umiaq* crews. Therefore, good access to walrus skins (and meat, blubber, and later ivory) generally meant a healthy economy overall. Moreover, its location in the Strait means that King Island has moving ice for a longer time than many other places in the region, and hence, open leads at which it was possible to hunt on foot for the other staple of the traditional Inupiat economy: the seal. In short, King Island was a very good place to find food year-round.

The mainland Natives' name for the King and other Bering Strait islanders reflects this

¹⁶William Fitzhugh and Aron Crowel, eds. "Eskimo About the Bering Strait" in *Crossroads of Continents*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1988, 23-25.

¹⁷*Umiat* is the plural of *umiaq*.

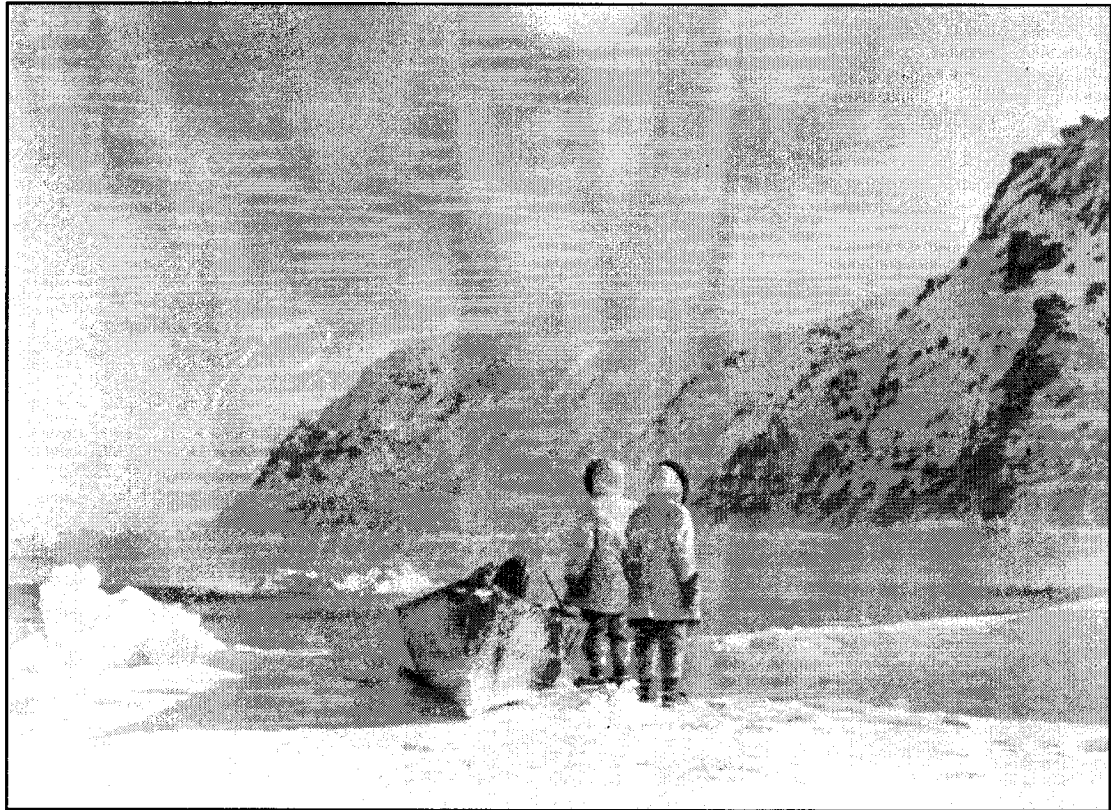


Figure 4. Two men prepare to go hunting. Although regarded by outsiders as a forbidding, desolate place, the island was an ideal location for an Inupiat village – the walrus and seal hunting were excellent, and birds, king crab, and edible greens and berries were available. Juan and Rie Munoz spent 1951 on the island as teachers.. Photo courtesy of Juan Munoz.

reality. They called them *Imaangmiut*, or “people of the open water.”¹⁸

Prior to contact with non-Natives, the *Ugiuvangmiut* built houses of rock, sod and driftwood into the hillside. The mens’ communal houses on the island were still constructed in this fashion at the time the island was abandoned. Scholars estimate it was during the latter half of the 19th century when they switched to homes with walrus-skin walls over a square wooden frame, with moss and grass insulating the ceilings and walls. The split walrus hide was stretched around the building to protect against the elements and lashed with thongs. Later still, they began to build wooden frame homes. Both were perched on stilts anchored to the slope with braided walrus hide, as King Island elder Margaret Seegana recalled in *Ugiuvangmiut Quliapyuit*:

Long driftwood poles were wedged into the earth so that they rested on bedrock; earth and rocks were then pressed around these stilts to hold them firmly.

Platforms of split driftwood logs were built on tops of the stilts to serve as the flooring of the structure. Generally two large rooms were built on top of a platform and served as separate dwellings in a sort of duplex. These rooms were built at the back of the platform with another long space in front, the length of both rooms. This was the storm shed, used for storage. In the middle was a door leading to the porch.¹⁹

Eventually, wooden stairs and boardwalks were built as well.

¹⁸Father Louis L. Renner, S.J. “Charles Olaranna: Chief of the King Islanders.” *The Alaska Journal*, Spring 1983: 15. Renner explains: “*Imaaq* is open water as found in the winter sea ice. For eight months of the year, from October to July, the island is isolated from the mainland of the two continents by the ever-moving ice fields that choke Bering Strait. Shifting leads in the ice constantly open and close. These are called *imaaq*, and this ‘open water’ makes the island inaccessible.”

¹⁹Margaret Seegana, “Traditional Life on King Island,” in *Ugiuvangmiut Quliapyuit, King Island Tales*. Alaska Native Language Center and University of Alaska Press: Fairbanks, 1988, 9.

The Ethnographic Past - Bering Strait Natives and the King Islanders

Some understanding of the ethnographic past, or traditional²⁰ culture, of the Inupiat is crucial to understanding the vast changes wrought by the move to Nome. Anthropologists divide the indigenous people of the Alaskan side of the Bering Strait region into two major groups: the Yupik-speaking Bering Sea peoples, and the Inupiaq-speaking North Alaskans²¹. The ethnolinguistic boundary between the two lies at the edge of Norton Sound on the far southeastern end of the Seward Peninsula. Scholars divide the North Alaskans, who range from Norton Sound up through the north coast of the state, into four groups: North Coast, Interior, Kotzebue, and Bering Strait people.

While there are regional differences between the North Alaskans, they have a common cultural base, the core of which is adaptation to the arctic and subarctic environment. As Ray observes, “Technological, social, and ritual practices surrounding the hunting of arctic marine mammals are the foundation on which most Eskimo cultures rest.”²² North Alaskan villages

²⁰The problem of talking about any culture is the ever changing nature of human societies. Often, people describe “traditional” indigenous cultures, meaning those cultures before contact with Europeans. This too is problematic, because those cultures did not exist in an unchanging state before the arrival of outsiders. This is evident particularly in the Bering Strait region. Trade relationships existed between Alaskan and Russian Natives, and between different groups of Alaskan Natives. It is naive to think that these interactions did not affect those groups. After the spread of the Russian empire into its Far East in the mid-17th century, Russian goods made their way into Alaskan communities. Even if one considers “traditional” cultures to be those at the turn of the 20th century, Alaskan Native cultures had already been introduced to firearms, liquor, the whaling industry, and a whole slew of trade goods. Ethnographic information is at best a snapshot of a culture at one moment in time. That said, one must be able to describe the Inupiat cultures that existed – in comparison and contrast to that of Inupiat culture in later periods. Indeed, the culture of the King Islanders in 1959 was different than that of today, and could reasonably be termed “traditional” as well. Because the earliest ethnographic data gathered in the Bering Strait region comes in the late 19th century, that information will be the basis for discussion of “traditional” culture in this ethnographic background, though not the sole source.

²¹Another group, confined to St. Lawrence Island, speaks Siberian Yupik. Culturally, they are closest to the Asiatic Eskimos of Russia.

²²Ray, Dorothy Jean. Nineteenth Century Settlement and Subsistence Patterns in Bering Strait, In *Ethnohistory in the Arctic: Bering Strait Eskimo*, edited by R.A. Pierce. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1983, 42

tended to be concentrated on the coast, usually at spits, for marine mammal hunting on ice and open water.

A further distinction can be drawn between Bering Strait people based on the focus of their economies. Dorothy Jean Ray divides their 19th century economies into whaling-walrus hunters, small marine mammal hunters, and caribou hunters. In general, Bering Strait tribes' technological, economic, and cultural adaptations were pointed to the pursuit of marine mammals. The King Islanders' traditional economy falls within the 'whaling-walrus hunting' category.

The yearly cycle coincided with arrival and abundance of particular species. Fitzhugh cautions though, that "despite the appearance of a lot of resources, survival depended on the success of spring walrus and whale hunts with other resources as supplements."²³ In the spring, when the ice loosened and open leads formed in the ice, men hunted seals and walrus moving north at the open leads. Hundreds of species of birds returned soon after. With summer, came the arrival of salmon, more birds, and marine mammal hunting continued on open water. Many types of edible greens became available during the short growing season of the arctic. On the mainland, caribou were corralled in groups and killed. In the late summer and early fall it was time for berry picking. With fall came a brief break in activity, while villagers waited for ice to form and become strong enough on which to hunt.

At King Island, in the winter they spent more time indoors, dancing and composing new songs, celebrating festivals, and making new clothes. Once the ice was strong enough, the villages' men hunted on foot for bearded and common seals.

²³Fitzhugh, William. "Eskimos: Hunters of the Frozen Coasts," in *Crossroads of Continents*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1988.

The King Islanders' names for the months reflect this yearly cycle. Their word for October, *SigutuuGvik*, means "icy month." November, or *Mayuaqtuwik*, means "going up to the back of the island to hunt there."²⁴ King Island elder Paul Tiulana discusses many of the months' names in *A Place for Winter*, explaining that in November, the wind begins to blow strongly from the north, forcing ice to the island on the north side and away from the south side of the island. Because it was unsafe to hunt on foot from the south, the men would climb up and over the island to the north side. July, the month when the King Islanders would arrive in Nome, was *IkpiNnailaq*, or "going over to the mainland."

The traditional Inupiat universe was one peopled with spirits. All animals had souls and proper conduct was necessary to ensure the cooperation of those animals in the hunt. It was believed that their spirits visited the village to see how they had been treated. Other spirits, good and evil, existed - either to be placated or from which one had to be protected. Prior to the conversion of the Inupiat to Christianity, shamans held considerable power within the community, because they were brokers between the spirit world and the rest of the village. They interpreted signs, performed seances and other rituals, and treated illnesses. Numerous festivals and rituals were observed, usually with dancing. Dances had many purposes and meanings, according to King Island elder Margaret Seegana, and were held for nearly every occasion:

Dance was related to survival of the community because it boosted morale and could represent success, failure, joy, sorrow, life, death, comedy, and sacredness, among other things. The dances told stories, and the words of dance songs matched the movements of the performers. Great feats and accomplishments of

²⁴Paul Tiulana with Vivian Senungetuk. *A Place for Winter: Paul Tiulana's Story*, Anchorage: CIRI Foundation, 1987, 10-15.

kinsmen were reenacted in dance. For example, if a man went hunting during a time of famine or bad weather and brought back a polar bear or a bearded seal to feed the village, a member of his immediate family or a close relative might compose a song with accompanying motions to reenact the event. These dances were kept within the family and handed down through the generations.²⁵

For the King Islanders, one omnipotent being, *Silam Inua*, governed all of nature.

As was common with many indigenous groups who made contact with Catholicism, residuals of the earlier Inupiat spirituality remained within the King Islander's new Christian cosmology. Dances to honor the spirits of animals killed, most notably of polar bears, continued to be observed. Another traditional belief that continued was that of what anthropologists term "name souls." In addition to the individual soul that left upon death, name souls recycled through the community. Infants were given the names of the deceased in the belief that the name soul then returned in that individual, along with its personality traits and relationships. These names were not gender specific, nor was an individual limited to one name. The bestowal of such a name brought with it the relationship of that person to others in the village - so a child could also be a grandfather, an *aapaa*, to someone much older than him/herself.

Despite a number of local variations, Eskimo naming systems (Inuit and Yupik) seem overwhelmingly to share common features which can be understood as resting on a limited number of spiritual and social principles. Spiritually, life is based on a finite number of recycling name-souls which provide communal continuity. The fundamental social principle of Eskimo naming is to provide links among individuals within a community and beyond thus functioning as an

²⁵Margaret Seegana, 25.

integral part of ‘Eskimo kinship’ which provides a variety of cultural means to turn ‘strangers’ into ‘relatives.’²⁶

The conversion of the King Islanders to Catholicism was achieved by Father Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J. in the first decades of the 20th century. Lafortune arrived in Nome in 1903, shortly after the initial frenzy of the gold rush – at a time when both the King and Diomed Islands were still pagans. He had limited success converting them as a group until after community members who had converted to Methodism died in 1918. (They had remained on the mainland at the Methodist mission and perished in the influenza pandemic of 1918.) Many scholars have mentioned the huge influence of Lafortune in the King Island community. The majority of King Islanders remain Catholic to this day.

Unlike many missionaries, Lafortune did not try to completely suppress his parishioners’ traditional singing and dancing, although he did encourage that the pre-Christian religious nature of them to be left to the past. Renner concludes that his tolerance of traditional singing and dancing sprang from his enjoyment of the dances themselves, and also from the fact that the dancing was “innocent” because men and women usually did not touch each other.²⁷ His empathy and flexibility is also evident in that he did not object to men hunting on Sunday. Should animals be sighted before Mass, the service would be delayed until they had their chance at hunting. Lafortune’s presence loomed large in the lives of the King Islanders – he encouraged them to remain on the island away from the “Sin City” of Nome, assisted them in securing medical care, and when they were on the mainland, helped them find work.

Lafortune lobbied his Superiors for years before being granted permission and support to

²⁶Peter Schweitzer and Golovko, Evgeniy V. “Local Identities and Traveling Names: Interethnic Aspects of Personal Naming in the Bering Strait Area.” *Arctic Anthropology* (1997): 34, v. 1, 167-180.

²⁷Louis L. Renner, S.J. *Pioneer Missionary to the Bering Strait Eskimos: Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J.*

build a church on King Island in 1929. Father Renner speculates in his biography of Lafortune²⁸ that the announcement that the United States Bureau of Education would finally build a government school there pushed the Church to act. The islanders had been requesting a government school since 1911, and so in 1929 got both a school and church. English was the working language of the school house, but outside its walls Inupiaq was the language used. Even after a 30-year presence of the school on the island, the King Islanders kept their language.

The majority of their diet consisted of what they could harvest from the sea. Men carried out two types of hunting done at different times of year: in the late fall and winter, they hunted alone on foot on the moving ice; in the spring, *umiaq* crews pursued walrus and bearded seals. Hunting was done also by single men in *qayat*.²⁹ Each man had his own *qayaq* built for him; only a few men had the skill necessary to build such craft. Hunting on foot out on the moving ice was a dangerous undertaking, and a great deal of attention had to be paid to changing weather and ice conditions. It required great agility and stamina, for hunters might venture as far as 10 miles out on the ice. Any number of men went out hunting and never returned, as Paul Tiulana explained:

If we were out hunting south of the island and the wind started to blow, we had to start running. The wind from the north pushes the ice away from the south of the island and the sea opens up. If we lost our breath and stopped in five minutes, there would be an open lead, open water, between us and the island. We would not be able to cross it. We had to run constantly, maybe five miles, maybe ten miles, until we reached a safe point, without stopping at all and carrying our hunting bags. Everything about us had to be prepared for our

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹*Qayat* is the plural form of *qayaq*.

survival.³⁰

Different rules for dividing the catch existed, depending on the type of hunting and type of animal harvested. Members of a boat crew received shares of the catch. The village's economy was based upon the harvest of polar bear, seals, and walrus. Several types of seal provided meat and blubber. A significant number of goods, other than food, came from the harvest of marine mammals. Seal blubber, when rendered into oil, could be burned in lamps for heat and light, and used as a preservative for other foods. Bearded seal hides were used to cover *qayat* and made into the soles of *kammit*.³¹ Gut would used to make waterproof clothing and gear, drum heads, and floats. Long strips of tanned walrus hide were used as rope. Hides of various seals were used for making parkas and pants, and sinew provided thread for village seamstresses. For many of the Bering Strait Inupiat, the walrus was the most important resource, as noted earlier, because skinboats were covered with the split hides of female walrus.

The boats themselves, and female walrus hides, were therefore very valuable. Those who owned skin boats and mustered crews held high status within communities. Often one captain, or *umialiq*, would emerge as a leader within a village. Individuals could also achieve status by demonstrating good hunting skills and the ability to provide for the community. Others who had the ability to deals with outsiders, European and Native, held prestige within the community.

As in other North Alaskan and Bering Sea communities, the mens' communal house, or *qagsri*, played an important role in the social life at King Island. Renner stresses its significance: "It was in the *kagrit* that the men and older boys spent most of their indoor time, working on hunting gear, carving ivory, socializing, telling stories, politicking, taking sweat baths, engaging

³⁰Tiulana, 16.

³¹*Kammit* are boots in the King Island dialect, frequently called mukluqs elsewhere.

in various gymnastics, and athletic activities. There they also ate, and there the older boys slept until they married.”³² As many as five *qagsrit* may have existed there at one time. These houses had their own membership and customs, and reflected alliances or political factions within the village.

Boat crews also reflected these factions, but womens’ social networks ultimately governed the distribution of resources within the village. At King Island, once a man brought meat home, it was up to his wife to distribute it as she decided best. In this way, in addition to the rules governing division of the catch, no matter the personalities involved, resources were distributed within the community. Other social structures mitigating the inherent factionalism in the community were partner and cross (sometimes called ‘teasing’) cousins, and certain celebrations such as the Polar Bear Dance.

Of course, there were disadvantages to life on the island. For most of the year, the moving ice that surrounded the island kept its residents isolated from the rest of the world. No landing strip existed, so planes could land only occasionally there upon the sea ice in front of the village.³³

The King Islanders did not have access to the terrestrial animals used by other Inupiat for food and clothing, nor could they harvest the abundant salmon runs that return to mainland river systems. There were limited greens and berries, compared to those available on the mainland, to be harvested from the top of the island. The King Islanders’ solution was to travel to the mainland each summer to trade with the mainlanders, pick berries and greens, hunt caribou, and fish. They maintained alliances with the Teller area and Kauwerak people, intermarrying and

³²Renner, “Charles Olaranna, Chief of the King Islanders,” 18.

³³There were three known landings at King Island – four, if one includes the crash that the photographer Joe Rychetnik walked away from in 1961.

trading with them. In the fall, before the usual rough weather came, they would return by umiaq to the island for the winter.

Russian Influence in Northwest Alaska

Despite the presence of the Russians in Alaska for 146 years (from 1741-1867), Northern Alaska remained virtually untouched by European Russians. This lack of contact was not the case with the Alaskan Natives and their Russian counterparts. Evidence from the 18th century suggests that the maritime Chukchi and Asiatic Eskimo often visited Alaskan settlements for trade and festivals – as well as for war. The purpose of warfare was to take furs and prisoners, who would become slaves. Karl Merck, a member of the Northeastern Geographic Expedition of 1785-98 mentions the Chukchi crossing the Strait and attacking the Alaskans. Russian accounts bear witness to the tension between the groups. When Ivan Kobelev stopped at King Island in the summer of 1791, his party was met by islanders wearing armor and bearing lances and bows.

When they saw that the islanders had spotted them in the sea, the Chukchi of Kobelev's party stopped their skin boats, donned "kuiaks" (Chukchi armor), and took spears and bows and arrows in hand, as in battle readiness. Kobelev asked them why they were preparing for war when they were not coming for war, and they explained that was the custom of the King Islanders, who would meet them in just such a manner.³⁴

Kobelev reported that his party was received with great friendliness. The Russians and islanders then traded – the islanders offering furs from the mainland and the Russians proffering spears, knives, hatchets and other iron goods along with beads. When they left two days later, as when they had arrived, both sides were armed.

³⁴Dorothy Jean Ray. *The Eskimos of the Bering Strait, 1650-1898*, 54.

But significant changes had begun much earlier with the advent of Russian control of its own Far East, particularly after the Russian crown ceased its efforts at pacifying its Chukchi people by force. After reaching an understanding in the 1780s with the Chukchi over tribute, peaceful relations between the Chukchi and their neighbors took hold, and a lively trade flourished in the Far East and spread to the islands and the Alaskan mainland. The King Islanders and other islanders in Bering Strait served as middlemen in the trade between Russian and mainland Alaskan Natives prior to any real presence of non-Natives in the region.

The growth of trade between the two sides of Bering Strait was further encouraged by the establishment of a trade fair on the Anyui River in Siberia in 1789.³⁵ The Chukchi traveled hundreds of miles to the fair, taking Alaskan goods, and in turn bringing luxury items to Bering Strait. In exchange for fox and marten furs, Alaskan Natives received tobacco, beads, and a variety of iron goods: plates, knives, axes, harpoon heads and later, reindeer skins. Ray calls the development at Anyui the most significant factor in the swift growth of trade at the beginning of the 19th century. The Anyui Trade Fair is also significant because it created the first stable supply of tobacco available to Alaskan Natives. It also helped turn local markets into international ones.

“Athabaskan Indians living along the Yukon River traded furs to Indian traders, such as those living along the Unalakleet River, who in turn traded with Norton Sound and northern Eskimo traders,” writes Kathryn Koutsky, “Eskimos added more foreign products to their material culture and became increasingly active both as traders and trappers.”³⁶ The increase in trade also contributed to the southward migration of the Malemiut, an Inupiat people from

³⁵The Anyui is a tributary of the Kolyma River. See Kathryn Koutsky, *Early Days on Norton Sound and Bering Strait Vol. IV* and Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait 1650-1898* for more discussion of the growth of trade and the Anyui Trade Fair.

³⁶Koutsky, *ibid.*

Kotzebue Sound, into the southern Seward Peninsula. They gradually displaced the Yupik-speaking Eskimos already there. The King Islanders, along with the Malemiut, Sledge Islanders, and the Wales villagers, were the most active groups in this intercontinental system of trade.

Europeans entered commercial trade in northwest Alaska when the Russian American Company established a trading post at St. Michael in 1833, followed by one at Unalakleet. In fact, the Russians were drawn northward by reports of the robust trade going on at Bering Strait. In order to cut into the action, they established St. Michael near the mouth of the Yukon River. Their efforts did little to disrupt the system of Alaskan-Siberian trade, but did affect some of the Eskimo traders who were more reliant on trade to the south. The Russians later established a post at the mouth of the Unalakleet River in 1837. They did not devote a great deal of energy to expanding their trade in the region further. It was in this commercial period that Eskimos first began to be hired to work as interpreters and guides. St. Michael continued to have an important presence in the region for ships and expeditions venturing north until after the gold rushes at the turn of the century.

In addition to introducing tobacco to Alaska's inhabitants, the Russians also brought alcohol. Although Russians in Alaska were forbidden to trade it to the Natives, by the mid-19th century, many groups had acquired a taste for it.³⁷ Prohibition went into effect across Russian American at the beginning of 1846.

Not all the goods the Russians brought to Alaska were addictive. One good frequently overlooked is tea, which was eagerly adopted by indigenous groups across Alaska. (In King Island dialect, tea is *saayuq*; on the mainland it is called *chaayuq* — in both instances the word is

³⁷Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898*, 179.

borrowed from the Russian *chai*.) Bogojavlensky's research bears witness to the importance of a seemingly innocuous item:

Older King Islanders speak of the advent of the regular stockpiling and use of Western food as the most important watershed in their history. Stores of flour, sugar, and tea erased the chances for general starvation due to hunting failure. The introduction of the rifle is not considered to have been at all as crucial to well-being. Time and again, the symbols for this epochal watershed, 'tea' and 'before tea' were explicated to me. 'The ancient way of life was when we drank boiled blood instead of tea.' The word for tea (a loan from Russian) and the word for cache are homonyms, and there is a play on words that exploits this fact to comment on how hunger is staved off by two such disparate devices of the same name, one aboriginal, the other peculiarly alien.³⁸

Smallpox, the first epidemic to reach Norton Sound, struck Alaska with devastating consequences in 1838. Ray ranks the severity of the outbreak with that of the measles in 1900 and the influenza in 1918. The Russians launched a vaccination program and the epidemic ended by 1840. The program seems to have stopped the spread of the disease northward, for it did not spread beyond Koyuk or Golovin.

A large influx of non-Russian outsiders into Bering Strait began in 1848. The Yankee whaling fleet finally "discovered" the rich grounds of Alaska in that year, and the first of many ships searching for the lost Franklin Expedition went through its waters. The search for Sir John Franklin ended in 1854, but the number of whalers passing through the region grew with the passage of time. With the arrival of the whalers also came the American liquor trade, though the

³⁸Sergei Bogojavlensky, *Imaangmiut Eskimo Careers: Skinboats in Bering Strait*. Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1969, 23.

traffic in alcohol was largely the work of trading vessels that followed the whalers north. The whaling industry did not have the catastrophic impact upon local peoples in Bering Strait that it did further north along Alaska's coast, but its impact was felt nonetheless.³⁹

In the first three years of whaling, from 1848 to 1851, some 250 vessels returned from Alaskan waters with whale oil. The number of vessels each year remained near 200 until the late 1850s, when the number of vessels (in tandem with the number of whales) began to decline. Initially, the whalers kept to the business of whaling, but in the late 1860s, the depletion of the whale stocks led them to pursue trade and walrus hunting as well. The whalers indiscriminately slaughtered thousands of animals each season, leaving the carcasses to rot.⁴⁰ Citing Edward Nelson, who wrote in 1887 that the walrus population was not over 50 percent of that 10 years earlier, Ray concludes that it is possible that by the 1870s only 1/4 of the pre-whaling population of walrus remained.⁴¹ Despite the wanton waste, Ray concludes that well-being of most Bering Strait tribes, even the islanders dependent on walrus, was not severely affected. Sergei Bogojavlensky, who wrote his dissertation about King Island and Diomedes skinboat crews in 1969, did conclude that the whalers had an impact, at least, on the island populations of Bering Strait:

The whalers did often stop off at villages on the islands. They traded for walrus ivory, boat crews, warm clothing and especially the excellent waterproof

³⁹For further information on whaling in Bering Strait, see Bockstoe, John R. *Whales, ice and men: the history of whaling in the Western Arctic*. 2nd ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with the New Bedford Whaling Museum, 1995.

⁴⁰The number of walrus taken is uncertain. Dorothy Jean Ray cites a San Francisco *Weekly Bulletin* article in 1866 that reports 50,000 animals taken by the Western Arctic fleet. However, that number may be a misprint or exaggeration. Other sources suggest 60,000 animals taken between 1868 and 1872. Ray herself says that the higher number could be due to a huge initial take of a heretofore largely untouched population.

⁴¹Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait 1650-1898*, 200.

footwear made of seal esophagi and skins. Trade goods became relatively common. Disease, liquor and cross-cultural violence and even massacres also arrived.⁴²

Both Ray and Bogojavlensky link the establishment of reindeer herding in Alaska to the decimation of the walrus herds. Having witnessed the vast number of walrus taken by whalers, and having found several villages near starvation in 1890, Captain Michael Healy of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear* was compelled to suggest⁴³ the venture to then U.S. Commissioner of Education Sheldon Jackson. King Island was one of the villages suffering through starvation that the *Bear* visited, but as Bogojavlensky wryly notes, it is one of the last places that would support a single reindeer. According to two of Bogojavlensky's informants, the famine was not due to the whalers' walrus take, but came about because of the failure of the spring seal hunt due to poor ice conditions.

Members of the Western Union Telegraph Expedition spent two years, from 1865-1867, on the Seward Peninsula. The purpose of the endeavor was to unite Europe and North America via an underwater cable between Siberia and Alaska. Nearly 300 young men were dispatched to each side of the strait. While the impact of the 40 men who overwintered at Port Clarence was negligible, it did bring about more knowledge of the mineral potential of the region. Some ethnographic information was gathered by scientists of the expedition⁴⁴, and nearly 45 miles of

⁴²Bogojavlensky, *Imaangmiut Eskimo Careers*, 22

⁴³Apparently, the idea was not Healy's, but one he adopted from the naturalist Charles H. Townshend who was aboard the *Corwin* in 1885. See Ray, "The Eskimos and Domesticated Reindeer" in *The Eskimos of the Bering Strait 1650-1898*.

⁴⁴Several members of the expedition gathered natural history specimens and meteorological data for the Smithsonian Institution and Chicago Academy of Sciences. William H. Dall and Frederick Whymper recorded the most information on the Norton Sound area, but John L. Harrington of the Port Clarence contingent "published" the first newspaper in any language in Alaska, the *Esqimaux*. Other members of the expedition published books or their diaries. Sprinkled throughout are descriptions of Alaskan Native

telegraph poles raised, but the project ended abruptly in 1867 when its members suddenly learned that a cable had been successfully laid in the Atlantic Ocean.⁴⁵ They also learned that they were now on American soil.

The Russian crown had begun trying to entice the United States into purchasing the territory prior to the U.S. Civil War, but was finally successful in 1867. Russia was willing to let go of the possession, because the empire was overextended after the loss of the Crimean War to Great Britain, and the fear of further British expansion in the North Pacific. For a sum of \$7,200,000 the Russians sold Alaska to the upstart power of the United States. Russia's legacy in Alaska was one of local control and a trade relationship with its colony. The Russians had, after all, arrived in search of furs – not intent on resettling its aboriginal population or to take possession of the land.

The American Period Begins

By the time the United States took possession of the territory, the Russian American Company operated 17 schools for the benefit of the Aleut and southeastern Indian populations - primarily those engaged in fur harvest for the Russian American Company. Less than a dozen non-Natives lived north of St. Michael at this time.

The Alaska district and its inhabitants drew little attention from the United States government in the immediate period after its purchase in 1867. From 1867 to 1884, the whole region was nominally administered by the military.

settlements, subsistence, and practices. See Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait*, 158-169.

⁴⁵The physical artifacts of their effort remain. Bogojavlensky's informants within the King Island community at Nome in 1966 still had stories about the telegraph expedition. He was shown an heirloom bracelet made of wire from the would-be telegraph system. Some of the poles were taken to King Island and used in the construction of homes.

The first American school in the district had come in 1877, when Presbyterian missionary Sheldon Jackson established a mission school at Fort Wrangell. Jackson went on to establish himself as an 'Alaskan expert' in the ensuing years, lecturing and writing unceasingly about the plight of the Alaska Native and the mineral and agricultural potential of the district.⁴⁶ In January 1880, Jackson convened a now-famous meeting of mission groups with an interest in Alaska. As a result of the meeting, the various denominations agreed upon spheres of influence in the district. The government in turn, ended up contracting with the various missions already present to provide education, sparing itself the cost of establishing schools across the far flung and distant land. Contract schooling lasted until the mid-1890s, when Lower 48 interdenominational rivalry (a split primarily between Protestants and Catholics) led the federal government to end the practice everywhere. Still, some exceptions were made for the unique situation in Alaska, as Henningsen notes in *Reading, Writing, and Reindeer*:

Nevertheless, the Alaskan situation mandated that some exceptions be allowed: government teachers were still sent to mission stations, and contracts continued between mission boards and the Bureau of Education for the management of various government-sponsored industrial education projects, such as reindeer raising in northern and western Alaska, and for provision of medical care for Natives. And, in isolated instances, direct contracting with missions for formal schooling continued: as late as 1920 the Bureau of Education paid the salaries of three of the eight nuns teaching at the Holy Cross (Roman Catholic) School for natives on the Yukon River.⁴⁷

⁴⁶See Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898* and Victor William Henningsen III. *Reading, Writing and Reindeer: the development of federal education in Alaska, 1877-1920*. 1987.

⁴⁷Henningsen, 83.

No provision for civil government in the new U.S. territory came until the passage of the Organic Act of 1884. Henningsen observes that with the Act, “From an ignored American possession, Alaska had become a virtually ignored American colony ruled directly from Washington.”⁴⁸ The Act did not really address the concerns of the district’s white inhabitants, who were clamoring for representation in Washington, D.C., and the means by which to levy taxes and acquire homesteads of land title.

What came with the Organic Act was the creation of the Alaska Bureau of Education, which was to see to the education of Alaska’s children, regardless of race. The majority of children were Native, but there were some 400 or so white children in the district. The language of the Act, “without reference to race,” was not an example of enlightened progressivism, but a reflection of an understanding of the Alaska reality. As a district, there was no Legislature by which to collect taxes and therefore fund a school system. By directing the Secretary of the Interior to make provisions for the education of all children, whites were insured access to education. (Government schools for Indians were limited to Indians in the Lower 48.) The federal government also determined that Alaska’s indigenous people were self-sufficient enough that the extension of other federal programs on the scale of those being provided to reservation Indians in the Lower 48 was unwarranted. At first Bureau schools were funded by license fees, but later Congress provided for them by direct appropriation. Sheldon Jackson was named the first General Agent of Education in 1885.

The first real presence of the U.S. government on the ground in Bering Strait came in 1890, when Jackson began recruiting teachers for schools at the larger Native villages of Wales,

⁴⁸Henningsen, 62.

Point Hope and Barrow.⁴⁹ Already, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden had begun a mission school at Unalakleet in 1887, however, there is no indication any actual schooling began there until 1889 – due to the fact the missionary had problems with both English and the Native language. Another contract school was established at Golovnin Bay in 1893 and Mitletok, northeast of Wales, in 1898. Schools for reindeer herders were established at Teller Reindeer Station and Eaton Station later in the decade.

By the time the three new schools were established in 1890, 10 contract schools, 16 public schools, and 10 entirely mission-funded schools held classes in the territory, along with an unknown number of Russian schools.⁵⁰ Jackson's school at Wales holds the further distinction, or notoriety, as the place where the missionary Harrison Thornton was shot and killed with a whaling gun by three young villagers. The three schools met only with marginal success in their attempts at proselytizing and education, the teachers generally being unprepared and unequipped by their churches or the Bureau of Education for life and their work in Alaskan Native communities.

Despite Jackson's efforts, there was no significant increase in the number of schools in Alaska until the frenzied quest for gold drew tens of thousands of white men first to the Interior, and then to Nome. A school would not be built at King Island until 1929.

Gold

The news of gold strikes in the Klondike traveled quickly in 1897, and caused a veritable horde of stampedeers to descend upon St. Michael during the shipping season of that year.

⁴⁹An unsuccessful attempt to begin an American school at St. Michael began in 1886. The Protestant Episcopal missionary Octavius Parker moved on to Anvik in 1887. See the chapter "Schools and Missions" by Dorothy Jean Ray in *Eskimo of the Bering Strait 1650-1898* for another excellent look at the development of schools in the region and Sheldon Jackson as the head of education in the territory.

⁵⁰Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898*, 215.

As soon as these ships docked in Seattle and San Francisco, respectively, delirium spread over the waterfront, and almost immediately miners, prospectors, adventurers, and malcontents crowded onto all kinds of vessels pressed into service to accommodate them and their ‘outfits’ of food, clothing, and equipment. Saint Michael suddenly became a metropolis: more ships than ever before were built on the ways, and huge buildings – hotels, storehouses, bakeries, and mercantile establishments – sprang from the earth.⁵¹

On the all-water route to the scene of the activity, would-be prospectors sailed to St. Michael and then took steam ships and sternwheelers up the Yukon River. Many arrived too late to make the trip upriver and were stranded there for the winter. Only the establishment of Fort St. Michael in October kept order.

More were to follow the next year. They arrived in the gold fields and found all the best claims staked by the end of 1898. As a result, thousands of men were already within the territory when news of gold strikes in the Fish River area began to spread. The Fish River, some 90 miles from present day Nome, gave rise to Council City in 1898. It was Council City from which the fateful journey of the “Three Lucky Swedes,” one of whom was in fact, Norwegian, began. They found gold on Anvil Creek in December of 1898 – and set into motion events that would irrevocably change life in Northwestern Alaska.⁵²

Throughout that winter, as news of the Nome strike spread, miners from the Klondike and St. Michael began to travel toward the area. When word reached outside Alaska in the spring

⁵¹Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898*, 203.

⁵²Whether Jafet Lindburg, John Brynteson, and Erik Lindblom “found” gold is a matter of perspective – and perhaps, now, mythology. Ray says they were shown where the gold was by their Eskimo guide, Too-Rig-Luck.

of 1899, even more men were drawn north. The rush to Nome began in earnest, and by summer 1899 a tent city of nearly 20000 men had sprung to life on the beach by the Snake River. This is the watershed event in the history of the region. Prior to the Nome gold rush, changes had come for the most part gradually to the indigenous inhabitants of the area. The Eskimos of Bering Strait had met the newcomers on their own terms, states Ray:

But mining was in an entirely new sphere. It brought persons interested in exploitation and ownership of large areas of Eskimo land. Up to this time, the Eskimos had usually accepted new ideas and objects voluntarily, but the new mining pursuits suddenly eliminated choices, and the disruption of settlement and subsistence patterns and a new authoritarian government were only a small part of the involuntary changes the Eskimos faced as their land was disturbed and its nonrenewable products extracted without their permission.⁵³

Nome quickly became the regional center of the southern Seward Peninsula and proved a powerful draw to the Natives of the many small communities nearby. Gradually, the small settlements disappeared as their inhabitants moved to town. Many of them did not fare well once they arrived, succumbing to diseases brought by the newcomers and the alcohol readily available in the rough mining town. The men attracted to Nome were the dregs of the previous rushes in the Klondike and elsewhere, and a considerable number of them were of the criminal element always present in mining towns. Gold rush historian Terrence Cole wrote of Nome:

If ever a town needed law and order, it was gold rush Nome. A New York mining engineer estimated that one-third of the population of the gold rush town were idlers and footloose wanderers who, 'never do well anywhere under any circumstances.' Another third were of the 'sporting class,' including gamblers

⁵³Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898*, 204.

and prostitutes, while the remainders were miners, professional men, and those who had plans to go into business.⁵⁴

Writing in *Blazing Alaska's Trails*, Alfred Hulse Brooks said of the tent city at Nome:

During the height of the excitement there was a good deal of lawlessness at Nome, and life and property were none too secure. A number of robberies occurred on the streets. During my many years of Alaskan journeys, beginning with the Klondike rush and including visits to every important mining camp, I found Nome in 1900 the only spot in which I had the slightest apprehension of being robbed. At Nome, since I carried a large sum of money, I went armed, as did many others.⁵⁵

In response to the gold rush, funding for the education of Alaska's Natives increased.

Those in charge of education were appalled by the treatment of Natives in the mining camps. As James Ducker observed, "the gold rushes in the Klondike and Nome... injected a greater sense of urgency to the educational mission in Alaska."⁵⁶

In 1901, legislation directed that one-half of all license fees collected outside of incorporated areas go to the support of the Alaska Bureau of Education's programs. This was a considerable sum, some \$145,000 in 1905. In 1905, Congress instead began to fund the Bureau of Education by direct appropriation. In 1906, Congress appropriated \$50,000. The next year, that figure doubled, and in succeeding years the amount allocated grew even larger. This increase in funds allowed the Bureau to greatly increase the number of schools in operated. By 1908, the

⁵⁴Terrence Cole. *A History of the Nome Gold Rush: the Poor Man's Paradise*, Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1983, 185.

⁵⁵Alfred Hulse Brooks. *Blazing Alaska's Trails*. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1953, 397.

⁵⁶James Ducker, "Out of Harm's Way: Relocating Northwest Alaska's Eskimos, 1907-1917." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (1996)1: 46.

Bureau had 66 schools in Alaska, 16 of which were in the Seward Peninsula and Kotzebue Sound area.

The purpose of many of the early schools on the Seward Peninsula was to keep Alaskan Natives removed from the evils of mining towns like Nome, Candle, and Council. Ironically, while the BIA school system has been subjected to a great deal of criticism, (many times well-deserved) for its role in the destruction of indigenous cultures and languages, the facilities themselves were often at the center of community life. Semi-nomadic groups often settled in around schools, creating larger communities. As Terrence Cole notes in “History of the Copper Center Region,”⁵⁷ it was not unusual for a government school to become the core of a native community. As the Bureau of Education noted in 1920:

In the Alaskan native community the school is the center of all activity – social, industrial, civic. The teacher is guide, leader, and everything else the community may demand. To be teacher in the narrow schoolroom sense is by no means all of the teacher’s duties in Alaska. He must often be physician, nurse, postmaster, business manager, and community builder.⁵⁸

At King Island in 1951, Wednesday night was “reading night” at the school for the entire community. Every Friday, teachers hosted a well-attended “game night.” Teachers had the responsibility for dispensing medicines and diagnosing and treating illnesses. Across Alaska, the teacher was a representative of the federal government in the village.

James Ducker attributes the receptivity of the Seward Peninsula Natives from the onset to schooling to a mixture of pragmatism and curiosity. The schools offered opportunities for trade

⁵⁷Terrence Cole, Professor of History, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Unpublished paper. Prepared for the law firm of Covington and Burling, May 25, 1993.

⁵⁸Ibid.

and employment, medical attention, and technological innovations. In addition, Ducker writes, the Natives' social structure was geared to great mobility:

But Eskimo people and educators were able to adjust – the Eskimos, either the men alone or with all of their families, wandered farther to hunt and trap, and the educators understood and acquiesced in shortened school years so that villagers could gain their subsistence. Thus movement to school villages and interest in Western education can be viewed as the response of at least some members of a mobile and competitive people intent on maintaining their families with traditional hunting and fishing while gaining a better understanding of a stronger and wealthier society that offered material advantages.⁵⁹

The Bureau of Education was in charge of educating Alaska's Native children until 1931, when those responsibilities were transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Eventually, the Bureau was slated to transfer all educational responsibilities to the state of Alaska, but, as always, the issue of money loomed large over such changes.

By 1959, the BIA was administering 75 day schools which ended at the eighth grade in the new state. Mount Edgecumbe provided a high school education with a 650 student capacity; the Wrangell Institute provided elementary education for 250. In addition, the BIA funded 13 "adult education instructional units" and 24 schools with Johnson O'Malley funds. It had opened 24 new schools since 1950, but schools were continually closing and reopening. In the Nome area, the Solomon and Golovin schools both closed in the 1950s – due to decreased enrollment – but Golovin reopened in 1960. The Little Diomed school, the one bearing the closest resemblance to the King Island station, closed for a time in 1958 after the teacher was injured, but reopened again later.

⁵⁹Ducker, 54.

King Island and the Bureau of Indian Affairs

The first real presence of the federal government in the everyday lives of the King Islanders came with the establishment of a day school at the island in 1929. Prior to that, their encounters with the U.S. government were confined to encounters with missionary groups and the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

The King Islanders had requested a school be constructed at their village as early as 1911. Materials arrived in 1929 and construction was complete in 1930. The one and ½ story, 20x60 foot building included living quarters for two teachers. Classes were first held in 1931. [Figure 5.]

The first teacher appointed the King Island station was Wales Eskimo Arthur Nagozruk, the “godless Protestant” whose presence had so offended Lafortune. He was removed some years later after ostensibly coming into conflict with the village over the school site. Bogojavlensky and Renner both suggest it was due to the combined religious and temporal powers of Fr. Lafortune and the “Chief” Charles Olaranna that Nagozruk was removed.⁶⁰ Lafortune’s antipathy towards Protestants and the secular BIA school is evident in his writings, and Nagozruk incurred Olaranna’s displeasure for his reported support of a rival faction to Olaranna’s. Officially, Nagozruk’s removal was over the school reserve. As was customary, land surrounding the school was reserved for use by the Office of Education. Villagers wanted to build homes within the boundaries of that reserved land, (some 40 acres) because of the lack of suitable sites in general in the village. To build too far up the slope would put buildings in danger from large boulders that

⁶⁰By most accounts, Lafortune and Olaranna dominated affairs on King Island for 25 years, but one informant in research for this paper suggested that Peter Mayac Sr. wielded a great deal of influence as the actual administrator for the King Island community, suggesting that Olaranna was more of a spokesman for the people.



Figure 5. Children walk up the steep slope to the island's school. When federal officials closed the school in 1959, there were more than enough children to warrant keeping the school open. Photo courtesy Juan Munoz.

occasionally slid down from the cliffs above the village. Olaranna dictated a letter to Acting Director of Education Charles W. Hawkesworth in Juneau that today seems eerily prescient:

What to do? We see only two openings: 1) build (sic) on the school reservation, or 2) Close the school. The school is not necessary for our life, but homes are. You will perhaps say “quit the island.” But let it be understood, we are not going to stand for that.⁶¹

Many villages opted for the incorporation of village councils under the 1936 Indian Reorganization Act, and King Island too went this way in 1939. In the first election, Charles Olaranna was elected Chief. Olaranna would dominate politics, and by extension, jobs, through the position for nearly two decades.

With the incorporation of the IRA council came the opportunity to apply for a loan from the BIA’s revolving credit fund. The original loan taken in 1940, \$2000, was paid off by 1947. The Council later opted for a \$10,000 loan which was due by 1952. As a member of the Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association, ANICA, the store was able to purchase goods along with other villages in Alaska. The operation was run by the Alaska Native Service, and goods delivered on its barges. The store would remain open even after most of the inhabitants had settled in at Nome.

As late as 1959, as only a few groups in Bering Strait had done, the King Islanders had successfully weathered several hundred years of dramatic change that came to the region – picking and choosing elements of European culture and technology that they would accept or reject. Even the conversion to Christianity and the establishment of a BIA day school had only moderate impacts upon their community. The turning point in their history would come

⁶¹Chief John Olaranna, King Island, AK, as dictated to Father Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J., to Charles Hawkesworth, Acting Director of Education, Juneau, AK, July 11, 1935. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

relatively late, when in 1959, the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced its decision to close down the island's school.

Historiography of the School Closure

The significance of the closure of the school on King Island cannot be understated in any discussion of the history of the villagers' move to Nome. The school is the crux of it, as is demonstrated in both BIA documents and the oral record obtained from King Island elders today. Despite the considerable scholarship pertaining to King Island, very little has been written about the school closure itself, though most authors attribute the complete abandonment of the island to it. Depending on whom one reads, the school was closed because of there being too few school children, a gradual decline in the island's population – brought on by need for medical treatment or the desire for an easier life – or because of the hazard posed by a rock formation high up the slope from the village. Anthropologist Linda Ellanna, writing in 1981, summed up the consensus view:

By the mid-60s, however, some Ukiuvungmiut had come to Nome to reside for education, employment, or medical reasons, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' decision to close down its school at this time provided the ultimate pressure which was to result eventually in total community relocation.⁶²

In a later article, Ellanna attributed their relocation to “governmental and economic pressures related to the difficulty of providing external support services to an insular population with no aircraft landing facility.”⁶³

⁶²Ellanna, Linda J. “Ukiuvungmiut: Cliff Dwellers of the Bering Strait.” *Alaska Fish Tales & Game Trails* September 1981, 4.

⁶³Ellanna, Linda J. “Skin Boats and Walrus Hunters of Bering Strait.” *Arctic Anthropology* Vol. 25, no .1, 1988, 108.

Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., one of the premier researchers about King Island, also points to the gradual population decline. Beginning in the 1950s, he writes, people began to resettle on the mainland at King Island Village on the east end of Nome. Life there offered more job opportunities, a less strenuous way of life, and most importantly, Renner wrote, access to adequate medical care:

For eight months of the year the only medical care available was that provided by the missionary or schoolteacher. This was a source of constant concern, especially to childbearing women, and offered the principal incentive for the gradual migration to Nome. Bureau of Indian Affairs closed the school on the island in 1959, giving as reasons for doing so the declining number of schoolchildren, the difficulty of finding teachers for a station of such “extreme isolation and undesirable features,” and the “rock slide hazard.” The complete abandonment of the island became only a matter of time.⁶⁴

Medical care was especially important in the treatment of tuberculosis, which was widespread across rural Alaska in the 1940s and 50s. Upon release from hospitalization or the sanatorium, tuberculosis patients faced a difficult time in resuming their old life. Recuperation from TB required that a patient refrain from any but light work – the sort of work that was virtually nonexistent for those living a subsistence lifestyle.

Sergei Bogojavlensky departs somewhat from the common understanding of the event, attributing the initial exodus from King Island to internal political conflicts within the community. His 1969 doctoral dissertation, *Imaangmiut Eskimo Careers*, focuses on the conflicts between social and political factions expressed as skinboat crews.⁶⁵ “The reasons for the

⁶⁴Father Louis L. Renner, S.J. “Charles Olaranna: Chief of the King Islanders,” 15.

⁶⁵Bogojavlensky’s thesis is compelling, but may not be as clear cut as he states. His research was not

abandonment of the island are many, but the specific social structural processes of factional struggles have obviously been a key factor,” wrote Bogojavlensky.⁶⁶ Men and families that left the island for a period of time, be it for wage employment or medical care, would no longer be guaranteed a place economically, so to speak. If a member of a crew left, the captain of that boat would need to replace him. Should that individual wish to return, he had no guarantees that he would have a place in the crew and therefore faced uncertain “economic” prospects.

Bogojavlensky, like Renner, notes the pull of adequate medical care, but again points to factional conflicts within the community:

There were social structural reasons, too. Families were afraid to return after an absence since they were not guaranteed the factional economic support they felt they needed. As the world over when marginal peoples are engulfed by Western culture, many of the younger people decided that the austerity and isolation of their home village was not worthwhile, but preferred the compromise arrangement of living among their own King Islanders on the mainland.⁶⁷

Bogojavlensky calls the school closure the “final coup de grace” for the village. The reasons that local BIA personnel gave for the closure, in his account, are the rockslide hazard and the lack of enough school age children to qualify for a school. He puts the number of school age children for the 1958-59 school year at 20, which was more than the 12 child minimum. He adds, in conclusion, that the reasons for the BIA to abandon the school are not clear.

carried out at King Island, but took place after it had been completely abandoned in 1966, raising the question of whether the lack of cohesion he reports within the community was always as pronounced as he stated, or had grown more profound with the move to Nome and all the associated stresses it caused upon the King Islanders. Moreover, he does not take into account mitigating factors with the community reported by others, such as the women’s social system and sharing, the Catholic Church, and such community events as the Polar Bear Dance.

⁶⁶Bogojavlensky, Sergei. *Imaangmiut Eskimo Careers: Skinboats in Bering Strait*, 230.

⁶⁷Ibid, 231.

Bogojavlensky also mentions that several families who continued to return to the island were forced by the BIA to leave their school age children with other King Islanders in Nome – although a few managed to return with older school age kids. In 1966, the captain of the *North Star* refused to take those families aboard for the voyage to King Island, and when they offered to leave their children on the mainland, were told by BIA and state welfare officials that they would consider that abandonment... and their children would be wards of the state. That was how, in 1966, the island came to be completely abandoned.

If one turns to the King Islanders themselves for an explanation of the abandonment of the island village, the consensus view is that the federal government forced them off the island by closing the school, although they acknowledge the other factors that led to gradual decline in the island's population prior to the school closure.

“My wife and I lived on King Island until 1956 when we moved to Nome,” wrote King Island elder Paul Tiulana in *A Place for Winter*:

The people on King Island had started moving to Nome in 1948 to get jobs and because of medical problems. No one had traveled much prior to that time, except in the service; then tourism came in and offered us a chance to travel. We were good dancers on King Island and the airlines offered to take us stateside, to promote their business... After some of the people had left King Island, the government forced the rest of them out.⁶⁸

Tiulana's sentiments are echoed today by King Islanders in Nome.

Gabriel Muktoyuk, 65, of Nome, made the choice to stay in Nome year-round in 1963.

“I wanted to keep going back to King Island but, when my two older girls were born there – and knowing that the school might be closed, and since there were no more teachers then, I decided to

⁶⁸Tiulana, 38.

stay here in the fall of 1963.”⁶⁹

His older brother, Edward, and his wife Cecilia, had 10 children. When asked why they moved to Nome, Cecilia said the same thing. “Because we got no school teacher.”⁷⁰

Agatha Kokuluk’s family moved for the same reason. “There’s no teachers out there, kids had to go to school, so we moved to Nome,”⁷¹ Kokuluk said.

When asked why the school closed, Edward Muktoyuk, Sr. listed a number of reasons:

Because people moving with their children, not enough children to attend school.

The numbers were small, that’s why we don’t have no more teachers. Besides, the rocks, sometimes they would roll and it’s kind of dangerous out there when the spring breakup, rocks would roll down. One hit the house by us, house next to school house, it hit that house and it rolled down.⁷²

The most recent work published on the King Islanders, Deanna Kingston’s *Returning: Twentieth Century Performances of the King Island Wolf Dance*, attributes the closure of the island school to a gradual decline in the number of school age children, which in turn prompted the BIA to close its doors. She, too, records incidents in the early 1960s in which the BIA forbade the return of school age-children to the island. Kingston, a woman of King Island descent, heard stories similar to those told to Bogojavlensky 20 years earlier:

For instance, when I asked SaasaNa and his wife SiGnaq when they moved off the island, they told me it was in the early 1950s, when both individuals were hospitalized at different times for tuberculosis. Although they did not say it, their

⁶⁹Muktoyuk, Gabriel. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 1 March, 2001.

⁷⁰Muktoyuk, Cecilia and Edward Sr. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 2 March, 2001.

⁷¹Kokuluk, Agatha. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 28 February, 2001.

⁷²Ibid.

attitude suggested moving back to King Island after their hospitalizations as not an option.⁷³

Kingston also points to federal programs, such as relocation, designed to draw Native people away from their rural communities, and, presumably, to ease their transition to “modern” society. Several young King Islanders and their families took part in this program, moving to places like California and Chicago. Finally, Kingston concludes, Father Lafortune himself may have contributed to part of the community’s moving to Nome before the school closure. Lafortune had helped the villagers get summer wage employment over the years, and the exposure to job opportunities and medical care may have drawn them to year-round residence on the mainland. Nor can one overlook the effect of Lafortune’s bias towards Charles Olaranna’s faction that may have alienated men in other groups.

Whatever the reasons why some King Islanders had left the island by 1959, writes Kingston, as a group they blame the BIA.

What exactly happened in 1959? Why did the Bureau choose to close the school in 1959, and not earlier? Do the “official” reasons match those contained within Bureau correspondence? The question of “what happened” is important for the historian, for the discipline is greatly concerned with causality, of what event or factors led to something else. Why else the incredible body of scholarship still devoted to the origins of World War One? The question of what happened has even greater resonance within the King Island community, since they are still living through the ripple effects of a bureaucratic decision made over 40 years ago.

⁷³Kingston, Deanna. *Returning: Twentieth Century Performances of the King Island Wolf Dance*, Fairbanks, AK, May 1999. Phd dissertation, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1999, 186.

Chapter 3

1959

King Islanders Arrive For Summer In Nome

Six boatloads of King Island Eskimos arrived early Sunday morning from their winter home. The trip was rather rough, they report, and it took between 12 and 14 hours to sail from the island. With them were Mr. and Mrs. Provance, teachers, and their (sic) Mr. and Mrs. Harbo of the Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Research Department.

– from the *Nome Nugget Newspaper*, Monday, June 22, 1959

The King Islanders returned in 1959 to become, temporarily, a part of the Nome community, as was the established pattern of things. Their arrival was remarked upon on page six of the local paper, along with other announcements of local interest: the birth of the Anungazuk's son, the arrival of the ANICA manager from Unalakleet, the admittance of Georgianna Auliye to the hospital, and the return of Alice Hudson from a wedding in Seattle.

That their arrival is mentioned at all is significant, for each biweekly issue was a curious mixture of wire news and local copy. The front page regularly featured headlines detailing events of the Cold War, national labor politics, and major league baseball standings – on the same page, one might find Alaskan stories, many of which focused on the territory's newly gained statehood. In 1959, the prospect of a new era in Alaska loomed large in the minds of the *Nugget's* readers, judging by the amount of space devoted to the issues surrounding the event. Boosterism, that euphoric support of development, was the editorial voice of the *Nugget* and other Alaskan papers. Newspaper editors across the state lent their support to two big development projects that had the backing of the powerful in Alaska: Project Chariot and the Rampart Dam. The *Nugget* was no

different, running headlines in the summer of 1959 that told its readers “Dr. Edward Teller Tells N.W. Alaskans Cheaper Mining May Result From Blast” and “C. Of C. Emphasizes Hydro Dam Value in Final Action.”

In the June 29 *Nugget*, the same issue which covered Teller’s visit to Nome, Managing Editor Emily Boucher wrote in an editorial titled “Our Fabulous New World”:

The proposed blast at Cape Thompson may not only prove to the world that this energy is not necessarily a force of destruction but a work force that may speedily and harmlessly remove the permafrost which covers our gold, tin, iron ore, copper, bismuth, coal and other valuable minerals, and could extract oil from the rocks in the area. This experimentation promises a fabulous new world of economic progress; and presents a possibility of providing our nation with those vital products we must now import, in some cases from unfriendly nations.⁷⁴

Both projects have been thoroughly discredited today, but in 1959, they did not seem to be pipe dreams, but the future of the state, promising jobs, economic development and a way out of the poverty and backwardness that characterized Alaska before oil began being pumped at Prudhoe Bay.⁷⁵ Both projects are noteworthy and reveal a great deal about the distribution of power and the mindset of those who wielded it. Both schemes potentially affected thousands of Alaskan Natives – and both for a time moved forward with no concern shown for the opinions of the people of Cape Thompson, or the Interior residents whose villages would have been submerged as part of the plan to dam the Yukon River. In fact, in the following years, a pan-Alaskan Native political consciousness would spring to life in reaction to both Project Chariot and the proposed Rampart Dam. But in 1959, the Alaska Federation of Natives did not yet exist, nor had Howard

⁷⁴*The Nome Nugget Newspaper*, June 29, 1959, page 6.

⁷⁵See Dan O’Neill. *The Firecracker Boys*. St. Martin’s Griffin: New York, 1994.

Rock helped found Alaska's first Native newspaper, the *Tundra Times*. The notable incident of civil disobedience, the Barrow "duck-in," would not draw national attention to the question of Native hunting and fishing rights until 1961. The Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act would not happen for another two decades.

In the same edition of the *Nugget* as Boucher's editorial, a small article appeared under the headline "Two Boats Motor to King Island":

Two umiaks left for King Island Saturday to pick up some of the supplies which were left when the families came over last week. In the party were some who have made their home in Nome and have not been to the island for several years.⁷⁶

Later that summer, the King Islanders appeared again in the pages of the *Nugget*, this time in a feature photo of Ursula Ellanna and Tony Pushruk Eskimo-dancing for tourists at their hall at East End.

The BIA Announces the Closure of the School

In the September 26, 1959 issue of the *Nome Nugget*, a brief article announcing the closure of the King Island school appeared on page 6. "No School for King Island" ran the headline:

It was officially announced by Robert Grant, of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, that there will not be a school on King Island this winter. He stated the reason for closing the school was that no qualified teacher could be found for the island school. There were about 35 children attending the school last year. As it stands now, these children will either return to their island home and have no schooling

⁷⁶Ibid.

or remain here to be taken into the now overcrowded facilities of the Nome School.⁷⁷

This was not the first time the island would go without a school. The island had suffered a close call a few years earlier, when the Alaska Native Service did not open the school in the fall of 1956. This had occurred at the island several times in the history of the BIA's operation. According to BIA records, during the 1942-43, 1945-46, 1947 and 1947-48 school years, the school was not open because there were no teachers there. The same situation occurred in the fall of 1956, although this time the Bureau did not operate a school because so few children were expected to return to the island for the winter. Unfortunately, for the King Islanders, the BIA guessed wrong.

In a memo dated September 27, 1956, Assistant Area Director of Schools Kenneth K. Crites announced the indefinite closure of the King Island day school. According to Crites, 23 of the 37 school age children had enrolled in the Nome Public School. According to the local area field representative, only 30 to 40 King Islanders intended to return to the island on the *North Star*.

"The remainder have decided to stay in Nome for the winter, and perhaps longer," Crites wrote. "The village population has steadily declined from a high of 272 in 1945 to 97 in 1956. This decrease in village population is largely the result of migration to Nome."⁷⁸

In a memo dated the same day as Crites, Area Director Max Penrod shared more information. Robert Grant of the Nome office had advised his superiors that less than 12 children (the legal minimum for school operation) would return to the island that fall.

⁷⁷*The Nome Nugget Newspaper*, September 25, 1959. Page 6.

⁷⁸Kenneth Crites, Assistant Area Director of Schools, Memorandum to the File, BIA, Juneau, AK, September 27, 1956. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

“A complete review of the situation, of course, will be undertaken next summer,” concluded Penrod, “and a decision made at that time as to whether the school will be permanently closed, or later resumed, possibly for the 1957-58 school term.”⁷⁹

The island’s teachers returned on the *North Star* that year to retrieve their belongings but found work elsewhere. It turned out, however, that a larger number of villagers returned to the island than Grant, the local field representative, had predicted.

On October 15, Education Specialist Warren Tiffany hastily wrote to Juneau: The King Island population has greatly exceeded that which was anticipated. Factors mentioned previously were responsible for reducing the village population from 97 to 75 and the school population from 39 to 25. Obviously, predictions are difficult to make with any degree of accuracy, but it seems highly probably that the school enrollment will remain at a one-teacher level for several years to come. Effort should be made, therefore, to provide a teacher for this station at the earliest opportunity. Certainly, we must plan for the operation of the school for the year 1957-58.⁸⁰

Tiffany suggested having the Coast Guard bring in a teacher before freeze-up, or waiting until December when snow cover allowed a plane to attempt a landing there. In the interim, Catholic priest Father George E. Carroll had agreed to conduct a school program. “King Island needs a school,” concluded Tiffany, “It can be done.”⁸¹

⁷⁹Max Penrod, Area Director of Schools, to All Branch Chiefs, BIA, Juneau, Alaska, September 27, 1956. Records of the BIA, JAO, RG 75, Box 36, Seattle Support Center, Juneau, AK, Program Correspondence Files 1920-1963, File: 902 King Island 1956. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁸⁰Warren Tiffany to Max Penrod, Area Director of Schools, BIA, Juneau, AK, October 19, 1956. Records of the BIA, JAO, RG 75, Box 294, 04/08/13-(3). Education Program Decimal Files, 1938-68. File: 864, King Island - Supervisory Visits. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁸¹Ibid.

The school reopened for the 1957-58 and 1958-59 school years, but in the fall of 1959 the decision came, once again, not to operate the school out there. The King Islanders were not necessarily aware of the finality of the decision. In the past, the school had always reopened.

The decision immediately touched off a controversy, but not from the King Islanders, at least, not that we can tell based on newspaper accounts. Instead, the city of Nome was in an uproar because of the addition of the King Island children to the school at Nome. The tone of the discussion was not welcoming to the city's newest, though largely involuntary, residents.

On September 28, a subheader titled "Nome School Problem" appeared above an article summarizing a meeting of the State Planning Commission held in Nome. "The unique problem of providing school rooms for the children from many villages where inadequate or no schools exists under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was presented to the Commission," wrote the editorial staff, "The City of Nome has reached the capacity of its financial support to the school but the taxable property has not increased in proportion to the influx of villagers bringing their children to be schooled in Nome."

Two days later, the *Nugget* ran an editorial with the headline, "King Island School Poses Problem":

The Nome School had reached the saturation point prior to this announcement, and what to do if any portion of these children remain here is a serious problem confronting the city. It is equally serious for those King Island residents who cannot afford to remain here for the winter and whose children must go without schooling for a year at least. With the closing of the King Island school, the BIA has at least \$30,000 budgeted for maintaining two teachers, heating and housing them – \$30,000 to spend somewhere else. In all fairness to the community which

will absorb the cost of the King Island school, some of this money which, by the way is tax money, should be channeled to the City of Nome.⁸²

The overcrowding of the Nome school, Boucher continued, would handicap the education of permanent Nome residents and seriously jeopardize the primary grades. In the same edition of the *Nugget*, an article on the most recent Chamber of Commerce meeting laid out that group's concerns. "It was brought out that these children are a distinct liability to the city and the school financial-wise, since these people contribute almost nothing in the way of tax income – and it is from the real property tax that the City of Nome derives the money to pay its share of school operation costs."⁸³

In the October 5 *Nugget*, a news brief mentioned that between 50 and 60 King Islanders had gone back to the island on the *North Star* two evenings earlier. Their priest, Father George Carroll, had returned with them. The rest of the village remained in Nome.

But the school issue remained in the foreground of the *Nugget's* coverage. "Increased Costs May Force Nome Close High School," ran the headline on the front page of the October 12 issue. In the story below, the editors warned that "With the steady increase in school enrollment, the City of Nome has found itself unable to carry the financial burden of supporting the school. It is very probable that unless aid is received, Nome in the not too distant future, will be able to offer only the minimum education required in Alaska – that is, an 8th grade education."⁸⁴ The possibility of aid from the BIA, it noted, would be discussed at an upcoming meeting with Bureau

⁸²*Nome Nugget Newspaper*, September 30, 1959. Pg. 2, ed E.P. Boucher. According to an *Anchorage Daily News* article on the school hubbub, of Nome's 2600 residents in 1959, 623 were school age children. The combined Nome elementary and high school was supposed to accommodate 500 students

⁸³ *Nome Nugget Newspaper* "NWA Chamber Reviews Results of Busy Week of Meetings and Hearings," Sept. 30, 1959, page 3. Ed E.P. Boucher

⁸⁴*Nome Nugget*, Oct. 12, 1959, page 1.

officials from Juneau and Washington. The October 14 issue ran a news brief headlined, “Congressman Rivers Here to Discuss Problems With Nome Civic Leaders.”

The hue and cry seems to have worked. In the next edition, Nome’s successful lobbying effort was described in another front page article, “BIA Officials Agree to Recommend Aid to Nome School.” BIA officials were sympathetic to Nome’s concerns and promised a recommendation of aid would be issued within 30 days. With that, the issue passed from the *Nugget’s* pages. No further mention of the Nome school crisis or the King Island school appeared in the Nome newspaper in 1959. Nome was to receive \$12,000 in Johnson O’Malley funds immediately, and \$30,000 in the next two years – the sum spent annually for the King Island school.⁸⁵

No Qualified Teachers Available?

It would appear, based on the *Nugget’s* coverage – which was, itself, based upon the initial announcement made by Robert Grant – that the school closed because the BIA could find no teachers for the 1959-60 school year. However, the circumstances surrounding the school closure are far more complex than the simple story reported in the *Nugget*. Why then, for example, did the Bureau not reopen the school the following year, as it had done in the past?

In subsequent newspapers articles and BIA correspondence, the reasons given for the school closure, and its permanence, change several times. What emerges is a picture of a bureaucracy at work, with its employees, themselves, either uncertain as to why the school closed, or possibly deliberately misleading the public and villagers. Based on the available records, it appears the school was actually condemned for safety issues – that finding being a

⁸⁵Nome was to receive the additional funds on an “emergency” basis, subject to review after the third year. Supplement III to Johnson-O’Malley Plan of July 20, 1959, Nome Independent School District, RG 75, Box 286, JAO Education Program Decimal Files 1938-68, 806.5-807.1, File: 806.5 Miscellaneous 1959-1960, Indian Schools Taken Over by Public Schools. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

convenient way for the Bureau to finally relieve itself of the expense and inconvenience of operating a school at King Island. Not only would closing the school remove that burden, it would also indirectly force the King Islanders into Nome.

Safety Issues

Bureau records show that the King Island day school was visited twice in the two years before its closure by Area Field Representative Robert J. Grant. In neither field report does Grant mention any safety hazard at the site.

However, in March of 1959, the Bureau began a "safety campaign" in Alaska. Members from the Plant Management branch, along with field engineers and employees from the Gallup Area Office conducted a survey of school plants to "determine the hazardous elements" in the area.⁸⁶ The Chairman of the Area Safety Committee, R.L. Davlin, sent a memo to the Area Director of Schools later that month concerning the "rock slide hazard at King Island."⁸⁷ Davlin recommended that the school should not be conducted during times of thawing conditions:

As you are aware, the school and village at King Island are located on cliffs above the sea. There are numerous rocks of all sizes up to the size of approximately ten tons that are loosened by the frost and weather from the cliffs higher up and occasionally crash down the steep slopes to the sea. The approximately 38 school children at our day school would be in extreme danger if a rock came down while school was in session. We are told that a few years

⁸⁶Branch of Education Monthly Report, March 1959, RG 75, Box 264 04/08/11, JAO, Education Program Decimal Files 1936-1965, 806.1 (Individual Station Correspondence) Miscellaneous File: 806.1 #8, Miscellaneous School Correspondence (1/1/59 to 6/30/59). NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁸⁷R.L. Davlin, Chairman Area Safety Committee, to Juneau Area Director of Schools, Memorandum, March 30, 1959, Subject: Rock Slide Hazard at King Island. King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

ago a sizable rock went through the roof of a building adjacent to the school. Fortunately, at the time of year when slides or falling rocks are most likely to occur, our school is not in session since, during the winter, the rocks are usually frozen solid in the ground.⁸⁸

The Area Safety Committee met again in the third week of September 1959. In a report to the Juneau Area Office, Davlin advised his superiors that the King Island hazard was again discussed. “Mr. Featherstone, Area Plant Management Officer and Mr. Crites, Assistant Area Director of Education both have additional information from their branches on this subject and will report their findings in written form,”⁸⁹ he wrote on September 21, a few days before the article in the *Nugget* appeared that had cited the lack of a teacher as the reason for the school closure. Crites, his superior, penciled in an additional note below that paragraph on September 30th, noting that because the station was now closed, no report would be required.

A more telling glimpse into the events preceding the school closure comes from unofficial correspondence between the Bureau’s social worker in Nome and the Juneau office. When Elsie May Smith wrote her monthly report for September, she referred to the King Island school closure. “At this point it seems to be the decision of the King Island people to remain in Nome due to the fact that there is no teacher for the Island,” Smith wrote. “This creates a problem for the already overcrowded school in Nome and will no doubt be a problem as far as welfare is concerned since ivory carving will be their only means of support.”⁹⁰ However, she

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹R.L. Davlin, Chairman Area Safety Committee, to Juneau Area Director, September 21, 1959, Area Safety Committee Meeting. RG 75, Box 264, JAO Education Program Decimal Files 1936-68, 806.1 (Individual Station Correspondence) Miscellaneous File: 806.1 Miscellaneous Correspondence (71.159-12/31/59) #9. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁹⁰Elsie May Smith, Social Worker, Nome, to Area Social Worker, BIA, JAO, September 30, 1959. RG 75, Box 112, JAO, Alaska. Mission Correspondence 1956-1968, File: Monthly Narrative Reports, Nome 1/59

attached a handwritten note on the back of an index card, dated October 6, to her report. The note offers a version of events contradictory to the official version which was given to the *Nome*

Nugget:

10-6-59, I talked to M. Penrod who said the schoolhouse had been condemned because of overhanging rocks. He did not agree with the condemnation, but B/F/Stone gave him no choice, so the teachers went elsewhere. Last school year there were 112 Natives on King Island, including 38 school age children. There could be about 25 families who will be needing G.A. this winter.⁹¹

Smith's unofficial version of events is bolstered by comments from the Acting BIA Nome Area Field Representative (AFR) in an *Anchorage Daily News* article dated November 5, 1959:

Tiffany stated that the sorest point in town is the King Island school, which didn't close because of low attendance but "because an engineer went out there and condemned the school building. I guess Nome picked up all those families when we shut down. Now we have to get the building uncondemned or something... but in the meantime we're diverting the funds to the other 24 schools in the area."⁹²

In an unsigned monthly report from the Bureau's Alaska Branch of Education in November 1959, the "rock hazard" justification was repeated:

The King Island school is not operating this year. Built on the precipitous side of

to 6/64. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁹¹Ibid. B/F/Stone would appear to be an abbreviation for William J. Featherstone, Area Plant Management Officer. G.A. presumably stands for "general assistance," the BIA's welfare program.

⁹²"Nome Taxpayers in Furor Over Closing of Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools," *Anchorage Daily News*, November 5, 1959, page 2.

the rocky island, the school and village lie in the path of possible rock slides, some of the “rocks” being almost as big as the schoolhouse. In view of this natural hazard, it was decided to shut down the school for the time being.⁹³

A Village Divided

As a result of the closure of the school, only 62 residents returned to the island that fall, some taking their children with them. But it is clear that the unresolved status of the school remained an issue with the King Islanders in Nome. Most of the men of the community attended a meeting in August 1960 to discuss who was planning to return to the island that year. The school was foremost in their minds, prompting the Council’s Secretary, Bernard Katexac, to query Juneau. “Three other subject were brought up, but there is no progress so they decided to write a letter direct to your office because it all concerns of having no teachers for some of the winters,” wrote Katexac:

Your prompt answer is expected therefore if there is any teachers qualified to spend the winter on the Island. Also any action taken to cut the cargo that should be discharged next October. There was also a rumor heard in the meeting, that beginning in 1959, there won’t be any teachers for King Island until three years later. They wanted to know if this is a true information.⁹⁴

In response, Area Director of Education Max Penrod wrote his superiors in Juneau, weighing in against reopening the school. “Although there was some discussion at the time of making further inquiry into this condition, with a possible view to making necessary corrections,

⁹³Monthly Report, Branch of Education - October 1959, to Area Director of Schools, November 2, 1959. RG 75 Box 264, JAO Education Program Decimal Files 1936-68, 806.1 (Individual Station Correspondence) Miscellaneous File: 806.1 Misc. Correspondence (71.159-12/31/59) #9. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

⁹⁴Bernard Katexac, Secretary, King Island Native Community, to Juneau Area Director James E. Hawkins, August 23, 1960. King Island Special Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

I have no information this has been accomplished. Therefore, under the present conditions we are unable to give further thought to the reopening the school.”⁹⁵

The Bureau had not made any further study of the matter, and so would not reconsider the closure. Forcing the children to remain in Nome could be considered a mixed blessing, Penrod added, hastening the integration of the entire group with the rest of the area. “It may be wise to take a careful look at the total picture and if the people, together with their children, could be relocated to a more favorable surroundings we might be completely justified in giving it encouragement,” he concluded. “Therefore, under present conditions I believe we should be very careful in considering the reopening of the school at King Island.”⁹⁶

Hawkins, in turn, responded to the King Island Native Community.⁹⁷ “We have serious doubts about the advisability of sending a teacher to King Island this year and have not employed a teacher for this school,” wrote Hawkins. As for those children who stayed with their parents at the island, Hawkins urged any parents who wished to send their children to the Wrangell Institute to contact Bureau personnel in Nome. “I know that the school problem is one which concerns you a great deal and it concerns us too. However we feel that the building on the Island is in a dangerous position and we would feel very badly if something happened to one of our teachers while living in that building.” Hawkins did not include Penrod’s opinions on how the school closure was a “mixed blessing” in his letter.

Enforcing School Attendance

While most of the King Islanders elected to remain in Nome because of the school

⁹⁵Max Penrod, Area Director of Schools, to Juneau Area Director James E. Hawkins, August 30, 1960. King Island Special Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷James E. Hawkins, Area Director, to Bernard T. Katexac, Secretary King Island Community, August 31, 1960. King Island Special Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

closure, many returned to the island with their children. How far the Bureau went to discourage this is unclear, but in a few instances it appears that families were threatened with the loss of their school aged children if they attempted to leave Nome with them.

Deanna Kingston refers to such instances in *Returning: Twentieth Century Performances of the King Island Wolf Dance*:

“The story, as told to me by my uncle Anauliq, is as follows: The BIA closed down our school in 1959. Then, when we tried to go back to the island the next fall, the BIA agents came to the ship [the North Star] with policemen and threatened us with arrest if we didn’t let our kids go to school in Nome.”⁹⁸

The story Kingston cites was repeated by Edward Muktoyuk Sr. in an interview in 2001. (Edward is her uncle.) Several of the older Muktoyuk children were attending boarding school, but the couple had planned to return to the island with four of their younger children. The police did not allow them to take them, and took them and the child of another family to King Island residents at East End village.

Two of the Muktoyuk children were taken to their grandparents’ home, one stayed with Dominic Thomas’ family, and another stayed at Teddy Mayac’s. The Muktoyuk’s did not see their children for nine months, nor was there any way for them to communicate with them in their absence. The separation pushed them to remain in Nome year-round the next season. “It was very hard,” Cecilia Muktoyuk explained. “... and that’s why we don’t want to go back after that. It’s very hard to leave the kids, the school kids.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸Kingston, 183.

⁹⁹Muktoyuk, Cecilia and Edward. Interview by author. Nome, Alaska, 2 March 2001.

Edward's brother, Gabriel, recalled the police showing up with another child whose parents were returning to the island that year.

"They left, after the last boat went down to the North Star, me and my wife went home and saying that we won't see them again till next spring," he said. "And later on, there was a knock on the door, a policeman brought our young brother-in-law, Maurice Nattangak, who was of school age by then... he said they yank him out from the North Star."¹⁰⁰

Gabriel Muktoyuk said the police told him that they couldn't bring any school age children over to a place where there was no school. No financial provisions were made for the families that had to take care of the additional children. Both the Nattangak and Muktoyuk children attended boarding schools in the following years. It is unclear who ordered the police to remove the children from their parents' custody. But the situation with the Muktoyuk and Nattangak families may have sent a message to the rest of the King Islanders.

Only 62 of the community returned to King Island in 1960. In April 1960, Father George Carroll in turn closed the mission the Church had operated there since 1929. An ever dwindling number of King Islanders returned each succeeding year. In November 1963, the U.S. Air Force and Coast Guard made an emergency food drop of 2,200 pounds of flour. "The reported food shortage was occasioned by the unexpected return of a number of Eskimos to the Island," reported the BIA's Robert Cole.¹⁰¹ Only 16 people returned to the island for the winter of 1964-65. No one returned to the island, finally, for the winter of 1966-67. Nome Superintendent McLean telegraphed Juneau in October 1966:

¹⁰⁰Muktoyuk, Gabriel. Interview by author. Nome, Alaska, 1 March, 2001.

¹⁰¹Robert L. Cole, October 31 and November 27, 1963, RG 75, Box 11, (BIA), General Subject Correspondence 1933-1963. 052-File: 052 Monthly Report 1960-63 Closed. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

This is to advise you that no King Islanders went out to King Island this year.

Please advise Commissioner Bennett. It is believed that the large rock which fell last spring is probably the deciding factor. North Star left Nome Saturday evening and is now at Mekoryuk.¹⁰²

To this day, however, a handful of members of the community venture to the island for the spring hunt and to maintain some of the houses that still stand.

¹⁰²From NE Superintendent McLean, to Area Director, October 3, 1966. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence. Housing Improvement Program Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Chapter Four

Why Was the School Closed?

Also, one of the big excuses the Bureau of Indian Affairs had for moving away from King Island was danger from rocks. They told the King Islanders, “There’s a big rock on the top of the village. Experts say it is going to come down any time and the school and some of the houses are in its path.” The rock is still up there. It never rolled down. The BIA tried to make all kinds of excuses for locking up the island. I do not know what the government is trying to do for Native people. A lot of times, I just reject the idea of the BIA.

– Paul Tiulana, in *A Place for Winter*¹⁰³

BIA officials gave a variety of reasons over time for their decision to close the King Island school. It appears the Bureau was not entirely honest with the King Island people about the reasons for the school closure – or its permanence. But how much of a danger did the rocks pose? And if the hazard posed by the rock formation was not sufficient justification for the decision, what other motivations may have prompted the Bureau to quit King Island?

A Clearcut Danger? The Rockslide Hazard

Bureau records indicate that the Area Plant Management Officer, William D. Featherstone, did visit King Island in March of 1959 – although no report from that visit has been found. The agency’s safety committee, initially at least, found the danger the rocks posed to be mitigated by the fact that school was not in session when the danger of a rock slide was greatest. Simply put, the rocks were frozen in place during the school year. Why then, did the Bureau

¹⁰³Tiulana, 39.

change its mind in September of 1959? Why did the Bureau decide against further inquiry into the situation?

It is curious that until 1959, there is little mention in correspondence or teacher reports to Juneau of the rock formation as a danger. The only mention of the rock slide came in 1935, when King Island Chief Charles Olaranna had written Juneau, protesting teacher Arthur Nagozruk's refusal to let them build homes close to the school.

Nagozruk was not being arbitrary, but enforcing Bureau policy. The federal government customarily would withdraw land for school sites. In 1931, Nagozruk had written his superiors to find out what the boundaries of the reserved lands were. He was told the reservation should extend from the landing place where materials for the school were unloaded, and include the house next to the end of the building. It would then extend as close to the houses on the other end and as far back up the hill "as necessary to prevent buildings being located where materials thrown from them would come down on the school house."¹⁰⁴

Olaranna said that the reason why the villagers wished to construct homes on the school reserve was they needed home sites that would not be threatened by the rocks above the village:

But now here is the crux of the situation. We have no place where to build but on the school reservation; and the school teacher objects to it. All the other places are dangerous, on account of the avalanches or the rocks falling from the top. We cannot build nearer the creek. Two people were killed for being too near it. That is enough. Towards the creek, every spring, stones rolling from the top smash everything on their passage.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴L.E. Robinson, Superintendent, Nome, AK, to Arthur Nagozruk, Teacher, King Island, AK, July 10, 1931. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹⁰⁵Chief John Olaranna, King Island, AK, as dictated to Father Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J., to Charles Hawkesworth, Acting Director of Education, Juneau, AK, July 11, 1935. Special King Island Collection,

Olaranna's request made its way to Washington, D.C., and later that summer, BIA Commissioner John Collier agreed, instructing the Juneau Office to allow the villagers to build on the school reservation.¹⁰⁶ Nagozruk, Collier wrote, would be transferred to Nunivak Island, as Juneau had recommended.

Thus, for safety reasons, the King Islanders were allowed to build in a location that would later be deemed too unsafe for the school to operate. In fact, several of the homes would have been hit first, placed as they were above and around the school.

No more records from the BIA Safety Committee's visit to King Island in March 1959 have been found, other than the letter recommending that school not be held in times of thawing. However, in 1965, the Bureau sent geologists David Hopkins and Robert M. Chapman to the island to assess the rock slide hazard. At that time, the Bureau was considering the reestablishment of the school and the possibility of constructing a small landing strip on the top of the island. It also had been directed to consider alternative village sites on the island and the stability of existing structures. Three BIA representatives accompanied Hopkins and Chapman on the trip. Afterward, they consulted with mining engineers and a local airline owner before preparing their report.

Hopkins concluded that rock falls capable of doing serious damage should be expected two or three times a century unless corrective measures were taken:

However, the rock-fall hazard can be reduced nearly 50 percent by identifying and removing hazardous rocks on the moderate slope above the village. The

Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹⁰⁶John Collier, BIA, Washington, D.C., to Charles W. Hawkesworth, Acting Director of Education, Juneau, AK, August 9, 1935. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

possibility of mass movement on the slope make it desirable that any new structures in the village be located in places where the debris slope is not being undercut and oversteepened by waves. However, the hazard is not great enough to justify condemnation of the school building.¹⁰⁷

As for an airstrip, Hopkins concluded that one could be built on top of the island, although it could not be used during summer months. (This would not pose a problem, as the King Islanders were on the mainland at the time.) All that would be necessary would be to airlift a small tractor to the upland surface. The tractor could move aside the boulders on top of the island, the rest could be removed with explosives, and the tractor could be used to smooth and grade the area. Fill and surface material would have to be brought in, or a rock crusher set up. The prevailing winds would make it a “difficult” airstrip, but still one that would be usable from early October until May. Hopkins’ conclusions meant, theoretically, an end to King Island’s extreme isolation. [Figure 6.]

As of 2003, King Islanders who have returned to the island report that no rocks have yet hit the school. Instead, the school, like the other abandoned buildings, is slowly succumbing to the elements.

Difficult and Expensive

There is no doubt that the King Island school was expensive and remote – even by Alaskan standards. The island was lucky to get one delivery of mail per winter, the delivery accomplished by dropping it from a plane. The word “difficult” recurred frequently in Bureau discussions of the site. In 1935, BIA Commissioner John Collier wrote:

¹⁰⁷David M. Hopkins and R.M. Chapman. “Engineering Geological Problems on King Island, Alaska.” Technical Letter, King Island-1, January 4, 1966.

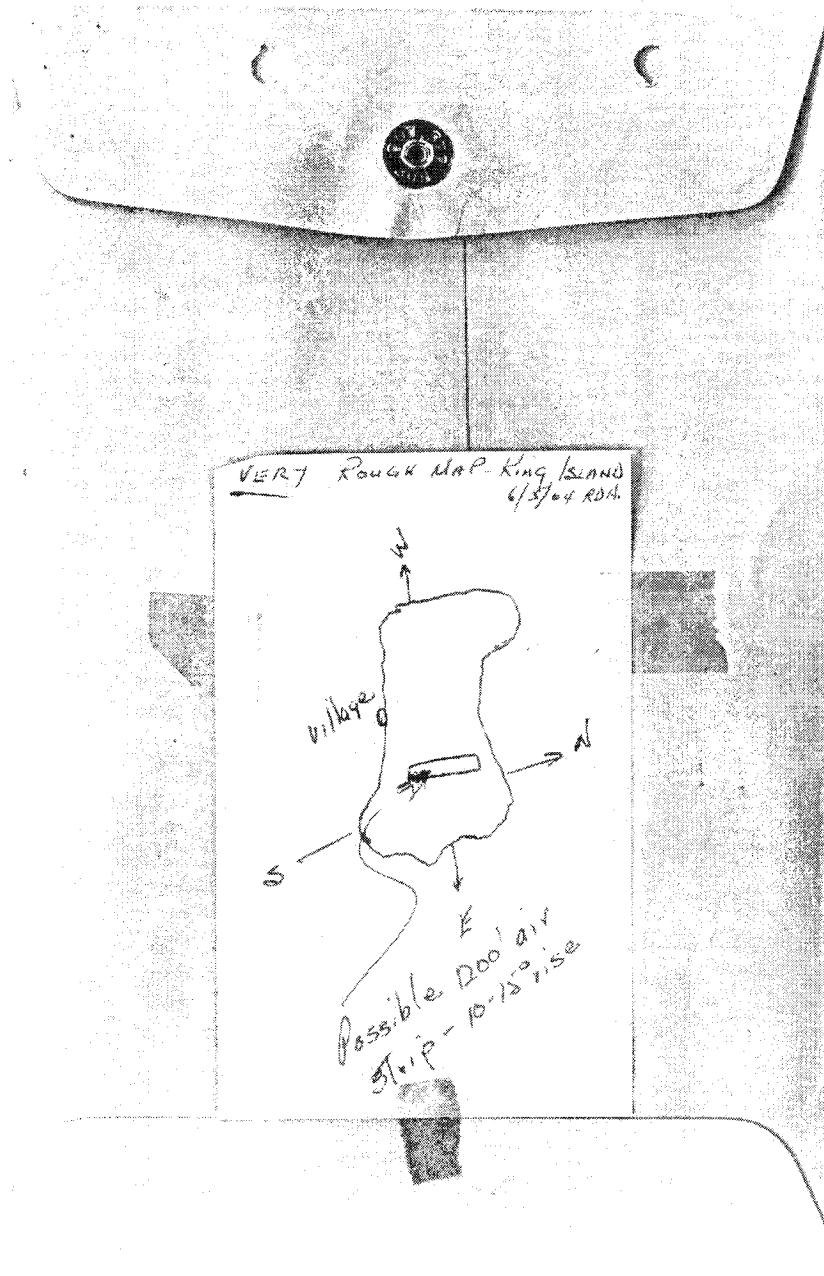


Figure 6. A sketch drawn by David Hopkins for a possible airstrip on top of King Island. Such a project would have reduced King Island's isolation. Found in the King Island file in the BIA's inactive Housing Improvement Program files. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

In view of the extreme isolation and undesirable features in connection with appointments to this station, it may not be possible for us to find white people who will accept appointment. In such it will be probably necessary for your office to make temporary appointment of qualified teachers already in Alaska, if it should prove possible for you to secure them.¹⁰⁸

Summing up his October 1950 site visit, the first that Bureau personnel had made in the ten years of record, Education Specialist Martin N. S. Holm called the King Island school “perhaps the one of the most unique schools in the Indian Service, if not the entire United States.”¹⁰⁹ Teaching there, Holm wrote, was tough and a most thorough screening of potential teachers was necessary, more than at any other station.

Teaching and living at King Island is difficult. Everything presents obstacles. Cramped room makes it difficult – even for the storage of petroleum barrels. Getting supplies up is difficult, getting water. There is no mail that comes in or out for eight months, no one leaves or comes to the island for the same length of time. The best our employees can do is a great deal, and has to be adequate. I think we are fortunate this year in having two teachers willing to return for a second year, as the usual has been to spend one year on the Island, then leave for some other station.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸John Collier, BIA Commissioner, Washington D.C., to Charles W. Hawkesworth, Acting Director of Education, Juneau, AK. August 9, 1935. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹⁰⁹Martin N.S. Holm, BIA Education Specialist, to Max Penrod, Area Educationalist, “Supervisory Visit, King Island, October 4 and 5, 1951.” Records of the BIA, JAO. General Subject Correspondence 1933-63. File: 056, Reports of Field Trips [1.2] Education, June 1, 1948 to December 31, 1950. [April 24, 1950 to Nov. 24, 1950. RG 75, Box 12, 04/01/13/(1). NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

One year after the school closure, Area Director James E. Hawkins attributed the decision in part to the island's remoteness. "I am sure you know that we discontinued the school on King Island last year due to its inaccessibility and a hazard from rolling rocks."¹¹¹

The practice at the island school was to hold school for one-half of the students in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon. This split was dictated by the fact that the number of children at that time, between 45 and 50, could not fit into the school room all at once. (The Bureau later came up with plans to create more space for students, but these were not acted upon before the school was closed.) Younger ones attended class in the afternoon, when older students would be needed by their families to help with meat brought in by the men.

Due to the labor involved in getting food, it is the job, and necessarily so, of the older students to help skin the seal and bring them up the hillside in the late afternoon, since the men continue hunting, and this also would interfere with a full day of school for the older students. I couldn't get around this situation, as the elementary fact exists that food is an absolute essential, and getting food at King Island is a difficult proposition.¹¹²

Holm said that it was "almost incredible"(sic) that a school was operated at the island.

Area Education Director Max Penrod voiced similar concerns when justifying the Bureau's reticence to reopen the school in 1960.

The school at King Island has been a difficult station for recruitment of teachers who would be willing to stay in almost complete isolation for eight to ten months

¹¹¹Juneau Area Director James E. Hawkins, JAO, to Deputy Commissioner Rex Lee, Washington, D.C., October 26, 1960. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence. Housing Improvement Program Files (Mission Correspondence: HIP) 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹¹²Ibid.

of the year. It has also been moneywise (sic) an expensive station to operate.¹¹³

Freight rates to King Island were higher than some locations in Alaska, it is true, but it was not the most expensive location to send goods. In 1945, it cost \$40.73 per ton to ship goods to King Island on the *North Star*.¹¹⁴ By comparison, the cost of freight to other villages in the Nome region ranged from \$21.44 per ton to Shishmaref up to \$64.69 per ton for Koyuk. Most locations fell in the middle, between \$25 and \$35 per ton. Rates to some other locations elsewhere in the territory could go above \$100 per ton.

The relative cost of getting goods to King Island may have mattered less than the budget crunch that the Juneau office was facing in 1959. Bureau schools were already overcrowded, Alaska's Native population was increasing, and costs were rising. In an era before fax machines and Internet service, requisitions needed to be prepared two years in advance.

The Nome Area Field Office was administering 24 day schools within an immense area that included the St. Lawrence, King, and Little Diomed Islands, and was bounded by the villages of Point Hope, Shungnak, Koyuk, Unalakleet, St. Michael and Stebbins.¹¹⁵ In the Branch of Education's monthly report for March, the author commented on the 1961 preliminary budget. "Several disturbing facts will have to be faced in this planning, mainly the skyrocketing costs for transportation and freight, higher costs for supplies and equipment and the ever-present enrollment increases."¹¹⁶ She added, "Any semblance of a stable organization in our area seems

¹¹³Max W. Penrod, Area Director of Schools, to Area Director James E. Hawkins, Subject: King Island School, August 30, 1960. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹¹⁴RG75, Box 9, 04/01/12. Records of the BIA, JAO. Gen. Subject Correspondence. 032.5-036.0. File: 032.60 North Star Freight [2.2] 1950 [May 7, 1946 to December 30, 1950]. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹¹⁵Classification Report, Nome Area Field Office. Louise Sargent, Area Classification Officer, July 9, 1958. RG 75, Box 0223, 05/04/09 (3). Records of the BIA, JAO. Social Services Administration Files, 1940-65, Social Welfare, Miscellaneous, 1935-49 Field Reports, 1945-58, File: Field Reports 1950-51-1958. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹¹⁶Monthly Report, March, 1959, Branch of Education. RG 75, Box 264, 04/08/11. Records of the BIA,

to be still in the future – we are always faced with an impending reorganization.”

Later in 1959, Nome Education Specialist Warren Tiffany issued a memorandum titled “Financial Distress and Attached Form.”

More children and classrooms divided by same amount of money = ? If you follow this more complex story problem, you will have a clue to the financial condition which appears to face the Branch of Education for the coming year. The situation is actually quite serious. It will take a great deal of cooperative effort on the part of everyone to hold down expenditures and insure the continued operation of the present program in the Juneau Area. To those of you who have been with us in Alaska for a few years, it will come as no surprise when I say that most of our money is going to salaries and freight costs although they may not have noticed the phenomenal rise in the consumption of petroleum products which has occurred over the last ten years. These things coupled with expanded enrollments help to explain the tripling of the operating budget in less than ten years.¹¹⁷

While there is no evidence that definitely proves the King Island school was shut down to save the Bureau \$30,000, there is no question that the Bureau was looking to cut costs. The only specific link found between the school closure and the Alaska Division’s budget crunch comes in a letter dated February 4, 1960.

The savings effected by closing the King Island school (salaries only, as supplies

JAO. Education Program Decimal Files 1936-1965, 806.1 (Individual Station Correspondence) Misc. File: 806.1 #8 Miscellaneous School Correspondence (1/1/59 to 6/30/59.) NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹¹⁷Warren Tiffany, Educational Specialist, Nome, AK to Principals and Principal Teachers, BIA, Nome District, October 1, 1959. RG 75, Box 252, 04/08/10. Records of the BIA, JAO Education Program Decimal Files, 1935-68. 806.1 (AFO Correspondence) Nome. File: 806.1 Nome AFO 1959-1960 [282] NARA, Anchorage, AK.

were ordered before it was determined to close the school this year) have been reprogrammed to meet other needs some time ago. One such need, for example, was to meet a 31 cents per hour wage increase for all school janitors which was effected in November.¹¹⁸

The role that cost-cutting played in the decision to close the King Island school is a matter for speculation. However, it is safe to say that once the money went elsewhere in the budget, the odds of it returning to the King Island school decreased. And one could reason, too, that the combination of expense and inconvenience made the odds even longer.

The BIA's Decision in Context

Whatever the specific reasons why the Bureau chose to quit operating a school at the island, it is instructive to pay attention to the greater forces at work within the BIA on the national level in 1959. A strong argument can be made that the decision to close the school and to later discourage the King Islanders from returning to the island are not isolated events, but instead consistent with the attitudes and policies in place in the BIA in that era.

Recent Federal Indian Policy in brief: The Indian New Deal, Termination, Self-Determination

Historians of 20th century federal Indian policy divide the century into several eras, but the most attention has been paid to the reforms begun under the commissionership of John Collier. (The century could be more simply divided into pre-Collier, Collier-era, and post-Collier, because all share the philosophical legacy of Collier.) Typically, 20th century Indian policy is divided into three eras:

¹¹⁸Area Director James E. Hawkins, Juneau, AK, to Commissioner, BIA, Washington, D.C., February 4, 1960. RG 75, Box 57, 04/07/13. Records of the BIA, JAO Mission Correspondence Education, 1912-1977. File: 806.5 Nome (Requests for Federal Assistance.) NARA, Anchorage, Alaska.

* The Indian New Deal, 1934-45. The era coincides with the time Collier held the position of Commissioner. It began with the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934 also known as the Indian Reorganization Act, which was extended to Alaska Natives in 1936. Collier pushed the legislation through Congress, though many of the reforms he proposed were stripped from the final bill passed by a largely hostile Congress. Historians disagree, but Collier is generally viewed as an anti-assimilationist, pro-tribal administrator. Originally, the IRA was to have officially repealed allotment, consolidated Indian land holdings, and established tribal courts. The most significant aspect of the IRA was its provision for the creation of Indian tribal governments with constitutions that would have standing in the eyes of the U.S. government and increased eligibility for federal aid and loans. These tribal governments would also have some control over their own funds.

* The Termination Era, 1945-1960. Historians disagree both about when this period begins and when it ends. Some consider it to have begun with Collier's resignation, but others date its official start with the passage of Utah Senator Alan Watkins' "Indian Freedom Act" of 1953, otherwise known as House Concurrent Resolution 108. Congress passed other bills speeding termination of specific tribes. Another significant bill of the period was Public Law 280, passed a few days after HCR 108, which gave states the right to extend their civil and criminal law over Indian reservations.

*Momentum built against Collier's pro-tribal reforms after World War II. The word termination refers to the intended dismantling of the reservation system, the programs and services that supported it, and the bureaucracy that administered it. Terminated tribes lost "trust" status and had to start paying taxes. It is hard to find any examples of favorable assessments of this policy. Many historians note the link between those who supported ending the federal

relationship with tribes and those interested in the minerals and other resources on Indian lands. One of the first tribes terminated, the Klamaths of Oregon, lived on lands desired for a large-scale dam and reservoir project favored by Watkins.

*Many historians reckon the end of the Termination era with the election of President John Kennedy. Others see no real difference in the actions of the Bureau and place the end of the era in 1970, when President Richard Nixon officially repealed it and announced a new era of “self-determination.”

* The Self-Determination Era, 1960 - 1980.¹¹⁹ This era, no matter when one places its birth, is characterized by the rise of national pan-Indian organizations that begin acting on behalf of all Native Americans. The groups exert an increasing influence on legislation and policies that affect their members. Too many important pieces of legislation passed in these decades to list, but the most important include the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the Menominee Restoration, the Indian Financing Act, the 1973 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, the 1975 Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, and the Indian Child Welfare Act. The bulk of this legislation was concerned with economic development, civil rights, and tribal government.

A Thematic Historiography of 20th Century Indian Policy

A constant in American thinking about the “Indian problem,” often posited as the only alternative to racial extinction, assimilation dominated policy in the years after the Civil War. A vigorous attack on its assumptions through the 1920s shaped the Indian New Deal in the next decade, but assimilation was back in

¹¹⁹Some would argue that Ronald Reagan’s “New Federalism”, which basically ended federal programs by cutting their funding, signaled a return to the Termination Era. The official term for this was “abrogation.” For more on Reagan’s New Federalism, see C. Patrick Morris, “Termination By Accountants.”

vogue in the wake of World War II. By the 1960s it was out of favor again but it still constitutes a major ideological position in policy debate as one of the poles implied by the current catch-phrase “self-determination.” Indians should be free to choose whether to live outside or inside white society, to remain distinctive, in short, or to assimilate. Not surprisingly, the issue of assimilation looms large in most studies of the American Indian.¹²⁰

The academic discourse about 20th century Indian policy has shifted over time.

Historians have tended to interpret Indian policy in the post-Collier era from several broad perspectives, best called tensions, though with considerable variation in their critiques.¹²¹ An overwhelming majority of the work done identifies a policy swing between assimilation and its opposite, which seems to support cultural pluralism, as key to understanding federal policy. AS one of the preeminent scholars of federal policy, Vine Deloria, Jr. writes:

Over the past century a definite pattern has developed with respect to the identification and enforcement of Indian rights. The Congress conceives a grandiose scheme for assimilating Indians into the American social and economic mainstream or, repentant for the miscarriage of justice on a previous occasion, it takes steps to guarantee the viability of the American Indian cultures and communities. Congress, does not, however, provide specific guidance for the

¹²⁰Brian Dippie. “‘Only One Truth’: Assimilation and the American Indian.” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1985): 31.

¹²¹There is a vast amount of literature written about 20th Century Indian policy, so much so that making generalizations is difficult at best. A good starting point to get acquainted with the field are the works of Vine Deloria and Father Francis Paul Prucha, S.J.: Deloria’s *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century* and his many articles; Prucha’s articles, along with *United States Indian Policy: A Critical Bibliography* and the second volume of *The Great White Father*. Other works I found valuable include: Angie Debo’s *A History of the Indians of the United States*, Brian Dippie’s *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, virtually everything on the topic by Darcy McNickle, and Edward Spicer’s *A Short History of the Indians of the United States*.

executive branch and consequently the administration of programs continues to reflect an anti-Indian bias which has characterized the administrative attitude from the very beginning of the Republic.¹²²

Another school of thought focuses on the relationship between the U.S. government and tribes, seeing a struggle between federal paternalism and Native American self-determination. Writing about the end of the Termination Era, Annette Jaimes argued that paternalism did not end with the election of John Kennedy:

The gist of his federal Indian policy, via key players Stewart Udall, Philleo Nash, and James Officer, among others was to get American Indians into the Euroamerican mainstream even at the expense of their cultural preservation of traditional norms and practices. This is not to say this was actually Kennedy's well-thought intentions, but that every policy revised, initiated or implemented by his Indian bureaucrats still maintained the status quo and the "WASP with a Catholic mentality" that non-Indians know what's good for Indians in all areas of the latter's affairs.¹²³

The charges of federal paternalism even surface in regard to the era called Self-Determination. Edmund Danziger offered a mixed verdict on the real changes effected by the Indian Self-Determination Act. Despite the optimism accompanying its passage, the BIA tied tribal contracts to its own failed priorities, and a truly extraordinary bureaucracy undercut tribal control of the contracting process. He quotes former Kawerak Inc. Executive Vice President Charles Johnson:

¹²²Vine Deloria Jr., "Government by Default." *Revue Francaise d'Etudes Americaines*. 1988, 13(38): 325.

¹²³Annette Jaimes. "THE HOLLOW ICON: An American Indian Analysis of the Kennedy Myth and Federal Indian Policy." *Wicazo Sa Review* 6 (1990): 41.

The BIA determines what services are to be delivered regardless of the needs identified by the Native people of our region. Last year a survey of 46 village parents identified bilingual education as a high priority for village schools yet this was dismissed by the agency superintendent since it was not identified as a priority by the BIA.¹²⁴

Some historians concentrate on a variant of the paternalism vs. self-determination model, one that hinges upon the federal government's waffling between continuing its special relationship with tribes and attempting to withdraw from that relationship.

A few historians have approached Indian policy on an entirely different footing. These authors have tried to incorporate U.S. policy into a wider scope of worldwide relationships between Western powers and indigenous peoples. Rather than approaching U.S. Indian policy as a unique response, they see it as a typical experience between a colonial power and conquered peoples.

Assessments of U.S. Indian policy have shifted from focusing mainly on the intent of the framers of that policy (Congress and the BIA) to include the input and response of tribes to those policies. The reasons for this approach are well-expressed by Edward Spicer in *A Short History of Indian Policy*.¹²⁵ Spicer observes that historians have often operated under the illusion that Indian societies are vanishing.

One finds example of all these themes in the relationship between the BIA and the King Island community.

¹²⁴Edmund J. Danziger. "A New Beginning or the Last Hurrah; American Indian Response to Reform Legislation of the 1970s." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 7 (1983): 69-84.

¹²⁵See Spicer, Edward. *A Short History of the Indians of the United States*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1969, 3. Spicer notes, with characteristic dry wit, that because few of the policies conceived by the non-Natives have had their intended consequences, perhaps, other historical factors must be taken into account.

BIA Policy and King Island

1959, the year the BIA shut down the school at the island, falls within the twilight years of termination as official Bureau policy. However, the decision to close the school and later attempts to discourage the King Islanders from leaving Nome fit in well with the general goals of the termination era, and the themes historians have identified as running through 20th century policy.

Termination is widely understood by historians of U.S. Indian policy as a reactionary response to the more progressive approach the BIA had taken under the leadership of John Collier. If the policy pendulum under Collier had swung away from forced assimilation and the parceling up of communal lands, with termination the pendulum swung back towards attempts to move Natives away from their rural communities where they could retain their culture, language, and lifestyle. Terminationists within Congress and the Bureau felt the assimilation of Native Americans to be a foregone conclusion, and the correct pursuit for the BIA. Termination was also about saving money. Ultimately, it was believed, the BIA would cease to have a purpose and be eliminated altogether.

This eventuality was on the minds of Alaska Native Service employees in 1949. In a letter to King Island school teacher Philip Viereck, Don Foster admonished Viereck to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of the ANS was to educate the Natives of Alaska to become self-sufficient. As such, Viereck should make an effort to educate his charges to perform many of the duties associated with the Native store:

We should operate on the premise that within a few years the Alaska Native Service will be liquidated, and in the meantime the Natives of Alaska must be developed to the point where they will be able to take over full control of their

own activities – so that they can hold their own in competition with the whites and live satisfying, productive, healthful lives under their own initiative and leadership, with minimum Government interference.¹²⁶

The Bureau's relocation program embodied the ideology of the Terminationists. The term 'relocation' is misleading, for the BIA program did not try to move entire communities from one location to another. Instead, relocation focused on individuals and single families, with the goal of integrating tribal people into the American cultural and economic mainstream. The key to accomplishing this, terminationists believed, was to get them off reservations and out of rural villages into large urban areas where they could get full-time wage work. It was not uncommon for Alaskan Natives opting for the Bureau's Relocation program to go from rural Alaska to major cities like Chicago and San Diego. Several King Islanders took advantage of the relocation program in the 1950s, as anthropologist Deanna Kingston, herself a King Islander, noted:

Although Bogojavlensky does not mention this, the population drain of the King Island community also occurred because of the Indian Relocation Act. Under this act, several young individuals and sometimes families relocated to Oakland, California in the 1950s. For instance, uncle *AaluGuq* lived there from 1961 to the spring of 1962 and, when viewing Father Hubbard's film, he mentioned how he and two other young King Island men took a week-end trip to visit Father Bernard Hubbard at Santa Clara, California. In addition, *Tasraq* and his former wife, *Tanaqiq*, brought their young family to Oakland where they lived for eight years.¹²⁷

¹²⁶Don C. Foster, General Superintendent, Nome, AK, to Philip T. Viereck, King Island teacher, August 5, 1949. Records of the BIA, RG 75, Box 91, JAO, Alaska General Subject Correspondence 1933-1963, 997.4, File: 997.4 King Island Native Store Jan. 1949. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹²⁷Kingston, 186. One woman, who I interviewed, said that her family returned from relocation to find that

The relocation program has since been thoroughly discredited by its critics. Speaking in 1964, BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash said that relocation had not solved the basic problems of poverty:

For nearly fifteen years we have had a program of helping those who wish to make this move. But as long as relocation was merely a program to transport people from one pocket of poverty to another, little was accomplished and the return to reservations was about as frequent as the permanent relocations. Not everyone likes city – not everyone is suited to it.¹²⁸

Part of the problem was that most people who were convinced to relocate were in no way prepared to live in the environment in which they were placed. Alaska State Representative Robert Blodgett, from Teller, blasted the program in a 1963 article in the *Tundra Times*:

Why does the BIA have to relocate our people?" he asked. "In my way of thinking, this is tacit admission that the BIA has failed to properly educate the people. Or to prepare the people to live in their own area. So what do they do? They relocate the native people to the lower 48, where the problems are worse. It also robs the villages of fine young leaders. The BIA milks off our fine people, and then replaces them with non-native experts from the lower states."¹²⁹

By any other than Alaskan standards, Nome was certainly not a large urban area. But as the regional center for more than 15 villages, it did hold more opportunity for year-round full-

the entire village now lived at Nome's East End.

¹²⁸Excerpt from a speech made by Nash at the Abraham Lincoln Center, Chicago, IL, February 12, 1964. Reprinted in the *Tundra Times*. "Nash 'War on Poverty.'" March 23, 1964.

¹²⁹*The Tundra Times*. "Rep. Blodgett Favors GVEA at Barrow While Criticizing BIA in 49th State." December 2, 1963. Blodgett, however, was in favor of the Rampart Dam, and said in the same article that a ten year delay on the Rampart Dam project would give the state plenty of time to plan for new villages on the shores of the lake that would have displaced them.

time employment. By its nature, full-time wage work means a reduction in subsistence activity. Hunting and gathering is a full-time job in its own right. Certainly, the King Islanders' isolation for most of the year contributed to their retention of their language and their adherence to a mixed-wage but predominately subsistence lifestyle. The move to Nome sped up the process of acculturation, and the adjustment was not to be an easy one.

The implications of the King Islanders remaining in Nome year-round were not lost upon BIA personnel:

As concerned as we were over closing the village school, it could appear in another sense that this may have been a blessing in disguise. For generations past, the people of King Island upon returning home segregate themselves from the rank and file for a good portion of each year. This has become a deterrent to the encouragement of the people to integrate and take a more progressive part in the economic and social structure of this area. The fact that the children were forced to remain at Nome to attend school on the mainland may hasten their integration with the population of the area.¹³⁰

The paternalism that many scholars have written about would also seem to be present in the case of the King Islanders. Little attention seems to have been paid to what they as a community wanted. This was a time when the BIA made decisions and announced them – and sometimes did not even announce them. In 1952, Delegate E.L. Bartlett drew the ire of Alaska Native Service officials for leaking the proposed closure of the White Mountain school to the regions inhabitants.¹³¹ In much of the Bureau correspondence examined, employees often

¹³⁰Max Penrod, Area Director of Schools, Area Director of Schools, to Area Director James E. Hawkins, Subject: King Island School, August 30, 1960. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹³¹“The proposed closure of the White Mountain School by the Alaska Native Service next year is a sore

discussed what would be best in their opinion for the King Islanders. When the King Islanders sought to move to Cape Woolley in the early 1960s, the Bureau seems to have based their decision ultimately not on what the King Islanders themselves said. Instead the BIA contracted with Frances Ross, a researcher who had worked with the villagers before to determine what the BIA should do. The Bureau provided her with a list of questions directing her research, asking her to make judgements about what action the Bureau should take:

In a nutshell, we are interested in knowing whether there is something which we can and should be doing to help the King Island community survive – with reasonable standards of living for its members – whether on the island, in Nome, or at some other site. The community has roots in two locations at present. Would we be doing the King Islanders a favor by helping them to set down roots at still another spot? Could it be done without heavy initial and continuing subsidies? What alternatives exist?¹³²

King Island and ‘Relocations’ Elsewhere

By referring to the King Island experience as a relocation, there is the danger of confusing the school closure, an administrative action, with the Bureau policy of relocation, which focused on moving individuals to urban areas for perceived economic opportunities. Nor

point with Northwestern Alaskans. Apparently the closure was to have been kept secret from Seward Peninsula residents. Delegate E.L. Bartlett learned of the move and so advised the people of Nome. For this he was roundly criticized by A.N.S. officials. “Closure of the White Mountain school will necessitate the sending of children to Mount Edgecumbe, about 1500 miles distant.” Memorandum, Subject: Conditions in Northwestern Alaska which adversely affect its economy and further development, November 18, 1952, Ralph Brown, Assistant General Manager. RG 75, Box 8, BIA, JAO, Subject Correspondence 1934-56. 032.5 File: 032.5 Office of the Territories Alaska Development Board [Jan 10, 1950 to May 27, 1954.] NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹³²Associate Commissioner of Indian Affairs James E. Officer, Washington D.C. to Dr. Frances Ross, Seattle, WA, January 8, 1965. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

was the process by which the King Islanders ended up in Nome permanently a 'removal' in the sense that the Cherokee and other Native Americans in the Lower 48 were forced from their lands in the previous century. Alaskan Native lands were not desired for colonization, as much of the territory's lands were unsuitable for agriculture, and so warfare was not the default method of obtaining their lands.

The King Island experience can perhaps be better described as a diaspora – a dispersion of a people from their original homeland.¹³³ But *diaspora* lacks something as a term, however, in that it strips out the sense of cause and effect, of responsibility, for what happened to the group. To call the events in 1959 (and later) the "King Island diaspora" makes it sound very much like they just wandered away from their island home.

One of the recurring patterns in U.S. history has been the relocation of Native people from their homelands, in some cases by war, and in others by the federal bureaucracy. The King Islanders' experience with the BIA fits, to some degree, with other examples of governments dealing with aboriginal people in Alaska and elsewhere. One curious project involved Eskimos from the Seward Peninsula. In 1911, the Bureau transported 11 families and two single men to a new settlement at Point Moller, on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula.¹³⁴ It eventually built a school and sent a teacher there. The Point Moller experiment was one of several attempts by the Bureau of Education to lure Natives away from Seward Peninsula towns at the turn of the century.

The most famous example of relocation in Alaska is that of the Aleuts, who were evacuated from the islands west of Unimak in 1942. While the evacuations came about to protect

¹³³See the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition, 2000.
[Http://www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com).

¹³⁴See Duckler, 55.

them from the invading Japanese, unfortunately, the effort had disastrous effects upon the people. Prior to their removal to the camps, the federal government had exercised an extraordinary amount of control over the Aleuts – who were still working for federal wages at the onset of the war. This meant that their fates were in the hands of bureaucrats who already ran their lives and made decisions for them. The evacuations were poorly planned, despite prior knowledge that the Japanese would invade, and the conditions in the camp were brutal. Aleuts were evacuated to camps at Funter Bay, Killisnoo, Ward Cove, and Burnette Island, some 1500 miles away. There they were kept in wholly inadequate housing, abandoned canneries, with virtually no sanitation and little medical attention. Disease was rampant, and nearly 10 percent of those evacuated died. In 1943, the able-bodied men were removed from the camps to carry out the lucrative fur seal harvest in the Pribilofs, for the benefit of the federal coffers, while women and children languished in the camps for another year. Those who returned to their homes found them ransacked or destroyed by military personnel, and their Orthodox churches and homes looted. Their evacuation, wrote Ryan Madden, follows a familiar pattern in relations between the U.S. government and Native Americans. “The injustice done the Aleuts was not an isolated event but business as usual for the United States government in its relationships with Native Americans. The government assumed the role of protector and guardian, but ultimately its Indian policy was guided by convenience for the United States.”¹³⁵ In 1990, the Aleuts received \$12,000 each in compensation.

Had Project Rampart come to pass, seven Athabascan villages would have been submerged beneath a 10,000 square mile lake. Not surprisingly, residents of those villages joined with the Alaska Conservation Council in opposing the project. Dan O’Neill describes the

¹³⁵Ryan Madden. “The Forgotten People.” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 16 (1992) 58.

attitudes of the project's many boosters towards the concerns of the

Athabascans:

Critics pointed out that seven Athabascan villages would be drowned by the project. But that didn't amount to much of a loss, according to Sundborg. After all, he said, the whole area contained "not more than ten flush toilets." It was a novel way to quantify the value of a culture, but not out of character for the comparatively uncivilized boosters. When Rampart Dam proponents paid any attention at all to the 1,200 people whose homeland and livelihood would disappear, they sometimes did so with a degree of ethnocentrism not readily distinguishable from insult. Gruening didn't mind saying, for instance, that these people lived in "an area as worthless from the standpoint of human habitation as any that can be found on earth."¹³⁶

Not all community relocations in Alaska were involuntary. Many modern day villages sprung up as smaller nomadic or semi-nomadic groups settled in around schools and other facilities. Others villages moved voluntarily because of a depletion of resources, or because of natural disasters such as the Good Friday earthquake, and some split over internal disagreements. Cheneliak, Chenega, and Holikachuk moved in the 1950s. In 1965, four villages were in the process of moving: Afognak to Port Lions, Koliganek to "New" Koliganek, Nightmute to Toksook Bay, and Sleetmute to the village of Georgetown. Some 24 villages were contemplating moving at the time.¹³⁷ The difference between theirs and the King Island experience seems to be whether the move was desired by the village (or not.)

¹³⁶O'Neill, 271.

¹³⁷W.H. Davis, Acting Area Director, Juneau, to Senator Ernest Gruening, Washington D.C., Jan. 15. 1965. RG 75,(BIA) Box 8, 05/05/05(2) JAO, Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975, File 721 Relocation Policy. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

In 2002, the village of Diomedede held another referendum on the issue of moving to the mainland. The vote came out in favor of a move, however, in all likelihood the move will not happen any time soon. Such an action would be entirely dependent on the federal government for funds. Shishmaref, which sprang up around a BIA school located on a narrow barrier island, sought to move for over 30 years due to the continued erosion of the sandy bluff on which the village sits. Every year, fall storms eat away more of the coastline, and each year more homes have to be moved before they fall into the ocean. In 2003, the federal government finally approved funds to build a protective seawall at the current village site. Other villages in the Bering Strait region are considering relocating due to erosion, but such endeavors are costly – estimates to move Shishmaref to safety had approached \$30 million.

The Canadian government undertook the relocation of several aboriginal communities in the Eastern Arctic near Hudson Bay between 1939 and 1963. Ostensibly, the moves were about aiding people whose livelihood, the fur trade, had collapsed. The experiments in community-building coincided with the growth of the Canadian welfare state. Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski make a case in *Tammarnit (Mistakes)* that the moves were carried out for a combination of goals: relief, establishing Canadian sovereignty in the far North, and the “totalization,” read: assimilation, of the Inuit. The effects of the moves tended to be disastrous. People accustomed to hunting caribou went to areas where only marine mammals were available, and those accustomed to surviving on marine mammals went to places where they could not get them. There were famines at Garry and Baker Lake and other locations, and the destruction of traditional societal norms that followed relocations led to new social problems.

As their American counterparts have evaluated U.S. policy, Tester and Kulchyski work with the themes of assimilation and paternalism:

The changes that took place in the lives of the Inuit in the period in question can be understood in terms of ‘totalization.’ The state became a critical agent in the struggle to incorporate the Inuit into the dominant Canadian society. This was a struggle to totalize a social group that had previously remained marginal and largely outside the sphere of dominant social relations.¹³⁸

This system of totalization, the authors posit, is a dynamic that has come to dominate the globe.¹³⁹ For a time, Canadian bureaucrats behaved much as did BIA employees, making decisions with far-reaching implications for communities without any input from the people to be affected. Wrote Tester and Kulchynski:

An era of neglect within the space of a few short years lead to an era of massive control. The importance of asking the Inuit people affected by decisions what they thought of them did not occur to planners for a long, long time, and then, when it did, they asked in a half-hearted and confused fashion. People were moved. And moved again to solve the problems that moving them had created. And split up and moved again. And some were taken south.¹⁴⁰

A Pattern of Thought, 1908-1959

Whatever the motivations of Bureau personnel, and the larger forces at work in 1959, there is some evidence that the origins of the closure of the school may go back to the early days of Nome itself, when the federal government was just beginning to administer services to Alaskan

¹³⁸Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchynski. *Tammarniit (Mistakes)* UBC Press: Vancouver, 1994, 4.

¹³⁹“This always contested historical process begins with the development of capitalism in Europe – a process that set in motion the dynamic of capitalist expansion,” they write. “Much of what is observed in this book closely parallels present-day attempts to bring indigenous and local cultures around the world into a web of international capitalist relations.” Tester and Kulchynski, 5.

¹⁴⁰Tester and Kulchynski, 360.

Natives. A survey of Bureau correspondence reveals that enticing or moving the King Islanders to the mainland was not a new idea in 1959 – it had been a constant in Bureau thought about the community since the beginning.

The idea to move the King Islanders to the mainland first cropped up in 1908. Dorothy Jean Ray found just those sentiments in letters between the Board of Education and the administration of the Methodist Sinuk Mission, which was located some 40 miles west up the coastline from Nome. The mission and government school at Sinuk were to be places where Eskimos from smaller villages around the region would acquire American customs and Christianity, but more importantly, be kept from the evils of Nome. With encouragement from the Bureau of Education, mission organizers had planned from the beginning to attract the King and Diomed Islands to resettle there – but they met with little success. It did not help that the Natives personally disliked the mission superintendent Milo Sellon. Ray writes that cultural misunderstandings were at the heart of why the King Islanders could not be enticed to Sinuk. Contrary to the beliefs of the missionaries and the Bureau, the King Islanders did not want to leave their island:

The missionaries had misinterpreted the islanders' seasonal travels to the mainland as dissatisfaction with their homeland. On the contrary, the King Islanders loved their precipitous island where there were excellent walrus, seal, and bird hunting, and they would cling to it as long as they could.¹⁴¹

Ray's point has further relevance beyond the Sinuk Mission's failed attempts to lure the islanders to the mainland early in the century. Over and over again, outsiders who saw King

¹⁴¹Dorothy Jean Ray. "The Sinuk Mission: Experiment in Eskimo Relocation and Acculturation." *Alaska History* 1 (1984): 27-43. This was one of several cultural misunderstandings on the part of the missionaries, including not being aware that the Sinuk area was not territory the King Islanders had traditionally used on the mainland. Doing so would have been considered intrusion.

Island would describe it in terms of barrenness and isolation, marveling that anyone could and would live there – or operate a school there. Time and again, someone would decide that maybe it would be better for the King Islanders to live elsewhere.

The Bureau of Education proposed a different move in the mid-1920s. Instead of the mainland, they would be moved to the larger, flatter St. Lawrence Island to the south. The BIA sweetened the deal with an offer to give them two years free provisions and the chance to get into reindeer herding.¹⁴² It should be noted that St. Lawrence Island was already the territory of two villages of Siberian Yupik people, Gambell and Savoonga. The King Islanders and the St. Lawrence Islanders spoke wholly different languages and had significantly different cultures. The plan was “immediately and categorically”¹⁴³ rejected by the King Islanders.

Even Father LaFortune toyed with the idea of moving them at one time, considering both Sledge Island and Cape Woolley.

School teacher Howard Cameron wrote Juneau in October 1939 to tell his superiors that the island would not be a good place to create a reservation,¹⁴⁴ but observed “if the Natives could be induced to move to Cape Woolley, then something could be done toward building a well planned village with adequate government reserve.” The subject of moving the villagers to the mainland appears to have been broached again by the Alaska Native Service in 1940. Cameron reported that the village council had discussed the idea and rejected it. “It was unusually interesting to note that these people in spite of their peculiar land limitations rejected the the (sic)

¹⁴²Louis L. Renner, S.J., *Pioneer Missionary to the Bering Strait Eskimos: Bellarmine LaFortune, S.J.*, 127.

¹⁴³Louis L. Renner. “Charles Olaranna: Chief of the King Islanders.” *The Alaska Journal*, (Spring 1983): 17.

¹⁴⁴When the Indian Reorganization Act was extended to Alaska in 1936, it provided for the establishment of reservations as existed in the Lower 48. Resistance to reservations was widespread, and only six were established in Alaska. Howard Cameron, to Mr. Claude M. Hirst, General Superintendent, Juneau, AK, Oct. 15, 1939. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

proposal of acquiring a reservation on the mainland,” Cameron observed.¹⁴⁵

In 1945, the Bureau had considered moving the King Islanders to the mouth of the Egavik River, approximately 200 miles southeast, midway along the coast between the villages of Shaktoolik and Unalakleet. Acting General Superintendent Fred Geeslin advised the Nome office that there had been discussion during the past several years over the question of whether the King Islanders should be moved to the mainland.¹⁴⁶

“Mr. Rood was in today making final plans for proceeding on leave tomorrow as discussed with you. I inquired of him what more suitable location for the King Island people he knew. Mr. Rood advises that Egavik is an ideal location for an Eskimo village. About 20 Eskimos reside there now,” Geeslin wrote. Geeslin extolled the many virtues of the location, including the plentiful salmon and migratory birds, and the possibility for raising vegetables. Nearby Besboro Island had an abundance of spotted seals, but the hunting would not have been as good as that at King Island, and the walrus supply was “meager.” Geeslin noted that the lack of availability of walrus ivory might cause the King Islanders to look upon the location with disfavor – but that they might be able to get ivory from other Bering Strait villages. (Geeslin, of course, was either ignorant of or overlooking the more serious loss that poor walrus hunting would bring: a reduction in the number of the hides available for skinboats.) Moreover, he observed, Reindeer Service buildings could be put to use by the relocated villagers, although there were not enough buildings for the entire population.

Previously, we understand, Father LaFortune and a majority of the King

¹⁴⁵Howard Cameron, King Island school teacher, letter to Donald W. Hagerty, Senior Field Agent, U.S. Dept. of Interior Office of Indian Affairs, Field Service, Juneau, AK, April 2, 1940. Records of the BIA, JAO, General Subject Correspondence, 1933-63. Box 16, 04/01/12, File: 064, King Island – Minutes of Meetings 1939-1941. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁴⁶Acting Superintendent Fred Geeslin, Juneau, AK, to Don Foster, Nome, July 25, 1945. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

Islanders have opposed this idea, although a number of King Island Natives have settled at Nome during the summer season to carve and market ivory. Some correspondence at hand indicates sentiment has changed due to a slippage of rock on the slope upon which the village is situated, the unsafe character of the surface drainage as a water supply, the risk of fire sweeping through the flimsy structures upon the steep slope during the winter while the people are entirely isolated, the extreme danger of fatal sickness during their isolation and for other reasons.¹⁴⁷

Geeslin said there was “some indication” that the King Islanders were proposing to establish themselves at Cape Woolley. He added, “It may be you will desire to ascertain from the King Island people what their wishes are in the matter.”

Foster responded to Geeslin in August 1945. “I talked this matter over with the Tates who have been our teachers on King Island the past two years. They recommend against any move. This whole question was news when you brought it to my attention.”¹⁴⁸ The question of a move to the mainland resurfaced a few years later. In a June 1947 letter to Juneau, King Island teacher Jens Forshaug wrote, “I also asked what their opinion was about the subject of moving the village to the mainland. This brought more serious talk. I will write more on both subjects.”¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, no further correspondence from Forshaug on the subject has been found.

Later Bureau documents also indicate that the Bureau had frequently discussed moving the village to the mainland. In 1961, when the village was split between those at Nome and those

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Don C. Foster, Nome, to Fred Geeslin, Juneau, Aug. 21, 1945. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

¹⁴⁹Jens Forshaug, ANS teacher, King Island, to General Superintendent ANS, Juneau, AK, June 17, 1947. Special King Island Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

still wintering at the island, Bureau Finance Specialist Winfield Ervin wrote Juneau regarding a possible relocation to Cape Woolley:

Mr. Robert Grant, Area Field Representative at Nome and myself have discussed many times the possibility of the King Islanders moving to the mainland. This, I am sure has been discussed many times by yourself and others in the department. If the King Islanders were to make such a move, it would save us many thousands of dollars. Also, it would improve their living conditions a great deal.¹⁵⁰

Clearly, a pattern of thinking about the King Island village existed, one that begins from their first encounters with schooling and the federal government. The question of where the King Islanders should live was asked time and again – one is left to speculate about the motivations of those posing the question.

It cannot be said without question, based on the evidence, that the Bureau specifically shut down the school in order to force the entire island community in to Nome. No such explicit intention has been found in archived records. But once the school was closed down indefinitely, it made the abandonment of the island inevitable. The closure saved the Bureau money, and removed the inconvenience of administering one of the most isolated locations in the Alaska. Forcing the King Islanders into Nome fit into the general goals held in BIA offices across the country in the Termination era. Eliminating the island as an option for families with school-age children also finally accomplished what the Bureau had failed to do several times in the past through persuasion.

¹⁵⁰Winfield Ervin, Jr., Sup. Finance Specialist, Anchorage, AK to Dale M. Belcher, Area Credit Officer, Juneau, AK. March 29, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Chapter 5

The Legacy of the Move

The story of the King Islanders' move did not end in 1959. Over the next several years, more families trickled into Nome. By the fall of 1966, the entire village had resettled about a mile east of Nome where they had previously camped during the summer. But dissatisfaction ran high in the Nome settlement.

Red tape: The Failed Attempt to Leave Nome¹⁵¹

Almost immediately after the first winter in Nome, members of the King Island community began to lobby the BIA for help to move out of town. Over the next six years, the King Islanders looked to the BIA for help in establishing their own village elsewhere. Their efforts were unsuccessful largely because of agency foot dragging and a truly spectacular example of bureaucratic red-tape. Bureau correspondence indicates that some employees felt they should remain in Nome, neither returning to the island or moving out of town. The fate of the island village itself appears to have been undetermined – in much of the paperwork on file, the Bureau talks about the move to Cape Woolley as a move to the mainland – interesting language given that the majority of King Islanders were moving into Nome.

The most important problem, of course, was who would pay for the move, which was eventually estimated to cost someone \$750,000.

Equally as problematic was the seeming failure of the Bureau to 'hear' them. The process went something like this – seemingly uncertain as to the King Islanders' wishes, the Bureau would ask them if they wanted a new village site, or perhaps carry out a survey of

¹⁵¹A majority of the information in this section comes from an inactive archived BIA file marked "Housing Improvement Program." Other villages with files included those to be affected by the proposed Project Chariot and Rampart Dam project. Some villages that managed to move successfully were also included.

households. The majority of King Islanders would reaffirm their commitment to move, and then the BIA would declare itself unable to help. Time would pass, and a form of organizational amnesia would overtake the Bureau and again they would ask the King Islanders if they wanted to move. And again they would be told ‘yes.’ Nothing would happen, and the Bureau would again study the problem with a move promised sometime in the future. There is some evidence that this pattern of miscommunication was fostered by state and Bureau employees who opposed the Cape Woolley village project.

A fairly extensive paper trail exists on the Cape Woolley project. Not only can one track the Bureau’s correspondence, one can track the “other side” of the issue, through the archived records of the non-profit group, the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA).¹⁵²

1960

In October 1960 letter to Juneau, Nome Area Field Representative Robert J. Grant endorsed the idea of the King Islanders relocating to Cape Woolley. Grant said he had been carrying on informal discussions with them regarding relocation to a spot on the coast between Nome and Wales. (It is unclear if Grant means relocation from the island or Nome. At this time, remember, the island was still inhabited by a number of villagers.) The King Islanders had picked Cape Woolley because of its abundance of resources and the access it would still provide to hunting at the island. They were lukewarm to the idea at first, Grant noted, but in light of recent events had changed their minds. Grant identified three concerns: accessibility, resources, and comparison with their present location.

¹⁵²The AAIA worked very hard to help the King Islanders relocate to Cape Woolley. The AAIA and its involvement is discussed in more detail in the following sections. The AAIA papers are particularly valuable, in that they give an idea of the numerous issues facing Alaskan Natives in the 1960s on the road to a settlement of land claims. They also give valuable context to the Alaskan situation, which was very much affected by the burden of history of the Lower 48 tribes and the reservation system.

“Personally, I feel it is by far the best solution for the King Islanders from an economic standpoint, not to mention health, welfare, etc.”¹⁵³ he added.

Juneau Area Director Hawkins in turn wrote Washington, D.C., in support of such a move and asked for help. In an “administratively restricted” letter to H. Rex Lee, Hawkins explained that King Island was a lot like Diomedes Island, which Lee had visited, but even more isolated.

“This office would greatly like to assist King Island in this move and hopes to work through the Alaska Rural Development Division in order to bring about this eventuality,” Hawkins wrote.¹⁵⁴

Hawkins believed that if the BIA could make a grant from its Credit or Welfare department, he could get matching funds from the State of Alaska and a “relocated village would spring up on the mainland.” But he added what seems now to be a tidy summary of the ensuing years. “I would not anticipate an immediate need for funds since the move would probably not be made until next summer, if then.”

1961

Nothing further appears in the King Island file until March 8, 1961. Leo Murphy forwarded the Juneau office a newspaper clipping from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* with the headline, “The Eskimo Moses: Will Face Red Tape Sea to Aid People.” The article featured a photo of Paul Tiulana, who was in Seattle to get a new artificial limb. The caption below read, “Paul Tiulana – Modern Day Moses? His People Need ‘Place to Hunt, Fish, Not Place to

¹⁵³Area Field Representative Robert J. Grant, Nome, AK, to Area Director James E. Hawkins, Juneau, AK. Subject: Relocation – King Island. October 21, 1960. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁵⁴Juneau Area Director James Hawkins, Juneau, AK to Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs H. Rex Lee, Washington, D.C., October 26, 1960. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Drink.”¹⁵⁵ Reporter Fergus Hoffman described the King Islanders’ plight:

Paul Tiulana and his people are King Island Eskimos. Only a handful, however, spent the winter on their island in Bering Sea. The rest, almost 200 were in Nome in slum-like unpainted shacks where they have clustered since deserting their old ways. “They are many good people, but they need to get away from town,” Tiulana said in Seattle yesterday. “Seventeen families are ready to move with me, but we will need help.”¹⁵⁶

Hoffman got the story partially wrong, saying the Interior Department had closed the school because so few people remained at King Island. A new move was under study. Tiulana said he was next going to Juneau for help. “We need a place to hunt and fish, not a place to drink.”¹⁵⁷

On March 29, Bureau Finance Specialist Winfield Ervin queried the Area Credit Officer as to the feasibility of getting abandoned buildings at Point Spencer for use by the King Islanders if they moved to Cape Woolley. “We know they do not have the money to move to a new location and build homes,”¹⁵⁸ he said. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ervin had discussed such a move many times and felt it would save the Bureau thousands of dollars while improving the living conditions of the King Islanders. The abandoned buildings could be disassembled and barged to the Cape Woolley site.

¹⁵⁵Fergus Hoffman. *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*. “The Eskimo Moses: Will Face Red Tape Sea to Aid People.” March 8, 1961.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸Winfield Ervin, Jr., Sup. Finance Specialist, Anchorage, AK to Dale M. Belcher, Area Credit Officer, Juneau, AK. March 29, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Word of the King Islanders' desire to move reached the Alaska State Legislature, which in turn passed Senate Resolution #26, "Relating to assistance for the King Islanders in their removal to the mainland," urging the federal government and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to assist the King Islanders in their move to Cape Woolley. Some of the facts were wrong, and some of the language cringeworthy to an audience of 2002, but the state did call the Woolley proposal commendable, requiring and deserving of assistance. "Whereas the permanent population of King Island has dwindled to a point where the Bureau of Indian Affairs has closed the school there; and whereas the industrious King Islanders are generally desirous of becoming mainlanders but want to avoid the pitfalls of overexposure to the sophisticated life of Nome..."¹⁵⁹ the resolution read, ending by urging Udall to encourage and facilitate the move.

Alaska Secretary of State Hugh Wade sent the resolution on to Washington D.C.. The Secretary of the Interior asked for more information:

Some members of the Bureau of Indian Affairs are conversant with the general trends of interest of the Islanders for making the mainland their permanent home. I have asked that specific information be secured regarding the coordinated plan of the King Islanders for this change. Upon receipt of this information, an analysis of the facts will be made. You will be advised regarding our ability to help with this project.¹⁶⁰

In the meanwhile, BIA Juneau Credit Officer Dale M. Belcher responded to Winfield Ervin's query regarding the abandoned buildings at Point Spencer. "Our property Branch advises that they know of no legal way the Bureau can acquire the buildings and turn them to the people

¹⁵⁹Senate Resolution #26, The Alaska State Senate, Second Legislature, First Session.

¹⁶⁰U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, Washington D.C., to Honorable Hugh J. Wade, Secretary of State, State of Alaska, Juneau, AK, April 27, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

for salvage and use in constructing homes,” Belcher wrote. “However there must be some way they can be made available.”¹⁶¹ Belcher suggested that Ervin and Grant determine who owned the buildings, and then it might be possible to help the King Island people acquire them.

Winfield Ervin responded in early May of 1961 with good news.¹⁶² Point Spencer, formerly under the control of the Aviation Department, had been turned over to the Alaska territory in 1952. In 1954, it was handed over to the Alaska Housing Authority. The AHA said the King Islanders could have any of the buildings at Point Spencer if they put the request in a letter. In addition, AHA had surplus lumber at St. Michael which was in questionable condition, but could be used for the Cape Woolley project.

Meanwhile, the Interior Department Branch of Relocation Services in Washington, D.C., responded to Hugh Wade’s letter and the Senate resolution. “Please check into this and advise us as soon as possible,” were the instructions given to the Juneau Area Office.¹⁶³ The Juneau office replied that the information needed would come from several sources and to expect a report by June 1.¹⁶⁴

A few days later, AFR Robert Grant wrote Winfield Ervin, thanking him for his effort on the Point Spencer buildings:

¹⁶¹Credit Officer Dale M. Belcher, JAO, Juneau, AK, to Finance Specialist Winfield Ervin, Juneau, AK, April 27, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁶²BIA Finance Specialist Winfield Ervin, Jr., Juneau, AK, to Area Director, BIA, Juneau, Attention: Area Credit Officer, May 1, 1961, Subject: King Islanders & Pt. Spencer Buildings. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁶³Chief, Branch of Relocation Service, Washington, D.C. to Area Director, Juneau, AK, Attention: Mr. Charles T. Featherstone, Relocation Services. Interoffice memo. May 2, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁶⁴Area Director, Juneau Area Office, Juneau, AK, to Commissioner, BIA, Washington D.C., May 5, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

As soon as I received your letter, I contacted Paul Tiulana, who is an influential member of the King Island community, outlining the proposal and suggesting that he take it up with the council, which he has promised to do. Interest in the move still runs high and I believe we shall have some definite information soon.¹⁶⁵

Grant said he imagined from preliminary talks that the King Islanders would expect the move, if it happened, to be done entirely for them – adding that perhaps he was being harsh and would wait and see.

Juneau Area Director James E. Hawkins chimed in on May 23rd – wanting a report from the Nome office as soon as possible. He directed Grant to “accurately assess the desire of the Eskimo people for a move”¹⁶⁶ and asked that Grant or his representative make personal contact with as many of the King Island families residing in Nome as possible. He was also to determine what the feelings of the people were towards a move to Cape Woolley and how many would take part, particularly if no other help was offered than the use of the old structures from Point Spencer. Finally, Grant was to estimate how long a move would take, especially if it was possible to do it all in one summer.

Grant issued his findings in June. He reported he had held more informal meetings with members of the community and they had not changed their minds about moving out of Nome. Seventeen families had indicated interest in moving, approximately 90-100 people. “I have had

¹⁶⁵Area Field Representative Robert J. Grant, Nome, AK, to Area Field Representative, Anchorage, Attention: Winfield Ervin, Jr., May 8, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁶⁶Area Director James E. Hawkins, JAO, Juneau, AK, to Nome Area Field Representative, Robert Grant, May 23, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

estimates as high as 200 persons who would be interested; this seems rather high and probably is, but there is quite a bit of interest on the part of others who have lived in Nome several years but who originally came from the island," Grant wrote.¹⁶⁷ Grant reported that the King Island men stated that they would need nothing other than suitable building materials; they would inspect the buildings while in that area.

One wrench in the plans, however, came with the involvement of local legislators Senator John McNees and Pete Walsh. McNees had jumped into it but then just as easily forgot the issue, Grant wrote, while Walsh had erroneously informed the people that the buildings in fact belonged the Navy. "Neither of these gentlemen has helped in the least insofar as morale is concerned," Grant wrote.

Again, the situation revolved around a school for the village:

One of the foremost things in the minds of the King Islanders is the matter of schooling for their children; this is understandably so. In our talks I have taken pains to inform them there would be a period of time before they could expect a school at the new location as they would have to prove residency that they intend to remain there permanently. No time limit was mentioned although I hinted it would be from one to two years. Here again, we might have a snag as the tone of some of the remarks made was to the effect that there did not seem to be any point in moving if there was to be no school. By the same token, they have mentioned the possibility of the Native store moving in at an early date. This is something that could possibly be squared away and put into effect in far less time

¹⁶⁷Nome Area Field Representative Robert J. Grant, Nome, AK, to Area Director, JAO, Juneau, AK, Subject: Relocation – King Island. June 19, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

than that of a school. I bring up these two questions as it is an integral part of their thinking and understandably so.¹⁶⁸

The main consideration, Grant said, was the matter of building materials. He doubted that the move could be accomplished in one summer, but indicated that if planning went on in the current summer, the move and rebuilding could occur during the next. The Juneau Area Office forwarded his report on to Washington.

In November 1961, a number of Bureau officials traveled to Barrow where the historic *Inupiat Paitot* meeting took place. Representatives from King Island attended, and it was there that Paul Tiulana crossed paths with Henry Forbes, who headed the Association on American Indian Affairs Committee on Alaska Policy.¹⁶⁹ It was Forbes who would back the founding of the first Alaska Native newspaper, the *Tundra Times*, by Howard Rock and Tom Snapp. Forbes and the AAIA would also become involved in the efforts of the King Islanders to relocate to Cape Woolley. One of the items on the agenda at the meeting had been the request of the King Islanders for a withdrawal of land at Cape Woolley for a new village.

In late November, Juneau Area Director sent Paul Tiulana, then Chief of the King Island IRA, a copy of a petition which the people of King Island needed to sign. The petition requested

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Forbes and the Executive Director of AAIA, Laverne Madigan, had come to Alaska to on a fact-finding mission, related to the proposed Project Chariot. After a community meeting in Point Hope in which they offered legal advice and financial assistance in retaining counsel, they traveled to Barrow, where the infamous "duck-in" in May 1961 had jumpstarted a discussion of Alaskan Native hunting and fishing rights. After the meetings, the AAIA agreed to provide legal and investigatory service and fund a fall conference on Native rights in Barrow. Over 200 representatives from villages across Alaska attended the conference known as Inupiat Paitot. The conference dealt with a variety of issues, including aboriginal rights, education, housing, employment and the like. The AAIA would remained very involved in Alaskan Native efforts to resolve longstanding issues such as hunting and fishing rights, housing, and land claims. For more information see Dan O'Neill's *The Firecracker Boys*. St Martin's Griffin: New York, 1994.

that the Secretary of the Interior withdraw land in the Cape Woolley area for use as a site for a new village. Besides describing the area to be withdrawn and reserved for their use, it stated:

We are unable to obtain our livelihood by residing on King Island and we are moving our village to Cape Woolley. We need the land herein above described for the purpose of obtaining our livelihood and to better establish ourselves in the economic framework of the State of Alaska.¹⁷⁰

In December 1961, Acting Area Field Representative Sterling G. Croell sent the signed petition on to Juneau. Included were the names of people on the island who had been contacted by radio and given their consent.

December 1961 also marks the beginning of the AAIA's archived correspondence regarding King Island. On December 16, AAIA Executive Director Laverne Madigan sent wrote her home office (marking the letter "confidential") describing her visit with BIA Commissioner John Carver. They had discussed several Alaskan matters, and Carver was uneasy that the suggestions he gave Madigan would become public as having originated with him. Explained Madigan:

I asked John, what, if anything, we and the Eskimos could expect from this Administration to do about aboriginal rights in Alaska. John has definite plans for handling every specific Alaskan problem – hunting rights, gas for Barrow, a new village for the King Islanders, even Project Chariot. But he has not yet

¹⁷⁰Area Director James Hawkins, JAO, Juneau, AK, to Mr. Paul Tiulana, c/o Mr. Robert Grant, Nome, AK, November 27, 1961. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. While reading the draft of this paper in 2003, one King Island elder found the wording of the above quote curious; the people were certainly able to obtain a living at the Island at this time. It is unlikely the King Islanders played any role in the wording of the petition. It was a time, he observed, when few adult King Islanders read or spoke English very well; usually, they just signed what they were instructed to.

figured out a way in which the Department can handle directly the general question of aboriginal land and mineral rights.¹⁷¹

Carver “hinted broadly” that he saw no way for any bureaucrat to resolve the issues “because of the inevitable hostility of the Alaskan delegation and Gruening’s strategic place on the Senate Sub-Committee.” Furthermore, while Carver believed that a bill to settle Alaskan Native land claims should be introduced by a member of Alaska’s congressional delegation, that would not occur while Gruening was in office.

Madigan wrote Paul Tiulana a few days later with good news: the new village at Cape Woolley was a go:

John Carver told me definitely that you King Islanders will get your new village. He said that the BIA office in Nome is having all of the people sign a petition (sic); this petition is to be turned in to Washington. Meanwhile, in Washington they are now trying to work out a plan for the new village to have all the good points of a reservation and none of the bad points. The plan has not been fully worked out yet. John Carver thinks the village should own the land, just as the Indian tribes own their reservations, and that the villagers should have full hunting rights on this land.¹⁷²

Carver’s plan would have villages paying taxes, and owning 75 percent of the mineral rights, with the state of Alaska owning 25 percent. He reasoned that if the state got 25 percent of the mineral

¹⁷¹Laverne Madigan, Executive Director, Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA), Columbus Hotel, Miami, FL, to Oliver La Farge, President, AAIA, December 16, 1961. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

¹⁷²Laverne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, to Paul Tiulana, Anchorage, AK, December 20, 1961. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

rights, it would stop opposing a land settlement.

Madigan urged Tiulana to write Carver and tell him that she had said that Carver was sincerely trying to help the King Islanders – and to thank Carver for remembering what he had heard at the Inupiat Paitot meeting at Barrow. But, she cautioned, he was not to mention Carver's plan specifically, as it was confidential. In closing, she mentioned the petition the BIA had circulated. Was it being circulated, were people signing?

AAIA President Oliver LaFarge, in response to a letter from Madigan, wrote that Carver's plan to have Alaskan Natives pay taxes on their lands and give up 25 percent of the mineral rights seemed a sound one. However, he worried that taxation would become a means to separate them from their property:

Can they elect enough genuine representation to the state legislature to protect their interests in the future? The kind of thing that I am leery of came up in connection with the four-and-a-half-acre tract of land to be returned to the Santo Domingo Pueblo. It was the opinion of everyone interested in the welfare of the Indians that, if that land had been given to the pueblo in fee simple, the very corrupt commissioners of Bernalillo County would have assessed it very high with such large taxes as to force the Indians to sell.¹⁷³

1962

Very little action seems to have occurred on the relocation in 1962. John Carver, who had been so supportive of the King Island move, had been replaced by Philleo Nash. Carver was now Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

¹⁷³Oliver La Farge, President, AAIA, Santa Fe, NM, to LaVerne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, December 29, 1961. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967. AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

In January, the new Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett submitted the petition signed by the King Islanders to Washington, D.C., reminding newly appointed Commissioner Philleo Nash of the origins of the request. “You will recall that since the school was removed from King Island many of the villagers moved into Nome. The people are unhappy there and would much prefer to build a new village at the Cape Woolley site.”¹⁷⁴

Bennett added that the King Islanders had made it clear that they wished to retain whatever right they had to the island, because it had been their hunting and gathering place for “hundreds of years.”

In the following months, Laverne Madigan received two letters from Paul Tiulana. In the first, Tiulana expressed support for Carver’s plan. He didn’t believe the Alaskan Legislature would object to a new village for King Island because of the resolution it had passed the preceding year. In the meantime, he would continue making friends with the politicians.

“I wish I had more political experience,” Tiulana fretted. “I’m sure need it now, but the time will tell.”¹⁷⁵ He had not written Carver, but would do so, and also contact Robert Bennett.

His second letter is found both in the BIA’s King Island file and the AAIA archives. Tiulana had written Madigan, who forwarded it on to John A. Carver, Jr. In it, Tiulana expressed his fear that Alaska Natives would not be able to establish their aboriginal rights to their land:

The Bureau of Land Management in Fairbanks has denied our aboriginal rights, even they know it is written, maybe they choose go to school more, and learn there A.B.C. again, its only 3 miles to the University of Alaska from Fairbanks.

¹⁷⁴Robert L. Bennett, Area Director, JAO, Juneau, AK to Philleo Nash, Commissioner, BIA, Washington, D.C., January 8, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁷⁵Paul Tiulana, Anchorage, AK, to Laverne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, January 1, 1960. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Mr. Dan Jones is try to get more name for himself for denying our rights, to reclaim our aboriginal rights. I don't know what really has in his dump (sic) mind. Like you said we are (Brainwash.) We are brainwash in our valuation of our very rich land, and our white leaders we do everything they know how, to reveal our valuable land to us, because it will be too valuable to them for set aside under our aboriginal rights. I might be wrong but that's the way I feel about it now. We are not going to fight with the rifles, but our moral.¹⁷⁶

Carver had been at the Inupiat Paitot meeting in Barrow the previous fall. Madigan asked for any news for the King Islanders:

Do you remember Paul Tiulana, the King Islander who sat next to you at Barrow and tried to explain what Inupiat Paitot means? Please find time to read the enclosed copy of a letter he just wrote me. If you read it, I know you will make somebody do something about the King Islanders' petition for a new village.¹⁷⁷

Carver responded to Madigan in April, saying he found Tiulana's letter "very interesting and so genuine."

I know you will be working closely with Bob Bennett on this while you are in Alaska. He and the central office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs are concerned about working out something for the King Islanders. There are difficult questions in attempting to create any type of land tenure but there should be

¹⁷⁶Paul Tiulana, Anchorage, AK, to Laverne Madigan, AIAA, New York, March 8, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁷⁷Laverne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, to Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C., March 27, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

some means of solving the problem satisfactorily with a bit of ingenuity.¹⁷⁸

Included in the BIA's King Island file was another newspaper clipping on the King Island situation. "Former King Island Resident Seeks A New Village In Cape Woolley Area"¹⁷⁹ read the headline on a story detailing Tiulana's efforts in the move. Tiulana told the *Anchorage Daily News* that 25 of the 35 village families were agreeable to the move. In addition to offering better access to jobs and medical attention, the new village would prove a tourist attraction. "Tiulana and the others have been mulling over the move for about three years. The village council has requested the federal government permit such a move and is now awaiting an answer, according to Tiulana."

No further communication regarding the King Island situation comes until November 1962, when Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett wrote Paul Tiulana, assuring him that the petition for land withdrawal had been forwarded promptly to Washington. Furthermore, as a result of an October Inupiat Paitot meeting in Kotzebue, a representative of the Bureau's Realty Branch would be assisting them in laying out a town site, getting a survey of the area, and assisting in other necessary steps to establish their community at Cape Woolley.¹⁸⁰

The BIA file on King Island goes silent for much of 1962, but correspondence between the AAIA and Paul Tiulana continued. Tiulana had gone to Washington, D.C., and New York accompanied by AAIA personnel. Madigan addressed a letter to him in late May. Their

¹⁷⁸John A. Carver, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Washington, D.C. to Laverne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, April 16, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁷⁹"Former King Island Resident Seeks a New Village in Cape Woolley Area" *Anchorage Daily News*, April 5, 1962, page 9. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁸⁰Robert L. Bennett, Area Director, Juneau, AK, to Paul Tiulana, King Island Village, Nome, AK, November 8, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

correspondence would indicate that they were friends, exchanging news of their families and goings on. LaVerne joked, "I think you hated New York, and I think you put a bad spell on me before you left. A week ago, I fell down flat on the sidewalk. I could not see that I had hurt myself and kept on running to newspaper interviews and things like that with Guy. (Okakok.)"¹⁸¹

Madigan advised that NBC television was going to do an hour long program on the Inupiat, sending a crew to Barrow and Cape Thompson. While Tiulana had told her that the King Islanders would be hunting and working at the time, she said that if any could make the trip by skinboat to Cape Thompson, it would bring publicity to them.

"I do hope your pretty wife has begun to understand how much the people need you. Once she understands that, she will be very happy and very proud, and then your own heart will be lighter," Madigan concluded.

Tiulana responded in late June. He had hurt his back while at King Island, and could not attend the Egg Meeting at Barrow or the task force meeting when BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash had visited Nome. The tone of his letter is unhappy:

As for the King Islanders they are not even one child that go over to meeting. I was so disappointed with them, so might as well drop off as the spokesman for the King Islanders, because they are not care for there future, and I couldn't let them see what is coming for them in the future, maybe they learn after they lose everything on there land. They only care for today not tomorrow.¹⁸²

But he concluded with warm wishes to Madigan. "I am very sorry to hear that you have another

¹⁸¹LaVerne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, to Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, May 31, 1962. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

¹⁸²Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, to LaVerne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, June 29, 1962. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

accident, but I'm not that kind of magician to have a bad spell for you."

Madigan responded in July. She had attended a large meeting of the Athabascans at Tanana. They not only supported what the Inupiat had done at Barrow, but had issued a statement of their own on Native rights. Madigan was disappointed that no King Islanders had attended the task force meeting in Nome. "The Task force has no way of knowing how important the King Islanders consider their new village unless some spokesman of the people goes out of his way to convince them," she wrote.¹⁸³ But Madigan had Emma Willoya¹⁸⁴ speak to James Officer, assistant BIA commissioner, on behalf of the King Islanders:

... she spokc very well indeed for your people. Mr. Officer said what you said in your letter – that the King Islanders were all away hunting when he was at Nome. He can understand perfectly well why the people have to hunt when they can, and he does not have the wrong idea that you no longer care for a village.¹⁸⁵

Madigan urged Tiulana to write Officer, and remind him of the petition the King Islanders had signed. "Tell him that the people have never heard one word since the petition was sent, and ask how soon the people may expect action."

Again Madigan ended her letter with encouragement to Tiulana. "I hope your wife is rubbing your back every night and that it doesn't hurt any more. Take care of yourself for her sake and also for the sake of all the INUPIAT."

It was to be the last communication between Madigan and Tiulana. Madigan died in a

¹⁸³LaVerne Madigan, Executive Director, AAIA, to Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, July 10, 1962. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

¹⁸⁴Madigan had recommended that the Inupiat committee invite Emma Willoya to be on the "Inupiat Committee."

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

tragic horse-riding accident in September 1962. AAIA President Oliver LaFarge sent a telegraph to Tiulana. After Madigan's death, Dr. Henry Forbes took over her work lobbying on behalf of the King Islanders.

The last words in 1962 on the King Island relocation came in a letter from Henry Forbes to Area Director Hollingsworth. The Bureau had become uncertain again as to the wishes of the King Islanders, according to Forbes. "At Kotzebue last October the outlook seemed good for the King Islanders' relocation to Cape Woolley," he wrote. "Now the B.I.A. seems doubtful if the majority of the those on the island want to move. I wonder if you can get reliable information on this?"¹⁸⁶ Forbes suggested contacting Paul Tiulana or Edward Penatac for information. The problem of building materials had not been solved yet either, and he added, "I am not surprised that the King Islanders hesitate to leave their Island unless they have some assurance of better conditions."

1963

BIA representatives met with the King Islanders in Nome on January 16. Twelve heads of households attended the meeting, out of an estimated 29 families, along with four individuals. AFR R.D. Hollingsworth presided and Paul Tiulana translated.

The purpose of the meeting, Hollingsworth explained, was to "give assurance of the BIA's help that would be available if people are still contemplating the re-location of King Island village to Cape Woolley."¹⁸⁷ When prompted for a show of hands by those desiring to move, 14 of the 16 people there raised their hands. When asked who favored the move, those present said

¹⁸⁶Henry S. Forbes, the AAIA, Milton, MA, to R. Hollingsworth, JAO, Juneau, AK, December 18, 1962. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. This letter is also found in the AAIA archives.

¹⁸⁷Tribal Operations Assistant Arthur Nagozruk, Jr., BIA, Nome, AK, to Area Field Representative, Nome, AK, January 16, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

it was both older people who desired more native food and younger people who had dropped out of school and were now unemployed.

The King Islanders gave four reasons why they wanted to move to Cape Woolley:

*abundance of marine mammals and fish

* parents felt that juvenile problems were increasing in Nome

* self-dependence and self-help

The fourth reason given was what remained at the heart of the problem - "the only reason the people are staying in Nome is because there is a school here for their children. Older people do not want to be examples of illiteracy."¹⁸⁸

No problems with getting land withdrawn at Cape Woolley were anticipated by BIA staff.

Again, in the BIA's report on the meeting, the relocation to Cape Woolley was discussed more as a move from the island itself than from Nome:

There is no doubt that the people are sincere in wanting to move from Nome.

King Island village is completely isolated and difficult in living conditions.

There is adequate supply of seals, walrus and cliff birds on the island, but because of the health problems experienced on the island with inadequate homes and difficulty in evacuating emergency medical cases, the people felt that returning to the island would not solve their immediate problems. Large overhanging rocks are threatening the entire village site. Because of the rocky slope where the village is located, it is not feasible to build adequate buildings with

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

sound foundations. There is no place to construct a landing strip for airplanes.

The school was condemned as unsafe.¹⁸⁹

The issue of housing remained paramount. Nagozruk, the former teacher at King Island, said the people were willing to move if and when the housing problems were solved. Other issues, such as the store and school could be dealt with later. Since the U.S. Coast Guard was constructing a Long Range Navigation (LORAN) site at Point Spencer, they would have to be contacted about the surplus building there. If the move was desired for the summer of 1963, Nagozruk recommended shipping the store supplies on the first voyage of the *North Star* so the people would have supplies during the relocation, along with whatever buildings or materials that could be supplied.

“The people are sure that they can attempt the move if adequate houses would be assured,”¹⁹⁰ he added.

The BIA identified four areas in which further information was needed: a complete population survey of those in Nome and on the island, the number of persons actually desiring to move, potential school enrollment and school facility needs, and finally, a survey of all potential sources of help with the housing issue.

AFR Hollingsworth wrote Henry Forbes back, telling him that the meeting had confirmed the King Islanders sincerely wished to move to Cape Woolley. The housing issue remained key, he said.

Hollingsworth proposed an alternative, if somewhat unorthodox, solution, “Our personal thoughts would be to investigate the possibility of a clay deposit in the vicinity and construct

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

homes either of the rammed earth variety or clay brick type, he wrote, adding the additional merits that such a venture would provide:

It would allow the people to do the majority of the work themselves, under technical guidance. Secondly, homes of this type have been used in the states and can be finished outside so as to be impermeable to the elements, while permitting the interior to be finished as the occupant so desires. Lastly, they are sufficiently warm and practically windproof.¹⁹¹

Nagozruk provided AFR Hollingsworth more specific data on the move soon after. Out of 29 families formerly from the island, 13 responded affirmatively to the question of a move. Six or seven families were on the island and unavailable for comment. The rest did not return the questionnaire. Only two households responded that they had no intention of leaving Nome.

The survey he conducted gives us a wealth of information about the King Islanders in Nome in 1963. In the thirteen households who responded with a 'yes' to the move, there were 80 people - 46 of whom were school age children. In those families, there were 10 high school age children, six of whom were either not attending school, were out on relocation with the intention of returning, or in the hospital.

All heads of households responded that they would participate in long-term housing loans if needed, and the majority said they wanted lumber. Occupations listed included laborer, painter, hunter, and ivory carver, with nearly all respondents listing carving or skin sewing as a special skill. In the group there were 3 large skinboats and three smaller ones. Most of the men had hunting gear and nets. Their reasons for wanting to leave Nome include better hunting, better

¹⁹¹Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, Nome, AK, to Henry S. Forbes, Milton, MA, January 21, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. This item is also held in the AAIA archives at Princeton.

living, to be away from liquor, to have their own school, to be away from Nome, and to remain together with their people. “Most of the families now undecided appears to be the young people with many pre-school children,” Nagozruk surmised. “It is highly probable that the rugged pioneering venture is too much for them at the present time.”¹⁹²

Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett passed on the information to Washington, affirming that “from the information now available the majority of the King Island Eskimos wish to move to Cape Woolley.”¹⁹³

Bennett cced the letter to AFR Hollingsworth giving him explicit direction:

You are instructed to help the King Islanders in every way possible to accomplish their move. In this connection I would like to have the view of the King Island Eskimos and yourself on the construction of a community house for them. It may be advisable that this take place in the Cape Woolley area rather than on the outskirts of Nome, if the majority of the people are anticipating the move to Cape Woolley in the near future.¹⁹⁴

The AAIA's Henry Forbes sent a letter to Assistant Secretary of the Interior John Carver dated January 31. “I am delighted to hear that Mr. Nash (BIA Commissioner) is planning to examine the King Island village situated at Nome. If their housing materials problem can be resolved it will be another feather in the cap of the B.I.A.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Tribal Operations Assistant Arthur Nagozruk, Jr., Nome, AK, to Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, Nome, AK, January 24, 1963. “Survey of King Island Re-location to Cape Woolley.” RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁹³Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Commissioner, BIA, Washington D.C., January 30, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, to John A. Carver Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., January 31, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd

Nagozruk attended the February 13 meeting of the King Island IRA Council. The Council was reorganizing, and elected a chief and new council. (Paul Tiulana was named chief, Edward Penatac vice-chief, Barbara Kokuluk secretary, with Councilmen Joachim Koyuk, Aloysius Pikongana, Frank Ellanna, Bernard Kasgnac, and Charles Penatac.) The Council said they favored the Cape Woolley location as the site for the proposed Community Building planned for the village. The issue of housing came up:

The men feel that the Bureau should give them definite assurance that housing problem would be solved in the very near future. They wanted to know if and when the materials would be delivered so that they would make plans for summer employment. They believed that they could not commit themselves for season employment if they were to expend their energy to building houses, but on the other hand, they do not want to lose their opportunity for summer employment if no housing would be available.¹⁹⁶

In mid-February, yet another person would become involved with the Cape Woolley Project, the researcher, Frances A. Ross, who had spent a year on the island in the 1930s and published a thesis on Alaskan Eskimo community houses.¹⁹⁷ Ross had begun another study, sponsored by the American Academy of Sciences, on the acculturation of the King Islanders at Nome. She had begun work in 1962, but had to postpone her work. Ross said she would be returning to Nome and the Island in 1963, and expected her work to be done by September 1964. In a letter to the Juneau Area Office, Ross asked AD Bennett for a break-down of appropriations

Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

¹⁹⁶Tribal Operations Assistant Arthur Nagozruk, Jr., Nome, AK to Area Director, JAO, Juneau, AK, February 13, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁹⁷Frances Anna Ross. *The Eskimo Community House*, Stanford University, 1958.

for the Cape Woolley project, as well as a time line for the move. Ross would figure largely in the project later.

Bennett advised Ross that no direct appropriation for the move existed, but the BIA would help the King Islanders in every way possible. One such example would be funding for the community center at the site of the new village.

“One of the reasons for this is that while the King Island people have talked about this move for some time, there was no definite decision on the part of the group until just during the past two months to make the move,” Bennett wrote.¹⁹⁸

In March 1963, Henry S. Forbes sent another letter to the BIA in Washington D.C., asking if progress had been made on getting building materials for the King Islanders.¹⁹⁹

Mason Barr, Chief of the Branch of Housing Development responded:

From last reports, the group of King Islanders at Nome are still uncertain about what they wish to do. Our people have been working with them to develop an organized group. The land that they have expressed a wish to resettle on, at Cape Wooley, (sic) is involved in prior claims that will have to be clarified before any final decision can be made. At the moment it would seem unlikely that they will be ready for construction this summer.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸Area Director Robert L. Bennett, Juneau, AK, to Frances A. Ross, Green Bay, WI, March 5, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

¹⁹⁹⁰⁵Henry S. Forbes, Chairman, Committee on Alaskan Policy, AAIA, Milton, Massachusetts, to U.S. Commissioner of the BIA, Philleo Nash, Washington D.C., March 4, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. This item is also in the AAIA archives at Princeton.

²⁰⁰Chief, Branch of Housing Development, Mason Barr, BIA, Washington D.C., to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, April 12, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Barr, was wrong, however. His letter prompted Forbes to write Tiulana, asking if Barr's version was accurate. Did the King Islanders still want to move or had they changed their minds?²⁰¹

In March, Nagozruk and the BIA's Resource Development Officer, E. Arthur Patterson, had chartered a plane and taken the village council out to Cape Woolley. There they inspected the area and measured off the 160 acres that Edward Penatac would file for a native allotment to be used for the new village site. The remains of a fox farm were on the site, which caused them some concern. If the owner of the fox farm, a retiree now living in a Pioneer Home in Sitka, had acquired title to the land it could cause problems. Upon consultation with the Bureau of Land Management in Fairbanks and BIA Realty in Juneau, it was determined that no prior claims existed to the land there.

BIA Realty's Charles Hall and the Daniel Jones of the Bureau of Land Management both met with the King Islanders in Nome in mid-April, telling them the land was clear to file on. The two spoke with Thomas Snapp of the Fairbanks-based *Tundra Times*, telling him that "the great majority of King Islanders at Nome want to move to the new location and are planning to do so this summer."²⁰² The people planned to file for Native allotments individually so that the land could be acquired fee simple.

Snapp, in a letter to Dr. Forbes, said it couldn't be determined what the villagers who had returned to the island would do. According to Tiulana, if those at Nome moved to Cape Woolley, then the rest would most likely follow suit. Hall, however, could not tell Snapp if the King

²⁰¹Henry S. Forbes, Chairman, Committee on Alaskan Policy, AAIA, to Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, April 16, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²⁰²Thomas Snapp, *Tundra Times*, Fairbanks, AK to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Islanders had asked for assistance, referring him to another employee who was not present.

Snapp offered his assessment of the situation:

It appears clear that red tape, bureaucracy, and so forth is making it hard for the King Island village to know exactly what to do. They particularly need assistance from agencies in different aspects of setting up an entirely new village. Of course each agency is concerned only with its own program which has many complexities and ramifications. There is scarcely any coordination and, if history is a good indication, they probably get the run around and “pass the buck” treatment.²⁰³

Snapp’s assessment of the situation appears to be borne out by the ensuing events of 1963.

Letters continued between Nome, Juneau, and Washington, D.C., but no progress was made on the issue of building materials or surplus buildings.

The situation prompted AAIA President Oliver LaFarge to remark, in a letter to William Byler of the AAIA, “This might be well worth your taking up at the Council on Indian Affairs. The Alaska area field office seems quite ready to move forward, whereas the Branch of Housing Development in the BIA in Washington is exhibiting the usual obstructionism.”²⁰⁴

Area Director Bennett received a letter from Senator E.L. Bartlett’s office in Washington, D.C., quoting Paul Tiulana’s missive to the senator. “As for the housing, we didn’t get anywhere with BIA how to apply for a housing loan. It doesn’t have to be a \$12,000.00 house but it does have to be a decent home,”²⁰⁵ Tiulana had written. Mary Nordale of the senator’s office wrote,

²⁰³ibid.

²⁰⁴Oliver La Farge, President, AAIA, Santa Fe, NM, to William Byler, Central Office, AAIA, April 19, 1965. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²⁰⁵Mary A. Nordale, Office of Senator E.L. Bartlett, Washington, D.C., to Area Director Robert L. Bennett,

“Senator Bartlett has been particularly concerned about the plight of the King Islanders and would, therefore, appreciate any information about what you have been doing either to assist these people to move to Cape Woolley or to settle in Nome.”²⁰⁶

Tiulana had also written Dr. Forbes, telling him the majority of people still wanted to move but the housing material issue remained unresolved. “If we have housing material we would move to Cape Woolley three years ago, But I am still waiting material.”²⁰⁷

Acting Area Director S.W. Smith defended Juneau’s efforts, pointing to the survey trip to Cape Woolley and the help provided to prepare allotment applications. “As soon as the HHFA and the Public Housing Administration approve the application that has been submitted whereby help can be given Alaska Natives to get new houses,” Smith added. “We will be in a position to advise the King Islanders and help them proceed in their efforts to get adequate housing.”²⁰⁸

What Smith appears to be referring to is the lack of a program that would fund housing or building materials for the King Islanders. M. G. Gebhart of the Alaska State Housing Authority, wrote Paul Tiulana advising him of the problem – which was under study:

As you well know, there is no program at this particular moment to serve your needs. However, the Housing Authority has applied to the Public Housing Administration for funds with which to study this problem in sufficient detail to possibly come up with a recommendation for a program that will actually work

BIA, Juneau, AK, April 18, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Paul Tiulana, Nome Alaska, to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, April 21, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁰⁸Acting Area Director S.W. Smith, BIA, Juneau, AK, to Honorable E.L. Bartlett, Washington D.C., April 24, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

and meet the needs of Alaska natives. The Bureau of Indian Affairs had been working hand-in-glove with us on this particular problem. At the present time the application which I mentioned is in Washington and several pieces of correspondence have been exchanged to provide information requested by the Public Housing Administration. It is not possible at this time to say that the application will be approved but we are not at all discouraged on the basis of the material that we have submitted so far.²⁰⁹

Gebhart told Tiulana that if the funds for the study were allocated, then ASHA would contact the village to see if it might be able to provide housing.

Forbes penned three letters, one to Mason Barr in Washington's Realty Branch, one to Assistant Secretary of the Interior John Carver, and one to BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash, attaching Tiulana's latest letter.

To Carver, he wrote "it is reassuring to know that the BIA is trying to help, but it seems clear that orders must come from a high level in Washington to break the present log jam."²¹⁰ Forbes thanked Carver for his personal interest in the matter.

In his letter to Nash, he laid the blame for the stagnation of the project at Barr's feet:

The chief issues are building materials, transportation to Cape Wooley and tools and technical aid. The Eskimos would do most of the construction themselves.

To get it going this summer will mean lots of hard work, initiative and perhaps a hatchet wielded by the Commissioner. You know, as well as I, that the thing can

²⁰⁹Executive Director M.G. Gebhart, Alaska State Housing Authority, to Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, April 24, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²¹⁰Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, to Assistant Secretary of the Interior, John Carver, Washington D.C, April 27, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

be done. If it were a project of the Defense Department it would be put through with a bang. It is not an expensive project and for the Eskimos' well-being it is urgent.²¹¹

He was less cordial, however, with Barr, and enclosed Snapp's letter. Forbes noted that the information Barr had provided ran contrary to facts provided by the King Islanders, BIA's James Officer, and Alaskan representatives of the BIA and BLM – and said he had taken the issue to Carver, who would be taking the matter in hand upon returning to Washington.

This whole affair might seem trivial but is not, for it is an excellent example of inefficiency and “passing the buck” so well expressed in the last paragraph of the enclosed letter. It reflects unfavorably on the Department of Interior. Last June Mr. Paul Tiulana, A King Islander and ex-serviceman who lost a leg during World War II, came to Washington from Nome and lunched with Secretary Udall and Secretary Carver. At that time I heard him receive assurance from Mr. Carver that within the legal framework he would do all he could to help establish a mainland homesite for the King Islanders.²¹²

The main obstacle, Forbes wrote, was the lack of building materials and technical assistance. “The site for the new village is now staked out and ready - waiting for action by the Branch of Housing Development, B.I.A. I hope a crash program can be started at once.”

Forbes letter and attachments, of course, made their way back to Juneau. Barr asked

²¹¹Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, to Chief, Branch of Housing Development, Mason Barr, BIA, Washington D.C, April 26, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archives, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²¹²Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, to Chief, Branch of Housing Development, Mason Barr, BIA, Washington D.C, April 26, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

Area Director Bennett, "You can see the information I furnished Dr. Forbes did not make him happy. Could you give me something to tell him about the King Islanders?"²¹³

Housing Development Officer Neal Jensen wrote the Nome Field office. "When you read the attached correspondence, you no doubt will have the same reaction I did. Never the less, (sic) we will have to come up with some answer to Mr. Forbes."²¹⁴

Bennett contacted Nome for more information, and was told by AFR Hollingsworth, "I can think of nothing at this end that we could do that we haven't done":

It is my understanding that with applications made for the land, they have 6 years to file final papers, and with the application made they are free to request help from the Housing Agencies - this I believe was to be initiated by the Juneau office.²¹⁵

In other words, the King Islanders could apply for help from any of the agencies which did not have programs that could fund their move.

Bennett penned a reply to Barr in Washington, explaining that a committee of state and federal agencies had been organized to coordinate activities regarding a housing program for Alaskan Natives.

With reference to surplus materials and tools to be used for building homes at Cape Wooley (sic), this at a first thought might seem to be a simple approach, but

²¹³Chief, Branch of Housing Development, Mason Barr, BIA, Washington D.C to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, May 1, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²¹⁴Housing Development Officer Neal Jensen, BIA, Juneau, AK to Area Field Representative Robert D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK, May 7, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²¹⁵Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, May 9, 1963, Subject: Cape Wooley (sic) - King Islanders. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

to secure and distribute these surpluses when they can be found, is quite a job. Certain criteria of eligibility has been established, and as is the situation of the King Islanders, they as yet cannot meet the requirements to qualify for this kind of assistance.²¹⁶

Assistant Secretary of the Interior John Carver in turn told Dr. Forbes much the same thing – the Bureau had no funds for the construction of homes or materials, but was trying to find other sources of funds or material. “The appallingly bad housing of most Alaskan natives is of great concern for us. The Bureau is working with the Public Housing Administration and the Alaska State Housing Authority to see if a program can be developed that will provide decent shelter for these people,”²¹⁷ Carver wrote.

The program that Bennett and Carver were talking about was approved later that month. This meant that potentially, Cape Woolley could be designated a pilot housing project by the Alaska Housing Authority and qualify for funds. But Bennett wrote Nome AFR Hollingsworth:

We have heard rumors that all of the King Islanders are not so enthusiastic as they were about relocating to Cape Woolley. The Alaska State Housing Authority’s request for funds to finance dwelling demonstration projects have been approved by H.H.F.A. We will discuss sites for these projects in a few days, so we must have complete and accurate information about their plans.

Please canvas all the family groups who had planned to move and find out if any

²¹⁶Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, to Chief Branch Housing Development Mason Barr, BIA, Washington, D.C., May 14, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²¹⁷Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, BIA, Washington D.C., to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAlA, Milton, MA, May 13, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

of them have changed their minds.²¹⁸

Bennett wrote Nome again two days later:

During Roy Peratrovich's visit to Nome he received the impression from Arthur Nagozruk that some of the King Islanders might be cooling off on the idea of moving to the proposed village site at Cape Woolley. Mr. James Officer, Associate Commissioner, who visited this office for a short time on Monday is quite concerned about this.²¹⁹

Bennett asked that Hollingsworth visit each of the King Island families individually to get a definite commitment one way or the other. "We would not want to recommend this location for such a designation if there is a lack of definiteness on the part of the King Island people to move to the new location."²²⁰

Hollingsworth circulated a letter of intent among the King Islanders in Nome. The language of the form letter is clear:

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether we King Island people who now live in Nome will or will not move to Cape Woolley. I cannot speak for others but I _____ am definitely planning to move to Cape Woolley.²²¹

²¹⁸Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK, May 27, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²¹⁹Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK, May 29, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, June 6, 1963, Subject: King Islanders - Cape Wooley (sic) RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

The letter also allowed each person to indicate whether they would be needing assistance in the making the move and securing housing. Of the 20 heads of households who responded, 17 said they definitely planned to move to Cape Woolley. Two respondents said 'no', one remained undecided, and six heads of household did not respond. Hollingsworth concluded, "it appears the majority of the families still desire to move."

Despite the fact that most of the King Islanders had literally signed off on their intention to move, nothing appears to have been settled in the minds of the BIA. When the AAIA's Director of Public Education wrote the BIA, in late July of 1963, yet another wrinkle had appeared.

"We understand that perhaps the King Islanders are at least for the time being thinking of delaying their relocation for two reasons,"²²² Area Director Bennett responded. The reasons were because of the potential establishment of a program in Nome for training ivory craftsmen, and the housing demonstration project which was being funded at Grayling. (Apparently, Cape Woolley was not selected as a site for the project.)

"When this project at Grayling is completed we will have the structure to help Native Communities build new dwellings, and receive financial assistance from Alaska State Housing Authority through the mutual-help program set up by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Public Housing Administration,"²²³ Bennett added, suggesting that if Correll wanted a story on a Alaskan group moving and establishing a new village, they should consider one on the Holikachuk to Grayling move.

Around the same time Bennett told the AAIA that the King Islanders were undecided,

²²²Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Lenie Correll, AAIA, New York, NY, August 12, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. This item is also held in the AAIA archives at Princeton.

²²³Ibid.

Paul Tiulana addressed a letter to William Byler at the AAIA. He asked what seems an odd question:

I like to know from you, what Neal Jensen told you at Juneau about our Cape Woolley problem. As Mr. Edward N. Penetac told me, he didn't want to explain clear, what you told him, about Neal told you. It will help me what to say, when Mr. Philleo Nash make his field trip sometime this year. You probably be here with him, if you don't please write and tell me, about what Neal Jensen told you.²²⁴

Byler's response is one of the most interesting items in the AAIA archives. In it, Byler told Tiulana that he believed Area Director Bennett and Nome Area Field Representative Hollingsworth favored the Cape Woolley project:

What is holding things up is the attitude of Neal Jensen, BIA Housing Officer in Juneau, and Mason Barr, head of BIA housing in Washington. I believe Barr's attitude is a reflection of Jensen's. These men have delayed any action on the grounds that none of the King Islanders really wanted to move except Paul Tiulana. They said the King Islanders kept changing their minds because Tiulana could persuade them one time, but the next time they would say they wanted to stay at Nome.²²⁵

Both men had insisted that the no one had really thought about the move, in terms of supplies, water, etc., Byler wrote, but Hollingsworth had said that that was untrue. Byler had spoken to

²²⁴Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, to William Byler, AAIA, New York, NY, August 10, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²²⁵Executive Director William Byler, AAIA, New York, NY, to Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, August 30, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Jensen, citing the 17 heads of households who had signed on for the move, at which point Jensen changed his tack – saying no school could be provided for them at Cape Woolley. Byler concluded that Bennett and BIA Commissioner Nash did not want to overrule their subordinate experts, Jensen and Barr. Moreover, he suspected there were other motives for keeping the King Islanders in Nome:

It seems to me that there are those who want to keep the King Islanders at Nome so that the problem of administrating schools, health facilities, etc., etc., will be simplified and cheaper. (It has been argued that all the native people should eventually be moved into a few major cities such as Fairbanks, Anchorage, Nome and Barrow). I also think that some people see Nome as a dying town and fear that if the King Islanders move away, Nome will be much worse off. It is hoped by some that if the King Islanders can be kept at Nome for another year or two by throwing obstacles in their way, they will give up hope and live at Nome for the rest of their lives.²²⁶

Byler had hoped that with the 17 families signed on for a move, all that needed be done was pressure the BIA. But, he wrote, another attempt was being made to persuade the King Islanders to stay at Nome:

I refer to a letter I received from Bennett indicating that, since the Arts & Crafts Board of the Department of the Interior has offered the King Islanders a program of instruction in ivory carving, the villagers are reconsidering their move to Cape Wooley. From the beautiful ivory carving I saw and bought at Nome, the King Islanders need no help from the Arts & Crafts Board in training ivory carvers.²²⁷

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Ibid.

Juneau Acting Area Director S.W. Smith sent the same message Bennett had given to Washington a few weeks earlier. In response to questions about road improvements, Smith told his superiors that Paul Tiulana had been trying to get his people to move for some time. "However, up to the present time no definite decision has been made. The main obstacle seems to be that people do not have funds to pay the cost of constructing a new village. Also some of the Natives seem to be having difficulty in making up their mind for sure whether they do want to move to this proposed site."²²⁸

The proposed workshop that Bennett referred to came up in an August 27, 1963 meeting at Nome that BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash attended. No records from the meeting itself have been found, but it is referred to in later correspondence on the Nome workshop. According to E. Arthur Patterson, the Bureau's project development officer, the first question the King Islanders asked Nash after his speech was, "When can we move to Cape Woolley?"²²⁹ Nash told them that the cost was estimated at \$750,000 and could not be done in the immediate future. Later in the meeting the workshop proposal was presented and drew the support of those attending, including the use of buildings at the East End King Island village site.

Tiulana addressed the issue of the proposed arts and crafts workshop in his next letter to the AAIA. He saw it as a way to introduce wood and jade to the community's carvers, which would command a higher price than ivory. For that reason, he did not oppose it, because it would help prepare the King Islanders to move to Cape Woolley more economically. Nash had told the King Islanders at the meeting that the Cape Woolley project was still under study in Washington,

²²⁸ Acting Area Director S. W. Smith, BIA, Juneau, Alaska to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., Attention: Roads. August 27, 1963. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²²⁹ Projects Development Officer E. Arthur Patterson, BIA, Nome, AK, to Area Director, BIA, Juneau, AK, April 6, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

D.C. Tiulana noted that Edward Penatac did not like the idea of the Arts & Crafts Board project, reasoning that it was an attempt on the part of the BIA and local people to hold the King Islanders in Nome.

... because if we move to Cape Woolley, the town economy will drop very sharply, and they can't afford to lose us now, and others King Islanders think so to. I ask the B.I.A. official here in Nome. Would this new Arts & Crafts center will enfect (sic) our move to Cape Woolley. He told me no, its will be different project all together.²³⁰

Tiulana felt he had taken a gamble by supporting the workshop.

William Byler sent two letters to the BIA Arts & Crafts Board before receiving a reply in late 1963. In response, Arts & Crafts Board General Manager Robert Hart said the proposal was merely in the planning stages and referred Byler to the Alaska Department of Labor's Employment Security Division. A plan had been worked out by that agency, although there was no information about when or if it would be possible to get underway.²³¹ The AAIA sent two letters requesting information from the Employment Security Division (ESD) before drawing a response, itself a marvel of bureaucrat-ese. The ESD needed to identify occupations which might be adaptable to train unemployed individuals and then identify potential trainees:

The State Employment Service discharges this responsibility then and the proposal goes to the State Vocation Education Authorities for scrutiny, and development of a course curricula, instructors, and designation of a training

²³⁰Paul Tiulana, Nome, AK, to William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, September 26, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²³¹Robert G. Hart, General Manager, BIA Arts and Crafts Board, Washington, D.C., to Executive Director William Byler, AAIA, New York, NY, November 18, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

facility. When such action is completed, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor must approve and provide the funds.²³²

As yet, the ESD had determined that such a need existed, but the location of the workshop and who would take part had not been resolved.

1964

In 1964, the Bureau appeared to have had a change of heart regarding the relocation efforts. The focus appears to have shifted from the Cape Woolley proposal to the possibility of supporting a return to the island by reopening the school, making improvement on the walkways and stairways, and perhaps even constructing an airstrip. The Bureau again was uncertain as to what the King Islanders really wanted.

In January 1964, the AAIA's William Byler received a letter from U.S. Senator Bob Bartlett's office regarding a proposal that would fund a new community building at Cape Woolley. The project had been approved but postponed.

A few of the former King Islanders have expressed a desire to move from Nome to Cape Woolley, a presently uninhabited and barren spot on Alaska's northwest coast. However, it is my understanding that the BIA is unwilling to invest the \$35,000 to \$50,000 per person needed to provide adequately for the few people who would move until some evidence has been developed that the people would substantially benefit by the move.²³³

²³²G.H. Ginsberg, Assistant Employment Security Division, State of Alaska Department of Labor, Juneau, AK, to Rose Flanell, Administrative Assistant, AAIA, New York, NY, December 24, 1963. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²³³Mary Lee Council, Administrative Assistant to Senator E.L. Bartlett, Washington, D.C., to William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, January 14, 1964. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

The first item from 1964 included in the BIA's King Island file was a news clipping from the AAIA's newsletter. No article was attached, but a photo ran showing a young boy standing by a quonset hut in the east end King Island village. It was in a lengthy caption below that the AAIA referred to the "slum quarters at Nome" which also brought up the delays in the move to a new village:

In 1961 the King Islanders petitioned the BIA for relocation assistance. Those closest to the scene strongly favor the move to Cape Woolley, but in Washington months lapse into years and nothing is done. There is a growing fear that the "BIA and some local peoples in town will try all they can to hold us here, because if we move to Cape Woolley, the town economy will drop very sharply, and they can't afford to lose us now." The BIA has refused to build a school at Cape Woolley. The Johnson Administration can demonstrate the sincerity of its "unconditional war against poverty" by giving the King Islanders an opportunity to begin life anew.²³⁴

Henry Forbes followed up with a letter to Bennett, asking for any recent progress on the move. "Do you know if building materials have been made available, and have means been found for delivering them to Cape Wooley?"²³⁵ (sic)

Meanwhile, the workshop proposal for Nome was approved, along with other courses to be held at the vocational school being built in Nome. BIA Project Development Officer E.

Arthur Patterson wrote the Juneau office, informing them that since the August 27, 1963 meeting

²³⁴AAIA newsletter, February 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²³⁵Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, March 9, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

with Nash, the King Islanders had made no overt move or request to move to Cape Woolley. “The King Islanders appear to be waiting,”²³⁶ Patterson observed. Patterson cced his letter to Henry Forbes, prompting Juneau to issue a memo reminding employees of the undesirability of providing copies of inter-office correspondence to people outside the BIA.

Bennett replied to Forbes that the BIA had not found surplus materials for the Cape Woolley project, nor did it have funds to buy the materials.²³⁷ Transportation could be arranged if the construction materials were available.

The AAIA kept up the pressure on the Bureau. William Byler sent a letter to Philleo Nash in Washington, D.C. He recounted the events of the last year, adding that the King Islanders still wished to move. As for the construction materials problem, he understood it to be solved already:

On my subsequent visit to Juneau, BIA officials there gave me to understand that financing for the housing was no longer a problem since funds granted to the State by the Housing and Home Finance Administration for experimental Native housing projects could be allocated to the King Island project at Cape Woolley. It was indicated at the time that the cause for the delay was that funds were not available for the construction of a school at Cape Woolley.²³⁸

Was the BIA contemplating the construction of a school at Woolley in the immediate future? If

²³⁶Project Development Officer E. Arthur Patterson, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director, BIA, Juneau, AK, Subject: King Islanders, Nome. Proposed Workshop; Proposed Move to Cape Woolley. April 6, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. Juneau Area Office. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²³⁷Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, April 9, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²³⁸Executive Director William Byler, AAIA, New York, New York, to Commissioner Philleo Nash, BIA, Washington D.C., April 21, 1964. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

not, the AAIA was considering a nation-wide solicitation of funds to construct a school there. Would the BIA be willing to operate a school if the AAIA built a school at Woolley? “(We assume the Federal government will make available to the King Islanders funds for the construction of their housing, regardless of the source of financing for the school),” Byler added.

Byler’s letter drew an interesting response. Simply supplying materials was not the only problem, wrote Acting BIA Commissioner John Crow.²³⁹ The cost of transporting materials made building houses and a school, let alone staffing a school, very expensive – approximately \$30,000 to \$35,000 per family. Also, the Bureau now needed to focus its resources on rebuilding schools and community facilities in villages damaged by the Good Friday earthquake. Even should the AAIA construct a school at Cape Woolley, the Bureau could not guarantee it would staff the school. “We would furthermore be loath (sic) to recommend that housing funds be committed to resettlement of the King Islanders until the school situation is clarified,” he concluded.

Complicating the school matter further, Commissioner Philleo Nash was now considering reopening the King Island school, as Byler remarked in a letter to Henry Forbes. The existing school had proven safe from falling rocks, having come through the Good Friday earthquake unscathed, and King Islanders seemed to be going back to the island. Nash was considering sending geologists to study the possibility of blasting terraces into the sides of the island so the villagers would be more secure in their housing, and perhaps constructing a jetty. Byler observed:

Philleo’s proposals would obviously cost far more than the project which his
deputy says the Bureau cannot afford. If the school at King Island is reopened,

²³⁹John Crow, Acting Commissioner, BIA, Washington, D.C., to William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, May 1, 1964. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Philleo is willing to staff it, although in Crow's letter he states that the Bureau cannot possibly staff a school at Cape Woolley. This is another round in what grow to be a more and more fantastic adventure in bureaucratic bungling.²⁴⁰

Byler suggested the AAIA go over Nash's head to Assistant Secretary of the Interior John Carver. But first, they ought to wait on the latest word from Paul Tiulana. The AAIA had written Tiulana the previous month, asking if the community still wished to relocate. Neither Howard Rock, of the *Tundra Times*, nor the AAIA had heard from him. In fact, there are no letters from Tiulana in AAIA or Bureau archives after September 1963. Perhaps Tiulana had finally given up.

Nome AFR Hollingsworth met with the King Islanders in July. The meeting was concerned with outstanding debts at the Native store, but Hollingsworth mentions in his report that there were now two councils: one of those living at the island, and one of those still living at Nome.

Hollingsworth made a trip to the island by skinboat later in July. He prepared a detailed report on the island, its vegetation, birds, and marine mammals. He also assessed the condition of the village structures: walkways, stairways, homes, the cable hoist, and school - and the rocks above the village.

There is no question but that if some of the larger ones gave way they'd wipe out half of the village. A smaller one came down last winter and punched a hole in one house. It is impossible to move any of the rocks without precipitating a rock slide. A slight possibility exists that they could be anchored with cable. I doubt that anyone could state with any degree of certainty what they will do. They

²⁴⁰William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, June 3, 1964. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

appear to have been in the same state without perceptible movement for years.²⁴¹

He recommended all walkways and stairways be replaced due to rotting and wear, along with the worn-out cable hoist.

The school, however, he found in good condition except for some minor foundation work that needed to be done. The electric system needed to be rewired and a water system and bathroom needed to be installed, he wrote.

Hollingsworth also examined the top of the island, and added in his report that there was definitely room for a small airstrip, about 100 by 1200 feet, with room for approaches on either end. He recommended the Bureau look into it further if people continued to winter on the island.

At a July 8 meeting with the King Islanders in Nome, he asked for a show of hands of those who would winter there if the school reopened. Six heads of household indicated they would, and in talks afterwards, he surmised that somewhere between 15-20 school age children would be available.

Based on his visit and talks with people in Nome, Hollingsworth said he believed that Cape Woolley would be the best move for the village, but added, "A move to King Island might be preferable to letting the people remain in the mainland subject to the various influences, etc., and dissipating their carvings to bars – but again they have to adjust some time."²⁴²

Hollingsworth's report, of course, went on to the central office in Washington D.C., and also drew the attention of Alaska Senator E.L. Bartlett. Bartlett wrote Associate Commissioner James E. Officer noting that beyond the school issue, repairs to the walkways could be made, regardless of how many villagers returned. "If there is considerable influx, then an airstrip might

²⁴¹Area Field Representative R.D. Hollingsworth, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director, BIA, Juneau, AK, Subject: Narrative Report - King Island visit, July 9, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁴²Ibid.

be worth looking into,” Bartlett concluded.²⁴³

Area Director Bennett met with the King Islanders again, and responded directly to Bartlett’s questions. At the September 1 meeting a number of topics were discussed, Bennett wrote, including what would be done with school-age children whose parents returned to the island for the winter. (Either they would be enrolled at one of the Bureau boarding schools or placed in a foster home in Nome for the winter.) Other issues included outstanding debts of the Native store and individuals. Bennett said the villagers were asked to meet with Arthur Nagozruk to develop programs for submission to the Alaska Rural Development Agency. ARDA could foot the cost of labor for improvements either on the island or in the Nome village and the BIA in turn would “undertake the responsibility of making every effort to provide materials which would be approved for the Rural Development Agency.”²⁴⁴ Bennett informed those present that their request for an airstrip at King Island had to be referred to the State Division of Aviation.

The Bureau did contact the Division of Aviation, and in return, Director Lars Johnson asked for more information on King Island – its population, industry, resources, property ownership and the like. Johnson advised that his office would not be able to carry out a site investigation until some time in 1965.²⁴⁵

John Angusuc, president of the King Island council on the island, wrote Lars Johnson, proposing two possible sites for an airstrip on top of the island. An airstrip, Angusuc said, would

²⁴³Senator E.L. Bartlett, U.S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Washington D.C., to Associate Commissioner James E. Officer, BIA, Washington, D.C., September 3, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁴⁴Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Nome, AK to Senator E.L. Bartlett, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., September 8, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁴⁵Director Lars L. Johnson, Alaska Division of Aviation, Anchorage, AK to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, Re: King Island Airport, September 15, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

allow for better communication with the mainland as well as regular mail service and transportation.²⁴⁶

Acting Nome Area Field Representative Lawrence B. Welch reviewed Angusuc's proposal and map, and decided that Site No. 1 would be the best choice. It was placed more favorably to the direction of prevailing winds, had ample room for clear approaches and would require less effort to construct. The island, he noted, had an abundance of marine resources that could become available to mainland King Islanders if an airstrip were constructed. "It is not immediately known whether or not the airstrip on the island may be an incentive for more King Islanders to return to the island. But it is a possibility," Welch wrote.²⁴⁷

At the same time that the Bureau was looking into improvements at the island – perhaps even considering reopening the school, some were trying to discourage villagers from returning. Consider again John Burkhardt's October 1 letter to his superiors stating, "We recognize that we cannot prevent people from returning to the island but we do intend to realistically discourage them as much as possible."²⁴⁸ Burkhardt had been charged with dealing with the King Island Native Store order for the winter. The problem lay in figuring out how much food and necessities would be necessary. The BIA did not wish to repeat the situation that occurred in the previous year when more people returned to the island than were expected, necessitating an air drop of food.

²⁴⁶King Island Council President John Angusuc, King Island, AK to Director, Alaska Division of Aviation Lars Johnson, Anchorage, AK, October 5, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁴⁷Acting Area Field Representative Lawrence B. Welch, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, October 5, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁴⁸Acting Area Representative John Burkhardt, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director, BIA, Juneau, AK, Subject: Report on King Island situation, October 1, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

In early October, Area Director Bennett again addressed a report to Senator Bartlett.²⁴⁹ In it, he offered comment on the issues brought up at the September meeting with the King Island people. Only one child was to return to King Island that winter; all the other children from the families returning to the island had been enrolled in boarding schools or at Nome. An invoice was being processed for the unpaid grocery bill covering the cost of the food that had airlifted to the island the previous year. Purchase orders had been issued to supplement the store's inventory so there would be enough food available for those returning to the island for winter. Discussions were being held with those in debt to the Native store. King Island leaders were meeting with Arthur Nagozruk, Jr. on rural development programs to fund stairways, and other improvements the village had requested, and to justify a proposal that the Alaska Department of Aviation build an airstrip at the island.

Bennett forwarded along Burkhart's October report, and told Bartlett that unless other developments came to the attention of the Juneau office this would be his final report to the senator on the matter.

Only 16 King Islanders returned for the winter at the island, Nome AFR Lawrence Welch reported a few weeks later.²⁵⁰ One child returned with them to the island, and the rest of the children of the families were admitted to boarding school. One problem arose that could not be remedied before the North Star embarked. The island had no working radio, and thus would be completely cut off until later in the winter when the ice might permit a landing. Frances Ross, the researcher working on an acculturation study of the King Islanders, had helped with preparations

²⁴⁹Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Senator E.L. Bartlett, United States Senate, Washington D.C., October 6, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁵⁰Acting Area Field Representative Lawrence Welch, BIA, Nome, AK to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, October 15, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

for their return, securing medical supplies from the Nome hospital and advising the Bureau on the store requisition. Welch included in his report a list of all people returning to the island.

Plans for an engineering investigation for an airstrip by the state Division of Aviation ground to halt in October of 1964. Director of Aviation Johnson informed John Angusuc, the President of the King Island Council at King Island, that the venture was to be abandoned after the publication of an October 5 article in the *Tundra Times*:

For one, Mr. Paul Tiulana, identified as the chief and leader of the King Island people, is apparently attempting to secure assistance in establishing more permanent housing for the King Island people at Nome. Also, it is reported that no one resides on King Island year-round and that only three families, or a total of seventeen persons, returned to King Island this year. It appears, therefore, that King Island might become uninhabited, particularly if Mr. Tiulana is successful in obtaining assistance in establishing more permanent housing at Nome.²⁵¹

Besides, Johnson added, what little information the DOA had on the island led him to believe that construction of a landing strip would be economically prohibitive, at least for the next several years. Juneau Area Director sent a copy of his letter on to Washington, D.C., to keep his superiors apprized of the situation.

The article in question, "In a Shanty-town Amid Poverty, King Island Chief Explains Dilemma, Need for Moving to Another Location," did not in fact say that Tiulana was looking for more permanent housing in Nome. Instead, it detailed the terrible conditions the King Islanders were living under at East End and the combination of factors that had led to them being there. It also described their unsuccessful attempts so far to move to Cape Woolley.

²⁵¹Director, Division of Aviation, Lars L. Johnson, Department of Public Works, Anchorage, AK, to Mr. John Angusuc, King Island, AK, October 29, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

“Since that time, Tiulana says a great number of officials have contacted him and the village on the move,” wrote Thomas Snapp. “They have many different ideas which they discuss and they tell us they think they will be able to help us but they go away and we never see them again.”²⁵² Snapp noted that in the years since the Islanders had proposed to move, many other groups in Alaska had been given government assistance and moved.

The second half of the article appeared in the October 26 edition of the *Tundra Times*. In it Tiulana explained the reasons why the people wished to make the move to Cape Woolley and the problems they had had in getting assistance. “But thus far all efforts have failed. Numerous officials have visited the villagers and discussed the move. Some officials have given the villagers hope; others discouragement,” Snapp wrote. “The travel expenses of officials alone would, no doubt, equal the cost of materials for the housing project.”²⁵³ According to Tiulana, Snapp wrote, BIA officials had been particularly hostile and indicated that the people wanted something for nothing. “If we had material and transportation, we wouldn’t even ask for their help,” Tiulana said. Compounding the problem was that the King Island village at Nome had no legal status. The IRA had organized at King Island, so there was some question as to the status of the group at Nome.

Another official had cited the divided loyalties between those wanting to return to the island and those who wish to move to Cape Woolley. Those who favored the island, Tiulana countered, had said they would follow the main group if it chose to go to Cape Woolley. But Tiulana pointed to the new “War on Poverty” programs created by the Johnson administration as a possible way of ending the impasse.

²⁵²Thomas Snapp. “King Island Chief Explains Dilemma, Need for Moving to Another Location.” *Tundra Times*, October 5, 1964.

²⁵³Thomas Snapp. “King Islanders Caught in Poverty Dilemma.” *Tundra Times*, October 26, 1964.

But the airstrip proposal was not dead. In late November, Area Director Bennett asked for assistance from the Department of Interior's Geological Survey. The safety factor at the island remained the main concern, so Bennett proposed that a geologist visit the island with a BIA representative to assess the safety issues, make recommendations to improve the situation, and provide any other information that would help the Bureau come to a final decision on whether to reestablish a school on the island:

The King Island people have been concerned about this school closure because the island was their home and it offered them many resources for the continuation of a subsistence economy and their way of life... There is continuous agitation that the school be re-established at King Island so the villagers can move from the outskirts of Nome, where they are living under slum conditions, to their original home.²⁵⁴

In late November, AAIA staffers met with Secretary of the Interior John Carver, Byler reported in a letter to Henry Forbes.²⁵⁵ The subject of King Island came up. Carver apparently remarked, "I wondered whether we would be able to get out of this meeting without a reference to King Island." Carver's assistant, Byler said, had introduced the subject with a great deal of the misinformation that had circulated in the Bureau for the last several years:

I succeeded in quashing this misinformation and urged Carver to develop an official, high-level position on the King Island question, and suggested that a 3-man Task Force might be one approach. He agreed that this question must be

²⁵⁴Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Geological Survey, Department of Interior, Menlo Park, CA, November 25, 1964. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁵⁵William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, to Henry S. Forbes, Milton, MA, November 30, 1964. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

settled once and for all, and seemed to imply that he personally saw no reason why the King Island Eskimos should not move to Cape Woolley. He then turned to Newt Edwards and, in what I took to be a rather sharp tone, told Newt Edwards to tell Philleo Nash that he, Carver, considered the King Island question one of top priority, and wanted Bureau action immediately.

1965

Both the BIA's and AAIA's archived files on King Island grow thin in 1965. However, one item of great importance first appears in this year – the BIA's contract with Francis Ross to essentially figure out what would be best for the King Island people. Ross was to receive \$3000 for her report in three installments.

BIA Associate Commissioner James E. Officer says as much in a January 8 letter to Ross in Seattle.

In a nutshell, we are interested in knowing whether there is something which we can and should be doing to help the King Island community survive – with reasonable standards of living for its members – whether on the island, in Nome, or at some other site. The community has roots in two locations at present. Would we be doing the King Islanders a favor by helping them to set down roots at still another spot?²⁵⁶

Officer asked for a wide variety of information, beginning with comparison of the physical features of Nome, Cape Woolley and King Island itself. “How do these affect transportation and communication?” he asked. Also needed was a description of economic pursuits, migration

²⁵⁶ Associate Commissioner James E. Officer, BIA, Washington D.C., to Dr. Frances Ross, Seattle, WA, January 8, 1965. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8.JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

patterns, social organization, religious life, and the material culture of the people at King Island and Nome. “How would these be affected by relocation to Cape Wooley (sic)?”

Officer also wanted to know about the leadership patterns of the group – who were their spokesmen and what was the range of their influence? What was the general attitude towards relocation, and who favored living where and why? What were the general attitudes towards education, and who favored being educated in a given place and why? How did they feel about sending their children to Southeast for school, or leaving them to be educated in Nome. Officer asked if Nome would continue to be an economic factor in the life of the people no matter where they settled, and if so, why?

Finally, and most tellingly, Officer asked for Ross’ recommendations about what should be undertaken on behalf of the King Islanders. “Indicate how much support you feel such a program would receive from the Eskimos themselves,” Officer wrote. “If your recommendations do not involve resettlement at Cape Wooley (sic), how do you feel Paul Tiulana and his followers would react to them?” Officer requested that her report be complete by April 15 to help the BIA in regards to planning, especially in respect to schooling. Juneau Area Director Bennett sent a letter to Ross offering the cooperation of the Nome and Juneau offices in compiling her report. He said her work would prove of great value because of her knowledge and experience with the King Island people.²⁵⁷

In March, the AAIA’s Dr. Henry Forbes again wrote John Carver, asking him to use his personal influence to jumpstart the Cape Woolley project. The letter is a recitation of the previous three years bureaucratic go-round. “I have written to Commissioner Nash on the

²⁵⁷Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK to Dr. Frances Ross, Seattle, WA, January 21, 1965. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

following dates:- April 26, and May 25; 1964, January 2, March 25, November 7, and December

4. I have received no answer from him to any of these letters,” Forbes wrote.²⁵⁸

The paper trail goes silent again until July of 1965. Dr. Henry S. Forbes again wrote Juneau, asking for an update.

I wonder if you can give me, briefly, any recent news from Nome about the King Islanders and the proposed resettlement? In Washington D.C. the Int. Dept. (BIA, BLM, & other bureaus) have been dragging their feet for 4 years, and I think many of the King Islanders have become discouraged; Paul Tiulana does not write to Howard Rock or me anymore. I want more facts on the present situation before appealing to Senator Bartlett to apply pressure.²⁵⁹

Bennett told Forbes in response that there was no new information, other than the families who had spent the winter at the island had returned to Nome. Bennett said he had asked the Nome AFR to contact the people and advise him of any changes in their plans.

When Bennett contacted the Nome AFR, Robert McLean, he asked him to make discreet inquiries about their feelings on a move, but cautioned McLean not to make any issue of it. “I understand that because of the tourist business this summer, which went very well, agitation for the move to Cape Woolley had died down,” Bennett wrote.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA to John Carver, Under Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., March 19, 1965. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²⁵⁹Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, July 3, 1965. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. Forbes followed up on the subject again in a letter to Bennett on August 22. RG 75, Box 2, 04/02/13 (1), JAO. Mission Correspondence ca 1935-1947. North Star III. File: 123: Confidential – Moving Villages (See Housing Files 123) 1965-67. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁶⁰Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett, to Robert McLean, Nome Area Field Representative, August 31, 1965. Records of the BIA, RG 75, Box 2, 04/02/13 (1), JAO. Mission Correspondence ca 1935-1947. North Star III. File: 123: Confidential – Moving Villages (See Housing Files 123) 1965-67. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

In response, McLean said he had discussed the issue with Tiulana and that Bennett was correct in his opinion that Tiulana was the prime mover among the people for relocation. Furthermore, Tiulana had expressed the opinion that someone else in the BIA had held the opinion that it was only he who wanted the move and thus, had influenced the Bureau in not moving them:

The remark was made that also that when the Bureau built a school they will move. It appears that they may have felt at one time or another that the Bureau had promised to build them a school. This was due to the fact, he said, that they would not have moved from King Island had the Bureau not closed the school. From what I can gather they feel that if the Bureau had lived up to its promise of building a school they would have been at Cape Woolley by now.²⁶¹

The people, McLean wrote, were torn between their “inherent” desire to hunt and fish and the advantages of work and services available in Nome. There had been no agitation for the move since his arrival, and he had tried not to raise the question, not wanting to influence them. The good tourist season may also have helped in controlling the agitation for a move, he observed. McLean did not know how many King Islanders planned to return to the island that fall, but he said he had counseled Tiulana to weigh the advantages and disadvantages:

...not only for their personal wants or needs but that they must go further and think of the community as a whole and the needs of their children who are growing up and being educated in the ways of our society. I feel personally that

²⁶¹Nome Area Field Representative Robert McLean, to Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett, September 21, 1965. Records of the BIA, RG 75, Box 2, 04/02/13(1), JAO. Mission Correspondence ca 1935-1947. North Star III. File 123: Confidential - Moving Villages (See Housing Files 123) 1965-67. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

if a 'ghost is not raised of moving' that the King Islanders will adjust and settle down.²⁶²

In conclusion, McLean noted that the King Island people were in a period of adjustment, "and it is quite true it is a painful one." But he felt that the Bureau could best help them by improving their living conditions in their present location at East End.

Bennett forwarded their correspondence to BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash in Washington, D.C. The report, Bennett said, "seems to bear out the conclusion that this office has had for some time in that Mr. Paul Tiulana appears to be the prime mover, and that his desire for leadership recognition motivates him to have a village of his own."²⁶³ In November, Officer contacted Bennett to inform him that the issue of a move to Cape Woolley appeared to be dead based on a recent conversation with Frances Ross.²⁶⁴ Ross had told him that she would have to revise much of the report she was preparing for the Bureau on the basis of her visit during the summer to Nome. The vocational training program in Nome had been of great assistance to Eskimo men living on the outskirts of Nome and the tourism industry was very healthy. Bennett passed the word on to the Nome office.

1966

The first correspondence in this year comes again from Dr. Henry Forbes. Again, he had written the BIA asking for an update on the resettlement of the King Islanders. He addressed his letter to Robert L. Bennett, who had recently been appointed BIA Commissioner in Washington,

²⁶²Ibid.

²⁶³Juneau Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA Commissioner Philleo Nash, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1965. Records of the BIA, RG 75, Box 2, 04/02/13(1), JAO. Mission Correspondence ca 1934-47. North Star III. File 123: Confidential - Moving villages (See Housing Files 123) 1965-67. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

²⁶⁴Associate Commissioner James E. Officer, BIA, Washington, D.C., to Area Director Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Juneau, AK, November 16, 1965. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

D.C. Bennett told Forbes that it had not been possible for the Bureau to obtain a consensus of opinion among the King Islanders, but that the Nome AFR had been alerted to the proposal and held several meetings with them. “You may be sure that once a consensus is obtained we will make every effort within our limitations on funds and manpower to accommodate the King Islanders,” Bennett wrote.²⁶⁵ The hesitancy on the part of some of the group, he said, may in part have stemmed from the tourism opportunities associated with the upcoming 1967 Centennial in Alaska.

Forbes’ response was quick. The project had been agreed to in general terms for years, and a village site staked out – Bennett himself had thought it possible in 1962. But no push from higher up had come. “At that time the King Islanders at Nome were practically unanimous for the move. Now, as Howard Rock reported, they are disorganized and many have gone back to the island.”²⁶⁶

In follow-up to Forbes’ query, Associate Commissioner James Officer responded in April. He noted the recent work by USGS on the island, and in particular the engineer’s opinion that the condemnation of the school was unjustified – and the possibilities for a winter-use airstrip. However, the BIA was still waiting for the report from Frances Ross. “We are hoping that with her report and the information from the U.S. Geological Survey, we can finally arrive at a conclusion about any possible resettlement of the King Islanders at Cape Wooley (sic),” Officer wrote. “We do not intend to try to revive any interest in the Cape Wooley (sic) settlement until we have the information referred to above. As you are no doubt aware, the present villagers at

²⁶⁵ Acting Commissioner Robert L. Bennett, BIA, Washington, D.C., to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, AAIA, Milton, MA, April 6, 1966. RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK. This item is also held in the AAIA archives at Princeton.

²⁶⁶ Dr. Henry S. Forbes, Chairman, Alaska Committee, AAIA, Milton, MA, to William Bennett, Acting Commissioner, BIA, Washington, D.C., April 9, 1966. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Nome are by no means agreed on a move to Cape Wooley.”

Forbes stayed on Bennett, writing again in August 1966 for news of the King Islanders. “I have received a letter from one of them but have not yet received the report by Miss Ross, University of Michigan, that the B.I.A. promised to send me.”²⁶⁷ Forbes, along with Alaska Senator E.L. Bartlett, was waiting for the report and any decision the Bureau had made based upon it:

Lest you forget I now repeat: it is five years since Secretary Udall, Carver and Nash promised to do all they could to help these Eskimos establish a village on land of their own at Cape Woolley, or other acceptable site, on the mainland. The recent closure of the Beltz Vocational School at Nome certainly does not help matters.²⁶⁸

The trail of paperwork grows even thinner in the following year.

1967

Most of what little archival material found concerns the missing Ross report. In January, the AAIA’s William Byler asked a subordinate to check in with the BIA regarding her report.²⁶⁹

“The King Island situation is pure farce,” Lazarus replied.²⁷⁰ At Philleo Nash’s insistence, he wrote, the Bureau had employed Ross to make a study and report. According to the

²⁶⁷Dr. Henry S. Forbes, Chairman, Alaska Committee, AAIA, Milton, MA, to William Bennett, Commissioner, BIA, Washington, D.C., August 29, 1966. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

²⁶⁹William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, to Arthur Lazarus, Jr., AAIA, New York, NY, January 23, 1967. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

²⁷⁰Arthur Lazarus, Jr. AAIA, New York, NY, to William Byler, Executive Director, AAIA, New York, NY, January 25, 1967. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

BIA, she had worked on it for two years, and arrived in Washington, D.C., where the Bureau provided her an office in which to finish it. She had submitted a rough outline of a report which was not particularly comprehensive:

According to Jim Officer, Miss Ross appeared from time to time at her office (but not every day), and seemed to be working intensively. Towards the end of the year, however, it was noticed that she had not been in for a while, and quite frankly, she has now wholly disappeared. The Bureau does not even have a first draft and never expects to have one.²⁷¹

The remainder of the AAIA archived material is made up of letters regarding the whereabouts of Frances Ross. Apparently, they never succeeded in finding her. It is not known if she ever completed her report.

The last item in the AAIA holdings is a letter received from the Executive Officer of the Community Action Program, Office of Economic Opportunity, in Washington, D.C.²⁷² Dr. Forbes had written him regarding the situation of the King Islanders. While his office wished the best for the King Islanders, F. William Ling wrote, it was the responsibility of the Department of Interior to alleviate their housing problems.

The Woolley project was apparently dead. The King Islanders would remain in Nome.

Impacts of the move to Nome

The most obvious impact of their resettlement at Nome was a change in their material circumstances. The new settlement outside of town was called King Island village. It was

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²F. William Ling, Executive Officer, Community Action Program, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C., to Dr. Henry S. Forbes, Chairman, Alaska Committee, AAIA, New York, NY, September 23, 1967. Box 184, File 6, King Island, 1961-1967, AAIA archived papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

without electricity, running water, or garbage service.

Electricity would come to the village when the power was extended to the navigation towers about three miles from town. Edward Muktoyuk remembers wiring the houses in the village when the project took place. (Sewer lines existed in Nome itself, but only a few homeowners could afford to hook up to the service. Even at the end of the decade, many Native homes in town were still on the 'honey bucket' system because of the expense.) The East End housing, shacks really by every description, was inadequate for the winter and there was not enough room for everyone. Some made use of discarded Gold Rush era buildings. The National Guard eventually donated World War II era quonset huts to help out. The quonset huts were sectioned off so that two families could make use of the space.

The Association on American Indian Affairs called the East End village a "slum" in its February 1964 newsletter. The AAIA was trying to draw attention to their efforts at relocating themselves:

Stranded in slum quarters at Nome, 100 King Island Eskimos are seeking Federal assistance to establish a new village at Cape Woolley, 45 miles northwest. The world-famous ivory carvers were forced to abandoned their traditional home on King Island and move to Nome when the BIA closed the elementary school in 1958. The children soon learned a lesson about life in one of the world's most appalling ghettos.²⁷³

The elders interviewed in 2001 and 2002 did not speak of their experience in the Nome King Island village in terms of hardship or suffering. Overall, they do not seem to be inclined to complain about much.

²⁷³RG 75, 05/05/04 (5) Box 8. JAO. Mission Correspondence: HIP Files 1953-1975. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

But Thomas Snapp, the Assistant Editor of the *Tundra Times*, visited the East End village in 1964. Snapp visited homes with Paul Tiulana and ran a two-part article on them in October 1964. Snapp referred to the housing he saw as a “shanty-town,” remarking upon the basic inadequacy and overcrowdedness of the dwellings:

“There are ten who live here.” Tiulana said as we went into a home about 15 by 20 ft. in size. Most of the space was in one room, a combination living room, bed room kitchen and dining room. Two very small rooms about the size of closets without lights were bed rooms, containing tiered wooden bunks. There was no plumbing, in fact, the only convenience was electricity. Linoleum covered the floor, but there was apparently no insulation and the walls appeared thin. The windows lacked facings. In the corner was a small wood stove and on a shelf nearby was a few items of food.²⁷⁴

In an afterword to her children’s book based on the King Island move, *Goodbye My Island*, Jean Rogers described the real-life aftermath of the resettlement at Nome:

The closing of the King Island school in 1964 (sic) marked the end of a way of life for the Islanders. For a year or two longer a few did return to the island for the winter, but gradually the abandoned World War II huts in Nome in which they had camped summers became their permanent homes. The story is not a happy one. In ten years these buildings became miserable slums. The damp and crowded living quarters fostered the return of tuberculosis, which had been wiped

²⁷⁴Thomas Snapp. “In a Shanty-Town Amid Poverty - King Island Chief Explains Dilemma, Need for Moving to Another Location.” *Tundra Times*, October 5, 1964.

out by a vigorous decade of health service and preventative care during the fifties. There was little work, and few of the islanders had good jobs.²⁷⁵

By the time Joseph Senungetuk published his autobiography, *Give or Take a Century*,²⁷⁶ in 1971, some changes had come to the village. Senungetuk wrote that some families had managed to make improvements and repairs, although newer homes were few in number. House designs remained small in order to keep heating bills down.

The people who remained behind in 1959 were not prepared to overwinter in Nome. The Nome social worker, Elsie Smith, had noted in her September report that there would be more need for the BIA's general assistance program, because ivory carving would be their only means of support during the winter. Usually, the King Islanders made enough money to buy provisions and then head back to a subsistence lifestyle at the island. Remaining in Nome would require more money for goods they didn't necessarily need at the island. One such example, kerosene for lighting, which replaced the seal oil lamps used at the island. Many homes at East End relied on wood stoves fired by driftwood for heat, and later on, stove oil. Water, if not hauled personally, would be delivered for a charge.

Unfortunately, they ended up in Nome at time when the local economy was in terrible shape. Moreover, it was not a good time to get wage work, because most available wage work was seasonal: in the mining industry, construction, and long shoring. Cecilia Muktoyuk confirmed that it was not easy at first.

NB: Moving to Nome, was it financially, money-wise, difficult to move here?

CM: Yes.

²⁷⁵Jean Rogers. *Goodbye, My Island*. Anchorage and Portland: Alaska Northwest Books, 1983, 81. Rogers gets a the facts of the story wrong (the date of the closure, the way it happened) but develops a moving account of a fictional young King Islander, Esther Atoolik, and her sadness at leaving the island.

²⁷⁶Joseph Senungetuk. *Give or Take a Century*. San Francisco: The Indian Historical Press, 1971.

NB: I mean, I imagine you'd need different stuff and you had all your stuff out there.

CM: Yeah, it's real hard. First time we stay here, ain't got no job. He's only carving. I sew.

NB: Slippers?

CM: Slippers. Yeah. It's very hard before he started to go to work.²⁷⁷

Writing about the 1960 economy, Area Social Worker Spartz said, "... the situation is very poor and will probably get worse. I learned during my stay in Nome that economic activity was in a bad way, with practically no construction, little road building in which Natives were employed, and continuing decreased operations in mining."²⁷⁸

The situation did not improve much with the passage of time, as indicated by Bureau reports:

Those in the Seward-Peninsula-Nome-Norton Sound area appear to have had less work in 1965, than during the summer of 1964 and were more affected by the lack of jobs and unemployment benefits than the people of Kotzebue and adjacent coastal and river villages. Storms and unstable ice conditions also appeared to play a part, as poor hunting kills have been reported in nearly all coastal areas...²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷Muktoyuk, Cecilia and Edward. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 2 March, 2001.

²⁷⁸"Report on Field Visit to Nome, July 24 thru July 28, 1961." RG75, Box 11 05/04/09 (3), Records of the BIA. JAO Correspondence. Mission Correspondence Social Services 1964-1969, File 720.81 Field Trip Reports by Area Social Worker and Asst. Area Social Worker 1/16/57 to 11/12/69. NARA, Anchorage, AK. Spartz reported a 93 percent increase in welfare expenditures in the Nome area between 1960 and 1961.

²⁷⁹Supervisory Social Worker Robert Davis, Nome, AK to Area Director, JAO, January 18, 1966. RG 75, Box 110, 04/02/14 (1) Records of the BIA. JAO. Mission Correspondence. 1956-68. File: 210 Budget by District Office. NARA, Anchorage, AK.

By most accounts, the Nome economy did not really improve until late in the decade. Even today, unemployment rates in Nome remain well above the norm in comparison to other parts of the country; in village Alaska, the situation is worse.

There did seem to be some prejudice against the King Islanders in Nome. A slur, “K.I.” still can be heard occasionally in Nome, some 40 years later.²⁸⁰ No one can tell you exactly what it means, of course.

Joe Senungetuk mentioned friction between King Island children and others in *Give or Take a Century*. Senungetuk’s father brought the family to Nome from the village of Wales in 1951. Not long after arriving, a young boy his age filled him in on Nome life, “It turned out that he had no playmates in this part of Nome, since he told of having to watch out for those “K.I.s” (King Islanders), whom all Nome school kids looked down on, and who themselves ganged together for protection from other gangs.”²⁸¹

Later in the book, he added that, “During 1950-59, as a student in the Nome public schools, I was beaten by half-breed boys for being an Eskimo, and personally witnessed the discrimination against the King Island children.”²⁸²

In addition to prejudice specifically against the King Islanders, in 1960, Nome was not much different than other parts of the country in terms of racial relations. It is not risking ‘presentism’ to point out that this was a time in America before the civil rights movement had blossomed and brought changes to the social fabric of the nation. Joseph Senungetuk described

²⁸⁰In 1992, when I moved to Nome, I heard that particular epithet from a white local.

²⁸¹Joe Senungetuk, 116-117.

²⁸²Ibid, 170. Senungetuk notes that the newest group to move into Nome, the St. Lawrence Islanders, received similar treatment.

his father's dilemma, of the choices between remaining in the village of Wales or going to Nome in 1951:

He knew about the dangers in Nome. He was dead set against drinking. There was the danger in the possible bad influences upon his children. And there was the other part of Nome life – the unemployment, inhuman poverty, drop-out rates from school, the unspoken but distinct racism which alienates the Nome non-alcoholic. There is also the Nome average middle-class worker, and the overt religious bias against the ignorant but not unhappy Eskimo who is soon identified as unreliable, unproductive, spending his welfare checks on booze, starving his children, and just plain “being an Eskimo.”²⁸³

A distinction can be made, however, between the experience of Senungetuk's family and others who came to Nome from the villages and the King Island experience. For the latter, the move and its accompanying changes were largely involuntary.

Tom Ellanna, a King Islander whose family moved to Nome permanently in 1948, remembers fights between them and other children, “Prejudice was not just between whites and the Eskimos. It was also within the Eskimos with each other. To the Natives that were already here, we were, they're the ones that called us K.I.'s. It wasn't really the whites that were calling us that.” Ellanna confirmed that there were fights between different groups of children.²⁸⁴

Younger King Islanders remember encountering prejudice. “It was by everybody. It was mostly being called a K.I. or a King Islander and it still goes on today,” said Renee Carlisle. “I know, I hear it from my kids. I hear it from other kids.”²⁸⁵

²⁸³Ibid, 108.

²⁸⁴Ellanna, Tom. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 7 January, 2002.

²⁸⁵Carlisle, Renee. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 4 January, 2002.

Janet Carlisle, Renee's sister-in-law, said she remembers encounters from high school. "It was mostly in high school that I felt it," Carlisle said. "Anywhere else, I, my mom was in the public eye for a lot of years, she was a waitress at the roadhouse, so there wasn't a whole lot of, besides high school, there wasn't a lot of prejudice."²⁸⁶ She didn't remember any physical intimidation. "Oh, teasing, you know, telling me 'You K.I.' or 'You Native.' Just words, I never was physically harmed."

Gabriel Muktoyuk, who brought his family to Nome in 1963, did not remember instances of hostility but said that the move to Nome had an effect on the community nonetheless:

NB: Was the town receptive to you moving in? Were people in town cool to you?

GM: Yeah, a lot of Natives they were pretty receptive, and us, who are brought up out there, you know we're just like home out there, and when we came here it's altogether different, lifestyle and we're all shy. Shyness is what gets us.²⁸⁷

When asked how they were treated by Nome people after moving in, Cecilia Muktoyuk replied:

NB: How did the Nome people treat everybody who moved in? Were they kind of welcoming?

CM: Maybe some of em'. Some of em' are different.

NB: Yeah? How so?

CM: Some of em' are friendly.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶Carlisle, Janet. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 4 January 2002.

²⁸⁷Muktoyuk, Gabriel. Interview by author. Nome, AK, 1 March 2001.

²⁸⁸Cecilia and Edward Muktoyuk interview. Anthropologist Deanna Kingston noted that Cecilia's response follows a cultural rule, of sorts, in which people do not criticize others publicly.

The Long-Term Effects of the Move: Alcohol, Subsistence, Language and Culture

*Just like everything start to change. Like from alcohol, abuse kids, abuse their wife, from alcohol. It's very different, changed people.*²⁸⁹

– Cecilia Muktoyuk, 2001

Among those interviewed in 2001 and 2002, the most frequently cited effect of the resettlement was the creep of alcoholism into the lives of the King Islanders who remained in Nome. The problem of alcoholism in Nome in particular, and in Alaska in general, is so widely known that it seems unnecessary to do more than acknowledge it. In the present day, crimes in which alcohol played a factor constitute the overwhelming majority of cases that go through the Nome Court system. The city, in the mid-90s, spent nearly \$1 million, out of a \$6 million annual budget, on a police force which largely spent its time cleaning up after people who had consumed too much alcohol. The social cost of alcohol abuse in Nome, even in the present day, is staggering. But it is also commonly understood that the situation in 2003 is far better than that in the previous decades.

We're going down real fast. And, the old-timers that really hunt and know how to survive on the island, they're all gone now. We lose, we're getting down real fast and the problem was alcohol. That's what most of the trouble we have when we move in. Before, they never use it much on the island while the missionary priest was out there.²⁹⁰

It was not just the isolation that kept alcoholism from making inroads into King Island life. Part of the reason was the inherent challenge of just living there, said Tom

Ellanna:

²⁸⁹Cecilia Muktoyuk.

²⁹⁰Edward Muktoyuk.

Alcoholism didn't really start occurring until after the people moved here from the island. It, alcohol was used, but it was very taboo thing to have it out there at the island. If you're going to have alcohol out there, you were pretty much, like, stay away from the island if you're going to be using alcohol. There is no room for you to bring your mistakes to the people. People did not want to deal with you if you have alcohol in that area. There's too much danger, of, of somebody to try and live out there that cannot have any common sense on how to even just to walk there, you know.²⁹¹

Ellanna said it wasn't the stress of living in Nome, but the widespread alcoholism already there that was the problem:

TE: There was some, for the people that used to go back to the island, but they were good enough to know if they stayed here in town, they would not been able to survive at all due to alcoholism.

NB: They would pretty much fall into it and not make it?

TE: Right. So they were pretty much like to stay out, go back to the island and stay there. Then they knew they would not have to deal with alcohol at all, nine, ten months out of the year. But those that stayed here would not have to worry about... the life being so hard... not as harsh as the island was.²⁹²

Subsistence

It's different altogether. If you learn how to do subsistence out on the island it's a real small island, about 2 and ½ miles that way, and ice moving all the time.

You have to go out on the moving ice and know what you're doing while you're

²⁹¹Tom Ellanna.

²⁹²Ibid.

*subsistence hunting. You hunt seals, oogruk, walrus, polar bear out on the ice. And a lot of that knowledge is, I think they, we're gonna lose it because we don't go out there winter-time.*²⁹³

– Gabriel Muktoyuk, 2001

Resettlement at Nome meant changes in subsistence patterns, diet, and in the long-term, culture. Gabriel Muktoyuk, Edward Muktoyuk, Sr., and Tom Ellanna all talked about the differences in hunting out of Nome. Instead of moving ice, the area around Nome had a lot of more shore ice. While they no longer had to worry as much about currents, there was less game in and around Nome, due to the larger population. The landfast shore ice builds up more at Nome, extending further, making it harder to get out to open leads where seals are found. Many opted to travel all the way to Cape Woolley, a place they had always used, and where the hunting is better. However, the area is prone to strong winds and ground storms that can make travel hazardous in the winter. In 1995, a party en route to Cape Woolley became lost in a ground storm and one man died.

“Out there you could do, subsistence hunting all year long, or all winter long,” Gabriel Muktoyuk explained. “Whereas it’s limited here due to, long, due to some places where you want to go is too far away if you don’t have a snowmachine. Woolley Lagoon is the next closest thing that they could go to but, gosh, it’s always windy in the winter time over there.”²⁹⁴

“But the game was not that plentiful, as to where at the island, sea mammal hunting is kind of way of life out there at all times,” Ellanna said. “You know, you can see, at the island, you can always pretty much know exactly where they could be at, I mean, where to be looking

²⁹³Gabriel Muktoyuk interview.

²⁹⁴Gabriel Muktoyuk interview.

for.”²⁹⁵

The move contributed to an increased reliance upon store bought foods, although in the early years at East End, residents could look forward to food arriving with their family members who had wintered on the island. Ellanna, whose family moved to Nome in 1948, recalled:

Subsistence food was pretty much always missed by the people here in town that were living here in town. We’re always looking forward for the people who come here for the summer from King Island and we knew they would bring some good Eskimo food with them back from there.²⁹⁶

The move to Nome also meant much less of a chance of killing a polar bear. King Island and other Inupiat people specialized in hunting whales, seals, walrus and polar bear. Seal and walrus were the most important animals to be hunted. Seals did not just provide meat and skins, but blubber, which in turn provided oil, a preservative and source of light and heat. Walrus provided meat, blubber, and the skins for the umiaq. However, in these societies where most men were competent hunters, killing a polar bear was the most prestigious kill a man could make.

The most recent scholarly work published on the topic came from Sergei Bogojavlensky in 1973. Bogojavlensky carried out his research in the villages of Little Diomed, King Island and Wales in the late 1960s. In “Polar Bears, Walrus Hides, and Eskimo Solidarity,” he described how the ceremonies the King Islanders held to celebrate a successful polar bear hunt helped overcome community factionalism. For King Island’s hunters, the polar bear held the highest status of all the animals harvested. The ceremony to celebrate a successful polar bear hunt, *Anirsaak*, celebrated the departures of a “placated” bear’s soul and its eventual return in another bear’s body. Wrote Bogojavlensky:

²⁹⁵Tom Ellanna interview.

²⁹⁶Ibid.

By unanimous agreement, the most glorious of all Bering Strait occasions is the ceremonial observance of a polar bear kill. Its joyousness was said by one King Islander to be “Much more than Christmas!” To kill a polar bear is the highest hunting honor; polar bear kills are tallied and the hunters keep mental records of one another’s successes over the year.²⁹⁷

By the time of Bogojavlensky’s writing, the King Islanders and other Inupiat had used firearms for polar bear hunting for roughly a century. The hunt itself, he noted, was exceptionally dangerous and required great stamina. “Contrary to popular conceptions, polar bears usually will run from a man on foot. Over several miles, however, a determined Eskimo can outrun a polar bear whose stomach is full of seal oil. When winded the bear will turn.”²⁹⁸

Today, the King Islanders in Nome have much less of a chance of encountering a polar bear, let alone killing one. They are seen only once in a great while near Nome, usually when one is stranded on the mainland during spring breakup. This means that the Polar Bear dance – what anthropologists have singled out as an important event for establishing and maintaining a sense of unity among the group – is rarely performed.

Deanna Kingston discussed the changes in song and dance traditions brought about by the move in her dissertation, and concludes that as a group they have attempted to counteract the negative changes brought by the move to Nome:

I believe, though, that the King Islanders have attempted to counteract these negative effects by maintaining singing and dancing traditions in general, by maintaining the proper times and places to dance, and by maintaining some of

²⁹⁷Bogojavlensky, Sergei and Robert W. Fuller. “Polar Bears, Walrus Hides, and Eskimo Solidarity.” *The Alaska Journal* (1973): 66-76.

²⁹⁸Ibid, 67.

their social and spiritual relations through teaching of the Wolf Dance and teasing cousin songs and of the proper behavior associated with killing animals.²⁹⁹

Language

*Language loss and alcoholism are the two of the most devastating things that happened to my people. My late uncle's phrase, from, in his book from People of Kauwerak was that the people of our region have gone through a third epidemic, which is losing of our relations, not knowing who we are related to. His statement is that when he says we do not know who we are related to, he is saying that we do not have the language to pass on exactly who our relatives are, by language.*³⁰⁰

– Tom Ellanna, 2002

Living in Nome year-round also began the erosion of the King Island dialect of Inupiaq. Ellanna's comments on language loss reflect the reality that language is not just about communication, but also contains a cultural component as well. Others interviewed in 2001 and 2002 identified language loss as a significant impact of Nome living.

In the Inupiaq language many more words exist to describe kinship between people than in English. Eskimo songs are in Inupiaq, which means that younger people who do not know the language do not understand the words to songs to which they dance. Although King Island children, like others in Alaska, learned English at school and were punished for using Inupiaq within its walls, outside the schoolhouse at the island Inupiaq was the language people lived in. When the village ended up at East End, this changed; parents began to stop teaching their

²⁹⁹Kingston, 202.

³⁰⁰Tom Ellanna interview.

children Inupiaq. English was the language used at work, school, and church at Nome.

Perhaps because they remained together at the East End village, they held onto it longer. When Joseph Senungetuk returned to Nome as an arts instructor in the late 60s, he reported that most of the King Island children were bilingual, unlike many of their Nome-raised counterparts. “My theory, to explain their ability to speak Eskimo so fluently, is that their parents and their peers are still close together and they have a better chance to retain the language,” he wrote.³⁰¹

In the early 21st century, however, language loss has become a reality for the King Islanders, too. A number of middle-aged people speak the language, as do some in their 30s, but very few children do, which does not bode well for the future of the dialect.

“Having moved here into Nome, in order, was as far as some of em’ were concerned,” Ellanna said. “Was to forget the Eskimo language and go ahead and start using English and that was gonna be the only way you’re going to be able to get by, was to learn English.”³⁰² It appears that people stopped teaching their children Inupiaq because it was an unspoken assumption that the way to function and make a go of living in Nome, was to speak English. This occurrence is not unique to the King Island people in Nome. Many Inupiaq people in Nome tell stories about how it used to be in Nome decades ago, when Alaskan Native culture and language were not something to be celebrated, but instead looked upon as something to be left behind.

That the King Islanders held onto their customs longer may explain some of the prejudice they encountered, as Deanna Kingston remarked:

Upon this relocation to Nome, King Islanders were faced with a certain degree of hostility from other Natives living there. This hostility is based upon the special treatment and attention that King Islanders received from outsiders in Nome, but

³⁰¹Senungetuk, 165.

³⁰²Tom Ellanna interview.

was complicated by the King Islanders' adherence to customs (e.g. wearing of parkas, dancing and use of skinboats) which made them look "backward."³⁰³

Epilogue

NB: Did you just kind of accept it as you had to do it, to come here and stay?

AK: I still think about King Island, even right now. As Cecilia said yesterday... you gonna talk there?

NB: Oh no, you go ahead.

AK: Edward Muktoyuk, her husband, we always want to go out to King Island.

Yesterday she said, "How you guys gonna live down there, you guys getting old." Our minds still strong, not our body.³⁰⁴

The East End village continued to be the primary place of residence for the King Islanders until 1974. In November 1974, a severe fall storm struck Nome. The King Island village was hit especially hard, because the seawall that protected Nome had been built before the King Island village sprang up as a permanent settlement. The seawall did not extend that far east, and all the homes at East End were destroyed. The King Islanders lost nearly everything they owned. With the help of Nome and various federal agencies, 25 homes were constructed for them in the center of town, in a neighborhood still known as Beringvue. In the late 1990s, those homes were replaced through the federal housing program.

The issue of relocation has not gone away entirely. Many elders still express a longing to return to the island itself, but realize they are physically unable to withstand the rigors of living there anymore. "To some extent, I would, go out there and at a least spend the whole winter one of these years, but knowing that there will be no provisions for me, it would be pretty hard for me

³⁰³Kingston, 196.

³⁰⁴Agatha Kokuluk interview.

to stay out there because I'm not as strong as I used to be and probably can't walk too long to go out hunting due to my health," observed Gabriel Muktoyuk.³⁰⁵

Some within the community still are considering the merits of a move to Cape Woolley. Gabriel is one of them. He said he would like to see the majority of his people move to be away from the drugs and alcohol in Nome. Tom Ellanna also would like to see the community move out there:

Away from Nome. For, to save, not just the identity of being King Islander, like I mentioned having King Island people from being descendent from King Island, King Island ancestry. Is to be more unified, bring back the unity of the King Island people. Bring back some of our language back, bring back our traditional way of life, of you know, like, bring some of our hunting and gathering type of deal... To pass it on, you know, some of our traces of traditional way of life. I gotta say traces of, you know, bringing back memories on how, like even myself how I was taught to hunt. Learn, like, I still know some of the ice movement and stuff like that, I would like to pass that on not just to my immediate family but also to somebody that is willing to learn about it.³⁰⁶

As it was 40 years ago, the expense and the issues of schooling are the big issues. Nome, the regional center of the southern Seward Peninsula, still offers health care and other services that would not be accessible someplace else. Interviewed in 2001, Renee Carlisle said:

When they first started talking about the relocation, I told Jimmy [her husband] I would do it in a heartbeat. But then again, I think I'm having second thoughts, because, if you're gonna live, it's, I guess I'm just dependent on, you know, our

³⁰⁵Gabriel Muktoyuk.

³⁰⁶Tom Ellanna interview.

local stores and having water and sewer. I'm not sure at this point in my life if I want to be hauling water, you know. It would be hard, yeah, but I would after they have everything established maybe.³⁰⁷

In 2003, the question of a relocation to Cape Woolley seems to have quieted down again. For now, the group appears content to use Cape Woolley seasonally.

³⁰⁷Carlisle, Renee. Interview by author. Nome, Alaska, 4 January 2002.

Chapter Six

Some Conclusions

In 1959, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials made the decision to close the King Island school, though, at the time, the permanence of the closure was not obvious. This administrative action had far-reaching impacts upon the people of the village that continue to this day – ripple effects in history if you will – that the King Islanders are still living with in 2003. They underwent radical changes in not just their material circumstances, but culture and identity.

As stated before, several official and unofficial justifications for the abandonment of the educational effort at the island exist. Sorting through the possible reasons for the closure and weighing the pressures and motives of those involved does not lead to a single, tidy explanation of ‘what happened.’

One can draw the conclusion, as does this researcher, that the island school was inconvenient and expensive – and closing the school would not only free up the Bureau’s time and money, but also help accomplish the stated Termination goals of the federal government at the time: urbanization and assimilation. Furthermore, the question of moving the King Islanders to the mainland, if not a constant, came up frequently in the discussions and correspondence of federal employees. Was it a conspiracy? No. More likely, all the above mentioned factors collided in 1959.

The bureaucratic dithering that blocked the community’s attempts to move to Cape Woolley is harder to understand. Many Alaskan communities managed to relocate in the same time period, but funding never quite made it to the King Islanders. The difference may be that the other communities did not have a long-standing association with a larger town like Nome. When the Bureau shut the school down, the King Islanders were already in Nome for the summer

and were able to just remain there instead of going back. The Bureau was not forced to do anything, since in a sense, they were now relocated from the island to a place where educational opportunities existed. This conclusion is lent weight by some of the Bureau's correspondence remarking upon the "mixed blessing" that this was, and its discouragement of those wishing to leave Nome. In some ways, King Island was too far away to be convenient, but too close to Nome.

One must also consider the huge bureaucracy that was the BIA. Once the idea that the King Islanders should move lodged itself within the Bureau's organizational memory, that notion remained there, no matter how many times the King Islanders said 'no' to relocating from their island.

The school was the crux of it – so long as the school remained closed, the King Islanders had no choice but to live elsewhere. Families were forced to choose between returning to their island (deprived of their children, who were to be sent to distant boarding schools), or staying in Nome. Before the school was closed, as a group, they were able to negotiate a compromise between their traditional lifestyle at the island and the 'modern' Westernized one evolving at Nome. This compromise arrangement gave them a degree of choice that many groups did not have – to go to Nome temporarily and return to their home for the rest of the year.

The story of the King Islanders is not just an isolated incident in Alaska's history, nor is it merely something that happened 40 years ago to a small group of people. The debate over the presence of schools in rural Alaska – which to some degree is a debate about the long-term viability of these small communities – continues to this day. But the BIA is no longer in the business of education in Alaska, having turned over schooling to the State of Alaska as envisioned at statehood. For a while, the trend was towards large regional boarding schools

instead of schools in Alaska's tiny communities. Boarding schools, it was believed, would cost less than many tiny schools all over the state, and provide better education.

In 1976, the settlement of the groundbreaking Molly Hootch case revolutionized education in Alaska. The suit, in which over 120 rural villages sued the state for failing to provide them high schools, challenged the boarding school solution, which was largely judged a failure by researchers. The case, settled by consent decree, provided for the construction of high schools in all the villages covered by the case – if they wanted one. A wave of construction occurred across rural Alaska. More significantly, it gave Alaska's predominately Native communities a degree of power that they had never before exercised, as attorney Stephen E.

Cotton notes:

A critical issue through much of the settlement negotiations was one of raw power: Who would have the ultimate say over whether a village got a high school? Throughout the state's history, such decisions were made outside the village, with little heed to village wishes. State and federal officials relied more on their own judgements or on those of consultants than on the wishes of native parents.³⁰⁸

Cotton points to the example of Little Diomedé, another remote island community in Bering Strait much like King Island, but which has persisted to this day:

The state has never seen anything quite like it. With a show of hands at a public meeting, people in the village of Little Diomedé, for example, could decide to have a village high school on that remote island rather than continue sending their sons and daughters to the coastal village of Shishmaref to board. And

³⁰⁸Stephen E. Cotton, "Alaska's 'Molly Hootch Case'" High Schools and the Village Voice," Educational Research Quarterly, 1984: 8, 4. Found at http://www.alaskool.org/native_ed/law/mhootch_erq.html.

despite the almost incredible expenses of building anything on Diomedede, which has neither an airstrip or even a dock, the consent decree permits no one to second-guess Little Diomedede.³⁰⁹

Part of the criticism of the boarding school method was that it removed children from their families and more importantly, their culture. This is why the issue of schooling remains so important and controversial to this day. Alaska is currently trying to come to grips with budget reality now that the “free money” of the glory days of oil revenues is over. Moreover, the “No Child Left Behind Act” set standards which rural schools had to meet or face penalties. All over rural Alaska, schools are being judged as having failed. Will the state continue to fund these schools or return to the boarding school as a solution for educating children in the Bush? Education in the Bush is costly, and may be construed by urban residents and legislators as inconvenient as well. Freelance columnist David Reaume concluded that rural schooling had failed in an op-ed piece that ran in the *Anchorage Daily News* in April 2003.

More than 25 years ago the Molly Hootch settlement institutionalized local elementary and secondary education for Alaska’s rural students. In my opinion, and in light of the criticism that that opinion will almost certainly generate, I believe it is fair to say that the Molly Hootch settlement also institutionalized inferior education for these students. No Child Left Behind has made clear, at least to me, that Alaska’s rural leaders need to rethink their positions on local schooling.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹Ibid.

³¹⁰David Reaume. “Local Schooling of Little Benefit to Rural Students.” *Anchorage Daily News*, April 6, 2003.

University of Alaska Anchorage History professor Stephen Haycox commented later in the month on the likelihood that budget pressures would prompt non-Native urban residents to clamor for cuts in state spending going to villages. These people, he wrote, will then take the position that if those villages cannot be sustained, their residents should move to Fairbanks or other urban centers where their material needs can be satisfied:

But moving is not the same for village Alaskans as it is for the vast majority of non-Native urbanites who moved easily into the state. Moving and re-inventing ourselves have become a tradition for white Americans. But the re-inventing does not involve much culture change. We move up but not out. In village Alaska, however, we are addressing cultures that have been tied to the same lands for millennia. Moving to Fairbanks or Anchorage is not just moving; it's leaving a culture behind. As a people, the majority of the state cannot morally recommend or participate in a forced cultural disruption of that magnitude.³¹¹

In some ways, the discussion over education and funding is really just a variant of the question the BIA asked itself about King Island and other Alaskan Native communities for years – where should the people live? And how should they live?

There has been a decades long move of Alaskan Natives into the smaller cities of Nome and urban centers like Anchorage and Fairbanks. This exodus has come about due to a combination of internal and external pressures in these villages, and in some cases through federally-funded programs such as 'relocation.' It is often overlooked that this movement from rural to urban is not a one-way street. Frequently, people travel back and forth between where they live now and their home village. Some get a university education or vocational training and

³¹¹Stephen Haycox. "Our Fiscal Future Must Include Villages." *Anchorage Daily News*, April 25, 2003.

return permanently. A flow of subsistence foods moves between the state's outlying areas and urban centers daily. People travel back to their home villages for bird hunting, or the spring seal hunt, or fish camp in summer, or moose-hunting, or to go whaling.

Village Alaska is not just a physical place, it is in a sense a repository of what the Canadians would call "traditional ecological knowledge" and a way of life that, what we for lack of a better word, merely term 'subsistence.' It could be argued that the rural villages preserve this cultural heritage. People may live in suburban Anchorage, but communities like Kipnuk and Shishmaref and Wales are still there. Alaskan Natives who live in and have been raised in Nome still often refer to themselves as being from whatever village in which their family originated. A close friend of mine would say, "I am Kingikmiut," referring to the village of Wales, where he grew up and still visits.

For the King Islanders, that well has gone dry. The village at King Island now exists only as what Deanna Kingston referred to as an "imagined geography," a place that is remembered rather than a place occupied by community members.³¹² It is the reverse of the 'promised land' – it is now a sort of mythic place and way of living that has been lost:

It is a place that many younger King Islanders have not seen with their own eyes.

Many King Island community members who grew up on the island reminisce about what life was like on King Island, and like *Ivyaana*, they have shared with me how much they miss the island and how much they would like to return to it.

This sentiment is so much a part of the discourse of present-day King Island life that one cannot read about them or talk to them without hearing that they no

longer live on King Island.³¹³

³¹²Kingston, 182.

³¹³Kingston, 183.

The historian Joy Parr talks about the relationship between knowledge and the physical body – one’s experience by living in a given place and time – in *The Timely, The Tacit and the Material Body*. She uses the example of the village of Iroquois in eastern Canada, which was moved to make way for the St. Lawrence Seaway in the late 1950s. Although the people were still near the river, the massive project and accompanying dams turned the river they knew into something else, cutting them off from the river they knew:

The river made old Iroquois, and was, for its residents, the town’s defining characteristic, the feature that formed the soundlines, sightlines, and physical scale to which their bodies were accustomed. In three years the habits, memories, and tacit knowledge accrued over six generations of bodily encounters with the river lost their anchors in the physical and social space of the village.³¹⁴

Parr calls the separation of the river people from the river a trauma.

These are not nostalgic longings for an imagined past that never really was, nor yearnings that mistake the cosseted simplicities of childhood for some actual lived space. Here we have a condition more akin to bereavement. For, like mourning a loved one, or a lost limb, or the diminution of a sensory capacity, this is a change in physical as well as psychic circumstances, a trauma like a devastating accident, which entrains a physical and psychological relearning, always partial and incomplete.³¹⁵

Substitute the word ‘island’ for ‘river’ in the following quote and consider again what the resettlement in Nome may have meant for the King Islanders. “By study, habit, and accumulating acquaintance, the villagers had taken the river unto themselves. Were we to follow

³¹⁴Joy Parr. “The Timely, The Tacit, and the Material Body.” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 723.

³¹⁵*Ibid*, 728.

Bruno Latour, we might say that they had moved the boundary between culture and nature a little so as to claim more of the river as cultural kin.”³¹⁶

Tom Ellanna’s comments parallel the theory Parr expresses. Part of the traditional knowledge of the King Islanders cannot be passed on by listening to a tape or reading an article. The knowledge itself requires the act of living at the island, observing the currents, the weather, walking up the stairways and perhaps even standing on top of the island – a breathtaking sight by the descriptions on record.

The relocation may indeed have been a result of a half-century old cultural misunderstanding. Sergei Bogojavlensky recorded a traditional King Island children’s song while doing research in the community in the late 1960s which speaks to the heart of the matter. Translated from the Inupiaq, *“I went to Diomedede. They game me some kauk³¹⁷ to eat. It was too tough. So I went to Wales. They gave me some kauk. It was too soft. So I went to King Island. They gave me some kauk. It was just right. So I ate lots.”*³¹⁸

“The singer of the song of the song finds only King Island kauk palatable,” Bogojavlensky observed, “which is to say that a King Islander feels at home only in his own village.”

It is the temptation of the historian to see only the damage, or to view as unassailable the greater forces that affect the lives of individuals and small groups of people. This does a disservice to those people, and leads to the fallacy of powerlessness. The story of the King Islanders is not merely one of loss. The very fact that they have not disappeared as a group, despite everything that has happened in 40 years – is in itself, a remarkable accomplishment.

³¹⁶Parr, 729.

³¹⁷*Kauk* is aged walrus skin. It is considered a special delicacy.

³¹⁸Bogojavlensky and Fuller. “Polar Bears, Walrus Hides, and Social Solidarity,” 76.

Unlike many Natives who move into Nome permanently and enroll in Nome Eskimo Community, they have succeeded to some degree in keeping their identity. While the way they as a group think of that identity may have changed, as Kingston discussed,³¹⁹ they still understand themselves to be King Islanders.

Ties to the island remain strong. When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement occurred they selected King Island and lands at Cape Woolley. When the BIA tried to include them with the local Native corporation, Sitnasuak, they balked and successfully lobbied the federal government for their own village corporation. They still have their own dialect and their own dances; many still go to Cape Woolley in the summertime. The elders are working on immersion programs to keep their dialect alive.

Many of the King Islanders still live near each other in the newer homes that have replaced the ones built in Beringvue after the 1974 flood. A new community hall is planned for construction, which will include not just meeting rooms but a place for men to gather and carve as they did in the qagsrit.

A few even manage to make a trip out to the island for hunting in the spring, maintaining old homes, or to just to visit. Dr. Deanna Kingston has undertaken a research project that will take some 50 King Islanders and researchers to the island in summer 2005.

The story of the move to the mainland is one of survival in the face of very high odds against. Their past and remembrance of their old way of life may sustain them in the future, a legacy that may be summed up as Tom Ellanna did in 2002:

“I can put it this way, my mother’s description of King Island life is that it was tough, but beautiful.”

³¹⁹“Thus in order to foster this sense of identity as a King Islander even though no one lives there any longer, the community appears to have shifted their criterion for being a King Islander from one that is determined by place of residence to one that is determined by kinship.” Kingston, 196.

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