

# Eyak<sup>22</sup>

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The Eyak (ē,yak) speak a language that is related to the Athapaskan family as a coordinate branch of a larger grouping called Eyak-Athapaskan.\* This grouping may be remotely related to Tlingit.

## Territory

In the eighteenth century the Eyak were living on the 300-mile long shore of the Gulf of Alaska between the Tlingit-Athapaskan people of Dry Bay and the Chugach Eskimo of Prince William Sound. Their original homeland extended from Italio River, east of Yakutat, westward to Cape Suckling and probably included the mainland shores of Controller Bay, although the Chugach held the islands (fig. 1). Kayak Island in 1741 was the hunting territory of a Chugach Eskimo band, the *čitqa-ŷmiut* (Tyitlqarmiut in Birket-Smith 1953:20), named after "Chilkat" village on Bering River at the head of the bay, but they may never have occupied it. An Eyak clan obtained their beaver crest in the vicinity, suggesting early Eyak occupation of the mainland despite Chugach claims, and the name Chilkat itself is of Tlingit origin.

By the late eighteenth century the Yakutat area Eyak were dominated by the expanding Tlingit. In the early nineteenth century Tlingitized Eyak from east of Cape Suckling drove the Chugach from Controller Bay, while more purely Eyak people pushed on to the Copper River delta (fig. 2) and to Cordova, just inside Prince William Sound. By the late nineteenth century the only relatively pure Eyak were those living in this last area, where they

\*The phonemes of Eyak are: (plain voiceless stops and affricates) *d, λ, ʒ, ʃ, ʒ, g, gʷ, ʒ, ʔ*; (aspirated stops and affricates) *t, λ, c, č, k, q*; (glottalized) *t, λ, č, k, q*; (fricatives) *s, š, x, xʷ, ɣ, h*; (nasals) *m, n*; (resonants) *w, l, y*; (short plain vowels) *i, e, a, u*; (long plain vowels); *iː, eː, aː, uː*; (short nasalized vowels) *ī, ā, ū*; (long nasalized vowels) *iː̄, aː̄, uː̄*. All short vowels occur before *h* and before a *ʔ* that is in the same syllable (not intervocalic); in other positions only *i, a, u* are found and *a* is [ə]. Information on Eyak phonology is from Krauss (1963-1970a:8, 1982: 23-24); the transcription of Eyak words into this orthography has been provided or checked by Michael E. Krauss (personal communications and communications to editors 1974, 1984, 1986). The short vowels are written as in Krauss (1982), which writes *a* for [ə] whether this is the reduced form of *a* (in prefixes) or the reduced form of *e, u, and i* (in stems); another solution to this problem of phonemic overlap would recognize a phoneme /ə/ and write the reduced vowels as /ə/ in stems and as /ə/ and /i/ in prefixes.

had a village named Eyak. Evidence for these movements is provided by historical records, traditions of the Tlingit proper, the Yakutat Tlingit, and surviving Eyak of Cordova (Swanton 1909:64-69, 154-165, 326-368; Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938; De Laguna 1972, 1:210), and by place-names. Many place-names from Cordova to Cape Suckling are Chugach in origin; those from Cape Suckling to Yakutat and farther east are often Eyak (or Tlingit translations).

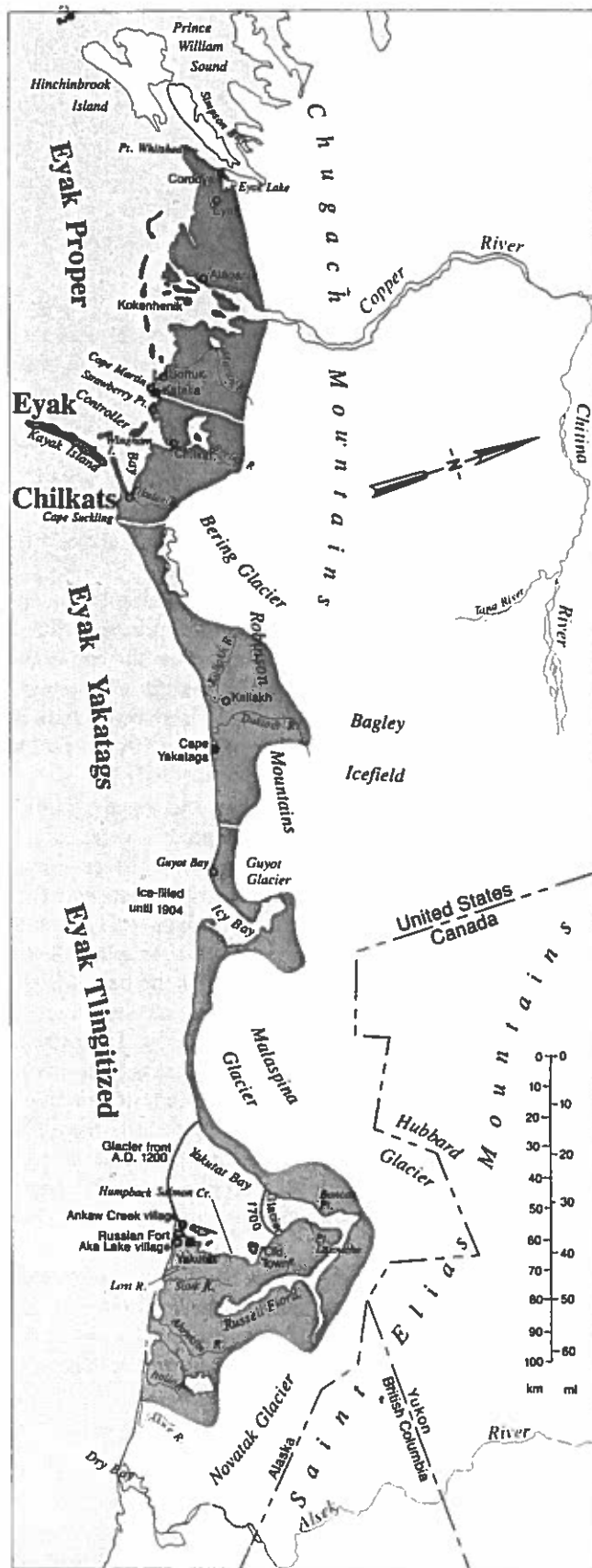
The Eyak have evidently lived on the Malaspina-Yakutat Forelands for a long time and, prior to Tlingit expansion, may have lived even farther south. Their culture, minus Eskimo borrowings and recent acquisitions, suggests what once may have been characteristic of present Northern Tlingit territory (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938; De Laguna et al. 1964).

The Eyak formed four regional groups, none a "tribe" in any political sense. These groups were, first, the Eyak (proper), since 1800-1825 in the Cordova-Copper River area (former Chugach territory). Second were the Eyak on the mainland of Controller Bay, who were becoming Tlingitized by 1850; they were sometimes called Chilkats from their village at the head of the bay. Third were the Eyak of the Gulf of Alaska coast between Capes Suckling and Yakataga, who were also being Tlingitized by 1850 and were sometimes called Yakatags from a village near Cape Yakataga. Emmons (1903) designated them as Guth-le-uk-qwan or Qwolth-yet-kwan from their main village on Kaliakh River and included with them the Tlingitized Eyak of Controller Bay. The fourth group lived around Yakutat Bay and are now completely Tlingitized.

Within this whole area 47 sites have been identified as having been at one time occupied by the Eyak (De Laguna 1972:58-106). Archeological investigations have been made in Controller Bay by Ketz and Johnson (1985) and in Yakutat Bay by De Laguna et al. (1964).

## Environment

Eyak groups living on the morainic shore, 15 miles wide at its maximum, between the open Gulf of Alaska and the mountains of the Saint Elias, Robinson, and Chugach ranges (10,000 to 18,000 feet high) tended to be isolated



190 Fig. 1. Territory and settlements of the Eyak in the 19th century.

both from each other and from their nearest neighbors. Canoe travel was dangerous except in the shelter of offshore bars; safe landing places could be found only inside the mouths of rivers or behind the islands of Yakutat and Controller bays. Sudden squalls, strong winds, fog, and rain, with heavy winter snows demanded human adaptation to damp and cold, but not to severe freezing.

Yet, the surf brought to the outer beaches the precious flotsam of the Pacific: bamboo, spars with drift iron, and stranded whales and sea lions (which the Eyak used but dared not hunt). Advances and retreats of the great piedmont glaciers are said to have overwhelmed ancient villages or opened new bays; where the ice reached tidewater were ideal breeding grounds for seals. The many lakes and lagoons attracted the enormous flocks of the Pacific flyway; berries grew in profusion on the open gravel and sand; the tidal flats provided mollusks and seaweeds.

The only large rivers cutting through the mountain barrier are the Alsek, emptying into Dry Bay east of Eyak country, and the Copper River near its western boundary. The Alsek was used by Athapaskans and Tlingits traveling to and from the interior, and the Copper River was used by Ahtnas bringing native copper and fur to trade. An easier overland route from the Copper River valley across the Bagley Icefields to Eyak settlements on the Duktoth River was taken by Ahtna immigrants and traders, but these routes were seldom if ever attempted by the Eyak.

## Culture

### Annual Cycle

Beginning in February, eulachon were caught in traps under the ice; later, with dip net or multibarbed spears from lighted canoes. Seals were harpooned on the ice. Edible roots, wild celery, sweet inner bark of the hemlock were gathered, and probably spruce roots for baskets.

In spring and summer, herring were caught and dried, and herring spawn collected. Trout, whitefish, and cod were taken with hook and line. Bird eggs were collected and seaweed picked and dried for winter. During the salmon runs, from early May to the last stragglers in November, chinooks, sockeyes, cohoes, and pinks were taken with traps, harpoons (fig. 3), two-pronged fish spears, or dip nets from river bank or canoe. Most were split and smoked; some were buried to rot.

Summer berries were picked and dried into cakes or preserved in oil. Sea otter were shot with harpoon arrows from encircling canoes. Molting geese and ducks were clubbed. Bears and mountain goats were hunted with dogs and killed with spears and arrows.

In the fall, Kamchatka lily roots and late berries were gathered. Clams, dried on strings, were put in boxes of oil.



Fig. 2. Copper River delta, covered by spruce, cottonwood, and willow. Mt. Eyak is in the distance. The house, used as a trading post 1898–1900, was built near Alaganik village, abandoned in 1892–1893 following an epidemic (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:21, 360–361) Photograph by Frederica De Laguna near present Alaganik, Alaska, 1930.

Furbearers were trapped in fall and winter, with deadfall and snare; beaver could be taken only in fall and spring, not when protected by thick winter ice. Late fall, when larders were full, was potlatch time.

The poor snowshoes undoubtedly limited winter hunting, though young men attacked hibernating bears, fished for halibut, and snared ptarmigan and grouse. Most people remained home from December to early February, telling stories, making clothing and baskets, or doing other indoor chores.

### Structures

The dwelling was a rectangular house of vertical planks, with a gable roof. A movable windscreen was hinged on the single ridgepole that crossed the smokehole. Sleeping rooms across the back and sides were roofed and floored with planks, entered by sliding doors, and illuminated by shell or cobblestone lamps. Bedding consisted of grass mats, pelts, twined goat wool blankets, and a sloping plank as the family pillow. Some Controller Bay houses in

the nineteenth century had shedlike additions. There were also houses for single families, smokehouses for fish and meat in the villages and camps, and boxlike caches on tall posts.

Each village had a fort or palisaded enclosure around some or all the houses. Every important village also had a potlatch house for each moiety, with carved post (of Eagle or Raven moiety) in front. High benches around the walls served for sitting and sleeping; below were lockers with crest designs on the doors. These houses were equivalent to the Tlingit lineage or chiefs' houses, and like those were named; for example, Raven House, Goose House, and Bark House of the Raven moiety; Eagle House, (Eagle?) Skeleton House, Bed (Platform?) House, Beaver House, Beaver Dam House, Wolf House, Wolf Den House, and Wolf Bath House of the Eagle moiety. One built at Katalla about 1870 had two posts inside, carved with the Eagle, Beaver, and Beaver Dam crests (Barbeau 1950, 2:fig.376 top; Keithan 1963:57).

Graveyards, as well as individual graves or grave houses, were surrounded by fences and also had crest memorials.

### Transportation

The Eyak had a variety of wooden and skin boats. These included: a small cleft-prow dugout (fig. 4) for open water hunting, a small heavy-prowed canoe with a ram for sealing in the icy waters of Yakutat and Icy bays, a larger Tlingit-type dugout for 10–16 persons, sometimes with a European mast and sail, a larger war canoe with Raven or Eagle carved on the prow, slender dugouts for racing, Eskimo kayaks and two-hole bidarkas for sea otter hunting, and large canoes like umiaks of goat or sealskin.

Snowshoes webbed only under the feet were aboriginal from Cordova to Yakutat (fig. 6). Sleds were hand-drawn, for dogs were used only for hunting.

### Clothing and Adornment

Men wore their hair tied in a bunch, women in a braid,



U. of Pa., U. Mus., Philadelphia: 33-29-1.

Fig. 3. Fish harpoon with detachable barbed iron head and cotton cord line. The iron head is 14cm long; the shaft, 356cm long and 3cm in diameter at the middle. The slotted end of the shaft is wrapped with cotton cord to prevent splitting, as the wedge-shaped tang of the barbed head would ram back and twist into the wood at every successive thrust. Abercrombie (1900:397) reported that most of the salmon supply was taken with this implement. Collected by Frederica De Laguna, 1933.



Fig. 4. Yakutat-type canoe, partly finished. Made by Gus Nelson, with an adz, it was thought to be the more traditional shape (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:45). The man beside it is the canoe maker's brother, Galushia Nelson, one of Frederica De Laguna's major informants. Photograph by De Laguna, Old Town, Cordova, Alaska, 1933.

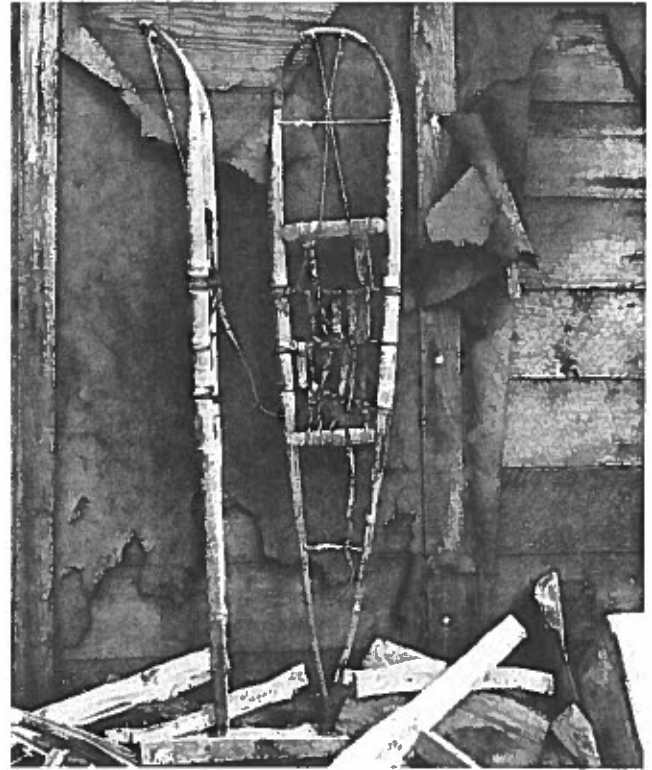
while the shaman's hung long and loose. Both sexes painted the face and wore earrings, nose ornaments, finger rings, and bracelets of native copper. Women, who tattooed their wrists, did not wear labrets except under Tlingit influence at Yakutat. No labrets were found in prehistoric sites.

The Eyak dressed like the Eskimo with trousers, boots, mittens, and a summer shirt with fur inside, over which was worn a hooded shirt in winter. For rain a hooded gutskin parka was donned. In summer men went barefoot and practically naked, for only a breechclout was noted in 1884 (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:70). An apron was worn to war. Men and women wore robes of small furs (preferably ground squirrel) or of twined goat wool. It was taboo for women to dress in fresh sealskins or to sew together land and sea mammal skins in one garment.



U. of Pa., U. Mus., Philadelphia: 33-29-2.

Fig. 5. Broken canoe paddle of characteristic Eyak form, with a crutch handle and an elongate, pointed blade. The handle has been reshaped as an ax handle. According to Birket-Smith and De Laguna (1938:50) it was common for paddles to wear through at the handle from friction with the gunwale of the canoe. Collected by Frederica De Laguna, 1933. Length, 175 cm.



left, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen: H-2966; right, U. of Pa., U. Mus., Philadelphia: 33-29-3. Fig. 6. Showshoes of the traditional type, with a 2-piece frame made from spruce; a pointed heel; a rounded, spliced, upturned toe; 2 or 3 crossbars; and webbing of seal thong (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:56, 384). Photograph by Frederica De Laguna, Cordova, Alaska, 1933.

### *Technology*

Tools, utensils, and weapons were like those of the Northern Tlingit or Chugach Eskimo except for the greater use of native copper for knives, ulu blades, scrapers, pins, harpoon heads for arrows, or sharp arrowheads. Eyak boxes, though decorated in Northern Northwest Coast style, were made of four separate pieces for the sides, morticed into the bottom. Abercrombie (1900) reported pipes with crude pottery bowls, the only mention of pottery. Bows were sinew-backed except the automatic bow set in a bear trail. Blunt arrows were used only at Yakutat. Fine spruce root baskets were decorated with false embroidery.

### *Social and Political Organization*

Three classes were distinguished: chiefs and their families, commoners, and slaves. There was no tribal or village government; the moiety (or clan) chief in any village was leader only of his own people, although one chief was likely to be preeminent. Chiefs owned slaves, led war and hunting expeditions, and dressed themselves and their close kin in dentalia and fine clothing. Succession went to a younger brother or maternal nephew. Slaves (war

captives and their children) might be killed at the funeral of a chief or his relative.

The Eyak were divided into exogamous matrilineal moieties, Raven (or "Crow") (*či·lehyu·*) and Eagle (*ğu·žgalagyu·*), equated with Tlingit Raven and Wolf-Eagle and with Ahtna Crow and Sea Gull moieties. Birket-Smith and De Laguna (1938:447) believed that the Eyak lacked true clans and that even their moieties were recent, but Yakutat informants named their clans, and De Laguna (1975) has argued that matrilineal clans and moieties were ancient and widespread in northwestern North America. Krauss (1974) doubts their importance among the Eyak and points out that the moiety word for 'eagle' is of recent Chugach Eskimo derivation.

Eyak clans were semi-localized, while local groups tended to be identified as clans. Villages might be said to "belong" to a certain clan, probably because its chief was the most prominent or his clansmen most numerous, although both moieties were represented in each settlement. While Cordova Eyak denied that hunting areas were controlled by clans, this was the case from Controller Bay southward (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946; De Laguna 1972), although any relative of the owners might utilize their resources. The clans were the political and legal units.

According to Yakutat tradition, much Tlingit influence, probably including potlatch ceremonial and crests, was spread westward by *ɣatga·wé·t*, a wealthy Tlingit chief and shaman of the *te·q"e·dí* (a Wolf clan), who was born near Dry Bay in the eighteenth century. He is said to have "organized" for trade the backward Eyak speakers of Yakutat, among whom he settled, but he also traveled all over, taking Eyak wives from places as far west as Cordova, bestowing Tlingit clan names on his wives' kinsmen, and introducing Tlingit ceremonial gift exchange (a familiar ploy for acquiring wealth from unsophisticated brothers-in-law). Stories about *ɣatga·wé·t* belong among the many traditions documenting the northwestward movement of Tlingit into Dry Bay Athapaskan and Eyak territories, through trade, intermarriage, purchase of lands, or conquest (Swanton 1909: 154-165, 326-346; De Laguna 1972:242-247).

Eyak clans are known chiefly by their Tlingit names (given in the following list unless otherwise indicated).

Clans of the Raven moiety were: 1. *ga·naɣte·dí*, 2. *qu·ské·dí* (Eyak *qu·ské·d*), 3. *tuk"á·ɣ"ádi*, 4. *qahlayahd·daíá·ɣ·dalahgayu·* 'bark house people' (Eyak name), 5. *k"á·šk·q"á·n* 'pink salmon people', 6. *hiný·dí*, 7. *stax"adí* or *sdaɣedi*. Clans of the Eagle moiety were: 8. *ži·šq"e·dí* (Eyak *ži·šqe·t·yu·*), 9. *ğu·žihyu·* 'wolf people' (Eyak name), 10. *gaɣyax·ka·g"anta·n*, 11. *ta·ɣa·yik·te·q"e·dí*, 12. *tuɣ"e·dí* 'muddy water people', 13. *yaný·dí*.

Clans 1, 2, and 3 were in the Cordova-Copper River area, while 4 and 9 were "adopted Tlingit" who moved

there from Controller Bay. Clan 8 was at Controller Bay, while 9, 10, and 11 were at both Controller Bay and the coast to the east. Clans 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 13 were in the Yakutat area, 7 and 13 at Arhnklin River, and 12 at Situk River.

Of clans 3, 6, 7, and 13, nothing more is known. Clans 1 and 5 are said to be branches of an Ahtna Raven clan who emigrated to the coast across the icefields. Those going west were named *ga·naɣte·dí* for the famous Chilkat Tlingit clan by *ɣatga·wé·t*, who also named clan 2; those who went to Yakutat acquired their name by purchasing Humpback Salmon Creek. Clan 8, considered a branch of 10, is clearly equivalent to the Red Paint People of the Sea Gull moiety of the Ahtna, Upper Tanana, and Tanaina. Clans 11 and 12 were considered eastern branches of 10. Other clans at Yakutat are either Tlingit or of mixed Tlingit-Athapaskan origin.

Ambilateral cross-cousin marriage was preferred, with bride-service, and avunculocal residence. There was polygyny, the sororate, junior levirate (with access to the elder brother's wife during his lifetime), wife exchange, and even wife hospitality. There was avoidance between mother- and son-in-law; father- and daughter-in-law (?), grown brother and sister; but free joking between brother- and sister-in-law.

Killing or even accidental injury to someone in the opposite moiety or in another house (lineage or clan) necessitated payment of damages; grievances were aired in insulting songs.

### Life Cycle

Fresh meat or fish were taboo to menstruants or pregnant women, for fear of offending the animals. All men left the house during childbirth; after 10 days of seclusion and taboos, the new parents purified themselves.

A girl's puberty seclusion lasted several months, involving special dishes, sucking tube, and bone scratcher. A boy's first kill was presented with gifts to members of the opposite moiety.

A dead body was laid out in the house for four days, watched by members of the opposite moiety, who tried to cheer the bereaved, then removed the corpse through a hole in the wall to be cremated or interred, according to the relatives' wishes. Slaves, witches, or evil taboo-breakers were always burned. Most of the deceased's property was burned or buried with him; some was saved to be burned or given away at his death potlatch. At this ceremony, the chief of the deceased's moiety acted as host to members of the opposite group, presenting food and gifts in order of rank, with special payments to the undertakers. Guests were addressed by their "potlatch names" (names of the dead in the hosts' moiety who were not yet reincarnated), but they accepted food and gifts on behalf of their own dead. Thus, all the deceased shared

what the living enjoyed. Potlatches were also held for building a new "potlatch house," or chief's house.

### Religion

All things, animate and inanimate, were believed to have spirit owners, or souls in anthropomorphic form. The human soul left the body temporarily in dreams, trances, or insanity. After death, it was supposed to enter the womb of a woman in the deceased's maternal line to be reincarnated, receiving again the same name and supposedly exhibiting the same personality and appearance.

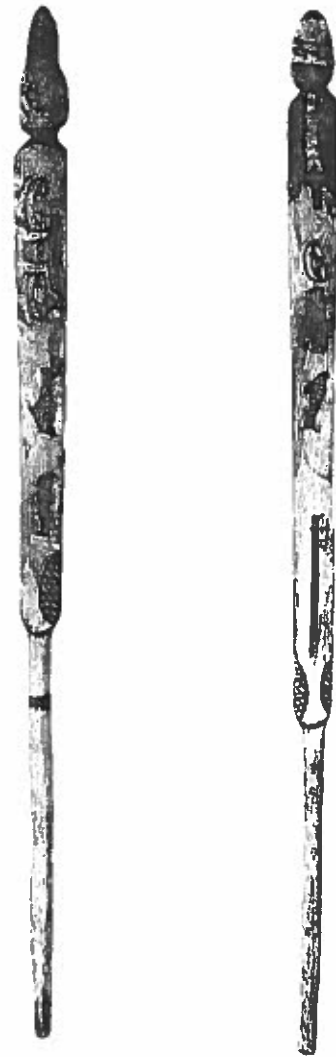
Hunters cut the eyeballs of game, so that the animals could not see them, and put the heads, entrails, etc., in appropriate places to insure the animals' reincarnation. Bears were treated with respect, and there was a simple first-fish ceremony. Women were tabooed from touching or stepping over a man's weapons. A wife should remain quiet while her husband was hunting or chopping wood.

Cold water baths, use of a rubbing amulet (an incised pebble), sexual abstinence, fasting, bathing, or purging with devil's club infusion could bring good luck in a chancy undertaking or remove the contamination of childbirth or death.

Shamans (fig. 8) could be of either sex. The power was usually inherited though not manifested until after puberty when the spirit helpers appeared in dreams. The novice fasted, observed sexual continence, bathed in cold water, purged with devil's club infusion, and went alone into the woods, where spirits in animal or human form gave him power and taught him songs. Before practicing, the shaman observed the same regimen, put on bone and ivory necklaces, an apron with rattling fringe, a belt, and the special mask or face paint representing the spirit he invoked. Cures were effected by singing, laying on hands, and sucking out disease. Shamans could also prophesy, find lost persons or property, confer good or bad luck, walk on water, handle hot rocks or fire, free themselves from bonds, perform ventriloquist tricks, or make an image move (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938: 208-213). (Dolls were, therefore, taboo to girls.)

Witches of both sexes obtained evil power from dead dogs or human bones. They could fly, change shape, and bring misfortune or death. Shamans usually blamed sickness on witches, and those denounced might be fined or suffer death.

Prayers were addressed to the Sun. There was also belief in the Thunderbird, Property-Woman, monster animals, dwarfs, Tree People (giants that steal humans), man-eating Wolf-People, and Land Otter Men that transformed the drowned or lost into creatures like themselves. Northern Lights foretold death. Generosity to the poor or to starving animals was rewarded. Raven cycle myths are said to have been sung; other myths and tales resemble those of the Chugach Eskimo and Tlingit, some



left, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen: H-2966; right, U. of Pa., U. Mus., Philadelphia: 33-29-3. Fig. 7. Ceremonial paddles used in potlatches like the dance paddles of the Tlingit, carried by song leaders to direct the singing and motions of their groups. Like Tlingit heirlooms, they could also be thrust between quarreling groups by a peacemaker to end disputes. They are painted with commercial oil-based house paint, in black, red, and white. That on the left belonged to the Raven moiety and was carved at the end to represent the raven. On the sides were paintings probably representing an animal's face, two jumping salmon and a beaver lodge. The other paddle has a bear's head at the end and is painted with figures representing bugs with 6 legs, an anthropomorphic face, a jumping salmon, and beaver lodges. The owner said that the Raven paddle was carried into the potlatch house by the leader of the Raven guests to announce the coming of his group. The Bear paddle followed, and showed that the Ravens were glad to come to the potlatch. Collected in 1933 by Frederica De Laguna; length of left 166 cm, other to same scale.

explaining the origin of crests.

### History

In 1783 Nagaiev (Zaikov 1979:1-6) first learned from the Chugach Eskimo of the Eyak living "east of Kayak Island," but the Russians did not encounter any until





Fig. 8. Old Man Dude at his house on Simpson Bay, Alaska. He was a powerful shaman with a reputation among not only the Eyak but also the Chugach Eskimo (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:10, 219-223). Photograph by Frederica De Laguna, 1933.

1792, when Eyak from Cape Suckling and Tlingitized Yakutat Eyak attacked a party under Aleksandr Baranov in Prince William Sound (Baranov 1979:27-37). In 1794 Purtoov and Kulikalov (1979:46-52) found no trace of habitation on the lower Copper River but discovered an Eyak village of 50 to 60 persons, at or near Kaliakh River, from which they took the chief and seven others as hostages, including two Yakutat men. In 1796 Baranov himself supervised the establishment of a fort and agricultural colony at Yakutat, securing hostages from the Yakutat (Tlingit?) chief and from the Eyak-speakers of the vicinity. In the late eighteenth century, the Yakutat people were still part Eyak, although the leading families were Tlingit or had adopted their speech and ways (Izmailov and Bocharov 1981; Beresford 1789; Colnett 1788; Malaspina 1885).

Native resentment of Russian tyranny and of poaching by their Aleut and Pacific Eskimo hunters led in 1799 to a massacre of a hunting party returning from Sitka by the Eyak at Cape Suckling; in reprisal an Eyak from Controller Bay was tortured to death by the Russians. The Yakutat people helped to plan the destruction of the Russian fort at Sitka in 1802 (rebuilt in 1804). In August 1805, the Russian post and colony at Yakutat were wiped out, the attack led by an Eyak of the *ta·xa·yik-te·q'e·di* clan; in commemoration the *te·q'e·di* Bear crest was carved on a nearby rock. The Russians never attempted to reestablish a post at Yakutat.

In the early nineteenth century, Tlingits from Dry Bay and southeastern Alaska, in part attracted by loot from the Russian post, completed their conquest of the Yakutat area, absorbing or enslaving the last Eyak people there. Smallpox in 1837-1838 wiped out about half the communities on the Gulf Coast.



Fig. 9. Anna Nelson Harry mending a commercial gill net. She was an informant who gave valuable data on kinship terms and tales (Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:9-10), and on language (Krauss 1982: 17-18). Photograph by Martha Nelson, Yakutat, Alaska, about 1975.

From 1806 until about 1825, there were joint Eyak-Yakutat Tlingit attacks on the Chugach Eskimo and Chugach raids on the Eyak and Yakutat. Finally, the Chugach had to surrender Controller Bay, and the Eyak began to settle on the Copper River delta and the edge of Prince William Sound. Some Eyak were later involved in unsuccessful Russian attempts to explore the Copper River, apparently killing their masters. H.T. Allen (1887) used Eyak helpers on his 1885 expedition but could not induce them to venture into Ahtna territory beyond the first village.

Yakutat remained relatively isolated until visited by missionaries, prospectors, traders, and alpinists in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1900, practically all the natives from Dry Bay to Cape Suckling were concentrated at Yakutat, which was becoming a typical Tlingit cannery town, enjoying brief prosperity between 1910 and 1920.

In the Cordova-Controller Bay area the first cannery was built in 1889, but it offered little employment to the Eyak. After 1900 the Eyak found some work in the canneries. The discovery of oil near Katalla and the building of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad, 1907-1910, forcing the natives from their homes, and the depletion of herring and salmon along the whole coast brought destitution to the remaining Eyak and their neighbors. This was the period in which the Cordova-Controller Bay Eyak were virtually destroyed. Debauched by alcohol, the native population was left to starve in winter or die from epidemics. Many children were shipped off to school at Chemawa, Oregon, from which few returned. By 1920 almost the only Eyak-speakers were those, fewer than 20, who lived at Old Town, Cordova. Population figures are given in table 1.

As a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (vol. 5:657-661) the Eyak Corporation was established. In 1985, it included 319 Alaska Native shareholders

**Table 1. Eyak Population, 1787–1985**

Date	Population	Sources
1787	70-80 <sup>a</sup> at most at Port Mulgrave	Beresford 1789:87
1788	200 <sup>a</sup> at most at Port Mulgrave	Colnett 1788
1791	1,000 <sup>a</sup>	Malaspina 1885:345
1818–1819	117 in Controller Bay and Copper River delta	U.S. Census Office 1884:33; Tikhmenev 1978–1979, 1:161
1835	150 <sup>b</sup> at Yakutat village	U.S. Census Office 1884:35
1839	150 <sup>b</sup> at most "near Mt. St. Elias" 38 families in Controller Bay area	U.S. Census Office 1884:36 Wrangell 1980:49
1860	148 baptized	Tikhmenev 1978–1979, 1:348
1874	300 in Controller Bay and Copper River delta	Dall 1877:23, 26–27
1880	444	U.S. Census Office 1884:29
1890	236	U.S. Census Office 1893:158
1899	59 Cordova area	Elliott 1900:739
1933	38 Cordova area	Birket-Smith and De Laguna 1938:24
1973	30-40	Krauss 1974
1985	5	Michael E. Krauss, personal communication 1986

<sup>a</sup>Includes Tlingit.

<sup>b</sup>Mostly Tlingit.

of which only two were Eyak. About one-third of the shareholders in the Eyak Corporation lived in the Cordova area (Lucas Borer, communication to editors 1985).

### Synonymy

The name Eyak, which is used in English as a self-designation, is taken from the name of the village Eyak near Cordova, where the last concentration of Eyaks lived. The Eyak name of this village is *?i·ya·g*, a borrowing from Chugach Eskimo *iγya·q* 'outlet of a lake' (literally 'throat'). The spelling Eyak was first used by Abercrombie (1900:384, 397) in 1884. Other spellings and variants include Ikhiak (Petroff 1884:29), Eeak tella, for the Cordova-Copper River group (Emmons 1903), and perhaps Hyacks, 1869 (cited in Hodge 1907–1910, 1:448).

The Eyak refer to themselves as *?i·ya·gdalahgayu·* (originally used in its literal meaning 'inhabitants of Eyak village') or simply as *dax̄hyu·* 'human beings'.

The usual name for the Eyak in Tlingit is *guté·x̄q̄á·n*, but the Yakutat Tlingit use this or the variant *kuté·x̄q̄á·n* for 'Chugach Eskimo' (vol. 5:7; Krauss 1970a:280) and call the Eyak *yá·t q̄á·n* 'local inhabitants', because

Eyak was the original language at Yakutat. The Ahtna, though farther up the Copper River, called the Eyak *dangene*, literally 'uplanders' (De Laguna and McClellan 1954–1968; Kari and Buck 1975:59), perhaps because they most often reached them by going up the Chitina and Tana rivers and over the Bagley Icefield to the coast.

The Russians referred to the Eyak as Ugalákhmūt- (with Russian inflections), variants having -la- for -liá- and -mu- for mñu-, and by the Russianized form Ugalenŕy (Wrangell 1839:51), names which appeared in German as Ugalachmut and Ugalenzen (Teben'kov 1981; Shelekov 1793, 1981; Radloff 1858; Wrangell 1839a, 1980:49). This name is from Chugach Eskimo *uḡala·ymiu* 'people of the southeast' according to Krauss (1970a:654). Names that appear to be ultimately variants or corruptions of this include Wallamute (Portlock 1789), Lakhamutes (Petroff 1884), Lakhamit or Lakhamites (Bancroft 1886). Bancroft also applied Agelmute(s) to Eyak from the Copper and Kaliakh rivers. Elliott (1900) named Agaligniute the Indians at Eyak or "Odiak" Village.

The Russians recognized the Eyak as distinct from the Eskimo and as linguistically distinct from the Tlingit, yet they often called them Kolosh (Tlingit) because their culture was like that of the Yakutat Tlingit. Russian Ākutatskiĭ 'the Yakutat language' sometimes refers specifically to Eyak (Davydov 1810–1812, 2:appendix).

It was Dall (1870, 1877) who introduced the erroneous notion that Eyak "Ugalakmiut" were really Eskimos transformed into Tlingits. This error was perpetuated by Petroff (1882, 1884), Emmons (1903), Swanton (1908a, 1952), Hodge (1907–1910), and Kroeber (1939). For a time Dall (1877) even confused the Eyak with the Ahtna, supposing that the "Ah-tena" or "Ugalentsi" had a colony on Controller Bay.

### Sources

Aside from brief items in Shelekhov (1791, 1793, 1981), Coxe (1803), and in Wrangell (1839, 1970), or references in Tikhmenev (1861–1863, 1978–1979), the earliest ethnographic information on the Eyak is in Jacobsen (1884) and Abercrombie (1900). The major source on Eyak culture, problems of nomenclature, and territorial claims is Birket-Smith and De Laguna (1938), apart from the preliminary sketch of De Laguna (1937). The same problems have been discussed by Johansen (1963), without new data. Additional information obtained at Yakutat, including notes from Harrington and Krauss, is utilized in De Laguna (1972). Archeological data are found in De Laguna et al. (1964). The definitive works on Eyak linguistics are by Krauss (1970, 1970a), which include all information from previous sources.

Stories told in Eyak by Anna Nelson Harry, the last speaker of the language, translations, and a sketch of her life appear in Krauss (1982).