

SALMON, COSMOLOGY, AND IDENTITY IN ELIM, ALASKA

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is the result of sociocultural anthropological research in and about the community of Elim, Alaska. Elim is a small community of approximately 330 (primarily Inupiaq and Yup'ik Eskimo) people in Norton Sound. This research began with a focus on the topics of salmon and identity in the community. The focus on salmon was particularly important because the communities of this region have often traditionally been understood in the social sciences through the lens of relationships with marine mammals.

The research involved participant observation in the community, a variety of forms of ethnographic interviewing (free listing, structured, and semi-structured interviews), focus groups, storytelling sessions, and archival research. Over 80 adults in the community participated in the project through interviews. I also completed extensive photo-documentation of the community and various aspects of peoples' relationships with subsistence activities.

Much of this work began with inquiries about the importance of salmon to people in Elim, as well as an examination of other things which were important to Elim residents, and how people come to understand themselves. In this I also examined and learned about aspects of Elim residents' relationships with fish and other animals, with the environment, with the spiritual world, and with each other. This process led me to insights not just about identity in Elim – what matters, what is meaningful and valued, how people understand and define themselves and their community, and so on – but it also led to me an understanding of how Elim residents think about the nature of the world in general (i.e., cosmology).

My main argument in this dissertation is that my research in and about Elim revealed that identity and cosmology are co-created – and it revealed how this is the case. I discovered that salmon are 'good to think with' in order to see that. This co-creation of identity and cosmology occurs within a particularly visible hybrid cosmological landscape of (primarily) 'traditionally Indigenous' and Christian ideologies. This landscape in lived culture and context is marked by a patterned heteroglossic 'condition' which includes a dominant (and indigenized) Christian discourse. This heteroglossia is constituted, represented, and evidenced by a (markedly)

heterogeneous multiplicity of discourse, practice, and belief. This cosmological landscape and its heteroglossic condition are visible, and made, in various respects in co-implicated, co-indexical, interlocking instantiations of human-animal relationships, spirituality, systems of proper behavior, place attachments, and identity processes and formations.

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- “Always taught not to waste”: Traditional Knowledge and Norton Sound/Bering Strait Salmon Populations (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a)

- Indigenous Knowledge and Use of Bering Strait Region Ocean Currents (Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2014)
- “When the fish come, we go fishing”: Local Ecological Knowledge of Non-Salmon Fish Used for Subsistence in the Bering Strait Region (Raymond-Yakoubian 2013)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“And right now it’s real important, I think, for kids to understand...and to let them know about their cultural identity. It is very, very important. Because we have to understand where we’ve been, and where we’re at, and where we’re going.”

(Elim Woman, early 50s)

Salmon, as well as other animals and plants harvested from the sea, land, and air are critical to the well-being of most rural, Indigenous communities in Alaska. They are harvested for subsistence as well as commercial purposes, and they are an element in shaping people’s relationship to the physical environment, to each other, and with broader society. Salmon plays an often un- or under-recognized role in the lives of Alaska Bering Strait region residents and communities despite the fact that they are widely harvested, are a culturally preferred food, and contribute to household and community food security. This dissertation brings focus to, among other things, salmon and other subsistence foods, and the community of Elim, Alaska.

My interest and involvement in this work was initiated by time spent in the Bering Strait region working with Tribes on a variety of policy, management, cultural, and other issues related to salmon. I was fairly new to western Alaska, having worked in a number of other areas of the state prior to moving to Nome. Based on my reading of the history of the region and social science work conducted there, I had a strong impression of the region as culturally centered around marine mammals. Soon after moving to and working in the Bering Strait, though, I came to understand that salmon play a prominent role in many communities and in the lives of many region residents. I felt as though I could contribute to filling some of the gaps in understandings of and knowledge about human-salmon relationships, as well as contribute to broader understandings of the contemporary realities of subsistence in the region.

I considered several communities as possible research locations for my dissertation work. Because I was acquainted with some of the Tribal Council members and other residents of Elim prior to developing the research proposal, and because of the village’s involvement in fishing (in

the subsistence, commercial, and political¹ realms) and subsistence in general, I felt that Elim was an ideal community with which to work for this project. After some informal discussions, I made a formal presentation at a Tribal Council meeting, at which several members of the community (in addition to Tribal Council members) were also present. I explained my research interests, and proposed working with the community on my dissertation project about those interests. Council members asked questions and provided feedback, and we had a discussion about that. I requested permission to conduct the project in Elim; after the discussions with me, and discussions amongst themselves, the Council passed a formal resolution endorsing the research and supporting the participation of Tribal and community members in this work.

Rationale for this study

In northwest Alaska, including the Bering Strait region, there has often been an emphasis within anthropological research on the relationships that Indigenous people have with marine mammals (e.g. Burch 1975, 2006; Ellanna 1983, 1988; Fitzhugh and Crowell 2009; Giddings 1977; Jolles and Kaningok 1991; Laughlin 1963; Nelson 1969; Ray 1964, 1967, 1984, 1992; Smythe 1996; Spencer 1984; Wisniewski 2010). While marine mammals have indeed been centrally important to the Inupiaq, Yup'ik, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik people of the region, salmon and other fish have also been important subsistence foods for millennia (Bockstoce 1979; Dumond 1987; Hoffecker 2005; Raymond-Yakoubian 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a). The polar explorer Beechey, when traveling through the region, noted that the people living there could be described as “a nation of fishermen” (Beechey 1831:299-300).

The focus of many of these previous studies and portrayals of the region and its people on the use of and interactions with marine mammals is perhaps understandable given their ecological, nutritional, and prestige-based importance (e.g. Burch 1975, 2006; Ellanna 1983, 1988; Fitzhugh

¹ As one example, take the Native Village of Elim v. State of Alaska (1999), wherein Elim, Nome Eskimo Community, and Kawerak, Inc. sued the State of Alaska and Frank Rue, the Commissioner of Fish and Game. This lawsuit argued that the Board of Fisheries violated several of its duties related to regulating the False Pass (“Area M”) sockeye salmon fishery and associated chum bycatch and, as a result, Norton Sound subsistence fishing communities were negatively impacted.

and Crowell 2009; Giddings 1977; Huntington 2000; Huntington et al. 1999; Huntington and Mymrin 1996; Jolles 2002; Jolles and Kaningok 1991; Laughlin 1963; Nelson 1969; Ray 1964, 1983, 1984, 1992; Smythe 1996; Spencer 1984). Some of these works have indicated that human-marine mammal interactions have been important to identity, and others have noted the expansion of this idea into popular media, often resulting in stereotypical portrayals (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1995; Jolles 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Jolles and Kaningok 1991; Nelson 1969; Senungetuk 1971). This project sought at its outset to assist Elim in meeting cultural heritage preservation goals and to advance and enrich the ethnographic understanding of Bering Strait Yup'ik and Inupiaq peoples by reorienting the lens onto human-animal relationships and identity in new ways, to previously under-analyzed areas – that is, to salmon as well as marine mammals, to contemporary subsistence practices, to senses and processes of identity in Elim, and to the importance of human-animal relationships to Elim peoples' identities (with these two goals being complementary).

This research was designed to broaden the understanding of these previously under-analyzed aspects of Bering Strait region culture and subsistence through an exploration of contemporary relationships between humans, salmon, and other subsistence-harvested species in the community of Elim, and to look at identity in terms of these and other issues. The research presented here, in its study of the interconnections between salmon, subsistence, and identity engages and contributes to previous research on human-animal relationships, identity, and the peoples of the Bering Strait region. Salmon has been an important resource for Elim-area Indigenous people for generations. Salmon-related topics occur frequently in conversation, and salmon products are frequently shared (at family dinners, potlucks and village meetings, among other important events). Documenting the ways that salmon, and subsistence, are significant to Elim is important to the community.

Additionally, management of and policy relating to large scale industrial, small scale commercial, and subsistence salmon fisheries have been widely debated in western Alaska since at least the 1970s, and many debates about subsistence have focused on salmon. Village of Elim residents have also become active in, and at times outspoken about, these salmon management and policy issues. Many social science researchers have argued for the incorporation of

Indigenous ways of knowing into science and resource management to make it more inclusive, appropriate and participatory, and to improve co-management (e.g. Behe et al. 2018; Berkes 2008; Charnley et al. 2017; Kendrick 2003; Krupnik 1993; Nadasdy 2003; Nuttall 1998a; Palsson 1998; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2017; Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017; Thornton 2001; Todd 2016a, 2018). This project will illuminate a particular group's way of knowing themselves in relation to an important subsistence resource, which will contribute to a greater understanding of the role of salmon to Bering Strait region Yup'ik and Inupiaq people, and act as an example of the kind of information that social science can provide to contribute to more engaged and appropriate resource management across the north.

Furthermore, inquiries into these (i.e. salmon and identity), and other topics which resulted from the natural course of doing ethnography, produced extensive information about other cultural domains – such as spirituality and place – and at a broad level, about Elim peoples' cosmologies. I will discuss this in greater detail further below. It was this expansion of the scope of my learning which resulted in the larger overall focus of this dissertation – the connections between and instantiations of cosmology and identity in Elim.

Background

The setting for this research is the village of Elim. Elim is located in Norton Bay, which is within Norton Sound in the Bering Strait region of Alaska. The Bering Strait region is the homeland to 3 distinct Indigenous cultural and linguistic groups – Inupiaq, Yup'ik, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik peoples. Elim considers itself to be a community of Inupiaq and Yup'ik people. The village has a population of approximately 330, of which about 201 individuals are 18 years old or older. Ninety percent of residents are American Indian or Alaska Native (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Salmon is a highly valued subsistence resource, and the subsistence harvest of salmon is an important community activity. The most recent comprehensive subsistence harvest survey for Elim indicates an estimated annual harvest of 146.4 pounds of salmon (all species) per person, which is the second highest for the region and almost double the mean per capita for the region (Ahmasuk et al. 2008:55-61). The village is also highly reliant on marine mammal resources (specifically seals and beluga) and the above-noted comprehensive subsistence harvest survey

estimates an annual harvest of 259 pounds of marine mammals per person in Elim. The mean per capita for the region is 636.6 pounds (Ahmasuk et al. 2008:177-189), making Elim's harvest less than half of what region residents are estimated to annually harvest for consumption in terms of pounds of marine mammal products. The residents of Elim actively participate in both subsistence and small-scale commercial fishing for salmon. People catch and store salmon for their own families, to share within and beyond the community, and for barter and trading activities (e.g. Magdanz et al. 2007).

Small-scale commercial salmon fishing in Elim is carried out at various locations along the shores of Norton Bay, generally between Elim and Kwik River (to the northwest). There are 26 commercial salmon permit holders in Elim (or with addresses in Elim), as well as individuals that hold herring and crab permits. The number of individuals that salmon fish, and the amount of time that they fish, varies from year to year. Elim commercial fishers typically fish from 18 foot aluminum boats with one to two crew per boat (the permit holder and a "helper") with gillnets in marine waters. Commercial fishing challenges that Elim and surrounding communities have periodically faced center around the presence of buyers (some districts have had no buyers, and thus no fishing, during certain years or periods of time), the location of tenders (on some occasions, tenders have been too far from fishing locations for regular deliveries), and depleted salmon returns to some rivers and creeks.

Elim is one of 15 communities that are members of the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC). NSEDC is one of 6 non-profit Community Development Quota (CDQ) corporations that were created in 1992 under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; these 6 corporations have a combined membership of 65 communities in western Alaska (NRC 1999). The CDQ program was intended to "alleviate poverty, provide economic and social benefits to residents, and achieve sustainable local economies" (NOAA 2018:1) and to "provide the participating communities with the means to develop ongoing commercial fishing activities, create employment opportunities, attract capital, develop infrastructure, and generally promote positive social and economic conditions" (NRC 1999:1). Through the CDQ program, the 6 corporations receive quota in several federally-managed Bering Sea and Aleutian Island fisheries. NSEDC member communities and individuals are

eligible for grants, loans, fuel and energy subsidies, and other programs. While the original intended recipients of program benefits through individual CDQs is unclear (e.g. NRC 1999:2), today benefits of NSEDC programs are available to all residents of the 15 member communities, regardless of their ethnicity. Elim has a NSEDC Community Outreach Liaison position and an Elim resident sits on the NSEDC Board of Directors. While the level of ‘uncomfortableness’ with the CDQ program and what it entails varies from community to community (and person to person) in western Alaska, some communities are highly conflicted about the prospect of essentially owning shares in large, industrial fisheries that include bottom trawling, salmon bycatch, and which may be contributing to ecosystem-wide changes that have negative impacts on subsistence fisheries. Issues such as salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery, and the waste that it entails, are of great concern to many communities, including Elim (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian 2012).

History of the community

In the mid-1800s, a period of rapid change began in the Bering Strait region (e.g. Bockstoe 1986; Burch 1975, 1994; Ray 1992). This change was initiated by an influx of non-Indigenous commercial whalers, colonization by missionaries and gold miners, and the introduction of diseases that caused wave after wave of deadly, traumatizing, and culturally destructive epidemics. Two of the first recorded “outbreaks” of disease in the vicinity of Elim were likely a smallpox epidemic that reached as far north as Koyuk, and a respiratory disease recorded at Port Clarence (Ray 1992:178). A devastating smallpox epidemic had also moved north and reached at least the shores of southern Norton Sound in 1835-1840 (Fortuine 1989:227-240).

The village of Elim was not established until 1913. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Seward Peninsula region was in the midst of a massive gold rush. By 1900 the U.S. Army had established Fort Davis at Nome in an effort to prevent claim jumping and to enforce law and order. Thousands of people arrived in the region with plans to make their fortune in mining. At the same time, and prior to this, missionaries were also arriving in the region, including from the Evangelical Covenant Church. In 1893, August Anderson established a mission at Golovin (*Chinik*), becoming the most distant mission of the Covenant Church from its base in Chicago.

He was joined the next year by Nels Hultberg. Other Covenant missions were also being established across Alaska around this time, including in Yakutat, in southeast Alaska, and Unalakleet, south of Golovin (Olsson 1962). In Unalakleet, Uyarak (“Rock”) became the first Indigenous evangelist for the Covenant Church (Olsson 1962:422-423; Savok 2004; Schroder 1979:62-63).



Figure 1: The Bering Strait region of Alaska (from Raymond-Yakoubian and Daniel 2018:103).

In 1895-1896, the Golovin mission was deeded land and given a herd of reindeer, and teachers were hired for the school (Olsson 1962:423). In August of 1897 P.H. Anderson arrived at Golovin to work as part of the “Alaska mission” of the Evangelical Covenant Church with Hultberg (Olsson 1962:373). He soon decided, however, like Hultberg who had already been mining for several years, that gold mining was a better use of his time. Many gold miners passed through or were based out of Golovin during this era. Hultberg and others made the now (in)famous discovery of gold on Anvil Creek in Nome which both set the gold rush into high

gear and initiated a decades-long battle regarding ownership of the claim where the strike was made (Carlson 1951). The legal battle which ensued involved the Evangelical Covenant Church, some of its missionaries, and several Indigenous people from the Nome area.

P.H. Anderson and Hultberg were among a group of missionaries who departed Alaska in 1899. Replacing them at Golovin were Amanda Johnson (who later married O.P. Anderson) and K. Henrickson (Olsson 1962:426, 429). Early in 1899, when the non-Indigenous population of Nome was rapidly increasing, a typhoid or influenza (or both; it is unknown) epidemic struck and was recorded by missionaries and miners in the region (Olsson 1962; Schroder 1979). In 1900 the “Great Sickness,” an epidemic of influenza, smallpox, measles, and other diseases devastated the Seward Peninsula region as well as much of the rest of western Alaska (Fortune 1989:209-226; Wolfe 1982). In some villages the infection rate was 100 percent. Of those that survived the first wave of diseases, many were in a weakened state and were not able to survive subsequent illnesses that reached their communities. The epidemic was so severe that many of the Indigenous people in the area were unable to carry out summer harvesting activities and had little or no food for the winter, and many died as a result of illness and lack of food. Many of the children in the Norton Sound region who lost their parents and families during this epidemic went to the Covenant mission at Golovin (Olsson 1962:428-429). These children came from all over the region, and were both Inupiaq and Yup’ik. By the spring of 1900 the Covenant missionaries determined that a larger children’s home was needed.

O.P. Anderson, who arrived in 1900, was part of the group that determined the mission needed to move away from Golovin. Anderson noted the reasons for moving as better availability of water and wood, and “to escape the unwholesome influence of the white people at Chinik (Golovin)” (Olsson 1962:429). They chose a spot south, down the coast near Carolyn Island, and began moving there in 1900. The mission in Golovin-proper remained open until 1903. In 1910 the Andersons were replaced at the relocated Golovin mission by Reverend Ludwig Evald Ost and his wife Ruth (Olsson 1962:431; Schroder 1979). Ost is remembered by some as, among other things, “loud,” “rough,” and “strict” (Savok 2004:163). He is often referred to by church members as “Grandpa Ost” (Savok 2004; Schroder 1979). Many in Elim are still familiar with his name and are familiar with his role in Elim history. After his arrival, Ost apparently

immediately began talking about moving the mission further down the coast again (Schroder 1979).

Reverend Ost and others associated with the mission had been living in the vicinity of Carolyn Island in Golovnin Bay (a misspelling of “Golovin” Bay that has persisted on maps), running the children’s home for several years. The location near the Island that the missionaries chose in 1900 had extreme conditions during the winter. One Elim Elder described what he had heard from his grandfather about the location of the home; it was so windy in the winter that the snow would pack around the woodpiles and turn rock hard. Winters could be particularly brutal and the winds often required the use of ropes to travel between buildings and the wood pile so that the children wouldn’t ‘blow away.’ The location was also prone to flooding, and was overall a less-than-ideal location.

A now legendary storm in the fall of 1913 destroyed much of the mission, forcing the missionaries and other adults from the area to decide on a new location for the mission and school. This powerful and destructive storm also destroyed many other structures along the coast, including in Nome (Daily Alaska Dispatch 1913).

As a result of the storm and subsequent move, the village of Elim was established in 1913; movement of people and the construction of buildings continued into 1914. The ‘relocation’ of the Golovin Evangelical Covenant mission was led by Ost and Indigenous residents of the area, including people from the village of *Chinik* (Golovin) and the surrounding area. The newly established mission and school were called the Elim Mission Roadhouse. While Schroeder’s (1979) account of this move only credits Ost (and has a variety of other inaccuracies), Aniguiin (Charlie Saccheus), Mike Murray Sr., and Julius Pleasant are recalled by Elim residents today as Indigenous men who played an important role in the move to Elim (Elim IRA 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.), including regarding the selection of the final village site. Ost claimed to have received no assistance from the Covenant Church in moving buildings and people to the new mission location at Elim. Swedish miners in the area did contribute funds to the Ost family, however, and those funds were used to rent boats and pay a tugboat captain to assist in moving the remains of mission buildings to Elim (Schroder 1979:105-107). Several hundred people

moved to Elim during and after its establishment; many of them were families that wanted their children to go to school. Not long after Elim was established, there was a mini-gold rush in the Haycock area (north of Koyuk) and many people left Elim to go work in that area.

According to Elim residents, and some Church records, several locations along the shores of Norton Sound from Cape Darby to the northeast were considered for the new location. These included the location that is now Elim, as well as Iron Creek, Moses Point, and several other areas along the Norton Bay coastline. The missionaries almost chose Iron Creek until Aniguiin and others told them it was too far from good seal hunting. Ultimately, the current location was chosen, by Indigenous Elders, because of the easy access to seals in particular, but also to wood, fresh water, and fish and other animals and plants harvested for subsistence. The location is wooded, primarily with spruce, has a sandy beach, a small and broad valley with a freshwater creek running through it, a hot spring nearby, and cliffs on either side of the village proper. Residents think the name “Elim” was chosen by Ost for its biblical connotations and associations with an oasis in the biblical story of the Exodus². An oasis provides comfort and resources, and the location that is today Elim was seen in this light when chosen. The Unaliq Yup’ik name for the location where Elim was established is *Niviarcaurluq* or *Nevlarcurluq*, and the Inupiaq name is *Nuviakchak*. The English translation of these names is “young lady” (Elim IRA 2013; Ray 1964). Like locations at the mouths of virtually every creek in Norton Sound, the site of present-day Elim was previously a summer camping spot and a village location, though not during the time period when Elim was established (Ray 1964). The hill behind Elim is called *Ceturavik* (Unaliq Yup’ik), “a place to slide,” and the camping location was also sometimes called by this name (Elim IRA 2013).

In 1917, 350,00 acres around the present day village of Elim were set aside, via Executive orders, as the “Norton Bay Reservation” (later called the “Norton Bay Native Reserve”) for the use of the U.S. Bureau of Education and the “Native inhabitants of the Village of Elim” (U.S. Senate 1999). Following this, in 1929, 50,000 acres were removed from the Reservation via Executive order. The order removing this land was done under pressure from non-Indigenous

² References to Elim can be found in Exodus (Chapter 15, Verse 27) and Numbers (Chapter 33, Verse 9) (King James Version).

people who were lobbying to open the Reservation to mining and other commercial activities. Elim did not consent to the revocation (U.S. Senate 1999). During negotiations related to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, passed in 1971, Elim chose the “opt-out” option³ and instead sought title to land in the Reserve (in lieu of other ANCSA benefits) through Section 19B of the Act (Holley 2016; U.S. Senate 1999). This amounted to the 297,982 acres at the time. Subsequently, the Elim Native Corporation also gained title to another 50,000 acres (U.S. House of Representatives 1999). Elim Native Corporation has outright ownership of this land (i.e. it is not held in trust).

The City of Elim was incorporated in 1970. Elim was one of the first villages in the region to get running water and a sewer system, which happened in 1974 and was provided by what was then the Public Health Service (Kawerak 2013b). Elim is currently a “dry” village, meaning that the sale and importation of alcohol is illegal. There is a maintained road that leads from Elim to the community landfill, to a camp at Iron Creek, and which ends at Moses Point, across from one of the community’s main fish camps. There are also many trails that lead from the village or Moses Point road out to various locations on Elim lands.

Organization of this dissertation

Following this Introductory chapter, is a chapter on Research Methods. This dissertation then moves to an exploration of Elim residents’ relationships with a variety of animals (with an emphasis on salmon) in Chapter 3. This includes consideration of what the term and concept of “subsistence” means to Elim participants in this research, as well as viewing human-animal relationships through the lenses of values and the issue of the buying and selling of subsistence foods.

In Chapter 4, I provide a visual link to the community, its residents, and the animals and lands that figure prominently in this dissertation in a photo-essay chapter. These images both illustrate some of the main discussion points raised throughout this work, and also connect the reader more

³ 43 U.S.C.S. § 1618(b) (1971) states that a Village Corporation may “acquire title to the surface and subsurface estates in any reserve set aside for the use or benefit of its stockholders or members...”

intimately with the community of Elim. Chapter 5 is a consideration, within the context of Elim, of various perspectives on salmon and other animals, and includes extensive discussion of spirituality and religion in terms of this as well as more broadly.

In Chapter 6, Elim residents' connection to Village Corporation lands, as well as how they move through those lands and associated waters, is explored, as are concerns about transportation and subsistence activities. Prior to my concluding thoughts and discussion in Chapter 8, in Chapter 7 I look at a variety of ways Elim residents think about senses of identity.

Chapter 2: Research methods

The Elim-based work for this research was primarily carried out in 2010 and 2011, and also at various times between 2012 and 2018. This research used six main data collection methods: archival research, ethnographic interviews of various types (free listing, semi-structured, and structured), focus groups, participant observation, photography, and storytelling sessions. A total of 84 interviews and two focus groups were conducted with residents of the village of Elim. This number of participants is equivalent to almost 42 percent of the adult population of Elim in 2010, which was 201 individuals aged 18 years or older (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Of the 84 interview participants, 43 were women and 41 were men. The age distribution of the interviewees was the following: 29 participants aged 18-35 years old, 32 participants aged 36-55 years old, and 23 participants aged 56-77 years old. All interviews were conducted in English. Study participants had the option to speak Yup'ik or Inupiaq during interviews, but no one chose to do so. Most Elim residents speak English as a first language; some do not speak Yup'ik and Inupiaq at all, and others have varying levels of proficiency those languages.

As noted previously, the Native Village of Elim gave permission for this research to be conducted with residents of the community. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was also obtained; the project was deemed 'exempt' by the University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB (protocol number 09-03).

Throughout the course of the research, many in-person and written updates were given to the Council and to the community (at community meetings), as well as informally to individual village residents. Additionally, Tribal Council members and interested village residents have reviewed this dissertation and have provided comments and feedback on the results presented here.

A placenames map for the Elim area was also made, and a booklet on Tribal members' views on uranium mining adjacent to their lands is also being produced for the Tribe as part of this work. Neither of these products were initially included in the research plan for this study. After some time in the community and conversations with residents and the Tribal Council specifically about

placenames, it was determined that a placenames map was of interest and value to the community and it would be a benefit to gather all the previously documented placenames from the Elim area. Over the course of several months I sought records related to placenames at the school (these names had been primarily documented by students at the Elim Aniguiin School in collaboration with community members), the City offices, and the Tribal office. Based on that information I created a draft map and Research Assistant Emily Murray and I sat down with several Elders to verify the placenames and to record additional placenames. The result of this work was a series of paper topographic maps with Yup'ik and Inupiaq placenames, locations, and English translations. This map was later digitized by staff at Kawerak, Inc, the Alaska Native Tribal Consortium for the Bering Strait region. The Elim Tribal Council has asked that this map not be made publicly available at this time. The Tribal Council, and Kawerak's Social Science Program (of which I am the Director), both hold the data and electronic copies of the map. The booklet on Tribal member views regarding uranium mining was determined to be a valuable product for the community to use in expressing their concerns and perspectives to agencies, organizations, and people outside of Elim. The final booklet will be held by the Tribal Council to use at their discretion.

Through agreement with the Elim Tribal Council and individual participants, Elim residents who participated in this research will not be identified by name in any of the research products (e.g. this dissertation, transcripts, articles, presentations, etc.). When direct quotes are used, the person is identified by their gender and age bracket at the time of the interview (e.g. *Woman, late 20s*). It should be noted that there are men and women of the same age bracket that participated in this research, which means that, for example, there could be two women, both in their late 20s, that participated in the study; I do not differentiate between these individuals in the text unless quotes from them are used in close proximity to each other. Additionally, if use of a quote from a participant required that a question or response from me also be included, I have used my initials (i.e. *JRY*) to indicate that I was the speaker. The chapter that includes photographs of Elim residents does include the names of some of the individuals in the photos; this should not be taken as an indication that those individuals directly participated in this research (e.g. through interviews or focus groups), but rather only that consent was obtained for the taking and use of those photos in this dissertation.

Data collection

The research methods for this project were structured in a purposeful study design. Throughout my work in Elim, I engaged in a variety of participant observation activities, which, among many other things, suggested to me questions and topics for interview and focus group work, and provided valuable information and clarity regarding ideas that I gleaned from that other work as well. I began my interview work in Elim at broader scales, with free listing interviews (which contained a semi-structured component after the free list questions), to understand the broader contours of what was important to people, and how people thought about themselves and their community. My next stage of interviewing built off of this work and other research activities I was conducting in Elim, and consisted of semi-structured interviews which delved into greater detail regarding topics raised in the free list interviews, topics related to salmon, subsistence, identity, and other topics that were becoming apparent to me as important. After the semi-structured interviews were complete, I held focus groups to help refine the ‘statements’ which were to be the basis for structured interviews. After this work with the focus groups, I then proceeded to conducting the structured interviews, which explored various aspects of Elim peoples’ lives and culture as related more specifically to salmon. These structured interviews were combined sessions with semi-structured discussions following them which explored the topics discussed during the structured portion in greater detail and along other avenues. I conducted a number of other research activities at various points during my work, including amidst the participant observation and interviewing work. This included archival research in various locations, placenames research, extensive photographic documentation (see Chapter 4), and organizing and observing community storytelling sessions on various topics. Data collection and analysis activities were conducted in an iterative, interlocking, and ongoing fashion throughout my work. As my work in Elim was conducted in two major stages, and as my research and analysis spread out over a number of years, I was also able to enrich my understanding of the things I had learned through other work in the Bering Strait region and in ongoing conversations with Elim residents over a span of years.

Archival research was carried out at the Eskimo Heritage Program archive, housed at Kawerak, Inc. in Nome, Alaska. This Bering Strait-region archive houses many interviews and transcripts

relating to the village of Elim and other region communities. These materials were examined for any information relating to beliefs and ideas about individual or village identity, salmon, subsistence, Tribal lands, and other topics related to this dissertation. Kawerak granted permission for access to the archive for this research and also endorsed the overall research project. Archival research was also carried out at the Evangelical Covenant Church Archives and Historical Library at North Park University in Chicago. This archive contains materials relating to the history of the church, including the establishment of the contemporary community of Elim, the history of missionary work in the region, and about beliefs and practices related to subsistence (of both Alaska Natives and missionaries). Research was also conducted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) archive. The Bering Straits Native Corporation office in Nome has a copy of the ANCSA archival materials related to the region. These materials contain recordings and transcripts primarily from the 1970s and 1980s about lands that Tribes were claiming under section 14(h)(1) of ANCSA.

I conducted purposive sampling for all interviews and focus groups, seeking to obtain among the adult population of Elim a reasonably balanced distribution of participants across genders and age groups. These were the main criteria for sampling, as beyond this I was not seeking to limit participation given that my aim was to learn about my topics across the whole of the community. Through other ethnographic research in the community, I was also able to make subtle adjustments to sampling based on whether I felt it was very likely individuals would not be interested in the relevant topics (e.g. in discussing their community and their own interests, salmon and subsistence-related topics, etc.) and willing to contribute substantively during interviews.

Free listing interviews were used, as noted above, early in the research as a method to elicit themes relevant to the cultural domain of “subsistence” and characteristics of the community, and also to help me learn more about Elim residents and the community and the things that are important to them. The free list interviews were also used to help formulate the final questions for the later ethnographic interviews. Twenty one free list interviews were conducted.

Free listing is an effective technique that helps ensure that the researcher is studying “culturally

relevant items and to delineate the boundaries of a semantic or cultural domain” (Weller and Romney 1988:10; see also Spradley 1979). This is often done by tabulating which items are mentioned most frequently across participants – the assumption being that more frequently-noted items are more “culturally salient,” “better known,” or “important” (Bernard 2006:301-305; Romney and D'Andrade 1964; Weller and Romney 1988:10-11). While this may not always be the case, it gives the researcher a starting point for examining potentially salient aspects of particular cultural domains or topics. Other factors that can also be considered include where on the list an item appears (e.g. at the top or bottom of a participant's list) (Weller and Romney 1988:10-11).

During the free listing interviews, participants were asked to generate a list of words or phrases on a series of topics such as subsistence foods, cultural activities, characteristics of their community, and so on. Individuals were asked each question and then told to say whatever came into their mind in response to the question. Interviewees were given several minutes to generate a list for each question. Prior to asking the actual free list questions, basic demographic data were collected (gender, age, years living in Elim), free list interviewees were asked if they subsistence fish every year, were asked which identity term they most closely identified with (i.e. Yup'ik, Inupiaq, Eskimo, Alaska Native, Native American, Inuit, or some other term or combination of terms), and were then asked the set of questions shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Questions asked during free list interviews.

Free List Interview Questions
What things do you like about Elim?
What things do you not like about Elim?
What kinds of subsistence foods are there?
What kinds of activities do you like to participate in?
What kinds of things make you feel like part of the community?
Are there characteristics/traits that all Inupiaq/Yup'ik people have?
Are there characteristics/traits that most Inupiaq/Yup'ik people don't have?

Table 1 (continued)

What is important to you?
How would you describe yourself to someone who didn't know you and didn't know anything about where you live?
Is there anything else you would like to say about yourself, your community, or anything else?

After going through the free list portion of the interview, participants and I also engaged in discussions about their answers to the questions and about related topics.

Two sets of in-depth ethnographic interviews were also conducted. The first set of interviews were semi-structured and the second set were more structured. The purpose of the first set of interviews was primarily to elicit themes related to salmon, subsistence, and identity that are important to individual residents of the village of Elim, but also to explore other topics which were becoming apparent as being important over the course of my engagement with the community. Thirty two of these interviews were conducted.

The topic of “identity” is difficult to approach directly in interviews. Individuals may have different definitions of the term, may not be familiar with it at all, or have difficulty discussing such an abstract concept. Other identity researchers have also concluded that direct questions asking participants to explicate their identity is often ineffective or inappropriate to the subject (e.g. Briggs 1998:19; Caulkins et al. 2000:269; Rosaldo 1980:34-36; Spradley 1970:69). The general concept of identity and one's own personal identity are not always thoroughly and explicitly considered by individuals prior to being confronted by situations, such as a research project like this, where they may be asked about it. Because of these and other difficulties, the idea of identity for individual Elim residents, and thoughts and beliefs about their identities, were generally approached obliquely, as well as directly in some contexts.

Because of some of the complexities noted above, and in order to not limit the interviewees to specific topics, the semi-structured interviews were open-ended in nature. An interview guide was produced based on my previous research into this topic and research experience in this region, and the free listing activities, to guide conversation when necessary. Some of the

questions asked during these interviews are listed below. The questions were not necessarily asked in the order below, not all questions were asked to each participant, and based on the answers given, additional questions were asked to some interviewees. For example, interviewees were also probed to expand upon their answers, provide additional examples and counter-examples, and to elaborate on any topics of interest and importance to them (Spradley 1979). The interviews were wide-ranging, though generally focused on topics related to ‘subsistence’ (see Table 2).

Table 2. Questions asked during semi-structured interviews.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions
What are your earliest memories of subsistence activities?
What do you like about Elim?
What do you not like about Elim?
In what ways is Elim different from other region communities?
In what ways is Elim similar to other region communities?
What does subsistence mean to you?
Which subsistence activities are most important to you; why?
Which subsistence foods are most important to you; why?
Are there any subsistence foods that are more important to you than others; why?
What is the subsistence food that you eat most frequently throughout the year?
What is the most important subsistence food for the community of Elim?
Do you participate in as many subsistence activities as you would like to; if not, why not?
Do you put away as much subsistence foods as you would like to; if not, why not?
Which foods would you like to put more of away?
Do you think that animals are aware of people's thoughts or actions? Are salmon?
When you think about salmon, what kinds of words or phrases come to mind?
Is salmon important to you; why/not?
Is salmon important to Elim; why/not?
Do you enjoy fishing; why/not?

Table 2 (continued)

If you could never eat salmon again, for whatever reason, would that bother you? How would it impact you?
How do you think it would impact Elim if there was no more salmon?
Did you ever receive any instructions about how to treat salmon from your parents or elders?
Is being from Elim important to you? What is the importance of the community to you?
What makes you the person that you are today?
What is important to you?
What are important traditions from Elim?
How does having/not having a job impact your subsistence activities?
How does participating in subsistence and eating subsistence foods effect your mental health and well-being?
If you run out of a particular subsistence food, or weren't able to put enough of one away and don't have it to eat – how does that make you feel?

After several months of research in the community, which included the free list and semi-structured interviews, and participant observation in various venues (among other research activities I have already noted, such as photo-documentation), I began developing material for a second set of interviews, this time more structured. These interviews were intended to be structured at their beginning and to then flow into a more open-ended format. After developing a draft of the question set, I convened a focus group of several individuals from the community to review my questions and give feedback on them. After the first focus group I revised the question set and then convened a second focus group of different individuals to review the new questions and to provide feedback. I revised and finalized the questions after the second focus group. None of the individuals who participated in focus groups were subsequently interviewed in structured interviews (though they may have previously been interviewed in the free list or semi-structured interviews).

The more structured interviews were intended to gather specific information about the importance of salmon to Elim residents, and the ways in which salmon plays a part in their lives and personal senses of identity. Thirty one of these interviews were conducted. The interview

questions were posed first as statements which participants were asked to respond to in terms of whether they “agreed,” “strongly agreed,” “disagreed,” or “strongly disagreed” with them. While the first part of these interviews was structured, and the same for each person, after participants had responded to each statement, we then discussed all or some of the statements and their responses (e.g. “You strongly agreed with statement number 6. Why is salmon the most important subsistence resource to you?”), as well as other topics that I or the participants were interested in pursuing. The structured statements that were presented to interviewees were very useful in opening up some topics of discussion that were challenging for some people to discuss. Table 3 lists the statements/questions that were used during the structured interviews.

Table 3. Statements/questions used during structured interviews.

Structured Interview Statements/Questions
Harvesting salmon makes me feel connected to the history and culture of my community and to my ancestors.
The most important activity that Elim residents do is harvesting salmon.
Commercial salmon fishing is more important than subsistence salmon fishing to me.
I harvest salmon primarily for economic reasons (as opposed to nutritional, taste, cultural or other reasons).
My children/younger relatives need to learn how to catch and put away salmon.
Salmon is the subsistence resource that is most important to me.
There are other foods more nutritious than salmon available to me.
If I could only harvest one subsistence resource it would be salmon.
Selling some subsistence foods, like salmon, for money is okay.
It is important to me that future generations of Elim residents have the opportunity to harvest salmon for subsistence.
Salmon are intelligent beings who can think and make decisions.
Harvesting salmon makes me feel self-sufficient.
I feel protective towards our salmon resources.
I appreciate having the opportunity to harvest salmon.
I don't look forward to or value the time I spend fishing and putting away salmon.
Salmon is a blessing from God.

Table 3 (continued)

I feel good about myself when I am harvesting or eating salmon.
If there were no salmon to harvest, I wouldn't want to live in Elim.
Sharing my salmon with others makes me feel happy.
Salmon is not an important part of my life.
I am proud that I know how to harvest and put away salmon.
If I could afford to buy all my food from the store, I would not put salmon away.
Salmon is a critical part of the culture of Elim.
It doesn't bother me when I don't have salmon to eat.
Knowing how to harvest salmon and put salmon away is important to my sense of who I am.

No one participated in more than one type of interview (free listing, semi-structured, or structured). As noted earlier, some focus group participants participated in either a free list or semi-structured interview; no focus group participants participated in structured interviews.

I carried out participant observation within and near the village of Elim and at dozens of public and community meetings in Elim, Nome, Anchorage and Seattle where topics related to this research were discussed. Participant observation activities were conducted throughout the course of my research. Participant observation relies on observation and direct experience as strategies for gathering facts (Bernard 2006:342-344; Jorgensen 1989:82-95; Spradley 1980). While in the community I participated in typical village activities and social life, with a particular focus on activities relating to salmon (the practice of fishing, eating and sharing of fish, talk about fish, etc.) and other subsistence activities to further identify themes related to salmon, subsistence, and identity. I also organized a number of storytelling sessions in the community where community members gathered to discuss a variety of topics, including medicinal plants and traditional healing, outdoor survival skills and stories, and the supernatural world, among others. Additionally, I extensively documented my time and observations in the community with over 3000 digital photos (see Chapter 4 for more discussion of this work, and an ethnographic photo-essay). Extensive 'field notes' were also written on a daily basis to document conversations, events, observations, methodology and theory notes, and general reflections on the research

process. Some of the activities which I observed or participant-observed are listed in Table 4, below.

Table 4. Examples of participant observation activities.

Participant Observation Activities
Tribal Council meetings
Community meetings
Birthday parties
Regional meetings that Elim residents participated in (outside of Elim)
School events
Church services
Family dinners
Elder-youth interactions
Preparations for subsistence activities
Subsistence activities like fishing, hunting, greens and berry picking, and the processing of subsistence foods
North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings

It was important for me, while living and working directly in and with Elim, to determine with and through the community what my roles would be in the village and what appropriate community participation and observation activities would be (Bernard 2006:347-349; Jorgensen 1989:61; Spradley 1980:58-62). While living in Elim, I filled various roles within the community including a researcher, a Kawerak employee (my employer in Nome), an employer in my own right (of research assistants), an organizer of community events, a roommate and renter, a supplier of gasoline (offered to those willing to allow me to participate in subsistence activities with them), a friend, and other roles. I shared office space with Tribal staff in the Tribal Council office. I lived with an Elder. I became a daily source of information about the organization that I worked for and its policies and positions. All of these roles and responsibilities contributed to my overall understanding of the community, and to the community's understanding of who I was and the work I was carrying out. Throughout my time in Elim, the information that I gained through

participant observation opportunities was used in an iterative fashion to refine and revise the questions I asked during interviews, as well as to guide the activities and situations I decided to focus my time and efforts on.

Data analysis

Data collection and analysis activities were not temporally exclusive, and contributed to each other's development in an iterative fashion. During the time I was collecting data, I was constantly conducting informal and formal analyses of the data I had gathered to help me further refine subsequent stages of the research, and to reflexively examine my work.

The majority of the 84 interviews were recorded and transcribed. Several were not recorded or transcribed, but extensive notes were taken during or after the interviews. As noted above, over 3000 photos and extensive field notes were also taken during the course of the research. The photos were downloaded, named, organized and reviewed every several days and were iteratively used in the process of creating field notes and memos, developing interview questions and, in general, planning research activities. They also functioned as memory devices and were used in analyzing the other data I had collected.

All of the transcripts, interview notes, participant observation notes, field notes, and other texts were uploaded as a data set into the qualitative data analysis software program Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development 2009). Atlas.ti version 7 was used. A hermeneutic unit (i.e. project) was created to contain all of the text documents to be used in the analysis. I then developed a series of codes, based on the research themes, to organize the data (e.g. Bernard 2006; Charmaz 2006; Ryan and Bernard 2000, 2003). I used a "grounded theory" approach to the overall analysis of my data (Bernard 2006: 492-505; Charmaz 2006). This process was iterative – i.e., developed over the course of numerous reviews of the data, and included inductive and deductive coding and (i.e., codes derived directly from the data, and codes created by the researcher based on theories or other ideas). The process of coding and analyzing data was repeated multiple times as new themes and patterns emerged from the data, memos were created, and linkages between and among codes (or the lack of such linkages) were recognized. A total of 46 codes were developed

and refined over the course of the data analysis work. Examples of some of the codes include: “religion,” “Elim traditions,” “well-being,” “importance of salmon,” “subsistence definition” and “youth and subsistence.” Quotations related to these themes were identified and coded; over 2300 quotations were coded.

In addition to coding and sorting of the data, various other types of text analyses were also performed on the many texts that were collected. Atlas.ti does not ‘produce’ outputs for the researcher, but does allow for complex coding and the creation of detailed “code books” or a code list – through which the codes were developed for this project. The software also allows quotations with all the same codes to be drawn from the data, to create visual “code networks” and to do some word-based analyses. Basic word-based techniques such as word counts, key-words-in-context, and identification of repetitions can all be done within Atlas.ti or with Atlas.ti outputs (Bernard 2006; Charmaz 2006; Friese 2012; Ryan and Bernard 2003).

The free list interviews consisted of answers both in list-format as well as open-ended discussion or comments from the participants. In addition to the above, the interviews were also examined in other ways. As part of the free list data analysis, all answers from each question were examined for the most frequent responses and for the average rank of items in responses. By examining both the frequency and average rank of items in free list responses, a researcher can obtain a sense of what some of the most salient or important features of a cultural domain are as a first step in developing interview guides and other research tools or to make conclusions about the data (e.g. Bernard 2006; Fleischer and Harrington 1998).

Free list data was also used to generate discussion with project participants and community members at meetings which I organized. For example, at one community meeting I presented a list of the most frequent responses to the free list questions “What do you like about Elim?” and “What do you not like about Elim?” I then asked meeting participants to discuss some of the responses, which became additional data to address ideas about the importance of place and community to residents. Another example of the analysis performed on this data was to examine the responses to the free list question, “What kinds of subsistence foods are there?” This question typically elicited a list of animals and plants that the interviewee consumes or was familiar with.

The placement (or rank) of “salmon” (or any other response) in the order of responses given was also examined. This type of ranking was not used in any of my formal analyses; rather, it was taken as a possible indication of how important a certain subsistence resource may be to an interviewee.

The data from the semi-structured and more structured interviews, participant observation notes, and other texts were also examined in a number of other ways. The data were reviewed multiple times in the course of coding work. The coding was based on the identification of themes in the data, as described above. This work also involved writing “memos” within Atlas.ti about ideas or theories regarding the data, which were reviewed and refined through this iterative process, and which were used to help outline ideas which became the chapters in this work. Other text analyses such as key word searches, key word counts, key-word-in-context searches, associations between codes, gender and age relations to certain themes, and others were also conducted (e.g. Ryan and Bernard 2003). Additionally, the outputs from multiple Atlas.ti queries were also reviewed in detail to further define and distill information about things such as, for example, the differences in the ways that women and men define “subsistence” (e.g. a query for the code “subsistence_def” within the group “women”). The same was done for age groups and particular themes. It should be noted that no significant age- or gender-related patterns were identified in the data. Women did not, to take the example above, have different ways of speaking about and describing subsistence than men did.

All of the above methods, analyses, and data were helpful in structuring my time and work in Elim, as well as my final analyses of the data into topics related to salmon, subsistence, identity, human-animal relationships, spirituality, place, and cosmology.

Overview: method to data to learning and analysis

Much of my work began, as intimated above, with inquiries into, at a very fundamental level, the question of ‘what matters and why’ to people in Elim as well as other relatively explicit questions about identity. In response to those inquiries and falling out of my other ethnographic work in Elim, I learned from people in Elim about those questions, other questions, and,

interestingly, something else very broad: how the world is structured. In many ways, this is the missing ‘how’ from the first set of inquiries looking at ‘what’ and ‘why.’ If the first set can be seen as fundamentally issues of identity broadly and narrowly conceived, as I suggest they all are, then the second set (the “something else”) is clearly about cosmology¹. Throughout almost all of this work, the broader topics of salmon and subsistence were touchstones that frequently framed many of these inquiries and opportunities for learning.

My main argument in this dissertation is that my research in and about Elim revealed that identity and cosmology are co-created – and it revealed how this is the case. I discovered that salmon (as well as subsistence) are, to borrow from Lévi-Strauss’ turn of phrase (1963:89), ‘good to think with’ in order to see that, and relatedly, as Todd (2016b) notes, “simultaneously many things.” This co-creation of identity and cosmology occurs within a particularly visible hybrid cosmological landscape of (primarily) ‘traditionally Indigenous’ and Christian ideologies. This landscape in lived culture and context is marked by a patterned heteroglossic ‘condition’ which includes a dominant (and indigenized) Christian discourse. This heteroglossia is constituted, represented, and evidenced by a (markedly) heterogeneous multiplicity of discourse, practice, and belief. This cosmological landscape and its heteroglossic condition are visible, and made, in various respects in co-implicated, co-indexical, interlocking instantiations of human-animal relationships, spirituality, systems of proper behavior, place attachments, and identity processes and formations.

¹ In general I treat the terms cosmology and ontology as separate. I define the terms thusly: cosmology pertains to comprehensive understandings of the structure of the universe (or world, reality, etc.) - what it is, what’s in it, the nature of those things and how those things are interrelated, and what the principles are which are associated with all of this. Ontology, in my use, would more strictly pertain to understandings of being and existence. It is not uncommon to see these terms intertwined, or to see one given primacy over the other, depending on the author and disciplinary context. My thinking does not necessitate a particular relationship between the two concepts (e.g. one being contained within the other), but in this work I favor a usage which subsumes ontology within cosmology, as this appears more appropriate for the analysis and sociocultural facts and contexts I am discussing.

Chapter 3: Human-animal relationships in Elim

JRY: “What does subsistence mean to you?”

“Everything. We couldn’t live without it.” (*Man, late 30s*)

Introduction

Many rural Indigenous residents of Alaska have relationships with animals that are vastly different from those of urban Alaskans or other people. These relationships are related to spirituality, food, work, identity, economics and many other spheres. On a day-to-day basis, it would be impossible, in most rural communities (including Elim), to not interact with (non-pet) animals at least once a day. Animals are ever-present in the form of food, tools, artwork, educational exhibits, clothing, hung up drying, or simply present in the immediate landscape of the village. This chapter engages with the literature and data on human-animal relationships on various scales, including a focus on many of the ways that Elim residents think and talk about, and interact with, animals, specifically animals harvested for subsistence (and among those, particularly salmon). This relationship is examined in detail through the lenses of values, concepts of ‘buying and selling’ and, more broadly, through an examination of the term and concept of ‘subsistence.’ A more in-depth discussion of spirituality will be presented in Chapter 5.

While it is true that “the histories and futures of Indigenous peoples and salmon are inextricably bound across the [...] North Pacific” (Colombi and Brooks 2012:xi), and there are indeed similarities to be found regarding various cultural domains and ‘salmon’ between Indigenous peoples, in this dissertation I did not presume a strong ontological equivalence of ‘salmon’ across time, space, and culture(s). If anything, the example of the complexity and the theoretical challenges it presents from just one community’s culture and history – Elim – seems to amply justify this precautionary approach. As such, the reader will find no separate section on “salmon and identity” covering both the literatures which may fall under this topic and connecting it to my own work. Instead, I have threaded many of the voices of key thinkers on these topics, where appropriate, throughout this work in various dissertation sections (e.g. on human-animal relationships, spirituality, identity, etc.).

Humans and animals in the North

“We need another and a wiser and perhaps more mystical concept of animals. ... We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err and err greatly. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth” (Beston [1928] 2003:24-25).

Animals are important to humans for a variety of reasons. They can provide food, clothing, and companionship; they can be seen as adversaries, trading partners, benevolent or malevolent actors, spirits and ancestors, a meal, or a nuisance. The Indigenous residents of the circumpolar north have viewed animals in all of these ways, and others. Relationships with animals can shape both how we see ourselves and how view other species, and other people’s views of animals can also shape how we view them.

What may seem entirely “natural” to Westerners, is in fact a cultural construct (Fienup-Riordan 1994:49), and one that is, in this respect, often contrary to the beliefs of Indigenous groups around the north (see also Morrow and Hensel 1992). As Sahlins (2008:2) has noted, for example, western metaphysics has embedded within it a particular dichotomy between nature and culture which sees humans as “basically beasts” rather than, as many other peoples around the world, animals as “basically human.”

This section is meant to be an overview of a selection of the important anthropological literature dealing with human-animal relationships in the circumpolar north, particularly in North America. The types of relationships that Indigenous people of the north had and have with animals will be reviewed. The section concludes with thoughts on what is currently know about such

relationships for the Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound¹ region.

There has been intensive study of the beliefs and practices surrounding human-animal relationships with Indigenous groups in the circumpolar north. Some of the most detailed or well-known include Berkes ([1999] 2008), Brightman ([1973] 2002), Fienup-Riordan (1983, 1994), Hallowell (1960), Ingold (2000), Nelson (1983), Tanner (1979), and Willerslev (2007), among others. These works have shown a number of similarities across circumpolar cultures in how people think about and relate to animals, particularly in regard to the concepts of personhood, reciprocity, communication, transmutation, and proper behaviors. However, we must also bear in mind the different times at which these analyses were made, as well as the important ways in which such beliefs and practices change over time (see e.g. discussion in Chapter 5 on spirituality and human-animal relationships in the present work).

Across the circumpolar north, people, animals, and other ‘things’ like landscape features, plants, and climatological manifestations are considered to have ‘souls’² and to be persons. There is an ontological equivalence between humans and animals for most circumpolar peoples. As Wenzel discusses regarding the Canadian Inuit, humans and animals are not segregated, but are in fact seen as very similar (1991). Likewise, Cree society “embraces” animals (Brightman [1973] 2002:2), and the Cree believe that humans and animals, and in fact all ‘beings,’ are of equal value and worth (Berkes 1998, [1999] 2008). “Animals,” according to Wenzel, “share with humans a common state of being that includes kinship and family relations, sentience, and intelligence” (1991:60-61). These same ideas were early noted for the Ojibwa people by Hallowell who described how, “the concept of ‘person’ is not, in fact, synonymous with human being but transcends it” (1960:21), and have also been expressed by other Indigenous groups around the north (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994; Olafsson 1989:46; Scott 1989:195; Willerslev 2007:73). In addition to possessing personhood, some other non-human persons are believed to possess great spiritual or other powers, and are also seen as having intelligence and being able to think and reason. These similarities between humans and animals necessitate both respect, as well as fear, at times, because animals are intentional actors and displeasing or offending them

¹ I also use the term “Bering Strait region” to describe the area that encompasses the Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound.

² Sometimes also called *inuas*, spirits, shades, or other terms (e.g. Fitzhugh et al. 1982).

could have grave consequences.

While personhood is granted to much of the non-human world, it does not necessitate that every thing actually be endowed with it. For example, Hallowell asked an Ojibwa person if all of the stones that were around them were “alive.” The person answered that only some were, indicating that there is the potential for all objects and things to have personhood, but whether or not they are actually perceived as having it is based on individuals’ experiences (1960:24-25). In a similar vein, Cruikshank discusses how some glaciers are sentient beings and active subjects, aware of human actions (2005). The sentience that animals possess as a result of personhood includes having an awareness of, or somehow being able to observe, what humans were doing and saying – even when at a great distance (e.g. Brightman [1973] 2002:273; Berkes [1999] 2008:98; Fienup-Riordan 1983, 1990; Gubser 1965). These observations allow animals to make decisions as to which humans to interact with (or not), and in what capacity.

Kohn, though not directly addressing northern anthropology, discusses the “ontological turn” in the discipline, and is specifically concerned with human-nonhuman (including animal) relationships (2015). It is analysis and understanding of these relationships that lead to our understanding of human concerns. Kohn discusses Viveiros de Castro’s view of Amerindian thought as ‘multinaturalist’ in relationship to perspectivism. As Kohn notes, “multinaturalism, then, takes the comparison inherent to perspectivism – for a characteristic of perspectival thinking is that one perspective can hold together multiple irreducible worlds – and asks what it would be like if we saw everything as potentially generatively comparative” (2015:319; Viveiros de Castro 2014). As pertains to multinaturalism as a style of thought, there are certainly identifiable elements to be found in certain (though not most) views among contemporary Bering Strait Eskimo people, including in the ethnographic data I collected while working with Elim, as well as people in neighboring regions. For example, one Elim resident (*Woman, early 30s*) stated regarding salmon that “[t]hey’re their own kind and I think they think and they’re just like you and me and everybody” (see also, e.g., Fienup-Riordan’s discussion of sea mammals living in their own *qasgit* and observing humans; Fienup-Riordan 2000). Multinaturalism and perspectivism, and other thinking in the ‘ontological turn’ in anthropology, while offering value at multiple levels (see the Conclusion and discussion chapter), do not present as theoretical

constructs and styles of thinking solutions which either entirely match the existing ethnographic data nor solve some long-standing and vexing problems regarding difference and alterity as relates, for example, to human-animal relationships. Similarities and differences with these styles of thinking in Bering Strait Eskimo views regarding human-animal discourse, if anything, can be said to speak to the significant degree of heterogeneity and hybridity in these views (which is not to say that there is not a dominant discourse, as is discussed for example in the chapter on Spirituality), though it is also part of an enduring ‘troubling’ of large-scale theoretical approaches to these issues. The political promise found in the above understanding of perspectivism also offers obvious potential benefits as pertain to the juncture of multiple knowledge systems and resource management.

Todd, as others before her have, also addresses the ‘ontological turn’ and calls for the explicit and purposeful inclusion of Indigenous voices and recognition of Indigenous “intellectual labor” in the discussion of Indigenous ontologies (2016a:7). This call for de-colonization is supported by her own work (e.g. Todd 2014b, 2018). Kohn makes a distinctly different call for a specific kind of ontological anthropology that is both metaphysical and political (among other things), and which leads to ethical practice that can contribute to non-reductionist assessment and addressing of human problems. He believes that anthropology can become “a project of cosmic ‘diplomacy’” (from Latour 2013 and others) which ‘makes room’ for various ways of being (Kohn 2015:321).

While Kohn argues that an ontological anthropology/anthropologists can play the role of a translator for these various modes of existence, I would argue for extreme caution here. Rather than simply posing the anthropologist as translator, it is perhaps better to see this role as bringing some understanding of particular peoples’ views (and the plurality of views) in order to bring equity to such ‘diplomacy’ – particularly in the context of fraught human-animal relationship discourses, such as natural resource management and policy – in combination with (and in large part to the ends of) facilitating the involvement of northern Indigenous peoples and the inclusion of their voices and leadership in these contexts so they can represent their own ‘ontologies’.

Human-animal relationships in the north were, and in cases still are, seen as reciprocal in nature.

While variability regarding the exact nature of these reciprocal relationships varies, the ideology that they are reciprocal prevails with many peoples. The reciprocal relationship requires that certain actions be taken on the part of humans to satisfy the animals. If humans perform these actions (proper thought, behavior, treatment of animals, etc.) then animals will give themselves to the hunter. Brightman provides detail regarding Cree-animal relationships and what actions are required on the part of the Cree to maintain them ([1973] 2002). As an example from Norton Sound shows, reciprocity can include ensuring that humans continue to utilize animals in their environment. A seal hunter from the Sound explained that recent declines in the numbers of seals available was due to human inaction, “The more you use them, the more there are. The less you use them, the fewer there are” (Huntington 2000:8). The relationship between humans and animals is long-term and ongoing and if humans do not maintain it, animals will stop providing themselves. If humans do not properly use animals (e.g. taking them when presented), and if they do not treat them in the right ways (e.g. through the performance and observation of ceremonies and ritual), the animals will no longer be available to humans. In this way, human and animal regeneration are connected (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994, 2000; Lyones 1964).

Animals are seen as having the ability to talk and communicate among themselves, to humans, and sometimes also to other kinds of animals (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994:123; Hallowell 1960:34-35; Ingold 2000:102-106; Milligrock 1981; Nadasdy 2007:35-36; Tanner 1979:137).

Communication also extends to things like humans’ appearance in the eyes of animals, such as ensuring that seal hunters had clean bright white clothing on (which pleases seals), to having new and well-made tools – all of which communicated to animals that humans respected them and were thus worthy to receive the animals. Animals can often communicate with humans through dreams or visions, as well speaking to them during waking life. These communications frequently involve animals instructing humans in how to properly treat animals to show them respect and ensure that their mutually satisfying relationships can continue.

Animals, and some humans, have the ability to transmute themselves between different kinds of persons; animals can change into humans (and vice versa), and sometimes also change from one type of animal to another. In one story, documented in Norton Sound, even a blade of grass is able to turn itself into a human (E.W. Nelson 1899:505-509; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-

Yakoubian 2012). This changeability is associated with the spiritual power of the being and was frequently taken advantage of when a moral lesson directed at humans needed to be communicated (e.g. Nadasdy 2003:84). Though not subscribed to by all circumpolar peoples, the ability of animals to change form has often stemmed from the common belief that animals had at one time been humans, and still retain at least some sense of that humanity.

Willerslev discusses how, for the Yukaghir, personhood is quite fluid (2007). Yukaghir hunters participate in elaborate mimesis in an effort to draw animals out so that they can be hunted – but there is always a risk that a hunter might go too far and actually be drawn into the world of the animal, temporarily or permanently. As Viveiros de Castro notes, the viewing of animals as persons often also involves a belief that the animal is simply wearing “clothing” that masks or “conceals an internal human form” or spirit, perhaps because of their long-ago status as fellow humans (1998:472, 465). Alternately, masks, used by humans during ceremonies, were tools by which humans could take on the essence or attributes of animals. Similarly, some northern peoples believed that the wearing of wolf or fox tails, or labrets imitative of walrus tusks, for example, would imbue the wearer with some of that animal’s positive characteristics (such as speed or cunning) or spiritual power e.g. (Fienup-Riordan 2000:262; Nelson 1983:151; Ray 1992).

Anderson has proposed the concept of “sentient ecology” as another framework through which to view human-animal-environment relationships in the north (2000:116-117, 2017). A sentient ecology consists of a living, thinking, acting environment, where humans, animals and the landscape all act and react to each other in a “mutual interrelation of person and place” (Anderson 2000:116). This concept can trace its lineage in part to Bateson and his ‘ecology of the mind’ (Bateson [1972] 2000). Anderson places an emphasis on sociality and relationality, as derived from and embedded in place (“emplacement”) (2017). When discussing the concept of reciprocity, Anderson notes that in Eurasia, hunters consider themselves to engage in reciprocity with a “spirit master,” rather than directly with a particular animal or animal deity (2017:136). Additionally, Anderson (following Nadasdy 2007) describes his interpretation of the “obligatory” nature of reciprocal relationships, and the dissonance between that nature and the positive, “warm” language often used to describe them (2017:135). He encourages northern anthropology

to engage deeply with story and to complicate our accounts of nature (2017:143).

As discussed above, the reciprocal nature of human-animal relationships require that humans enact various rituals and ceremonies, and follow a variety of, sometimes bewilderingly comprehensive, taboos. These acts may have been small private rituals (e.g. Oquilluk 1973:98), or larger group ceremonies (e.g. Brightman [1973] 2000:213-243), the observation of various taboos associated with different animals or human statuses (e.g. Hensel 1996:61; Nelson 1983:92-93), or large-scale ceremonial gatherings (e.g. Hawkes 1913). Carrying out these rituals, ceremonies and taboos was often seen as ensuring ‘luck’ to hunters in future pursuits of animals. The Nunamiut, for example, would cut off the head of the caribou in order to release its soul so that it could return home, and presumably tell other caribou of its hospitable treatment so that other animals would be willing to be killed by human hunters (Grubser 1965:326). Ellanna and Sherrod discuss the intricate ceremonies and taboos practiced by Inupiat surrounding the harvest of wolves that were necessary, in part, because of their perceived spiritual importance (2004:165-168). The sharing of animals was also an integral means of showing respect to animals (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994; Scott 1989), as was the use of good technique by hunters (e.g. Nelson 1983; Scott 1989). If these acts are not performed or are not performed properly, animals may refuse to present themselves or may become unable to be reborn. The concept of “infinitely renewable” animal resources is also common across the circumpolar north (e.g. Brightman [1973] 2000:291), but the animals (or more properly their ‘souls’ or ‘spirits’) can only be reborn (in this cycle of infinite renewability) if humans treat animal bodies properly to facilitate this rebirth. Burch, working with historical and ethnographic material from Northwest Alaska, has also discussed how the notion “that hunters share,” which he says is “part of the received wisdom of anthropology,” is in fact far more complex and particular in reality (1988b:95).

As Ingold has discussed, the existence of these human-animal relationships entails that there be no differentiation between “social and ecological relations” (2000:60); hunting people's relationships with animals (and vice versa) embody both. While Ingold (and others) believe that these relations, or peoples' views about them, are culturally constructed, Nadasdy (and others) have argued that we perhaps need to view them in a much more literal sense (Ingold 2000; Nadasdy 2007).

Alaskan Eskimo human-animal relationships

This section reviews some of the literature on human-animal relationships related to Eskimo³ people in Alaska. Ann Fienup-Riordan has done some of the most in-depth and detailed research regarding human-animal relationships for Alaskan Yup'ik people. Fienup-Riordan has worked with Yup'ik Elders and communities for decades and has been able to richly document their actions and beliefs about these relationships (e.g. 1983, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2005). Some of what she has written about human-animal relationships in Yup'ik society, with communities to the south of the Bering Strait region, is distilled below.

Yup'ik people, like others in the circumpolar north, believe⁴ that humans and animals are not distinct types of beings, but are alike in many ways, such as having immortal souls and possessing awareness and personhood (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1983, 1990, 2000). Animals were, at one time, closer to human beings and had even used human clothing and speech (Fienup-Riordan 1994:62). Humans are not thought of as being different from animals. Rather, non-human animals are persons and are considered to be of equal worth (Fienup-Riordan 1986b). Fienup-Riordan, writing almost two decades ago, noted that many Yup'ik people today still hold these (and other) traditional views about animals (2000:58). She describes the relationship between Yup'ik people and animals as one of “collaborative reciprocity,” entailing, among other things, that animals gift themselves to human hunters who have treated the animals with respect and treated them as persons (Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1994). This view, of reciprocal relations between humans and animals, is widespread among northern hunting peoples. As Nadasdy and others have noted, these types of relationships are “long-term” and must be maintained through acts such as rituals and offerings (Nadasdy 2007:25).

Yup'ik people believe that the *ellam yua*, or spirit of the universe, oversees everything (Kawagley 1995; Fienup-Riordan 2005). They also believe that there is a 'shared code of

³ The term ‘Eskimo’ is used here, and throughout, unless referring to the work of an author that uses a different term. I acknowledge that the term ‘Eskimo’ is not widely used outside of Alaska, but is a common and in many cases preferred autonym for many Yup'ik, Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Yupik individuals and organizations throughout the Bering Strait region.

⁴ The following section is written in the present tense, for ease of reading. While some or many of these beliefs or practices may still be the case currently, others may not be.

conduct' between humans and animals which emphasizes respect for other persons as well as individual integrity (Fienup-Riordan 1994:52-58). Perhaps most critical in terms of human actions for the health of this reciprocal relationship is treating animal bodies and animal remains with respect. Some respectful actions include covering all traces of blood at a kill site, presenting seals with freshwater when bringing them into the village, taking care of animal bladders and returning them to the sea, properly distributing a catch, and properly disposing of bones and other animal remains according to the rules for each species (Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1994, 2000). Yup'ik people do not believe that animals are stupid or that humans hold some kind of dominance over them – nor do they see themselves as entirely subordinate to animals – rather, it is a two-way relationship, one of mutual respect. People do their part to maintain this reciprocal relationship by carrying out an extensive ritual and ceremonial cycle and animals do their part by returning in abundance when they have been treated properly by humans (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990:168-169). This relationship also requires that humans respond to animals who present (give) themselves to humans; if humans do not respond appropriately (by respectfully killing the animal) they will in the future experience bad luck in hunting (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990:181). As Fienup-Riordan has noted and discussed in detail, the Yup'ik story “The Boy Who Lived With The Seals” exemplifies human-seal (animal) relationships and the respect and obligations that each type of person (human and seal) owes to the other, as well as how each views the other (1983, 1994, 2000).

The Yupiit see their environment, including animals, as being “responsive to their own careful action and attention,” including even thoughts (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 2000:5, 12-14). The power of thoughts and the necessity of “being of one mind” is emphasized to Yup'ik people as they are being socialized (Fienup-Riordan 1994:143-158). Thinking ‘good’ thoughts is believed to be a critical component of clearing a path for the animals a hunter will seek in the future (Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1994:149-158). Good thoughts, along with the following of many other rules, such as cleaning up refuse and shoveling snow from entryways, ensures that animals will see that they were respected and thus want to give themselves to proper-behaving hunters (1990, 1994, 2000). Humans are able to take fish and game because they have acted and thought appropriately (Fienup-Riordan 2000:17-18). Just as young men are regularly told to “keep the thought of the seals” in their minds, young seals are believed to be instructed to “stay awake” by their Elders

(so they will be aware of a hunter's blow and be able to retreat to their bladder, to later be reborn) (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990:74, 1994:51, 53). Young women, as well, are advised to think of the animals as they do helpful things, which also contributes to clearing the way for animals (Fienup-Riordan 2000:12). Additionally, women cannot be distracted (such as by singing) when doing things like sewing rain gear, and have to ensure that men's clothing is made perfectly. Any improper thoughts will later be perceived by the animals with distaste (e.g. if a woman sang while making hunting clothes, her husband would be perceived as a loud and noisy hunter), and any mistakes in sewing, such as a crooked stitch, will be blatantly obvious and also distasteful to animals (Fieunup-Riordan 1994:96). The thoughts of all group members, it is believed, should always be on the animals, with a focus on doing things properly to please them. This idea of the power of a group all being of the same mind is something that is frequently discussed, often in terms of fighting for subsistence rights, and in determining which group will be successful (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.).

At the center of the Yup'ik ritual cycle is the maintenance of the relationship between humans and non-humans (living, dead and yet to be born) (Fienup-Riordan 1994:324-354). The Yupiit view of the universe is a cyclical one whereby both human and animal spirits are constantly being reborn. Ritual and ceremony emphasize this view and also act on it to ensure that animal spirits will want to return and offer themselves to humans again in the future. The ceremonial cycle, and the gifting of food involved in many dances and ceremonies, was and is one way for humans to prove to animals that they are respected and that the hunters and communities are "ready to receive them again" (Fienup-Riordan 1994:347). By way of this cyclical view and ceremonial (as well as everyday) actions, animals will always be available, regardless of how many humans take, as long as they are treated properly so that the animal spirits can, and will want to, return again as new animals (Fienup-Riordan 2000). Outsiders, non-Yup'ik people, have upset this balance in some instances by not acting appropriately towards animals (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990:175-183, 1999). Yupiit who do not follow the appropriate protocols could also, of course, upset this balance. The most serious consequence for inappropriate thought and action would be for a hunter to no longer be successful. This is a very real, life or death, threat which most hunters and community members act strenuously to avoid.

Animals, as non-human persons, live in their own worlds, which are in many ways similar to the human world. Sea mammals, for example, live “in huge underwater *qasqit* (plural), where they arrange themselves around a central fire pit in ranked fashion” (Fienup-Riordan 2000:11, 171). From their underwater homes they observe humans and their actions towards animals and then chose which hunters to give themselves to. King salmon, for example, are also said to choose which net to enter based on the treatment they have received previously from fishermen (Fienup-Riordan 2000:52).

With regard to fish, dead salmon and salmon remains “must never be left lying around or be thrown into the river. Once human hands had touched them, they were marked. If any other fish saw them in their path, they would not continue upstream but return to the sea” (Fienup-Riordan 1994:120). Instead, fish remains have to be disposed of in other ways. This does not appear to be common practice in the Seward Peninsula/Norton Sound region today. In fact, the exact opposite seems to be the case at many fish camps, where salmon remains, including heads and guts, are thrown directly into the river (or ocean) after the processing of each fish (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.). Yup’ik people also have various other proscriptions for the treatment of non-salmon fish and fish in general. For example, people are not supposed to argue about fish during the fishing season as the fish will hear the belligerence as much exaggerated, which will displease them (Fienup-Riordan 1994:120). This axiom is known and discussed in some Bering Strait region villages today. For example, in one village, residents have commented to me that fights over salmon between region subsistence fishermen and the commercial fishing industry (and fishery managers), as well as disagreement among region residents, was a likely cause of the declines in salmon runs that they had recently experienced (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.).

Yup’ik people also make important distinctions between different classes of animals, such as land and sea animals. Fienup-Riordan points out that, though not always recognized, this is an important distinction for eastern Bering Sea coast residents (1994:118, 140). According to her, the division is to ensure proper passage of the animals between worlds (i.e. so a land animal would not accidentally be returned to the ocean, or vice versa). While not generally recognized as ‘true,’ this division is known in some Bering Strait communities today. For example, a story from Elim relates how residents of a nearby abandoned village were killed by an earthquake

caused by someone cooking “land and sea birds” together (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.; see also Burch 1988a:97; Oswalt 1967).

As noted above, some of these views about human animal relationships persist and are acted upon in Yup'ik communities today. Additionally, when it comes to contemporary subsistence debates, the Yupiit believe that rights to fish (for example) should fall to them because of their long-standing reliance on the resource and because of the social relationships that they have maintained with fish (Fienup-Riordan 2000:19). While the sharing of food (even with non-Yup'ik people) is highly valued, in the case of subsistence rights, Yup'ik communities feel they should take priority over others because they have been acting properly and cultivating these relationships with animals for countless generations (Fienup-Riordan 2000). Hensel has also written in depth about Yupiit views on subsistence, including human-animal relationships and the politics of contemporary subsistence (1996).

Regarding the northern Seward Peninsula and northwest Alaska, Burch and Nelson have been the most prolific anthropologists and have recorded vast amounts of information about the Inupiaq people of northwest Alaska. While both reported on human-animal relationships in this region, Burch did more detailed work. Burch's work had a strong focus, however, on the kin and other social relationships of the Inupiat of northwest Alaska (e.g. Burch 1970, 1971, 1975, 1988b, 1998a, 1998b, 2005, 2006) with more sporadic detailed information about human-animal relationships (see especially Burch 2006). Burch's writing was derived in large part from interviews with Elders that he conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, and Nelson relied primarily on his observations and experiences as a novice hunter. Neither author presents a summary or condensed view of Eskimo-animal relationships in their work, but Burch does provide a short summary of the “Eskimo world view” that incorporates information from groups across the Arctic (1988a:89-107). While having less published material, Lucier also contributed to documenting human-animal relationships (e.g. 1951, 1954, 1958 and 1995 [with VanStone]). Information about such relationships is also found in the work of Gubser (1965) and others, in addition to the explorers and visitors to the region who documented stories and other information about such relationships (e.g. Nelson 1899; Rasmussen 1932; Simpson 1875).

Richard Nelson's work focused on environmental knowledge and hunting practices in northern Inupiaq Eskimo communities (1969, 1980). He gained firsthand knowledge of the techniques and body of information used by marine mammal hunters, primarily in Wainwright. While Nelson provides extremely detailed information about hunting and environmental knowledge, for this region he has very little discussion about how hunters think about animals and what kind of spiritual, moral, or other relationships might exist between humans and animals. His work *Shadow of the Hunter* (1980), a fictionalized ethnography, has more description of such relationships than his other works.

There are few summaries of Inupiaq beliefs on any topic, but early and fairly comprehensive summaries of major sources were done by Lantis and Oswalt for all "Alaskan Eskimo" groups, including the Inupiat (Lantis 1947; Oswalt 1967). They note similarities and differences between and across Alaskan Eskimo peoples regarding such things as beliefs and stories about the origin of people, the early condition of the world, spirits, shamans, and ceremonialism. Ellanna and Sherrod (2004) provide a more recent summary of essentially the same sources, with some contemporary additions. Indigenous authors and scholars from the region have also contributed richly to an understanding of Inupiaq and Yup'ik people in the Bering Strait region (e.g. Anungazuk 2007; Cox 2003, 2005; Degnan 1999; Kaplan 1988; Kingston 2005, 2007; Koonooka 2003; Kazingnuk 1937/1940; Senungetuk 1971).

Alaskan Eskimos have also had relationships with other types of animal-beings, ones not typically seen (nor recognized by western science). For example, E.W. Nelson describes "fabulous monsters" that people were both terrified and fascinated by including the "walrus dog" which is very aggressive towards humans, giant fish that live in tundra lakes, and the "great worm" which can change its form at will (1899:441-449). Fienup-Riordan details a number of "extraordinary" persons that people may still encounter such as tiny "errand people" (1994:62-87), and Oquilluk discusses a Seward Peninsula creature that lived in a lake and which paralyzed anyone who saw it – before grabbing them and presumably killing them (1973:173). Additionally, Burch gave an overview of some elements of the domain of the "nonempirical environment" of northwest Alaska Eskimo (1971). These 'nonempirical' elements which Burch described were very real to the people from whom he learned about them. The relationships that

northwest Alaska Eskimos had with such entities in their environment were also quite real and had measurable impacts on peoples' behavior. For example, giant fish were frequently reported to Burch and appeared to be quite common. People would refuse to go out onto lakes where the giant fish were known to live out of fear of them and even avoided "excellent fishing and caribou spearing localities" because of such fish (Burch 1971:156). Fish of this type are still reported in the Bering Strait region today, though I have never been told that people continue to avoid such places because of them (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.). Sightings or beliefs in similar phenomena and entities (i.e. what might be called 'supernatural' or 'paranormal' in western culture) are also still common in some Bering Strait communities. For example, sightings or signs of "little people" are reported fairly regularly, as are signs of other entities such as "big foots" and very large eagles (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.; see also Wilder 1987). The term "nonempirical" is not the appropriate way to describe these phenomena and entities, for a variety of reasons. The Bering Strait region Alaska Native non-profit, Kawerak, is currently conducting work on this topic in collaboration with eighteen region Tribes (e.g. Kawerak n.d.).

Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound region Inupiaq and Yup'ik people fall right in the middle of their more intensively visited-by-explorers and researched-by-academics neighbors to the north and south. As discussed below there is very limited specific documented information about pre-contact traditional, contact period, and even contemporary human-animal relationships in this region as compared to others. It is probably fair to assume that many of the beliefs and practices relating to animals that have been documented nearby, for the Inupiat to the north and the Yup'ik to the south, also apply to Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound Eskimo people. To what degree, and in what temporal and spatial contexts, is not clear at this time, however.

Human-animal relationships in the Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound region

Oquilluk's *People of Kawerak* is the most complete record, from an Indigenous point of view, of Seward Peninsula-region Indigenous history, and includes the practices and beliefs regarding animals that had been passed on to William Oquilluk during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Oquilluk 1973). The majority of what Oquilluk documented pertained to an "ancient" time period in Eskimo history. There are substantial gaps in the information presented about human-

animal relationships, as well as examples of what seem to be western influences in some of the stories (for example, “The Second Disaster;” Oquilluk 1973:53-61). Despite these challenges, this work is discussed at fairly great length here because of its emic perspective on this history and relationships, and because of its status as the longest and most detailed record of the history of any Seward Peninsula people (specifically, the *Kauwermiut* and their neighbors). Many people in the region call this book their ‘bible.’ In the discussion below, I discuss examples from the text which pertain to human-animal relationships and what we might be able to learn from them.

William Oquillik was born in Point Hope in 1896 to a Mary's Igloo (interior Seward Peninsula) family. When William was seven, his family returned to Mary's Igloo, and it was at the end of his life when Laurel Bland helped him record and write down the stories which comprise *People of Kauwerak* (Oquilluk 1973:v-ix). While *People of Kauwerak* records only one man's recollections, it comprises stories, knowledge, beliefs and experiences of generations of Seward Peninsula people, including Oquilluk's grandfather, a *Kauwermiut* man. *Kauwermiut* territory covered much of the Seward Peninsula from the Shishmaref area in the north, to the Koyuk River area in the south, including the lava bed region of the interior of the peninsula (Ray 1983:159-160, n.23).

Oquilluk relates stories about the first Eskimo people that lived “when the world was young” (Oquilluk 1973:1), before the first disaster (a volcanic eruption in ancient times; Oquilluk 1973:15-34). At this time there were many animals and fish available to humans (but there was no herding of reindeer, as there was during Oquilluk’s lifetime). The Eskimo people at that time also “lived like wild animals” according to Oquilluk, meaning by this that they did not use or need houses, clothes, or tools and did not know about spirits or ghosts (Oquilluk 1973). Humans at this time were also physically larger than they are today. There is no discussion of a time when humans and animals were the same, or even more similar to each other, or a time when they could communicate freely between species (cf. Viveiros de Castro 2004; Brightman [1973] 2002), but rather it is clear in these stories of the first people that humans and animals could not communicate with each other and that humans spoke ‘Eskimo’ and animals each had their own language. There is no indication that the relationships between humans and animals were strained or tense; they were similar to what exists today (animals as prey for humans). After the “first disaster,” humans learned how to make clothes and tools and other things that they have

today.

Of particular interest to my work is the relationship between Bering Strait region Alaska Eskimo people and fish. *People of Kauwerak* relates how Eskimo people first learned how to net fish by carefully observing the web of a spider and the way it trapped many flies (Oquilluk 1973:4, 28-29). After observing this, a man then created his own net out of rawhide and was able to catch many fish in a river. This man, and others, gradually improved the design of the net to make it more useful and efficient and created different kinds of nets for different fish. People also developed other ways to catch fish, such as with spears from riverbanks and through the ice, and with traps. They also experimented and learned that they could eat frozen fish, could dry them for winter use, and could bake or boil them (Oquilluk 1973:5, 28-29, 38-39, 42, 44). There are few clues or discussion in *People of Kauwerak* about what the ancestors of contemporary Seward Peninsula Eskimo people thought of fish or about their relationship to them, however. In one instance a man observed a pike eating a minnow and wondered how he could “fool” the pike in order to catch it. He and his hunting partner devised a hook with bait to catch pike (Oquilluk 1973:42). Believing that one had to ‘fool’ an animal to catch it can be seen as being related to other northern people's notions of human-animal relationships, ones that were potentially both reciprocal and adversarial (e.g. Brightman [1973] 2002; Nadasdy 2003; Tanner 1979; Willerslev 2007). It also indicates a level of intelligence or awareness on the part of the fish, which is only barely alluded to here, and nowhere else in the text.

In terms of the spiritual or ‘supernatural,’ it would appear, from Oquilluk’s knowledge, that Seward Peninsula people had a relationship with both human and animal spirits. For example, one story relates that there are “some things or someone” that take care of people (1973:68). This entity also watches over animals and every other living thing. The person relating the information in the story indicated that they did not know where this entity was, or what it looked like. This is also expressed in other stories that Oquilluk documented. In some instances the entity is described as being quite benevolent, as “looking after living things, so that no one will go hungry” (Oquilluk 1973:87). In one story, about a time of great deprivation, during an ordeal drifting on an ice floe with her small son, a woman “raised her hands upward and gave thanks to whatever it was that saved her” after discovering that they still had a small bit of food left

(Oquilluk 1973:78). The woman was sure that there was “something” looking after her and she “talked to someone” to express her gratitude (Oquilluk 1973:78). After reaching land she again raised her arms to the sky and “talked out in her voice⁵” to express thanks to “whatever” had saved them and brought them ashore (Oquilluk 1973:78).

This entity seems to have never communicated directly with humans, but humans interpreted certain things (e.g. weather, survival) as being caused by the entity. Though there were many spirits, it seems as though most people in Oquilluk’s stories attempted to communicate gratitude to one entity, an overarching one, and not multiple ones.

In addition to what seems to be an ‘overarching’ spirit, Oquilluk describes that there were “many different kinds of spirits” belonging to dead humans, animals, and other natural things. These spirits were not discovered by humans until after the second disaster (a flood) when skeletons were heard conversing (Oquilluk 1973: 115-116). The *aungutguhks* and shamishes (bad and good shamans) had control over and communication with these spirits (Oquilluk 1973:116). Toolik, the founder of Kauwerak village and not a shaman, had direct contact with 'spirit people' when they taught him how to properly carry out the Eagle-Wolf Dance (see below). He was also aware that these spirits could see him at all times, and that an eagle spirit could see him, as well (Oquilluk 1973:156). Another story relates how a young and poor orphan was able to obtain his deceased Grandfather's spirits (by asking for them) to become a shaman and perform great athletic feats to win the hearts of three daughters of a chief (Oquilluk 1973:194-198). In general, it seems as though only shamans had direct knowledge of specific spirits and their expertise or usefulness. Importantly, the shamans could also control people's access to resources. In one story, *aungutguhks* were preventing people from being able to harvest tomcod at an always reliable location in the Imuruk Basin. A living *aungutguhk* suspected this and went to communicate with deceased *aungutguhks* nearby. After talking with them, he returned with fish and his people were thereafter able to successfully catch fish at the location again (Oquilluk 1973:122).

This same ‘overarching’ entity, or perhaps another, also had control over the weather; “It is

5 This has a potentially interesting parallel to the Evangelical Covenant Church and their practice of 'praying out loud' – at least as practiced by some communities in the Bering Strait region today.

wonderful that whatever it is something has turned the mischief weather into great weather. There is something that still knows about us. Whatever it is, it does not despise us” (Oquilluk 1973:69). Additionally, small offerings were made to this entity that oversaw people and their lives. One woman put small pieces of walrus rawhide and skin boat cover (which her party had been boiling and eating during a time with little food) on a fire, along with “some other things.” This was done in gratitude for the beautiful weather they experienced after surviving many storms (Oquilluk 1973:69). A second offering of walrus skin was also made by the woman to show gratitude that her party had survived the storms and to ask for continued good weather and for their lives to be long (Oquilluk 1973:69). There is no indication that these offerings were made to walruses⁶ or walrus spirits, but rather to an overarching entity that had control over both the environment and human lives.

Another instance of an offering is recorded in the context of the peoples' recovery from the third disaster; after a successful caribou hunt, men threw pieces of caribou meat into their fire. This was done in an expression of gratitude directed towards the entity that looked after living things (Oquilluk 1973:98). Additionally, the hunters gave the offering “so each caribou could come into life again and the hunter could have them next time when they needed them” (Oquilluk 1973:98). It is not clear if the offerings were made to both an overarching spirit and to some kind of caribou spirit, or if it was made in general thanks to an overarching entity with the additional desired outcome of the caribou returning in the future.

Oquilluk also relates that people made offerings, prior to the third disaster, when a person died. They would burn “little things” in the fire and then ask “the spirits” to send the deceased person back as a new baby. This was done when 'good' people died and they needed another person like them. People did this despite the fact that they did not know “what the spirits looked like or what they are” (Oquilluk 1973:181-182). The above stories show a belief in the reincarnation of both humans and animals – though the details of such beliefs are not clear.

During the recovery following the first disaster, men came across a dead walrus on the beach. It

⁶ See Wilder 1987:51 for an example from the same region of an offering being made directly to animals (killer whales who had shared beluga *muktuk* with humans on shore).

was the first time anyone had seen a walrus and they “began to find out what was in it, and how the animal could be used” (Oquilluk 1973:47). This seems to be characteristic of the emphasis on the utilitarian relationship which region Eskimos had with animals and the rest of their environment, as presented in *People of Kauwerak* (i.e. stories of people seeing animals, knowing they were food, finding ways to catch or kill them). When explaining the nature of the world to their children, one couple from this ancient time noted that, “Someone gave the animals to be useful to many people” (Oquilluk 1973:87). What can be perceived here as a more 'utilitarian' view is perhaps the result of the fading or loss of many traditional stories that had human-animal relationship information in them, and the presentation of only a small sub-set of stories. While perhaps having a more utilitarian view of animals, people did also need to maintain a certain manner of relationship with animals, though, in order to remain in good standing with the entity(ies) that watched over them (people and animals). This information could be interpreted in two ways. At the time that Oquilluk heard these stories, in the early 1900s, they may have reflected an already changing cosmology as the result of several decades of growing interaction with and influence from western culture. Alternately, if the stories reflect an accurate representation of ancient *Kauwermiut* beliefs, this indicates that people in this region may have thought differently about human-animal relationships that groups to the north and south.

After the second disaster people became afraid of “evil spirits.” The people carved dolls and charms from ivory and also saved the dried noses of animals and claws to wear, which they believed would keep the evil spirits away from them (Oquilluk 1973:131). People gradually stopped using these items when missionaries began arriving in the region (Oquilluk 1973:131-132).

These ancient Eskimo people created, learned and passed down several main rules in regard to their ideal relationship with animals. They were taught to “be kind to all living creatures,” to “not play or make fun of any living creature,” to “help living creatures,” and to “kill and eat the living things,” but “never leave them or waste them” (Oquilluk 1973:68-69, 87, 109). There were also consequences for not behaving properly towards animals. In one instance children were instructed that if they did not follow these dicta toward animals that they would die (“someone will take life away from us”) (Oquilluk 1973:87), but if people were kind toward animals, “they

shall live a long time in this world” (Oquilluk 1973:68). Another ‘rule’ relating to a positive relationship with animals involved the sharing of the first catch. As with other Indigenous groups, a boy's first catch of every species was shared with the entire village, particularly the Elders. The purpose of this custom was to make the boy a good hunter and provider for his people. People believed that by sharing these first catches that the animals would know of the young man's generosity, would not be afraid of him, and would make it easier for him to find animals in the future (i.e. give him ‘luck’) (Oquilluk 1973:137-138).

There is very little formally documented information about it, but the *Kauwermiut* had a ceremony during caribou hunting time involving a caribou 'prediction' mask placed at impromptu corrals they built. If, during the ceremony, the mask had a lot of blood come out of its mouth they would get a lot of caribou, if there was less blood, few caribou (Oquilluk 1973:98, 117). This ritual was carried out by an *aungutguhk* and it is not clear if the prediction was the *aungutguhk*'s, or if he enabled his personal spirits to convey this information, or if the “something” that watched over all living things passed on the information through the mask, or something else. Ellanna and Sherrod point out that this ceremony was “predictive in nature as opposed to manipulative” and that it indicates a *Kauwermiut* belief that they (including their *aungutguhk*, which was only facilitating a prediction) had no control over the caribou or their harvest of them (2004:162).

In what is another possible instance of people communicating with animal spirits (if that is what the previous example was), the *Kauwermiut* had an Eagle-Wolf Dance (also called a messenger feast). The purpose and details of this dance and feast were communicated by 'spirit men' to an ancient hunter, Toolik, who killed a giant-sized young eagle. The purpose of the dance was to help the young eagle's spirit return to its mother, who was in mourning over its death (Oquilluk 1973:102, 149-166). The wolves play a part in that they have a symbiotic relationship with eagles where they “eat the parts of the animals that the *tingmiakpak* (large bird, eagle) do not use” and they therefore do not want the young eagle's mother to suffer “because they are grateful for the food she and her son shared” (Oquilluk 1973:155). Neither the hunter himself, nor other participants, could communicate directly with spirits during the dance, but had to do it through an *aungutguhk* intermediary (Oquilluk 1973:164-165).

In two *Kauwerak* stories, humans are able to enter the realm of animals that is not typically seen or visited by people. In the story of the “Five Sisters” a group of sisters and their husband are able to spend time at the bottom of the ocean. All the animals there are the “biggest they had ever seen” (clams, bullheads, other fish) (Oquilluk 1973:171-177). Their journey somehow allows them to reverse the aging process and become younger. At the end of their lives they went to live forever at the bottom of the ocean (presumably as younger people).

The second story, “Two Brothers,” relates the story of brothers who lived along a river with their family. When the family fished they would leave the fish guts and eggs for the sea gulls because they did not want the birds to be hungry. One spring the brothers were in the woods and came across a camp-robber’s nest. Even though they knew it was against their ancestors’ rules, they killed the baby birds except for one, which the older brother wanted to spare. Later that year while hunting hares, the boys became lost and tired. They came to a small cabin by a creek where they rested and were fed by a ‘little man’. They later found out the man was a beaver. They left the beaver-man and encountered a place with salmonberries growing on the snow, which the younger brother ate. He grew sick and died from these berries.

Following this, the older brother tried to find his way home and came across a little sod house, which was very large on the inside. A girl invited him in and there were many people inside, including an old man. They fed him and one of the people with a sea gull voice told the boy that he had just eaten and enjoyed the scraps that the boy and his family had left for the gulls while fishing. The old man related back to him the story of how he and his brother had killed the baby birds and then the old man revealed that he himself was the father of the birds. The old man-bird had arranged the brothers' ordeal and told the older brother that he did not harm him because he had saved the little girl, his bird-daughter. The bird-man offered his daughter in marriage to the brother and then died and turned into a bird. The remaining people in the house also turned into birds and left, while the little girl had changed to the size of a human. They married and had many children. The older brother lived to be old and was reunited with his younger brother in death. When they met they both had split lips. They decided to become a rabbit and a seal, respectively, and people thereafter believed that the seal and the rabbit were brothers because they both have a cut on their upper lip, and this story is how they cut them (Oquilluk 1973:183-

188). Additionally, Wilder relates several similar stories from the same region where humans are able to enter the realm of animals, and/or where initially, animals appear to people in human forms and only later reveal their animal forms (1987:77-82, 110-113, 180-182).

Another story relates to communication between two different animal species – the crow and the fox. The crow convinces the fox to jump over a creek, knowing the fox won't be able to. The fox fails, falls into the cold water which then freezes around him, and he is eaten by the crow (Oquilluk 1973:200-201). It isn't explained how humans came to know this story (if they observed it, were told it by crows or foxes, etc.). Communication between landscape features is also described. Two mountains on the Seward Peninsula argued all the time and one of the mountains (Bendeleben) got tired of quarrelling with the other and moved himself to his present location to get away (Oquilluk 1973:200). These stories indicate that *Kauwermiut* people believed that objects like mountains, as well as animals, could all be non-human persons and active agents in their own right.

While the idea of “luck,” or at least hunting rhetoric discussing luck, and rituals and actions necessary to ensure it, has figured prominently in discussion of many northern hunting and gathering groups (e.g. Brightman [1973] 2002; Nelson 1983), it is only mentioned a handful of times in *People of Kauwerak* (Oquilluk 1973:98, 164, 173-174, 213). There is also little discussion regarding things such as the proper frame of mind for hunters and other community members before, during and after a hunt – something that remains important in Yup'ik communities to the south of Norton Sound. Little contemporary information exists about hunters' thoughts and beliefs on this topic today (though one example is the prohibition, followed by some people today, to not talk about the animals you are about to pursue; see Chapter 5 for additional discussion).

While *People of Kauwerak* is able to provide a great amount of detail about the origins and history of Seward Peninsula region people, only fragments of information about their obviously complex relationship with animals and other non-human persons is available in the materials that Oquilliuk and Bland were able to assemble before Oquilluk's passing. It seems clear that Seward Peninsula people did not see the domains of personhood and agency as being limited to humans,

but included animals and the landscape, as well as spirits (human and animal) whose provenience the *Kauwermiut* (or Oquilluk) may have been unclear about. The question of which older beliefs regarding human-animal relationships persist today, along with what new ones have been adopted or created, is an outstanding question requiring further research in this region, and is something which this dissertation addresses.

Other sources of information on the early contact period for the Seward Peninsula region include Zagoskin and E.W. Nelson (Michael 1967; Nelson 1899). Zagoskin, a former Russian Naval Officer, joined the Russian American Company to help determine profitable locations for forts and trading posts, but also recorded a large amount of ethnological data during his travels. While Zagoskin spent time in the southern Seward Peninsula area (1842-1844), primarily around St. Michael, he spent much of his time exploring the interior of Alaska via the Yukon River. E.W. Nelson of the US Signal Service spent the years 1877-1881 based out of the village of St. Michael. His primary duty was to make meteorological observations along the coast, but he also accumulated a massive amount of other information relating to ornithology, geography, ethnology and other topics (Nelson 1899).

Zagoskin had much to say about the appearance and perceived morals of Norton Sound people, but less about issues that can help us determine the status of human-animal relationships at the time of his travels. In terms of religious beliefs, his observations included that the residents of the region “recognize a higher being” and “the immortality of the soul.” Zagoskin also says that each “tribal group” believes in their own “ruling spirit,” though he does not mention if any of these are animal spirits or if immortality of the soul was extended to beings other than humans (Michael 1967:120-121). Shamans were considered to be “intermediaries” between living people and the world of the spirits (Michael 1967:121). Additionally, when discussing beliefs about death, Zagoskin notes that some Norton Sound region people placed caribou (“deer”) heads with arrows in them at human burial sites, though he does not say why this was done (Michael 1967:109, 122).

Zagoskin also provides semi-detailed descriptions of two ceremonies he witnessed at St. Michael relating to honoring the dead and of the “earth and sea” spirits, including a month-long festival in

honor of “yugyak,” the spirit of the sea (Michael 1967:121-124). The latter was the Bladder Festival, undertaken to ensure the plentiful return of animals the next year (see Fienup-Riordan 2000, for example). These ceremonies included, respectively, offerings of water and food to deceased relatives and the return to the sea of bladders of the animals hunted the previous year (Michael 1967:121-124). E.W. Nelson also noted that the bladders were thought to contain the “shades” or “*imuas*” – the spirits – of the animals and that the festival was held to please the animals so they would return (Nelson 1899:392-393; see also, e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990:74, 1994:51, 53). The success or efficacy of holding the feasts was explained to Nelson with a story about a St. Michael man who had participated in the festival, as usual, by painting his animal bladders a certain way, to please the animals. When the man went hunting the next year a seal that he killed had the same marks on its bladder (Nelson 1899:393).

Nelson also observed many festivals and ceremonies at St. Michael, including the Bladder Festival, and provided detailed observations of the activities he observed, including some commentary on the purpose of the various ceremonies as ascertained from participants. He also recorded various “folk tales” from the region. Much of the information that Nelson provides is generalized to non-specific “Eskimos” and in most cases can't be said to relate directly to the Seward Peninsula (though much information is from St. Michael, on southern Norton Sound), unless specifically identified as such.

In his discussion about “masks and mask festivals,” Nelson notes that Norton Sound Eskimo had formerly made and used more masks, but had since changed many of their beliefs because of the influence of outsiders (Nelson 1899:393-394). Many masks, including those of shamans, were carved to represent the spirits of places, inanimate things, animals and people, and that everything (animate and inanimate) was believed to have a spirit (Nelson 1899:394, 428). Related to this was a belief that, “in early days,” all living things had a dual existence and the ability to transform between human and animal appearances. This was done by raising up a muzzle or beak, as if a mask, to then reveal a human form. This belief was still extant at the time of Nelson’s learning of it (Nelson 1899:394, 466). Plants were also considered persons and could take on the form of human beings if they desired, as is shown through one story Nelson recorded from Sledge Island (near Nome) about “The Discontented Grass Plant” (Nelson 1899:505-509;

see Burch 1988a:89; also Fienup-Riordan 1990:73; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2012).

Nelson learned that people believed that “nearly every attribute possessed by the shades of people is also believed to be possessed equally by the shades of animals” (Nelson 1899:423). Following from this, human and animal spirits were seen as similar in that “each kind lives in a village of its own” (Nelson 1899:423). All of these spirits were reliant on living humans for their comfort and sustenance (e.g. food, water and clothing), as given through offerings (Nelson 1899:423). The relationship is reciprocal, though, because humans are dependent on animal resources for their survival, as well. The idea that animals live in communities of their own, that are similar in structure to human communities, is widespread throughout North America (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 2000:11; Sahlins 2008:95).

Nelson relates the “genesis myths” of the Eskimo of western Alaska (“believed by the Eskimo from Kukskokwim river northward to Bering strait and well around on the Arctic coast”). These stories, and similar ones, have been recorded by others for Eskimo people. The story that Nelson recorded identifies the “Raven Father” as the creator (Nelson 1899:425). The Norton Sound Eskimo, says Nelson, offered pieces of food to Raven at different places on the tundra, for which in return he gave good weather (Nelson 1899:426). Nelson also records a St. Michael story about a flood in the “first days.” According to this narrative there was a great flood that flooded everything except the top of one high mountain, which saved a few animals, and a few people were saved in an *umiak* (Nelson 1899:452). Following this, Raven taught people all they needed to know about living and making tools, etc. (Nelson 1899:452-462). These stories differ in some fairly significant ways from the Seward Peninsula *Kauwermiut* origin stories and flood story presented above (for example, in the *Kauwermiut* story some people knew the flood was coming and prepared for it), perhaps because of Christian influences on the *Kauwermiut* story (Oquilluk 1973:53-61). Additionally, in the *Kauwermiut* stories, humans learned for themselves how to create tools and clothing, and there is no mention of Raven (or crow) teaching them these things.

Other “myths” recorded by Nelson involve a “man-like being” on the moon who controls animal populations on the earth. Shaman are intermediaries between the moon being and humans

(Nelson 1899:430-431). Humans can also be directly responsible for animals' reactions to them, though. Nelson, similar to Fienup-Riordan, reports that some animals were believed to have extraordinary hearing and that if they were spoken about, even from very far away, they would hear and the hunter would thus be unlucky (Nelson 1899:438-439). Additionally, hunters who did not take proper care with the bodies of dead animals would also experience bad luck on future hunts (Nelson 1899). Both of these beliefs are also widespread throughout the north and are not limited to Eskimo or Inuit peoples (e.g. see Brightman [1973] 2002).

While what was presented above is only a summary of some of the more extensive works dealing with the region, there are, of course, others who have conducted research that engaged Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound Eskimo relationships with animals such as Ellanna and Sherrod (2004), Hawkes (1913), Huntington (2000), Huntington and Mymrin (1996), Jolles (2005), Jones (2006), Kingston (2005, 2007), Ray (1983, 1992), Simon (1998) and others. These works, however, do not have a primary (or in some cases even secondary) focus on human-animal relationships, and many document such information incidentally to their main purposes.

Further discussion of the human-animal relationships literature

The preceding sections have reviewed some of the major works in circumpolar anthropology that address human-animal relationships, including research relating to Alaskan Eskimo people. While there is an extensive amount of anthropological research dealing with these relationships in the north in general, there has been very little academic research, or historical records, dealing specifically with the Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound (Bering Strait) region. Alaska Native people in the region are today frequently involved in debates about the proper way to hunt animals, how to use them, and how to dispose of their products. These ongoing debates, most frequently with state and federal resource management entities (but also at times internally within the context of village, Tribal, or regional organizations), have significant impacts on people's behaviors towards animals, and likely on their attitudes, beliefs, and relationships with them.

So, some questions we are left with are what kinds of beliefs and relationships do contemporary

Alaska Bering Strait Eskimo people have with animals, and what do they mean to Eskimo people today? How can these relationships be observed in individual and group practice or discourse? How do they relate and fit into other and broader cultural structures? And do these beliefs mesh with, or are they contradictory to, contemporary natural resource science, policy, and management?

This dissertation attends to, among other topics, all the questions above. I will speak more to the first three questions here, especially as pertains to the existing literature, and will attend to the last question in the concluding chapter of this work. It is hoped that this dissertation enriches existing understandings regarding all of the issues associated with these questions, among other topics. There has been very little investigation into the first question for Bering Strait people in the recent past. Most of what we know, or think we know, comes from the work of social scientists working to the north or south of the region (e.g. Burch, Fienup-Riordan and others). This is not to say that there has not been work – and that there are not other available materials (e.g. archival materials) – which are highly informative about Bering Strait Eskimo human-animal relationships and cosmology (as there are, and they are discussed in this dissertation, e.g. Nelson 1899; Oquilluk 1973; Ray 1964, 1992). While Bering Strait people share and have shared much in common with their neighbors to the north and south, it cannot be said that the human-animal relationships and cosmology of the Bering Strait region is currently well understood based on the literature available prior to when I started my dissertation research.

Because so little is documented about the first question, little is also known about the second and third – how contemporary Bering Strait Eskimo people express these relationships through actions, speech, or in other ways, and how these relationships are related and fitted with other and broader cultural structures. Just prior to, and then around the time of my work in Elim, a limited amount of anthropological work had been done to investigate these types of questions in the region (e.g. Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Gadamus et al. 2015; Jolles 2005, 2006b; Raymond-Yakoubian 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a; Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2014; Wisniewski 2010). In addition to ethnographic and other social science work, another valuable source of information about these relationships is region residents' testimony at public meetings relating to the management of subsistence resources.

People from the region both sit on management and policy-related bodies, and also attend and provide testimony to such bodies. The management of subsistence resources is frequently a contentious topic, and meetings where these issues are discussed often involve residents giving impassioned testimony about animals and their reliance on them, as well as other details about human-animal relationships (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.). The records of these meetings are a rich source of information on these topics.

In the rest of the chapter below, and elsewhere (particularly Chapter 5), I describe in more detail human-animal relationships in Elim – historically and currently. Heterogeneities (in and) of voices, discourses, beliefs, perspectives, and practices are strongly visible in this cultural domain (and other cultural domains) in Elim. Such heterogeneities are representative, evidentiary, and constitutive of a heteroglossia of the cosmological landscape, which includes a dominant indigenized Christian discourse. It is additionally important to note that the field of discourse in Elim is also marked by a hybridity of ‘traditional’ Indigenous and Christian cosmological ideologies. There are certainly identifiably ‘traditional’ beliefs similar to that which has been discussed further above. However, as regards fish, they are generally seen as lacking the levels of intelligence, awareness, personhood, and agency which are noted in many of the above discussions and reasonably attributable to earlier periods of local worldview. As I elaborate upon later in this dissertation (and have argued elsewhere; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017), the dominant discourse about fish has become a regionally and locally particular Christian (or, more specifically, an indigenized Christian) one which, as pertains to human-fish relationships and fish agency (as well as other characteristics of fish), taken together with the above-noted observations about a more ‘diminished’ view of fish qualities, constitute what I characterize as a ‘Christian animatism.’

The understandings of heteroglossia which I use in this work are ones which are both similar to and, to an extent, expanded beyond Bakhtin's original usage (1981). Bakhtin notes, in his essay on discourse in the novel, that

“The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal

stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphasis) - this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. The novel orchestrates all of its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types [*raznorečie*] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorečie*] can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization - this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel.” (1981:262-263)

As Holquist and Emerson also note, Bakhtin “seems to endorse the broad definition of language offered by Juri Lotman in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, ‘any communication system employing signs that are ordered in a particular manner’” (1981:430). Holquist and Emerson describe Bakhtin’s use of heteroglossia as such:

“The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions - social, historical, meteorological, physiological - that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as possible of that locus where

centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress” (1981: 428).

I argue that the heterogeneity (or more precisely, heterogeneities) in and of languages, discourses, voices, practices, and beliefs which I argue are present in Elim regarding various cultural domains are constitutive, representative, and evidentiary of a (patterned) heteroglossia. These heterogeneities do this at various levels. For example, with regard to voices, practices, and beliefs, the various differing voices which I discuss are indicative, representative, and evidence of the heteroglossia (and the discourses, ideologies, and languages which constitute it at a ‘higher order’ of organization). They are different in patterned, structural ways, occurring along patterned lines and in patterned ways. I generally use ‘discourse’ in the sense of patterned, systematic and/or ‘recurrent’ voice-with-voices, or a concatenation of multiple similarly-threaded voices, occurring in and bound up with culture and context, each discourse being one of the floating and interweaving plies with other discourses making up languages and cultures. I see value in understanding ‘languages’ in various levels of broadness and narrowness as pertains to understanding heteroglossia as well, including (among others) broad semiotic notions as well as notions akin to dialect, ‘register,’ and of the various speech types or languages of particular social groups or institutions. With regard to the latter, for example, voices discussed in this dissertation in some ways represent various such languages, such as the language of the Evangelical Covenant Church, or of Indigenous tradition, or hybrids thereof. Seeing this is one of the ways of connecting these voices to broader and deeper cultural and sociohistorical contexts, such as the ways such discourses can be mobilized through different ‘authorities’ (including the historical precipitates of power relationships). The multiplicity of discourses and languages may be seen, for example, by groups of individuals ‘voicing’ a particular discourse, or by single individuals mobilizing multiple discourses or languages. Regarding the latter, this was shown for example by Todd, who “demonstrate[d] how the Inuvialuit of Paulatuuq employ “fish pluralities” (multiple ways of knowing and defining fish) to negotiate the complex and dynamic pressures faced by humans, animals, and the environment in contemporary Arctic Canada” (Todd 2014b:217).

Unsurprisingly, for much of this work I will discuss in tight proximity both the notions of

heteroglossia, hybridity, and heterogeneities of voice, discourse, belief, practice, and so on. It is worth bearing in mind the differences as well as the similarities and connections. The linkages are, as just intimated, in multiple senses and at multiple levels (e.g. as a heterogeneity of discourse being a heteroglossia, or a heterogeneity of voices representing, evidencing, or being constitutive elements in a heteroglossia, etc.).

An expanded discussion of how Christianity is practiced in Elim is presented in Chapter 5. In addition to the significant influence of Evangelical Covenant Christianity in Elim's history, another reinforcing factor for the shift briefly alluded to above (a shift from previous beliefs about fish to how they are currently conceptualized) could also be the role of salmon in the local economy. Salmon are heavily implicated in the cash economy of Elim, and perhaps this has aided in diminishing the qualities which may have once been associated with them, transferring away some of their agentive powers of being and becoming more like 'things' in part by virtue of a parallel transformation to a mass commodity.⁷ In fish we could therefore be seeing, facilitated by this economic transformation, an instance of a strong shift from a 'traditional' cosmology to a western Judeo-Christian one, of which capitalism is its highest refinement. Sahlins characterizes this shift broadly as entailing a pattern whereby nature is perceived as 'obdurate matter' upon which the Adamic economic man lays waste his powers (Sahlins [1996] 2005:563-564, 568), though I would suggest this does not occur in the case of Elim, where the diminished view of fish qualities is met up in many cases with a view of fish as being part of "God's blessing," through which those qualities are, in a way, found again.

Subsistence in Elim

As this study focuses on Elim and subsistence resources, participants were asked to talk about what the word 'subsistence' means to them. This work of defining what subsistence means is relevant to ongoing discussion and debate in Alaska about what the proper word or phrase is to describe exactly what it is that Indigenous people do when they do what is called "subsistence" (in its 'simplest' form, when people harvest food and other resources for themselves and their

⁷ The fact that sea mammals (beluga in particular) are not – and by law cannot be – commodified in a similar fashion as fish may support this conclusion, because sea mammals appear to be a category of animal which retains a strong semblance of 'traditional Indigenous' values associated with them in Elim.

families, and all that is related to this, including what that truly represents and means to people). Many different formal and informal definitions for subsistence have been created. The ones that hold the most weight, legally, are the State of Alaska's definition (AS 16.05.940[33]⁸) and the US Federal government's definition (in the Alaska National Interest Land Claims Act, Title VIII, Section 803⁹), both of which are used to adjudicate the who, where, and when regarding granting of access to particular resources for 'subsistence.' However, these definitions are generally not what is meant when Alaska Native people use the term 'subsistence' to describe their activities. In one recent examination of the "multivocality" of the term 'subsistence,' Gartler reviews some of the many ways that the term has been used in different contexts and by different groups of people (2018). Part of the discomfort with and perceived inadequacy of the term in the Indigenous community relates to its association primarily with the 'economics' of subsistence and the 'act' of harvesting food or resources as opposed to the spirituality, philosophy, history and tradition that is a part of that act. Anthropological studies have also tended towards looking at subsistence through an economic lens (see Wheeler and Thornton 2005:71). Additionally, for many people who are not familiar with subsistence, or who do not value it, it is equated with poverty, or with 'poor' people (Berger 1985:5; Gartler 2018). People who do subsistence are colloquially described as just 'surviving,' as opposed to thriving, which has, for some, led to negative connotations with the term and concept of 'subsistence.'

The regional Alaska Native Tribal consortium for the Bering Strait region (Kawerak, Inc.), based on extensive work with region communities, utilizes the following understanding of subsistence:

⁸ AS 16.05.940[33]: "subsistence uses' means the noncommercial, customary and traditional uses of wild, renewable resources by a resident domiciled in a rural area of the state for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation, for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption, and for the customary trade, barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; in this paragraph, 'family' means persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and a person living in the household on a permanent basis;"

⁹ Alaska National Interest Land Claims Act, Title VIII, Section 803: "As used in this Act, the term 'subsistence uses' means the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption, for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade."

“By the term ‘subsistence,’ the authors employ the senses commonly used by indigenous residents of this region (as opposed to, for example, the State of Alaska's understanding). The indigenous perspective encompasses hunting and gathering related activities which have a deep connection to history, culture, and tradition, and which are primarily understood to be separate from commercial activities” (Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017: 133).

Food security and food sovereignty are distinct from subsistence though are highly related to it; indeed, they are “entailed within each other” (Kawerak 2017). ICC-Alaska has recently defined the term ‘food security’ through an Inuit lens. This comprehensive look at a complex concept has helped identify what Alaskan Inuit communities value and need in their goal to achieve food security. ICC-Alaska defines Alaskan Inuit food security as:

“Alaskan Inuit food security is the natural right of all Inuit to be part of the ecosystem, to access food and to care-take, protect and respect all of life, land, water and air. It allows for all Inuit to obtain, process, store and consume sufficient amounts of healthy and nutritious preferred food – foods physically and spiritually craved and needed from the land, air and water, which provide for families and future generations through the practice of Inuit customs and spirituality, languages, knowledge, policies, management practices and self-governance. It includes the responsibility and ability to pass on knowledge to younger generations, the taste of traditional foods rooted in place and season, knowledge of how to safely obtain and prepare traditional foods for medicinal use, clothing, housing, nutrients and, overall, how to be within one’s environment. It means understanding that food is a lifeline and a connection between the past and today’s self and cultural identity. Inuit food security is characterized by environmental health and is made up of six interconnecting dimensions: 1) Availability, 2) Inuit Culture, 3) Decision-Making Power and Management, 4) Health and Wellness, 5) Stability and 6) Accessibility. This definition holds the understanding that without food sovereignty, food security will not exist” (ICC Alaska 2015).

Subsistence activities, food security, the existence and use of Traditional Knowledge (TK) within communities, and respect for the broader Indigenous Knowledge (IK) of communities – all of these are important to and shape the well-being of both individuals and communities. Kawerak uses the following definition of TK, which is highly aligned with how residents in the Bering Strait region use the term, and which was developed based on extensive collaborations with region communities:

“Traditional Knowledge (TK) is a living body of knowledge which pertains to explaining and understanding the universe, and living and acting within it. It is acquired and utilized by indigenous communities and individuals in and through long-term sociocultural, spiritual and environmental engagement. TK is an integral part of the broader knowledge system of indigenous communities, is transmitted intergenerationally, is practically and widely applicable, and integrates personal experience with oral traditions. It provides perspectives applicable to an array of human and non-human phenomena. It is deeply rooted in history, time, and place, while also being rich, adaptable, and dynamic, all of which keep it relevant and useful in contemporary life. This knowledge is part of, and used in, everyday life, and is inextricably intertwined with peoples' identity, cosmology, values, and way of life. Tradition – and TK – does not preclude change, nor does it equal only 'the past'; in fact, it inherently entails change” (Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017).

Kawerak also defines Indigenous Knowledge as follows:

“Indigenous knowledge can be described as a body or system of knowledge that any indigenous person has. This is in contrast to Traditional Knowledge which is specialized knowledge, with a strong connection to heritage, on a topic or topics. Indigenous Knowledge is a broader term, which encompasses Traditional Knowledge as well as other forms of knowledge. All indigenous people have Indigenous Knowledge, but only some of them have Traditional Knowledge. We do not presume that there is a similarity/commonality between the bodies and systems of knowledge held by all indigenous groups” (Kawerak 2017).

A definition of well-being was recently developed through a working group of the State of Alaska’s Salmon and People (SASAP) project¹⁰. I share it here as a point of reference for the term and concept of well-being in the context of salmon and subsistence activities. Many of the components of this definition are reflected in the conversations that I had with Elim residents about subsistence, salmon and identity.

“A way of being with others that arises when people and ecosystems are healthy, and when individuals, families, and communities equitably practice their chosen ways of life and enjoy a self-defined quality of life now and for future generations” (SASAP 2018).

This study deliberately attempted to move beyond the economics of subsistence to look at value and meaning. Elim residents were specifically asked what the word ‘subsistence’ meant to them, or if they could define it (for themselves personally, not a legal definition). Discussions of subsistence, and what it means and encompasses, also happened organically within the context of many of the interviews, informal conversations, and experiences I had with Elim residents. Some of the most frequently discussed components of a definition or meaning of ‘subsistence’ are included in Table 5.

Table 5. Some of the most frequently discussed components of the meaning of ‘subsistence.’

Frequently discussed components of the meaning of ‘subsistence’
Subsistence is a way of life
It is about survival, self-sufficiency, and taking care of ourselves
It is the physical act of hunting, fishing and gathering food and other resources (e.g. firewood)
It is about “Native foods,” “Eskimo food,” and “traditional food”
Living off the land or eating off the land, and doing this in time with the seasons
Subsistence is a tradition and it connects you to the past, to places, and to ancestors
It is holistic, and all-encompassing (and, because of this, is difficult to truly define)

¹⁰ <https://alaskasalmonandpeople.org/>

For many people, one of the important things about subsistence is that it frees you from reliance on store food (to varying degrees, depending on how much you harvest through subsistence activities) and state assistance (e.g. food stamps or other state- or federal-provided aid). This is important and relates back to the idea of ‘survival.’ While no one in Elim equated subsistence with being poor, it was frequently discussed as a way to avoid the high costs of store foods. These same individuals and families, if forced to purchase all of their food, would not be able to ‘survive’ – that is to say, they would not be able to afford what they need. Subsistence, for them, is a way to economically survive. This is, however, only one component of the concept of subsistence for them. Interestingly, no one replied to the query about the meaning of subsistence by discussing that subsistence foods are, mostly, not bought and sold (like, for example, fish harvested in commercial fisheries are).

Subsistence also means providing for family. It is a way to be self-sufficient. When asked what subsistence means to them, some people began to list all the different resources that they harvest. The animals and the food they provide, the physical aspect of doing subsistence activities, and other related benefits are all crucial to both mental and physical well-being. The act and process of “putting away” food is also important, in part because it provides a physical connection to the animal or other resource, and also because it reinforces the self-sufficiency of the individual or family; they have the knowledge and skills to take care of the resource and to provide for themselves. Subsistence is also a way to uphold the, still today, highly important value of sharing (this is discussed in more detail further below; among other things, this also shows the importance of subsistence for a society, as well as, for many people, its spiritual aspect).

Some Elim residents also reflected on what they view as losses associated with subsistence. This includes the fact that some village residents do not participate in even one subsistence activity. It was observed that people who don’t do any subsistence have a hard time. These observations were primarily about economic difficulties (i.e. not having enough food), but also about the healthfulness of foods (e.g. not having ‘good’ food). Practicing subsistence was called a “dying trend” by some Elim residents, and many people spoke of wanting it to continue into the future and the need to “preserve it” for future generations. Some participants in this study noted that this study itself was one way to document and preserve information about subsistence.

Many people use the word “ability” in their descriptions of subsistence, as in ‘the ability to go out’ and do subsistence. By this, they mean not being impeded by the state or federal government, or others, in their practice of subsistence activities. This relates directly to the ICC-Alaska definition of food security and the right and ability to practice hunting, fishing and gathering activities when and where they are needed.

People also spoke about “ability” in terms of things like transportation (see also Chapter 6). For example, some participants stated that they did not have the ability to go fishing because they didn’t have a four-wheeler or didn’t have a boat. The comments about ability and self-sufficiency, when taken together, are particularly interesting when considering the existence of these activities in contemporary times. Activities like seine fishing (and other activities) were traditionally group activities where multiple families collaborated to complete the harvest activity. However, many subsistence activities today are carried out in a much more solitary fashion, or only involve a small number of people. This relates directly to ideas about self-sufficiency, as opposed to overall community sufficiency. Additionally, subsistence activities were in the recent past conducted with very little machinery (which was often shared between many families) and, only several generations ago, was conducted with no machinery at all. In contemporary times, many individuals view machinery (e.g. four-wheelers, boats with outboard engines, etc.) as a necessity for conducting subsistence. This is not a criticism of any particular idea or mode of activity, but these more individualistic comments and desire/need for modern machinery can be seen as part of the hybridity between tradition and modernity, and the integration of western ideas and practices with Indigenous ones. As the Comaroffs and Sahlins, for example, have noted, modernity and tradition are always in dialogue, and we must be wary of essentialist notions of identity, which are often used as a cudgel against the cultures of those without power by those with it who would forget the hybridity of their own cultures (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Sahlins 2002; see also, Reedy-Maschner 2010). Discourse and meta-discourse about transportation, subsistence, and cultural values are but one instantiation of the complex negotiation between tradition, modernity, subsistence, community and self which are a critical part of living in Elim and for which this dissertation offers numerous other example instances (e.g. regarding spirituality, animal sentience, value, etc.).

While some Elim residents find the term “subsistence” to be deficient – for the reasons described above, or others – I do not propose a new word or phrase for the term here. No one in Elim suggested a new term or phrase, either. The various ways that people use the word ‘subsistence’ also makes it difficult to find a substitute or new word or phrase, while at the same time, currently used variants of subsistence (see below) can also create awkward speech. In addition to the referential, legal, and cultural complexities related to the term, Table 6 illustrates some of the pragmatic complexity in ways that the word ‘subsistence’ is used in everyday speech across Alaska.

Table 6. Some of the ways that the word ‘subsistence’ is used in everyday speech.

Some of the ways that the word ‘subsistence’ is used in everyday speech
Going to do subsistence
Practice subsistence
Subsistence way of life
Subsistence fishing (adjectival modifier – i.e. as opposed to commercial or sport fishing)
Everyone here is subsistence
We are all about subsistence
Going out subsistencing
This is a subsistence salmon
Subsistence gear or equipment
I have no subsistence this year
This food was subsistence-ly caught

Below are some statements from Elim residents, in their own words, about what the term ‘subsistence’ means to them (additionally, see the quote at the beginning of this chapter):

Woman, late 20s: “A way of life. My way of life.”

Man, late 60s: “It means eating Native food! You have to go out and get it yourself.”

Man, late 60s (different person than above): “Subsistence is the ability to go out and gather food in order to survive.”

Man, early 60s: “Subsistence to me means that I can stand up and feed myself with the minimum amount of help.”

Man, early 20s: “[It] means a lot. It’s like our personality, or our character! What we’re defined as. What we’ve been doing for thousands of years. And I think we should just keep going at it and showing our young what to eat and what to catch and how to eat it. It’s also fun, too!”

Man, early 50s: “The word itself is a legal term. And it doesn’t really capture, it’s like translating a word from one language to another. You lose something in the translation. But it was a word developed by lawyers in Washington D.C., they [did not understand] our lifestyle. So, to them it’s a form of hunting and fishing rights, but it’s just the way we live. Nowadays, you see us surrounded by computers and we can track where the caribou are, as long as the collars aren’t sitting in somebody’s house or freezer. Things have changed. But, it’s also an economy. But not in the sense of money, it’s the underlying value of sharing. I mean that’s a real big thing. I don’t have time to go out, I do too much traveling. But when I do have the opportunity go out and get, I’m always trying to rein in my wife, don’t give away too much of our berries or this or that. Every time we go to Anchorage, she’s always bringing something for somebody, but it comes back to you and all the time people are giving us stuff. I didn’t ask for *muktuk* a couple weeks ago but some guy bring about 15 pounds of *muktuk* [in thanks for him acting as a medical escort]. ... It’s not just food, this subsistence is also shelter and other things.”

Woman, late 60s: “Subsistence means that I can go out and get what I want. I can go and cut a tree down and keep my house warm. Of course I don’t have a stove. And be able to dig in the freezer, like for a fish, or a piece of moose meat, or caribou meat, pull it out of the freezer, cook it. For the family. Subsistence is a way of life. To me.”

Man, late teens: “Subsistence - it means harvesting food I like, food we enjoy, as a family. Time together as a family. That’s what I think. ... Yeah, a whole way of life.”

Man, late 30s: “It’s a way of life to me. ... Go out and get your food, come back home, and you see the food you caught, it gives you a good feeling, you know you have food. It’s a way of life. Without it we wouldn’t be able to survive. It’s a good feeling when you go out and get the food that you get, when you bring back home, and you see all your food that you put away. Leaves you feeling good because it’s gonna help you survive one of these days. Actually doing subsistence is the only way nowadays, because the cost of living is going too high. Everything is going up. And it won’t change. But what won’t change is the food that’s out there. Is there labor? [nods ‘yes’] But it doesn’t feel like labor. It touches your heart when you have all your food you gathered that year. When you see it all in one freezer, wow, it’s amazing. You open your freezer, wow, look at all this food to eat. *Oogruk*, beluga, dry fish. It’s a good feeling when you put all those foods away. We go out there and gather it and come back home, you put it in the freezer, and the days you don’t have money you open your freezer, wow, I have all this food to eat. Don’t have to go hungry today. So, subsistence is a big part life, I could say.”

Man, middle-aged: “Subsistence means being a hunter-gatherer of the resources that God gave you. To harvest from whatever land and water that is out there, for you to utilize as food and what you store away. ... Subsistence means survival to me, a way of life. A way of passing the tradition on to your children and grandchildren. ... Subsistence is preserving the resources that’s available to you. Preserving your way of life. Preserving your family. Preserving whatever you gather and hunt. So that you all see the fruits of your labor. That’s subsistence to me.”

Woman, early 30s: “Subsistence is very important to me. It’s very delicate. It’s the most valuable part of my life. Since I can’t put it away as much, I know it’s very important and I love subsistence. ... Like certain families put a lot of it away, and there’s some of us that hardly put it away. [When you] grew up on it it’s something you’ll always crave and want and, if it’s not there, it’s like your spirit in that part of you will die or something.”

Based on just this handful of quotes from Elim residents it is clear that the way that subsistence is perceived and defined is, for many people, quite different from the legal definitions of the term. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, these perspectives could be used as a starting point for either developing a locally-relevant definition for “subsistence,” or as the basis for

developing a new term and concept to replace it. From an anthropological perspective, the desire for such a change is understandable (e.g. in terms of linguistic and epistemological sovereignty, in terms of the processes of identity, in terms of what the term and the discourse about it indexes, etc.). However, also from an anthropological perspective, some care should perhaps be taken, as there is a potential pitfall if the discussion becomes mired in a referential discourse about finding the best term for what the term is meant to describe. For what ‘subsistence’ means is not only, and perhaps not even mainly, understandable from a strictly referential perspective, but rather a pragmatic one – that is, language in use. Around the term ‘subsistence’ has arisen the very complex of concepts and attachments which it describes, and to understand all of this is to understand subsistence-in-culture. The term and use of it are part of the making of what it means.

There are, of course, many ethnographies and other works that discuss subsistence in great detail. However, one crucial work that helped shape our contemporary understanding of subsistence from an Indigenous perspective was *Village Journey* (Berger 1985). This Alaska Native Review Commission report provides reflections on the impacts of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and discusses the ways it, during that early period of implementation, impacted communities, as well as their thoughts and concerns about the future of subsistence and federal regulations¹¹ regarding subsistence. It also provides great insight into what subsistence truly means for many of the people that Berger received testimony from. Berger’s travels, while compiling the report, included the Bering Strait region, and people from across the region, including Elim, testified to the Commission during its work (e.g. Berger 1985:68). Much of what Alaska Native people from around the state shared with the Commission is the same as what Elim residents shared with me in terms of some of the most important components of what subsistence means to them. These lines of continuity in thought about ‘subsistence’ through time are important to recognize. Many of the Elim study participants were small children, or not even born, at the time of the Berger report, yet they express many of the same ideas, beliefs, and concerns of the Alaska Native people that testified over 30 years ago. This indicates that many of the values, beliefs and understandings about ‘subsistence’ are being passed on to, and experienced by, younger generations, with exceptional durability. Several of these values are discussed further below.

¹¹ ANCSA and others such as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (PL 96-487).

Wheeler and Thornton (2005) have extensively reviewed research on the topic of subsistence that has been conducted in Alaska (though much additional research has been conducted in the decade-plus since their article was published). Research in the Alaska has ranged from “salvage” ethnography work to more applied approaches to the issue of subsistence. Wheeler and Thornton also identify “cash and subsistence” as one of the “enduring issues” in Alaska anthropology, including the shift in theorizing about this issue as “dual economies” to a recognition of “mixed economies” (2005:79); this is another axis along which we see the co-evolution of daily life and discourse as pertains to tradition, modernity, subsistence, and identity in Elim. (This dissertation also ventures into other areas Thornton and Wheeler identified as needing future attention in subsistence research, including being a collaborative ethnographic approach to such research, highlighting under-represented issues, and furthering our collective understanding of subsistence in the Alaska economy.)

Elim perspectives on buying and selling subsistence foods

Elim residents that participated in this project shared varied opinions about the acts of buying and selling subsistence-harvested foods. Some participants feel very strongly that subsistence foods (also called Native food or Eskimo food) should never be traded for cash (bought/sold/buy/sell), others think it is acceptable (ethically) to buy and sell, and others think that only under certain circumstances is it acceptable to sell.

My discussions with Elim residents on this topic involved the caveat that there are state and federal prohibitions related to the selling subsistence-harvested foods, but that we were discussing lived experiences, which don’t necessarily follow those prohibitions. Additionally, I did not attempt to quantify the sales of subsistence foods in Elim (e.g. the types and amounts of food being sold, the numbers of sales, the prices different items were sold for, or any other similar quantification). Conversations were focused on the Indigenous ethics of the issue, and were specifically noted to not be about the legality of such sales, or about the details of sales.

Virtually every study participant acknowledged that subsistence foods are sold and bought within the community of Elim, and elsewhere. There are many shades to the question of whether or not

it is acceptable to sell or buy subsistence foods, from an Indigenous perspective. However, many residents expressed that in an ideal world, subsistence foods would not be sold.

Man, late 30s: “I just don’t see it [as] right. We get it for free and it doesn’t take much to process it. ... I don’t think we should sell stuff like that.”

Some residents had no qualms with the sale or purchase of Native foods. Many residents were, though, staunchly against the sale of these foods, but even most of those opposed to it were able to come up with some hypothetical reasons why it would be acceptable to sell. Some of the reasons that were suggested by Elim residents as to when or why it would be acceptable to sell subsistence foods are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Some of the reasons it may be acceptable to sell subsistence foods.

Some of the reasons it may be acceptable to sell subsistence foods
If money is needed for gas to go out and do other subsistence activities.
If you need to buy some essential item (items mentioned included, among other things: baby diapers, baby food, baby wipes, subsistence equipment, ammunition, engine parts, etc.).
If you need to pay a bill.
If selling foods gives people who are not physically able to get out and harvest on their own an opportunity to buy.
If the food you are selling was obtained legally and respectfully, and you don’t sell all of it.
If you only sell enough to get the amount of cash necessary to buy the thing you need.

The last reason listed in Table 7 has an interesting parallel to not taking more than you need when harvesting in the first place.

Man, early 20s: “Yeah. The other year, me and my wife, we picked two gallons of salmon berries, and that was just around the time the silvers [salmon] were coming in. So we picked two gallons of salmon berries and we sold them. And with that 80 dollars, we bought a rod and reel.

So...that was a plus! Plus for us. So it helped us get fish while we helped the other person get berries! I think that was just the only time we did that. Maybe we did sell berries for other stuff, maybe like diapers and wipes. That was the time when we had our younger girls with us.” *JRY*: “So you see it as a kind win-win situation?” *Man*: “Mm-hmm! And as long as the people are selling the food or a good cause, for themselves, I think it’s right to do that.” *JRY*: “So if someone was selling berries to buy alcohol or something, you wouldn’t agree?” *Man*: “Yeah, I wouldn’t agree with that! That’s good to sell stuff for stuff you need, like gas, or food, or diapers and wipes, or maybe even a rod and reel, like what we did. Even just to pay a bill.”

For those opposed to selling subsistence foods, many expressed great empathy when considering possible reasons why someone else would. They may still be angry or displeased about the selling, but recognized that someone would have to be in great need to be in the position of wanting to sell subsistence food.

Woman, early 50s: “Well because, I learned how to share, take it in and give it. Taking money for it is like an insult to me, if someone offered me money for it. So, you know if I can get it, I can share it. And I know there are people that do knock on your door and say, ‘Want to buy this?’ I mean, they have their reasons for doing that but I just feel that for me it’s not okay to do that. I just feel it’s better to share than to charge somebody for it. ... There was one day someone asked me if I want to buy *muktuk*. ... And I thought this person must really be hurting for money, you know? ...[A]nd it was someone that I didn’t expect to say that to me. ... [A]t the time I didn’t have the money. I wanted to help this person out but I couldn’t have the money and this person never ask me if I wanted to buy anything ever before, or after. So I think it was like a one-time thing that this person really needed it. ... I thought, this person must really be hurting for money.”

Talking about Elders produced a particular point of agreement. Virtually all Elim residents that discussed this topic agreed that Native food should always be shared with Elders, not sold to them. Even here, though, there were exceptions made by some participants. For example, if an Elder offers you money in exchange for Native foods that you give to them, some felt you should take it (others said absolutely not, even if you had to find a way to return the money, like sneaking it back into their wallet when they weren’t looking). During my time in Elim I was

present on several occasions when Elders were offered subsistence food for purchase; in all cases, the Elder purchased the food offered. On some occasions I was alone with the Elder and the seller, on other occasions multiple people were present. After one of these transactions occurred, and the Elder and seller departed, there was discussion about the appropriateness of selling food to Elders (as opposed to giving it). Additionally, I had conversations with some Elders who said that they wished younger people would share a particular subsistence food, and on one occasion was with an Elder who asked me if I had heard about anyone selling a particular kind of food (because they didn't have any and wanted to buy some).

Man, late 30s: “Crab, it's easy to get, real easy. Berries, too. It's hard work, too, but you know the berries I pick, I don't sell my berries. I don't sell mine. I eat them. Because it's hard being out there walking on the tundra, walking for miles, hot, mosquitoes, all that hard work, just to sell them. You know some people use that [Native foods] for money resources, people that don't have jobs. And that's a good way for them to harvest and keep some of them and sell the rest. ... But yeah, I don't mind people selling berries or crab or dry fish; it's a way for them to get money, sometimes. Some of these people don't even have jobs. I don't mind at all.”

Originally, when developing this topic for discussion, I believed individuals who already think it is acceptable to sell Native foods would say in particular about berries that it was acceptable to sell them because they are ‘easy to get’ – i.e. they are readily available to anyone who can physically walk to them, right in the village (as well as beyond). I hypothesized that, because this food is so nearby in location to the village, and because it does not require any special equipment to harvest, that people would be more willing to sell it. My hypothesis was disproved, however, by Elim residents. While some did argue that it is more acceptable to sell berries than other foods because they are easy to get (and perhaps not an ‘animal’ or ‘person’), when I observed discussions about the sale of berries, or when others shared their thoughts with me, some people argued that berries are actually quite difficult to get (see quote above, for example), and that it takes a lot of work, and that they should therefore fetch a high price (alternately, I have heard *buyers* argue that berries are easy to get, thus the asking price should be lowered). It does not appear that effort necessarily equates to acceptability regarding sale (e.g. that it is acceptable to sell an ‘easily’ obtained food).

This, and what follows below, clearly show the complexity of how culture and identity are being navigated through human-animal relationships. We can see the dynamics of the management of the sacred and the profane mixed in with ever-evolving senses of cosmology (see Chapter 5, for example), the nuances of practice (e.g. the effort applied in subsistence), economic ideologies and their associated value systems (e.g. views on cash versus subsistence economies and their associated practices), and so on.

Salmon (mostly in dried form, though sometimes in strips, whole fish, or fillets) is another subsistence food that is sold in Elim and other communities. Again, discussions I had with people did not pertain to the legality of sales, but rather people's other thoughts about selling and buying. One resident who does not sell or buy subsistence foods talked about salmon and berries like this:

Man, early 60s: "Some things, to me, would be okay to sell alright, but it's mostly supposed to be trade [for other foods, not cash]. But some things, to me, that are easy to catch, like the dry fish. They can just be seined. But other things, like what you were talking about, somebody, trying to sell beluga, to me... that should be traded [for other items, not for cash], not sold. If it were up to me, should be just traded for." *JRY:* "Yeah. It seems like the only things I've seen or heard about for sale in Elim since I've been here have been dry fish and berries." *Man:* "Dry fish and berries, yeah. But it doesn't take somebody with a brain to try to go get them, you know. (laughing) They're right there!"

Other participants in this study discussed similar thoughts about the close availability of certain foods, the level of difficulty to obtain them, and the skill needed to obtain them, being related to their sell-ability and monetary value. The conclusions drawn by different people (e.g. sellers and buyers) were not necessarily similar, however.

Woman, late 40s: "If I had a job, then I'd probably have transportation, then I'd be doing that myself [harvesting subsistence foods]. But the things that I buy are the things that wouldn't really be in abundance here. Like in [other village] they pick a lot of salmon berries and so I just buy salmon berries from there. I mean, there's some you can buy and some you can't buy. I've

never heard of anybody selling *mungtuk* or whale meat. Although I did send my son, when he was in [another community], I send him dried *oogruk* meat and I marinated it, so I send him some. And he was selling it down there, 20, 30 dollars for a little piece. I couldn't believe it! I gave that to you to eat and he was selling pieces. I mean, I just couldn't believe how small they were. See if I send him some more! (laughs)"

While this person indicated that if she had the ability, she would be out harvesting more foods, and potentially harvesting foods to sell for cash. At the same time, she was upset that her son had sold Native food that she sent him. This displeasure was not related to the broader idea of selling Native foods, but rather was because she had prepared the food lovingly and had sent it to her son as a gift because he was away from home. The intent was to share with family something they may have been craving and missing.

At times, buyers would complain that a price was too high, for example for berries. Their rationale was that berries were 'easy' to get, so they shouldn't have to pay a lot for them. Sellers were also heard saying that they *could* or *should* charge more for a particular thing because it was difficult or expensive to harvest or process. These types of arguments are, one could argue, to be expected in a situation where cash is being exchanged for 'goods.' Though I have not explored this issue in detail, I assume based on non-systematic or purposeful observations, that exchanges of Native foods also involve similar calculations on the part of all parties. As one example, in a different community I was once present when seal oil was being packaged to exchange with someone else for dry fish. The owner of the seal oil was trying to determine how much oil it would be 'fair' to exchange for a particular amount of fish.

Many residents, even those who believe selling foods is okay, have levels of distinction about permissibility. One participant, when asked if there any foods that people never sell, responded "No! Nothing. Everything is sell-able" (*Man, late 60s*). While this may be correct, that all subsistence foods have been sold at some point, there are some animals and their food products that are treated differently. Beluga whale, in particular, is an animal that virtually everyone in Elim thought should never be sold. All agreed that it is very uncommon to hear about someone trying to sell beluga products and, that if someone is trying to sell beluga, they must be doing so

because they really need the cash. Others responded to questions about beluga by saying that it is so expensive to get in the first place (e.g. needing a boat, motor, fuel, firearms, a crew, sometimes a net, etc.) that it isn't worth selling. For others, it is "too precious" to sell. These can all be seen as value judgments about the relative value of beluga as compared to, for example, salmon (and also statements which potentially index many other things, such as the comparative understanding of each type of animal in the local cosmology).

Woman, early 40s: "We mostly give our Native foods away instead of selling them." *JRY:* "Why?" *Woman:* "It's just better to give than receive. We never sell anything, unless we really have to. My husband, he never sells his beluga; but maybe a bag of dry fish if we need to get something from the store, if we are really hurting."

The sale of beluga can also have negative repercussions for people.

Man, late 30s: "Yeah, my grampa used to tell me not to sell any subsistence foods. What we get...if somebody wants it, just give it to them! Like if somebody come by, 'Oh, can I buy a bag of your beluga?' I'll say, 'No, I'll just give it to you!' So I go by what he say! Yeah!" *JRY:* "Did he ever talk about why that was a good thing to do?" *Man:* "He say if somebody's hungry give them what they ask for." *JRY:* "What do you think about it when other people sell subsistence foods?" *Man:* "I don't really like it. Because a few years back, some guys sold some beluga, and now, they haven't gotten beluga for – how many years now? So."

Another participant noted that she learned that if you sell food, there will be less next year. These spiritual dimensions of the human-animal relationship are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, as are aspects of animal intelligence and agency, which is also potentially related to the acceptability of selling or buying certain foods.

Additionally, at least one Elim resident thought that it was possible to "get hooked" on selling subsistence foods, which would be a very negative thing. It was expressed that people shouldn't be doing subsistence harvests with the intention of selling the food later.

For those individuals who think it is okay to sell, most expressed that even though it is okay, they only do it, or would only do it, when they really needed the money. For example, “If I got dried fish, I would sell it! But then... only if we need, when we’re broke. And that’s the only time I would like to sell something” (*Woman, late 30s*).

Participants who said it was not acceptable to sell Native foods were asked why they felt that way. Many replied that they had learned that from their grandparents or other Elders – either through direct instruction or just by observing that they never sold foods but rather only shared or bartered for them.

Man, late 30s: “It’s our tradition [to give food away, share]. People always lost sight of that, man, our tradition, you know, [when] we grew up, you give, not sell. You know somebody needs that blubber, give it to them. There’s more where it came from, you know? It always bugs me when people ask me to buy it. ‘Can I buy a piece of *muktuk*?’ ‘No, just go ahead.’ There’s a few people here that always come with my share [of the harvest], when I’m putting it away. They’ll stop by, ‘Can I buy a piece?’ ‘No, just grab what you need.’ I always want to tell them, ‘No, just ask [to share some], don’t ask to buy it. You want it as much as I do so just grab what you need.’ It feels good when you give, because you know you will always get more. We have a tradition, the more you give, the more you’ll get. And that’s true, I’ve seen that.”

Man, late teens: “It’s not good to be greedy if someone has no food and they ask you if you have any Eskimo food or any kind of food. You know, how you would feel that day? And you got a freezer full of food and they don’t even have food in their fridge. [You’re] feeling bad at the end of the day; I would. Instead of sharing. That’s a big part of [our] way of life, too.”

For people interested in *buying* subsistence foods, one resident noted that if you want different kinds of foods, you should barter/trade for them (not try to buy them with cash). However, if you are in need, and no one is sharing with you, than asking to buy Native foods may be your only option. There are even individuals who said that it is never acceptable to sell Native foods, but that if they are short of something they need or want, they will try to obtain those foods by buying them with cash.

While this discussion is focused more on Elim residents' thoughts and beliefs about the appropriateness of buying and selling Native foods, it also reflects ongoing discussions in Alaskan anthropology (and beyond) about 'mixed economies.' Elim residents spoke to me extensively about the need for both cash and subsistence foods to feel content and well. The balance between the two (cash, often derived from employment, and subsistence foods/activities), varies from person to person and household to household. This topic has been explored by numerous anthropologists (e.g. Bodenhorn 1988; Burnsilver et al. 2017; Dinero 2003; Fast 2002; Langdon 1986a, 1986b, 1991; Orback and Holmes 1986; Reedy-Maschner 2009, 2010; Wenzel 1995; Wheeler 1998; Wheeler and Thornton 2005; and others).

Reedy-Maschner, for example, notes that many descriptions of contemporary Indigenous peoples "minimize" their involvement in formal, western economies (2009:135-136, 2010) which is contrary to lived realities. The need and desire for cash in contemporary village life, including in Elim, is real and present. Elim residents, like other Alaska Native people, have faced challenges and rebukes for their engagement in a cash economy, use of contemporary equipment for subsistence purposes, and other "entanglements" (as Reedy-Maschner would put it; 2009) with contemporary, western activities. The buying and selling of Native foods falls into this scrutiny of Indigenous peoples, too. In this discussion, I do not categorize these types of activities, as carried out by some Elim residents, as "non-traditional," nor do I ignore them, or otherwise try to explain them away. They are most certainly part of a broad suite of economic activities and decision-making that village residents are enmeshed in. Some residents most definitely have opinions regarding whether buying and selling is appropriate and, even, whether or not it aligns with 'traditional' ways of being. What I attempt to do here is to illuminate how Elim residents interact with subsistence foods through the lens of an economy with a cash component; how they negotiate those interactions with knowledge of 'traditional' or older views on such exchanges; and, more broadly, to illustrate a part of this broader economic reality that is not often discussed.

Beliefs about selling and buying Native foods can be highly idiosyncratic in Elim; even people within the same nuclear family can hold different perspectives on the issue. The issue of selling and buying subsistence foods is clearly tied to ideas about sharing and value. Sharing, as described further below, is perhaps the 'traditional' value that is most often discussed and that

people have the strongest opinions about. Many older participants indicated that the level of selling and buying of Native foods is much higher than when they were growing up and that this is, in a way, an indictment of the current status of food sharing in the community. For many people there has been a re-conceptualization of cultural resources into cash resources – which is to also say there is a conceptualization of the economics of cash as counter-posed to Indigenous culture and proper human-animal relationships (again illustrating the co-implication of discourse and meta-discourse of human-animal relationships with those on culture, economics, and identity).

Traditional values and subsistence: Elim residents on sharing and not wasting

As I have discussed elsewhere (e.g. Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Raymond-Yakoubian 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a), sharing and not wasting are identified as highly important components of what are conceptualized as ‘traditional’ value systems of many Inupiaq and Yup’ik communities and people (e.g., ANKN n.d.; VNN 1996). These concepts are highly valued in communities throughout the Bering Strait region, including in Elim, and these values are formally and informally discussed and practiced in Elim and other communities on a regular basis. When discussing human-animal relationships in Elim, these two values were highlighted as being of particular importance to residents.

In addition to being asked about, and specifically discussing, the values of sharing and not wasting, participants were also asked what else they had learned about how to treat animals, including fish, when they were growing up.

I first take up the concept of sharing and why it is important, why people say that they share, what sharing looks like in practice, and the connection between sharing and human-animal relationships. This is followed by a discussion of ‘not wasting.’

Many Elim residents described their view that sharing of subsistence foods is a common (and positive) practice not just in their community, but in Alaska Native communities across Alaska.

Some described their experiences of receiving hospitality when traveling to other villages (being served subsistence foods when a guest), receiving food to take with them when departing, or receiving food from friends or relatives in other communities via local airlines or through the mail (e.g. Lee 2002; Magdanz et al. 2002; Magdanz et al. 2007; Reedy-Maschner 2012). Many Elim residents do the same when they have guests in their community, or relatives and friends living in other places. This sharing or exchange of food items can also be described or viewed as the “cycling” of good within and between communities (Fienup-Riordan 1990:37-48). When asked to talk about sharing, many Elim residents first describe how others have shared with them.

Table 8. Some of the reasons why people share foods.

Some of the reasons why people share foods
Because there are Elders and others who can't go out and get their own Native foods.
Sharing brings you “luck” and if you share, you will get more in return in the future.
If you share, it will ‘come back to you’ later.
If you share, it makes God happy and things will be shared with you, later.
It simply pleases God when we share.
People have shared with you in the past, so now you share.
People were taught to share by their Elders.
It pleases animals when we share.
If you have more than you need or want, you should share it.
If something will go to waste, it is your responsibility to try and prevent that; sharing is one way to do that.
Sharing makes you feel good.
It is a tradition to share (and there are traditional practices related to sharing).

Sharing is not limited to Native foods, though that was the focus of discussions on this topic for this study. Elim residents also share store foods, vehicles, rides, tools, equipment, labor, knowledge, money, and virtually anything else that is share-able. This is, of course, not ‘indiscriminate’ sharing and individuals have their own rules or guidelines regarding what they will share and with whom (see also Burch 1988b). Though the focus in this section is on the sharing of foods, other resources that are shared are also discussed. See Table 8 for some of the

various reasons why Elim residents share, many of which have also been expressed by other Bering Strait region residents, (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a).

Elim residents recognize that sharing by their ancestors was a way to ensure survival of communities, particularly during periods of food shortages. One woman (*late 50s*) relayed “a story of sharing,” which she had heard from her relatives, which I summarize below. This story describes the assistance of non-human persons, and a little boy’s commitment to share, in the rescue of a starving community.

“Grandma used to tell us that if you’re stingy with your catch, it will be that much harder for you to get anything. Grandpa told us one story – a story of sharing. There was a little orphan boy in *Atnaq* [an abandoned village near Cape Darby] who lived with his grandmother. At this time, people in the village were starving. The Grandmother told the little boy that he should follow the hunters, as they might give him a piece of their catch. He followed the hunters from a distance and somehow he lost them. While he was lost, he saw two people dragging an *oogruk* behind them. The boy noticed that they walked a little bit above the ice. He followed them to Haystack Mountain [just outside of present-day Elim] and then followed the two people as they went inside of the mountain. The boy said that inside the mountain was like a bright city, a very rich looking city, because they burned so many seal oil lamps. Having many lamps burning and a very bright house would have been a sign of wealth back then. Finally they noticed that the little boy was inside the mountain with them and said to him he didn’t belong there and had to go back to his village. They gave him a piece of seal meat and a little piece of blubber. They instructed the boy to cut both into little pieces when he returned to his village and to give each house a piece. The boy followed their directions and after that his village was successful hunting.”

The people in the mountain were ‘little people’ – beings that have special powers and abilities and whom sometimes interact with humans (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed description).

Elders are a frequent part of discussions about sharing. Elders have taught (or shown) the importance of sharing and they are also a group that it is very important to share with. This is because Elders have, in theory, spent their lives sharing foods and knowledge and skills with the

community, so it is important to acknowledge that through sharing with them, especially when it may be difficult for them to harvest on their own foods. Many Yup'ik and Inupiaq communities have ancient traditions of sharing the first catch of an animal, or the first harvest of a plant (like berries), with the grandparents or other Elders related to the harvester. Not all participants in this study were clear on whether or not the giving away of a first catch of salmon was 'required', as tradition dictates for other animals like seals, but some stated that fish were also part of this tradition. Traditionally, for example, a young man is expected to give away the first bearded seal (*oogruk*) that he harvests. All of the animal, or parts of the animal will likely be given to an Elder. Other community members, like widows or disabled people, should also be shared with since they also may not be able to conduct their own harvests. It is important to share with Elders on all occasions, not just as part of traditions related to the first catch.

Man, early 20s: "Always give away your first catch to an Elder. They always never back down on something [like that]. It's always good to share."

Man, late 20s: "Yeah, bunch of kids, like if they get their first bird or first seal... I think it was just mainly, like the old people to show sharing. Like if you get your first one it is good to give it away to an Elder. That way you know it's important to share. That's like the kid's first animal they got and just have to give that away to Elders and stuff who need it."

Another Elder commented on others who share fish with her:

Woman, late 70s: "He brought me one silver salmon, he gave one to [another Elder] ... I wanted to buy more fish, I ask on the VHF! Because I knew who had fish. ... But they never let me buy any! I could pay for it, they know that. But that's something I just couldn't figure out. I don't know if it has to do with me being a Christian lady. Couldn't be."

Sharing is not limited, of course, to Elders, widows or the disabled; anyone, Alaska Native or not, can be the recipient of shared subsistence foods. Some participants noted that they will share with anyone. For example, one person described how they will announce over VHF if they have extra food and that anyone can come get it.

Man, early 70s: “I know I like to share food with everybody, alright, when I get a good catch. If I get more than enough, I’ll give – like first hunt, when I go up – month of April, mostly month of April...if I go out *oogruk* hunting. If I get *oogruk*, that first *oogruk*, I’ll bring it up, and I’ll announce on VHF [for] people to come over with their pots, and I go out there, and sometimes there be *lots* of people. Sometimes even White people always go get *oogruk* meat.”

Woman, late 30s: “It made my cousin feel good inside when I told her, ‘Ohh, man, I’m so happy that you bring me fish!’ Because she knows that I don’t have no transportation to go fishing. I told her, ‘I’m gonna freeze it, I’m gonna *quaq* it, I’m gonna grab the seal oil, and I’m gonna fry it.’ ... And then I saw her the same day, and I was like, ‘Man, I thank you for giving trouts to me, and boy, I’m nice and full!’”

Elim residents I spoke with clearly stated that when someone is in need, you should share with them; if you have “enough” you should share with anyone who needs. The question of what “enough” means, of course, varies from person to person. For one it may mean ‘enough for today,’ for someone else it may mean ‘enough for the rest of the year.’

Man, early 60s: “The money thing is, we don’t need to sell salmon for money. If you got enough, just give it to a person you know. I know when I give a person salmon or dry fish, they ask me ‘How much?’ I say they don’t need to buy it, or talk to me like that. ... It’s lot of work. ... They want to buy the fish. We say, ‘No, it’s not for sale. We just give you a piece, you take it.’”

Sharing with Elders or others in need is a priority, but it doesn’t only apply to those who physically aren’t able to go out. For example, if someone is traveling or working and misses the chance to harvest a favorite animal or other food, relatives who were able to harvest share it with them, and say that the relative would do the same for them. Additionally, some harvesters will ask Elders or other family members if they need something and if so, they share it or try to go get it for them. Sharing helps to maintain and build relationships and also contributes to overall social, or community, well-being. Sharing not only distributes food across the community, but sharing of food also distributes feelings of good will and a sense of community. Lien has noted, for example, following Sahlins’ observation that “[a]bout the only sociable thing to do with food

is to give it away” (Sahlins 1974:214), that “the same could be said for salmon. [...] salmon moves along networks of reciprocity that often defy Euro-American notions of individual property rights” (Lien 2012:245).

Other ways that subsistence foods get shared and distributed throughout the community include events like potlucks (celebrations of life, graduations, and holidays), birthday parties, or other special events. For example, birthday parties in Elim are a particularly popular event and a way to share subsistence foods. Typically, the host of the birthday party (often the parent of the celebrant) will prepare large amounts of food of various kinds (some Native foods, some store foods) and then host the community throughout the course of a day or evening. People are welcome to come and go as they please, pass on birthday wishes, and to eat and drink what the host has prepared.

In Chapter 6 I note that some Elim residents discussed potential feelings of embarrassment or shame when it comes to not having the necessary things needed to go out and do subsistence, like boats, four-wheelers, etc., or having to ask for rides to camp or other places. When it comes to the sharing of food, however, there were no similar feelings expressed about being the recipient of shared subsistence foods. Many individuals rely on family members (typically close relatives like parents or siblings) to share with them in order to get such foods.

When asked what they would do if they needed food, or if there was a food they wanted, but did not have any of, many people say that they would go ask others. It is not clear how many people regularly do this, or if they would ask outside of their circle of close relatives. Another strategy for sharing Native foods, or receiving them, is to eat at other homes when Native foods are being served. One resident also noted that Elim people have had fish stolen from their fish racks, presumably by others who needed food or wanted salmon. Many people indicated that they want more Native food than they have and/or that they would increase the amount of Native food in their diet (as opposed to store food), if they were able.

Sharing genuinely makes many people feel good; it feels good to share and it feels good to receive. Many participants said that helping people is important to them and that sharing is way

of life. These positive feels are the only ‘motivation’ expressed by many individuals for sharing food. People have expressed that they do not expect anything directly in return.

Woman, late 50s: “Yeah, sometimes I always get carried away and give it away, so I had to buy a bag [of fish]. And replace the one I gave away.”

Man, late 40s: “Yeah. When you catch a lot, and see people who don’t get to go out, or Elders, then you get them fish and they’ll be happy, just to taste them.”

Woman, late 30s: “Fishing, giving it away, it’s a part of life to do [that].”

Positive feelings about sharing are also enhanced by the widely-shared understanding that the more you share, the more you will get in the future. There are a variety of explanations for why this is the case; for some people it means that many others will share with you because you shared with them, or are known to be generous; for others it means that the animals reward you (often expressed as you having ‘luck’) for sharing by allowing you to get more of them; and for others, it means that God will reward their sharing with more catches in the future. Other residents expressed that they believe that the more you give, the more you get, or ‘what goes around, comes around,’ but that they do not know the mechanism by which this happens. This is discussed more in Chapter 5.

Man, early 60s: “I always think about those kinda things, once in a while... and they’re a different part of that. [I]f you’re too stingy, you’re gonna have a hard time, too! You know, being stingy of what they catch? You know, it works both ways! That’s what my aunties and my uncles used to tell me. That’s why you share your things.”

Man, late 30s: “Yup. The more you give the more you’ll get. That’s what my Grandma used to tell us. She used to always tell that. We’d give some to the families, you know? Next day we’d get even twice as much as what we gave away. So we learned lot from our Grandma. She knew. She had it down. She knew what was gonna happen if we give away - you’ll get twice, three times as much as what you gave away. So, it definitely makes me feel happy when we give food

away, because that's gonna help them to survive the day, and it leaves you a good feeling because when they say 'thank you,' man it just touches your heart. It's a blessing to hear somebody say 'thank you'. That was good, it uplifts your spirit, make you wanna do it more. So, yeah, it does make me feel happy. Not only salmon but you know other stuff too, beluga, seal, moose. Because sometimes they won't get any. We give, we always get. But not only salmon, but other stuff too. It does make me feel happy."

Elim participants all agreed that sharing is the ideal way for food and other resources to be distributed through (and beyond) a community. Many also expressed that the realities of contemporary life, or of particular family or individual situations, mean that sharing isn't always possible or desirable for them. The varying perspectives on the 'status' of sharing in Elim differed within the community; e.g. some people said that people share enough, others that sharing is in decline, and others expressed their feeling that some people are greedy and do not share enough.

Woman, early 50s: "There's people that do share. I kind of think it's kind of leveling off. Kind of at our generation, because you know there are parents that taught their kids well and that's how we grew up, that's what we learned. But the younger people, they don't do as much subsistence gathering, so it's not, they never learned that the way is to take your share and share it with whoever."

Woman, early 40s: (In reference to beluga whales being butchered on the beach.) "The whale, and how there's meat on there, but people are able to go down and get it, they just don't do it. But I remember, all the meat was taken off, when I was a little girl. ... [T]he way it used to be, even just a few years back, you just give away. Give away. But now everything is so monetary, got to sell, sell, sell. And it's difficult to see that happen, but that's just the way it's changing now."

Man, late 30s: "It's our tradition. People always lost sight of that, man, our tradition. When we grew up, you give, not sell. Somebody needs that blubber, give it to them. There's more where it came from. ... We have a tradition. The more you give, the more you'll get. And that's true, I've

seen that. ... We don't sell Eskimo food. We just go [with] our tradition, we [got] real strong, strong, tradition. We give our food, we don't sell it."

Woman, late 20s: "I guess long ago, they used to share the whole whale, everything they get. But it is different now."

People noted that they learned to share by watching their families as they were growing up, and that young people today don't share as much. The reason why sharing is not as prevalent among young people was not discussed in detail, and is something that could be followed up on. (Is it because they aren't seeing sharing happen? Because they are not participating in subsistence to the same degree as older generations? Or something else?) Elim residents attributed some of the contemporary focus on individual desires and cash as a consequence of becoming 'westernized.' As a result, food, including subsistence, has for some people become focused on finances more than anything else.

Some individuals explained that the expenses involved in doing subsistence are a potential reason why some people do not share as much as in the past; e.g., one resident noted that beluga is "very expensive...very expensive food. Very expensive" (*Man, late 60s*). Others spoke about the high price of gas, in general, intimating that those prices impact sharing decisions; "I think it's the money part, too. You have to buy the gas, and buy the grub, to go out there and get them" (*Woman, late 50s*). I have also conducted a small, unpublished, project about the cost of fuel and its impacts on subsistence activities western Alaska that supported the comments made by Elim residents (Raymond-Yakoubian 2009a, 2009b).

Many Elim residents felt that it was not appropriate to harvest more food than you need with the intent of selling it (see above), but in the case of sharing, people discussed harvesting more than you know you will need as being acceptable and beneficial because you have the intent of sharing it later. The intent of the harvester is crucial. The Elim resident below described his personal calculus for determining how much fish to put away, and also discussed the pleasures of sharing and receiving:

Man, late 40s: “I’ll put what I always call my ‘wife’s box’ first. I’ll fill hers first. Count the number of bags say, January, February, March - I don’t go one, two, three - two more bags for potlatches, those don’t go nowhere. This is what I give away over here, and I’ll fill that section up. To who, I don’t know. I don’t know who’s gonna ask, but I’ll know who I’m gonna call up and say ‘Hey I got some extra fish, you want some?’ Then once that’s depleted I got to bargain with my wife for that over here. She’ll say, ‘If it’s for a good reason.’ I’ll say, ‘I need black *muktuk* honey, we don’t have any.’ [His wife will say:] ‘Send some of your fish out to the island.’ And we’ll send a box out there. Black *muktuk* comes next week. Fresh. Ready to go. That’s from putting salmon away. Not only the dried fish, the fillets, too. One of my friends, his mom passed away in Nome. And I had put away 16 kings, whole, in my freezer. And when his mom was ill, at the hospital, we knew she was going. I pulled one out to let it thaw, and just before it thawed I sent it to him. The family had a potlatch. And king salmon was what they had. He was real appreciative of that. I said, ‘You are more than welcome, because I enjoyed getting it. And now you guys get to have it over there, at the potlatch.’ That makes me even more happier. I’ll go get some more, I hope, Lord willing, I’ll get more. I love that word, ‘thank you.’ Because I’m thankful through Him, for giving it to us. ‘Thank you’ is a giant word, man. It’s the best word, best two words in the world. ‘Thank you.’ It’s almost better than ‘love you’, because you’re thankful. You’re happy for that.”

Additionally, participants acknowledge what has been termed ‘super households’ or high harvesting members of the community (e.g. Magdanz et al. 2002; Wolfe 1987; Wolfe and Walker 1987; Wolfe et al. 2009). There are people in the community, like in other villages, that are harvesting very large amounts of food with the purpose and intent of sharing it widely.

Woman, early 50s: “There are some families that contribute a whole lot of food to a whole lot of people here. They come back and they tell somebody, ‘Here’s your share,’ or they’d call people to and come get some. And it’s not as common in some families around here, but if I close my eyes I know I could picture all those that do share with everybody.”

Man, late 60s: “But people learn how much they can gather, how much they wanna eat in a year. Some could estimate, but I always like to catch more than what we need, just because I always give it away.”

Along with others that share, these individuals and families in ‘super households’ are very important to the health and well-being of the community. They share healthy, wild foods widely, they keep subsistence practices alive, and they train the next generation of subsistence practitioners. These individuals are also often highly sought after to participate in harvest surveys, research activities (like this study), advocacy work, and other activities (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2017). For this study, for example, among many other people, I sought to interview and spend time several individuals who are very high harvesters. One of those people was particularly busy and was difficult to get time with. Because this person was so busy with subsistence activities at virtually all times, I decided to stop pursuing opportunities to interview him so as to not interfere with that work.

There are also different protocols for sharing different types of foods. In traditional times these rules were adhered to quite strictly, according to Elders. However that is not the case today; many rules for sharing and distribution of foods are no longer remembered, some are not followed at all, and some have been modified. For example, many whaling captains have created their own rules for the distribution of beluga their crew harvests. Most Elim captains now distribute beluga shares in equal amounts to each crew member (and then, crew members may distribute their shares however they want to). One Elder described how a bearded seal, or *mukluk*, would traditionally be divided:

Man, late 60s: “Back then, the type of sharing they had long time ago is different than the way we share today. Because the type of sharing they did was out in the field. Like say, I got a bearded seal. And my custom says for me to put a flag up. And when the other hunters see a flag, they run. The first one to tag the *mukluk*, the bearded seal, gets their share right here, all the way down to the back. The second one to touch the *mukluk* gets the other side, all the way down. And the third one, gets the chest, with the backbone, right down the middle. And the fourth one, gets the other ribs, without the backbone. And the fifth one gets the back end.” *JRY:* “What do

you get?” *Man*: “If five people touches the bearded seal, I get the skin. That’s it. So when five people touch the skin, touch the *mukluk*, they do a [purposely] very sloppy job of skinning the *mukluk*, leaving lots of blubber for me. And when I go home, my wife would take and clean all the blubber off, so I have lot of blubber, which is the most important part of the *mukluk*, back then, to have. So, and I couldn’t eat what I caught, without other people, that’s their share too, to share with other people in the village. So, yeah, that way almost everyone gets a share. The way we share today is, the hunters bring back the whole thing. They don’t share like, traditionally. They share with the hunters that are in the boat, and these hunters come home and they share with the rest of the village. It’s sharing but in a different sense. ... So sharing in the village is a big part of our culture. Everything that we put away is ours. For us to share later with somebody who needs something.”

Earlier, I discussed views on the buying and selling of different foods, including beluga and salmon. When participants were asked why they would share salmon, many would respond by saying that it is *easy* to get. When hunters or the families of hunters were asked why they share beluga, many responded by saying that it is *hard* to get and so not everyone can go harvest it. So, on the one hand, if a food is ‘easy’ to get, then of course it should be shared – it was not difficult to obtain. On the other hand, if another food was difficult to get, then of course it should be shared – not everyone has the skill or ability or means to get it. The difficulty or ease of obtaining the food does not seem to translate into a formal rule or norm about sharing (i.e. easy = share, difficult = don’t share, or vice versa), as was the case with selling and buying those foods (discussed above). It could be argued, though, that the ‘rule’ about sharing is simply that all subsistence foods should be shared, which is essentially what all study participants expressed.

Additionally, regarding beluga, many people commented on a community potluck that used to take place each spring when the first beluga was harvested. In the past, the harvest of this first whale would initiate a community potluck and the entire animal would be shared as it was butchered on the beach in front of the village. This potluck (called a ‘festival’ by some) has been identified by Elim residents as an important tradition of their community. Many discussed, though, that this important event sometimes does not take place today until 5 or 10 beluga have been harvested (instead of after the first one is harvested). When asked about why the potluck is

often delayed until more whales are harvested, some participants responded that they didn't know why that was now the case, and others indicated their belief that it was because the hunters weren't willing to share (in the specific form of a community potluck) until the needs of their families had first been met. It is a clear expectation in the community that successful beluga hunters should share.

Man, late 20s: "I never go out whale hunting, that time, because of that. One boat got a [beluga] whale. Then [a different boat] argued that's supposed to be their whale. Then they came back to Elim, and that boat that never got it was, like, "You should have a feast now!" ... And they brought it in, and they never have a feast. Then that one boat that was squabbling over it – they got a whale, and then that other boat tried to get *them* to have a feast, and they never have a feast until when they get nine whale one day. Finally."

As noted above, Elim people don't just share subsistence foods, they also share store-bought foods, labor, knowledge, equipment, and other things. For example, someone may borrow a boat to go pick greens and then give the owner of the boat a lot of the harvested greens. People will also buy gas or shells for someone else, and then a portion of the catch will be shared with them. These examples may more formally be described as bartering (e.g. lending a boat in exchange for some greens), but study participants describe these and similar scenarios in terms of 'sharing.' Buying gas for someone so they can go out, and receiving a share of the catch in return, is not seen as the same thing as directly buying Native foods with cash. Some young people don't have a way to go out and do subsistence, but they want to; adults will take them. This is a sharing of time, transportation, and knowledge.

Sharing and not wasting are intimately connected in the perspectives of Elim residents, as indicated in many of the quotes above. For example, if you catch too much (i.e. more than you need) of a particular animal, most participants believe it is your duty to share it and find people that want it, even if it means asking lots of people. It is not acceptable to harvest too much and then let some of it go to waste.

Some ideas and values about not wasting subsistence foods (or other food or resources) are similar across all of the Elim residents that participated in this study. For example, the belief that you should not waste is universally shared by all of the study participants. However, the *reasons* why you should not waste vary between individuals. The reasons participants gave for not wasting (see Table 9) are very similar to those described above (for sharing, Table 8).

Table 9. Some of the reasons why people do not waste.

Some of the reasons why people do not waste
There are people in the community that would use the food, so it should be shared with them, not wasted.
Wasting food means you will get less in the future, you won't have "luck".
People were taught to not waste by their Elders.
It displeases God when we waste.
It displeases animals when we waste.
It makes you feel bad to waste.
It is a tradition to not waste.

Elim residents were asked a variety of questions about 'not wasting' including, for example, how they learned that not wasting was important and valued, the reasons why they believe they shouldn't waste, whether or not wasting impacts future subsistence harvest success, what constitutes wasting, and ideas about wasting in relation to other 'things' (e.g. beyond food).

Wasting food is always considered to be bad, but it is seen as even more egregious when there are people in need that could use the food that has gone to waste or when someone has wasted intentionally.

Many of the Elders that participated in this study could not ever remember instances of wasting food when they were young. These Elders, as well as other residents, know stories about times of famine that their ancestors endured in the past; these stories have instilled in them the understanding that food should never be wasted.

Some participants relayed that they were specifically instructed about not wasting and others said they learned just by watching their parents, grandparents, or others. Sometimes participants provided this information without prompting, and at other times it was shared in response to questions about what people learned about how to treat fish and other animals when they were growing up.

Woman, early 60s: “We noticed that they [Elders] never waste food.they shouldn’t waste it. Even our grandkids, we always tell them that.”

Man, late 40s: “I heard it from my grampa, saying, ‘What you catch, you don’t waste.’ Our heritage is like that. ... When you get enough fish, if you see more, you don’t need to get them and waste them. That’s what he say to me.”

For some, not wasting food (or other resources) is a value that they apply to their whole lives, and is not just related to subsistence.

Man, early 60s: “Even when I go in the restaurant now, I always just finish all my stuff, because of that. That’s what they teach me. But we live in a throwaway society, now. You don’t want it, you throw it away! But, then, if they don’t want it, and throw it away ... biggest thing, to me, is that you gotta recycle it, then! I mean, at least the container!”

In the past (and occasionally today), when young people killed something without the intent to consume it, Elders used to make them eat it. Stories that were shared about this included people recalling how when they were a young child, they may have killed a small bird or other animal not typically harvested for human consumption, or they killed ‘for fun’ or ‘without thinking.’ All who had this experience of killing something ‘without thinking’ or ‘for fun’ also recalled that, after being required by their Elders to process and eat what they had killed, they never killed an animal without a reason again.

Woman, early 50s: “They said [parents/grandparents] if we’re gonna kill something, then we’re gonna have to eat it.”

Man, late 20s: “Everything you catch, make sure you use it somehow. Like, when I was a kid, I always ... I was a pretty mean kid, and I put some eggs on a hook. I made a seagull bite it. And I caught that seagull, and my mom, she made me eat that seagull! She said, “You caught it, you have to eat it now!” And she cut it up for me, and made me eat it. Even though we didn’t eat seagull. ... Yeah, I never caught a seagull again after that!”

Woman, late 50s: “If you catch it, we got to eat it. You know, when I was young, we used to like to catch those snipes, real little ones, hit it with rocks. My grandpa caught us and ... so we had to eat them. So we learn not to just kill them or to leave them. But that’s how we learned, I learned, not to waste.”

Woman, early 50s: “...some animals aren’t for eating, they’re just there. But we kill to eat. ... It’s not good to waste. Especially food.”

Intent is a crucial part of determining what is wasteful and what is not wasteful, or what is deemed just ‘unfortunate’. If you didn’t intend to waste, but some uncontrollable problem arose and something got wasted, people generally don’t view this poorly. Waste that sometimes occurs during commercial fishing is a good example of this.

Commercial fishing was raised during discussions about not wasting by several participants. For example, several people discussed commercial fishing and how sometimes fishers have to dump the fish they harvested because of poor weather (e.g. weather that does not allow fishers to check their nets, so the fish goes bad, or they are in danger by having a load of fish in the boat) or lack of access to the tender boat (the boat that takes delivery of fish and brings them to the processor). This is definitely represented as wasting and people do not like it. Koester has also noted, for example, the alienating effect that commercialization and its associated waste has created in human-fish relationships in the Kamchatka region (2012:62). Along with displeasure about it, many in Elim also see some amount of wasting in commercial fishing as practically inevitable, as fishers can’t control when the tender arrives, and can’t control weather conditions. Waste in industrial fisheries, however, like the Bering Sea pollock fishery, is seen as totally unacceptable.

As noted above, if there is a safety reason to dump fish out of a boat, regardless of whether or not someone is commercial fishing or subsistence fishing, this is an exception to wasting. This does not just apply to fishing, but also to hunting and marine mammal species. No one provided examples of land mammal hunting that would result in an exception that would allow for wasting, though one could imagine similar weather situations where hunters would have to take shelter and not be able to butcher animals before the meat spoils.

Man, late 60s: “We found people leaving food behind. When they get something, they should take the whole thing. ... People frown on leaving food behind. And ever since I was young we’ve been taught to take everything. Liver, heart... when we were young, they used to take even their lungs, of the whale, to dry. But our hunters know what to take – almost everything. And not leave it... Sometimes, when it’s getting rough, we have to leave something. ... Because of rough water. ... We were supposed to take everything! That was just drilled into us!”

When discussing what it means to be wasteful, people often remarked that they try to use every part of the animal when butchering and putting it away (regardless of the animal). What is considered ‘usable’ parts, however, changes through time. For example, several people discussed how their grandmothers processed the backbones of salmon, as edible parts. The majority of people in Elim today do not process backbones, but this is not currently considered wasteful. This speaks to the changing nature of values through time. What people judged to be ‘usable’ has varied over the generations, and today the backbones of salmon, as one example, are not considered edible or usable by all fishers or processors.

Another way that people describe not wasting is to say that you should take only what you need, or, don’t take more than you can handle. You may need hundreds of fish, but if you get them all at once (e.g. through seining), and aren’t prepared to process them, some will likely go bad and have to be thrown out. At the same time, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, because of difficulties associated with doing subsistence activities today, some people do try to get as much as they can every time they go out hunting or fishing or plant gathering. It isn’t clear if Elim residents think this is currently impacting levels of wasting in the community.

Giving food to dogs, and sometimes other animals, is also not considered wasteful. At the time of the research for this study, only one Elim resident maintained a working dog team (currently, none do). Many residents keep dogs as pets, however. Providing dog teams or pet dogs with Native foods that are unwanted or considered unfit for human consumption is not considered wasting. Nor is it considered wasting, by some people, to throw spoiled fish or other foods into the ocean for birds and other animals to consume. This is not considered to be wasting because dogs or other wild animals will consume the food. Several people have noted that “seagulls need to eat, too,” for example. Another person noted that their grandmother said it was not wasting to give food to seagulls because, the next year, there would be more seagull eggs for people to harvest because the birds had been well-fed (many people don’t harvest seagull eggs today, though, because of village landfills and concerns about what seagulls may have eaten). One person hypothesized that more food is wasted today than in the past because there are no more dog teams around.

Man, late 30s: “The parts we don’t use, we throw them to the sea gulls. Because some people, they like eggs. I don’t like seagull eggs, but they say [sharing un-used animal parts] will make us good sea gull eggs. So got to feed them, too. Just the parts we don’t use, we feed them to the sea gulls. If the sea gulls don’t get them, the foxes will. So, nothing goes to waste, it’s either the sea gulls, or the foxes, or the bears will get at them.” *JRY:* “So everything gets used.” *Man:* “Yeah, but we take most of the nutritional part, the rest goes to sea gulls.”

Other actions, such as throwing eggs back in the water when processing salmon, are recognized as generally not ideal, but are seen as some as inevitable.

Man, late 30s (different person than above): “I sure don’t like to throw [salmon] eggs away. It’s so much fish we have to put them in the river.”

When asked about whether or not wasting happens in Elim today, participants said that there is not a lot of wasting in Elim, but that it does happen on occasion. When asked what happens to people that waste, many people said that someone would say something to the person wasting. They would tell them that it wasn’t right and they shouldn’t waste. Peer pressure from other

hunters can be effective in curbing waste, also. Wasting has the potential to impact other people and is taken seriously. Some people also said that wasting is the kind of matter that traditional councils would have addressed in the past (see also, Black 2017). When people do see wasting, it bothers them.

Woman, early 50s: “Someone mentioned to me not too long ago about someone that shot an animal and only took the skin. I mean there was a whole carcass, there was good blubber that would make good oil, and they only took the skin. And I was shocked to hear that. So I know there’s people that do that. It’s unusual, I believe. Because I think that’s the way our subsistence is, our way of life, our survival. So I think most of the people that go out and gather food, they take care of it.”

Man, early 60s: “Nobody would want to go hunting with him anymore [a wasteful hunter]. He’d have to go hunting by himself.”

Man, late teens: “Yeah, when we’re fishing sometimes we always joke around with some of us, saying that, ‘Man, this is what our ancestors did’. In ways that make us feel connected. But it all depends on how you respect your catch and your subsistence. You don’t abuse it, don’t waste foods or waste fish, or do it just to have fun. It’s a serious thing.”

When asked why, specifically, people should not waste, several different reasons were discussed by Elim residents, as noted above. For some people, wasting of foods potentially results in less successful harvests in the future. This inability to successfully harvest is often described as not having any ‘luck’. Some people strongly believe this and others have heard about it, but don’t necessarily believe it. Individuals noted that they had personally seen people waste food, but then those people didn’t ever seem to have trouble harvesting in the future. Similar to beliefs about sharing, some people said that in terms of wasting, ‘what goes around, comes around.’ And, also similar to sharing, not everyone was certain of the mechanism by which this is carried out.

Man, late 40s: “If you’re a wasteful person, you won’t have any luck. I know it’s true. I’ve seen it more than once, I’ve seen it a lot, lots man.”

Man, late 30s: “Never waste. That was their biggest [rule], never waste your food, never waste. Even on dried fish my grandma used to scold me. I put my dried fish down and there’s one more piece on there. My grandma would always observe us when we eat Eskimo food. ‘You’re not done.’ ‘I’m full.’ ‘You eat it. Take that last piece off and eat it.’ One day she’d tell me, ‘The reason I tell you to eat all your dried fish, [is so] you always have good luck.’ Her grandma used to tell her, when you eat all your dried fish you always have good luck. Never waste food. That was the biggest. If they see us wasting fish they would go over there and scold us, ‘Don’t waste your food. Grab that fish do what you could with it.’ We don’t abuse or waste food. We have high respect for everything, very thankful for everything that’s here.”

Man, early 60s: “But that’s what old folks say - you waste your food, you’re gonna have a hard time. Maybe not right now, but later on, you have a hard time hunting! Yeah. In other words... what goes around, comes around! That kinda thing.”

For others, their Christian beliefs were the main influence in their thinking about animals, luck, and hunting success. For example,

JRY: “So, how would that work? You said before that salmon is a blessing from God. That God gives us the salmon and if people were wasteful with their food - would it be God that wasn’t letting it come back or, what would be happening?” *Woman, late 70s:* “God would.”

Some participants described that if you wasted food, the animal(s) would know about it. This would displease them and be viewed as disrespectful, and the offending person would have less success (sometimes no success) harvesting in the future. Their close family members could also have less luck because of their actions (see also Nelson 1899).

Many of the participants were presented with a hypothetical situation in which a fictional person harvested an animal (fish, beluga, other animals) and then wasted it because they were lazy and didn’t bother to process it or put it away. Participants were asked if the animals would know that the food was wasted, and if that knowledge would impact the human harvester in the future. For some people, this was an uncomfortable topic to discuss – e.g. if animals are aware of our actions

and can have an impact on our hunting success. Others declared that it wasn't something they thought about, and that they didn't know how to reply; and some had clearly thought deeply about these matters.

Man, early 50s: "I've heard about it, yeah. It's probably true. I don't know if it's an individual or if it's just a kind of a group awareness, I mean for both groups [humans and animals]. It's not good, to waste anything. But I take that attitude towards some of the junk we get. My trailer is made out of Honda shocks and Ski Doo leaf springs. And I make use of stuff that's around me."

JRY: "What would happen if someone did waste?" *Man:* "I think the difference in culture is, there is a lot of waste in this new culture of throwing things away kind of stuff. And I think that's one thing that's changed in our culture and I never thought about it that way until you brought that up. It's not just a food, this subsistence is also shelter and other things. And I think that permeated our more traditional culture, not wasting things and this new culture is 'Take it to the dump.' And I think some of the stuff they sell us are engineered to last only so long. But, I think that's changing in them, in the larger culture, too. Can't live that way. It's not sustainable."

Others have heard stories, like the hypothetical one presented during discussions that were part of this study, but believe that the purpose of the stories was simply to teach people not to waste (e.g. not that the story necessarily had any truth to it, in terms of animal awareness or repercussions for human actions).

Man, late teens: "For the most part, I think it's just for your own well-being. If you grew up hearing that story, you think you got it in your head that it's wrong to be wasteful and not take care of your fish. What are you gonna do when you get older? You're gonna not be wasteful, if you listen and you like those stories that you heard from Elders, parents, older brother, older sisters, uncles, aunties. You're gonna know in your head that that's the right thing to do. So the outcome of that will be, you'll harvest your food right. You'll want to harvest your food right, you'll want to get fish in your net, so..." *JRY:* "So if that's the case then, what's the incentive for you today not to waste? If you believe that salmon are mostly instinctual and it really doesn't matter to them if you waste?" *Man:* "Just like I said, growing up, being told not to waste, and

learning if you do waste, it will either come back to you or, it will show up later on that winter, ‘Man, I should’ve saved it.’”

Woman, early 30s: “Maybe not, because I hear of some people always getting this and that and this and that and don’t take care of them. And they still get.”

Other Elim residents said they did not know if animals were aware of these things and what would happen to someone who intentionally, or through neglect, wasted.

Man, late 40s: “I don’t know what would happen to them. But catching fish for no reason and leaving them... not too good of an idea.”

The phrase ‘playing with food’ often comes up in discussions about wasting, also. This idea, which has been documented elsewhere (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994, 1999, 2000; Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017), relates to both wasting food and bothering animals without reason. “Playing” can mean killing an animal for no reason, harassing it, making fun of it, speaking poorly about it, or otherwise being cruel to it. This can also extend beyond animals to the land itself. You should never disturb the land without reason. People should try to be respectful to the animals and the land at all times (e.g. Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Kawerak 2013a).

Woman, in her 70s: “You catch them and just let them rot - that’s what I mean. When they leave fish on the beach and they shouldn’t. It’s important that you don’t do that to fish. If you didn’t want it, you don’t fish for it. So, lot of people sometimes they do that. They catch fish and they let it dry up and stuff, that’s just doing waste. But I guess I’m old fashioned, though ... God gave us these fish, so you got to take care of them. I mean, not play with them, you know. Because some day you might starve to death or whatever, if there’s no fish. You could fix it [prepare it] anyway you want to. Just don’t play with what God gave you – fish.”

Man, early 60s: “If you play with food, the food won’t come back to you. The fish won’t come back to you. The fish won’t come back. Waste is, you know, throw away what you get, play with

it, don't take care of it, it won't come back to you. Like I said, some of those salmon, they know there's a net... No, they just said, don't play with food – animal, fish. You don't take care of them, they don't take care of you. ... Don't play with it, waste it. ... I see some family do; they don't understand.”

Man, late 30s: “I never really heard it but, you know, if I see even my boy playing with the fish or trying to kick it I don't like it. I tell him not to.”

Man, early 60s (different person than above): “...never waste, never make fun of the animals. ... Never kill them just to kill them. ... If you're hungry, don't have food on some days, go ahead and kill it. That will make you survive. But if you've got meat, and you're not hungry, don't try to go after the animal.”

Several participants discussed ‘biological’ reasons not to waste by saying that if you take too much, you may impact ability of the species to reproduce, so you should not take more than you need.

Woman, late 50s: “My grandma used to say, ‘Take only as much as you need. Don't take too much.’ If you try to take too much, you might, later on, in a couple of years, you might have nothing. So they have to go up and spawn.”

The concepts of sharing and not wasting broadly in the north has been discussed by many authors (e.g. Bodenhorn 1989, 1990, 2000a; Collings et al. 1998; De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 2006; Fienup-Riordan 1994; Fogel-Chance 1993; Gombay 2005; Hensel 2006; Lee 2002; Scott 1989; Searles 2002; Stairs and Wenzel 1992) and, for western Alaska, extensively by Fienup-Riordan and her co-authors and collaborators (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1990, 1994). Alaska Bering Strait region-specific work that discusses these values includes, importantly, Oquillik (1973), as well as others (e.g. Bogojavlensky 1969; Raymond-Yakoubian 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angaboogok 2017).

The prominence and continuance of the values of sharing and not wasting highlight the problematics that face Elim (and many other communities) when it comes to, particularly, large-scale, industrial, commercial fishing. For example, as previously mentioned, the Bering Sea pollock fishery has been of great concern to Bering Strait region residents, including Elim residents, because of the wasteful catch and discard of salmon.



This chapter has demonstrated how, in Elim, key aspects of human-animal relationships – as expressed in conceptualizations of subsistence, economics (e.g. buying and selling), and values (e.g. sharing and not wasting) – provide a fertile ground for the everyday and historical negotiation – through discourse, ideology and practice – of tradition, culture, and identity. Further, there are obviously deep connections and reflections in human-animal relationships and human-human relationships. Changing social norms and conflicted discourses about them echo across the relationships and are mapped onto each other. Understandings of proper human-animal relationships are even often directly mapped, for example, onto proper human-human relationships, as can be seen in the discourses on sharing and proper harvest behavior. Chapter 5 expands on the insights in the present chapter through a consideration of the topics of spirituality and animal sentience.

Chapter 4: An ethnographic photo-essay on subsistence and identity in Elim

The photographs in this chapter visually illustrate aspects of the relationships that Elim residents have with the land, animals, subsistence activities, and each other. They also provide insight into the relationship between myself (the photographer, researcher, neighbor, etc.) and community members.

The images presented here are part of a collection of over 3000 photographs that were taken, primarily over the course of three years (2010-2012), during the most concentrated period of time I have spent in the community. These photographs were taken in many different contexts, ranging from when visiting with people in their homes, to being out in the country during subsistence-related trips, walking around the community, and being called up by residents and told to go someplace because, ‘You’re going to want to take a picture of this!’ My camera was nearly omnipresent during the work that I did in Elim. Based on over a decade of social science work in Elim and other communities in the region, I have taken over 13,000 photographs, which have been widely used in reports, outreach and education materials, and presentations in a variety of settings (e.g. to government officials, resource management bodies, other scientists, and so on). In my experience, visual documentation of region residents’ way of life and ways of being is extremely important to Indigenous residents of the region. It has also proven to be important and effective in conveying those ways of life and being (and the values, concerns, and needs of people) to broad audiences to assist in enhancing cultural awareness, forwarding policy recommendations, and transmitting other information.

Names of many of the individuals in the photos are included in this chapter in the photo captions. This should not be taken as an indication that those individuals directly participated in this research (e.g. through interviews or focus groups), but rather only that consent was obtained for being photographed and for the use of those photos in this dissertation.

One of the most memorable experiences of my time in Elim is highly connected to my camera and visual documentation of the place, people, events and environment; however, this experience was not documented visually. One fall I was visiting the fish camp at Moses Point with an Elder

from Elim. Our plan was to stay for several days because she enjoyed spending time at her cabin in camp, though we weren't there to fish. To reach the camp, you must cross the mouth of the *Kwiniuk* (Moses Point) River by boat, and a fellow resident brought us across along with her four-wheeler. Initially, there were a handful of other people at the camp fishing and doing other activities. The weather took a turn for the worse and everyone left camp amidst rainy and foggy weather that was not conducive to fishing and drying fish. We planned to stay for a couple more days and eventually get a ride back across the river and drive her four-wheeler back to the village.

While in camp, we needed to collect driftwood for the stove. At first we gathered what wood was available immediately adjacent to the cabin on the beach. After a day or two we realized we needed to go further down the beach where there was more wood available. We drove her four-wheeler down the beach a ways and then went up along the high tide mark and also into the beach grass to look for more wood. One the way back to camp we went further down the wide beach towards the water. I suddenly looked down and saw small barefoot footprints in the sand. They were very clear and distinct, and looked to be made by a foot about the size of an 18-24 month-old human.

There was only one set of footprints. The beach, from the waterline up to the beach grass, was quite wide at this point – at least 100 feet. The sand was completely smooth, as the tide had gone out not long before we arrived. I stopped to look closer at the footprints, to look back and forth along the beach, to look from the water to the grass. These were real footprints, but there was no way a small child would be out here all alone, and there was no sign of anyone else. I pointed out the footprints to the Elder, and she came over to observe them as well. I said to her, “Where did these footprints come from?” She didn't know. I pointed out that we were alone at camp and that it looked like a child had made the prints. She agreed.

We determined that we should follow the footprints in both directions and each took off to do so. We both walked away from each other, observing the ground, and after about 30 feet each we stopped and turned around. The footprints had ended – simply disappeared. They did not go down to the water or up to the grass. They approximately followed the center of the beach, for

about 60 to 70 feet in total. As we slowly walked back towards each other I couldn't stop thinking, "We're alone. We're alone out here. There's no one else. Who made those footprints?" As we approached each other I said, "They end right over there." She said the same, gesturing in the other direction. I asked her who could have possibly made those footprints. She said she didn't know, and that we had better go back to her cabin at camp.

We rode back, brought in the wood and added some to the already burning stove. I couldn't stop thinking about the footprints. We sat at the table and drank some tea and looked out the window, and looked at each other – all in silence. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore, and said, "We're alone! There's no one here! Who made those footprints?!" She again repeated that she didn't know and that we were definitely alone – nodding towards the beach and noting that there were no boats on this side of the river. Determined to verify this fact, or discover some other information, I went around the camp to every single cabin and structure and looked inside or knocked on doors. No one was at camp anymore on this misty, chilly fall day.

I returned to the cabin – a little bit confused, a little bit distraught, and a little bit concerned. I shared my results: "There's no one else here. We're alone." The Elder nodded in agreement. "*Who* made those footprints, then?" I half-demanded to know. Then, either coming to terms with it herself, or tired of me asking the same question over and over, she said it must have been "that little man," and she proceeded to tell me a story. She had never seen him herself, but she knew about a 'little man' that spent time near this Moses Point camp in the past. 'Little people,' as they are colloquially called in English in rural Alaska, are not-exactly-human persons that live out in the tundra, or forest, or mountains. They are small in stature, typically about 3 feet tall. They wear traditional Eskimo clothing such as fur and leather. They carry and use traditional hunting implements like spears and bows and arrows. They usually speak Yup'ik or Inupiaq, but rarely speak English. Little people are extremely strong – disproportionately so for their size. They are often benevolent, but not always. And, among other characteristics, due to their small size they make very small footprints, and they often do not wear footwear.

The Elder related that the little man that she had heard about had a social relationship with an Elder who had passed away quite a few years ago. They were friendly and even traded food. The

little man would sometimes tell the Elder about items he wanted from the store in Elim, including cigarettes. The Elder would promise to bring them to a certain spot along the beach near the camp. When the Elder would arrive at the spot with the groceries, cigarettes, or other requested items, he would find dry fish or other Native foods waiting for him, in exchange. This relationship carried on for many years.

As I sat at the table listening to her tell me about this little man, I looked over at my camera, which was on the table. She asked if I took a picture of the footprints. I hadn't! This omnipresent piece of equipment, which I was always using or thinking about using, was literally hanging around my neck as I looked down at the sand and baffling footprints. I couldn't believe that I had not taken a photo. She couldn't believe she hadn't told me to. I wanted to go back, but it was already getting dark out. She, and later others back in the village, would talk about how, when a person experiences something like that, often 'your brain won't work right.' Somehow, whatever beings or spirits or energies that are around you somehow prevent you from thinking and acting normally. That was why I hadn't taken a photo.

In a day or two we left camp when a boat arrived and agreed to ferry us back over to the other side of the river. There were a few other Elim residents there, doing various activities. We packed up the four-wheeler, chatted with a few people, briefly told our story about the footprints, and headed back to the village, she on her four-wheeler, and me in another vehicle. A few hours later, when visiting with someone else, people began to ask me questions about the footprints and the little man. I realized that the news of our experience had traveled back to, and through, the village almost as fast as we had. People were interested and curious, and I told the story several times. All agreed that it must have been a little person. All asked to see photos of the footprints. And all seemed to understand when I said that the thought of taking a photo never even entered my mind, though I was wearing my camera around my neck. Another Elder in the village said to some of us that it was to be expected; when you experience something like that, other powers are at play and could prevent you from documenting what you saw or experienced.

While my photographic mindset was not operational during that experience, it was very important in that the experience led to Elim residents sharing many stories with me about strange

and unusual experiences of their own, and their thoughts and perspectives on those experiences. How those stories and experiences translate into values and contribute to things like personal and group identities are complex and important. Those conversations (and others) and my own experience later contributed to another ongoing project that speaks in great detail to the value and importance of similar stories and experiences to the residents of this region, including Elim.

In this case, not having taken a photograph was as important as taking one.

The photographs in this chapter were taken with a high degree of intentionality, with the aim of illustrating some of the lived realities of village residents, particularly as relates to subsistence. While by no means comprehensive, these images provide insight into these realities and relationships and, it is hoped, they also help ground and connect the reader to this particular community.

While these photographs are presented here as a distinct portion of this dissertation, these images should not be viewed as entirely separate from it, or as an ‘add-on’. The images relate to specific themes discussed in other chapters and have short captions describing some of what they represent and some ways they relate to ideas discussed elsewhere.



Figure 2: This drawing was made by a young child for an Elim resident returning to the village after time spent away from the community. While simple in design, it expresses the attitude of many Elim residents – that their village is a home – a safe, familiar place, where people are comfortable. This implies the deep connections to place that Elim residents have for the village-proper as well as the lands that are owned by the Tribal Corporation. (Anonymous artist).



Figure 3: An Elim resident processes salmon at a fish camp in Norton Bay. Processing salmon and other subsistence resources are skills that are honed over a lifetime of experience. While both women and men catch and process salmon, the cutting of fish remains a fairly gendered activity, with women taking the lead. Dry fish and salmon strips are preferred foods for many Elim residents, though much salmon is also put away as frozen filets; fermented salmon parts are not commonly prepared. Salmon strips and dry fish, as well as whole or fileted salmon, are a food that is shared, traded, and sold in the community.



Figure 4: A home in Elim with salmon drying and a garden plot. Some residents supplement their hunting, fishing and gathering activities with gardens, as well as through barter, trade and sharing, and with store-bought foods.



Figure 5: Wyman Anasogak bringing a salmon to an Elder. Sharing is an important cultural value for Elim residents. Sharing is practiced with a variety of people for many different reasons. For example, food is often shared with Elders who are no longer able to harvest their own. Residents also share with others who may lack transportation, who have experienced a loss, or for many other reasons.



Figure 6: Elder Kenneth Katongan with tools to build a sled. The loss of traditional skills, such as sled-building, is a concern to many Elim residents, particularly Elders. Because of the high cost of modern transportation (and all its accoutrements), many believe that it is essential that traditional skills are passed on to and embraced by younger generations.



Figure 7: Snowmachines and boats on the beach in front of Elim prior to hunting. Contemporary subsistence activities frequently entail the use of manufactured boats, outboard engines, snowmachines, and a variety of other equipment and the means to power them. Lack of access to transportation is discussed by some Elim residents as a major impediment to carrying out subsistence activities.

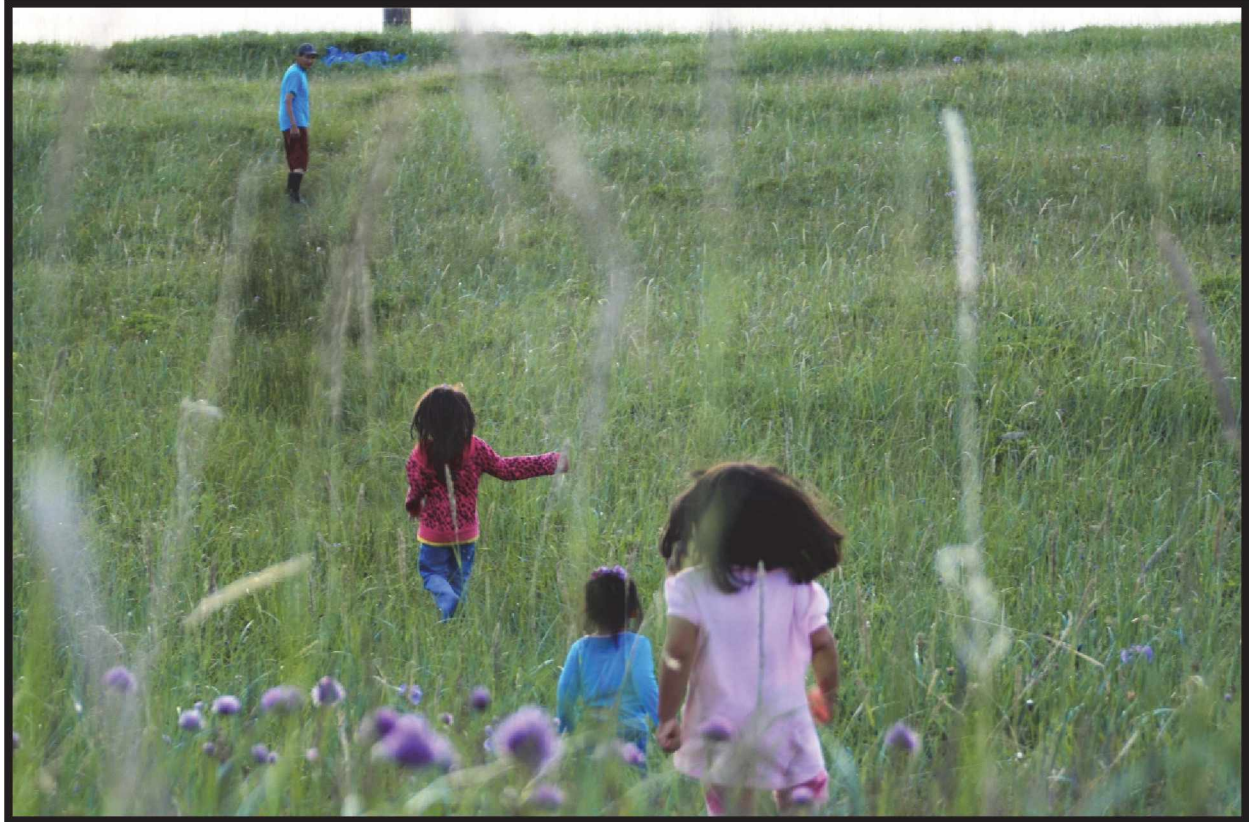


Figure 8: Elim residents at *Cingigpak* (Caches) fish camp. Many adults living in Elim today recall their experiences at fish camp as formative, and describe those experiences as very positive. Most younger people today do not spend anywhere near as much time at camp or out in the country as their parents and grandparents did. Some Elim parents and guardians discussed their efforts to make sure that their children spent at least some time at camp each summer to ensure they have experiences outside the village, can connect with traditional lands, and to remove them from the many technological distractions of village life. Adults also speak about time at camp or out in the country as an important way to ‘disconnect’ from those same distractions and nurture their own well-being.



Figure 9: Darla Jemewouk cooks beach greens on the shore in front of Elim. These greens were prepared to be later fermented and mixed with blueberries. Fermented greens (and other fermented foods) are not commonly produced in Elim today and the few residents who know how to make them are considered experts in such activities. Recipes and techniques are passed on between and across generations.



Figure 10: A hunter and Elim children examining a beluga that was just harvested. Marine mammal hunting, particularly beluga hunting, is an important activity for Elim. Hunters and marine mammals have a complex and complicated relationship. For example, Elim hunters have talked about the intelligence of beluga and their ability to learn over time to evade hunters. Many hunters consider a successful hunt to mean that the animal has willingly given itself to the hunter.



Figure 11: A young boy attempts to help haul in a recently harvested beluga. Traditionally, young people learned about subsistence activities early in life by watching their relatives and by participating. Not all youth have the same opportunities for these learning experiences today, a circumstance that is of concern to many Elim residents.



Figure 12: Elim hunters divide up their harvest of beluga from a spring hunt on the beach in front of the community. Each boat captain has their own method for dividing the catch. Beluga is shared within the community as well as beyond it.



Figure 13: Julia Moses displaying her artwork, which shows a woman ice fishing. This artwork was a product of the bilingual/bicultural education class, which is currently a part of the curriculum at Aniiquin School in Elim. Aniiquin is an important person in local history, including for, among other things, being one of the founders of Elim and a well-known seal hunter.



Figure 14: Wild onions collected during a boating trip, salmon spread, crackers and homemade bread. Plants and berries are important subsistence foods. Some families return to the same berry patches, wild onion patches, and other plant harvest areas each year. These locations are often informal camping areas (e.g. with no permanent structures, like cabins), or are only visited for a few hours at a time.

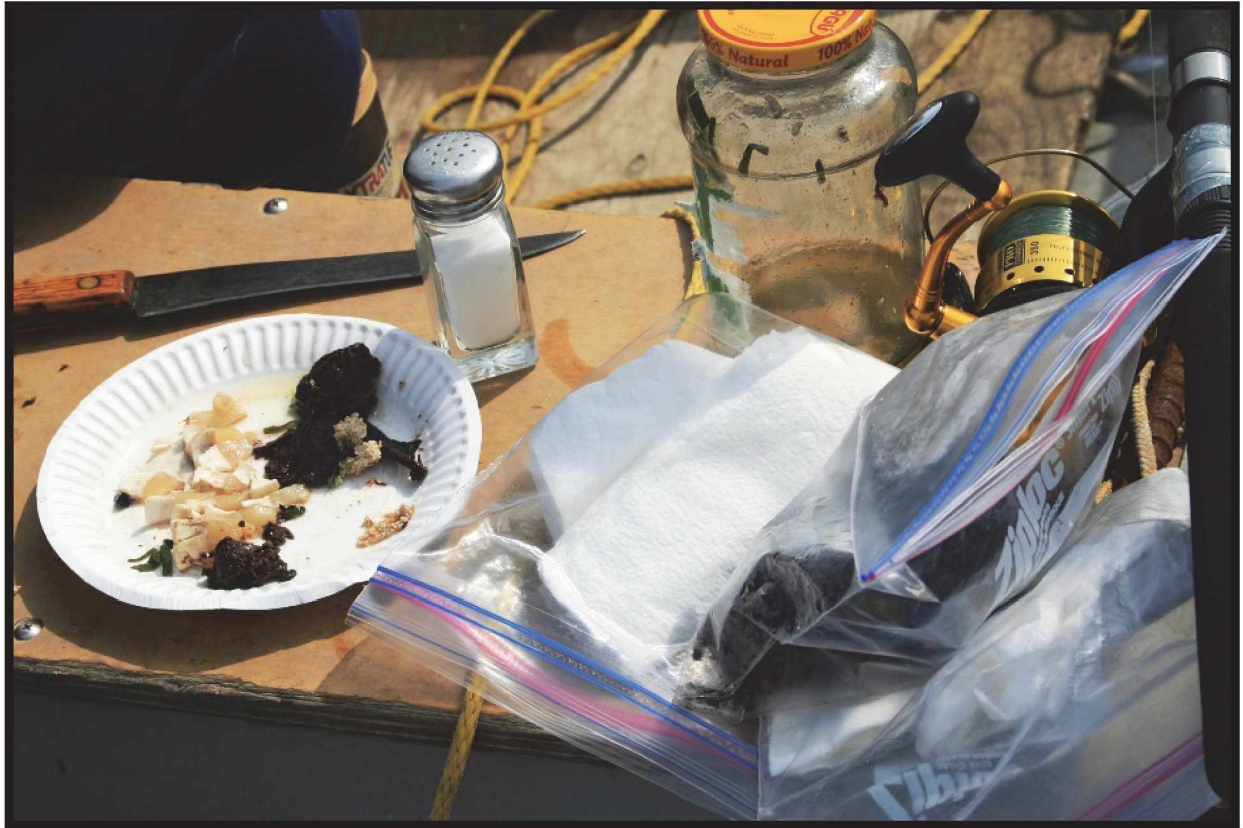


Figure 15: Beluga muktuk, dried black meat (seal), and a jar of seal oil packed as a lunch for a boating trip. Subsistence foods are often packed for trips into the country and are said to keep you full longer, and more satisfied, than store-bought food.

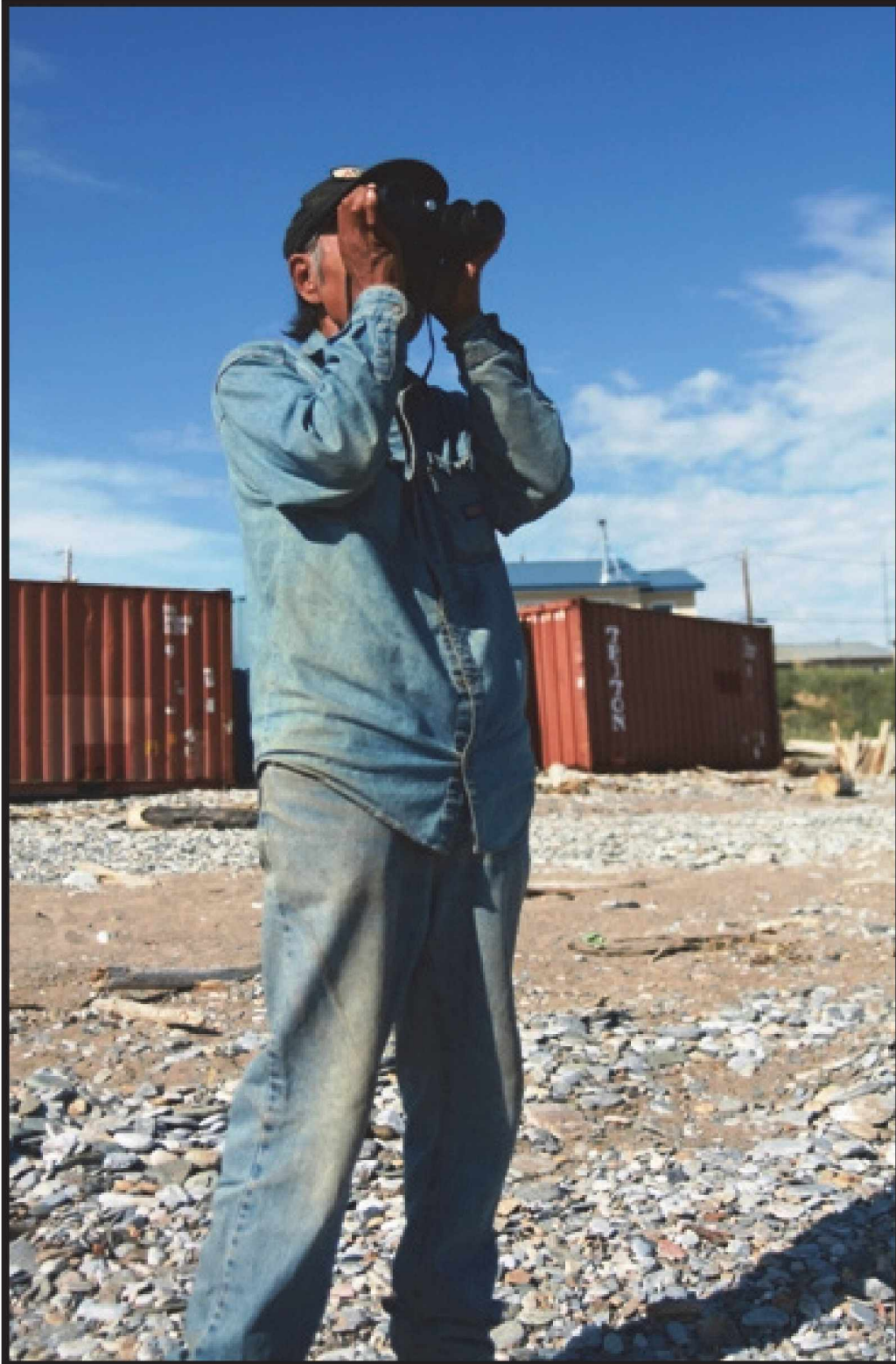


Figure 16: Harry Daniels keeping track of beluga and beluga hunters off shore in front of Elim. Elders and retired hunters often give advice and support to younger hunters in the village.



Figure 17: Helga Saccheus and Ralph Saccheus (on four-wheeler) wait amongst other Elim residents watching beluga hunters return to the shore in front of the village. Hunters use both rifles and nets to harvest the animals. Community members use the cliffs in the background to spot beluga out in the bay. The commencement of the spring beluga hunt is a highly anticipated event.



Figure 18: Wallace Amaktoolik butchering moose meat outside his home. Elim residents hunt for moose as far away as the upper Koyuk River. The cost of fuel can be limiting or prohibitive for some residents who want to travel beyond the village limits to hunt, fish, or gather subsistence foods. Some hunters will pool financial resources to buy fuel. Non-hunters may also contribute funds to a hunting or fishing party and receive a share of the harvest in return.



Figure 19: Lolita Nakarak expertly processing salmon at her family’s camp at *Cingigpak* (Caches). *Cingigpak* camp can only be reached by boat or by four-wheeler (after crossing the mouth of the *Kwiniuk* (Moses Point) River). Some camps here have been washed away or damaged by storms or have fallen into disrepair.



Figure 20: A young woman plucking a goose on the banks of a creek in Elim. Birds are a valued subsistence food. There is a place near *Cingipak* (Caches) camp whose native place name identifies it as a ‘place to hunt with an atl atl’ (*nurulliravik*).



Figure 21: Emily Murray preparing a meal of baked salmon for her family. Salmon is prepared in myriad ways by Elim residents: fresh-baked, frozen and then baked, dried, half-dried, dipped in seal oil, in chowder, smoked in strips, as a spread, and in other ways. Salmon is a preferred and highly desirable food for many village residents.



Figure 22: Art Amaktoolik checking his salmon set net in Norton Bay. Set nets are most frequently used (and owned) by Elim residents (or their families) with commercial fishing licenses. Many individuals and families use the earnings from commercial fishing to help support their subsistence activities. The same equipment (e.g. nets, boats, motors, etc.) can be used for both commercial and subsistence fishing.



Figure 23: Young men returning from spring bird hunting. Subsistence remains a priority for some young men who try to balance their interests in subsistence with their interests in sports, technology like video games, and required school attendance.



Figure 24: A family picking salmon berries. Plants and berries are important subsistence foods and time spent together out in the country contributes to inter-generational learning and fosters connections to ancestral lands.



Figure 25: A community gathering at the Elim Aniguin School library. Elders and community members discussed medicinal plants and traditional healing, outdoor survival skills and stories, and the supernatural world, among other topics at various gatherings. Many Elim Elders are interested in sharing their knowledge with young people and others who are interested.



Figure 26: Boaters approaching a fish rack at *Cingigpak* (Caches) camp at sunset. View facing the *Tupuktuliq* (Tubuktulik) River mouth. The lagoon behind the fish camp, as well as the *Tupuktuliq* River, are historically a very important and heavily-used area for subsistence salmon fishing. While some new camp structures have recently been built, many of the camps at *Cingigpak* are infrequently used, some are essentially abandoned, and others have been destroyed by storms and flooding.

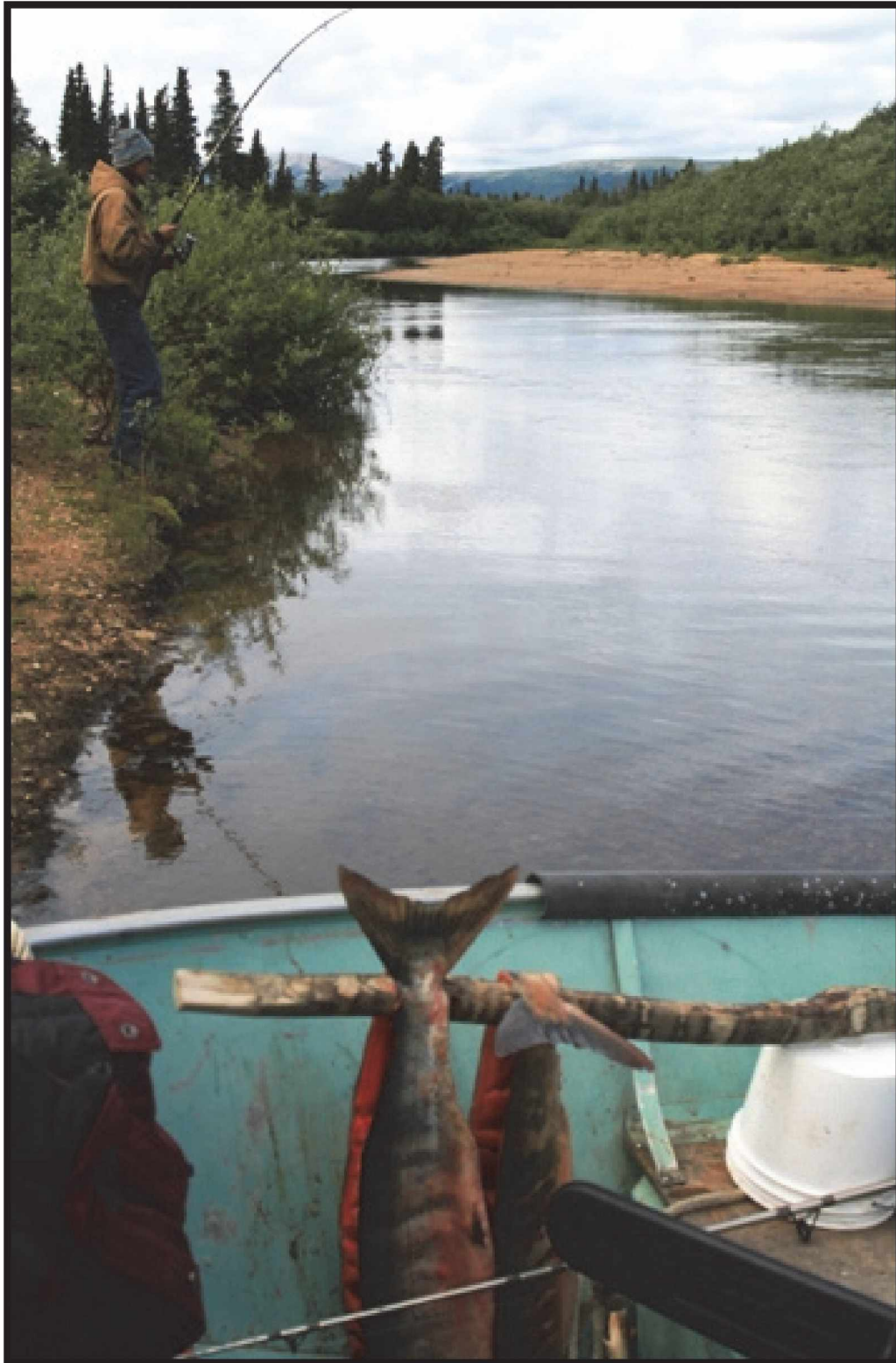


Figure 27: Robert Keith fishing on the banks of *Kwiniuk* (Moses Point) River. Rod-and-reel fishing is a common way that Elim residents harvest salmon.



Figure 28: Grace Takak with a jar of her pickled herring. Elim residents harvest, preserve, share and consume a wide variety of fish species. All harvested species of salmon and non-salmon fish are important to the community for nutritional, economic, spiritual, and social reasons.



Figure 29: Margie Saccheus showcasing some of the half-dried salmon her family harvested and prepared. Half-dried salmon is frequently eaten with seal oil as a condiment. Some individuals and families dry their salmon at camp, some do so in the village. Proper weather conditions, as well as proper care of the fish, is required in order to prevent spoilage.



Figure 30: Smoked salmon strips prepared by an Elim family. Smoked salmon strips are often traded for cash or other subsistence foods, and are very popular. Each person or family has their own recipe for the brine and for smoking. For example, different species of wood are preferred by different people for the flavors their smoke imparts to the fish.



Figure 31: Morris Nakarak Sr. (right) and Jr. (left) prepare a salmon net for storage. Family members often work together in Elim’s small-scale commercial fishing operations. Morris Jr. worked as a ‘helper’ on his father’s boat during this fishing season.



Figure 32: Members of two families working together to seine fish on the *Tupuqtuliq* (Tubuktulik) River. Most families do not seine for salmon because they do not own a net or because of the number of people required to operate the seine and then process the often large number of fish that are caught.



Figure 33: Seal meat drying on a rack behind an Elim home. This meat was shared with an Elder by family members. Ringed, bearded, and spotted seals are abundant in Norton Bay, which is one of the reasons that the ancestors of current residents chose the shores at Elim as a place to establish their village. Seal meat and blubber is shared widely in the community and beyond.

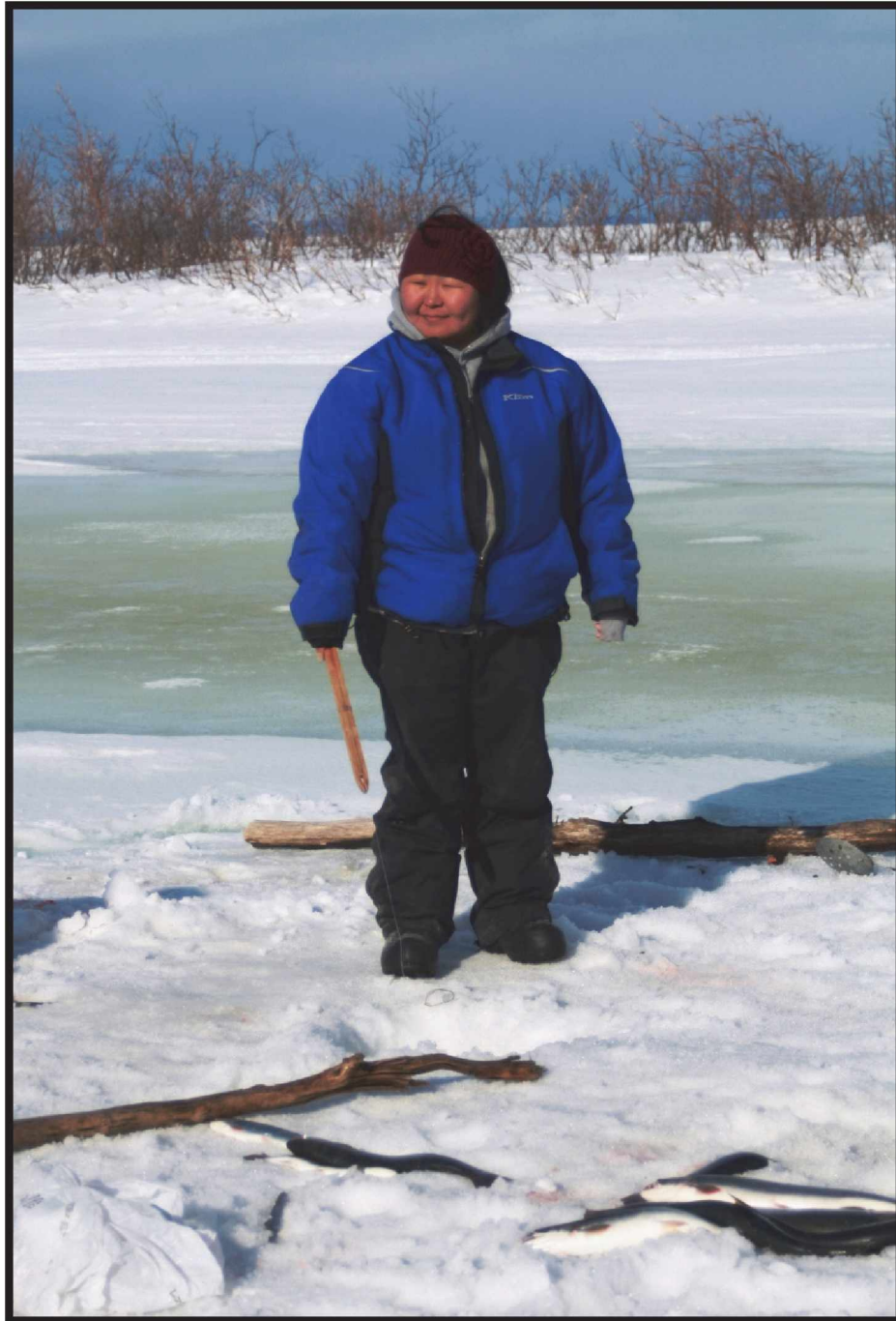


Figure 34: Sonja Simpson ice fishing for trout and other fish species. In addition to being a source of valued subsistence food, ice fishing (or “hooking”) is often a very social activity where people can share news and otherwise visit out in the country and away from the village.



Figure 35: Rod-and-reel fishing on Elim tribal lands. Many people enjoy being out in the country as much as they enjoy the act of fishing and catching fish. Many Elim residents speak with pride about their Tribal lands and the abundance and variety of resources that can be found on them.



Figure 36: Joyce Takak with salmon fillets that she is preparing for a family dinner. Most Elim residents enjoy eating salmon on a regular basis, when it is available to them. Many households will ‘ration’ out their supplies of salmon (in whatever form: frozen, dried, etc.) so that they can have a taste of it throughout the year.

Chapter 5: Salmon, subsistence, and spirituality

“Every Sunday I have Eskimo food.” (*Man, late 30s*)

Building off of previous chapters, this chapter will discuss Elim residents' views about the intersection of contemporary Christianity and more 'traditional' views about salmon and other animals. This includes a discussion of what 'traditional' views about salmon and other animals are, and how they fit into a traditional cosmology (based on available sources), as well as an outline of the views about salmon held by residents today and how those fit into contemporary Christianity as practiced in Elim. This chapter also discusses the concept of “luck” as relates to animals and harvesting, as well as taboos and behaviors related to animals (specifically fish).

Terms such as 'traditional' are used in this dissertation in a sense which recognizes multiple layers.¹ The first and most important is the discursive sense in which it used by people living in Elim – e.g., what Elim people say are/view as being traditional views. These may or may not be contrasted to varying degrees with other types of views, depending on how they are framed. Secondly, these emic senses are also expounded and defined further through reference to appropriate sources. For example, this might include archival sources when what is traditional is referring to something grounded in deeper history. This also includes a general overall analytic sense which can be aided by the use of definitions which meaningfully derive from senses from research participants as well as data from other sources (see e.g. the definition of “Traditional Knowledge” utilized in Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017). What it is not meant to indicate is a blanket or universal assertion of tying tradition to a particular time period (e.g. pre-contact) or cultural 'state' (e.g. non-western), nor to imply that tradition is static, nor that tradition is in contrast to modernity (except in cases where this is clearly what a research participant is conveying). This is not to ignore some of these connections and contrasts in a blanket sense either, as they are often highly relevant discursively, and it can also often be said there are meaningful broad patterns in what constitutes 'traditional,' including, for example, as relates to connections to deep history (and the discursive formulation of that), expertise and elderhood as

¹ Also, see the discussion of terms such as 'traditional,' 'contemporary,' and so on in Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017.

domains wherein tradition often lies, and so on. I also use these terms heuristically, and hope my uses of them throughout is fairly obvious (and not un-critical), and as such do not want to overly belabor these considerations, so as not to fall into a trap of referential perfectionism in language use.

I do not mean, either, to suggest a strict dichotomy between, for example, Indigenous and Christian cosmologies. While what we might call ‘traditional Indigenous’ and Christian cosmologies are distinct (in varying ways at different times and places) real things which have historically been in contact with each other, the points need to be made, as they have been elsewhere (e.g. Sahlin 1985, [1993] 2000), that, first, structures are real, but they are also and only made real in particular (e.g. indigenized) instantiations.

The main Christian denominational influence in Elim is the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC; this is also the only church in Elim). In general, people do not speak about being Evangelical Covenant (though some do), but rather about being Christian or holding particular Christian beliefs; additionally, for some people their Christianity seems to be what could be called a vague generalized Christianity (as is common in many places in the United States). Despite this, and while most people are not regular church-goers, the predominant form of Christian belief and behavior evidenced in Elim has marked and consistent ECC characteristics regardless of whether the person regularly attends church or not. The major characteristics I noted of the (ECC) Christianity in Elim are described in Table 10.

As noted, most people in Elim are not regular church-goers. I elaborate in greater detail on how Christianity is practiced in Elim further below in this chapter (see the ‘Religion and spirituality’ section).

Many of the key characteristics of how the ECC’s institutional leadership defines its beliefs, identity, and affirmations (ECC 2019) are similar to how Christianity is practiced in Elim. I want to make clear, however, that the Christianity, Christian discourse, Christianization, and other such derivations which I am referring to regarding Elim are – and should be understood as – hybridized, indigenized ones. They are hybridized in that these are particular Christian

discourses (and languages, voices, etc.) hybridized with other discourses (and languages, voices, etc.) - primarily those which could be called 'traditional' Indigenous ones.

Table 10. Major characteristics of ECC Christianity in Elim.

Major characteristics of ECC Christianity in Elim
Right (e.g. proper, correct) Christian behavior
Outwardly expressive behavior (regarding Christianity and Christian beliefs)
The importance of a personal relationship with God
Belief in the Bible as the word of God
Regarding proselytization, or spreading Christian views: this is a definite characteristic for the ECC, though for community members this manifests as an outward religiosity with the hope that it effects the person this religious behavior is directed at
The importance of Jesus Christ as one's savior

When evaluating analyses below and elsewhere in this dissertation, I also urge the reader to consider that varying conceptualizations of Indigenous beliefs (e.g. traditional beliefs) as found in the literature may be based on dramatically different datasets and methods of collection. Therefore, one should always take caution in any comparison between analyses.

Summary of Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok (2017)

In an earlier work, Vernae Angnaboogok and I describe some of the shifts in human-fish relationships over time in the Bering Strait region (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017). In that work, we considered data from multiple Bering Strait region communities, including Elim. That book chapter is summarized in detail in this section, below, because of its relevance to Elim, and because it is based in part on work with Elim residents.

We argue that fish are “critical subsistence resources for Bering Strait Eskimo people” for a variety of reasons, including their contributions to well-being and identity (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:105). For example, an Elim man (*late teens*) said during the context of

my dissertation research that, “I wouldn’t know how to describe who I am without having that subsistence of salmon” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:105). Human-fish relationships have changed over time, often in significant ways, but fish remain important to the Indigenous residents of the region.

We identified the key components of earlier beliefs about fish in contrast to contemporary beliefs about fish. We describe “earlier” (or “older”) beliefs about fish as associated with the early contact period, if not prior (though the exact time when shifts in views occurred is unknown, and was not a singular event), and which are, generally, in contrast with contemporary views. While our chapter was written on a broader regional scale, it is directly applicable to Elim residents’ beliefs about fish and human-fish relationships, and is used here. The framework for beliefs (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:106-109) we developed is presented below in Table 11.

Table 11. Beliefs about fish (from Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017).

Earlier Beliefs about Fish	Contemporary Beliefs about Fish
Fish are persons	Fish are not persons
Fish are intelligent	Fish are sentient but not very intelligent
Fish have agency	Fish have limited agency
Fish have spiritual or other powers	Fish do not have spiritual or other powers
Fish must be treated with respect	Fish must be treated with respect
Fish-persons have equivalence to human-persons	Fish are an economic and cultural resource

As can be seen, there is some overlap between the contents of the categories of belief, and of course what is noted above speaks to general and dominant patterns of belief and is not the case for every individual.

“Earlier” beliefs about fish included attributes such as personhood, intelligence, agency, and power, that fish must be respected, and that fish have an equivalence to humans. It is common, across the north, for Indigenous peoples to recognize these qualities in animals and other components of the environment (see Chapter 3, for examples). These qualities often necessitate certain kinds of relationships with fish and other animals, including respect and reciprocity. Agency is crucial to these understandings of animals and requires that a person (human or animal) “have consciousness, intentionality, and decision-making ability” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:107). Human persons and fish/animal persons have equivalency under these earlier beliefs.

These earlier beliefs about fish and other animals were likely the common view prior to extensive adoption of Christianity throughout the region in the late 1800s (Almquist 1962; Burch 1994; Olsson 1962; Savok 2004; VanStone 1980; see also e.g. Fitzhugh et al. 1982; Hawkes 1913; Hill 2011; Kingston 2005; Michael 1967; Nelson 1899; Oquilluk 1973; Ray 1964, 1983, 1992; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a; Raymond-Yakoubian 2013 for general presentation or discussion of earlier views). At this time, many other western ideas and practices were also being introduced to (as well as violently forced upon) the Bering Strait region. It is likely that this general time period is when “contemporary” beliefs about fish started to become dominant. These contemporary views included the belief that fish are not persons, are not very intelligent, have limited agency, and do not have spiritual or other powers. Fish still must be respected, but they have come to be viewed increasingly as economic resources under this contemporary belief system (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:107-109).

There are three main changes in human perspectives about fish from earlier times that guide contemporary human-fish relationships. The first is the “Western rationalization of the local conceptualization of fish.” This has happened, in part, through the metricalization, regulation, secularization, and biologizing of fish (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:108). The enumeration, counting and management of fish, for example, reduces them to a set of western scientific biological and economic characteristics and indicates “a powerful cosmological shift” towards a Judeo-Christian cosmology. Koester, for example, has noted the importance of the introduction of a particular kind of fish enumeration in the shifting of human-fish relationships

amongst the Itelman (2012:53-54; see also Raymond-Yakoubian 2011 regarding metricalization and well-being in Elim). Lien, following and expanding on Koester's observations, notes that,

“Different epistemic worlds do not evolve in isolation. Koester's [...] [2012] account of the written enumeration of salmon in the Soviet period may be seen as an example of the mechanisms through which one ontology gradually comes to replace, or encompass, another. Numbers, according to Verran (2012), are deeply embedded in, and constitutive of the real. Hence, the calculation of numbers is also an act of politics, and the question becomes not only whether to do salmon as numbers (see also Lien 2007b, Lien and Law 2011), but also whose numbers to use, what to count, and what to leave out of the equation” (Lien 2012:250).

Sahlins has characterized the epistemic component of the just-noted Judeo-Christian cosmology as entailing “knowledge of natural things ... reduced to sensory experience of the obdurate matter on which humanity was condemned to lay waste its powers” (Sahlins [1996] 2005:411).

The second major change is the commodification of fish. While fish have for millennia been an economic resource (through barter and trade), commercial fishing as we know it today is a relatively new way for Bering Strait Indigenous people to interact with fish. Participation in a large market economy “has led to a necessary adoption, reinforcement, and incorporation of western concepts about what kind of things fish are and can be, and how human beings relate to them – all as part of the necessary process of trying to operate within the current colonial regime” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

The “explicit Christianization of conceptualizations of fish and human-fish relationships” is the third major shift in contemporary human-fish relationships (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109). Earlier views of fish had an “animistic quality,” while the shift to contemporary perspectives includes, for many, an understanding of “fish as being either (Christian) God-directed or motivated through what might be called a ‘Christian animatism,’ that is, fish as part of God's blessing on earth” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109). This could be otherwise summarized as a shift “from a more animistic worldview – where all

things were part of a broader interconnected system and the various entities contained within (for example, people and fish) had spirits and personhood – towards one which revolves more around a Christian God” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

These conceptualizations have been expressed by many Elim residents. For example:

Man, middle-aged: “Salmon is a blessing from God, because God created everything. And He’s our creator. He created the salmon. It’s a blessing from God because he gave it to be part of our food. God created the salmon to be part of our way of life” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

Woman, early 60s: “People say I’m lucky to catch fish. I’m very lucky to catch fish. Yeah, lucky. Yes, but who gave it to us? God did” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

Woman, in her 70s: “God gave us these fish, so you got to take care of ‘em, not play with them. Because some day you might starve to death or whatever, if there’s no fish. Just don’t play with what God gave you – fish” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

Woman, late 50s: “He [God] just directs us to [the fish]. He directs us to know where it’s at” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109).

An understanding of how contemporary beliefs and practices mesh with earlier ones requires more than superficial engagement with people. A good example of this is sharing and not wasting; both are important values and practices today, in contemporary times, and were also in the past. On the surface it may seem as though ‘people shared in the past and they share today,’ and that there is not much difference. In earlier times it was important to not waste food and to share food widely because of close, reciprocal relationships with animals; these actions would please animals and showed them respect. Sharing and not wasting both remain very important today but, for many people, the reasons why this is the case are much changed from earlier times; “[r]ather than trying to please the animal, a view many hold today is that sharing *pleases God*,

and that the relationship is now between humans and God rather than between humans and animals” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:110).

This ‘transformation’ of the relationship away from human-animal to human-God is significant and, once identified, leads to consideration of many other ways that human-fish relationships have changed over time. This includes even participation in subsistence activities, as well as small-scale local commercial harvest of fish. In order to do both – subsistence and commercial harvesting – people must participate in metricalization processes. They keep count of their harvests for managers, and they discuss escapements, counting technology, and allocations, among other things. Participation in these processes may at times be conscious and voluntary and even embraced, but it is also often required (and may be actively opposed). The potential cosmological impact of this dual-ontology of fish, however, reminds of Todd’s reflections on the ways bituminous tar was once used to patch Albertan Dene canoes and now is “weaponized through petro-capitalist extraction and production” which turns this tar “into settler-colonial-industrial-capitalist contaminants and pollutants” (Todd 2017:107). This participation is because people need and want fish; the importance of salmon (and other ‘managed’ animals) to varied aspects of Elim residents’ lives and well-being (e.g. nutrition, personal economics, culture, identity) means they must participate in those processes. Participation in these processes is an example of the “ways raw power enters into cosmological interfaces” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:111).

Perspectives on animal intelligence, including fish, have also shifted. Under earlier beliefs fish have agency, meaning they are conscious, intelligent, and can make decisions. Today, many Bering Strait residents, including many Elim residents, consider fish “as sentient but not very intelligent,” and “operating primarily on instinct” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:111). In the standard, contemporary view, fish can avoid visible obstacles, return to their natal rivers, and perhaps recognize danger, but are not really aware of humans and cannot recognize the nets of specific humans.

Reasons behind this shift in thinking about intelligence may have to do with the commodification of fish – which are “the most commodified of all the animals in the Bering Strait Eskimo

environment” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:112). Fish can also be considered some of the least “individualistic” animals in the environment. They often travel in schools and behave very similarly. Other larger animals that are frequently seen solitary or in small numbers are often considered to be more intelligent (and are, also, largely not commodified), are discussed by some as giving themselves to hunters, and are considered by most to be more ‘difficult’ to harvest. These characteristics of non-fish animals fit more squarely with “earlier” views.

While it can be said that these large shifts in the discourse about and beliefs related to human-fish relationships have occurred, it must also be recognized that this is not a heterogeneous shift; there is both “variety and hybridity at the social and individual level” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:112). This hybridization can be seen in many places. For example, as discussed in both Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok (2017) and Chapter 3 of this dissertation, perspectives about the selling of subsistence foods vary. The selling of commercially-harvested fish is acceptable but, for many people, the selling of what are essentially the exact same fish (the same species, from the same location, harvested with the same net, and so on), but which were harvested for subsistence, is not acceptable (or only under very particular circumstances, but still not ideal). Perspectives about human-fish and human-animal relationships are not homogenous across a particular community (including Elim), or the region. In examining these relationships and questions, we have entered an arena of complex history and relationships, “hybridized realities,” and beliefs (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:213-214).

Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok (2017) summarize some of the important shifts in human-fish relationships over time. These shifts can in many cases also be applied to other animals (which will be examined in terms of several domains further below). The analysis of the complexities in these historical shifts

“should not be taken to imply that history is writ from outside, even if the dominant views today are strongly influenced by forces historically external to indigenous communities. ... history’s reality and meaning must be understood through local

generative processes. History, we feel, is not writ from the outside, and we concur with Sahlins in seeking to understand modernity as indigenized, as well as with his view that the confrontation between the West and the Rest in colonial history is best seen ‘as a triadic historical field, including a complicated intercultural zone where the cultural differences are worked through in political and economic practice’ (Sahlins [1993] 2000:486, 495)” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:213).

In the discussion below, I will expand upon the analysis noted above by focusing on three main areas in relationship to salmon, subsistence, and spirituality: the intelligence and awareness of non-humans, conceptualizations of luck and proper behavior, and religion.

Non-human agency, spirit, personhood, intelligence, awareness, and reciprocity

Beliefs about non-human intelligence and awareness are crucial to the ways that Elim people think about and interact with animals. Many of these beliefs appear to be highly influenced by a person’s spirituality and whether or not they hold more ‘traditional’ Indigenous beliefs or Christian beliefs. This discussion, below, builds off of Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok (2017, and its summary, above), and focuses on Elim.

Questions of intelligence and awareness are important because, among other things, they can speak to animal agency and to what appropriate human-animal relationships should be like. Many Elim residents that participated in this study were clear about their personal beliefs regarding non-human (e.g. animal) intelligence and awareness. Not all were able to articulate exactly why they held a particular belief, however. Additionally, as will become evident to the reader from the responses to questions below, peoples’ beliefs about these issues indicate what could be characterized as a ‘pattern-fuzziness’ – that is, while there may be some clear patterns between particular concepts or domains (e.g. views about animal intelligence and size, or between even broader concepts like spirituality and human-animal relationships), some connections are more murky (e.g. regarding connections or lack thereof between larger classes of ‘mid-level’ concepts, such as intelligence and awareness, agency, and reciprocity). This seems clearly related to the argument I have made in other instances in this dissertation about the

existence and nature of the heteroglossia, and of the significant hybridity and heterogeneity, in and of the fields of discourse about these issues in Elim – and much of this appears related to various other, often longer-term, sociocultural trends, such as the interaction of different economic and spiritual systems. Additionally, it appears clear that this ‘fuzziness’ can even extend to the level of particular concepts and categories. Responses to questions indicate that, for example, the ideas of intelligence, awareness, and agency can be variable as well as intertwined. Again, all of this is not to say that there is a chaotic lack of patterning evident in the culture and cosmology.

Many of the discussions about this topic stemmed from my questions about sharing and not wasting (and the repercussions of doing or not doing those things), and from questions about whether or not animals are aware of human thoughts and actions.

There are five main concepts that are important here: intelligence, awareness, agency, sentience, and reciprocity. For Elim residents, animals can be seen as having all of these characteristics, or some combination of them. For example, a type of animal might be seen as intelligent, aware of human actions (and possibly thoughts), possess agency, and be engaged in reciprocal relationships with humans. Or, an animal might have some form of awareness (e.g. of a net that is blocking them), but not any of the other characteristics. And so on, in different permutations.

Sharing and not wasting, as have been discussed previously, are highly valued in Elim today. The reasons why a person might share or not waste are varied. For some people, a main reason why these values are practiced is because of the belief that humans are in a reciprocal relationship with animals, that animals are aware of what we do, and animals have some type of control over future harvest outcomes. Therefore, the animals must be respected, and sharing and not wasting the animals that you harvest are important ways of showing and expressing that respect.

For other Elim residents who do not believe in reciprocal human-animal relationships, sharing and not wasting may still be important parts of their subsistence practices. This may be because those acts are part of their culture, are family or community traditions, because they just think it is the right thing to do, or because they believe those acts please God.

Man, late 30s: [previously noted that fish do not have awareness] *JRY:* “Say you went hunting, and for some reason, you wasted a bunch of beluga meat, a lot of it went to waste. Do you think that animals would be aware of that in the future, and would that impact your hunting, as well?”
Man: “I don’t think the animals would be aware about that. But I think it could affect...like, if you waste a lotta meat, or *mungtuk*, could be tough luck, having a tough time...getting them. Yeah.”

Part of these discussions centered on beliefs about whether or not an animal “gives itself” to a human, or allows itself to be harvested, during fishing, hunting or trapping activities. If an animal is able to give itself to a human, this generally seems to imply intelligence, awareness, and agency because the animal has to understand the situation, consider what action it should take, or consider what action it should allow humans to take. It also implies a strong relationship between humans and animals, and that there are certain people that an animal would be willing to give themselves to and others that it may not be willing to give itself to. This is most often viewed in terms of a reciprocal relationship, based around respect.

Man, late 20s: “My parents used to always say, ‘Share. Share your catch all the time. And it’ll make the animals want you to kill them. They’ll give themselves to you.’ They used to always teach me stuff like that. I always make sure I give away my first catch, and every time I catch something big, share it with as much people as you can.”

There is a cosmological ecology of ethics and morality implied in the above statement which illustrates a connection between goodness in human nature and goodness in the universe itself. To some degree, this may be antithetical with particular Judeo-Christian beliefs about the nature of human behavior. There are other, different views about sharing in Elim as well which are very directly connected to the importance of a Christian God – such as the view that sharing pleases God, and that a potential result of that is that God will then help the sharer harvest more animals. These views taken together highlight the high degree of hybridity and heterogeneity in views about human-animal relationships in Elim.

Man, late 40s: "...but they [animals] will give itself up for us. And I'm thankful for that. That they provide food for us. I respect what they do."

Man, late 20s: "I think that they are [aware of people's thoughts and actions], because people who respect them, people who use the meat and whatever they need, they get all the time. But some people who go out there and get them any old way, they don't really get them. Like even beluga hunting – the same people always catch a beluga all the time because they use them all the time and they probably share."

JRY: "Do you think animals are aware of people's thoughts and actions?" *Man, late 20s (different person than above)*: "Yeah! When I was growing up, [Elder] was teaching me that if they wanna give themselves to you, you'll catch them. But if they don't, you won't find them. And I always believed that. I mean if someone's trying to go out hunting and something bad happen, like in the village, or they did something bad, or something, those animals could feel it or something, and so they won't let that person catch them. ... A couple years ago, I was having problems with my boys' mom, and it was always on my mind, and I would go out walking and I wouldn't see nothing. Then when I started feeling good about myself, and whatnot, I would have no gun there, and I would see all kinds of animals!"

Man, late 40s (different person than above): "I say I got it from my folks, I got it from my grandma, I learned it from them. When you waste food it won't come back to you. They [animals] know. It's like they can sense the wasteful person real easy. Where they don't even see him at all. If you're a wasteful person, you won't have any luck. I know it's true. I've seen it more than once, I've seen it a lot."

Reciprocal relationships are not strictly (though are usually) related to an animal giving themselves to a human. Animals may also communicate information to humans. For example, one Elim resident shared a story, in a different context, about his interactions with a bear, who was trying to communicate with him.

Woman, early 50s: “I believe animals could foretell things, or warn you about some things that are about to happen. ... So animals, I think, have respect for human beings, too. You know, they do have respect!”

While some residents believe that animals give themselves to humans, not all were certain about how or why that happens. Others were very clear about it.

Man, late 60s: “Yeah, he’s giving himself to us.” *JRY:* “Do you think all animals are doing that or is it just a certain set of animals that –” *Man:* “Oh, I think it’s *all* animals. Belgua, seal, *mukluk*, caribou, moose. Yeah, moose, everything.” *JRY:* “And is there anything that you think you need to do, as a hunter, to make sure the animal wants to give itself to you?” *Man:* “Um...I really don’t know! Because I always take everything [from a harvested animal]. As much as I could! That’s how I grew up! [i.e. not wasting]”

This hunter, above, while saying that he isn’t sure what he needs to do to maintain reciprocal relations with animals, does explicitly note that he always takes as many usable parts from a harvested animal as possible. This is one of the tenets of such a relationship – respect through not wasting (e.g. Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015). Even hunters that do not believe in reciprocal relationships with animals, or even necessarily that animals are intelligent and aware, consider not wasting any of the animal you harvested to be required behavior (either to show respect to the animal, or God, or ‘just because’), even though wasting would not, in their minds, impact future hunt success.

Some Elim participants believe that animals are intelligent or have a level of awareness, but do not believe that animals give themselves to humans. Some described that it is simply the knowledge and skill of the hunter or fisher that drives the harvest. Fishers in Elim talk about understanding where the fish will be, how they go about looking for them, how they can smell when the fish are nearby, and their understandings of local micro-environments like currents and eddies (among a vast body of other types of knowledge). The animal may be considered by a hunter as being smart and as having awareness, but not necessarily be in a ‘giving’ relationship.

So, for example, the animal knows they are being pursued and always tries to get away, and is only harvested if the hunter (or fisher) is skilled enough.

Many individuals believe that a higher power, a Christian God, is responsible for animal behavior and harvest success (see also Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017). So, for example, animals would not be aware of you wasting, but God would, and God could prevent you from getting more. God may also send animals to you, send you to animals, or keep animals away from you, based on your past behavior. As seen with many people in Elim, there has definitely been a significant Christianization of human-animal relationship conceptualizations, marked in part by a view that animals are “either (Christian) God-directed or motivated through what might be called a ‘Christian animatism,’” – i.e. animals being “part of God’s blessing on earth” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017:109). This is discussed more below.

Woman, late 50s: “[Another person] said the Lord knows what we’re doing. And if you waste it, you won’t get any more.”

JRY: “Do you think animals are aware of our thoughts and actions?” *Woman, early 60s:* “I don’t know, but there’s somebody watching you out there. Somebody takes care of you. I know that. And everybody’s – well we were more or less raised – both of my parents were Christians.”

Some animals were clearly identified as being intelligent by the majority of the Elim participants. Beluga, for example, are almost universally regarded as being extremely smart animals. They are described as being able to learn over time and to share information with each other. Even interviewees who weren’t certain about whether or not particular kinds of animals were smarter than others described having “heard” that beluga are smart (even if they had never observed something personally, though many had). For some people, beluga are intelligent and aware but are not in a reciprocal/giving relationship with humans, while for others, they are or may be in such a relationship.

In Elim, for those who do not believe humans and animals are in a reciprocal relationship, generally, this appears to be influenced by Christian views for certain people, and for others

simply a view that this isn't the type of relationship that exists as relates to humans and animals (though I suspect in many cases in these latter instances, the influence of Christianity has played a role here as well). In the former instances, the relationships are clearly with God – e.g. God directing either you to the animal or the animal to you.

There was not a consistent view identified in Elim which would apply across fish and animal species as regards connections, or lack thereof, between fish/animal intelligence and reciprocal harvest relationships. Willerslev has noted, for example, that Siberian Yukaghir simultaneously hold the view of reciprocal hunter-animal relationships and the view that hunting entails outsmarting the animal (2007). In Elim, patterns did not hold in this regard amongst individuals or across species. For example, some see fish as intelligent but not in a reciprocal harvest relationship, while others do not see them in either respect; beluga, however, are typically seen as both intelligent and in a reciprocal harvest relationship with hunters.

One participant described his knowledge of beluga in the region by describing them as such: “[o]ne thing about beluga... very sensitive animals. Pretty intelligent animals!” He went on to talk about an area near Kotzebue where beluga used to be hunted a lot:

“Right now, beluga don't even go in there, because of outboard motors. They just come in night time, like same way in the bay here [Norton Bay]. Koyuk people are kind of hurting because they used to get lot of beluga up in that Koyuk area, the shallow water” (*Man, early 70s*).

Here, he is discussing how belugas have learned that outboard motors are associated with hunters, and that hunters are usually only out during the day time. As a result, beluga have adjusted their behavior and only come into shallow water near the village of Koyuk at night. Koyuk people now have a harder time harvesting beluga because of this. Numerous other beluga hunters in Elim (during this study) and elsewhere (e.g. Huntington and Mymrin 1996, Huntington et al. 1999) have described similar things.

Man, late 30s: “I think those beluga remember where they were caught, in the past. Yeah. They don't go there anymore.”

Man, late 30s (different person than above): They're [animals] just like us you know, they die. And I know those fish or beluga, they know that they had a name and he was among the people too, you know. I know they have spirits and stuff like that I truly believe it. ... I know they [beluga] have names, too, they have names now, too. They're smart; I don't know how many noises they can make but they can make lot of noises and whistles and chirps. And when they're under water that's how they find each other."

Man, early 60s: "But...to a lot of people, the beluga is maybe smart as, or maybe even smarter than, a human! They are! That's part of what this is, getting tough for catching them now. They know how to evade those boats nowadays. One of the hunters even see them, when you're spying around in the cliff [an animal spotting area near the village], go right up under the water, somehow it extended its breathing hole [so its body doesn't surface, just the breathing hole], and then go back down. That's how smart they are! When we're chasing, we see them. They can even slow down, and that boat go over them, and then they go in the prop [wash], follow right behind the boat. That's how smart they are! But I would rather be hunting them! Because anybody can catch a moose if they see it, you know, but it's like following a wolverine, those beluga now, they're smart."

The hunter above compares hunting beluga to trying to follow the trail of a wolverine; wolverines are also considered by many Elim residents to be highly intelligent animals. Also, the hunter implies that the difficulty in harvesting a beluga, because of their intelligence and awareness, is also important to him.

One hunter and trapper described wolverines as "very intelligent and cunning" and said he won't pursue them because of that. "I have a high respect for them. If I see one I'll leave it alone. Just like he wanna live, just like me. So, I have a high respect for all of them" (*Man, late 30s*).

Another participant, who touched on many of the ideas in this section, said the following about the varying levels of intelligence and awareness of different animals.

Man, early 50s: “I think you can read moose’s eyes if you get close enough to them. First one I caught around here, his eyeballs got real big when he seen me, kind of an ‘oh, shit!’ attitude. Or response, not attitude. Yeah, I definitely know the moose do and beluga are [aware of us]. The beluga that hang out in Norton Sound rarely get caught. It’s the ones that pass through² that usually get caught. Those beluga around here, they’re pretty crafty. They’re really hard to catch compared to the ones that pass through. Those are probably the smartest animals we have. They develop different strategies and you can see how they, to avoid us, like the big males will purposely show themselves and then lead us away from the others. And sometimes, if there’s two boats coming, they’ll come up in between the two boats and then they’ll do circles around the boats. They’re very intelligent animals. Moose, when they get older, they’re pretty intelligent too, but they’re a little bit dumb when they’re younger. But, the older ones, they get old for a reason, because they’re smarter. Generally speaking.” *JRY:* “Are smaller animals like fish aware?” *Man:* “Well, I think it’s mostly because of the bears. You splash in the water and they’ll [fish] disappear. ... I think the higher up ones like rabbits are probably a little bit more intelligent than ptarmigan, spruce hen, we don’t have any grouse around here. But definitely when you get up to the geese and others, they’re much more adaptable to our ways of hunting.”

For this person, beluga have a high degree of awareness and intelligence. Also, for this person and other Elim residents, some of the smaller animals, like different birds and rabbits, have lower levels of intelligence. Larger mammals are seen as “smarter” because they more frequently are able to avoid being harvested. This person’s analysis also raises interesting ideas about the relationship of harvests (by humans and predator animals) and animal learning to issues of animal intelligence, awareness, and behavior.

Pet dogs, animals that some people spend significant amounts of time with, are also described by many Elim residents as being intelligent and aware. Many provided examples of their own dogs exhibiting signs of intelligence and awareness, such as being able to distinguish between the sound of their owner’s vehicle and others. Other residents do not think that pets should be treated with the care and attention that some people give them.

² There are resident and non-resident populations of beluga. The non-resident populations travel through the Norton Sound area on their annual migration.

Man, late 40s: “Some people put too much into their dogs and treat them like they’re people. They are not. They are a pet. They should be helping a homeless person or somebody that needs it more than that dog or that cat.”

Another frequent example that is given of animal awareness and intelligence are moose, as alluded to above. People talk about moose staying away from villages during hunting season “like they know” (this is not an uncommon comment to hear anywhere in Alaska that has moose), or being smart enough to “hide” from people (see *Man, late 60s*, above, for example).

Man, late 40s (different person than above): “Yeah, moose, they hear us, too. They’re getting smart, the way I see it!”

A number of people spoke about how animals recognize human sounds, like vehicles, and seem to know to stay away from them. This does not necessarily translate into the belief that they are intelligent but, rather, that they have awareness that perhaps (but not always) exceeds pure instinct. For example, some animals like birds were described as always being “alert” or “wary.” Others do think that this type of behavior makes these animals smart and implies that they are interpreting human-made sounds and can adapt to noise. At some level, in this view, even if it is only very basic, the animals recognize sounds and (usually) flee from them. This can be described as basic awareness and instinctual behavior (and this can also be recognized in reports that region residents give about ‘sick’ birds and seals; i.e. birds and seals that are not afraid to approach or be approached by humans. There have been multiple instances of this in the Bering Strait in the past few years). In this model, animals hear sounds and, out of instinct (fear for their life or safety), they automatically react and try to get away from the sound.

For example, one participant (below) indicated that animals are not particularly intelligent or in possession of a higher-level awareness as relates to humans, but that they simply react to being hunted. Thus for salmon and other wild animals:

Man, middle-aged: “And I don’t know how they think. I don’t know how they do the stuff that they do, but salmon do the same thing as any wild animal would do. They react to a human being

just the way the wild animals do. They get scared and run away if they see a human being, like a wild bird or wild animal would do.”

This participant did note that beluga may be smarter than other wild animals owing to repeated attempts to hunt them – this was explained as learning the sound of outboard motors leading to an avoidance reaction by the beluga.

Salmon were of special interest to me during discussions about animal intelligence and awareness, particularly because people indicated a potential hierarchy of intelligence among animals, with larger mammals often being considered to possess higher intelligence. When asked specifically about salmon having awareness of human thoughts and actions, many people said that they have a ‘general’ awareness – more like instinct – and also differentiated between salmon and ‘bigger animals’ that, for many, were more likely to have what might be characterized as a ‘higher-level’ awareness of humans. One Elim resident even refused to directly answer the question about salmon awareness, declaring it “ridiculous.”

Salmon intelligence and awareness was often discussed in terms of the ability of the fish to find their way home to their natal streams – i.e. that they must have some kind of intelligence in order to do that, but aren’t necessarily ‘smart’ in terms of thinking and making decisions, or don’t have a complex awareness of human thoughts and actions.

Man, late 30s: “They’re just fish, they don’t think and make decisions.” This person also indicated that beluga are “kind of smart.”

Man, late 30s (different person than above): “I observe fish over the years. You could tell they’re intelligent. Every time I’m sitting in my boat, some days water get real clear, lots of salmon, they’d see my net and go this way [away from the boat]. They go all the way to the beach, turn around and come back out. They’re smart. I believe they are very intelligent and I watch them and real clear you could see them. A school of about ten or so, go all the way to the beach. ... And one time I was fishing, really clear water, they just watch my hook. When they see my hook coming they don’t go that way. They knew what the hook was.” *JRY:* “So if they’re smart like

that, how do you ever catch any fish?" *Man*: "It all depends on the weather. If it's rough and dirty water they can't see. The best time of fishing is when it's rough or dirty water because they can't see the net. Little swells... and the current is going this way and that way, and they follow the current, they follow the beach. When they see another fish they'll come out, and they can't see that net anymore, they go out and continue. It's better when it's rough, and the water is dirty. Those are very good days for fishing. I like those days, that's the best day to fish. ... Best when it's rough and they can't see the net, especially silver salmon. I got a very high respect for those silvers because they're real intelligent."

Similarly, another fisher commented that, "Yeah, they're really aware of what they see under water! You have to have a very, very good net to catch the fish! A clean net! If your net is dirty, you won't get very many fish. Your net has to be very clean and camouflaged" (*Man, late 60s*). For this interviewee, fish aren't necessarily seen as intelligent, but rather are aware of their surroundings and dangers and, therefore, fishers must keep their gear clean in order to get salmon.

Another person commented that caribou are aware of our actions, that moose can change and learn, but that fish don't have these characteristics: "No. I would say they're the same. We get them pretty easy in our community" (*Man, late 40s*). For this person, the ease of harvest indicates salmon are not particularly intelligent.

Woman, late 20s: "Some years we always have a lot of salmon and some years we don't around here. And when people don't catch them they always say salmon are trying to be smart, and I don't believe that."

Woman, early 50s: "I can't picture a salmon making a decision. To me, all they do is go up the river. I mean, they got to have some intelligence to get up there to where they were born, but I think it's instinct that brings them there."

Woman, early 30s: “They’re their own kind and I think they think and they’re just like you and me and everybody.” This person also added that salmon are smart because they are able to “get away” from their human pursuers.

Woman, early 60s: “I guess I disagree [that salmon are intelligent]. How can I know? ... I don’t know if they’re intelligent, they don’t make decisions. If they were very intelligent they wouldn’t even hit our nets in the river or go by us.”

Elim resident’s beliefs about non-human animal intelligence and awareness are varied and complex. They speak to a high degree of heterogeneity of beliefs and a lack of patterning as regards certain salient (and thus in theory potentially related) factors such as difficulty in harvesting a particular species, intelligence and awareness levels of various species, views about giving and reciprocal relationships between humans and animals, and proper human behavior. While some patterns are able to be seen amongst some of these and other factors – e.g. difficult-to-harvest species are generally seen as being intelligent, increased size of species is generally correlated with a higher likelihood of it being ascribed intelligence, etc. – broader patterns connecting many of the factors is not readily apparent beyond what has already been noted (see e.g. above and Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017). An important instance of pattern clarity is the dominant place of a Christianized perspective in the discourse regarding views on fish and human-fish relationships (e.g. the “Christian animatism” noted earlier). There are other potential connections amongst the above-discussed elements and concepts relating to the nature of animals and of human-animal relationships, as discussed in other parts of this dissertation. For example, there is the possibility that more ‘traditional’ views about animals and human-animal relationships may be less prevalent in the case of more commodified species (like salmon) and harvest relationships. This particular analysis would make sense in combination with the view about a dominant Christianized discourse in light of long-standing arguments in anthropology about the connection between Judeo-Christian cosmology and capitalism (see e.g. Sahlins 1996).

Conceptualizations of luck and proper behavior

During our discussions about the nature of human-animal relationships, Elim residents were also asked if they had learned any specific behaviors, taboos or rituals relating to fish or other animals. Sharing and not wasting were talked about in detail, and several other practices were also discussed. Many of these relate to the concept of “luck.”

Respect, as could be expressed in different ways (see above; Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Kawerak 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017), was the basis of many of the behaviors and ways of treating animals that were discussed. For example, some Elim residents noted that you should treat animals the way you would want to be treated. This was applied by individuals who believe that animals are intelligent and aware, and by those who believe, for example, that fish and many animals behave primarily based on instinct.

Man, late 20s: “Because if you don’t respect them, they won’t respect – you could say that they won’t respect you either.”

There are many practices related to proper human-animal interactions that have, of course, been documented for Inupiaq and Yup’ik people in Alaska, and for other Indigenous peoples in the north (see Chapter 3). Elim residents were not asked about any of these specific practices (e.g. sewing stitches in hunting garments in particular ways to be pleasing to seals that will be pursued by a hunter wearing them) but, rather, were asked if they could independently think of any specific practices or behaviors that they had learned or been told about.

One Elder (*Man, early 70s*) relayed a story and information about the preparation of certain foods. He made clear that he did not believe this himself and that he had learned about it from his grandfather. This Elder said that he been told that you should never cook land and ocean animals together in the same pot. Doing this can cause earthquakes. He then shared a story about people who used to live at the mouth of Kuik River who cooked land ducks and ocean ducks together and then experienced an extreme earthquake that destroyed their village (“flipped it upside

down”). This Elder believed that the village was in fact destroyed by an earthquake, but that it must have been coincidental and not the result of their cooking activity.

Another Elder (*Woman, early 60s*) noted that her great aunt told her: “We shouldn’t make fun of animals...because it will come back to us. ... And it’s not right to make fun of people, too, that are crippled or not healthy, because it could come back to us.” Making fun of animals, or ‘playing with animals,’ could include things like plucking their feathers while they are alive, harassing or bothering them for no reason, catch-and-release fishing, or otherwise hurting them or making them suffer (see also, e.g., Fienup-Riordan 1999; Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015). This can come back to people later in their life and could be manifested through physical ailments that were the direct repercussion of actions the person had previously taken. As discussed above, ‘playing with animals’ can also result in loss of luck and difficulty harvesting animals in the future.

One Elder shared how, when she was a young woman, she was processing salmon with a larger group of people. She noticed that a seagull had great difficulty trying to swallow large chunks of fish remains that people were discarding. She decided that she would cut up her salmon heads into smaller pieces to make it easier for the seagulls to eat. Her reasoning for this was that we should not do anything to hurt animals. Empathy towards animals (as well as other people) is an important part of human-animal relationships.

One participant (*Man, early 20s*) shared that his bilingual-bicultural teacher at school had told the students about what to do after catching a seal. What he recalled his teacher (a current Elim Tribal member, resident, and Elder) saying was to “put some fresh water in its mouth or something, just to like, let it know, or let it come back or something, I guess.” He did not recall in any detail why hunters should do this. Other Elim residents expressed knowledge of this same practice, but also did not know why it was done. Some hunters said that they still do this today (put freshwater in a seal’s mouth) though, again, not necessarily with knowledge of why (see Fienup-Riordan 1994 and Kawerak 2013 discussions of seals and freshwater).

Some Elim residents shared that they, personally, have rules about what to do or not do with fish remains, after processing them. The person quoted below, like others, discussed the benefits of not wasting and the dangers of, for example, letting fish decompose in the river. Many people prefer to put fish remains in the ocean, rather than the river – some because they believe salmon will become aware of those remains and won't want to come upriver to be harvested, others because they think it will change the water quality and potentially make it not possible for fish to return. Others do not think that it matters and will put fish remains in the river and expect that fish will still return regardless.

Man, late 40s: “All they told me was not to waste them [salmon]. And if we polluted the rivers they would die. ... My grandma used to talk about the food and the animals won't come back because, if you get a fish and you pull it up and you just left it there, it rots and turns to bugs. That in turn makes a lot of flies, the more flies you have, you can't even hang up dried fish, you know. And then she said it will just cause a chain reaction, once you start to waste things it just grows. And then, they won't come back because it will be a dirty river or – they sense, you know the animals sense it, too. Even the fish. They'll sense the waste, if you throw out a dead fish and here comes a salmon, they'll know there's no oxygen in that water, because it's all blood, guts. There's no air in it. It's just gunk matter coming up. She said even God will know when you're wasting. He won't bring them back. He'll detour them another way. And it's true, I don't know if it's Him doing that really or if it's nature, but when you waste, the following year, even more years down, you'll find it harder to get. It's so true.”

Several people also noted that they had heard, from Elders or others, that you shouldn't talk about animals before you go out to hunt them. Some of these individuals said that this is because the animals will hear you and then it will be harder for you to catch them; others did not know why you shouldn't talk about it. This is also a common practice across Indigenous communities the north (e.g. Fienup-Riordan 1994; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015)

Woman, late 30s: “I heard that when we say, ‘We're gonna go fishing,’ and talk about it before we go, we always have no luck.”

The participant above was not certain what exactly the mechanism for ‘luck’ or lack of it was, but was clear that it had to do with the animals themselves. ‘Luck’ is discussed further, below.

Following traditional beliefs, when these relationships function properly – when humans behave respectfully towards animals and animals in return share or give themselves to humans – it is often discussed in terms of ‘luck.’ A lucky hunter or fisher is one that is successful, an unlucky one is not successful. Many people use the term ‘lucky’ when talking about their relationship to animals, but have not considered exactly what it means, or are not aware of much of the knowledge their ancestors had about human-animal relationships. For many others, being lucky means that God assisted you in some way to be successful. In these cases, as discussed previously, the relationship has shifted from being a reciprocal relationship between humans and animals to one between humans and a Christian God (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017). On the other hand, some Elim residents use the term “luck” in a very general way that basically means “happenstance,” or just happening to be in the right place at the right time to, for example, see a seal and be able to kill it. One resident and hunter, in a non-interview context, recently described that luck is “really just another way to say ‘prepared.’” He continued by saying that he is ‘lucky’ when he is prepared to go hunting or fishing – when his gear is organized, gas tanks full, etc. Then he does not have to run around like other people to get ready (when, for example, the weather clears or some other circumstance arises) and has improved his chances of successful harvest.

During interviews and discussions, when initially asked, many people replied that they could not think of any specific practices regarding the proper treatment of, or behavior towards, animals. At other times in our interviews or discussions, though, some of the same people noted that they say a prayer (either to God, or to the animal) each time they harvest an animal. Prayers or thanks to animals or God were not identified as practices to maintain proper relationships with animals or a higher power, but can be described as such.

Many participants in this study were asked what “luck” means to them and what the mechanisms associated with having or not having luck are. Many people believe that bad behavior on the part

of humans leads to a loss of luck. Bad behavior could include things like: not sharing, wasting, playing with animals, or selling certain Native foods like beluga.

Woman, late 30s: “You play with and kill a bird, you’re wasting. The other kinda birds, [you] won’t be so lucky to get! ... You can’t play with animals or some bad luck might happen to the family.”

Woman, early 60s: “No [does not believe that animals know if you waste]. It could’ve been true, though! Yeah. But I know the Elders were saying if a village didn’t hunt right, or they wasted and killed lots of whale or whatever... that the next time they hunted, they wouldn’t be too lucky. ... If they were not sharing whatever is on their land, to other people, like other villages, then whatever they wanted wouldn’t be as much as before. That’s what I heard, anyway.”

Additionally, many Elim residents were asked about what makes a successful fisher-person; luck, skill, God, or some combination of these or other factors. There were very varied responses in these discussions, including that successful fishing is the result of: luck, your own efforts and skill, your own efforts and skill in combination with God, or that it is solely the result of God.

One person described God’s role as this, “I would say, God’s role in all this is there’s gonna be lean times, there’s gonna be times of plenty. I mean it seems to be a cycle and everything that God has created, so sometimes we have very few berries. And some summers we have lots of berries. Some summers we have few fish and I believe that God’s role is just putting that cycle [in place], you know, all that he has created” (*Woman, early 50s*). For this person, God created everything, including the cycles that different animals and plants have, but God doesn’t direct particular people to particular resources. For others, they also acknowledge the natural cycles that God has created, but additionally believe that if a person behaves properly, that God will personally direct them to the resource, or the resource to them. There is no “luck” involved in either of these scenarios.

Man, early 20s: “I think about people wasting their catch; that they would probably have bad luck later on. I think about that from time to time.”

Man, late 20s: “Yeah, that's like when somebody try and sell their *muktuk* before and they never even catch anything that following year. They get bad luck or something. It's just like, it's kind of weird, sometimes things like that happen, I think. I don't really hear of anyone selling *muktuk*, though. Trading, though, but not selling. Maybe seal meat, too? I never hear of anybody selling seal meat.”

Woman, early 60s: “Just lucky, maybe. Sometimes we don't catch fish when we really try sometimes. [Another person] and I experienced that, hardly any fish, all of a sudden they're there and we catch them and cut them and everything, but sometimes we don't catch any at all. It's that way, for me it's that way. People say I'm lucky to catch fish. I'm very lucky to catch fish. Yeah, lucky. Yes, but who gave it to us? God did. ... God gave us fish. God provided it. God knows everything. He provided fish for us when we need it. Sometimes it doesn't come and we just have to accept the fact that we didn't get it and we don't get mad at God. But we are thankful when we catch it. We thank Him before we eat the food.”

Conceptualizations of “luck,” like many of the other concepts discussed in this chapter, are varied in Elim, as are ideas of what proper behavior towards animals looks like. Many Elim residents have their own individual practices for things like dealing with the remains of animals, or behaviors that may ensure they have successful harvests in the future. The ways that some of these beliefs and practices are connected to religion and spirituality are discussed further, below.

Religion and spirituality

As the previous sections have helped illustrate, in Elim there is a strong interplay between Christian religious beliefs and views and perspectives on subsistence and animals. This is not unsurprising as ‘traditional’ beliefs were not construed as “religion” but rather as the way things were, including rules for living. Many Elim residents, when asked during free-list interviews what kinds of things are important to them, included “God” and/or “church” in their list. The community of Elim was established in part by the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) (see Chapter 1) and has an active ECC community today. When referring to “God,” participants were

referring to a Christian God and, most commonly, to the Evangelical Covenant perception of God. This is what is meant here, unless otherwise noted.

Elim is most certainly a 'religious' community in that they have a church that typically holds services at least once a week, they are involved in Christian summer youth camps, they periodically have a resident pastor in the village, Christian beliefs and religion in general are spoken about frequently and, for a number of people, hunting, fishing and gathering are preferably not carried out on Sundays. Small groups of people will also often pray together aloud to God when a friend or family member is in crisis or needs 'help' of some kind, and 'grace' before meals is common, as is praying in association with conducting subsistence harvesting. God is also frequently invoked in regular day-to-day conversation. Additionally, religious objects (e.g. bibles, portraits of Jesus Christ, displays of bible quotes, crosses, and other similar items) are found very commonly in households. My work and I were prayed for on occasion, including one time when a resident concluded her prayers and said, "Julie, sometimes God sends us people right when we need them." I observed church services in Elim on a handful of occasions and was always welcomed, and sometimes prayed for. The typical congregation size for the services I attended was about 10 people. There are several people who regularly play music and lead gospel singing during services (mostly in English, but sometimes in Inupiaq for songs that have been translated and have sheet music and lyrics available), and a few individuals that lead church services when there is no pastor in the village. Several residents commented to me that they did not believe that Elim is a very religious community because not very many people attend church services.

As noted, many people identified some component of Christianity as being very important to them. This included things like going to church, singing Christian songs, living their Christian values, and others. For example, one woman explained that, "...believing in God is important to me, and living our Native lifestyle" (*Woman, early 60s*).

Many questions and discussions related to the topics of religion and spirituality (including religious, spiritual, traditional, and 'older' beliefs) were also initiated over the course of this study. To further understand how Elim residents perceive animals, they were asked, for example,

if animals have spirits, what role a higher power plays in providing animals to people, if animals go to heaven, and other topics – some of which have been touched on previously.

The specific impact of missionaries and other Christian ‘authorities’ was not specifically explored as part of this work. However, the topic of missionaries was discussed both formally and informally with me by Elim residents. As noted, the ECC mission was a driving force in the establishment of the village in its current location. While this is now over 100 years ago, the names of many of those church authorities are still widely known in the community, and that history is discussed among residents. Missionaries were also, though, noted as a reason why Elim no longer has some of the traditions that other communities maintained, such as Eskimo dancing, singing, and drumming. One interviewee noted that a community member tried to reintroduce Eskimo dancing several decades ago, but the Elders wouldn’t allow it because the missionaries had told them it was bad. More recently, on several occasions Elim has invited the King Island Dance group (from Nome) to come to the Aniguiin School and teach songs and dances to the students in efforts to reintroduce some of those traditions.

Man, late 60s: “It’s because, when the preachers came, they told the people here that it was evil – to dance our dances.”

Man, late 20s: “Not too many traditions; we’re all losing our culture here. Like, Eskimo dancing wasn’t here for about a hundred years. It was lost when those people from the church came. ... I tried to ask my grandma if there was Eskimo dancing here and she said no. She said that they said it was bad. I wish there were more traditions and stuff.”

I asked Elim residents, during free-listing and ethnographic interviews, what types of traditions their community has. Many people struggled to answer the question, with some responding that Elim doesn’t really have many traditions remaining. Other participants talked about subsistence activities themselves being an important tradition that the community carries on today. Watching boats come in to the village with their harvest is also a community activity that many people practice and treasure. Other traditions that were discussed included the community potluck that in the past regularly, and today sometimes, happens when the first beluga of the season is

harvested. Potlucks that take place at other times of the year, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, or after someone passes away, were also noted as important traditions. For some families, the giving away of the first-catch of an animal by young hunters and fishers is an ongoing and important tradition. Additionally, while not necessarily ‘ceremonial’ in nature, the first meal of fresh salmon in each year can be very important to certain families. And, created in more recent times, an Elim-based basketball tournament has been noted as an important village tradition.

While many Elim residents expressed the belief that animals have spirits of some kind, not all study participants believed this. Belief in animal spirits did not necessarily correspond to a belief in, for example, reciprocal relationships between humans and animals.

JRY: “Do you think fish and other animals have spirits?” *Woman, in her 70s*: “Like when you’re alone, sometimes the birds and animals will come to me. They have feelings. I mean, I think they do. ... I know maybe they have feelings and stuff, spirits, too....”

Man, late 20s: “I think every living animal has a, well...being.”

Woman, early 50s: “Well, I would imagine they have spirits. I mean, they have a beating heart like we do and they breathe the air and they eat. They do everything we do. And then, if their heart stops beating, they’re just like us, a shell, they’re gone. So I would say they have spirits.”

For many Elim residents, God is directly involved in how successful a hunter or fisher is. This extends beyond the belief that God created the world and all the animals in it for humans. Direct involvement could mean that God directs, for example, fish to a fisher or seals to a hunter. It could also, however, mean that God somehow prevents you from being successful, or from being highly successful. The interviewee below discusses how God keeps us “in line” by not always giving us what we want (or may even “have fun with you” [play with you] if you don’t behave properly).

JRY: “You strongly agreed [with the structured interview statement] that ‘salmon is a blessing from God’. We talked about that a little bit, but tell me more about why you strongly agree with

that one.” *Man, late 20s*: “Well, He made everything. I’m a strong Christian, everything that I see is made by Him. Salmon is just another part for us to have and use, both commercially and subsistence way of life.” *JRY*: “Do you think God has any impact on whether or not, say, you’re successful when you go fishing?” *Man*: “Yeah, yeah.” *JRY*: “In what ways, do you think?” *Man*: “Every morning I pray about the things we’re going after. . . .ask anything you want and He will do it so, I always go for a prayer and I always say, ‘Oh Father, who art in Heaven, bless us with a bountiful supply of fish today.’ And some days, man there would be lots of fish. Sometimes there wouldn’t be so, you know. Good and bad, seem like he always bless on the days we really need it. Bless us with less, you know, just keep us more in line. Trust, it’s just a balance you know. I believe he blesses us with more or less just to keep us in line. I think salmon is a blessing from God.”

Woman, late 70s: [in reference to a discussion about people sharing foods with her] “I don’t know if it has to do with me being a Christian lady. Couldn’t be!”

Many other residents, similarly, expressed their belief that God is aware of how we act and treat animals, and there are consequences, from God, for not behaving properly.

Woman, early 50s: [in response to me asking if fish will know if I am wasteful, and will not go to my net next time I fish because of that] “Well, I’ve heard of that among animals, I never heard about the fish. You know like a seal, or a whale, a caribou.” *JRY*: “So bigger animals?” *Woman*: “Bigger animals, I never heard about the fish. Interesting.” *JRY*: “Do you think it could be true?” *Woman*: “I would not consider that the animal or a spirit. I would consider it God watching out for his people. If He sees our actions, He sees what’s in our heart and He sees if we give grudgingly . . . we’re not gonna get a return on that. But, if we share, or we get our catch and we take care of it, we share with people, put it away like they know how to survive, you get blessed for giving, and for caring for your own. But I would say it’s God, it’s not the spirit of the animal.”

Woman, late 50s: “. . . the Lord knows what we’re doing. And if you waste it, you won’t get any more.”

Another woman noted that she did not believe that animals have spirits, but that God “gave salmon for us to eat” (*Woman, late 70s*). She continued that she had also heard, and believes, that if you waste, animals won’t come back and that it would be God that was preventing the animals from coming back to you.

Man, late teens: “These are His animals. If you’re going to catch the animal that has been given, take care of it. If you’re gonna catch it and not do anything about, not take care of it, it’s a waste. Could’ve been caught for someone else, or just give it to someone else. ... I strongly agree because I believe that you cannot do these things [subsistence] without a blessing of God. You know, if you turn back on God, or don’t believe that He provides these things on earth for us, then I think it comes back or you don’t really catch as much, or have a good, how should I put this, have a good mind-set on catching fish.”

Man, late 40s: [In response to me asking if person would suffer repercussions if they wasted subsistence foods.] “It has a lot of truth. It has a lot of truth. That’s why I said there’s a percentage of God in there, God and nature working together. They know that this person won’t do anything good with that [animal], so they try and keep that away from that person, no matter what he or she does. Some people abuse it real bad. And the following year they come back and they say, ‘Man, I haven’t caught anything.’ And I’ll say, ‘It’s because of how you took care of your last catch. I told you what to do with it.’”

JRY: “Do you think God plays a role in how successful fishermen are?” *Woman, early 40s*: “If they seek, and are honest to seek His knowledge, and if they’re willing to accept and take it by faith, He’ll guide them.” *JRY*: “Do you think that God plays a direct role – actually sending more fish to one person than another, or...?” *Woman*: “Maybe not sending fish, but ‘Here’s a fish.’ If they seek them, then God says, ‘Over here!’ So, if they’re willing to heed God and His guidance they might go to where the fish are, not the fish going to them. I don’t know! Could be either way.”

Woman, in her 70s: “Maybe God knows how they take care of the fish, you know. That’s what I think. Because God put them down here for some reason – not to waste them. Because they’re

live fish, you can't play with God's stuff. ... I guess I'm old fashioned, though. God gave us these fish, you got to take care of them. Not play with them. Because some day you might starve to death or whatever, if there's no fish. ... Just don't play with what God gave you – fish, you know.”

The last quote is interesting in that the woman applies the same ‘idea’ of “playing” with animals, but from a Christian God-centered perspective.

These beliefs, about a God that purposefully interacts with humans and animals and impacts the level of success of harvests, indicate a reciprocal-like relationship between humans and God. If humans don't behave the way God ‘wants’ them to, God may prevent them from being successful. This is the same as the ‘traditional’ relationship that people formerly had, and some still have today, directly with fish and other animals. If humans didn't behave properly towards animals, the animals would no longer give themselves to humans. Now, as noted earlier, the relationship for many people has shifted from one between humans and animals to one between humans and a Christian God. When taken in concert with a ‘diminished’ view of particular qualities of fish (intelligence, awareness, agency, spirit, reciprocity), this could be characterized as a shift from an earlier/traditional animistic view to a ‘Christian animatism,’ as noted earlier (see also Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017).

Now, as more of the ethnographic details have become viewable to the reader over the course of this work, I would like to provide some further clarity to the idea of a “Christian animatism” I am using here (and have used in a similar fashion elsewhere; Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017), and the historical shift to it. As I have discussed, earlier beliefs regarding human-fish relationships in the Bering Strait area, including Elim, could be characterized as animistic; namely, that the loci of agency (and/or personhood, sentience, and spirit) is within animals themselves. Taking into account the diminishment of the views on fish agency, personhood, intelligence, awareness, and sentience, and the Christianized discourse regarding fish and human-fish relationships (e.g. harvest relationships), there is a clear shift in views away from these earlier views. In the dominant contemporary view, a key part of the overall contrast is that there is a shifting of the fully agentic spiritual essence from originary loci in fish/animals

(an animism) to an originary locus somewhere else, something diffuse or diffusely applicable. That ‘somewhere else’ is a Christian God (who can direct things) and God’s blessing, which are now the proper locus of such an essence, and which then has particular instantiations (of God’s direction or blessing); this ‘third element’ is thus also now added to the relationship between humans and animals.

I call this newer view a “Christian animatism.” Marett introduced the term ‘animatism’ to draw a contrast with Tylor's (1873) elaboration of the concept of animism. Marett argued that the basic “raw material” of religion could be seen in “that positive emotional value” which “needs only to be moralized - to be identified with goodness - to become its essence” (1909:xxxix); he argues that the concept of *mana* comes as close as any to this formulation (also explicating a “*tabu-mana* formula” for the basic definition of religion). Marett suggests Tylor's definition of animism (see further below) is overly broad (1914:233), and that Tylor's “doctrine of universal vitality” should be understood in a distinct sense which he called animatism ([1871]1920:285); he also characterized this as “an attitude of mind” which could be characterized as being “in the vaguer Spencerian sense of the attribution of life and animation” (1909:117). Marett also noted,

“Thus there will be found attributed to the sacred and divine now the impersonal nature of a force, as in dynamism; now a living nature in which the body and its indwelling are not distinguished, as in animatism; now a nature of a dual kind, in which the body is subordinated to an independent animating principle, as in animism; now a nature as of a living man, only crowned with transcendent personality, as in anthropomorphic theism [...]” (1909:xxxii)

I am neither endorsing nor re-engaging Marett (nor Tylor’s) original projects, arguments, or sentiments. Additionally, as can be seen from Marett’s discussion, the term itself in his usage does not offer a perfect fit to the ethnographic facts I am working with (a point to which I will return in a moment). Rather, I am selectively re-animating and repurposing an old term that was once used to create a categorical distinction in an old debate to now help describe a distinction in the historical and ethnographic data. Specifically, I am using the aspect of the term which focuses on the contrast between a diffuse spiritual force and a spirit within a particular thing (the

prior contrast) to show the contrast in Elim between the locus of agentive spirit (for fish) being within a diffuse spiritual power in the current view rather than, as previously, within the fish themselves. Thus I am selectively and heuristically using this (admittedly imperfect and imperfectly fit) term to highlight a very real difference evident in the ethnographic data. I am thusly here using the term ‘animatism’ for the current view because the fully agentive spiritual essence for animals is primarily located in this diffuse (or diffusely applicable), divine, sovereign third element. This element, this essence, in the form of the Christian God’s direction or blessing is instantiated for or with (at least certain) animals, and is also acknowledged, and/or sought, and/or appreciated by (and perhaps even operationalized within; see below) humans in a somewhat reciprocal albeit highly asymmetrical relationship with God.

To return to a point noted just above, terms such as these are imperfect and imperfectly fit on multiple levels. Firstly, terms like animism (especially) and animatism have had a long history within the anthropological discipline; their re-use and re-purposing does not constitute an endorsement of the original projects and senses in which they were used. Additionally, it is worth noting that they are indeed often re-purposed and re-fashioned, in ways which may be quite far from their earlier uses. For example, take Tylor’s early use of animism as consisting of both “the belief in souls and in a future state” and “spirits, upwards to the rank of powerful deities” (1873:426-427) alongside Brightman and collaborators’ definition of animism as “the attribution of human(-like) subjectivity, agency and emotion to humans: in short, non-humans seem to be endowed with personhood” (2012:14), among many other variations over the discipline’s history. This re-fashioning can be done for theoretical reasons and to take into account ethnographic realities. For example, note Bird-David’s well-known reformulation of animism particularly in light of ethnographic data with the Nayaka people (1999). As some have noted, certain categorical distinctions themselves often do not “hold” well, such as in terms of when they are confronted with ethnographic realities (as Willerslev and Ulturgasheva (2012) show regarding animism and totemism, which they refashion accordingly; Swancutt (2012) similarly argues these concepts in practice move around, including overlapping and shading into each other), or in terms of their internal logic, or both. Regarding the latter, Young and collaborators argue:

“Some concepts, such as mana or kami, can be either animistic or animatistic, depending on whether one is focused on a specific object such as a sacred tree or on the essential oneness of the spiritual power that is found in everything. Moreover, the distance between animism and animatism is not that great; from the recognition that everything in the cosmos has a soul (as in animism) it is only a small leap to the position of animatism that everything in the cosmos shares the same spiritual power.” (2017:376)

The information I received from people in Elim assuredly demonstrates some of these critical points, as already intimated above. For example, under certain definitions, aspects of both animism and animatism can be seen in the Elim discourses about fish and human-fish relationships; also, the distinctions between whether fish are construed as directed by God or as part of God’s blessing even suggests the possibility of sub-distinctions which could be made.³ Regardless, as previously noted, terms such as these can be heuristically useful to describe real ethnographic observations, which is how it is used here.

It is not entirely clear what scope this Christian animatism has in the cosmology of those Elim people who have this view – for example, exactly what the extent is of which animals and other ‘things’ in the world are seen in such a way. As with other cosmological structures explored in this dissertation, there is also clearly some heterogeneity at play; this ideology is not completely realized across all people in Elim nor is it holistic in its application to all animals. For some animals, such as beluga, there is clearly more of a view that the loci of agency are directly within the animals. It is also noteworthy that some people expressed views indicating that God can direct the fisher to the fish, and also that proper behavior could enable this (or the fish coming to the fisher) – this suggests that, for some people at least, this Christian animatistic principle of the

³ I present here in this work the views of both the formulations of God-directed involvement in fish (and human-fish relationships) as well as the “God’s blessing” formulations of fish and this relationship as all to be within the same general category of a “Christian animatism,” at the very least for heuristic purposes. There are clearly some differences (such as the more personal nature of God directing fish or humans, and the more directly agentive nature of God directing things as compared to some formulations of “God’s blessing,” for example). However, there are similarities as well (the role of God being obvious, but also the fact that one would assume God’s direction also involves some sort of ‘force,’ for example). There are also variations within these views – for example, in some cases the formulation of “God’s blessing” seems more passive and in others it seems more active.

working of God's direction or blessing for fish is also operational for humans as well, at least to some extent.

Being outwardly thankful to God for animals harvested is also important to many Elim residents, as is praying for success in harvesting. The latter is markedly different than traditional views, which dictate that you should not talk about what you want or what you plan to harvest (see above). Praying about subsistence foods and subsistence harvests, including praying in thanks after you harvest and before you eat it, is part of how the relationship between God and humans is maintained by Elim residents, too.

Man, late teens: "When we receive stuff like subsistence foods, what I've grown up doing is thanking the Lord that we have received something. One of his creations. Thank the Lord for that." *JRY:* "And do you do that when you're out?" *Man:* "Yeah, when we're out there." *JRY:* "So right when you get the animal." *Man:* "Yeah. But, lot of communities, different parts of Alaska have their own traditions for doing things."

Man, late 60s: "I pray to God for a successful fishing season, so I guess God answered my prayers. Every year I pray for a successful fishing season. I know that God played a part."

Some people, including some who consider themselves to be very religious people, believe that God provided everything for people, but that He does not necessarily control how successful people are in harvesting. One reason people believe this is because they have seen people waste fish, for example, and still get more fish the next time they try to harvest. Or, alternately, they have seen people be very pious, yet still not necessarily be successful in their attempts to harvest.

Man, late 40s: "She [Elder] said even God will know when you're wasting. He won't bring them back. He'll detour him another way. And it's true. I don't know if it's Him doing that really or if it's nature, but when you waste the following year, even more years down, you'll find it harder to get. It's so true."

Woman, early 30s: “Because He’s our provider and He’s our creator. He created everything and all the animals and fish and us...” *JRY*: “Do you think that God plays any part in whether or not a fisherman is successful?” *Woman*: “I’m kinda not too sure about that. I could say when my dad was Christian, serving the Lord and whatnot, I would see that he wouldn’t be as successful as others, so it’s, I don’t know how to explain it. It’s like he wasn’t catching as much as someone else, I mean it’s just... I don’t know. And then when he begins to catch more, like when people know how much he was getting, others would go surround him, too. They would seem like take most of the fish that he was supposed to be getting.” *JRY*: “Maybe he was a blessing to them, instead of himself?” *Woman*: “Yeah, yep. So, that’s why I strongly agree it’s [salmon] a blessing from God. I mean, because He put them here and He’s the Creator.”

Another Elim resident expressed that ‘luck’ in hunting doesn’t come from God but, rather, “[i]t’s like the cycle of life, circle of life” (*Man, late 30s*). He also shared his view that it is more important to harvest larger animals like beluga, seal, and caribou. “They’re sacred. Because they feed us. And we have a high respect for those animals. Every time we catch a beluga, or seal, me and my cousins will sit there and thank God, for the blessing of that hunt. Because it feeds, it gives us oil. Gives us meat. Beluga, *muktuk*, whale meat and oil or just dark meat. I know salmon is a good part of it but, to me, I think beluga and seal are more important to me.”

And, to expand on a conversation noted earlier:

JRY: “And what role do you think God would play in the success of a person fishing?” *Woman, early 50s*: “I would say, God’s role in all this is there’s gonna be lean times and there’s gonna be times of plenty. I mean, it seems to be a cycle in everything that God has created, so sometimes we have very few berries. And some summers we have lots of berries. Some summers we have few fish and I believe that God’s role is just putting that cycle.” *JRY*: “So more like a general role in things. Not like every year God is controlling the amount of berries, but it’s more the cycle he put in place?” *Woman*: “Yeah, that’s the way I see it. I would say, if a successful fisherman, if he gets very little, it’s just part of the cycle.”

Some participants also, as noted earlier, have a particularly ‘mixed’ or hybrid view of the relationship between humans, salmon, and God combining, for example, some elements of what could be considered traditional Indigenous views and also contemporary Christian-centered views. Some expressed a feeling of confusion about the relationship, even if they had considered these types of questions before (many people said – quite reasonably - that they had not thought extensively about some of these questions prior to me asking them) – e.g. that they really just didn’t know and weren’t sure how those relationships worked. And some people believed that it was a ‘combination’ of God playing a role in harvests in conjunction with the skill of the fisher.

JRY: “Do you think that God plays a role in a fisherman’s success at all?” *Woman, late 50s*: “Mostly, yeah.” *JRY*: “So if one fisherman is real successful and another one isn’t –” *Woman*: “They just sit there, the unsuccessful one set his net in the wrong place, the successful one knew where to put it already.” *JRY*: “And how do you think God plays into that, too?” *Woman*: “He just directs us to know where it’s at or, he knows. ... Because he made everything here. God made everything. Everything on this earth is for us to eat, is a blessing from God. To make us be, and serve him more. ... He’s... I don’t think he’s directing them, but they’re coming here on their own, where they hatch, it’s like that every year, some years its low because it’s a low run.”

This chapter has explored the characteristics and interconnections of views in Elim about the nature of animals (particularly salmon), human-animal relationships and human behaviors in light of those relationships, and the importance of the historical shift to Christianity (and particularly Evangelical Covenant Christianity). The analysis demonstrates the significant heterogeneity of the local discourse, beliefs, and practices on and regarding these topics; the hybridity of ideologies and discourses in the midst of historical change; the heteroglossic condition of the cosmological system in culture and context which is evidenced by these ideologies, discourses, beliefs, and practices; and the development of a dominant discourse within this heteroglossia centered around an indigenized Christian perspective which extensively co-indexically structures the local forms of subsistence, economics, human behavior, and broader cosmology. Subsequent chapters continue elements of this and a broader analysis of salmon, subsistence, cosmology, and identity by examining place in various aspects (e.g. transportation issues and local economics and the presentation of self, the importance of and changing

relationships to place and the impact of that on culture and identity, etc.), and finally identity itself in some more explicit considerations of the topic in light of many of the other issues explored throughout this work.

Chapter 6: Subsistence and place in Elim: naming, attachment, and movement

“I’d fight for Elim’s land. ... You’re not gonna take my land.” (*Man, late 40s*)

Introduction

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I discussed the history of Elim as a community, its establishment in Norton Bay, and some of the unique status of Elim lands over time. Here, I look in more detail at the ways that Elim residents connect to Tribal lands and waters and the importance of those lands and waters to the community (see also Raymond-Yakoubian 2016). The community takes great pride in the places they collectively own and care-take, and many study participants, when asked why they love Elim, refer specifically to the land and water, and the plants and animals that can be found there. Black has noted for the Yukon Flats that “[t]here is a relationship between governance and well-being [...], specifically as it relates to the management of fish and wildlife resources” (2017:153). One Elim resident (*Woman, early 60s*) shared how an Elder she was close to used to talk about a phrase in Yup’ik that meant ‘our land: the one that cares for us.’ She continued by saying that the land takes care of Elim people and that is why Elim people must care for the land.

Elim residents’ relationships to the village proper, to Tribal Corporation lands (“Tribal lands”), to the marine environment, and to the environment in general have experienced shifts over time. This is true, of course, for many other Indigenous communities across Alaska. In Elim, the most obvious representation of these changed human-environment relationships is that the majority of community members spend far less time outside of the village, and far less time moving across the landscape, than previous generations of Tribal members did¹. This chapter explores how these contemporary relationships with the land impact residents’ understanding of it and connection to it. Contemporary subsistence practices play a prominent place in these relationships. This chapter is not a quantitative assessment of participation in subsistence activities and how that relates to time spent on the land. Rather, this chapter examines what Elim residents have to say about their relationships to the environment and their attachment to place

¹ ‘Environment’ and ‘land’ are both used broadly here to refer collectively to the terrestrial and the marine environment.

(e.g. the village of Elim, Elim Native Corporation lands, the marine environment, etc.) – particularly in terms of how people generally view Elim lands, in terms of placenames (very briefly), place attachment, and movement through place (in a discussion of transportation and subsistence).

The lands of the Elim Native Corporation encompass approximately 350,000 acres surrounding the village of Elim. Elim Tribal members access these lands and associated waters for a variety of activities including subsistence, commercial fishing, recreation, research activities, solitude, and others. Their lands are often described in complementary terms with adjectives such as “bountiful” and “beautiful.” My personal attraction to Elim as a community was initially sparked by the existence of trees there (most Bering Strait communities do not have trees) and the beauty of the landscape. Many people have specific camps and other places in the landscape that are highly meaningful to them and to which they have great attachment.

Some of the lands that the Elim Native Corporation owns were only recently re-conveyed to them (the process started in 1999 with the passage of H.R. 3090, U.S. House of Representatives 1999) after extensive efforts to reclaim them. Elim chose not to participate in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and approximately 300,000 acres were conveyed to the Corporation. This was not the entirety of the lands that Elim believed they were entitled to, however (see Chapter 1). Village leaders fought for many years for title to the additional 50,000 acres. In the Act that reconveyed these lands, and based on testimony to and communications with the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Elim leaders and residents were able to communicate the “sense of loss” felt over not having ownership of those lands (HR. 3090 Section 1(F) and (G)).

During my time in the community Elim lands were frequently discussed, both informally in day-to-day conversations, as well as formally through the activities conducted for this study. As noted, many participants described the area as being bountiful, like an oasis, and having many of the animals and plants that the community relies on for subsistence. One resident summarized much of what many other participants in this study had to say about the lands and waters around Elim:

Man, late 40s: “We have it all. We have the ocean right there. We have mountains, we have trees, we have little bit of dry land up there, wetlands, hot springs, rivers. If you go someplace else, maybe they have one little mountain. Maybe they got a couple rivers. But they don’t have trees, they don’t have the mountains, they don’t have the fresh water. Where else can you go hunting out on the ocean, get seafood, come back, go over here and get something off the mainland, or go to the river and go get a duck? We can have a variety of foods right in front of us. Because it’s all around us. I can’t think of any other place that does that. People from surrounding villages, when they come here, we tell them what we have, what’s available to us, and they say, ‘Man, I’m gonna move here!’”

Man, late 60s: “We all live a subsistence way of life. We all share, respect others. Respect the land. Respect each other. That’s what I like about Elim and the surrounding villages.”

In addition to appreciating the ample resources accessible on Elim lands, the community is also concerned about ensuring that those resources are used appropriately and by individuals that share the same values as the community. This concern was made very clear on several occasions during my time in Elim. I share two examples to illustrate this.

Because I did not have access to my own vehicle, I often picked berries in a meadow just behind the village. I was told by a variety of people (including Tribal and Corporation authorities) that I ‘had permission’ to pick berries there because I was a respectful person and a member of the community (I was counted in the local census one year). I would also pick berries with other village residents in this meadow, and at other locations. Occasionally, when people would mention that they had observed me picking berries, I would be sure to check in and ask them if it was ‘okay’ for me to do so. I always received a reply that it was okay. I also often noted to various residents that I had shared my berries with this Elder or that person in the community. This is, of course, not a typical thing for a village resident to do (i.e. announce that they have been sharing). As an outsider, though, I felt the need to make it known that I was not selfish in my harvesting activities and was sharing with others, including Elders, and also embraced the ethic of sharing, which Elim subsistence values require. My sharing activities were noticed, and

commented on, by a number of residents, reinforcing my understanding of the importance of this activity, and that it was viewed as being respectful of the land and other people.

As a counterpoint to those experiences, I also observed events unfold with another non-Tribal member who resided in Elim for some of the same period that I did. This is a highly abbreviated account of what happened, in order to preserve anonymity. This person carried out many behaviors that were deemed unacceptable by the majority of the community, many of which involved inappropriate interpersonal interactions and engagements with the community. As a result of their actions, this person was specifically and in no uncertain terms disallowed from accessing and harvesting on Elim lands. This individual had not (to my knowledge) acted inappropriately on, or to, the land. However, when the community felt that an individual was disrespectful to their community, and did not share their values, they took action to prevent access to their lands and resources.

Placenames

Before addressing other topics, I will briefly discuss placenames. As part of this research I collaborated with several Elim residents to create a placename map for the lands surrounding the village (see Chapter 2). Elim has chosen to not publish this map as part of this dissertation or elsewhere. Anyone interested in viewing the map should contact the Native Village of Elim directly to ask for permission. In our collaboration, we documented over 70 Indigenous placenames (some with English translations, some without) and several English-language placenames. A number of these names are not known to younger people in the village, though the map is now displayed in the Tribal Council office and can be referred to when discussing places on the land. Language-loss is an issue of concern to Elim and very few residents consider themselves to be fluent in Yup'ik or Inupiaq, and no Indigenous language courses are currently taught at the school. Elim is concerned about documenting and maintaining the placenames that Tribal members do know, and this map was part of an effort towards that end.

Place attachment

I argue that Elim Tribal members are highly attached to Elim lands. There are several themes that were repeatedly raised by study participants regarding connections to the environment, which are discussed in turn, below. These themes are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12. Major themes regarding Elim residents’ connections to the environment.

Major themes regarding Elim residents’ connections to the environment
The beauty and abundance of Elim lands
How Elim lands connect people to their ancestors
Personal stories of time spent on the land
The relationship of the land to subsistence and resource harvesting activities
Ownership and access to tribal lands promotes freedom and self-sufficiency
Connections between well-being and the land

Man, late 50s: “What do I like about living in Elim? Well, it’s pretty, and there’s all kinds of game here, and trees...”

Woman, early 50s: “We still have a store here, but if you’re living in a city, then you just don’t have that close interaction with animals, like we do here. Because our own backyard is full of animals! (Laughs) We still have wild country back there.”

The beauty of Elim lands is often discussed in the same breath as the abundance of resources found on that land. People appreciate the beauty of the land, particularly in its undeveloped state. They also feel grateful for the animals and plants and other resources that are accessible via Elim lands. While out in the country with Elim residents, people would often make a point to show me a particular spot or a specific view and bring my attention to how beautiful it was. The name “Elim” itself comes from the Old Testament and refers to an area where the Israelites camped after their Exodus from Egypt; it was described as an oasis. It wasn’t clear if all Elim residents I

spoke to were aware of the derivation of the name, or if it factors into their perception of Elim lands.

Relationships to and knowledge of ancestors is important to many Tribal members. Elim residents are very aware of their family histories (e.g. where previous generations of family members were born, lived, camped, and hunted). Younger harvesters, too, are cognizant, to varying degrees, of Tribal history and the ancestral ways of life.

Man, late teens: “Yeah, when we’re fishing sometimes we always joke around with some of us, saying that, ‘Man, this is what our ancestors did.’ In ways that make us feel connected. But it all depends on how you respect your catch and your subsistence. You don’t abuse it, don’t waste foods or waste fish, or do it just to have fun. It’s a serious thing.”

Man, early 20s: “To live the life we’ve lived, and our ancestors have lived.” (In response to a question about why it is important to teach subsistence practices to young people.)

Woman, early 30s: “[F]ood from our lands are more important. And it’s more...carried on from long ago, how our ancestors survived.”

When I traveled outside of the village, on Elim lands, with village residents, they would often point out specific locations and share a story about an historic event, or a person that is now deceased. Those locations on the landscape hold both specific memories for individuals, as well as broader information about Tribal and Indigenous history in the region.

Woman, early 50s: “It’s really important for kids to understand where they come from, and what’s happened to them as Native people. A couple years ago, we did the book *Give Me My Father’s Body* [Harper 2000; as part of the school curriculum] and we integrated the local history with the reburial [of ancestral remains] at Atneq, Rocky Point and Kuik [River]. And that’s one history the kids won’t learn in the classroom! But also the legends. Right now we’re doing curriculum on how the first boat was made, the first net, how houses were made. And I sure like that book *People of Kauwerak*, because it really tells about the history of where my mom came

from. And those are real stories. . . . We have to understand where we've been, and where we're at, and where we're going, you know?"

As the woman above indicated, it is important for Elim youth to understand their history, which is a sentiment expressed by many residents. One significant way to learn and know this history is through experiences out on the land. Providing these experiences for young people is a priority for some adults, parents and guardians. Involving youth in repatriation and reburial activities, like described above, is one way to build connection with history and place. These experiences out on the land, though, are not as frequent as when today's adults and Elders were children. It is an ongoing concern to Elim that if young people (and others) are not out on the land, that the land and the specific places in it may have less meaning to them (e.g. Augé 1995).

Some people express of feelings of loss around subsistence in general, but also specifically around discussion of spending time at camp or out in the country, particularly related to youth. I must caveat this discussion with the fact, per this study's design, I did not formally speak to anyone under the age of 18 years for the purposes of this research. Along with a sense of loss is also a sense of inevitability – that the changes being experienced are, perhaps, unavoidable or unchangeable. It can be difficult for some parents to convince (or insist) that their children participate in subsistence activities with them. The distractions of the internet, video games, cell phones, and television were cited by many as reasons why young people (and some older people) lacked an interest in camping and subsistence. Moerlein and Carothers encountered similar concerns about youth and subsistence in northwest Alaska communities (2012).

Man, late 20s: "Yes, we're losing our culture and not many kids are following their parents or their grandparents anymore. It's only a few families in the village that do subsist. I mean, everybody get fish and all the basic stuff but not too many people do it like they used to long ago." *JRY*: "Why do you think that is?" *Man*: "Just lot of people are becoming lazy...too easy with internet, TV."

Man, late 40s: “It’s like some stranger coming out and saying, ‘No, your kids are staying with me while you go out there. They’re gonna be doing this.’ I really don’t like those [video] games at all. Unfortunately, I gotta buy them.”

Woman, early 50s: “I think if the young people had more structure they would do better.”

Conversations about ‘camp’ were prominent when discussing Elim residents’ connection to the land. Traveling to and spending time at fish camp, as well as other locations visited on a semi-regular basis (like hunting cabins, greens picking areas or other places), are an important way that people learn the land and water, and is an important part of how they develop connections to those places and feelings of responsibility towards them. The physical act of traveling there, being there, and the relationships that are enacted there, all lead to strong attachments to place (e.g. Basso 1996; Thornton 2008; Menzies 2012; Poe et al. 2016). Stories from Elders and other family members about specific places are also important and help foster connections to place.

For adults and Elders in Elim, memories of camp and being out at camp as a child are some of the best memories that people have. Universally, the participants in this study say that memories of camp are positive, warm memories. For some residents, their first conscious memory has to do with observation or participation in a subsistence activity of some sort. Some Elim residents spend extensive amounts of time at fish camp, on rivers rod-and-reeling, out in the country picking berries and greens, or hunting. Some residents only take part in these activities once or twice a year. For all study participants, those activities and that time outside of the village are highly valued.

Man, early 60s: “Yeah, they’re some of the best, I guess [memories of camp]. Even though we didn’t have electricity, we didn’t have running water, didn’t have phones or TV. Kids got in less trouble. Everybody was busy. Even us! The younger ones helped. We had to hang fish, and take care of dogs, summertime.”

Man, late 30s: “When I was growing up, we had maybe one or two boats in our whole family. We had one big one - everybody used to jump in there, and go seining! Nobody was left behind.

Even the babies had to go! And we'd be up the river all day, and we'd come home [to camp] with a boatload of fish, and the sun come up, next morning in July, I would still have two aunties cutting fish."

Man, late 20s: "The real enjoyment in life is being on the river, putting some fish up for the family and the dogs."

While these camp experiences were important, and even formative, for many study participants, some adults also discussed the changing nature of participation in subsistence activities today compared to when they were younger. Elim residents described memories of the village 'emptying out' every summer because everyone was up at camp, usually for the whole time that school was out, and how, nowadays, few people go out to camp for long periods and most do day-trips.

Man, late 50s: "Yeah, when we were younger we used to be out at camp all summer. Nowadays everybody stays at home."

Woman, early 50s: "I mean it was just what we did every summer, you know we would only come here back to Elim to wash clothes and grab supplies from the store and go back to camp. So it was like from the time school was out to the time school started, we were out there, and now a lot of the families don't do that. And even when I see some middle-aged people, like me, go out and go fish, they leave their kids at home. And it's like, how sad, that they don't carry it on and teach their kids what they need to know. I feel they need to know. ... And when we were growing up we didn't have all these video games and we didn't have TV. And I wish it was still that way around here."

Man, late 40s: "I love it at night. When there is no wind, the birds are out. It's quiet. You can really find yourself out there. And then you look back to the village and you got to go back to everything that's going on there. I don't know. I just miss camping, I really do. It's something that to me I think was like, taken away from us. I don't know why I feel that way..." *JRY:* "By all these other things?" *Man:* "Like TV and games. Video games is what really stole our kids."

For many people, their feelings about the land are related to ideas of self-sufficiency and freedom. This even includes, as the above quote shows, the freedom to be connected to the sounds of the natural world, including through sound and quiet; as Todd notes, sound is an important means by which Indigenous people connect to land and place (2014a).

There is security and pride in being able to provide for yourself and your family, in knowing where and when to find fish and seals, for example, and having the ability to go out and harvest them. That knowledge, skill and experience can be difficult to translate into other contexts and places, and contributes to Elim residents' attachments to their lands.

Man, late 30s: "As much as I hate this place, I love this place. There's like a balance of ups and downs. I've been up here most of my life; this is home. That saying is true, 'Home is where the heart is,' so, this is home. Growing up and being hunter just makes it more...you get more attached. It's that feeling of - you know what's gonna happen. We're waiting for the seasons to change and we know what's coming up, that just makes it more exciting." *JRY:* "The land, the water..." *Man:* "Yeah, we know the land, we could just tell by, even the ocean, you could just tell by looking where you're at. We know a lot of places where to go to and from you know, the knowledge and respect for the land." *JRY:* "So it would be real hard for you to go someplace else." *Man:* "Very hard, it would be...I don't imagine myself any place else."

At the same time, some study participants discussed the high cost of living in rural Alaskan villages, even for families that practice subsistence and that do not buy all their food from the store. For this person, below, and his family, these costs may lead to them having to relocate to a larger community like Nome or Anchorage.

Man, late 20s: "I'm eventually going to have to pack up and go sometime down the road, I just don't know when. Just because the cost of living is getting so much, it's going to come to a certain point where I'm going to have to move somewhere to make it. I could make it out here, but just the necessities you need to live, it's amazing how much it costs. ... I think about it a lot...that I would hate to leave, because I love the subsistence lifestyle and that's what I grew up doing and I don't want to lose it. I don't want to let my kids lose it because I have to leave and go

to a bigger city. It upsets me that way. If I have to leave, I have to leave my 28 years of what I gained knowledge doing. It's like leaving a whole life behind if I leave. That's the bum part about it. ... The fish and stuff, I would miss, going up the rivers and stuff like that. Minimal amount of traffic, you see very few people. That's the downfall of leaving Elim." *JRY*: "Why is it important to be able to pass on subsistence living to your kids?" *Man*: "It's important because it has a lot to do with what I was taught from my parents and grandparents. It would be a shame to not pass on their knowledge of what they gave me, to not pass it on to my kids. It would be a shame. Because they wouldn't know what to do when it's time to go out in the country and put stuff away. That part would be hard, to not pass the tradition on to my children. I would feel like I'm disrespecting my Elders and what they taught me. That's something I grew up learning, to respect people, to treat as you want to be treated. It would be like a disgrace to me to not show my kids what my Elders taught me, and my grandparents, because they're no longer here. That's what I grew up doing, putting away a lot of food."

The pain of this possible future decision is palpable in the quote above, as it was during other conversations with Elim residents on the challenges of village life. The desire for young people to understand the land and community values, as well as subsistence harvest knowledge, is strong in the community. Practicing subsistence is seen as a "good" way to live.

Woman, late 40s: "It's important to teach kids values. Values of the land, values of life, I guess." *JRY*: "What do you mean by values of the land?" *Woman*: "If you had no food, and then you came here, then you'd know what to eat, where to get it, when to get it, and what to do with it."

Woman, early 60s: "Mom taught me how to gather berries and how to put them away and pick greens during the spring. A lot of things I'm real thankful for about them teaching me how to do things because I'm alone now and I know what to do! It's not bragging or anything, you just have to learn that! That's why I encourage these young people, 'You gotta learn to survive out there.' There's no TV, no phone to get a hold of somebody right *now*. This modern stuff, it really spoils a lot of the young people."

Man, late 60s: “This feeling of well-being, you’re comfortable with yourself. You have a feeling that you have something for the future. I learned how to do this from my father, mother, since I was a little boy. I really learned it good because my father had me do all this while I was growing up. When they left, I still had it. And I try to pass it down to my children but they like to eat from the table. Now all the children, it seem like all the children are turning away from a subsistence lifestyle. They’re not learning the traditional way, anyway. Which is a better way to do things.” *JRY*: “Why do you think they’re turning away or not at interested?” *Man*: “I think the western lifestyle is stronger, because they own iPods, TV, electricity like we have today. When I was growing up, we had to fish in order to live. It was our lifestyle, it was the way that we make money to survive, and our people fished all summer to pay off their bills at a real low price back then. But back then everything was cheaper.”

Woman, late 40s (different person than above): “Because they can do it for themselves when they get older. We can’t rely on stores forever. Prices could go so high that you can’t even afford them and then pretty soon you gotta rely on subsistence, so I try to teach them the basics so that when I’m not around, and when they get it [subsistence foods], they know what to do with it.”

Freedom of movement is very important to many Elim residents. Elim lands, and full and unimpeded access to them, provide people with means to live the way they choose, to carry on traditions, to support themselves and the community.

Man, late 40s: “What I like about Elim is there are no fences on our land. They can just go anywhere. You don’t have to go around no fence, you don’t have to have permission, you just go. Simply go get what you want, come home, leave it as it is. So that maybe the next year the animals will be there again. It’s what I love about it.”

People’s well-being can be greatly affected by connection to subsistence activities and the land. This also extends to foods from the land and having the opportunity to consume them. People describe feeling good when they are out on the land and water and feeling good when they consume subsistence foods. Subsistence foods are considered to be healthier than store foods. You get exercise and fresh air when you harvest them, and they are unprocessed and don’t

contain harmful ingredients². Native foods are said to fill you up more than store foods, and to keep you full longer. As some of the quotes shared here have expressed, Elim residents find great joy and happiness in spending time out on their lands, as well as in harvesting subsistence foods.

JRY: “Do you think you feel any differently when you eat Native foods, as opposed to store foods?” *Man, early 20s*: “Feel more ... could almost feel more alive, right?!”

Man, early 20s (different person than above): “We eat [Native food] with family, so it brings the family together! Most times we have big dinners; everybody brings something. Maybe I’d bring some dried fish, and my mom and dad would make some *muktuk*, and maybe my auntie would bring some seal oil.”

Man, early 60s: “...don’t waste, it’s food that will make you grow, make you happy.”

Man, middle-aged: “... you gotta eat something good that tastes good. That makes you feel good, eating something good. I like to eat salmon and I eat it a lot.”

Woman, late 50s: “Yeah. I, think it’s a part of me, salmon. I like to go and get it because it makes me happy to get it. And we all love it.”

Woman, late 70s: “I just love camping though, it’s good for your health. ... Lots of fresh air, eat outside, eat fish any old way. ... I sure enjoy camping. Seem like you get well when you go to Moses Point. That’s what a lot of people say, you go up there and you get well, get all your fresh air, but nowadays I can’t be where it’s damp.”

² Elim residents, like many harvesters of wild foods in the Arctic, have concerns about pollution and its effects on the foods they harvest and an interest in testing and research done about contaminants in Eskimo foods (e.g. Jewett and Duffy 2007). But this concern is separate from their discussion of unhealthy processing and ingredients found in store-bought foods. Residents are also concerned about the prospect of hatcheries in the region and the impacts they may have on wild salmon stocks (Swanson 2018 and Swanson et al. 2018, for example, discuss the potential negative impacts of hatchers on wild fisheries.)

Elim is facing potentially harmful mining activities just outside the boundary of their Tribal lands (see Ruckel 2014). A Canadian mineral exploration company has been exploring for uranium adjacent to Elim lands and near the headwaters of an important river, the *Tupuktuliq* (Tubuktulik River). Many Elim residents have expressed great concern about the potential for uranium mining because of concerns over the health of their lands and waters (including knowledge of the toxic effects of such mining elsewhere). The group Elim Students Against Uranium have been very active in communicating community concerns and desires related to preventing uranium development.

Man, late teens: “And then we’re protective of that [Tubuktulik River] because it leads into our Norton Sound. What’s gonna happen when they start mining, and all the fish, and pretty soon our other fish, our other mammals in the Norton Sound get that radiation? We got to protect our lands. ... Take care of the land, [it will] take care of you.”

Man, late 40s: “The other thing is that uranium mine. If they get that thing going good and they get a leak, it’s gonna kill two of our major rivers. We know that for sure. ... If it gets in the river it’s gonna get out in the ocean. And then we’ll start having things die all along the coast. And if this place dies out, I don’t think anybody wants to relocate anywhere. I wouldn’t be able to find another place like this. Maybe, but, wouldn’t be the same.”

Woman, early 50s: “I’m very against uranium mining. Because it’s not good for the land...and what’s not good for the land isn’t good for the animals.”

Woman, late 40s: “I really support going against that mine that’s going to be up there, that uranium mine, because it will affect Tubuktulik. And Tubuktulik, I mean if you get radioactive stuff going down there, man, you’ll just kill everything, everything in the ocean, the fish is gone, and then it goes down. And pretty soon you get the clams, shrimp, beluga. It will just kill everything. The greens, the caribou – it’ll affect the caribou.”

In response to exploration and the possibility of a uranium mine, and in efforts to protect their lands, Elim residents have protested during the Iditarod (AJC 2008), the Tribe has started a

program that monitors water quality and collects other data on the Tubuktulik River, and residents have presented on this topic and their concerns at many different conferences and gatherings, including to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

The literature about place (and space) is vast and crosses several disciplines. There are several authors whose work I find particularly relevant to a discussion of Elim's relationship to the environment, which are discussed below.

Yi-Fu Tuan, a human geographer, has contributed a great deal to the understanding and theorizing of "place" (e.g. 1974, 1977, 1993). Tuan's concept of "topophilia" is defined as "the affective bond between people and place or setting" and includes "all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment" (1974:4, 51). Tuan identifies many ways that topophilia can arise, such as visual pleasure, enjoyable physical contact, ability to invoke the past (nostalgia), pride of ownership or creation, means of gaining a livelihood, and animal health and vitality (Tuan 1974:92-112, 247). Low has, similarly, identified six 'types of relationships' between people and land or places, which are very similar to Tuan's themes (1992:166). Some authors have discussed the difficulty or impossibility of determining which factors lead to the very complex attachments that humans have to places (e.g. Altman and Low 1992; Proshansky et al. 1983; Riley 1992), as it is likely that a combination of factors are important, and even different ones at different times. As I have discussed elsewhere, topophilia can also arise through more 'negative' affiliations. For example, if a place is threatened, it may heighten the topophilia a person or group experiences towards a place (Raymond-Yakoubian 2002). Elim residents identified all of the reasons above as drivers of their affection for or attachment to Elim lands and specific places on Elim lands, including the 'threatened' nature of the lands (as a result of uranium exploration and potential development).

Tuan also describes "aesthetic" responses to the environment and how, if we find a place visually appealing, we may become more attached to it (Tuan 1974:93). This aligns closely with the many comments from Elim residents about how visually appealing they find Elim lands to be. Additionally, Elim residents talk about the quiet and peaceful nature of being out in the country,

including the sounds that you hear (and don't hear) out there. These things are pleasing to people and are missed when they spending time in the 'noisy' village (e.g. Tuan 1993:70-95).

Study participants' love of and attachment to Elim lands is also connected to another of Tuan's themes: "awareness of the past is an important element in the love of place" (1974:99).

Connection to specific places and landscapes, for many Elim residents, is derived in part from their connections to both known and unknown ancestors, and to perceptions of a less complicated past where human-environment-animal relationships were prominent in people's lives. Additionally, Tuan discusses an association between topophilia and "religious love" and "hierophany" (1974:124, 146). As is discussed in more detail in the chapter on Spirituality, subsistence practices are highly connected to spirituality. These practices and the relationships that are associated with them are, in many cases, sacred for Elim residents, and are connected to a Christian God and/or animal spirits.

Within anthropology, Low, and others, have taken up the challenge of specifically addressing concepts of place through the lens of "place attachment" (Low 1992). Place attachment, similar to topophilia, is defined as "the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment" (Low 1992:165), and which can also be described as a type of "people-place bonding" (Altman and Low 1992:4). Attachments to place and feelings of topophilia are, as Geertz has separately described, unavoidable.

"For it is still the case that no one lives in the world in general. Everybody, even the exiled, the drifting, the diasporic, or the perpetually moving, lives in some confined and limited stretch of it – 'the world around here.' The sense of interconnectedness imposed on us by the mass media, by rapid travel and by long-distance communication obscured this more than a little" (1996:262).

Similarly, Cooper Marcus has noted that,

“[f]eelings occur in space and inevitably become associated with various highly charged places; feelings cannot occur ‘out of space’ any more than they can occur ‘out of time.’ Thus, any discussion of emotion and place must return to the observation that the two are inexplicably connected, not in a causal relationship, but in a transactional exchange, unique to each person” (1992:111).

While the ‘real’ world and real places that we each individually live in and interact with can be the foundation of our attachments, so can the ‘imaginary.’ As noted above, both known and unknown ancestors, and people’s connection to them through the land, are important. As Riley has described, however, “imagined landscapes” and memories can also play a role in place attachment (1992:20-21). Additionally, I would add that ‘imagined memories’ may also play a role in the attachments that Elim residents (and others) have with their lands. By this, I do not mean that people have invented memories, or purposefully distorted information, but rather that the Traditional Knowledge, family histories, and other important stories about the past, have led to an imagined history or ‘memory’ of the past, which leads to feelings of attachment. It is natural, in the course of listening to stories or considering other information about ancestors and the past, to think about and imagine what lives were like, how people traveled, how they lived on the land, and so on. These ‘imaginings’ can be powerful ways to connect to both ancestors and the lands that they used.

As Blu has noted, in a different context, “...movement through space connotes well-being” (1996:215). Elim residents’ movement through the spaces and places that comprise their tribal lands connotes well-being in that one is able to access to the land, has freedom of movement, can harvest and eat food from it, can get physical exercise, can receive respite from the tumult of village life, make spiritual connections, and so on. In other words, movement through and across Tribal lands can greatly improve or contribute to well-being.

All of these ‘factors,’ ‘themes,’ and experiences are important to the formation and maintenance of place attachments. Cooper Marcus expresses the complicated nature of these attachments: “the subtle but powerful blending of place, object, and feeling is so complex, so personal, that it is unlikely that the process will ever be fully explained” (1992:111).

Transportation and subsistence

Transportation is a critical component of subsistence activities for all subsistence practitioners, including Elim residents. As such, it is a crucial element of Elim residents' senses of and connections to place, and as a significant form of movement in and through place(s) it creates kinetic linkages between subsistence, place, affect, well-being, and identity.

Subsistence activities may take place directly in the village, such as some greens and berry gathering; some may take place within a few miles of the community, accessible from Elim's one road or via trails; and some activities may take place tens of miles from the village, on the land and rivers or in the ocean. The types of transportation used by Elim residents in the course of subsistence activities include walking, four-wheelers, snowmachines, trucks, vans, cars, rowed boats, and boats with outboard motors. In rarer instances, small planes have also been used to access more distant areas. No Elim residents are currently using dog-teams for transportation.

The accessibility of subsistence resources is often noted by Elim residents, and other region residents (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian 2013; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a; Moerlein and Carothers 2012), as a limiting factor in their harvest activities. Access to resources may be limited by a variety of things, including lack of transportation. Other limiting factors include wage employment that ties an individual to the village, child care, health issues, lack of the necessary equipment (e.g., nets or a gun), climate change, and other factors, or a combination of factors. For most Elim residents, subsistence foods are preferred for nutritional, taste, cultural, spiritual, and economic reasons. When people cannot access the resources that they need or want, they may not be able to harvest enough and may have to rely on store-bought foods and/or the sharing of subsistence or store foods by other community members. The undesirability of some of these outcomes is determined on an individual level.

In the past, and prior to the introduction of mechanized vehicles, all subsistence activities were carried out under human and animal power. People walked to the various camps they used throughout the year, boats were paddled, poled, dragged or lined, and dogs pulled sleds, carried packs and helped pull boats. The conduct of subsistence activities gradually changed over time

as small-horsepower motors, snowmachines, and other mechanized transportation methods were introduced into rural Alaska, along with other social and cultural changes. The ancestors of contemporary Elim residents, like people across Alaska, adapted to these technological changes by adopting what was most useful to them, what they could afford, and what was available. This is an ongoing process today.

In comparison to most other villages in the Bering Strait region, Elim is unique in that it has a road leading away from the village out to Moses Point and a major river in the area where a fish camp and many fishing activities take place. This road is approximately 7 miles long. Between Elim and the terminus of the road is also another fish camp area, at Iron Creek, approximately 3 miles from Elim. The Elim road is in constant use during the summer months as individuals and families travel back and forth to Moses Point for subsistence and commercial fishing activities, to pick berries, or just to see what is going on outside of the village. The road is seen in both positive and negative ways by residents. Among other things, there have been tragic accidents on the road, but it has also improved access to some areas for Tribal members.

Whether or not an individual or household owns or has access to certain types of transportation is a major factor in their level of participation in subsistence activities. The amount and type of vehicles is also important. Having access to one type of vehicle, e.g. just a four-wheeler, facilitates access to a variety of subsistence resources and harvest locations, but also limits the types of subsistence activities that will be carried out. For example, to go caribou hunting today, snowmachines are used. So, even if someone owns a four-wheeler, they will (usually) not be able to use that vehicle to go caribou hunting, though they may use it to go berry and greens picking, to access areas where they rod-and-reel for salmon, and even to access ice-fishing areas during the winter. Many individuals feel the need to own a boat and motor, four-wheeler, and snowmachine to be able to fully participate in the yearly round of subsistence activities.

Wage employment is seen by some as necessary to obtaining and/or maintaining their access to requisite transportation. At the same time, wage employment can also be seen as a barrier to carrying out subsistence activities because of the ways that it ties a person to being in the village. Employment also does not provide a guarantee that an individual or household will have

sufficient funds for a vehicle or for gas to use it. Often times, when speaking to someone with a job, they would indicate that the job restricts their subsistence activities, and when speaking with someone without a job, they believe that if they had a job they would have better access to transportation, which would increase their participation in subsistence. Both situations provide positives and negatives from the perspective of subsistence practitioners.

Man, early 40s: “In order for me to get out in the country I probably need a vehicle or gas in order to get out there. So I have to work to get the gas for the vehicle, to get out into the country.”

Woman, late 20s: “We never pick too much this year [berries]. I would be stuck at work, and... whatever. We’d have no money for gas, or... something!”

Man, early 60s: “Yeah, if our four-wheeler was running I know we’d have dry chum already.”

All types of vehicles are extremely expensive to get to Elim. They are typically delivered by barge, though some smaller vehicles can be delivered by plane. Some individuals may also purchase a vehicle in Nome, such as a snowmachine or boat, and then drive them back to Elim. Once vehicles are in Elim, there are no formal repair shops to do maintenance or repair. This type of work is done by individual owners or by other skilled residents who may charge cash or barter for their services. All replacement parts must be ordered, as well.

The price of gasoline (and motor oil) is also a limiting factor for some individuals (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian 2009a, 2009b). In Elim, the price of gas is partly subsidized by the Native Village of Elim IRA in an effort to keep it affordable to residents (not all villages are in this situation). In recent years the price has remained around \$4.00/gallon. The cost of gas has an impact on many aspects of subsistence, such as how frequently a vehicle can be taken out and the distance that can be traveled. The price can also limit when people purchase gas. For example, towards the end of the month households may have less cash on hand and therefore may not be able to buy gas at that time – even if it is an ideal time to carry out certain subsistence activities.

Some project participants also discussed making difficult decisions about whether or not to pay certain bills or to buy gas (or other supplies) needed to go harvest subsistence foods.

Woman, early 50s: “Yeah, like more towards the end of the month, when we’re low on money, the price of gas is too high. We just don’t go because of that.”

Man, early 60s: “The thing is, you need gas! Gas and shells! That’s what you need. And sometimes you have to wait a whole month before... and by the time that month come around, finally be able to buy something... It’s too late! Yeah. Gotta wait ‘til next year!”

The price of gas has also been discussed by Elim residents as a reason why some individuals may choose to sell Native foods (see Chapter 3 for more details). For example, if gas is not affordable for a particular person, they may sell some Native foods they have in order to obtain gas money, so that they can harvest additional foods (or purchase food or other goods or services). As discussed in Chapter 3, some people do not approve of the selling of Native foods except in very particular circumstances, which for some includes selling foods so that gas for subsistence activities can be purchased. The actual price for particular foods may also be ‘set’ by the price of gas or how much gas a person needs. Some residents have commented that the prices being (informally) advertised for some subsistence foods were much too high, in their opinion, but that it was probably because of the cost of gas.

This high cost of vehicles, maintenance, gas and motor oil can put stress on harvesters in multiple ways. People may not be able to go out as frequently as they want or need, may not be able to go as far out in the country or on the ocean as they would like (or as needed to find animals), and may have to make decisions about who they are able (and not able) to bring with them. This has the possibility of restricting the experience of younger people, or the access of people of any age, to specific resources and experiences.

As a researcher wanting to observe and participate in subsistence activities, I approached many residents on different occasions to see if I could “follow” along with people when they were doing subsistence activities. I was very fortunate that quite a few residents generously allowed

me to travel with them and observe and/or participate in their activities. Many times, though, I was turned down because there wasn't enough space for an extra person, or because a vehicle had broken down, or because people decided they couldn't afford gas or other materials (I always offered to help pay for fuel any time I traveled). These same challenges are faced by Elim residents with no transportation of their own. One difference, however, is that I was a persistent, ever-questioning researcher, with access to funds to purchase fuel – and not all residents have that luxury.

Harvesters also discussed their anxiety about having to be successful on every trip in order to recover the cost of the trip. Some people have reported making difficult decisions about where to spend their money. For example, one individual discussed whether it was “worth it” or not to go out hunting when they may not be successful, and that perhaps their money was better (or more safely) spent on store food, rather than gas.

Woman, late 50s: “I mean, when you go, you make sure you get as much as you could.”

Man, late 20s: “Like nowadays, if you're going to buy gas, you gotta catch something if you're going to go do it, otherwise you just waste your money. ... More pressure to come home with something. You can't just get up and go any time. If the fuel was cheaper you'd be able to do that. It always be pretty stressful when you don't come home with much and you burn, like, 20-30 gallons of gas. It's kind of tough.”

Man, late 20s: “I noticed because of that price [of gas] that ... people started gettin' a little edgy about who they take hunting, and stuff like that. (Pause) Because it feels...I mean...if you didn't have gas to go follow somebody hunting, they wouldn't take you.”

Several Tribes in the Bering Strait region have a limited amount of funds available to Tribal members to help cover the cost of subsistence activities. For example, a hunter can provide receipts for gas or ammunition and the Tribe will, on a case-by-case basis, reimburse all or some of the costs. Elim does not yet have a program like this.

Any reductions to harvest capability, due to any cause (e.g. unfavorable weather, change in animal migrations, loss of a hunter, mechanical breakdowns, etc.), can have widespread consequences. For example, just one vehicle being out of commission can have a large impact on the household that owns it, and potentially many other households. While vehicle-sharing is not a preferred practice in Elim, it does happen, especially between close family members. One vehicle may be used by multiple related households to harvest foods. Food harvested by the owner or household with a vehicle is also often commonly shared (e.g. Magdanz et al. 2007; Wolfe et al. 2009). If an individual or household no longer has a vehicle, they may not be able to harvest subsistence foods to share, and they will not be able to lend their vehicle to others to go harvest.

Boats being out of commission can be particularly difficult, because they can carry so many people and are used to harvest large marine mammals. For example, the outboard motor of one hunter was broken down during one recent spring and the boat could not be used for hunting. That boat typically carried a marine mammal hunting crew of several men. Some of the men from this crew were able to join other crews, but not all were. The men without crews could not go hunting. While the exact impact of the temporary loss of this boat was not directly documented, some hunters did discuss the fact that they personally (and their families) had less subsistence food available to them because of the situation.

The use of vehicles to “get out into the country” for purely or mostly recreational purposes is also popular in Elim, particularly among young people. “Going out riding” or otherwise touring the country is an activity that many Elim residents find pleasurable. Often times, but not always, people combine this “riding around” with at least some minimal level of subsistence activity, like spending a little bit of time rod-and-reeling for a salmon or picking some berries. Enjoyment from being out in the country, whether or not a person is conducting subsistence activities, has been noted by many Elim residents of all ages, and I conjecture that this is an important part of Elim residents’ connection to their Tribal lands (as illustrated earlier in this chapter). Time out in the country has many benefits for people ranging from increasing their sense of personal well-being, to learning more about the landscape, to adding to the collective observations of the land

and water. This type of information (landscape and marinescape observations) are crucial to the building and maintenance of community knowledge, including Traditional Knowledge.

While all subsistence activities took place strictly under human or animal power in the past, mechanized vehicles are seen by many as a necessity today. During my time in Elim, I never saw individuals walking out to go fishing, though heard of perhaps two instances of people doing so at a creek within two miles of the village. People did occasionally walk to the tundra meadow along the road (still within the village) or other nearby areas, to go pick blueberries. And on two occasions, I picked greens within the village with other Elim residents.

It seems to be an obvious or ‘reasonable’ suggestion that people who do not have vehicular transportation, but are physically able to, would walk to camp and fish at Moses Point or at Iron Creek. But, as noted, in the author’s experience, this does not happen (and was not mentioned by any of the research participants as something they had done). When asked, several residents noted that it was technically possible to walk to camp or other areas, but that it was silly or they had never done it.

Woman, late 40s: “I could do it like the olden days and walk from here to there! (laughs)”

Man, early 20s: “...on our regular trip, we need to buy gas, we need money, we need shells. Unless we go way back, and try to do it how they [i.e. ancestors] did it. And people just don’t have the...courage, or the...energy, or something, just to go without no resources, that we have today. Maybe on a trapping day! Probably could walk, and just go by yourself! Maybe take a knife, or something.”

Man, early 60s: “Because they don’t wanna be seen walking up to camp. That’s how it was long ago; we go by sailboat, or I can even remember our dogs pulling us along the river, you know, in a harness, and a long line. ... But it’s, see, subsistence is different nowadays, and they don’t wanna be seen walking the whole ways [to camp]. They’d have to drag their things and walk along. Everybody wants to use a boat and motor, or snowmobile and gas. But that’s what they

have to learn - what they don't think about is you have to have a part-time job, just to get those, nowadays.”

As the last quote above implies, some people may feel shame or embarrassment in walking to camp, or a fishing area, because it indicates that they cannot afford vehicles. Being in circumstances that generate feelings of shame or embarrassment are painful for people and lead some to act in ways to preserve their sense of self (e.g. Goffman [1959] 1973, “impression management”). Some individuals have also expressed embarrassment or even resentment about being in a position where they could have to ask people for rides out into the country. Others hope that they will be offered a ride and, if they are, will purchase some gas to help defray the cost (but would be reluctant to directly ask for a ride). While some people feel this way, and may not participate in some subsistence activities as a result, others feel that they simply must have a vehicle and all the accouterments of their more well-off neighbors and relatives in order to participate in subsistence.

As discussed, being without transportation is cited as a reason that people cannot harvest as much subsistence foods as they need or want. This is an issue in terms of preferences for certain foods, as well as in terms of nutrition. When it comes to the ‘rural diet,’ it is recognized by village residents, as well as medical and nutritional experts, that diets with a higher amount of traditional foods are more healthy than those with high amounts of western or store-bought foods (e.g. Johnson et al. 2009) (though there are concerns about potential contaminants in some subsistence foods). Many Elim residents wish that they could have a higher amount of subsistence foods in their diet, and some expressed the desire to have 100 percent of their diet (or close to it) consist of subsistence foods. When asked what is preventing them from achieving their desired mix of subsistence and store-bought foods, many identified lack of transportation as a major barrier.

Man, late 40s: “This year, I didn't get any fish because I have no Honda, you know, ATV? So I was unable to put any away.”

JRY: “What percentage of your diet do you think would be ideal to be subsistence foods?” *Man, late 20s*: “Well...if I could, I would be a hundred percent, alright!” *JRY*: “And what do you think is preventing you from being able to do something like that?” *Man*: “Jobs, and the transportation and the fuel to get there.”

People without transport depend on others to share food, or to share transportation (i.e. bring them out). Many people do not like this feeling of being dependent. In the past, it was more common to share transportation and “no one” would be left behind that wanted to go (and even those who may not have wanted to go were required to); for example, anyone who could fit into a boat would be welcome. Some Elim residents feel that others do not share transportation as freely as they should, and as was done in the past. For example, one participant said the following in reference to young people:

Woman, early 30s: “Probably [they would do more subsistence] if they had someone to take them. Maybe like if they had somebody that would have a boat and stuff and would want to have time to bring them. But I kind of think people are, I mean like, if they get paid they’ll do it. But voluntarily, I kind of don’t think they would have time. I mean that’s how I feel anyway.”

Some residents, however, have frequently stated that they are willing to take young people if they have room in their boats.

Woman, late 50s: “You know there’s a lot of kids here in Elim that say they don’t have chances to go out and harvest anything. So I was telling them, ‘Lot of us go out, you could always come on.’ Some of them would ask alright, to come along, to go like pick berries, or get some fish.”

Because of the nature of subsistence today, activities are more ‘dispersed,’ meaning, for example, that there is not an entire camp full of people fishing and processing fish for weeks on end in the same general location. Rather, individual families or small groups travel out on their own schedule to try and harvest salmon. This may be, in part, because one particular method of salmon fishing is less common today than in the past: seining. Seining requires multiple people to be done effectively and families would often work together to do the seining and process the

catch (which could be several hundred fish per seine). Seining is less frequently done in recent times. Elim residents have often commented that people used to “work together” more often in the past. This encompassed everything from communally traveling together to harvesting and processing together.

It was mentioned above that some individuals sell Native foods in order to obtain gas money. In some cases lower rates of sharing (overall, or attributed to specific people) has been associated, by Elim residents, with the high cost of fuel and other things needed for hunting, for example. When a beluga hunt is successful, but not a lot of the harvest is shared, people will often attribute that to it being so expensive to hunt belugas (i.e. in terms of needing a boat, motor, gas, oil, guns, ammunition, food while out hunting, etc.). Some Elim residents have pointed to these costs as a reason why a traditional beluga feast happens only sporadically now. In the past, after the first successful beluga hunt of the year, a community feast would always be held on the beach in front of Elim. Beluga would be butchered, cooked and distributed community-wide on the beach by hunters. This gathering does not always occur now.

Woman, late 50s: “Because, I think it’s the money part too, you know. You have to buy the gas, and buy the grub, to go out there to get them [beluga], buy the shells, make your harpoon.”

Man, early 50s: “I don't have my own boat or Honda so my sisters always bring me what they have. I'm very fortunate to have my sisters and brothers here.”

Sharing is an important traditional cultural value to Elim residents (as discussed in Chapter 3), and extends beyond the typical sharing of Native food items. Sharing of the costs of subsistence is something that is done to varying degrees by different individuals and households in Elim. For example, people may pool money to buy gas, or consolidate already-purchased gas, to fund a hunting trip. Or, individuals may “sponsor” a hunter or hunting crew by buying gas, ammunition or other things they need, and/or lending equipment in return for a share of the catch. This pooling of financial resources does not always happen, though.

Man, late 30s: “We don’t go as far [because of the price of gas]. ... Still go out, though! Yeah, when we go out everybody buys ten gallons each ... like, when there’s three of us, everybody will buy ten gallons. ... But it pays for itself, if you get something, like moose or caribou, or ... yeah! You don’t have to go to the store and buy chicken, or pork, or beef...”

Man, late 60s: “I also sponsor a hunter – for caribou.” *JRY:* “And what’s involved in that?”

Man: “Buying gas, using my snowmachine, my sled. We go half-and-half [on the catch].”

Woman, late 40s: “It’ll be the first time I’ve been without him [the hunter of the household] in the winter. I’d probably be able to pitch in with one of the hunters and get gas, you know, if they go hunting. And that way I can get some meat. Of course if I had my own snowmachine I’d go with them, but that would be the only way I could get it right now. ... Yeah, some people do. The ones that don’t have transportation to go get them. They do give the hunters gas so they can get something back.”

Woman, late 20s: “Yeah, usually he goes whenever they [caribou] come close, but haven’t been able to lately because we don’t have a snowmachine. So he’ll go with his dad’s snowmachine, and he gives most of it to his dad, because he used the snowmachine. We get part of it.”

Some people ascribed changes to sharing practices to the price of gas and motor oil, and the cost of doing subsistence in general. Some research participants felt that some individuals were not sharing as much of their catch as in the past, and that this was directly or partly related to the cost of conducting subsistence. Research participants also discussed the importance of sharing Native foods with people who lack transportation, with people who cannot go out to harvest foods because of medical issues, and with Elders who are no longer able to participate in subsistence.

Participation in subsistence activities and eating subsistence foods are important to the well-being of Elim residents. People who lack transportation really miss being able to go out into the country like most did when they either previously had access to transportation, or when they were children and traveling with their family. As noted, individuals without transportation often rely on others to offer to take them out into the country.

Woman, late 30s: “My cousin went out fishing, and she got quite a few trout and whitefish, and she brought some *big* sized trouts over. And I wanted to go so bad. ... She said, ‘Ohhh, I’ll see about tomorrow!’ And I said, ‘Let me know, man, I’ll go out there and go fish with you!’ I miss being out there.”

Woman, late 70s: “We used to haul our stuff down to go camping. Then, they use sticks and oar and sail just little bit, and we used to walk the dogs over the hill. And we’d stay when we go up there. We’d stay up there all summer, then we’d come down. ... Lots of fun.”

Woman, late 30s (different person than above): “[A particular person was] nice enough to take us to Kuik, and go berry picking ... with my daughter, and that was the only time I went! And that was nice!”

The road from Elim to Moses Point plays a large role in the subsistence activities carried out by the community, and is recognized as unique by most Elim residents. Residents predominantly consider it a positive feature of their community. The road is viewed as providing important access to subsistence resources. Many residents rod-and-reel for salmon at Moses Point. Others store their boats there in the summer and then go to camp or on day trips up various rivers. Storing a boat at Moses Point is considered a cost-saving measure since you do not have to travel by boat from Elim to go fishing (though you still must drive to Moses Point to access the boat, and still must cross the mouth of the river to get to the actual fish camp at Moses Point).

Camping was formerly an important part of conducting subsistence activities but because of the speed and ease provided by motorized vehicles and the Elim road, many harvest activities now take place on day trips. This may potentially seem counter-intuitive; people have easier and faster access to camp and harvest locations, but spend less time there than in the past. It appears, however, that *because* Elim has a road out to a major camp, and because residents have four-wheelers and powerful outboards, this has led to people doing day trips and not staying out for long periods of time. Additionally, people value flexibility in the timing of their subsistence activities, which can be limited (or perceived to be) if there are non-nuclear or extended family

(or others) traveling with them. There are also other potential causes for not camping, of course, such as requirements to be in the village for wage employment.

Woman, early 60s: “But they go back and forth quite a bit now that they have four-wheelers and cars. And if they have a boat it’s more easier for them to come and go. A long time ago I remember oaring from here [Elim] with a big boat and we used to oar to camp! You notice how far it is up there? And it never fazed me or anything. It was a way of living.”

One of the consequences of not spending extended periods of time at camp is that young people get less experience, and potentially less instruction, than they did in the past (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian 2009a). Time spent at camp is important for the development of various skills associated with subsistence living and general self-sufficiency. Time at camp was also important for the passing on of Traditional Knowledge through observation, instruction and storytelling (not just harvest and processing information, but traditional stories, values, etc.). Travel to and from, and around, camp and other harvest areas is also an important way that young people learn about the land, geographic landmarks, specific harvest areas, history and place names, and other important information.

Transportation-related issues play an important part in the subsistence practices of Elim residents. Transportation can cause great anxiety for people that lack it, as well as for people who have vehicles because of the expense of operating and maintaining them and the knowledge that people are depending on them. People or households with reliable transportation, and who harvest large amounts of resources, are also very important in the sharing network of Elim. Transportation issues are a large part of the complex decision making process related to subsistence that Elim residents must regularly consider, and whose results have far-reaching impacts in the community.

This discussion of transportation in Elim is not meant as an evaluation of technology itself, but rather as a discussion of the ways in which village residents view transportation issues in relation to their subsistence, and suggestive of ways in which transportation is important to understand in terms of connections between subsistence, identity, and affect. Changes in transportation

technology can also change how people occupy and engage the land and engage animals which, in some circumstances, can lead unintended ecological consequences (e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015:127-128, 135-138; Wolfe and Spaeder 2009:366-367). Issues related to the adoption of new technologies, snowmachines for example, has long been discussed in Alaskan anthropology (e.g. Anderson 1992; Bodenhorn 2000b, 2000/2001; Braund and Langdon 2011; Hall 1971, Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2014; see also Pelto 1973). The day-to-day choices that individuals and families must make regarding subsistence and transportation, however, have not been thoroughly studied or discussed. This chapter provides insight into the ways that access, or lack of access, to transportation may impact food choices, physical activity, connections to and knowledge about the landscape, self-image, human-animal relationships, and skill development among young people.

Chapter 7: Subsistence, salmon, and identity in Elim

“I wouldn’t know how to describe who I am, without having that subsistence of salmon. I wouldn’t know how to define who I am. Because, I like to hunt, I like to put away food, I like to eat it. I like to help out with it. You know without those, take that out of the picture, and I would just mainly be like technology, TV, money, bad habits, I don’t know what else. ... Without those things [subsistence] it doesn’t make you a bad person, you know.” *JRY*: “Just a different person.” *Man*: “Yeah, just a different person.” (*Man, late teens*)

In this chapter I will first review the concept of identity in anthropology and related fields as it relates to two thematic areas (the individual and the group, and contents and boundaries); I will then narrow the focus to an examination of identity in the Eskimo world, and finally further narrow this to a discussion of subsistence and identity in Elim.

Regarding the first of these endeavors, the focus on the concept of identity will here be both broader and narrower than simply 'identity.' It will be broader in that a number of other closely-related concepts and terms – such as subjectivity, intersubjectivity, self(hood), person(hood), ethnicity, etc. – and the literature on them must be examined in order to consider identity. This is not only because these concepts are conceptually related to identity, but also because of conceptual overlap in the research as well as taxonomic looseness (for discussion see Banks 1996; Cohen 1993a, 1994, 2000; Jackson 1998; La Fontaine 1996; Ortnor 2006). It will be narrower in that these concepts and their literature, including just that of 'identity' itself, is far too broad to meaningfully engage in a summary fashion. Therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation, a particular aspect of, or perspective on, identity will be the focus here: identity as the defining characteristics and experiences that are distinctive of and essential to an individual or group. This is not presented as a comprehensive definition of identity nor does it entail a view that this is the only aspect of or perspective on the concept. Additionally, this chapter, rather than making precise taxonomic distinctions amongst the above-mentioned concepts, will examine and engage particular insights from previous works which will be taken here to be broadly identity-related and useful for the task at hand (e.g. Banks 1996; Barth 1969; Biehl et al. 2007a;

Carrithers et al. 1996; Caulkins 2001; Cohen 1994).

Identity's conceptual complexity, diversity, and close relationship to other notions has made writing and thinking about identity and these other concepts within anthropology a task "fraught with difficulties" (Morris 1994:x), and "a philosophical and conceptual 'minefield'" (Ingold in Morris 1994:x). The field of discussion is full of conceptual disorder (Biehl et al. 2007b), lacking definitions (R. Cohen 1978:385), has arbitrary distinctions (Cohen 1994:1-22), and is infused with variability and heterogeneity (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007). This is the case because, as many identity theorists have noted, identities and selves are often multiple and fractured. However, the potential significance, and analytic rewards, are high for investigations into identity. As Cohen has noted, the issue of personal and group identity, and by extension the individual and society, gets at a central issue within anthropology – "how to associate the part and the whole" (Cohen 1982:14). Ortner's observation about the importance of examining subjectivity in anthropology is also germane to identity: "it is a major dimension of human existence," key to our understandings because of the need to comprehend structures of power and how subjects "act on the world even as they are acted upon" (2006:110).

My perspective on identity that will be focused on for this chapter (see above) necessarily builds off of work which calls for more complex understandings of identity in two main ways. The first is that which addresses and recognizes a complexity in the relationship between the individual and the group. The second is through an engagement for 'identity' those insights in the literature on ethnicity and other concepts which have recognized the importance of contents and boundaries. These two broad areas of analysis will frame the first review section below. That will be followed by a discussion of the anthropological treatment of identity in relation to the Eskimo world.

The individual and the group

As noted above, my broader review of identity theory focuses on the aspect of, or perspective on, identity as the defining characteristics and the experiences that are taken to be distinctive of and essential to an individual or group. I will first focus, in this section, on issues within the latter

element of this – specifically, the relationship between the individual and the group, which has been an important focus in the development of identity theory. Subsequently, I will focus on the former element, on the issue of contents and boundaries, and a framing of areas of research into identity which bear centrally on the issues of identity definition, characteristics, distinction, and differentiation.

Within the literature on identity, the question of the mutual interactions between individuals and society is essentially one of structure and agency. Is society the prime driver in defining identities, or do individuals (based in their identities) exert and create society, or, in the more likely (and more complex) scenario, do individuals and society exert pressures, sometimes unequal, on each other? The question of the relationship between the individual and group, it has been argued, is a problematic one and one that should be interrogated (e.g. Caulkins 2001; Cohen 1994).

As anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists, and others have related through their research and writing, identity is constituted through social interactions and contexts. And, as Cohen has noted, the “dialectic of the individual as (a) socially constituted, and (b) as ‘authorial’ lies behind most dilemmas of identity and their analysis in social science” (1993a:62). In order to understand how, or if, these two ideas can co-exist, the relationship between the individual and the group requires deep examination.

The differences between explanations of and contentions about identity stem primarily from differences in opinion related to how much emphasis is placed on the individual as opposed to culture, society or larger groups. Most frequently, the self has “been treated as determined or licensed by society” as well as “defined by other people with whom the individual interacts” (Cohen 1993a:56, 58). Those who call for a more informed study of identity concepts argue that individuals are drivers and that it is necessary to recognize that “‘persons’ are themselves ‘constructed’ in terms of shared understandings that inform the ways they act and feel” (and think) (Rosaldo 1980:35).

Descartes was interested in determining what knowledge is, and how we can have it (1989).

Through his philosophical method, revolving around acts of cognition, he came to recognize both a distinction between the mind and the body, as well as a unity; that the “self” was a union of both the body and mind. This led to a further recognition that Descartes himself was (and therefore other humans were) one body (person) among many others, that he related to each other person in unique ways, and that other persons can cause pain and pleasure. Additionally, through his recognition of “the existence of material things” (including the body), Descartes, then, and those who have followed, specifically privileged the subjective experience and subjectivity, that is, personal ways of knowing. In recognizing a self, and therefore others, Descartes was observing differences between individuals, as well as similarities.

Biehl et al.’s understanding of the self follows from Descartes’ observations. For example, they believe that the self is “corporeal, with the body as part and parcel of technical, political, and social processes” (2007b:8). For their conception of the self, what the body does, what it eats, and where it goes all engage the formation of the self.

Bakhtin’s concept of the self does not allow for a person to ever be fully known, in part because the person is always changing. Bakhtin also believed that the self is in many ways fashioned by its interactions with others ([1919] 1900), and that it requires the other in order to exist. It is this dialogical relationship with the other which leads to individual consciousness (1981). Because of his focus on interactions with others in the formation of the self, Bakhtin gives privilege to intersubjective experiences.

While this discussion focuses mainly on formulated identities and not (among other things) identity formation, clearly identity formation is important to the issue of identity in the sense of it that I am focusing on. Additionally, some of this work on identity formation speaks directly to the matters just discussed, of the individual and the group and the self and other. For example, Fox Keller (2007) and Briggs (1970, 1998) both make the important point that “...we can view the development of a sense of self as occurring in tandem and in reciprocity with the development of a sense of other, and the recognition of both one’s own and others’ mental states as emerging from just such a dialogical process” (Fox Keller 2007:355).

Mead, in *Mind, Self, and Society* ([1934] 1967), describes how an individual mind/self is developed based on communicative, social interactions (“significant gestures,” e.g. language) with other individuals. Communication is an inherently social process, and it is through these social processes, Mead argues, that the mind/self is developed (Mead [1934] 1967:50, 142, 172-173). For Mead, the ‘mind’ consists of “mental processes and intelligence” that allow an individual to ascertain “meanings” from social processes and to be able to ‘point them out’ to themselves and others (Mead [1934] 1967:132-13). Mead also argues that self-consciousness (and therefore a ‘self’) cannot exist unless the “individual is an object to himself;” an individual must recognize their role in relation to others for a self to exist. In other words, an individual must be “reflexive” to have a proper self (Mead [1934] 1967:142, 169, 172). That reflexivity is born of social interaction as, according to Mead, self does not exist “at birth” but is developed “through social experience and interaction” (Mead [1934] 1967:135). Reflexivity and its associated mental processes are also an “essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind” (Mead [1934] 1967:133).

For Mauss, while society or groups may influence actions, the self is always the ultimate source of action (1979:10). Mauss defines the self as a self-aware human agent, a “conscious personality,” containing “individuality, both spiritual and physical” (Mauss [1938] 1996:3). This is in contrast to his definition of the person as a socially constructed “category” defined by a particular community.

Fortes used Mauss’ category of the person “as a label for the social representation” (La Fontaine 1996:125). Fortes also argued that the concept of the person was common to all societies and that it “is intrinsic to the very nature and structure of human society and human social behaviour everywhere” (1973:288). He further explored this through his data from ethnographic work with the Tallensi (1973).

Sartre, like Mead and others, has also argued for consciousness in relation to the other; “... this consciousness can be produced only in and through the existence of the Other” ([1956] 1984:363). Sartre “argued for the primacy of human ‘freedom’” (Ortner 2006:108). Sartre, by experiencing the “Other concretely as a free and conscious subject,” recognizes himself as the

same (1984 [1956]:362). The individual recognizes himself as such because of the existence of the Other.

“That subject’s presence without intermediary is the necessary condition of all thought which I would attempt to form concerning myself. The Other is that ‘myself’ from which nothing separates me, absolutely nothing, except his pure and total freedom, that is that indetermination of himself which he has to be for and through himself” (Sartre [1956] 1984:362).

Some anthropologists, like Lévi-Strauss, for example, argued that the goal of human sciences was “not to constitute but to dissolve man” (1966:247). In *The Raw and the Cooked*, he also outlined that,

“I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact. [...] It would perhaps be better to go still further and, disregarding the thinking subject completely, proceed as if the thinking process were taking place in the myths, in their reflection upon themselves and their interrelation” (1969:12).

This structuralist type of thinking about the individual and agency was in direct contrast with, and in response to, Sartre’s writing about human “freedom” (Ortner 2006:108). For Lévi-Strauss, there is no freedom for human subjects, rather society and its symbols act on and through individuals.

While many anthropologists have looked at various cultures to determine varied understandings of the ‘person,’ ‘identity,’ ‘self,’ and other related concepts, there have been far fewer attempts at examining such concepts more comparatively and cross-culturally. In a controversial article, Geertz has noted that,

“The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment

and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures" (1975:48).

In what has been an oft-cited study, however, Shweder and Bourne (1984) ask, "Does the concept of the person vary cross-culturally?" They determine that, yes, it does, and according to their framework, there are two main ideas of 'the person': a Western "egocentric" conception and a "sociocentric" conception used by non-Western groups (Shweder and Bourne 1984:193-195). The egocentric nature of Shweder and Bourne's approach and conclusions have been criticized as being stuck within a "dualistic paradigm ... which sets up a dichotomy between the individual and the social," as "marginalizing the spiritual aspects of the person," and as downplaying the "material" dimensions of the person (Morris 1994:193-195). Stairs and Wenzel have suggested a third category of "cultural identity concepts" that they term "ecocentric" identity, which would include the integration of human, animal, and material components (1992:9).

Cohen argues that the "person" is generally recognized in anthropology to be a "socially constituted entity, socially locatable (by kinship, rank, etc.) and endowed with rights [and] obligations..." (1992a:350). Cohen has recognized that "Western social science proceeds from the top downwards, from society to the individual, deriving individuals from the social structures to which they belong..." but that the question of the relation between individuals and society needs to be much more critically examined (Cohen 1992b:6, 21). The question of how individuals relate to society, and how social groups exist, form, are maintained and are possible, have been central questions in anthropology, and are ones which Cohen believes also need to be approached through the lens of self and identity (Cohen 1992b:8, 17; 2000:4). This is crucial because, as noted above, social science has often focused on the ways that society influences the individual, but much less effort has been spent determining how society is created and informed by individuals (Cohen 2000:1-13).

Morris and others have argued that most early anthropology "generally neglected" concepts of person and self (e.g. 1994:6; Sokefeld 1999). While these concepts were often tangentially addressed, they were overshadowed by a focus on the larger society or 'culture.' There was,

however, some attention given to “the self” within anthropology by those who followed the work of the social psychologist Mead (Cohen 1994:2). Cohen argues that by focusing our attention on the “other” that we lose sight of, and ignore the importance of, the self (Cohen 1990:37). The complexifying of this relationship will help anthropology to build a “more complex model of the interaction between personal experience and culture” (Corin 2007:287) and recognize the “role of the subjective as a vital determinant of human behavior” (DeVos et al. 1985:23).

Morris describes how the term ‘person’ can refer to three different concepts: a generic human, a cultural category, and a psychological concept – a self (Morris 1994:10-13). The person as a human being is fairly self-explanatory and according to Morris is universally recognized (Morris 1994). The person as a cultural category has an ideological function or basis and may also “extend beyond” the human subject to plants, animals, and environmental features (Morris 1994). Morris also believes that the person as a self is a universal category. Morris describes the self as “being unique to an individual,” but with a content and meaning that vary based on the social context, and “refers to a process rather than to an entity” (1994:12).

Mageo has argued that there is a forced dualism between socio- and egocentric understandings of the self/person and that “highlighting” one over the other in our analyses “constitutes a cultural premise about the self, namely that people are individuals or that they are role players” (1995:283). She counters that we should see socio- and egocentrism as “a matter of degree” in societies and subcultures (Mageo 1995).

Cohen's insights (1978, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1992a, 1993a, 1994) into the relationship between individual and group identity, particularly those that argue this relationship is a problematic one and should be interrogated (1994; see also Caulkins 2001) are important in the context of disciplinary directions. The existence of intracultural variation was key particularly to Cohen's call (and that of others, e.g. Rosaldo 1984:140) for closely examining the relationship between the group and individual. Briggs has addressed this latter problem while studying personhood among the Canadian Inuit; she recognized that individuals within the same culture can be extremely different and that “[p]erhaps the values of some of these variables may be shared to

some extent by some individuals some of the time, but the nature and extent of this sharing must remain open to questions” (1998:20, 208).

Cohen has spent a great deal of time (e.g. 1978, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994) explicating his belief that anthropology must be more dedicated to exploring the “question of the self” (1994:4), because if the issue is not adequately addressed, the discipline runs the risk of “misunderstanding, and therefore misrepresenting” people and groups we claim to know and that we represent to others (Cohen 1994, 1992a:349-350). Cohen regards the individual as being composed of “a cluster of selves” rather than a “combination of roles” (à la Goffman) (1994:7). As opposed to being only (or always) a “basket of selves,” Cohen sees individuals as having a variety of “themes” (i.e. like kinship, recreational activities, etc.) that can be used to find common ground, or be used for political purposes, or other actions (A. Cohen 1978:461).

In terms of the formation of self/identity, Cohen points out that the individual’s process of developing a self, and of societies influence on that same process, work in tandem (1990:57). Cohen also notes that each individual is part of the social whole and that all the pieces are needed for a coherent whole (1978:449). At the same time, to act as a collective, and to engage in “extra-local” (extra-group) interactions, individuals must “suppress” some of their individuality to present a common identity (Cohen 1978:450). The collective or group identity then reflects back to the community itself “where it serves as an ideal-typical point of reference” for identity construction and “evaluation of performance” (Cohen 1978:453); in other words, it becomes important to internal as well as external discourse (1990:55-56).

Cohen also argues that, methodologically, our own experiences of selfhood are or should be important tools for investigating others’ senses of self (1990, 1992a, 1992b). He claims that reflexivity may be our “most powerful tool” in such work (1990:57). Our primary experience of group membership is as individuals (selves) (Cohen 1992a:350), and this is important for our own analyses that are part of the “ethnographic enterprise” (Cohen 1992a:350). This is, in part, related to calls for “experience-near” anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1983; Wikan 1991), and may also require further efforts at “ethnographies of the particular” and taking a detailed look at lived experiences (Abu-Lughod 1991).

Biehl et al.'s (2007a) volume on subjectivity provides a broad understanding of the term and the ways it has been recently approached within anthropology. Biehl, Good and Kleinman note that a contemporary and widely accepted definition of subjectivity as "a synonym for inner life processes and affective states" is also a fairly recent definition (Biehl et al. 2007b:6). There are many potential reasons to study identity/subjectivity/self, many of which have been outlined above, but for Biehl et al. the study of subjectivity is a way to "explore what matters most in people's lives in the making and unmaking of meaning" (2007b:15). Additionally, by examining individual subjectivity we can illuminate strategies "of existence and a material and means of governance" to help broaden our understandings about "the workings of collectives and institutions" (Biehl et al. 2007b:5). Similarly, Lovell has emphasized that it is through the "network of transactions" and the relationships which individuals engage in that we may be able to begin to understand individuals (2007:329).

Contents and boundaries

Ethnicity has been one of the major frameworks for examining identity issues in anthropology (Banks 1996). As many anthropologists have noted directly (or indirectly by their use of his ideas), much contemporary thought on identity within the discipline is grounded in the work of Barth (1969). In his discussion of ethnic groups and boundaries, Barth notes that groups and boundaries are subjective concepts, ascribed and identified by actors, and are a means of social organization (Barth 1969:6, 10). Barth reviewed how previous examinations of ethnic groups focused too heavily on characteristics such as "racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers" (1969:11). Barth argued that analyses needed to move beyond the content of ethnic identity ("traits"), to examine "the boundaries that mark the limits of such contents" (Banks 1996:12). Barth goes on to emphasize that the continuity of ethnic groups "depends on the maintenance of a boundary" and that the boundary does not necessarily bind a group, but rather serves to distinguish between groups (1969:14-15).

Barth's insistence to focus study on ethnic boundaries, in addition to what those boundaries contain (e.g. traits, characteristics, etc.), was motivated by a desire to be rid of *a priori* assumptions about group stability and coherence. Barth wanted, instead, to emphasize the

permeability of boundaries (and of the “cultural characteristics” of group members), and that bounded groups only exist “in contrast” to other groups (Barth 1969:14-15). In claiming some type of group identity, individuals both associate themselves with particular characteristics and distance themselves from others (Cohen 1993b:197). In this way, “the substance of ethnicity responds to the nature of the boundary” (Cohen 2000:3). That is, the contents, or the emphasis on certain of them, are variable – the substance of ethnicity is whatever is required for particular individual or group interactions.

As R. Cohen notes, ethnic and identity boundaries can be “narrowed or broadened” in relation to specific goals, political or otherwise (1978:385-386). At the same time, as Rosaldo and others have discussed, the ongoing “reproduction of a given form of social life demands... continuities in discourse as would permit a shared and sensible frame for the interpretation of daily practice” (1980:223). In addition to being “narrowed or broadened,” new groups or boundaries can be “triggered into being salient” as a result of particular cultural, political or other factors (R. Cohen 1978:397).

Anthony Cohen, in reviewing various ways that Barth’s work on ethnicity and boundaries has been used, comes to the conclusion that ethnicity (boundaries) is not just about group interactions with others, but is also about individuals defining their own selves (1990:56-57). As DeVos and Romanucci-Ross describe, boundaries are “basically psychological in nature, not territorial” (2006:2). Boundary creation, as a “cognitive act” carried out by individuals and groups, gives individuals the ability to help shape the outcomes of interactions (Gombay 2005:430). It is useful for groups to define boundaries, many of which may be superficial, in order to contrast themselves to others, but, as Cohen notes, these boundaries may not match up with “actual practice” (1992a:349-350). Caulkins et al. have argued, similar to Cohen, that Barth’s theory of ethnicity and of boundary creation and maintenance is equally important to definitions of identity (2000:276).

While Barth was revolutionizing anthropological thought about ethnicity for American and western European academics, in the Soviet Union Bromley and colleagues were positing that ethnic groups were composed of a stable core of cultural features, which consisted of a list of

things like language, costume and dances – a list of 'contents,' thus highlighting the importance of a set of traits common within a group (Banks 1996:17-24; Dunn 1975). Bromley's contentions are referred to as "ethnos theory" and have been roundly criticized outside of Soviet anthropology. This stable core of cultural features, which is the defining characteristic of ethnos theory, is viewed as being "so strongly resilient that it persists through generations and through a variety of social forms" (i.e. Marxism's five historical social formations) (Banks 1996:18). Barth's and Bromley's approaches to ethnic identity are examples of opposite ends of the spectrum. While Barth's approach is clearly more theoretically sophisticated and relevant to actual practice, ethnos theory and other theories of ethnicity that emphasize contents and characteristics have importance to our understanding of ethnicity. As Banks notes, physical differences between groups, be they bodily differences such as phenotypical variations, or differences in dress or housing, are often of crucial importance to both individuals and groups (Banks 1996).

As Nelson has noted for social identity, such contents must be regarded not simply as "additive" but rather as "interactive and complex" (2007:vii). Barth, as discussed above and in contrast to those focusing on 'contents,' contended that we should focus on the boundaries of groups and that ethnicity is constructed at these boundaries (social and/or territorial) and that groups cannot be defined other than in contrast to each other (1969, see also Briggs 1998:269; Cohen 1982:6; Sartre ([1956] 1984)). Caulkins and colleagues, working more explicitly on identity and self-identification, have used cultural consensus analysis to examine where the continuous variation ("clines") in cultures are as well as the areas of "contestation" ("edges") (Caulkins 2001, 2004; Caulkins et al. 2005; Caulkins and Hyatt 1999; Trossett and Caulkins 2001). In my work I recognize both the importance of contents and boundaries in the construction of identity, as both seem to involve a degree of co-entailment.

In an important work on identity, James Clifford examined how a group of Massachusetts Mashpee Indians fought a legal battle to regain lands that had been taken from them and to prove that they were an "Indian tribe" under federal regulations (1988). Clifford traces that history of the community with its "shifting categories" of race, adoption of Christianity, and other practices (1988:194). He argues against simplistic 'assimilation' arguments to show that the Mashpee

made conscious decisions about the facets of colonial, and later American, government, culture, religion and other ideas to adopt, partially adopt or reject (1988:196-197). He provides insight into how Mashpee communal identity changed and was negotiated over a 350 year time period. Clifford presents a picture of “deeply contested” identity and of multiple power struggles between the Mashpee and colonial and American forces to both maintain and define themselves and their community. Cohen has discussed “territorial occupation” and its ability to serve as “a representation of identity” (1993b:206). In many cases, land occupation and use is an important factor in defining identities, but for the Mashpee, it was not enough. They were judged to not have continuously been an Indian tribe and were not able to regain lands that had been taken from them (Clifford 1988).

Sociologist Erving Goffman is well known for his “dramaturgical” approach to self and identity through which he portrays individuals as “actors” having different “roles” depending on the social situation they find themselves in (Goffman [1959] 1973). Goffman addresses the techniques that individuals use to attempt to control the impressions (“impression management”) that others have of them ([1959] 1973:15). He viewed the self as “an intentional construction” that individuals attempted to use to “secure for its bearer the greatest advantage” in social interactions with others (Cohen 1994:10). In social interactions, Goffman speaks of a “front region” and a “back region” (alluding to the stage and individuals as actors) where self-presentation to others (the “audience”) is prepared (back region/back stage) and where presentation is performed (front region/stage) ([1959] 1973:103-107, 238-255). Individuals thus attempt to keep their back stage, personal identity or self, off limits to others. Much of this, according to Goffman, is motivated by fear of embarrassment (Goffman [1959] 1973, 1967). The self is thus the awareness of the different roles we play as actors in different situations, as well as the “props,” “tools,” “team” and “audience” involved in performance and interpretation of individuals and groups ([1959] 1973:252-253); the person or self is thus defined largely by social factors.

Goffman's description of self and identity, and of the performance of identity, are rather confrontational representations of the concept. Individuals and groups are seen to be almost forced into interactions where they then must choose some “performance” of their selves which

will win them the most advantage. Goffman's rather mechanistic operationalization of self (Cohen 1994:27, 2000:5), and the focus on the 'social calculus' and "microsociology" (Ortner 2006:2) of interactions, have been criticisms of his approach.

In his *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Giddens argues that "identity is not to be found in behaviour, but the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (1991:54, 244). Personal biography and interactions with others, all play a role in defining a coherent self-identity for individuals. Here Giddens is claiming an inherent stability as a main characteristic of identity (in modernity), whereas others such as Oskenberg Rorty have emphasized the changing nature of subjectivity and the self – "If subjectivity is an awareness of oneself, it seems to not have stable content: every moment brings a different 'self' to light" (2007:34). Similarly, Battaglia argues that the self exists in a "nonsteady state," that is, that the self is constantly changing (1995:1). The cause of these changes are social interactions with others (other selves).

It seems true, based on subjective experiences, that "... our subjectivities and the moral processes in which we engage are forever in flux," and that as a result, as Kleinman and Fitz-Henry argue, "[a]s our worlds change, so do we" (2007:55). However, it also seems as though, in order for individuals to be consistent, to know how to act in novel (or mundane) situations, there must be a stable core of beliefs and ideas that they are acting from. Giddens' identity is a very 'interior' concept which involves much reflexivity on the part of the individual to evaluate both their own feelings and actions, as well as those of others (1991). Giddens' self may have many different facets which, a la Goffman, can be emphasized in different situations, but the only reason a person is able to deploy them effectively and appropriately is because of their "biography," which includes a core understanding of their self.

Identity can be a site of contestation and a venue for the expression of difference. As such, it is important to recognize the complexity of the relationship between the individual and the group and the ways that identity can both trigger contestation, and be a result of it.

Conceptualizations of identity in the 'Eskimo world'

There is a variety of literature on identity related to Eskimo people, much of which addresses the influence of society on individuals. Naming practices have also been a focus in Eskimo-related identity literature. For example, Schweitzer and Golovko (1997) discuss identity in relation to naming practices in the Bering Strait region and how personal names have been associated with both individual and group identity (group identity potentially being equivalent to Burch's national identity) and were also frequently used to reinforce kin or trading relationships.

Ann Fienup-Riordan and her collaborators have made important contributions to the understanding of Yup'ik personhood and identity (e.g. 1983, 1986, 1991). She has illustrated that the Yupiit historically considered society, rather than the individual, to be primary and that “the life of the individual only took on meaning in the context of a complex web of relationships...” (1986:262). As Fienup-Riordan describes, Yup'ik society places high value on both proper action and proper thought (1986). As proper thought is something that only individual persons can carry out (and with no one else knowing if they are thinking ‘properly’ or not), the person and self do hold a critical position in Yup'ik society. This is important to note because while Yup'ik society may consider the group/society to be of primary importance, within their framework much of the responsibility for maintaining the status quo or promoting positive relationships (with both other human persons and other-than-human animal persons) is placed on the individual and on their interior, subjective ‘actions.’ Wenzel notes a similar position for the Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic (Wenzel 1985 in Stairs and Wenzel 1992:4-5). He relates that individual success in subsistence activities reflects not “material effort,” but rather “the person's cognitive referencing to both the human and animal communities with which he interacts” (Wenzel 1985 in Stairs and Wenzel 1992:4-5).

Orr et al. edited a volume titled *Ellangellemni ... When I Became Aware ...* (2005). *Ellangelleq* is a Yup'ik word meaning “awareness,” which can also be glossed as an “awareness of existence” or a “consciousness of a world process going on about one” (Orr et al. 2005:614; Fienup-Riordan 1986). It typically refers to childhood and a person's first conscious memories and their gradual awareness of their surroundings. A person is not believed to be born with a sense of self (see

Fienup- Riordan 1986:263). Another Yup'ik word, *Usvingelleq*, or “sense, understanding,” refers to a more advanced understanding of the world around oneself, including relationships with other people (Fienup- Riordan 1986). Briggs discusses similar expressions used by Canadian Inuit that refer to a small child becoming a person (*inuk*), or becoming “less incapable” (e.g. 1970:252, 1998). These are crucial times when a child comes to self-awareness – to understand the consequences of actions, their relations to other people, and how to accomplish things for themselves; essentially learning that they have an identity beyond their mother or other caretaker (Briggs 1970, 1998).

Yuuyaraq, or “the way of the human being,” is not explicitly related to identity or self-awareness. Harold Napoleon discusses this word and all it encompasses for Yup'ik people (Napoleon 1996:1-36). As Napoleon explains, among other things *yuuyaraq* dictates human relationships (with other humans, animals, the environment, the spirit world). *Yuuyaraq* then, very strongly helps define an individual, and further helps them determine who their “self” is in relation to others they encounter. *Yuuyaraq* is thus a powerful set of concepts and beliefs that were critical to Yup'ik identity before Euro-American contact with western society and which still remain important for Yup'ik people today.

The most comprehensive examination of identity (or a form of it – ethnicity) for an Alaskan Eskimo group was done by Hensel in the Bethel area (1996). Hensel discusses the enactment and construction of ethnicity for Yupiit living in Bethel, and how the enactment and performance of ethnicity is focused primarily around subsistence activities, and discourse about subsistence activities. Because his research took place in an ethnically mixed community, Hensel spent a great deal of time analyzing social interactions and how ethnicity was performed in certain social situations.

Hensel discusses the “power” of subsistence as deriving from perceptions of the past, and associations with traditional lifestyles (which people value) (1996:12). Anthony Cohen has noted the same for crofting (farming) on the island of Whalsay; “The croft, then, condenses the past through the landscape itself, and through its associations with the nature calendar; with community; with an earlier mode of subsistence and the ideal of self-sufficiency” (1986:190).

These are all things that Whalsay residents value and want to be associated with – the same as with Yup'ik subsistence activities and Bethel residents. It is something they can identify with and which they can and do incorporate into their identities. As one Bethel resident put it to Hensel: “I think it helps me identify. I feel like it kind of puts me in touch with Yup'ik part of who I am, that feels real good” (1996:61).

Stairs (1992) and Stairs and Wenzel's (1992) examination of human relationships with animals and the environment, and the role of hunting activities in Inuit “cognitive culture” is an important contribution to discussions about Inuit identity and to the literature on the role of “country” (‘subsistence’ in Alaska) foods to identity. Stairs and Wenzel note that a variety of actions surrounding *niquituinnaq*, Inuit food, are important in differentiating Inuit from non-Inuit people, including relations to animals that become food, sharing of food, and how food animals are harvested:

“Through a life that unifies the land, the animals, and the community past and present the Inuk hunter acquires, reconstructs, and lives out a world-image which provides both security in his own identity and direction for his behavior” (1992:7).

Stairs and Wenzel suggest that for the Eastern Arctic Canadian Inuit, Inuit food represents a unity of “environment, community and identity” (1992:3). And further, that it is through these human/animal/material connections that Stairs and Wenzel propose a “world-image identity,” distinct from a Western “conventional self-image” (1992:9). They argue that Inuit identity is based in a desire for “grounding” in the world, rather than autonomy within or from it (1992). Stairs also argued that this “world-image identity” is an integration of multiple explanations of identity constructions being utilized by others; ecological-economic explanations, cognitive explanations, and social explanations (1992:119). This is necessary because Inuit identity encompasses the material world, animals, and human communities (Stairs 1992:120). Stairs has elaborated further, explaining Inuit culture as being composed of a “bundle-of-traits” that is constantly being negotiated (Stairs 1992:118).

This view of identity necessarily emphasizes subsistence activities and all their related activities,

values, and relationships. A significant part of this involves the importance of human-animal relationships, which I believe are central to the identity concepts of many Eskimo peoples' identity, though as that particular issue is discussed elsewhere in this work in more detail (see e.g. the first part of this chapter), I will only note that Eskimo peoples, as well as other peoples around the world, have recognized animals as non-human persons with whom complex relationships are possible and desired (see e.g. Brightman [1973] 2002; Howell 1996; Nelson 1983).

The sociality of human-animal and -environment relationships, and their importance to identity, has been commented upon for other peoples around the world (e.g. Descola 1994; Hallowell 1960; Howell 1996; Langdon 2007; Scott 1989); one manifestation of such sociality are relationships of reciprocity (Hoeppe 2007; Nadasdy 2003; Tapper 1988), gifts and giving (Bird-David 1990; Brightman 1993; Ingold 2000), and mutualism (Ingold 1992).

The importance of subsistence, and all that surrounds it, to identity cannot be ignored and has been highlighted by many northern researchers, residents, visitors and others (e.g. Andrews and Creed 1998; Fienup-Riordan 1991; Jones 2006; Rearden 1998; Stalker 1998; Thornton 2008; see Reedy-Maschner 2010 for a different perspective). Eskimo foods (and the categorization of foods as “Eskimo” or “Native” or “Inuit”) are a powerful way that individuals can assert identity and power in their lives (Searles 2002).

Reedy-Maschner, in discussing Aleut identities, has argued that, universally-speaking, Alaskan indigeneity should not be inherently linked to “subsistence;” Native foods, and the idea of broader livelihood in engagement with the ocean, rather than subsistence practices, are, for Reedy-Maschner's work with Aleut people, more meaningful identity markers at the broader level (2010). I would argue that for people in Elim, however, subsistence in the broadest sense – including not only Native foods but also subsistence practices, for example – is key to identity. This is not to deny, of course, the local heteroglossia and heterogeneity of practice and discourse in Elim which includes, for example, an important role for other human-environmental engagements such as commercial fishing. Mintz, in discussing the importance of food to many people, notes that food consumption can be used as “a kind of declaration,” “a form of self-

identification,” and as “communication” (1996:13). As Stalker, an Iñupiaq woman from Kotzebue has described, “[o]ur foods define who we are, connect us to the land and keep our culture alive” (1998:31). Traditional (or ‘country’) foods are also often a source of comfort, and when one shows no interest in food or eating, others often become concerned for their well-being (Briggs 1970, 1998).

Other authors, writing about Alaska Native people specifically (e.g. Bodenhorn 1989, 1990; Hensel 2006; Jolles 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Jolles and Kaningok 1991; Lee 2002; Nelson 1969; Senungetuk 1971), have also discussed the crucial importance of subsistence activities and foods to senses of identity. For example, Berger, in his Alaska Native Review Commission report, presents information from individuals from communities all across the state of Alaska that convey the many and varied ways that subsistence (as a practice, as a way of life, as foods) are important to Alaska Native people (1985). I also discussed this in Chapter 3. Thornton (2001) notes that “despite the alienating effects of colonization and modernization [Alaska Natives] continue to conceptualize subsistence as an integral part of their culture, identity and being” (2001:87). Thornton has argued that subsistence activities constitute a specific Alaska Native ontology and are thus an “essential component” of their identity (1998:29). Similarly, Hensel has pointed out the importance of subsistence as a marker for Yup’ik identity in the Bethel region (2006). He has found that the importance of subsistence can be seen both in its praxis and in dialogue about subsistence. The importance of subsistence extends to the importance of sharing subsistence foods; sharing being a value that many Eskimo people see as crucial in defining themselves (e.g. Bodenhorn 1989; Fogel-Chance 1993; Gombay 2005; Hensel 2006; Lee 2002; Searles 2002, 2008). The sharing of subsistence-harvested food is also symbolically important – imbuing people with qualities of a ‘real’ Eskimo and also providing a measure of prestige (see also Bodenhorn 2004). This type of symbolism is most effective when it allows contrasts and comparisons between others (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 2006:376).

Nuttall (1992, 1994:125) and others have also noted that Eskimo identity, community and individual, can be strongly related to a sense of place, as can be seen through group naming practices with the suffix -miut, or “people of.” As Nuttall points out, this both gives group membership and distinction from other peoples (1994:125). The importance of place has been

noted by many anthropologists for groups of people all over the world (e.g. Basso 1996; Gombay 2005; Jolles 2006b; Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003; Lowe 2003; Rose 1995; Thornton 2008; Tuan 1977).

Frequently, as Jolles has documented for Diomedede Island residents (and others in the Bering Strait region; e.g. 2005, 2006a; Jolles and Kaningok 1991), subsistence praxis and place combine to act as a powerful force in local identities (2006b). Jolles calls subsistence a “life system” and describes how it is “extremely important as a source of identity and tradition and continues to be a major source of the cultural, social, and economic characteristics deemed by community members as important elements of heritage and belonging” (2006b:244). Jolles also notes that prior to the 1970s, the community of Diomedede would have also noted Iñupiaq language skills as crucial to identity (2006b:258), but as those skills fade, other skills and activities have gained even more importance for individual and group identity on the island.

Numerous authors have noted that Eskimo naming practices are frequently linked to identity and community continuity (e.g. Briggs 1970; Cohen 1993b; Cox 2003; Fienup-Riordan 1990; Jolles 2002; Mauss [1938] 1996; Nuttall 1994; Schweitzer and Golovko 1997; Turner 1994), including the passing on of social roles from one generation to the next (e.g. Guemple 1994; Searles 2008). Additionally, for some Eskimo groups, a child does not become a real person until they are named. The name they are given at once relates them to past and current Eskimo individuals and bestows upon them particular relationships and social roles and obligations – thus the beginnings of their identity. Jolles reiterates this in her discussion of contemporary naming practices on St. Lawrence Island, noting that the naming of a child leads a family to “look for the influence” of the name-bearer's predecessor in the child's character and qualities (2002:115, 93-120). The continued importance of naming in these communities is illustrated by strong desire for names to “remain in the community” due to their ties to history, family lineages, and other important relationships (Jolles 2002:245). Cohen argues that a focus on naming practices “as a means of initiating” a person to an identity, can lead to a privileging of “the social definition of the individual over his/her self-concept” (1993:57).

While I am not, for the purposes of this discussion, specifically interested in “assigned” or

officially approved types of identity (e.g. Anderson 2000), the issue of “national” identity, as defined by Burch (1998b) for the Inupiaq people of northwest Alaska, is important. For the most part, ethnographers of the Bering Strait region have most often raised the topic of identity in the context of political organization (Burch 1998a, 1998b, 2005, 2006; Ray 1964, 1967, 1992), and Burch has concluded that “national affiliation was one of the most important elements” in the social and individual identities of Inupiat in the early and mid-nineteenth century (1998b:324-326, 2006:126-128). This is of interest because the notion of “national” identities for Inupiaq people involves a definition that includes characteristics and components of individual and community identity as defined by the individuals and communities themselves (as opposed to Anderson's discussion of official identities (2000)).



Because identity and identity-related concepts are so crucial to the everyday lived experiences of individuals and groups, it is critical that anthropology seriously participate in identity-based analyses and attempt to understand what they mean and how they are engaged by those we work with. Both individuals and groups practically engage identity on a day to day basis. All of the concepts addressed throughout this discussion are relational and rely on such daily engagements with others to refine, create, and breakdown or reinforce them. Identity is necessarily personal and internal, while at the same time greatly shaped by social interactions and expressed outwardly through those social interactions. Identity has a certain meaningful essentiality, and is forged, negotiated, maintained, contested, and revised in complex personal and social communicative processes and relationships at a variety of levels. In the literature on identity and Eskimo peoples, there has been a focus on the ways society influences and helps define (and sometimes exerts control over) the individual, with occasional discussions of the individual as well as the ways the individual contributes to groups, culture, society and stability. The review of literature above indicates ways in which a focus on identity in terms of its definitional and distinction-making aspects can be taken in tandem with rich expositions on the complexity of identity – such as with regard to the relationships between and amongst individuals and groups.

Subsistence, salmon, and identity in Elim

The topic of “identity” is difficult to approach directly in interviews. Individuals may have different definitions of the term, may not be familiar with it at all, or have difficulty discussing such an abstract concept. Other identity researchers have also concluded that direct questions asking people to explicate their identity is often ineffective or inappropriate to the subject (e.g. Briggs 1998:19; Caulkins et al. 2000:269; Rosaldo 1980:34-36; Spradley 1970:69). The general concept of identity and one's own personal identity are not always thoroughly and explicitly considered. Because of these and other difficulties, the idea of identity for individual Elim residents and thoughts and beliefs about their identities was approached both directly and obliquely. For example, I discussed with many research participants what kinds of things are important to them, how and if they would be different people if they didn't have access to certain foods or activities, and similar topics.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, some of the methodologies used for this study were free-list and semi-structured ethnographic interviews, and participant observation. After several months of living in the community, and conducting free-listing and then ethnographic interviews as well as a variety of participant observation activities, I had a strong groundwork for designing the more structured, final set of interviews. These interviews were based on a series of ‘touchstones’ relating to culture and identity, and were approached specifically through the lens of salmon. As described in the methodology, I created a set of statements regarding salmon and other topics, and convened 2 focus groups to review and refine them. People's reactions to those statements, as well as the discussion about them that followed during interviews and the information from previous study activities, tell us, I believe, about how Elim residents fit salmon, subsistence, and related topics into their ‘structure’ of identity and culture.

There are multiple patterns that became apparent during my analysis of the data (from the structured interviews, and other methods). For example, many Elim people feel that salmon is vital to who they are as an individual. Many also feel that salmon is important to the community, and that it is something that they collectively share. Additionally, subsistence praxis, be it the harvest of salmon or other animals or plants, is also essential to many Elim people and their

senses of self and community (e.g. Bodenhorn 1998; Fogel-Chance 1993; Gombay 2005; Hensel 2006; Jolles 2006b; Lee 2002; Searles 2002; Thornton 2001, 2008). While some of these patterns or observations may seem “obvious,” I argue there that they are not, have not previously been examined in a contemporary Bering Strait region context (nor, necessarily, in many other contexts, e.g. Wolch and Emel 1998:xvii), and that they speak deeply to what Elim people value as characteristics in themselves, as well as in other community members. As I have discussed previously, there has been a strong focus on marine mammals when discussing this region in the past. The hunting of marine mammals has been identified as a crucial part of Alaska Native identity in many anthropological studies, some equating hunting to the action needed to become a ‘real’ person. But salmon plays a large role in many facets of Elim community and individual life and that should be recognized and acknowledged. This is discussed further below.

Before I move specifically to a discussion of salmon, there are several other important points to make regarding Elim. During one discussion, early in my time in Elim, a community member described himself as “Yup’iaq,” meaning that his heritage was both Yup’ik and Inupiaq. I asked if he had come up with that term, which I had never heard before, himself. He explained how when he was in school one of his teachers had told students that the community and many of their families were both Yup’ik and Inupiaq and had suggested the terms “Yup’iaq” and “Inup’ik.” I later heard people refer to themselves or these terms on multiple occasions.

This teacher, during his early days at the school, was trying to determine if he would teach Yup’ik or Inupiaq language classes to the students, as he spoke both languages. There was not a consensus in the community, because people spoke both Yup’ik and Inupiaq, so he put the matter to a vote of the residents and Yup’ik was chosen¹.

As a result of some of these encounters, discussions, stories, and interviews I added a question about autonyms to the interviews I was doing. I compiled a list of commonly used terms I had

¹ Yup’ik language is no longer part of the curriculum at Aniguiin School. Yup’ik or Inupiaq language skills were not noted by any of the study participants during interviews or focus groups to be particularly important to their own or the community’s identity, though in another setting one resident did identify this as important. Other things, like practicing traditional values, have gained prominence in that regard. This is similar to what Jolles has noted for Diomedede (2006b).

heard region residents use to describe their ethnicity or cultural heritage, printed them out on a sheet of paper, and asked study participants to consider them and to tell me which word or words they would use to describe themselves to a person who didn't know them or, if the word they would prefer wasn't shown, to tell me that word or phrase. The terms that I included on the paper were: Alaska Native, Eskimo, Yup'ik, Inupiaq, Inuit, Native American, other terms, some combination of these terms.

A total of 76 people were formally asked this question during interviews (76 out of 201 adults total, and a total population of 330). The responses received are shown in Table 13, including responses that people generated, independent of the list I provided.

Table 13. Autonyms used by Elim residents.

Response	Number of Responses
Alaska Native	14
Eskimo	12
Yup'ik	9
Inupiaq	17
Inuit	0
Native American	0
Inupiaq and Yup'ik <i>or</i> Yup'ik and Inupiaq	12
Eskimo and Inupiaq	4
Native	2
Inupiaq, Yup'ik and White	1
Inup'ik	1
Alaska Native and Inupiaq	1
Eskimo and Inup'ik	1
Native Eskimo	1
Native, Alaska Native, half Inupiaq, half Yup'ik	1

I initially asked this question mostly as an exercise for myself, to learn more about what people in this unique community preferred to call themselves. The answers, however, were quite revealing in a few ways. The four most commonly used identity terms were, by far, Inupiaq (38 times), Yup'ik (25 times), Native/Alaska Native (20 times) and Eskimo (18 times). The more specific terms (Inupiaq and Yup'ik) might at first glance seem more common than the broader terms (Eskimo and Native/Alaska Native), which could suggest a form of boundary marking in what is a culturally mixed community. However, closer examination of the responses indicates that Inupiaq and Yup'ik were used together 15 times, which would make their combination very common. And, if we remove those instances where Inupiaq and Yup'ik were used together, only 23 and 10 usages remain, respectively. This makes the use of specific and broad terms very similar and is therefore not suggestive of boundary marking. Rather, on the whole, it seems to indicate a general level of acceptance for particular broad terms and an awareness of a certain set of particular and broad terms as being the most appropriate. This suggests a widespread recognition and acceptance within the village of the culturally-blended nature of the community.

Burch's research (1988), in contrast to others such as Bodenhorn (2000c), has made an argument for identity as tied to place of birth and Tribal affiliation. While specific Tribal affiliations/group, such as 'Malemiut' do not seem to factor into most Elim residents' self-identification, as can be seen above, broader cultural affiliations such as Yup'ik and Inupiaq do. On the other hand, "territorial occupation" (e.g. Cohen 1993b) remains crucial to the community of Elim, including as a point of pride that they own a large land base, that they are free to use it at-will, and that they can support themselves off of that land. This alludes to Stairs and Wenzel and their discussion of "ecocentric" identity (1992). The land, and the plants and animals and waters it encompasses, are highly important to Elim residents (see Chapter 6). Macinko's conceptualization of "place-based" management, wherein management is "focused, in the first instance, on endowing places, rather than individuals, with resource wealth" has some strong parallels to the sentiments Elim residents hold towards their lands (Macinko 2007:73; see also Raymond-Yakoubian 2016).

Additionally, in the midst of wider debates in Alaska regarding blood quantum and enrollment statuses, and who can 'be' Alaska Native, (e.g. Langdon 2016), these factors, from a community

perspective, are only one part in a consideration of a whole person and in determining if they are “Eskimo” or not. The existence of these debates is known to Elim residents, though not of immediate concern in day to day practice. For many residents it seems as though the use and understanding of their bodies for “political processes” is less relevant than what they individually “do” (such as actual harvesting and consumption of foods like marine mammals and salmon (e.g. Biehl et al. 2007b). As Cohen has described, the contents or substance of ethnicity can change in response to the “nature of the boundary” (2000:3, 1993b) and, bounded groups exist “in contrast” to other groups (Barth 1969:14-15). In many cases, heritage (broadly speaking), values, and lived realities are more crucial to determining identity, than genetics and law.

While naming practices were not explored deeply as part of this research, through different work in Elim and other communities, I have discussed this topic in more detail with many region residents. Naming practices remain important for many families and individuals, however the older ways of naming are not practiced by all, and the beliefs surrounding those practices are unknown or not subscribed to by many people today (e.g. Schweitzer and Golovko 1997).

Elim is, as a result of both its unique history and its geographic location, a ‘border’ community, of sorts. Geographically speaking, Elim is located in an interstitial place between lands that are historically Inupiaq (to the north and west) and Yup’ik (to the south). Historically speaking, Elim is a community that was formed, in part, from children orphaned by the Great Sickness, and by individuals and families from around the region who came together, along with Evangelical Covenant Church missionaries, to purposefully build a new community (see Chapter 1). These distinctive historical circumstances lead to the creation of a community that, from its start, included both Inupiaq and Yup’ik people (as well as other ethnicities).

Another interesting observation can be made based on the responses given to the question of self-identification. There has been a movement in some arenas of Indigenous politics in Alaska to no longer use the term “Eskimo” (see Chapter 3, Footnote 3, also). Some people feel the term is derogatory² and, as is the case in Canada, wish to see the word expunged from use. Many

² See the Alaska Native Language Center etymology of the term, which is not derogatory: <https://www.uaf.edu/anlc/resources/inuit-eskimo/>. This, of course, does not mean that the term was never

organizations and individuals in Alaska, however, use the term regularly and some people make a point of sharing that they are very proud of the ‘label’ “Eskimo.” “Eskimo” was a frequently chosen autonym by Elim residents; one of the most frequently chosen if you include other ‘combination’ terms that were provided (i.e. Eskimo and Inupiaq, Native Eskimo, and Eskimo and Inup’ik). Additionally, none of the Elim residents that were asked this question identified “Inuit” as their preferred autonym. Only one participant expressed some discomfort with the term “Eskimo” in the context of an interview, though she used it throughout our conversation in her responses. Another resident, in a different context, expressed similar views; i.e. that she uses the term herself, for example to talk about “Eskimo food”, but recognizes some of the negative associations of the word, which she does not endorse or appreciate.

Woman, early 20s: “Alaska Native. Because I’m from Alaska and I’m a Native. When I was younger I overheard my uncle say that using the word ‘Eskimo’ is not good. I still use it whenever I talk, but every now and then I catch myself and I try not to say it because I heard it’s not a good word to describe yourself.”

The connection with the term “Eskimo” goes beyond self-identification, as well. In Elim, foods harvested for subsistence are not just subsistence foods, they are “Eskimo food” or “Native food.” This implies an important connection to identity (c.f. Searles 2002). Food purchased from the store, for example, is not referred to by these terms (and is often called “store food”). Elim residents, as well as other Indigenous people in the region, often equate the consumption of subsistence foods with ‘being Eskimo.’ The desire and ability to eat these foods is an important marker of Eskimo-ness. This even applies to non-Indigenous people, though sometimes this is done in a partly joking manner. For example, when a non-Indigenous person tries to or consistently eats subsistence foods, people may say that the person is “one of us” or “a real Eskimo” because of their willingness to eat those foods. Similarly, if an Eskimo person does eat, or like, many subsistence foods, people may jokingly (or seriously) question their ‘Eskimo-ness’.

and is never used in a derogatory fashion – it most certainly is and has been. The origin of the word, however, is not negative.

Woman, late 20s: “They would ask if I eat certain [Eskimo] foods. I say ‘No.’ Then they say, ‘What kinda Eskimo are you? What if there’s no more [store] food to buy?’”

This relates to a series of negative feelings or associations with subsistence and salmon, which some people do have. This is discussed further below. Not liking or just not eating Eskimo foods is seen, in part, as a question of exposure and learning. Study participants have talked about the desirability of teaching young children how to harvest, as well as ‘how to eat’ Eskimo foods. Children must be provided with those foods, and encouraged to eat them, as part of their education in how to be an Eskimo person. If a young person has not learned how to eat those foods, or has shunned them, this is often seen as a sad circumstance. It is also recognized that if a person does not grow up eating such foods, they may not want them later in life, which would also be an undesirable outcome.

Woman, early 30s: “I’m just happy to be brought up on it [Eskimo foods]. If I wasn’t brought up on it, I’d probably wouldn’t care. But I care because I was brought up on it and grow up eating it and grow up putting it away and I want that for my kids, too.”

Eskimo or Native food is also viewed by Elim residents as being very healthy, nutritious food. (One resident’s motto is, “A salmon a day keeps the doctor away” (*Woman, late 50s*.) These qualities are important to people and frequently mentioned in discussions about the qualities of different types of food. Eskimo food is often contrasted with “store food” with, for the majority of people, Eskimo foods being the most desirable. One Elim resident described Native foods as making him feel “more alive,” and many other study participants also discussed how eating subsistence foods makes them physically feel better. Residents are aware of research that has shown the positive health impacts from eating traditional foods and sometimes mention these studies when discussing subsistence or Native foods. They also discussed how some foods, like seal oil or whale, make you feel full for longer, and are good foods to eat when you are going out in the country or going boating. Many of the study participants were asked about the percentage of their diet that is currently Eskimo food (versus store food), and if they were satisfied with the amount or desired more. The majority of people who responded to this question indicated they wanted a higher percentage of their diet to be Eskimo food. The harvest, preparation,

consumption and sharing of Eskimo food are all linked, directly by study participants, to their physical and mental health, to feelings of pride and self-sufficiency, to care-taking of themselves, their families and communities and the land, and to their spiritual well-being, among other things.

As can be seen, the consumption and materiality of subsistence foods (e.g. Biehl et al. 2007a, 2007b), Eskimo foods, is a component of identity for many Elim people. This relationship between identity and subsistence foods has been discussed for other groups of Indigenous people in Alaska, also (e.g. Bodenhorn 1990, 1998; Hensel 2006; Jolles 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Jolles and Kaningok; Lee 2002; Mintz 1996; Nelson 1969; Senungetuk 1971; Stalker 1998; Thornton 1998). I argue, again, that it is important to revisit this broad question of the connection between subsistence and identity, as well as the particulars of salmon and identity and, even more specifically to examine it in the context of the community of Elim, because of the ubiquitous nature of discussions centered on marine mammals.

When talking about the importance of the existence, harvest and consumption of salmon Elim residents discussed an extensive list of reasons why salmon was important to them. These echo some of Hensel’s findings, further to the south in the Bethel region (e.g. 1996:61). Table 14 includes aspects of the human-salmon relationship that Elim residents identified as important.

Table 14. Aspects of the human-salmon relationship that Elim residents identified as important.

Aspects of the human-salmon relationship that Elim residents identified as important
Salmon is “our food”
People need salmon to survive
Salmon is a part of Elim’s culture
It is a tradition to harvest salmon
Salmon is accessible and abundant
Life would be different without salmon
Salmon helps people to be self-sufficient
Salmon is part of local traditions like potlucks

Table 14 (continued)

Salmon plays a big role in the tradition of sharing
Salmon can be commercially fished, and people can make money
Salmon harvest activities sometimes encourage people to work together
Salmon is a culturally preferred food and people like to eat it; almost everyone eats it
Salmon is a healthy and nutritious food and there are many ways to prepare and eat it
The activity of going out and getting salmon keeps people active and healthy and is enjoyable
The act of harvesting and putting salmon away, and eating it, facilitates intergenerational interactions and is a means for passing on skills and traditions
Salmon plays an important role in the overall ecosystem; it is part of a seasonal cycle of food and it has its own place and time
Store food is expensive (and people can buy less/spend less if they have salmon)
Interactions with and about salmon help people define who they are

For many people, one or more of the statements above are directly linked to their identity or to what they see as components of a larger community identity, which includes community values such as care-taking of the land.

Man, late 40s: “[Without salmon] I would be a *totally* different person. The people that don’t do that [harvest, put away salmon] don’t really care about our campsites, our rivers, where the salmon are and where we hang them and clean them. They don’t care about that. To them it’s just a waste of real estate. They want to put something else there like hotels and restaurants and stuff like that, too. ... To us it’s a way of life. If you don’t have it, something’s gonna be missing. And yeah, I am very proud of that one there because I have given away a lot of dry fish, and when my family goes out [people will say] ‘Hey, your dad sent us some dry fish. Tell him a big thank you. He makes really good dry fish.’ And my boys are proud of that.”

Woman, late 50s: “I think it’s a part of me, salmon. I like to go and get it because it makes me happy. To get it. And we all love it.”

JRY: “So what does subsistence mean to you?” *Man, early 20s*: “Means a lot. It’s like our personality, or our character! What we’re defined as. What we’ve been doing for thousands of years.”

Woman, early 50s: “When we don’t have salmon to eat, [it’s] just like you have *nothing* to eat.”

Man, late 40s: “Something would be missing [without salmon]. The more I think about it.”

Man, late 20s: “It would be a big impact in my life. I wouldn't be able to do a lot of things. I wouldn't be able to feed my family for 100 days a year. I wouldn't be able to put away fish. Salmon plays a big role in my life, from drying salmon to filleting salmon, to pickled salmon. If there was no more salmon I think life would get a lot tougher. ... If there was no salmon, I think I would have to...I don't know what I would do. Put it that way. Plays a big part in my little world here. It would definitely be hard with no salmon. ... There would be a big piece of my life missing if salmon didn't come back.”

[In response to the statement: Knowing how to harvest salmon and put salmon away is important to my sense of who I am.] *Man, middle-aged*: “You are what you eat and that’s why I said I agree with that. And that’s what I eat [salmon]. And salmon are important to my diet. And that’s why.”

Woman, early 30s: “Native food is like soul food for me.”

As some of the quotes here and elsewhere describe, the praxis of fishing or subsistence is important to people, not just the food itself. One resident, while talking about assistance that some community members receive (e.g. food stamps), said, “While you would rather be just existing... I’d rather be subsisting” (*Man, early 60s*). He was discussing the fact that some people, in his opinion, have become disinclined to practice subsistence because of financial assistance they receive from the state and federal governments. Others in the community expressed similar perspectives, along with the belief that doing subsistence was more rewarding in a variety of ways, than solely depending on assistance.

Woman, late 30s: “It feels good to just go out there and go fishing. ... It feels good inside to be doing that with my boys, or with my family, you know, it feels good to be doing that. And I would smile at my boys and say, ‘When you’re on your own you’ll be doing that!’ (Laughs) And so, it just makes me feel good! *Inside.*”

Man, late 20s: “The real enjoyment in life is being on the river, putting some fish up for the family and the dogs.”

Woman, late 50s: “I would never stop putting fish away, no matter what.”

The connection between salmon and history and ancestors is also important for Elim residents. Many people discuss the joy, connections to the land, and connections to ancestors that they feel when out in the country and harvesting salmon. For many people, it brings them a sense of comfort and purpose to acknowledge that the activities they are doing, right now, are activities that their ancestors also carried out. And that that is one of the reasons why they are here today.

Man, late 30s: “[After a very difficult winter,] that following spring I guess there was ice, all the way across the Sound here. There was no ocean, you couldn’t even get to it down that way – it was ice, it never break up. They couldn’t get the beluga or seal. They even tried walking on ice looking for *oogruk*, couldn’t find any. So, they survived on dry fish only. More than once it happened. So if it wasn’t for dry fish, I don’t know if I’d be here.”

The value and activity of sharing has been extensively discussed in previous chapters, but is relevant here, as well. For many people, sharing their subsistence foods is important to their senses of self – to be a person who embraces the traditional value of sharing and who embodies it by the practice of sharing (e.g. Bodenhorn 1998; Fogel-Chance 1993; Gombay 2005; Hensel 2006; Lee 2002; Searles 2002). The sharing of salmon and other foods is important to peoples’ positive sense of self.

Throughout the course of this study, on a number of occasions, people discussed or implied some feelings that were opposite to the primarily positive feelings outlined above. For example, some

people talked about embarrassment, sadness and even shame associated with not being able to (or just not) harvesting subsistence foods, including salmon, not having enough to share, or in regards to the buying or selling of subsistence foods (i.e. that they personally thought it not good to do, but that they did it). These feelings indicate deep and important connections between subsistence activities, foods, community values, and self.

Elim residents recognize the interconnectedness of the various components of the ecosystem, and this interconnectedness is also related to identity issues. As an Eskimo person, it is important to have the knowledge to understand the ecosystem, the cycles of various animals and plants, how seasons change, how different species are linked to each other, and to be able to adapt to and act on that information to harvest and prepare subsistence foods.

Man, early 50s: “Beluga depend on salmon quite a bit. That’s something I never thought about. There’s numerous different species of fish and salmon, trout and grayling. We’ve had a number of different species drop way low and just force on our dependence on the other species. . . . Both the trout and the grayling, they also depend on the salmon eggs and those little tiny fish they eat. I never thought of how important that whole thing is in the food chain. And all those species that depend on salmon, we depend on them also. That would be devastating [if salmon were no longer around].”

Man, late 40s: “If you take one thing out, the rest is gonna fall down.”

Man, late 60s: “The subsistence activity that’s most important to me – I would say fishing. Without fish... we wouldn’t be alive today, I don’t think! Because everything, every sea mammal, eats fish! We eat fish. Ducks eat fish. Bears eat fish... most of the animals eat fish! Fish seems to be the staple of our culture!”

Man, late 20s: “I would say that they’re all equal [subsistence activities]. Like sometimes you have to pick berries. And you have to go out all the time or you’re not going to catch anything. So you gotta go out there, and you can’t get a moose, and then you just go fishing the next day. And all of them are important, even berries. And then if you get a lot of berries you could trade

for *muktuk* or trade for moose meat or smoked salmon or dried fish. If you put everything away, then everything is important; there's not just one.”

Many people are hesitant to identify a subsistence food that is most important to them (though many will point to salmon). The lack of willingness to identify a ‘most important’ subsistence food is common across the entire Bering Strait region and extends and is related to hesitancy in declaring certain parts of the ocean or land as ‘most important’ for subsistence (e.g. Oceana and Kawerak 2014). Many Elim residents prefer, as noted above, to talk about seasonal cycles and how salmon is a part of that and has its own time - ‘eating by the season.’ It is also important to do things in the right season and to be prepared, because some foods are only around at certain times. Seal oil was used as a good example when I pursued the discussion of ‘important’ foods. Seal oil and salmon go hand in hand for many people. Dry fish (salmon) and seal oil are commonly eaten together and this is a meal enjoyed by many people. Neither ingredient is more important than the other. And in order to get that meal, you must be active in and knowledgeable about multiple seasons, species and equipment. Or, you must be active in bartering and sharing of foods. “Everything fits together,” as one resident said to me. A variety of subsistence activities and foods are required to make a complete picture. Salmon-related activities are crucial subsistence activities in Elim, and subsistence is crucial to identity.

Salmon, and subsistence, embody values, actions, ideas and feelings that are important to Elim residents and their identities. These include things such as the cultural values of sharing and not wasting, physical acts of doing subsistence that connect people to history and place, bearing and passing on tradition, and personal preferences. The particular methods, means and location of the harvest and preparation of salmon are seen to be distinctive of Elim people and of Eskimo people.

Woman, early 30s: “I guess maybe they could probably survive with other kinds of food but, I mean, our food from our land is more important. And it's carried on from long ago. That's how our ancestors survived.”

I want to return to what Biehl et al. stated about reasons to study subjectivity – such studies are a way “to explore what matters most in people’s lives in the making and unmaking of meaning” (2007b:15). This chapter and previous chapters have explored many of the things that “matter” to Elim residents, as well as what those things “mean” to people. When it comes to the things that matter to identity in Elim there is, perhaps unsurprisingly, difference and variety. This echoes some of the earlier calls for the study of identity/subjectivity (e.g. Cohen 1993b, Rosaldo 1984), and also mirrors what Briggs described for Canadian Inuit – namely that there can be large differences between people within the same culture and that “some of these variables may be shared to some extent by some individuals some of the time, but the nature and extent of this sharing must remain open to questions” (1998:20, 208). Barth has underscored the porousness of cultural boundaries and characteristics and, like others, that distinct groups exist only in contrast to a different ‘other’ (1969:14-15). Elim residents consider their community to be both unique, as well as aligned with other Yup’ik and Inupiaq communities in the region. The community can be considered a ‘coherent whole,’ with significant internal variation.

This variation is not, as noted with regard to numerous cultural domains and landscapes in this dissertation, simply chaotic, however. There are patterns and structure amidst, of, and through the variation. For example, with regard to identity, as I have demonstrated, the importance of the positive qualities of Elim itself constitute a central core of how people conceive of not only their group but individual identities. There are also patterned ways in which people defined themselves in autonymic terms. And the heterogeneity in issues related to identity is itself a key and patterned identity marker and process, in that it speaks, for example, to the importance of variation in the local construction of selves, as well as likely to the hybridity resulting from the locally particular contact between Indigenous traditional and Christian cosmologies (which itself has resulted in another key marker of individual and group identity: the importance of the current dominant, indigenized conceptualization of Evangelical Covenant Christianity which manifests itself in many ways in the lives of Elim residents). Additionally – though this brief list of ‘for examples’ is by no means a complete one – I have discussed the thorough-going importance of salmon to the community and its residents’ senses of who they are at a number of levels.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and discussion

“Salmon is our center. ... It’s the centerpiece of everything. ... Salmon helps us keep a strong identity.” (*Woman, early 60s*)

The title of this dissertation is *Salmon, Cosmology, and Identity in Elim, Alaska*. In concluding this dissertation, I want to first discuss the title itself, as understanding that is a fairly succinct way of conveying what I did in Elim, what I learned there, and what I hoped to do in this work.

Fundamentally, my work began with, and was thoroughly informed by, asking people fairly explicitly about identity topics and also about what mattered to them and why (all of which, I would argue, are really questions that are centrally about identity, broadly understood). I asked, for example, about what is important to people, and about people’s relationships to Elim, to fish and other animals, to place, and to each other. Salmon was a key lens, topic and tool through which to do that, and a topic which provided key information about what came out of those inquiries, though it was by no means the only such lens, topic, or tool. Out of those inquiries I not only received information explicitly about identity and also about ‘what matters and why;’ I additionally received a picture how things are and how they work. That is to say, I learned about the local cosmology, a set of discourses about and a model of how the world is structured, and what the nature of and relationships are between that which lies within it (including humans). This should not be surprising – to the question of ‘what matters and why,’ the answer about the ‘how (what matters)’ goes right back to cosmology. I also obtained through those inquiries, and my thinking about them, a picture of that picture in the local discourse – this meta-picture conveys a sense of diversity and heterogeneity in the picture itself, but contains patterns and is itself patterned, including the pattern which is the heterogeneity itself.

As seen in the preceding chapters, this inquiry provided information about salmon, subsistence, identity, history, being, the nature of animals, human-animal relationships, human-human relationships, economics, spirituality and religion, place and space, affect, meaning, value(s), and cosmology. This produced insights about, among other things, the importance of subsistence to people, the importance of salmon (particularly in a region which has otherwise been understood

primarily through the lens of relationships with marine mammals), the nature of the hybridity in the local worldview, the cosmological importance of a shift towards Christianity, key touchstones about values and how they relate to broader cultural patterns, attachment to place, and processes of identity formation. I began to get a picture of how people understand and interrelate humans, animals, values, behavior, place, the divine, the community of Elim, and the broader universe to each other and in the context of history, culture, and cosmology. Salmon was good to think with, and asking about it told me not only, fundamentally, about what salmon *is* to Elim people, for example in terms of food, spirituality, values, politics, and so on – but also, asking about it was a way of gaining insight into and understanding of those broader relationships and contexts. I suggest these are all highly and meaningfully interconnected, and I have explored ways in which this is the case in the preceding chapters.

Returning to the title of the dissertation. Regarding identity, as I noted earlier, I spent considerable time exploring not only identity in some more explicit senses, but also what was important to people, what mattered – and why. The latter told me about value, meaning, place, and much more – all of which, as I have just suggested, are also really fundamentally about identity in a broad sense. Identity connotes, all at the same time: being; significance, meaning and value; context and process; discourse; and affect. In other words, identity was a good metonym – it is part of what I was finding out about when I was asking about Elim, and ‘what matters,’ and why – and it also happens to be a good way to describe what I found out about that. Furthermore, as I have suggested, these and other inquiries and research experiences also fundamentally led me to understandings about cosmology – the constitution and nature of the things in the world, their relationships, and the principles which underlie all of that.

With regard to the fourth word – Elim – this would appear self-evident, and to an extent it is. I highlight it now, however, to stress the significance of place to everything else I have looked at, such as identity and cosmology. It is at the heart of my work, of what I was told, and what I think about it. As I have suggested, in a fundamental way my work asked of people in Elim: What matters, and why? To get there, I asked a lot about salmon, but also many other things. And, what I got were not only answers to those questions, but also ‘how things are and how they work.’ Asking about what matters in Elim told me many things – it told me about value, it told me about

meaning, it told me about the nature of the universe, it told me about identity, and so on... but in telling me what matters to, in, and about Elim it also showed me how *Elim* matters – it told me about the importance of Elim itself to the people in Elim amidst this whole galaxy of topics.

Thus, this dissertation is about many different topics, and about many different patterns and observations and insights about those topics. In conclusion, I would like to engage the data and analyses in this work in more detailed discussions. The first discussion is an attempt to show one of the possible ways for thinking about the interconnections amongst all of what has come before in this dissertation – a picture of what I have learned, and a picture of that picture. I am calling it a woven narrative, drawing a thread of discussion through the various domains, considerations, and arguments. In this I will look at, in a holistic way, the internal details and broad outlines of these pictures and the cosmology, as well as some connections and patterns about, within, and between these pictures, this cosmology, and their elements. It is not the only way this could be done, but it is one way to connect many of the elements discussed in preceding chapters, building off of that which has already been presented. The final section of this chapter is an engagement of this dissertation's material and analyses in light of problematics at the nexus of difference and contemporary cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and management interfaces.

Weaving a thread

To return to what I noted in the Introduction, it is my main contention in this dissertation that my work in Elim revealed that – and how – identity and cosmology are co-created, and that salmon are good to think with in order to see that. I have looked at the nature of and interconnections between people, fish and other animals, other aspects of the environment, and the spiritual. These tie together in a cosmological system, and the nature of that system in (lived) culture and context has particular characteristics (namely, it is heteroglossic, contains a particular dominant discourse, and is a patterned and structured landscape marked by hybridity and constituted in large part by significant heterogeneities in and of voices, discourses, practices, and beliefs). To put it another way, the co-creation of identity and cosmology occurs within a visible hybrid cosmological landscape of (primarily) ‘traditionally Indigenous’ and Christian ideologies, and this landscape in lived culture and context is marked by a patterned heteroglossic ‘condition’

which includes a dominant (and indigenized) Christian discourse. This is visible, and made, in various respects in co-implicated, co-indexical, interlocking instantiations of human-animal relationships, spirituality, systems of proper behavior, place attachments, and identity processes and formations. In the more specific elements of these broader categories – subsistence practices, attachments to place, understandings of the divine, characterizations of the nature of and relationships with fish and other animals, statements of values, economic ideologies, forms of proper behavior, processes of identity, affective states, and so on – we see a co-implication of elements of the system which shifts and is defined, constructed, instantiated, and understood through history, practice and discourse.

Some of the broader themes in this work are, at some level, stories told many times over in other places and with other people – such as the importance of salmon and subsistence to culture, and how Christianity and Indigenous worldviews may meet up in a complex dynamic of cosmological tension and hybridity. That does not change, however, the fact of their importance here and the significance of that importance. Additionally, it is the particularities of the processes, structures, and discourses told here which have broad and specific significance. Elim shows, for example, unique ways in which human-animal relationships, elements of spirituality, processes of identity, place attachments, and affective states can be co-implicated and co-indexed in meaningful ways. Also shown in Elim is the meaningfulness of salmon in culture and cosmology in a region which has historically been analytically understood primarily in terms of human relationships with marine mammals. Among other things, this made evident how salmon can be useful to think with in their particular cosmological position as they highlight a strikingly different form of human-animal relationship and ontology – a Christian animatism – than what is typically understood as being the case for Alaskan Eskimo groups. Aspects of this shift may be more prevalent in other areas of the north than is currently recognized in the literature. We can also see the ways in which historical particularities play themselves out in lived realities, for example in the uniquely powerful ways in which Evangelical Covenant Christianity played a key role in the founding of Elim and its way of life through the present day. My inquiries with Elim, using the lens of salmon, and subsistence, into cosmology and identity revealed their co-creation, and in the picture of that co-creation a key feature was the evident and striking heterogeneity in the beliefs, practices, and discourses of Elim residents.

The existence of these heterogeneities, which have patterns and structure, is a noteworthy sociocultural fact in and of itself which is also suggestive of the outlines of certain key cultural-historical processes. This landscape of (heterogeneities of) beliefs, practices, voices, discourses, and ‘languages’ makes visible important features, as I have argued, of Elim peoples’ hybridized cosmology in (and of) culture and context. That landscape is also representative, constitutive, and evidentiary of the key heteroglossic condition of this system-in/of-culture, a condition marked by a dominant discourse largely informed by an indigenized Christianity. Bakhtin has noted that the languages of heteroglossia “do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways,” and, further, that,

“there does exist a common plane that methodologically justifies our juxtaposing them [these languages of heteroglossia]: all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they all may become juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. As such they encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people” (1981:291-292).

As Sahlins (following Bakhtin) has noted, “Polyphony is not Cacophony” (Sahlins 2002:27); this heteroglossia, and the heterogeneity(ies) of it and its constitutive elements at multiple levels, is not chaotic, but rather is meaningful and patterned in relation to the cultural and cosmological landscape hybridized (with historical particularity) in part by that Christianity as well as by ‘traditional,’ Indigenous, and other discourses, systems, and structures. The marked heterogeneities I speak of are likely a sign of that particular hybridity, including the historical particularities relating to Evangelical Covenant Christianity’s significant role in the history of Elim.

As I noted earlier, I have utilized a broad conceptualization of heteroglossia, both in terms of what it can be applied to and what can be constitutive of it. Included in this, for example, is an area which I have discussed mostly indirectly and implicitly (as opposed to, for example,

particular voices, discourses, or 'languages' understood broadly), and that is the area of “socially typifying” languages (Bakhtin 1981:291). Many of the Elim voices and discourses discussed – and noted in quotes – pertaining to the various topics explored in this work can be seen as evidentiary, representative, and/or constitutive of such languages. For example, views about fish as directed by God or part of God’s blessing typify the dominant form of religious language, the indigenized (Evangelical Covenant) Christian discourse in Elim. This can be said to be the case for other voices as well – such as speech about fish enumeration voicing management discourse; particular statements about sharing and not wasting, reciprocal relationships with certain non-human species, and the values associated with subsistence speaking to a form of ‘traditional’ language (e.g. taught by Elders, subsistence practitioners, and others); and so on. Many such languages are active in Elim, including the Christian/religious, scientific, natural resource management, traditional, commercial, Tribal, state, federal, and so on, to name just some. Salmon and human-salmon relationships are a particularly valuable lens through which to see this and how it works in everyday life and broader history and culture; or, as Todd has noted, as a “micro-site of engagement” (2018:61), borrowing from Fienup-Riordan's similar notion of “points of engagement” (2000:57). These languages are tied to power relationships and histories, and are connected, as are the people voicing them, to many other discourses and actors in the local and wider world. They are not always explicitly formulated and clearly overlap in many cases. The languages themselves can exhibit forms of multiplicity, themselves being multiple, being voiced and inhabited by many different people, and having various statuses. They may be developed and voiced in formal and informal interactions and in authorized and unauthorized ways and places. They are conveyed through a variety of communicative acts, including the circulation of a variety of texts and discourses of and regarding these languages (for example, from biblical passages to fish counts to scientific papers to announcements of fishery closures and so on). Utterances themselves also can voice multiple languages simultaneously, which points to ways discourses can be connected, such as to a dominant discourse, and to a broader cosmological or cultural system. This is one way in which, for example, languages of Christianity, natural resource management, commercial fishing, and aspects of traditional language appear to interlock in terms of the formulation of the dominant discourse on fish and human-fish relationships in Elim.

I will focus in the remainder of this section's discussion on weaving one weft thread through the warp by honing in on some of the arguments presented throughout this work through the lens of an examination of Elim residents' perceptions of fish and other animals, and at human-animal relationships. Subsistence is central to people individually and collectively in Elim, in terms of everything from senses of identity to well-being to economics and beyond. Salmon is crucial to subsistence, and is also interesting 'to think with,' as I have stated previously, for example by constituting in many ways an iconic species in terms of historically shifting understandings of animals and human-animal relationships. Salmon is also valuable to think with in other ways, being highly implicated across the cultural and discursive landscape in Elim. While this dissertation expanded out to considerations of subsistence as well in this regard, with it too becoming a key lens – in no small part because considerations of salmon are often highly linked with understandings of subsistence – my work began fundamentally with an attention to salmon (and identity), and it remains the central lens and source from which much of the rest of the work for this project unfolded. During a conversation with one Elim resident regarding my dissertation research, she conveyed the sense that salmon should be understood as a cultural and cosmological anchor. She (*Woman, early 60s*) stated that salmon “helps us keep a strong identity,” that salmon “is our center,” and that “activities circle around it [salmon].” Salmon, which she also called the “centerpiece of everything” and “the bottom line,” in her view “anchors” many other activities and ideas, including storytelling, family ties, the land, history, different kinds of skills, camping, intergenerational knowledge sharing, community, culture, cultural practices, fishing and other subsistence activities – and activities on the land broadly. This resident also characterized salmon as being like a “stake in the ground” to which everything is attached and moving around, like the center of a universe.

In the local discourse on buying and selling, we can see a well-known dynamic tension between cash and subsistence economies (and the underlying ideologies associated with each); many in Elim see a re-conceptualization occurring with some subsistence resources from a previous status as cultural resources shifting into cash resources, discourse which counter poses the cash economy with Indigenous culture and a sense of proper human-animal relationships. The traditional values of sharing and not wasting are held in high regard in Elim, though discourse on them also points to shifts in underlying logics for some (e.g. that sharing pleases God) and binds

people are placed in in a changing world (e.g. the assessment of waste as it relates to commercial fishing).

Views about proper human-animal relationships are also reflected in views on human-human relationships – and also speak to what I have called a particular cosmological ecology of ethics and morality – such as in the views about sharing and not wasting in terms of their similar importance or even necessity in both types of relationships. Changing views are also reflected across both domains, as is seen in views about how sharing with others may please God and result in successful harvest. In views about fish and other animals, and human-animal relationships, as well as a number of other related issues (such as conceptualizations of luck, sharing, etc.), there is a broad heterogeneity of views which are perhaps evidence of the particular way different cosmological systems have and are currently historically hybridized in actual lived reality in Elim. As one of these systems, the actively practiced and prominent Christianity in Elim plays a powerful structuring role in peoples' beliefs, actions, and discourse. It was argued that Elim provides a good example of a shift seen across the Bering Strait region more broadly of changing views from earlier times about fish agency, spirit, intelligence, awareness, and other qualities.

With a shifted and 'diminished' conceptualization of fish intelligence, awareness, agency, spirit, and reciprocity (with the shift being of some qualities out of fish and to God or God's blessing) combined with the relationship between fish and humans (e.g. in terms of harvest, reciprocity, etc.) now being primarily based on the relationship with (a Christian) God and God's blessing, I have suggested that in Elim we may characterize the relevant aspects of the conceptualization of fish and of the human-animal relationship pertaining to fish as a Christian animatism (see Chapter 5, and also Raymond-Yakoubian and Angnaboogok 2017). This may also be related to the high degree of commodification of salmon in comparison to other subsistence species. As noted earlier in this dissertation, the focus here in this understanding of animatism is on the shifting of the fully agentive spiritual essence from originary loci in animals (an animism) to somewhere else, something diffuse (or diffusely applicable). That 'somewhere else' is a Christian God and God's direction and/or blessing, which is now the locus of such an essence, which then has particular instantiations (of God's direction or blessing). That third element is now added to

the relationship between humans and animals. It is because the fully agentive spiritual essence for animals is now seen as primarily located in this diffuse (or diffusely applicable), divine, sovereign third element that I have called this a type of ‘animatism.’ This essence is instantiated in or with at least certain animals (certainly fish). It is acknowledged, and/or sought, and/or appreciated by humans in a somewhat reciprocal, albeit highly asymmetrical relationship, with God; it may also be operationalized in humans.

Mauss’ formulation of systems of gift-exchange stressed the obligations to give, receive, and reciprocate, and the relationship of such gift-exchange to gods, nature and the dead ([1950] 1990). In these systems, the exchange of gifts is both free and obligatory, and such giving involves an “intermingling” of people and things in systems of value, obligation, and the performance and production of social structure ([1950] 1990:20). Nadasdy has mobilized the idea of the gift to describe the reciprocal relationships between northern hunting peoples and animals (Nadasdy 2007). Mauss noted that,

“In all societies in Northeast Siberia and among the Eskimos of West Alaska, as with those on the Asian side of the Behring Straits, potlatch produces an effect not only upon men, who vie with one another in generosity, not only upon the things they pass on to one another or consume at it, not only upon the souls of the dead who are present and take part in it, and whose names have been assumed by men, but even upon nature. The exchange of presents between men, the ‘namesakes’ – the homonyms of the spirits, incite the spirits of the dead, the gods, things, animals, and nature to be ‘generous towards them’. The explanation is given that the exchange of gifts produces an abundance of riches. Nelson and Porter have provided us with a good description of these festivals and of their effect on the dead, on wild life, and on the whales and fish that are hunted and caught by the Eskimos. In the kind of language employed by the British trappers they have the expressive titles of ‘Asking Festival’, or ‘Inviting-in Festival’. They normally extend beyond the bounds of the winter villages” ([1950] 1990:14-15).

This discussion, as well as Mauss’ notions of multi-system “intermingling” in gift-exchange and of the relationships of gift-exchange to the natural and spiritual, clearly suggest ways in which

ideologies of sharing, reciprocity, the nature of animals and human-animal relationships, and the nature of the spiritual and divine have meaningful interlinkages amongst them and to other cultural domains and social systems. They also suggest a framework in which to understand what I have termed a “particular cosmological ecology of ethics and morality,” as well as one way to see potential connections between the current Christian animatism discourse and previous animistic discourses. With regard to the latter, perhaps in fish as being given to humans as “God's blessing,” requiring reciprocal behavior such as good acts towards fish (that blessing), towards other people, and towards God (e.g., not wasting, sharing, and praying), we see a form of gift-exchange in the contemporary dominant discourse pertaining to fish and human-fish relationships, a Christian animatism heavily influenced by the Evangelical Covenant Christianity practiced in Elim. Thusly, a gift-exchange which was once between humans and animals directly has been shifted to being between humans and animals but by way of a primary relationship to God.

Perhaps in the shift to a Christian animatism we also see some of the roots of the paradoxes people find themselves in as pertains to their relationships with animals. For example, in interacting with a capitalist economic system, Elim residents are required to simultaneously hold opposing beliefs. Take for example commercial fishing, an activity which promotes discussion of cash and subsistence as in a dynamic tension (not just in terms of practices and products but also values). On the one hand in this system people are entangled with what is implicitly valued in a Judeo-Christian cosmology – the virtue of the capitalist economic orientation towards the world – with an awareness of these structures as foreign bodies, and even as cancerous and profane in comparison to traditional Indigenous structures. Additionally, in this commercial relationship to fish (as well as in certain eventualities which occur, such as waste), one might even see this as doubly profane – not only in its juxtaposition to Indigenous traditional beliefs, practices, and cosmology but also in its treatment of a Christian God's blessing. This is perhaps a central part of the problematic which Elim residents are placed in, and which evinces in their discourse, when considering human-animal relationships as well as their own identities.

It is my contention that, in addition to the information I received about more ‘explicit’ discussions about identity (see e.g. Chapter 7), that much of what I learned about regarding other

topics – human-animal relationships, spirituality, place, and so on – was also about identity as well. This is in a specific sense but also a broad one connoting meaning, value, similarity, significance, and importance. Discussions of salmon and subsistence, values and the practice of them, and attachment to place all were strongly framed by an emplacement within Elim. Connections between subsistence food (and in particular salmon) and well-being were tied to group identity, childhood development, connections to ancestry, and the embodiment of human-animal relationships. Collings et al., for example (among many others), have posited and demonstrated the connections between subsistence or “country” food and identity, sociality, and human-environment relationships for Inuit and Eskimo people (2015). Understandings of the nature of animals and of relationships between humans and animals, and the practice and mechanics of values and proper behavior were highly connected to Christianity (including, for example, in the connection between a sort of cosmic principle of opportunity – luck – and the practice of values and proper behavior and the role of the blessing of God).

Man, early 60s: “Salmon and marine mammals were the mainstay of survival. Simply existing with these creatures ensured our identity, as beings in our world.”

In a consideration of identity markers, contents, and processes we also see a mirroring of that which is seen in consideration of other cultural domains, such as human-animal relationships. For example, we see a heterogeneity of belief, practice, and discourse in a hybridized and heteroglossic cosmological and ideological system-in-lived-culture-and-context. As part of this we see, among other things, the importance of the influence of ‘originally’ western modes of spirituality and economy, and we also see explicit and implicit meta-discourse about that influence. These discourses on identity – who we are, what we value, how we are who we are, etc. – like the discourses on so many of the other topics explored in this dissertation, have simultaneously recursive, self-referential, and meta-discursive elements, whereby people are discussing not just the elements of the picture being provided but also painting a picture of that picture at the same time – for example, through discussions of senses of loss, complexity and difficulty in light of competing ideologies and their practices (e.g. commercial versus subsistence fishing), and attributions of attachments and values to particular things over others in light of this ever-moving field of cosmology-in-practice. Identity processes are also realized and reflected in

states of affect and selfhood which reference broader cultural patterns. For example, there was discussion of shame and the presentation of self which pertained to transportation options to subsistence, or with not having enough to share with others, but no such sense is attributed to the receipt of shared subsistence foods. This paints a picture of the negative affective states which lack of possession of purchased goods can create but positive associations which are tied to similarly-functional cultural resources (that is to say, vehicles can function to bring one to food). This affective pattern is seen elsewhere in the discussion of buying and selling of subsistence foods, for example – but it also sits alongside the strong relevance of a Christian worldview in the local cosmology. Just as a salmon can almost simultaneously carry two different ontologies depending on the intentionality of the fisher when it is caught – subsistence or commercial fish – the person in Elim who consumes that salmon also experiences an embodied hybridity on a daily basis, sometimes successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully negotiating multiple and often competing ideologies at epistemic, practical, affective, and unconscious levels.¹

Difference and contemporary epistemic, policy, and management interfaces

In concluding this work, I would like to turn to a type of engagement which is particularly meaningful to me – those engagements which lie at the crossroads of the lives and knowledge of the people I work with, and the realms of science, policy, and management at broad levels. For roughly the past dozen years, I have worked as the Social Science Program Director for Kawerak, Inc., the non-profit Tribal Consortium for the Bering Strait region, which includes the village of Elim. My work in this capacity with and on behalf of the Tribes of this region has involved documenting, analyzing, and applying the knowledge, perspectives, interests, and concerns of Indigenous people in various fora – particularly broader scientific, policy, and natural resource management arenas. This work often involves the challenges and complexities of the problem of interfacing forms of Indigenous Knowledge (such as Traditional Knowledge), discourse, cosmology, perspectives, and concerns with systems and institutions which are non-Indigenous in origin. At a more fundamental level, however, these interfaces (which may manifest as issues of “integration,” “incorporation,” or something else) are really about difference and the

¹ See also Lien and Law’s formulations, mobilizing de Laet and Mol, of salmon as fluid and multiple (Lien and Law 2011; Law and Lien 2012).

engagement with it.

I would like to first return to the questions I posed in Chapter 3, namely: What kinds of beliefs about and relationships with animals do contemporary Bering Strait Eskimo people have, and what do they mean to Eskimo people today? How can these relationships be observed in individual and group practice or discourse? How do they relate and fit into other and broader cultural structures? And do these beliefs mesh with, or are they contradictory to, contemporary natural resource science, policy, and management? With regard to the first three, I evaluated these questions in relationship to the ‘state of knowledge’ at the time of my research in Elim and of this writing, and suggested that the work in this dissertation also – among other things – helped to think more about answers to these questions. I specifically left the last question unanswered, to be addressed in this portion of this work, where it is just one possible question of many in what I am now framing as a broader problematic regarding difference and alterity and contemporary cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and management interfaces.

In regard to that last question – whether and how contemporary Bering Strait Eskimo beliefs about human-animal relationships are concordant or not with contemporary natural resource science, policy, and management – as with the other questions, we have some, though not an extensive base of knowledge, to begin to tackle the question. Much of the research on this topic in the region, as well as observations of many interactions between communities and management regimes, indicate at the very least that region residents are not satisfied with the status quo regarding natural resource science, policy, and management, and that there is a significant disconnect between worldviews regarding animals, knowledge, management, and many other things (see e.g. Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Gadamus et al. 2015; Raymond-Yakoubian 2017; B. Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2014; Raymond-Yakoubian n.d., 2012; Raymond-Yakoubian and Daniel 2018; Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian n.d., 2015a, 2015b, 2017; J. Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017). This previous work indicates that with regard to the Bering Strait region there are real and potent problems related to difference at the conjunction with contemporary cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and management interfaces.

A number of related, and I would argue interlocking, problematics are bound up within this

broader issue. For example: how do we understand and grapple with difference and alterity in terms of cosmology and ontology at very broad theoretical levels as well as ‘applied’ and ‘practical’ levels (e.g. in the above-noted interfaces)?; how do we account for variation within systems and groups of people?; and how do we consider issues and problems of voicing, privilege, and power? I posit that we do not have completely satisfactory answers to the broad issue which headlines this sub-section (difference and contemporary cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and management interfaces) nor any of the related problematics – and indeed, as I will show, the information and analysis which has been the substance of this dissertation lends weight to that conclusion. However, I will also argue that it lends weight to the idea that there are good ways forward.

I will start here looking at the middle question just posed, with a theoretical vignette which is as good a place as any to begin with that addresses the issues of cosmological difference and alterity as they relate to cross-cultural interactions, particularly epistemic, policy, and management-based. Nadasdy has addressed this question, broadly, in terms of both anthropological theory and wildlife management (2007). Nadasdy argues that anthropology generally only accepts hunters’ beliefs about animals as metaphorical, as opposed to being literally true, and in justifying the prevailing western debasement of such ideas. Because of this, Nadasdy argues, anthropologists are not only closing off important areas for anthropological investigation and understanding, but are also contributing to the dismissal of Indigenous people’s knowledge specifically in the context of wildlife management, and to the reinforcement of state control over Indigenous people, in general (2007:25, 37). Nadasdy forwards that anthropologists regularly argue for the legitimacy of Indigenous ideas and practices, but at the same time anthropologists’ own personal and disciplinary beliefs are “fundamentally incompatible” with them (2007:26). Even anthropologists like Brightman, who have spent large amounts of time investigating such relationships, have fallen prey to such ideas:

“Some Crees who participate intensively in foraging are socialized to experience feelings of thankfulness when they kill animals, and they say that they find in the enactment of these practices a satisfying medium for the expression of these feelings” ([1973] 2002:103).

Brightman is clearly classifying these Cree beliefs as cultural constructions, as opposed to beliefs having any standing in reality (for an Alaskan example, see Burch 1971). Nadasdy agrees with Povinelli (1995) and Ingold (2000) that by maintaining certain ontological distinctions like these ourselves, we are just giving ammunition to biologists, government officials, and others who want to “delegitimize” Indigenous Knowledge systems (Nadasdy 2007:26). If, within a system that values “fact,” we cannot argue that hunters’ beliefs are factual, or based in fact, what is the basis for our recommendations that their ontologies be taken into consideration?

As Nadasdy discusses, what can happen is a situation where western people do not subscribe to northern hunters’ beliefs (any of them, but especially the ‘magico-religious’ ones) and ‘cherry-pick’ what fits for incorporation into the prevailing system of wildlife management or what-have-you (2007:37). This happens in many places around the north, including Alaska, and is disempowering to Indigenous peoples and contributes to the maintenance of state power over those peoples. Managers, policymakers, scientists and others take out of a body of Traditional Knowledge what is most similar to their belief system, something that is common between the two, or something that supports their aims and goals, and then insert it into their plans. This defeats the purpose of trying to ‘integrate’ systems of knowing, however, and is particularly detrimental to Indigenous people whose knowledge is being played with for the purpose of political correctness or to suppress complaints. This “distillation,” as Nadasdy calls it, also goes against anthropology’s abiding interest in the holistic and context-dependent interpretations of culture and knowledge (2007:37).

Nadasdy argues that anthropologists who study hunting societies have been, in general, hesitant to “apply standard insights of exchange theory” to their examinations of human-animal relationships (2007:26). He challenges us to at least be open to possibility of literal truths in what our research participants and collaborators convey to us, if for no other reason than the possibility of learning something new about human-animal relationships. He provides examples from his own as well as other anthropologists’ field work to show that such an approach is not unwarranted.

Nadasdy focuses on the reciprocal relationship that northern hunters state exists between humans

and animals to argue why such a radical analysis should be undertaken. A counterpoint to these gifting relationships are relationships involving coercion, magic, or trickery. These types of relationships, frequently expressed within the same culture, are often posed by northern researchers as being contradictory. Nadasdy argues that they are not necessarily in contradiction, but are simply two different ways that humans and animals relate, and that (at least) Kluane people see such a relationship (of both reciprocity and coercion) as being part of a coherent whole (2007:17-28). Sahlins has discussed how statements or beliefs that appear contradictory to outsiders may in fact not be inconsistent. This is because “we do not know, without much experience, the point of view from which each is made” (Hocart in Sahlins 2002:27). In other words, for this case, just because a hunter has to “resort” to a strategy to kill an animal, does not mean that what he gets is not still a gift – just that he had to work in a different way to get it. A commonality that persists in both types of relationships (reciprocal and coercive) is the theme of respect. Hunters pursuing animals under either type of relationship are still required to be respectful of the animals during the entire context of the hunt.

While Nadasdy's suggestions for how anthropologists who study hunting peoples are to move forward are both theoretically and practically intriguing, there are a number of concerns one could raise. The first is a practical one – even if this is a valid critique (and it certainly has merit, in whole or part), how should the anthropologist escape some of these binds? I myself am ready to accept the truth of the views of those I have worked with for over a decade, but even upon review of my dissertation, I find it difficult to accept the use of manners of speaking which run afoul of Nadasdy's critique (even if, at most, they reflect a linguistic limitation). A second critique which could be leveled is that the abandonment of one's own cultural presuppositions would seem to amount to fakery rather than reflexivity on the part of the anthropologist, because it is questionable that such an abandonment is even possible. For example, by saying “This group of people believe X,” the implication is that the world is not necessarily that way and/or that there is an alternative to that belief, even if that is not what the anthropologist/author is meaning to say. (Work in “ontological anthropology” proposes solutions to this problematic, though I do not feel it truly solves this and related problems; I discuss issues related to this further below.) Thirdly, Nadasdy seems to miss or not take into consideration one key difficulty with his suggestion: beliefs about any issue or situation are likely to vary within any given group.

Anthropologists, of course, know this, but have been prone in some cases to overgeneralizing the beliefs of a group based off of knowledge of a few individuals. Briggs, working with Canadian Inuit, has pointed out the difficulties of such generalizations: “[p]erhaps the values of some of these variables may be shared to some extent by some individuals some of the time, but the nature and extent of this sharing must remain open to questions” (1998:20, 208). In his work with the Cree, Brightman, for example, points out that Cree ideas regarding animals have changed over time: “[b]eliefs and practices regarding management and intensive use are today distributed through Rock Cree society in an exceedingly diverse manner” ([1973] 2002:303). As is demonstrated extensively in this dissertation, a heteroglossia, and hybridity and heterogeneities of belief, practice, voice, and discourse, are distinct patterns regarding the issues I research in Elim. Nadasdy does not account for these types of observations (a problem of course not exclusive to Nadasdy’s work), which has serious implications for his suggestion that we create a “theoretical framework that can accommodate the possibility that there might be literal truth to what hunters tell us” and advocate for the use of Indigenous conceptions and ideas in wildlife management (2007:37). Hensel, commenting on difference in the conceptualization of subsistence, is also noteworthy here: “not only does subsistence mean different things to different people, but it also means different things to the same people at different times” (1992: 82). And, perhaps particularly in today’s globalized world, where even the most ‘insular’ northern communities have access to ideas and knowledge from around the world, and a diverse heteroglossia is frequently evident, deciding which voices to privilege within this dialogue seems an increasingly difficult task.

For example, several years ago in one Seward Peninsula community that was experiencing acute declines in salmon returns, I was told by one individual that the difficulties were caused by arguments amongst village residents about fish. I was told by another individual that it was simply a low point in the cyclical nature of salmon populations; by another that it was caused by a halt in lake fertilization previously carried out by local managers; and by others that offshore pollock trawlers and their salmon bycatch were to blame (Raymond-Yakoubian n.d.). Each explanation carries with it a different set of possible solutions, each of which would need to be acted on differently by an anthropologist advocating for some kind of solution. As Todd (2014b:231) notes,

“[w]hile the metaphor of human-fish relations as a site of engagement is an attractive heuristic to explain different understandings and experiences of human-animal relations as encountered by different actors in Paulatuq, I also acknowledge that each person’s experience is unique and that to over-generalize local human-fish relations is a great disservice to the nuance and complexity of these personal stories.”

These types of observations are not only true at the level of individual voices but at higher heteroglossic orders, so to speak, such as in discourses and ‘languages,’ for all of which there may be a multiplicity in a community (as in the case of Elim).

The heteroglossia which such discourses help constitute is a patterned complexity which is navigable and coherent via a “common system of intelligibility, extending to the grounds, means, modes and issues of disagreement” (Sahlins 2002:28-29). This cultural systematicity is in and of the heteroglossic complexity. Speaking even more broadly, intelligibility derives from culture, the cultural systematicity in and of the heteroglossia, as well as other common systems of intelligibility at different orders (sometimes interlocking, and which may be ideologies, discourses, or languages in the local heteroglossia as well as indexed, partially ‘external,’ systems to which they refer and are connected). The heteroglossia and cultural system I speak of for Elim includes a hybrid cosmological landscape informed and shaped by various cultural constructs and historical patterns; this includes within it the systems and processes of colonialism and the social-political order that it has helped spawn.

Even with such an understanding in place, we are still left with difficult, if not impossible decisions to make, if we are to follow Nadasdy’s theoretical and practical suggestions. Who are we to ‘believe,’ or ‘voice,’ so to speak, in our work? For example, are Indigenous people whose beliefs could be characterized as more ‘western’ to be taken less seriously by anthropology? Are we to only or more strongly advocate for Indigenous people who maintain what appear to be more ‘traditional’ views of human-animal relationships? Who has the ‘better’ and more ‘real’ relationship with animals? Can we voice them all? And, to complicate the matter further, it is apparent in even stating these questions that they do not accurately reflect the complexity of lives, cultures, and communities, such as in the indigenized constructions of larger cultural patterns (as

if there is any other kind), and in the fact that particular individuals may voice and stake multiple discursive and ideological positions. Not only do such questions illustrate fairly clear ethical problems, making certain choices here (e.g. towards a particular ideology regarding subsistence and commercial fishing as relates to understanding identity), as Reedy-Maschner has argued, enters into theoretically fraught territory as well (2010). Could anthropologists privilege and voice the common system(s) of intelligibility instead of particular voices, languages, and discourses of a heteroglossia? Perhaps that is one approach, though caution again is required here, for while there is a role for the anthropologist, including in the identification of such a system, this is perhaps a bridge too far in terms of the idea of representing (first by depending so heavily on the accuracy of such an analytical abstraction) “others” or even one’s own culture(s), though perhaps concerns here could be addressed by rigorously co-productive methodologies which include robust review of products prior to applied use of them. These and many other questions trouble those who take seriously Nadasdy’s (and others’) call for the construction of new theoretical frameworks.

I agree with Nadasdy (2007) that a radical change in anthropology’s approach is worth considering – or at least with the sentiment of it. However, as I have noted above, heterogeneities (e.g. within systems, or groups like communities) like those I have discussed extensively in the present work significantly trouble Nadasdy’s suggestions regarding anthropology’s approach to human-animal relationships. Some work in the “ontological turn” in anthropology has, for some, presented the promise of a way of tackling challenges related to addressing difference, alterity, and ontology, and the problems of ‘multiculturalist’ logics.² For example, perspectivism and multinaturalism, outlined by Viveiros de Castro engaging Amazonian material, presents a counter to a multiculturalist perspective, among other things countering the idea of ‘one nature’ in the proposition that there are many natures but one culture (Kohn 2015; Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2014). Holbraad et al. note that,

“while the ontological turn in anthropology has made the study of ethnographic difference or ‘alterity’ one of its trademarks, it is really less interested in differences

² I do not necessarily see an incompatibility between the essence of what Nadasdy is calling for and some of the thinking and approaches in what has come to be called ‘ontological anthropology.’

between things than within them: the politics of ontology is the question of how persons and things could alter from themselves” (2014).

I am convinced there is value in these approaches – for example in the examination of difference and alterity as it relates to ontology, in the possibility for a critical examination of the underlying logics in certain forms of anthropological thinking, in the attention to the substantial and active role of non-human entities in the world, in the concern with the political consequence of anthropology and ontology, and in the suggestive and even artistic approaches to these problems.³ However, I remain unconvinced that they offer encompassing solutions to putting into practice the old and vexing problems such as those Nadasdy (and others, of course) have noted are associated with difference, alterity, knowledge, power, and cross-cultural engagements, or the broader theoretical dilemmas which they engage such as the ‘problems’ of multiculturalist perspectives. Nor do I find these solutions to be any less troubled by issues raised by heteroglossia and heterogeneities of voice, discourse, ‘language,’ belief, and practice such as that discussed in this dissertation. In many cases it also seems as though ‘ontological anthropological’ approaches seem to simply reproduce other existing problems (see, e.g., Ramos’ 2012 critique), and that they fail to convince across scales (e.g. regarding the multiplicity of ontology and cosmology in and of the production of theory and ideology itself), which can also produce a strange analysis that is simultaneously dissatisfyingly incongruent with ethnographic realities and also dissatisfyingly dissimilar from other apparently problematic approaches to those realities.

Part of the solution to the problematic issue which heteroglossia and intracultural variation raises for the nexus of concerns related to difference, knowledge, policy, and management is the simple recognition of these heterogeneities. This at least enables a critical awareness of their existence as well as a meaningful search for understanding systems of intelligibility amongst them. More broadly speaking, I posit that a thorough-going attention to difference and alterity is a positive and necessary unsettling force, simultaneously raising voices against systems of oppression

³ Schweitzer, perhaps for different reasons, does not ‘adopt’ the approach in ontological anthropology; nonetheless, he identifies some of these points as valuable elements of that approach, which he feels are not necessarily exclusive to it, and also argues for the central importance of being “open to the possibility of alterity” (Schweitzer 2017:168).

while also unsettling theories which seek to represent difference. Recognizing certain forms of difference, as in heterogeneities this dissertation discussed, certainly and perhaps ironically troubles particular approaches to understanding difference – and this clearly extends beyond just dealing with policy and management realms out to (and beyond) the issues of understanding and representing systems, communities, people, and other ‘things’ we may be, live with, or work with. A thorough-going attention to and recognition of difference and alterity looks at not only differences between cosmologies, ontologies, and ideologies and the problematics related to that – it also looks at differences, such as heterogeneities, within systems, at all levels. This dissertation has explored both of these aspects. To return to the broader notion of difference, as Carothers has noted for another region of Alaska, “[e]mbracing difference as an analytical concept opens up possibilities for exploring the current challenges to fisheries engagement in the Suqpiq region” (2012:136). I suggest that the recognition of heterogeneities is a key decolonizing technique, among other things being a crucial tool for recognizing the indigenization of reality and pushing back against false and disempowering hegemonic narratives/narratives of hegemony. I will return to and further explicate this argument shortly below.

I suggest other parts of the solutions – or ways forward – for understanding difference and alterity particularly in the often-‘applied’ crossroads with cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and natural resource management interfaces involve recognizing some of the other related problematics. Key among these are problems of voicing, privilege, and power, things which are clearly related to the concerns raised as well by intracultural variation just noted. Additionally, a continual vexing problem in anthropology is the messiness of anthropological categories and forms – their internally fuzzy logics, and their messiness and incongruence in application to ethnographic data.

A part of the way forward may involve a fluid, flexible, and experimental approach to the categories of and for thinking. Thinking about categories and forms of anthropological thought – such as the concept of animism – as being as fluid and dynamic as the ethnographic realities they are applied to, along with a healthy appetite for experimental refashioning and repurposing of concepts, is something which can hold value. In this work, I have attempted such an approach,

for example in my repurposing of the idea of animatism, and in my attention to heteroglossia, hybridity, and heterogeneities of voice, discourse, language, practice, and belief. As noted in an earlier chapter, Willerslev and Ulturgasheva (2012) and Swancutt (2012) have approached the issues of totemism, animism, predation, and hierarchy with an eye towards some of these types of approaches. Regarding agency, humans, and animals, Lien and collaborators have argued that “[t]he distribution of agency among humans and nonhuman animals is uncertain, negotiable, and shifting” (Lien et al. 2018: 20). This is an apropos and perhaps unsurprising observation since the objects of reality themselves can also be quite fluid, as Law and Lien, mobilizing de Laet and Mol, have argued for salmon – in a need to see them as fluid entities, changing “in form between practices” (Law and Lien 2012:368, 372), or, elsewhere, again following Mol, as multiple (Lien and Law 2011:70).

Problems of asymmetrical power histories and relationships, voicing and privilege (e.g. who's voice is spoken, and how?), and authority and legitimacy are interconnected and saturate and underlie the problematics posed by difference and alterity in the face of cross-cultural epistemic, policy, and natural resource management interfaces. Carothers, for example, has noted the importance of recognizing the deep interlinkages between physical, symbolic, and ideological violence which can play out in, among other social domains, the arena of fisheries with the clashing of cultures (2012:155). Recognition of the value of forms of Indigenous Knowledge, including Traditional Knowledge, in fisheries management is a key part of remedying problems in those management processes (see e.g. Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017). Todd has argued that work in anthropology and other social sciences which ‘cherry-picks’ “parts of Indigenous thought” but fails to engage “directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency, legal orders and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars,” or fails to acknowledge, whilst citing their Euro-American counterparts, the Indigenous thinkers thinking about the same topics, is bound to fail in efforts towards decolonizing thinking and institutions (Todd 2016a:18). There is a parallel in ecological theory, where Menzies has noted “the ways such theories have displaced and ignored Indigenous practices in shaping – and in effect making – the environment that latter-day ecologists now study as natural systems” (2012:162).

My work here takes the methodological and analytical stance that a crucial first step is to

represent with as great a fidelity and richness as possible the many voices in an ethnographic landscape as possible, and it is that aim which I hope to have achieved through the presentation and discussion of many Elim voices over the course of this dissertation. In addition to, and not unrelated to this broader aim (as I have argued above and will explicate further below), this attention to ‘voicing’ has also enabled a better representation of heterogeneous discursive landscapes and the heteroglossic nature of cosmological and other cultural systems. Much of my work over the past decade in Elim and other Bering Strait region communities has regularly evidenced a rich heterogeneity of beliefs, practices, and discourses on, for example, many subsistence management issues, often stemming from different views of human-animal relationships. Whose voice is to be emphasized in research and who is to be advocated on behalf of? Selecting one discourse in the heteroglossia of an Indigenous society is a very ‘othering’ act; one that can point out and celebrate difference, or one that can be dismissive (e.g. of beliefs as non-traditional and therefore unworthy). This is one of the reasons why this dissertation focuses very heavily on giving a rich discussion of the heterogeneities I have just mentioned, particularly through the widespread reproduction of Elim voices in the text (another reason is that this heterogeneity was such a significant feature of the local culture that its discussion is an important element of my overall analysis) – I seek, at a fundamental level, to as fully and with as much fidelity as possible to represent the diversity of these voices, discourses, beliefs, and practices.

Another valuable set of approaches to engaging difference in cross-cultural knowledge, policy, and management interfaces involve the promotion of forms of indigenous governance and management as well as the co-production of knowledge. Jerry Ivanoff, an Indigenous resident of Unalakleet, noted to me while working on another project,

“[I]f we’re not going to be fishermen, they’re killing that particular source of life, then we’ll be scientists. Local knowledge, like I told my Dad I have a degree from Stanford University, anybody can get that with 16 years of concentrated education. [...] I told him the knowledge that you have is far more valuable than anything that I have gained in 16 years of education, as his knowledge is not written in any books. He possessed the oral tradition, knowledge passed down through generations, in our own language” (cited in Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015a:137).

The Kawerak Social Science Program (for which I am the Program Director), has, for example, extensively supported the application of the expert Indigenous scholarship held by the Bering Strait region's Traditional Knowledge experts towards a multitude of scientific, policy, and natural resource management challenges.⁴ Additionally, the Program has been involved extensively in supporting young Indigenous residents from the region in social science work through internships, and, through engagement in the Caleb Pungowiyi Scholars Program, supporting many other scholarly journeys leading towards the protection of the marine environment. It is also important to recognize and promote various forms Indigenous management and management discourse. Todd has noted,

“[w]hen I discuss refraction and dispersion – these are metaphors I borrow from physics – I use these terms to illustrate how Indigenous peoples can (and do) use Indigenous legal orders, and relationships to more-than-human beings, to bend and diffuse the State's European-derived laws. When forced to negotiate across both ‘sameness and difference’ as a matter of survivance, fishy refraction is a tool through which to assert Indigenous legal-governance traditions while contending with the unavoidable realities of State imaginaries about how humans should relate to the world around them” (Todd 2018:67).

Black has noted that Indigenous participation in various forms of governance – including regarding lands and resources – increases well-being (Black 2017), as was clearly shown in this dissertation with the positive attachments and effects on well-being associated with the control of and identification with Tribal lands in Elim. As has been noted elsewhere, traditional reciprocal stewardship practices help to “ensure sustainable forest ecosystems” (CATG 2016: i). I and other collaborators have worked to discuss and promote various Bering Strait Indigenous forms and thought pertaining to natural resource management, including regarding protections for marine areas (Raymond-Yakoubian 2016), habitat conservation policies (Gadamus et al. 2015), a respect-based framework for management (Gadamus and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015; Kawerak 2013a), and ocean planning (Raymond-Yakoubian and Daniel 2018). I and collaborators have developed a co-production of knowledge approach for the Arctic, laying out a holistic process for

⁴ Many of these works have been cited in this dissertation. They and others can be seen at the Kawerak Social Science Program website found at: <https://kawerak.org/natural-resources/social-science/>

bringing together knowledge holders from different knowledge systems towards the goals of shaping and informing various epistemic, policy, and decision-making outcomes in equitable and respectful ways (Behe et al. 2018); this is one among many similar types of approaches with similar ends (e.g. Diver 2017; Diver and Higgins 2014).

The final area I will discuss here regarding these challenges and ‘ways forward’ are calls for and projects of indigenization. I would argue that we can speak of both indigenization and Indigenization, two related endeavors. The first (with a lower-case ‘i’) aims to show how the reality of any process or institution – such as research, or natural resource management – is intimately bound up with its indigenizations. Practically speaking, Indigenous (for example) perspectives and participations regarding such processes are part of what those processes are in and of themselves. Sahlins’ work is key to understanding this notion of indigenization in a broader sense. In his critique of World Systems approaches, he called for, in regard to the study of human societies and cultures, the study of the “indigenization of modernity” (Sahlins [1993] 2005:495). In making a case for historical ethnography, Sahlins argues that one of the things the *tristes tropes* embodied in both the new ethnography and the World Systematists’ views of the time, was one that involved understanding peripheral peoples reverberating in the wake of western capitalism, and in this it collapsed peripheral peoples’ “lives within a global vision of domination in subtle intellectual and ideological ways,” making their “conquest complete” ([1993] 2005:478). Sahlins argues “that no assertion of an imperialist discipline can be received as an event of colonial history without the ethnographic investigation of its practice” ([1993] 2005:485-486). Further, he posits that the confrontation between the West and the Rest in colonial history is best seen “as a triadic historical field, including a complicated intercultural zone where the cultural differences are worked through in political and economic practice” ([1993] 2005:486), and he calls for a breaking-free from the “imperial claims” western capitalism has held on our historiographic and ethnographic analyses ([1993] 2005:495).

I and a collaborator have, repurposing Sahlins’ arguments, argued for an indigenization of climate change (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015b) and an indigenization of research (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2017). With regard to the latter, we argue that in such an indigenization,

“views of research as simply involving or effecting indigenous people [are] abandoned in favor of understanding that how research itself is defined – as well as concepts of research impacts – is based inherently on a relationship of perspectives between all stakeholders involved, including both research and indigenous communities [...]. That is to say, indigenous perspectives on research are part of what research is, in and of itself” (2017:20-21).

With regard to the latter, we argue that we may even see “climate change” as an “environmental cognate” to ‘modernity’ in Sahlins’ call for an indigenization of modernity. We argue that,

“[w]e must, then, for true understanding – as well as for truly just research – not simply posit a list of ‘impacts’ of climate change on Inuit people, but rather understand how such a thing is made meaningful – and thus made real at all – in practice (for everyone). Through this we can see how particular encounters actually occur, and actually exist [...]. In this we are also able to see surprising new interpretations. Consider, for example, that the collective pressures from still dismal Norton Sound salmon returns, the obscurity, horrors and inequity of bycatch, and the pressures of albeit outgunned Bering Strait indigenous subsistence fishers have all served to ignite a shift from the multi-decadal failure of western science and policy to solve this fisheries problem, leading to invigorated funding for scientific research into the causes of the declines and for Traditional Knowledge research, and even some meager regulations on the commercial industry’s activities. In this, the narratives of Bering Strait indigenous people are crucially involved in a change in the way science, management, and policy are practiced, and even moreso, how fisheries and environmental changes themselves are even conceived” (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2015b).

Elim and other Bering Strait Indigenous voices, discourses, languages, beliefs, and practices are interfacing all the time in cross-cultural and intracultural epistemic, policy, and management discourses. This is one way through which particular languages in the heteroglossia are realized in local discourse. Our understanding of these interfaces themselves needs to include within them Indigenous perspectives and engagements, or we are not understanding what they fundamentally

are. Elsewhere, for example, Carothers has noted for the Sugpiaq in the Kodiak archipelago regarding processes of change brought about relating to the introduction of canneries, that “[r]ather than being caught in a one-way relationship of structural dominance and passive reception, local peoples were actively involved in these processes of change” (Carothers 2012:143).

Calls for and processes of Indigenization (with an upper-case “I”) are of course highly related to work on (lower-case ‘i’) indigenization. Here I would characterize Indigenization as involving empowerment and increasing voice, changing existing processes to include Indigenous people and voices, and recognizing and implementing Indigenous alternatives to existing colonial processes. Todd has argued, for example, that we cannot simply call for a decolonization of thought without changing epistemic institutions themselves wherein such thought is generated; thus, for example, we must also decolonize the academy (Todd 2015b). Without this, calls for such a decolonization of thought are “predicated on absent bodies” (Todd 2015a:114). Todd notes,

“[w]hen discourses and responses to the Anthropocene are being generated within institutions and disciplines which are embedded in broader systems that act as *de facto* ‘white public space,’ the academy and its power dynamics must be challenged. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s call for the ‘permanent decolonization of thought’ must be coupled with a radically decolonizing praxis: a praxis that dismantles and re-orientes not only the academy’s and the art world’s presuppositions about themselves, but also dismantles the heteropatriarchy, racism, and whiteness that continue to permeate political and intellectual systems in North America and Europe. [...] Decolonization requires that we change not only who is spoken about and how, but also *who is present* in intellectual and artistic “buildings.” This is because there are so few of us, so few Indigenous bodies, within the European academy. Even when we *are* present, we are often dismissed as biased, overly emotional, or unable to maintain objectivity over the issues we present” (Todd 2015b:251).

In my work at Kawerak, I – and many others at other Indigenous organizations and entities –

have argued for the inclusion of a Tribal seat at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council – alongside many other elements to decolonize the federal fishery management process in Alaska (Raymond-Yakoubian 2012; Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2017). And, as Bering Strait Indigenous experts on research processes noted during a recent workshop, a goal regarding research and policy is not just to have seats at the table, but rather to change or redesign the table (Raymond-Yakoubian and Raymond-Yakoubian 2017:16). Further, the recognition and implementation of Indigenous forms of research, management, and policy is something which sits in both the related i/Indigenizations; some examples from the Bering Strait were discussed above with regard to Indigenous management and governance.

This dissertation in many ways also contributes to indigenizing approaches. For example, I would argue that there is a strong linkage between the recognition of heterogeneities of voice, discourse, language, practice, and belief, and the task of indigenization. A recognition of such heterogeneities can be a key technique – decolonial and otherwise – towards recognizing the indigenization of reality, for example in speaking against false and disempowering narratives of hegemony. My work showing the complexity of these heterogeneities – including through the extensive voicing of Elim residents – provides a counter to understandings that would be based on such problematic and totalizing narratives. Todd also notes, in invoking the concept of “fish pluralities,” that “the Inuvialuit of Paulatuuq employ ‘fish pluralities’ (multiple ways of knowing and defining fish) to negotiate the complex and dynamic pressures faced by humans, animals, and the environment in contemporary Arctic Canada” (Todd 2014b:217). Similarly, we may think of the benefits in the reverse of what I just noted – I would argue that seeing the world as indigenized allows one to see how the discourses and languages of heteroglossia are made not only by factors and actors external to (Indigenous) communities, or by ‘broader’ (e.g. ‘global’) forces, but also by Indigenous people and communities – like Elim, as I have shown for discourses on and about Christianity, the nature of fish, the nature of the world and the relationships of its parts, the relationship of identity to place, and so on. This allows us to see both reality in general and the elements of heteroglossia in particular as they really are, as opposed to particular privileged discourses and interpretations – such as in the fields of science, policy, and management of natural resources – which also allows us to also challenge that which is unjustly or inequitably privileged.

Clearly the challenges still outstrip the solutions, but there are approaches to dealing with difference, alterity, voicing, power, cosmology, and ontology in their vexing cross-cultural interfaces with epistemic, policy, and management processes and systems. I suggest that perhaps the best approach – and the one which makes the most sense given the holistic nature of human beings – is one which is, rather than in search of an overarching theoretical solution, paradigm, or problematic, something that is instead imbued at its core and throughout with the ethical, and that is in parts theoretical, methodological, and sentimental – in reverse order, a thorough-going openness to and recognition of many forms of difference; a commitment to humility, equity, reflexivity, empowerment, and co-production; and finally an appreciation of structure and systematicity, heterogeneity and complexity, and particularity. What we have are not solutions but awareness (of the challenges and their conditions), tools and flexibility (for dealing with those challenges), and responsibility (to those we work with, our humanity, and our world). It is my hope that the present work is something valuable along these lines, especially to those I worked with.

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Appendix



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Institutional Review Board

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February 26, 2009

To: Peter Schweitzer, PhD
Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Stockdale, Research Integrity Administrator
Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Protocol Application

Thank you for submitting the IRB protocol application identified below. This protocol has been administratively reviewed and determined to meet the requirements specified in the federal regulations regarding human subjects' protections for exempt research under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) for research involving the use of educational test, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside of the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Protocol #: 09-03
Title: *Fish and Forms of Subjectivity in the Bering Strait Region*
Level: Exempt
Received: February 17, 2009
Exemption Date: February 26, 2009

If there are major changes to the scope of research or personnel involved on the project, please contact the Office of Research Integrity. Email us at fyirb@uaf.edu or call 474-7800. Contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.

