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Memories, Languages, Place Names, and Landscapes in Iliamna Lake, Alaska

Kohkluk Map 150 Years Conference
Whitehorse, Canada, 2019

Yoko Kugo

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Igiugig: Dalia Andrew, Annie and George Wilson, AlexAnna Salmon, Christina salmon-bringhurst, and Stacy and Carl Hill

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Newhalen: Evelyn Anelon, Elena Balluta, Katie Olympic, Fedusia Balluta, Michael Trefon, Bill Cornell, and George and Funa Hornberger, Joanne and Raymond, Alex Wassillie, and Father David and Gladys Askoak

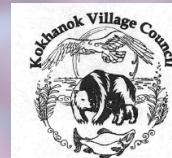
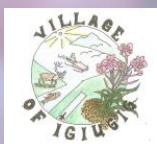
Iliamna Lake Place Name Committee

Yup'ik translators: Dr. Walkie Charles, Eva Evelyn Yanez, and Gabriel Aaciangaq

Undergraduate mentees: Haley Jenkins, Ayik'aq Timotheen Charles, and Travis Schoening

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Iliamna Lake: *Nanvarpak* and *Nila Vena*

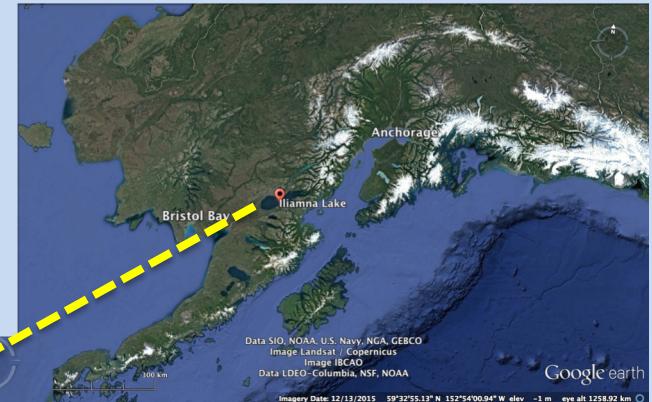
Iliamna Lake is located 362 km southwest of Anchorage.

The lake is 124 km long and 35 km wide.

Iliamna Lake, Alaska (Google Earth)

Yugcetun *nanvaq* (lake) + *-rpak* (big N) = “Big Lake”

Dena’ina *nila* (island) + *vena* (lake) = “Island Lake”



Research Questions

- How is the place named?
- How are place names used for survival in hunting and gathering, traveling, and migrating?
- How do the Yup'ik people (hereafter YUPIIT, the plural for Yup'ik) communicate with the landscape?
- How did the YUPIIT interact with the neighboring group of Dena'ina Athabascans who shared their cultural boundaries?
- What are the significance of the place names to the people in the past and today?



Kokhanok group meeting at the Kokhanok Village Council Building, from left to right, Nick Newyaka, Yoko Kugo, Mary Nelson, Annie Parks, and Marsha Wassillie. March 2017.

Five *Nanvarpak* Communities for the Project



Research Techniques:

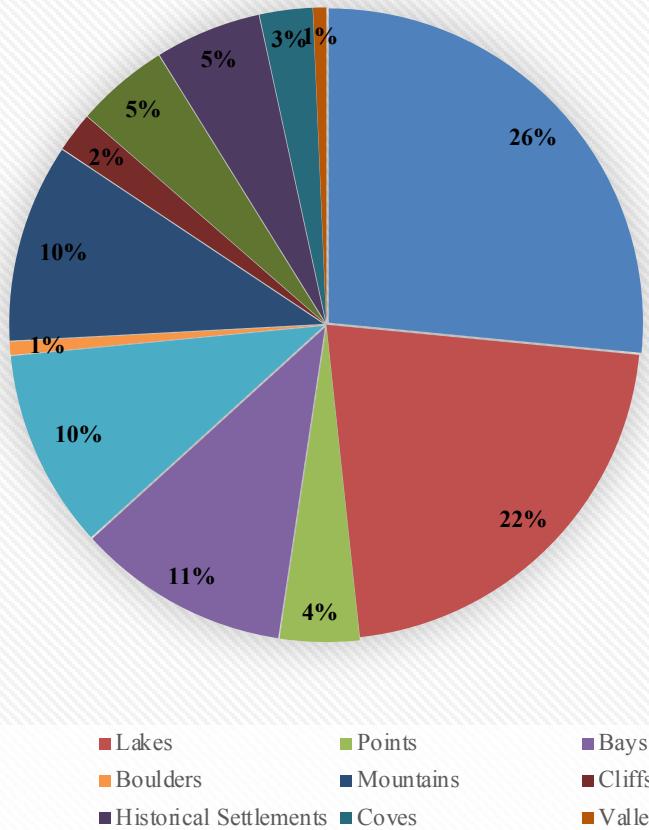
- Participant observation
- Oral history interviews
- Mapping exercises using Department of the Interior Geological Survey (USGS) maps

Photo by Yoko Kugo

In 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, six local assistants, three Yugcetun translators, and over 20 local Elders participated in this project.

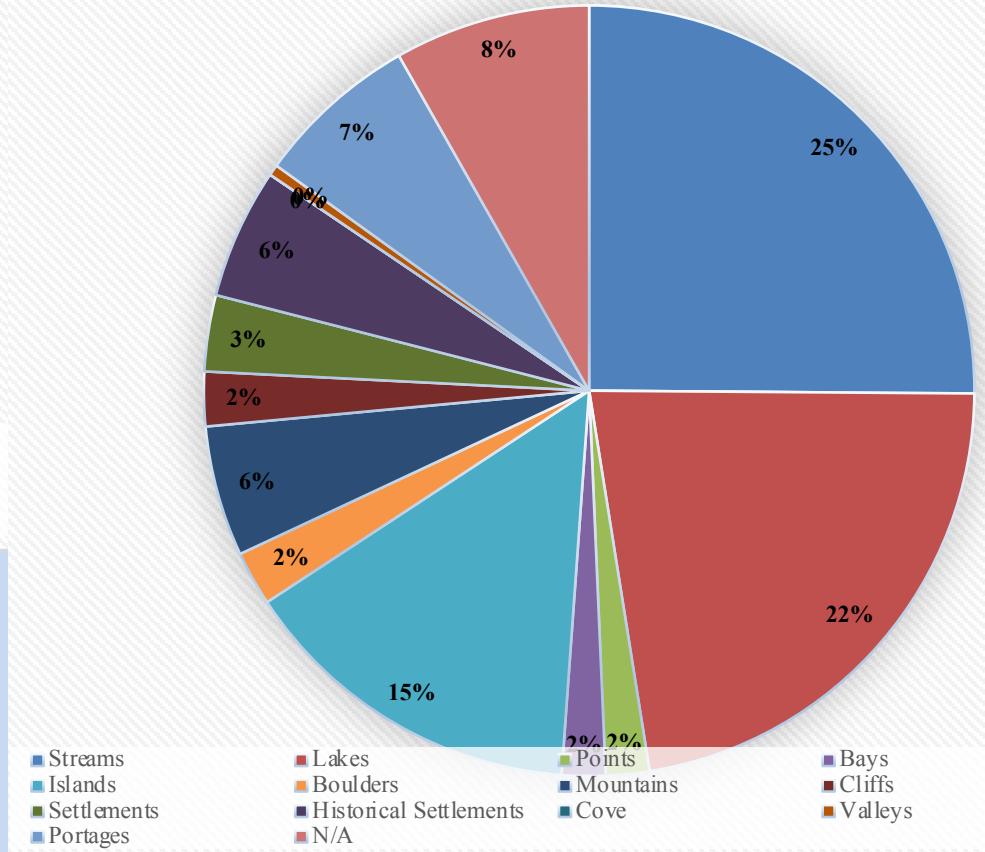
Place-naming Patterns in Iliamna Lake area

Features that acquired official names (n=146)



Iliamna Lake Yup'ik place names recorded for this project from 2016-2019

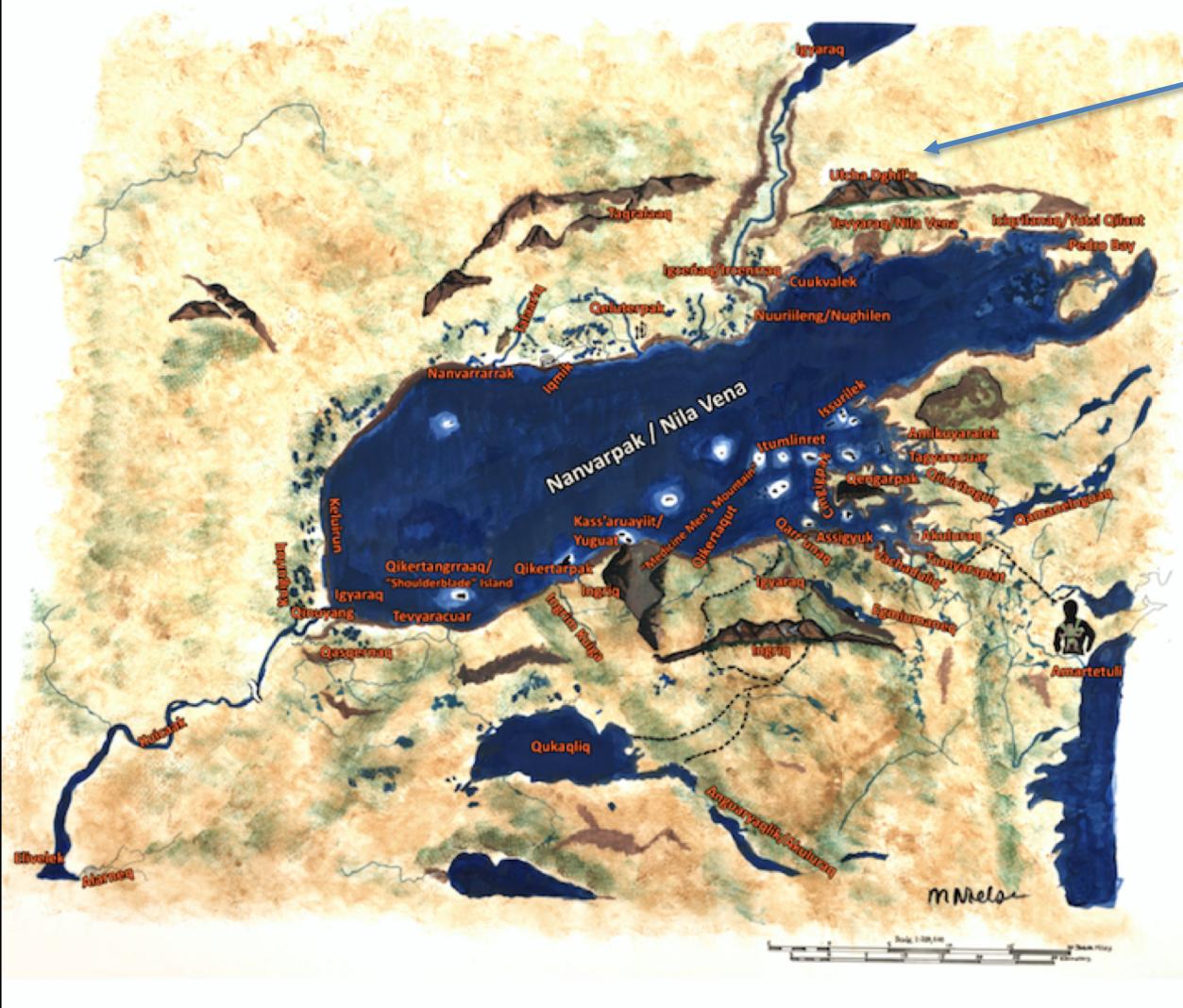
Features that acquired Yugcetun Names (n=219)



Selected official place names from northeast to southwest part of Iliamna Lake
USGS map 1957 scale 1:250,000

Unearthing *Nanvarpak* Cultural Landscape

PLACE NAMES OF ILIAMNA LAKE, NANVARPAK, NILA VENA



For instance, some Iliamna Lake Yupiit remember English name Roadhouse Mountain as a part of Tevyaraq (Portage)



Boating from Newhalen to the other side of the river for berry picking with Newhalen locals, Funa Hornberger and Fedusia Balluta. August 2017. Photo by Yoko Kugo.

Traveling on the Kuicaraq (Kvichak River)



Peksussurvik “Place to Hunt Eggs”, or
Qikertacuar “Small Island.”

Ole-m Kuiga “Ole [possessing] Creek”, or
Cuukvagpalgem Kuiga “Big Pike’s River.”



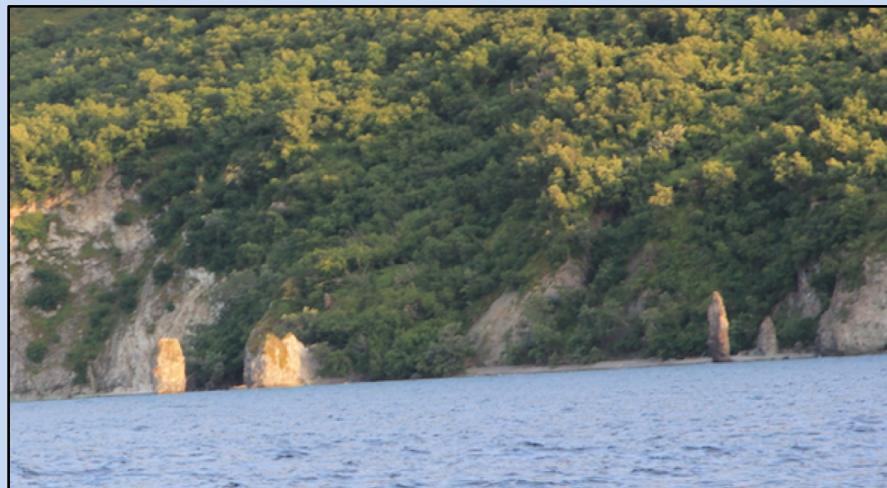
Qasgivik on the shore of Pecks and Ole Creek

Crossing Nanvarpak (Iliamna Lake)



Looking at *Ingriq* from north side of Iliamna Lake.
August 2018.
Photo by Yoko Kugo

Qikertarpak “Big Island.” Aug. 2018.
Photo by Yoko Kugo



Coming towards to *Kass’aruayiit* or *Yuguat* from Igiugig to Newhalen.
The shape of the boulders look different from different directions. August 2018. Photo by Yoko Kugo

Conclusion Remarks

- In the multiple visits, I observed that many locals became interested in the results and knowing how many names the project has collected. Locals are keen to learn more about their “living” history from their local Elders, the “original Google.”
- The Iliamna Lake place name data will be beneficial for Iliamna Lake residents to maintain their geographic knowledge and strengthen their cultural pride, history, and connections to their ancestors and homeland.



Over 20 Elders, and locals participated in the Iliamna Lake Place Name Workshop in Newhalen Teen Center, May 15, 2018.

Chin'an, Quyana, Arigato, Thank you!

