

# Vanguard Alutiiq heritage practice and the import of expertise Pratiques patrimoniales alutiit d'avant-garde et l'importation de l'expertise

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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## Résumé de l'article

Cet article explore les diverses manières par lesquelles le nettoyage de la pollution due au pétrolier *Exxon Valdez* et le travail patrimonial et identitaire des Alutiit se sont articulés autour de conseils d'experts universitaires. Les types de connaissances et d'évaluations à travers lesquels l'identité, le patrimoine et le nettoyage des côtes polluées ont pu être administrés suggèrent que ce sont les technologies elles-mêmes de la réalisation patrimoniale et identitaire des Autochtones de l'Alaska qui se transforment. Elles sont à présent de plus en plus liées au paysage politique américain au sens large, au capitalisme, à l'autorité scientifique et à l'intervention de l'État, autant qu'à une sensibilité propre et un attachement à l'autorité locale. L'identité et le travail patrimonial autochtones sont négociés, contingents, ouverts et provocateurs, mais sous certaines conditions.

# Vanguard Alutiiq heritage practice and the import of expertise

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Arthur Mason\*

**Résumé:** Pratiques patrimoniales alutiit d'avant-garde et l'importation de l'expertise

Cet article explore les diverses manières par lesquelles le nettoyage de la pollution due au pétrolier *Exxon Valdez* et le travail patrimonial et identitaire des Alutiit se sont articulés autour de conseils d'experts universitaires. Les types de connaissances et d'évaluations à travers lesquels l'identité, le patrimoine et le nettoyage des côtes polluées ont pu être administrés suggèrent que ce sont les technologies elles-mêmes de la réalisation patrimoniale et identitaire des Autochtones de l'Alaska qui se transforment. Elles sont à présent de plus en plus liées au paysage politique américain au sens large, au capitalisme, à l'autorité scientifique et à l'intervention de l'État, autant qu'à une sensibilité propre et un attachement à l'autorité locale. L'identité et le travail patrimonial autochtones sont négociés, contingents, ouverts et provocateurs, mais sous certaines conditions.

**Abstract:** Vanguard Alutiiq heritage practice and the import of expertise

This article explores ways that *Exxon Valdez* oil spill restoration as well as Alutiiq identity and heritage work become articulated through a reliance on the advice of university-trained experts. The kinds of knowledge and calculation through which identity, heritage and restoration become administrable suggests that the very technologies of Alaska Native identity and heritage making are shifting. They are now increasingly linked to the larger American political landscape, capitalism, scientific authority and state intervention, as well as to local sentimentality and preservation of authority. Indigenous identity and heritage work are negotiated, contingent, open and provocative, but there are specific conditionalities.

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## Introduction

Studying the founding of the Alutiiq Museum on Kodiak Island, Alaska, in the wake of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill of 1989 provides a unique opportunity to explore how government dispersed 900 million dollars in settlement funds to restore communities affected by the ecological disaster. It offers a chance to consider how Alaska Natives on Kodiak Island sought oil spill restoration through the financing of an Alutiiq museum. It highlights the tensions articulated by government's desire to define Alaska Natives in definitive ways through restoration and how the latter embraced or resisted these government strategies. It also illuminates an emerging collaboration between Alutiiq and university-trained experts—anthropologists, historians, linguists—who write the history of Alaskan Indigenous communities.

My aim in this article is to understand the relationship of identity, heritage and academic expertise in securing *Exxon Valdez* oil spill funds to build an Alutiiq Museum. I want to know how the use of oil spill funds for constructing a museum becomes desirable and defensible as well as what social order emerges so that this project becomes achievable, suitable and feasible. I argue that from the 1970s through the 1990s, the Alutiiq need for experts' advice rendered possible new types of communal activity, individualisation as well as particular kinds of environmental justice.

Today, in Alaska, heritage work is integral to creating a greater sense of Alaska Native identity. Ann Fienup-Riordan (2000: 167) calls heritage “conscious culture,” performed in old and new public contexts against historical experiences of loss. Heritage work includes such practices as oral historical research, cultural explanation through exhibits, publications, community-based archaeology, etc. In this context, writes James Clifford (2004: 4), heritage work “responds to demands that originate both inside and outside indigenous communities, mediating new powers and attachments: relations with the land, among local groups, with the state, and with transnational forces.” Clifford (*ibid.*: 28) argues that today's community-based heritage work in Alaska represents a “conjuncture” between corporate liberalism and Indigenous heritage. This is my argument too, but I feel that more attention could be paid in this context to what John and Jean Comaroff (1992: 27) call the “endogenous historicity of local worlds.” That is, Clifford's narrative glosses over the genealogy and ethnography of how new formations of identity and heritage emerge through communal work, as in the present case, how Kodiak residents come to understand corporate liberalism to be intertwined with expert- and self-knowledge.

## Background and approach

Throughout various publications (Mason 1996, 2002, n.d., in press), I have sought 1) to trace the emergence of distinct categories of identity among a subset of Alutiiq people, which I refer to as an Alutiiq elite (nobles, burghers, national citizens [Russian and U.S.]); 2) to examine how this group deploys these shifting categories to reproduce

and maintain its elite status through time; and 3), to describe how these categories articulate with 19th and 20th centuries conceptions of the modern and of modernity. My work employs an ethnographically-rooted discussion of 19th and 20th centuries processes of subject formation during times of great change and upheaval in Alaska Native societies. In particular, my discussion of the shifting role of colonialism, nationalism, and modernity in the formation of an Alaskan Native elite seems important and novel, given its lack of attention in the literature. Interested in recognition, critical kinship or citizenship, contemporary Indigenous ethnographies and critical histories, I examine how the workings of social and status reproduction at critical junctures in Alutiiq history and experience articulate to moments of identification and political recognition via forms of heritage work, citizenship and, in the present case, academic expertise.

By examining attitudes of expertise as applied to identity, heritage and restoration between 1978 and 1995, I will demonstrate in this article how an elaborated system about Kodiak Native culture emerges from a period in which it is characterised as “lost” (Endter-Wada et al. 1992: 804). From this narrow organisation of experience rises one condition of possibility for today’s Alaska Native “cultural renaissance” (Johnson 2001: 93). Similar to my work on Alaska politics (Mason 2005, 2007, 2008) my descriptions here attempt to retrieve historically specific meanings that are fragile and ordered. These meanings situate a recent past whose coherence, when seen from our vantage point, appears as a system of contradictions. Still, by refusing to see the past through the opinions and facts of the present, I invite readers to explore the ground on which various types of knowledge *could* make sense and *could* produce truth within a specific period. Through this analysis, I claim to rediscover an organisation of meanings that bind institutions, experiences and doctrines and to which these meanings refer when elements of them refer to Alutiiq identity and heritage work.

As I will demonstrate, collaborations between Alutiit and academics (and with governments and Native corporations) do not assume common goals nor are they part of a simple sharing of information. Those collaborations however do signal negotiation between differing interest groups (government and local communities, scientists and lay people) even when compromise remains illusive. In fact, collaborations often redefine the interests of multiple actors by creating new interests and identities and by joining stakeholders along new axes of common purpose (Agrawal 2005: 161; Crowell 2004; Lowenhaupt-Tsing 2005: 13). A unique intersection is the emphasis placed early on by Gordon Pullar, an Alutiiq leader and anthropologist, on strengthening a spiritual connection with one’s heritage and sense of identity. Pullar’s innovation is to emphasise personal growth and self-discovery through *mutual* help. As such, he directs academic expertise toward developing heritage work that is less likely to be mediated through individual reading or examination of conscience as through face-to-face group activity. Whether or not it provokes a restorative process against two centuries of colonial rule as intended (Pullar 1992), Alutiiq heritage work has certainly succeeded in developing an array of professionalised, non-professionalised and mid-cultural capital techniques for acting on oneself that profoundly shape the present (Crowell et al. 2001).

My argument is that the diversity of forces—intellectual technologies, practical activities, social authority—provided by an Alutiiq import of expertise lay the foundation for standardised forms of experience about identity, heritage and restoration. Once taking local form, this experience renders possible new forms of communal activity, individualisation and justice. As such, applied social science provides practical systems for normalising experience across various domains of knowledge and among competing interest groups. In the end, concerns about identity and heritage are transformed into the oil spill concerns of how, when, and what/who should be restored as well as what it means to be restored economically, effectively and emotionally. Stated formally, expertise and scientific inquiry focus on and help identify particular types of subjects as their targets—for example, the productive subject of economics, the speaking subject of linguistics, or the subject/citizen dichotomy of normative political theory (Agrawal 2005: 221-222). Just as the applied natural sciences deal with questions of translating scientific knowledge into technology, there are also a range of applied social sciences emerging in the Arctic that deal with questions of *social technology*—institution building, ideological critique, and programmatic alternatives to *status quo*.

### **Use of anthropological knowledge**

Anthropological investigation on Kodiak Island dates to the turn of the 20th century. Few instances suggest that visiting scientists considered how the Islanders might benefit from or even be deserving of the data collected (Clark 1992). In the late 1970s, however, anthropological knowledge became accessible in ways that began to shape how Kodiak Islanders organised their identity and heritage work. Hence, ethnographers began utilising modes of fieldwork which placed them in the role of cultural bearer. In her Ph.D. dissertation titled *Alutiiq Ethnicity*, anthropologist Patricia Partnow (1994: 23) identified herself as an educator of Indigenous knowledge: “My career had been committed to exposing young people and their teachers to Alaska Native cultural information and to presenting the information accurately and engagingly.” In the following passage, Partnow described her contribution to identity formation among inhabitants of the Alaska Peninsula:

I believe I saw in the Christmas and New Year’s rituals a tie with precontact culture and religious practice [...]. I told people of parallels I saw between ancient and contemporary practices. Some individuals denied that the Christmas holiday referred to anything but a commemoration of Christ’s birth, but most expressed interest in what they perceived to be a newly opened door to the Alutiiq past (Partnow 1994: 21).

This quote suggests that Partnow’s intellectual enterprise is a resource for developing a greater sense of Alutiiq self-knowledge. It announces that communication of traditional knowledge no longer depends on the social authority of an elder. It also illustrates one form by which self-knowledge and heritage are linked to the authority and ethnographic activity of academic expertise.

The rising popularity of Alutiiq (plural: Alutiit) as a term of identification provides an example of Kodiak Islanders' interpretation of academic linguistics. The story is unique. The details suggest an originating site of collaboration between the Alutiiq and wider academic communities. From the 1970s to the mid-1990s, different communities of practice employ distinct terms to refer to Kodiak Islanders. The latter used the term "Aleut" for self-identification (Armstrong 1979). Among historians, "Aleut" is coined by Russians who colonised Alaska during the 18th and 19th centuries and who employed the term from Kamchatka to the Aleutian Islands and to the Gulf of Alaska, including Kodiak, to identify peoples who hunt sea mammals (Black 1992). For linguists, the Kodiak dialect is "a member of the Eskimo family of languages" (Leer 1978: 4). Anthropologists and archaeologists prefer the phrase "Pacific Eskimo Region" (Clark 1984: 136). If one includes the wider literature of linguistic, historical and religious scholarship of this period, additional terms are: Eskimo, Kodiak Islanders, Koniag, Sugcestun, and Sugpiaq (e.g., Fitzhugh and Crowell 1988; Oleksa 1992).

For Kodiak Islanders of this period, "Eskimo" and "Sugpiaq" were disfavoured because of strongly felt cultural distinctness from their neighbours to the north. Consider this passage written in 1979 by one Kodiak Islander for *Alaska Geographic Magazine*, several years before the adoption of the term Alutiiq:

According to the linguist's map, the Gulf of Alaska, much of the Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak Island are all peopled by a group called the Sugpiaq, who are of Eskimo stock. While this is a handy label for scientists, it is most confusing for the people, who have long thought of themselves as Aleut, traditionally warred against the Eskimo and held them in low esteem. True, the language of these people is not the soft Aleut of the Aleutian Chain and varies from village to village around the gulf, but Aleut is more easily understood by these people than the harsh guttural language of their Eskimo neighbors and culturally the Suqpiak have far more in common with the Aleuts, sharing not only lifestyle and tradition but a mutual devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church (Armstrong 1979:176).

This passage expresses two beliefs: firstly, the Aleut language of the Aleutian Chain and the Aleut language of Kodiak Island—are mutually distinguishable; secondly, the Aleut language of Kodiak Island—and the "guttural language of their Eskimo neighbors" to the north—are mutually indistinguishable. According to linguists writing at this time, by contrast, the Kodiak dialect is mutually distinguishable only to an "Eskimo" language to the north. Linguist Jeff Leer referring to the Kodiak dialect as Alutiiq writes,

The Alutiiq language is not the language of the people who inhabit the Aleutian Chain; it is a member of the Eskimo family of languages and is split into two dialects: Koniag Alutiiq (Kodiak Island and Perryville, Chignik, Port Heiden, Pilot Point on the Alaska Peninsula), and Chugach Alutiiq (Port Graham, English Bay, Seldovia on the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound) (Leer 1978: 4, emphasis in the original).

The underlined emphasis in the above text suggests an academic etiquette that both instructs and scolds the reader. It contrasts with the Kodiak Islander's colloquial politeness and enlightened recognition of alternative ways of knowing. At one level,

this contrast reflects distinct practical relations to language. The Kodiak Island author above-mentioned is not a speaker of the local dialect, but an English speaker. By the late 1970s, few speakers of the Kodiak dialect remain. To my knowledge, no speakers of the dialect are among the ranks of the Kodiak leadership who organised the 1980s Alutiiq identity and heritage work programs. Still, for Kodiak elders fluent in the dialect, Alutiiq is indeed a term of self-reference.

How then does Alutiiq emerge as a singular term of reference among these different communities of practice? The popularity of Alutiiq reflects perhaps a compromise. For scholars insisting on a linguistic classification, Alutiiq is a performative of the “Eskimo family of languages” (Aleut in an indigenised form). That is, for elders who self-identify as Aleut when speaking English, Alutiiq is a marker of identity when speaking in their dialect. For those members of Kodiak’s Native leadership seeking to retain Aleut, Alutiiq provides a similar reference. Linguist Michael Krauss (pers. comm. 2008) suggests that “The degree to which the ethnonym Alutiiq is accepted by the Alaskan public is related to three points: 1) it resembles ‘Aleut’; 2) the -iiq has an exotic, so authentic look; and 3) Native pronunciation aside, it is easy to pronounce as English Uh-LOO-tick.”

This compromise reflects different interests of differing groups—theoretical knowledge of linguists, local knowledge of elders, and vanguard heritage work of an Alutiiq elite. The actual selection of Alutiiq was itself fostered through the catalysing work of linguists at University of Alaska’s Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC). In 1978, during a week-long language workshop on Kodiak Island sponsored by the ANLC, Islanders agree to retain Alutiiq. According to the *Conversational Dictionary of Kodiak Alutiiq* which came out from this workshop,

[...] several issues important to the future of the Alutiiq language programs were decided. After the Alutiiq alphabet (which is at present used in English Bay and Port Graham on the Kenai Peninsula, and on the Alaska Peninsula) was introduced to the participants, all those present agreed that they wish to use the same writing system. [...] They also agreed that they prefer the name Alutiiq to refer to their people and language, rather than any of the other names which have so far been proposed and used in linguistic and anthropological publications (Sugpiaq, Suk Eskimo, Pacific Gulf Yupik, etc.) (Leer 1978: 2).

The ANLC workshop can be seen as a *social technology* that gave rise to a pan-regional term of self-identification. That is, the workshop stimulates a perceptual shift among Kodiak Islanders. Speakers of the Indigenous language begin to perceive their dialect as no longer limited to the Island community. In 1992, Nina Olsen, an elder and fluent speaker of Alutiiq stated to me of her hopes—“now knowing of the existence [of other speakers]”—that the Alutiiq language would “survive.” Olsen’s views are reflected in the personal interviews I conducted with other speakers of Alutiiq, all of whom were over the age of 60 at that time (Mason 1996). This collaboration with linguists provides also the perceptual foundation for an emerging regional identification among groups who historically were not aligned politically (Clark 1984).

## The map as classification scheme

Today, the Alutiiq region comprises the areas of Kodiak Island, Alaska Peninsula, Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound. Historic accounts indicate that the same language was spoken on Kodiak and at Prince William Sound with subdialects within these areas (Clark 1984). Still, evidence of a common identity above the level of two major groups—Koniag and Chugach—is lacking: “Neither was a tribe in the sense of an organized body” (Clark 1984: 185). A unique social technology for raising consciousness of a pan-Alutiiq identity for this region is the popular *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* map (Krauss 1982). This linguistic map depicts bounded areas shaded in the colour blue which designate today’s Alutiiq region. Early publications identify this region as Sugpiaq, while a post-1982 map publication replaces Sugpiaq with Alutiiq (Sugpiaq follows in parenthesis). The map’s colour scheme portrays the Alutiiq region as related linguistically to northern neighbours, the “Central Yupiit.” This visual classification scheme distinguishes those to whom the Alutiit are not related linguistically—their western neighbours, the Aleuts (shaded in green). The intent of the linguistic map is to highlight language areas that historically are spoken in different regions of Alaska. The title of the map includes the phrase “Native Peoples” and thus suggests a link between areas of linguistic similarity and areas of cultural identity. According to the primary author, Michael Krauss (pers. comm. 1996), the *Native Peoples* aspect of the map’s title has become “an unintended puzzle that the Native groups would have to work [it] out.”

Anthropologists disagree about the effects such material has on Alutiiq construction of identity and heritage. Social technologies like a map, however, do facilitate shifts in understandings about identity and belonging. They foster “imagined communities” (Anderson 1992) that rely less on face-to-face contact. Prior to linguistic knowledge, for example, Kodiak’s Alutiiq leadership may not have identified with their linguistically related neighbours to the north and northeast. By the early 1990s, with increased collaboration between Kodiak Islanders and academic communities, “a gathering of the Alutiiq peoples of all these areas” was in the planning stage and would represent “the first in historic times” (Pullar 1992: 183). The perceptual shift from local context to imagined community is discussed primarily in the context of the construction of nationalist ideologies (Gellner 1983). Benedict Anderson (1992), in discussing nation-building policies identifies three technologies of power: the map, the census, and the museum, which together profoundly shape how the nation imagines its dominion. Identity, Anderson states, imagined by the classifying mind of the state, becomes reified through the map: a totalising classificatory grid that has the effect of creating concrete projections on the earth’s surface. In the museum, the state’s cultural treasury displays its patrimony which is viewed as intimately linked to a population tabulated by a census and bound by a map. Interlinked with one another, the census, the map and the museum illuminate the state’s style of thinking about its domain and is applied with “endless flexibility” to anything under the state’s real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, languages, and monuments (*ibid.*: 184).



I suggest that the logic of these state-centred technologies for constructing national sentiment is present in the technologies and forms through which the Alutiiq construct self-identity and heritage. Visualised through linguistic maps and as I will show, archaeological and museum collections, Kodiak Natives during a post-1978 period began to build an Alutiiq region based on a shared culture and heritage. These forms of framing identity, heritage and region, place an emphasis on the past as a resource for molding the future. As Gordon Pullar (1992: 185) states, during this period: “It was clear that if we were to truly know who we were and where we wanted to go, we would first, both collectively and as individuals, have to examine our pasts.” Pullar’s comments may be situated within an ethos of a rising Alaska Native corporate liberalism. With Congressional passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, the U.S. government ceded 44 million acres of land and nearly one billion dollars to Alaska Natives in the form of regional and village corporations to resolve legal claims of Aboriginal title to Alaska. From this, a new economic position emerged in Alaska Native society which created opportunities for Native leaders to view themselves as a particular type of entrepreneurial group.

Elsewhere, I argue (Mason 1996, 2002) that a first generation of Alutiiq leaders to take part in the land claims settlement shared similar historical and personal developments and were descendants of prestigious 19th century Russian-Native Creole families. These 19th century burgher families (*meshchane*) possessed political and cultural distinctions based predominantly on education, ancestry, and citizenship which differentiated them from other Kodiak families of the time. Members of this “Alutiiq cohort” became the first generation of Native capitalist leaders to control corporate decisions concerning resource development. Still, their entrance into the American corporate world raises ethical problems which concern the ways in which economic responsibility displace traditional routines. As Pullar writes,

[b]y not knowing our history we Alutiiqs were allowing contemporary events and outsiders to define our identity. The ANCSA is a prominent example of this. While ANCSA was intended to divide Alaska into 12 geographic regions based on general culture areas, these boundaries had not always been well thought out. Consequently, the Alutiiq culture area fell into three ANCSA regions [...]. In just a few short years *this ANCSA regional identity had overwhelmed the Alutiiq ethnic identity* (Pullar 1992:185, emphasis added).

Due to the apprehension of a regional identity based on corporate economic values, Kodiak Native corporate liberalism leans toward an *ethnos* centred academic knowledge. After all, Kodiak communal practices of celebration have emerged in the absence of expertise (*e.g.*, Mason in press), and one can even imagine the possibilities of a Native based communal heritage that explores military prowess and distinction on the battle field and the hunt<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> During pre-contact and the early historical period, Kodiak Islanders played an important role in a “multiple equilibrium system of continual hostilities” for which a key coordinated activity where “leadership would seem to have been required [...] is warfare” (Hrdlicka 1975[1944]: 90; Osgood 1937: 109 in Taylor 1965: 13). A 19th century observer notes the Alutiiq of Prince William Sound were at war with all “the surrounding tribes,” and “especially the inhabitants of Kadiak [Kodiak Alutiiq]”

## Native corporate archaeological assessment

In 1984 the board of directors of the Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA), a regional non-profit Native corporation administering health, education and economic development, began activities for preserving Alutiiq language, custom and arts. For Pullar (1992: 182), who was the KANA president who initiated its Culture and Heritage Program, “the implied, if not stated, goal was to develop a higher sense of Alutiiq ethnic identity and an increase in cultural pride.” In this period, KANA’s program attracted the attention of anthropology students who identified the effort as the beginning of a “revitalisation movement” (Jackson 1992; Moulton 1988). Similar perspectives of this period apply “cultural renewal” to the phrase “reformed Native identity” (Endter-Wada et al. 1992: 804). Earlier, during the 1960s, a state-wide mandate recognising Native culture emerged with the Alaska Native land claims movement and the formation of the Alaska Federation of Natives (Lantis 1973: 99). Rather than reclaiming rights, as was the case in the land claims movement, the Kodiak’s Alutiiq program focuses on “strengthening the spiritual connection with one’s heritage and sense of identity” (Pullar 1992: 183). During this period, similar revitalisation movements were documented across the state (Fienup-Riordan 1983; McNabb 1987).

The first formal activity of the KANA was the participation by Alutiiq youth in an archaeological project in the village of Karluk. In 1984, project director Richard H. Jordan of Bryn Mawr College included Alutiit as crew members on excavations, and presented the project’s findings to people in Karluk, and other Kodiak villages. In 1987, KANA hired Bryn Mawr archaeologist Richard Knecht as the coordinator of the Culture and Heritage program. By this time, KANA-Bryn Mawr excavations were annual events. In addition, KANA sponsored the construction of Alutiiq meeting houses in villages, the recording of oral histories, and the development of photographic and document archives. In related efforts, the Kodiak’s Tribal Council established an Alutiiq dance group. Alutiiq artisans drew inspiration from KANA’s slide collections of museum holdings and began mask carving, bent wood hat weaving, and skin covered kayak making. An Alutiiq studies curriculum for village schools and an Alutiiq heritage week also was developed (Knecht 1994).

Throughout the 1990s, Kodiak Alutiiq corporate sponsored archaeological programs loomed large. In addition to the Bryn Mawr connection, KANA conducted a joint project with the University of California and the Sakhalin Regional Museum at Three Saints Bay, Kodiak’s first Russian-Alaska settlement. KANA provides support for excavations by Harvard University Ph.D. candidate Philomena Hausler-Knecht as well as for the research efforts of other anthropologists, archaeologists and ethnohistorians (e.g., Jackson 1992; Knecht 1994; Mason 1996). With support from the

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(Berkh 1823[1974]: 62). Another observer notes that the Alutiiq “were in incessant wars among themselves, and especially with the neighboring peoples, both the Aleuts and Kenaitsy [Dena’ina]” (Davydov: 1811-1812 [1977]: 159). As recently as 1961, “the people of Kaguyak village, at the south end of Kodiak Island, were in full agreement in remembering fights with villagers from Old Harbour, some 30 miles to the N.E., over the exploitation of a sea-lion rookery” (Taylor 1965: 19).

Alaska Humanities Forum, KANA sponsored Cultural Heritage Conferences which brought scholars from North America, Western Europe and the U.S.S.R. According to Knecht (1994: 8), non-Native peoples on Kodiak Island gained new insights for Alutiiq heritage and “Alutiiq people also [gain] a sense of renewed respect for their heritage and ultimately, themselves.” In 1991, after struggling against the Smithsonian Institution, and with help from the Native American Rights Fund and KANA, Kodiak’s Larsen Bay residents prevailed in having the remains removed by physical anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka between 1931 and 1936 returned. More than 1000 individuals’ remains were reburied, opening a new era in relations with the Smithsonian Institution (Bray and Killion 1994).

By spring 1991, KANA established the Alutiiq Center, dedicated to promoting Alutiiq cultural events, and which would a few years later include an archaeological repository. In related efforts, other Kodiak Alutiiq corporations begin assessing archaeological resources on their lands and in 1994, the Afognak Native Corporation began an eco-tourism program called “Dig Afognak.” Paying participants could join archaeologists as they excavated sites and conduct surveys. The most triumphant of Kodiak’s emergent Alutiiq-academic collaborations was the establishment of the Alutiiq Museum. In 1994, the ground-breaking ceremonies took place for the Alutiiq Archaeological Repository and Culture Center and a \$1.5 million grant from the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council was awarded to KANA to help restore archaeological sites damaged in the wake of the 1989 oil spill.

### **Expertise in the wake of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill**

On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* struck Bligh Reef spilling nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Alaska. While the social, economic and environmental impacts of the spill are well documented, little academic discussion exists over how federal and state governments dispersed 900 million dollars in settlement funds to restore affected communities. The sum was awarded in the public law suit against the Exxon Corporation for restoration of damages<sup>2</sup>. Dispersing restoration funds was a complex process of negotiation and persuasion involving the assemblage of loose networks which in turn brought a motley crew of people, organisations and objectives into alignment. For example, the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council, formed by three federal and three state administrators was given authority by each government to decide how to spend the money. From the outset, members of the Trustee Council were at odds with each other over how the money should be allocated to areas affected by the oil spill. Questions were asked on all sides: Who is entitled to receive government restoration funds? How do we go about evaluating who deserves the money? How much money are communities affected by the oil spill deserving of? How do we make sure funds will be spent responsibly and economically?

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<sup>2</sup> See *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council website: <http://www.evostc.state.ak.us>.

Because federal and state representation was divided, projects voted on favourably had to comply with two sets of government regulations: federal and state. For communities requesting funds, this issue became a source of misery as both sets of regulations when taken together, were on numerous points inconsistent. Competitive proposals, as a result, became written in a style oriented toward satisfying these contradictions. In other words, communities seeking restoration funds enlisted experts knowledgeable in writing government documents. Meanwhile, local public officials scrambled to foster personal connections, or at least, put on their “Sunday’s best” in front of Trustee Council members in attempts to ascertain knowledge of favourable proposals.

Also, Trustee Council members were unclear as to whether certain proposals fell under the designation of oil spill restoration. Such projects included museums whose function was to house archaeological collections damaged by oil spill clean up. But heritage centres could be places where, in addition to collections storage, traditional activities or community functions could be practiced. For this reason the Trustee Council directed their questions to the U.S. Department of Justice who, according to one Trustee representative “kicked out the opinion that there should be no bricks and mortar projects as part of the restoration effort” (Craig Tillery, pers. comm. 1995). According to the same Trustee representative, the “attitude” of federal government was that if Alaska communities used restoration funds to build museums, they would soon return with an “open palm” requesting money in order to cover long term operating costs. Federal Trustee Council members were prohibited by law to vote on such projects.

The Trustee Council requested nominations for a Public Advisory Group (PAG) from the Kodiak Island Borough “to provide advice on all decisions relating to injury assessment, restoration activities, or the uses of the natural resource damage recoveries” (Lujani 1992). Richard Knecht was one of three who were nominated and endorsed for appointment by an *Exxon Valdez* Restoration Committee. Knecht was subsequently appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Proposals submitted by communities were evaluated by the PAG as well as state and federal appointed councils. The advisory group and councils were requested by the Trustee Council to provide advice on decisions relating to restoration activity. Members of the PAG were citizens from the communities affected by the oil spill. They were nominated by the borough mayor’s office and officially appointed to the PAG by signature of the Secretary of the Interior.

Based on analysis of data collected during the 1990s, I found that governing restoration was orchestrated through at least three techniques of expertise: *evaluation*, *alliance*, and *routinisation*. First, *evaluation*: the Trustee Council required technical ways for understanding and acting upon events and people in distant places typically through standardised project proposals and assessment reports produced by experts. Second, *alliance*: government agents were in partnership with non-government experts, for example, the Public Advisory Group, for whom both would come to rely on a particular style of thinking and acting from one another. Finally, *routinisation*: signals

the official procedures and forms by which government rendered knowledge and citizens worthy of evaluation in professional and ethical terms. Here I am not referring only to project proposals, but to the Justice Department's decision to define strict guidelines on restoration based on Alaska communities' perceived inefficiency for managing their economic affairs and thus the need to limit "open palm" requests for additional aid.

### **Response of the Kodiak Island's experts**

Three Gulf of Alaska municipalities were affected by the oil spill – the Kodiak Island Borough, and the boroughs of Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound. Kodiak Island was the least affected by the spill in terms of actual oil washing up on the shore or being deposited in the eco-system, but it was the largest of the three boroughs in terms of population, commercial revenue, and government bureaucracy. Kodiak is home to Alaska's largest fishing fleet and seafood processors. It is the third largest fishing port in the United States in terms of value of annual landings. Because of its large population and economic strength, Kodiak emerged early as a formidable competitor against other areas in seeking restoration funds.

The success of Kodiak Islanders in mobilising organisations and professionals to lobby for funds can be related to its professional and charismatic civic leaders. Of the three municipalities affected by the spill, the Kodiak borough was the only district early in the game to submit unsolicited proposals to the Trustee Council. Seizing the opportunity to benefit from the 900 million dollars, Kodiak leaders wasted no time waiting for an invitation by the Trustee Council for project proposals. Kodiak mayor Jerome Selby, a resident of 10 years and previous Health Director for KANA, appointed a lobbying committee of environmental specialists. Also, Selby requested proposals from local state government agencies such as the University of Alaska Fisheries. The mayor's office identified vandalism of Kodiak's archaeological sites during oil spill cleanup as an early concern. Cleanup crews hired to wipe up oil from the beaches had been digging up artefacts and destroying Alaska's cultural heritage.

To address the problem, the mayor approached Alutiiq leaders at KANA, requesting they draft a proposal for the construction of a museum to conserve artefacts damaged by the clean up. Plans to establish an Alutiiq museum existed for over a decade. When KANA and Bryn Mawr presented findings from their archaeological dig in 1984, the Islanders' enthusiasm was intense. However, during the question and answer period, when Alutiit discovered that the only repository of archaeological material in Alaska was the University of Alaska Museum in Fairbanks, 800 miles to the north, they quickly reached a consensus about the need for a local museum to house local collections (Knecht 1994: 8)

As mentioned earlier, a museum reflects a style for imagining one's place within the nation-state. For Pullar (1992:185), inspired by a U.S. Attorney General's declaration "know your history or you are doomed to repeat it" the museum symbolised

a social technology for realigning the present, past, and future. KANA archaeologist Knecht and KANA vice-president Rita Stevens drafted the initial museum proposal (Stevens and Knecht 1993). After the Justice Department's designation that museums were beyond the scope of oil spill restoration, mayor Selby, KANA leaders and Knecht changed the museum designation to "artefact repository," downplaying the public-viewing aspect, arguing that the only professionally recognised way for dealing with artefacts affected by the spill was to bring them into a building. Also, KANA submitted to the Trustee Council an environmental impact report assessing damage to archaeological sites on Kodiak as a result of cleanup activities. Finally, KANA entered into a condominium agreement with Natives of Kodiak, another Kodiak Alutiiq corporation who placed \$600,000 in treasury notes in an escrow account to assure the Trustee Council that KANA could conduct themselves responsibly.

From my interviews during summer 1995 when the Alutiiq Museum opened to the public, its supporters equated its strengths with getting funds from an existing program of an Alutiiq corporation that was proactive in preserving regional prehistory. According to one report, the Alutiiq Museum benefited from archaeological resources within the spill area and reinforced ongoing federal repatriation efforts (Bittner and Reger 1994). Museum supporters favoured a regional repository to help smaller village based cultural programs with collections management, treatment expertise and interpretation of prehistory. As a symbol of public stewardship, the museum was also perceived as key to saving heritage sites from loss, particularly in light of identified tighter federal and state agency budgets (*ibid.*). The idea behind sites stewardship is to initiate public interest in the information they contain and to convince people to report site destruction. That is, effective stewardship depends in substantial measure on the willingness of a significant number of people to adopt as their own the processes of monitoring and enforcement, what might be called a "governmentalization of the environment" (Agrawal 2005: 18).

Community leaders with whom I spoke, including Stevens and Selby, attributed the success of the museum project to numerous other factors. According to Selby, there would have been no Alutiiq museum without the passage of ANCSA. Selby stated that KANA's work over the past years toward building a museum, although "in many respects an unrealistic goal" had placed the idea firmly within the community's imagination, so that when the prospect of obtaining funds became real, the museum proposal "was a natural." In fact, KANA did have plans to construct an Alutiiq Museum and Culture Center on Kodiak to serve as a repository for art and artefacts and as a research and education centre. In 1987, KANA president Pullar sought Kodiak City support for a lease of city land for a museum and the president of Koniag Corporation suggested donating a commercial city lot. KANA also had initiated a process for securing funding for museum construction. A year earlier, for example, KANA had entered into a joint venture with a Bingo operation in Anchorage to raise money for such a facility. According to Gordon Pullar (pers. comm. 2008), the seed money for the Bingo operation could be traced back in time to an account established in the late 1970s and which was "restricted for use towards the construction of a museum and cultural centre." Finally, the "number one priority" of KANA's recruitment of

Knecht as Cultural and Heritage program coordinator was to develop the museum project in part, by “winning over the Kodiak community” (*ibid.*).

Community leaders also attributed the success of the museum project to Knecht himself. According to interviews, from all the past archaeologists who excavated on Kodiak and who left with artefacts for destinations unknown, Knecht had “stayed behind” and taught the locals the value of their archaeological heritage. Wherever the emphasis is placed, Selby, Knecht, and Stevens were players on the firing line who had several times sat before the EVOS Trustee Council defending the museum project:

We [Selby the speaker referring to himself, Knecht and Stevens] were able to go to the Trustee Council and we went to a couple different meetings, and we were getting it closer and closer, and actually by that time the Council was supportive of building the project here on the island, but we finally went back with the last request and bumped it up to a million-and-a-half dollars. I’ll never forget that meeting because Rick [Knecht] and I were sat up at a little table and the Trustee Council were up above—we were like the Christians in the arena waiting for the lions—and here was the Trustee Council firing all these questions on us. At one point Rick leans over to me and says ‘let’s cut it back to \$700,000.’ He figured we were never going to get out of there with our one-and-a-half million. [Selby now laughing] I said ‘whoa, hang on here, we’re about to bring this home!’ (Jerome Selby, pers. comm. 1995).

On January 4, 1994, in the interest of restoring and preserving Alaska’s heritage, the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council offered KANA a grant of *Exxon Valdez* oil spill civil settlement funds for the amount of \$1,470,000. The grant was to be applied toward the construction and equipping of an archaeological repository located in Kodiak. The primary activities of this facility would be dedicated to the preservation of archaeological artefacts and associated data threatened by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and resultant cleanup. The Alutiiq Archaeological Repository was also to be dedicated to traditional Native culture and public education to help reduce further vandalism.

## Conclusion

In the argument I have advanced, practices of specific subjects are the location where relationships between institutions, expertise, imagination and subjectivity come together. The adoption of particular practices at any point in time is itself a prior result of variable combinations of politics, institutions and existing subject locations of technologies of government. For example, the financing of the Alutiiq Museum suggests that the techniques of *evaluation*, *alliance* and *routinisation* helped establish a “community of interpretation” (Mason 2006: 21; 2007: 374) about the appropriate distribution of *Exxon Valdez* oil spill restoration monies. KANA’s reliance on academic experts and public officials for writing proposals and conducting environmental assessment conformed to professional expectations for the evaluation of the museum within the artefact repository designation. While government developed techniques for administering restoration, taking precautions for ensuring that projects funded were done economically, efficiently, and responsibly, Kodiak Alutiit met these challenges

through developing equally powerful techniques, thus escalating what might be regarded as an “intellectual arms race” over restoration.

Both government and Alutiit sought to articulate and negotiate restoration through the reliance on advice by university-trained experts. Of the six museum proposals submitted to the Trustee Council by local communities during this period, the Alutiitq Museum was the only project voted in favour of and the only Native corporation to receive restoration funds. One might say that the Alutiitq import of expertise provided an opportunity to co-opt funds because restoration monies were not intended for private corporate use. This reliance on expertise suggests that rather than a retreat of the State, as writings on devolution during this period imply (*e.g.*, Young 1992), a new round of state and federal intervention had been taking place, one which represents governing through alliances and at a distance, and rewarding those who place emphasis on appropriate social technologies for creating communal activity and self-responsibilisation.

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122/A. MASON

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