Getting to Know the Neighbourhood:

Upper Tanana Place Names and Navigation in the Scottie Creek Valley

of the Yukon - Alaska Borderlands

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ABSTRACT. Among other functions, place names provide a means of geographical reference to locate position on the landscape. However, as Kari has noted, there is considerable replication of place names within the Upper Tanana language territory. There are numerous "mineral lick" creeks and "grass" lakes, for example. This repetition may be related to reducing the total number of place names within the semantic domain of geography, but presents the problem of distinguishing one "mineral lick" lake from another in speech. Based on my collaborative research with Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny of the Scottie Creek valley, I will present one Upper Tanana speaker's solution to this problem, a solution which is more generally shared throughout the language region. Mr. Johnny applies several higher orders of geographic organization to the landscape, associating individual place names within distinctive "neighbourhoods" or "blocks," which provide a secondary geographic reference to commonly repeated place names. This paper will provide examples of place name repetition, document the "neighbourhoods" of Scottie Creek which Mr. Johnny has identified, as well as discuss place name research more generally in the borderlands region.

Keywords: Upper Tanana, Athapaskan, Linguistics, Place Names, Navigation, Scottie Creek, Yukon - Alaska Borderlands

INTRODUCTION

The Scottie Creek valley lies astride the Yukon - Alaska border. The Alaska Highway passes through the lower reaches of the valley, crossing the creek just to the east of the border; the highway then runs northwest along the upland terraces to the north of Scottie Creek (see Fig. 1).

The aboriginal inhabitants of this valley are classified by anthropologists as the easternmost branch of Upper Tanana, a distinctive Athapaskan language group defined phonologically within a long dialect chain found along the drainage of the middle to upper reaches of the Tanana River and beyond. Within their own language the Upper Tanana are *Dineh* – people.[1] They are internally subdivided by a mixture of matrilineal descent categories, residence affiliations, and local dialects. Geographically, the Upper Tanana *Dineh* associate themselves with a large area which is *approximately* bounded by the Donjek River in Yukon Territory to the West, the St. Elias Mountains to the South, the interior Dawson Range of mountains and the Yukon River to the North and Northwest, and the Tanana River above the ramparts to the East in Alaska.

In today's world they principally occupy four contemporary villages: Northway, Tetlin, and Tanacross, Alaska, and Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, although speakers and descendents also live in many neighbouring communities (such as Mentasta in Alaska and Burwash in Yukon) as well as further afield in the urban centres of Fairbanks, Anchorage, Whitehorse, and Vancouver. In years past their successful hunting lifestyle

[1] I use the term *Dineh* based on my questioning of Mrs. Bessie John and Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny for a designating term for themselves. Admittedly this caused them some perplexity at first and a variety of terms were proposed, including Indian People, Athapaskan, Scottie Creek People, *Dineh Su* / shu /, and *Dineh*. I have settled on Upper Tanana *Dineh* on the basis that the term locates the people I am referring to geographically, situates them within the historical literature, and emphasizes the cultural, social, and

maintained the Upper Tanana *Dineh* in a larger number of villages, many of which are still used today as seasonal hunting locales by some families.

Scottie Creek is also bisected by the 141st meridian which, through the terms of treaty between Great Britain and Russia in 1825, established the boundary between then British and Russian territory in the far northwest interior of North America. The British negotiators of this treaty were principally concerned with opening the north Pacific to trade vessels; they were unconcerned with the fact that their abstract lines on poorly developed maps might have any effect on the indigenous people of the region.

And for many years it did not. The Upper Tanana *Dineh* who lived around the "border" knew not of its existence, nor did it play any role in their continued seasonal movements and ritual exchanges back and forth across the boundary, until 40 years after the American purchase of Alaska (see McKennan, 1959, for an ethnographic account of traditional and early 20th century Upper Tanana society and culture).

In 1907 field workers of the International Boundary Commission first arrived in the Scottie Creek valley, cutting their one straight line from the Wrangell Mountains to the Arctic Ocean. They would return each summer after until 1914, when the boundary vista was finally completed (Green, 1982, Easton, n.d.). Since that time the Upper Tanana *Dineh* have been externally divided into American and Canadian citizens, an etic categorization which has created many challenges to the continued maintainance of a singular *Dineh* identity.

Yet maintain it they have. Despite village nucleation and international segregation, there remains a strong sense of ethnic unity amongst the Upper Tanana

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historical continuity with their related linguistic cognates across the full extent of their distribution in the western subarctic.

Dineh. This unity is buttressed by the continued practice of socially cohesive rituals, such as exogamous inter-village marriages, extensive reciprocity-based exchange of hunted meat and fish, and large inter-regional potlatches, which will draw additional relatives from neighbouring language groups, such as the Ahtna of the Copper River region, Tanacross people of the Tok region, the Hän of the Dawson area, and the Tutchone of the southwest Yukon. These more formal ritual ties are further complemented by regular visits between relatives and friends across the international border, and the continued use of the land as a primary resource for subsistence and other economic activities (Simeone, 1995; Easton, 2001a).

It is land use which I will focus on in this paper, in particular the relationship between place names and successful navigation over the land. The data discussed here has been gathered during the course of extended fieldwork with Upper Tanana *Dineh* speakers over the past decade. Primary collaborators in this documentation have been Mr. Andy Frank (b. 1901- d. 1994), *Nelnah* - Mrs. Bessie John (b. 1922- d. 2000), and her brother Mr. Joseph (Tommy) Johnny (b. 1937).[2] Both Mr. Frank and Mrs. John have since passed along their trail to heaven, but all three were born, raised, and lived most of their lives in the borderlands region. Two Athapaskan linguists, John Ritter of the Yukon Native Language Centre, and Jim Kari of the Alaska Native Language Center, have also contributed to these data; John Ritter has provided the orthographic transcriptions and translations.

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[2] Additional place name and land use documentation has been provided by Mr. Louis Frank, Mr. Fred Demit, Mrs. Ada Galen, Mrs. Avis Sam, Mr. Roy Sam, Mrs. Jenny Sanford, Mrs. Marilyn Sanford, Mr. David Johnny, and Chief Jerry Isaac.

For the purposes of illustration of my thesis, I am limiting my discussions to the watershed of Scottie Creek. This should not be taken as any indication that Scottie Creek *Dineh* did not range more extensively over the landscape both in the past and today - they did and do still, but that is another documentary project (see Easton 2003 and 2005).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE UPPER TANANA LANGUAGE

The published literature on the Upper Tanana language is relatively sparse. Paul Milanowski has worked with native speakers, principally in the Tetlin dialect and Tanacross language, to produce several booklets and a dictionary (Milanowksi 1979) for use as curriculum materials in local schools (see also Milanowski 1962). Because the Upper Tanana language is spoken in both Yukon and Alaska, it has also been documented by both the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the Yukon Native Language Centre (YNLC), each of which use a slightly different writing system (the former de-emphasizes the tone, the latter insists upon it).

Jim Kari of the ANLC has prepared several publications with Upper Tanana transcriptions. Tyone (1996) was transcribed and edited by Jim Kari. While ostensibly concerned with the Upper Ahtna, Kari (1986) necessarily includes subsidiary Upper Tanana materials resulting from the close kinship connections between his principal collaborators and Upper Tanana speakers. Kari has also undertaken extensive documentation of Upper Tanana, Tanacross, and Ahtna geographical place names, which he has generously shared with me and which forms a major underpinning of my own work on this topic.

The Yukon Native Language Centre has produced several curriculum aids, including basic language lessons (e.g. John and YNLC 1995) and computer-based talking books lessons in a number of Upper Tanana dialects and idiolects, as well as regular printed accounts of their group literacy workshops (e.g. YNLC 1995, 2001). Daniel Tlen transcribed a glossary of basic words in the Scottie Creek dialect of Upper Tanana in collaboration with Mrs. Bessie John (John 1997).

My own linguistic work has focused on Upper Tanana names for geographic features, personal names, and animal and plant names (Easton 2005b). Projects on Upper Tanana bird names and knowledge with Doris Johns and Upper Tanana semantic domain of fish and are currently ongoing (Friend, et al. 2005).

The schools at Beaver Creek, Northway, and Tetlin provide some measure of language training to both youth and adults. To date, however, there is nothing approaching a language-based immersion curriculum, which is generally regarded as one of the most efficacious methods for ensuring competent inter-generational language transmission.

The regional relationships between Upper Tanana and its neighbouring indigenous languages are less certain, but we can make several observations on the matter. To begin with, as noted above, the differences between Upper Tanana and their linguistic neighbours are relatively slight, reflecting considerable interchange of speakers across language boundaries within the region. This lack of extensive linguistic differentiation reflects an important social-cultural characteristic of northern Athapaskan speaking peoples, namely that:

> Intergroup communication has ordinarily been constant, and no Northern Athapaskan language or dialect was ever completely isolated from the others for long. The most important differences among Athapaskan languages are generally the result of areal diffusion of separate innovations from different points of origin, each language - each community - being a unique conglomerate . . .. Between Northern Athapaskan as a whole and the band or community dialects that are its fundamental sociolinguistic units the only useful larger categories are languages, and even these are sometimes arbitrary.... Whatever the language boundaries, the network of communication in the Northern Athapaskan dialect complex is open-ended.... People from adjacent communities usually expect to be able to understand one another's speech, if not immediately then surely after some practice. Local dialects and languages are important as symbols of social identity, but the native expectation that these differences, even across relatively vast distances, will not be barriers to communication gives the Northern Athapaskan speaker a distinctively open and flexible perception his social world (Krauss and Golla 1981:68-69).

The Upper Tanana language is no different in this regard. While it is a distinct language, it nevertheless shares similar features of one sort or another with Tanacross, Gwi'chin, Northern and Southern Tutchone, Lower Tanana, and Han. This indicates considerable linguistic and hence social exchanges over an area stretching from east of

Fairbanks to the Old Crow flats, exchanges which the evidence suggest have been going on for several thousands of years. As McKennan notes:

> The Athapaskans on the Tanana and Yukon rivers, from the Tutchone to the Ingalik, do not fall easily into a number of discrete cultural or linguistic blocks; rather, they constitute a continuum of local bands whose respective microcultures and dialects differ only slightly from those of their immediate neighbors. Over a span of several bands the linguistic differences are compounded, with mutual intelligibility diminishing in rough proportion to the intervening distance . . .. it is hard to say whether the linguistic jumps from the Minto dialect (of Lower Tanana) to Upper Koyukon and from Upper Tanana to Southern Tutchone are greater than the jump from Minto to Upper Tanana (Michael E. Krauss, communication to editors 1978). Indeed, both Tanacross and Upper Tanana speakers told McKennan that they are able to converse with Lower Tanana speakers less easily than with speakers of Han, Ahtna, and Southern Tutchone, although it is not clear whether or not this is because they have acquired some degree of competence in these languages through extensive and often intimate contact (McKennan 1981:563).

Finally, it seems pretty clear that a multi-lingual capacity was the traditional norm amongst the western subarctic Athapaskans. Bessie John, at a language workshop in Whitehorse told how, "In the old days we were sent to another village to learn their language, when we were little we would just stay there and speak their language; then we know it." She herself learned Northern Tutchone as a young girl from her years living at

Fort Selkirk, where her maternal grandmother was from, and Coffee Creek, which was shared by speakers of both Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone.[3] For the neighbouring Ahtna, Kari has observed that:

> The Upper Ahtna have an impressive tradition of multilingualism. Most Upper Ahtna Elders can speak the two distinct languages of the Tanana drainage - Upper Tanana and Tanacross - and they are familiar with the other dialects of Ahtna spoken down the Copper River and to the west. The Upper Ahtna often sing and dance with the Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway people at Copper River potlatches. . . . The . . . Dena'ina or (Tanaina) of Cook Inlet, and the Western Ahtna had a tradition of speaking and understanding each other's languages. Early in the period of Russian occupation the Russians employed Dena'ina as agents and interpreters as they contacted the Ahtnas and other Athapabaskans in interior Alaska (P. Kari 1985:16, and footnote 3, pp. 16-17).

The Upper Tanana language seems most closely related to the Hän and Gwich'in languages, which lie, to the North (Ritter, pers. comm,n.d.).

The Tanacross language, spoken to the east of Tetlin, and the Lower Tanana (sometimes called simply Tanana) language, spoken yet further downstream along the Tanana River, are mutually distinct, though closely related, languages which combined with Upper Tanana constitute the Tanana linguistic group proper.

The Scottie Creek dialect represents the eastern-most expression of the Upper Tanana language. To the west are dialectally differentiated members centered at the mouth of the Nabesna River - referred to as speakers of Northway dialect, and about

[3] Bessie John, Upper Tanana Language Workshop, Yukon Native Language Centre, 12 November 1997.

Tetlin Lake - referred to as speakers of Tetlin dialect.[4] However due to a lack of any concrete linguistic data, it is uncertain whether there was a distinctive Upper Chisana River dialect. Based on the dialectical differentiation present between Scottie Creek, Northway, and Tetlin, this distinction may have been possible, but its features are now undoubtedly lost to us.

VILLAGE AND PLACE NAME DISTRIBUTION IN THE SCOTTIE CREEK VALLEY

As much as possible, travel in the Scottie Creek valley is orientated to trails along the base of the hills which skirt the muskeg lowlands. These are intersected by trails crossing the uplands to provide "shortcuts" over the mountains. The use of the creek itself as a trail today is inhibited by the prevalence of beaver dams throughout the lower drainage as well as the meandering length of the stream. However, most villages are down below, near water, and many are separated one from the other by the low wetlands which characterize the valley floor. The distribution of remembered village locations is perhaps denser than we might expect, concentrated in 4 areas along the watershed (see Table 1 and Fig. 1), and perhaps denser than we might expect based on the usual representations of aboriginal demographics of the western subarctic of less than one

[4] Some would disagree with this categorization: lumping the Nabesna, Scottie Creek, and Chisana localities as a single dialect group of Upper Tanana that is distinct only from Tetlin dialect (c.f. McKennan 1981:563 & 562). Based on my exposure to the language, participation in language workshops sponsored by the YNLC, and discussions with its director, linguist John Ritter, I am inclined to make the distinction. More importantly, this position is further supported by linguistically competent speakers who also recognize subtle, but consistent distinctions in pronunciation of personal and place names. Having said this, I also believe, based on my understanding of demographic migrations in the area that the current dialectical distinction between Northway and Scottie Creek arose relatively recently, perhaps within the past two hundred years.

person per one hundred square kilometers (Kroeber, 1939, McClellan and Denniston, 1981).

	Table 1. Known Village Locations in the Scottie Creek Valley
Map #	1. Lower Scottie Creek (*Tthee K'ät Niik*) :
1-A)	*Tthee K'ät* / rock weir /
1-B)	*Taa Tl'ằt* / water swirling (water gyres) / [Jim Kari has collected a toponym for this locale as *Tehmìil K'èet* , roughly translating as "fishnet place".]
1-C)	*Tayh Tsälh* / hill small / (gloss: small hill; [english locally known as High Cache])
	2. Little Scottie Creek (*Ts'oogot Gaay Niik*) :
2-A)	*Tayh Chìį '* / hill point / (gloss: point of the hill)
2-B)	*Ts'oogot Gaay* / ?? / (unanalyzable, *gaay* = "small ")
2-C)	*Nìį'ìį'* / look out (away from) /
2-D)	*Taatsàan'* / raven, crow /
	3. The "middle course" (*Ts'oogot Niik*) :
3-A)	*Diah Kàteè̲łąy* / ?? / (Mr. Johnny's gloss: "sandpiper washed out creek")
3-B)	*Naagät Kàyy'* / fox den / [on the little hill]
3-C)	*Łįį Tthìitth'ằnn* / dog head bone / (gloss: dog skull)
3-D)	*Tuu Tüh Tąy* / water across trail /
3-E)	*Łèek'ằth Níik* / mud (cold?) stream / (gloss: muddy creek)
	4. Upper Scottie Creek
4-A)	*Nàhtsìą̀ ch'ihchuut* / wolverine grab or steal something (with one's mind) / (gloss: a person grabbed wolverine's spirit power with his mind)
4-B)	*Ruup S̲h̲ah* / Ruup's house / (gloss: Bill Rupe's cabin and trading locality)
4-C)	*Tayh S̲h̲iìt* / hill in / (gloss: in the hill; actual reference to two successively occupied villages, 4-C-1 and 4-C-2)
4-D)	*Niìduu Ts'inehdayh* / lynx shot with arrow / (gloss: we shot lynx with arrow).

Ecologically the Scottie Creek valley is very fecund, holding one of the largest contemporary moose populations in the Yukon, substantial fish populations, lies contiguous to the Chisana and Nelchina caribou herds migration routes, and traversed by the western interior flyway along the Shakwak Trench of a wide variety of migratory birds. Combined with the probable effects of historically documented epidemics, it seems likely that the area held a much more substantial population than previous general estimates (Easton 2005a:60-65).

I have conducted field documentation of the trail from *Ts'oogot Gaay* to*Tayh Chịị̀*, in the Little Scottie Creek area and on to the village site of *Naagat Kaiy* on the middle reach of the creek, as well as the trail from *Tayh Tsälh* to *Taa Tl'ằt* and on to *Tthee K'ät* , at the confluence of Scottie Creek and the Chisana River. Bill Sheppard has done some archaeological survey in the lower reaches of Scottie Creek (Sheppard, 2000); In addition to documentation of the trails and surface surveys (Easton, 2001b), I have also undertaken test excavatons at a number of localities along the trails (Easton 2002, 2003).

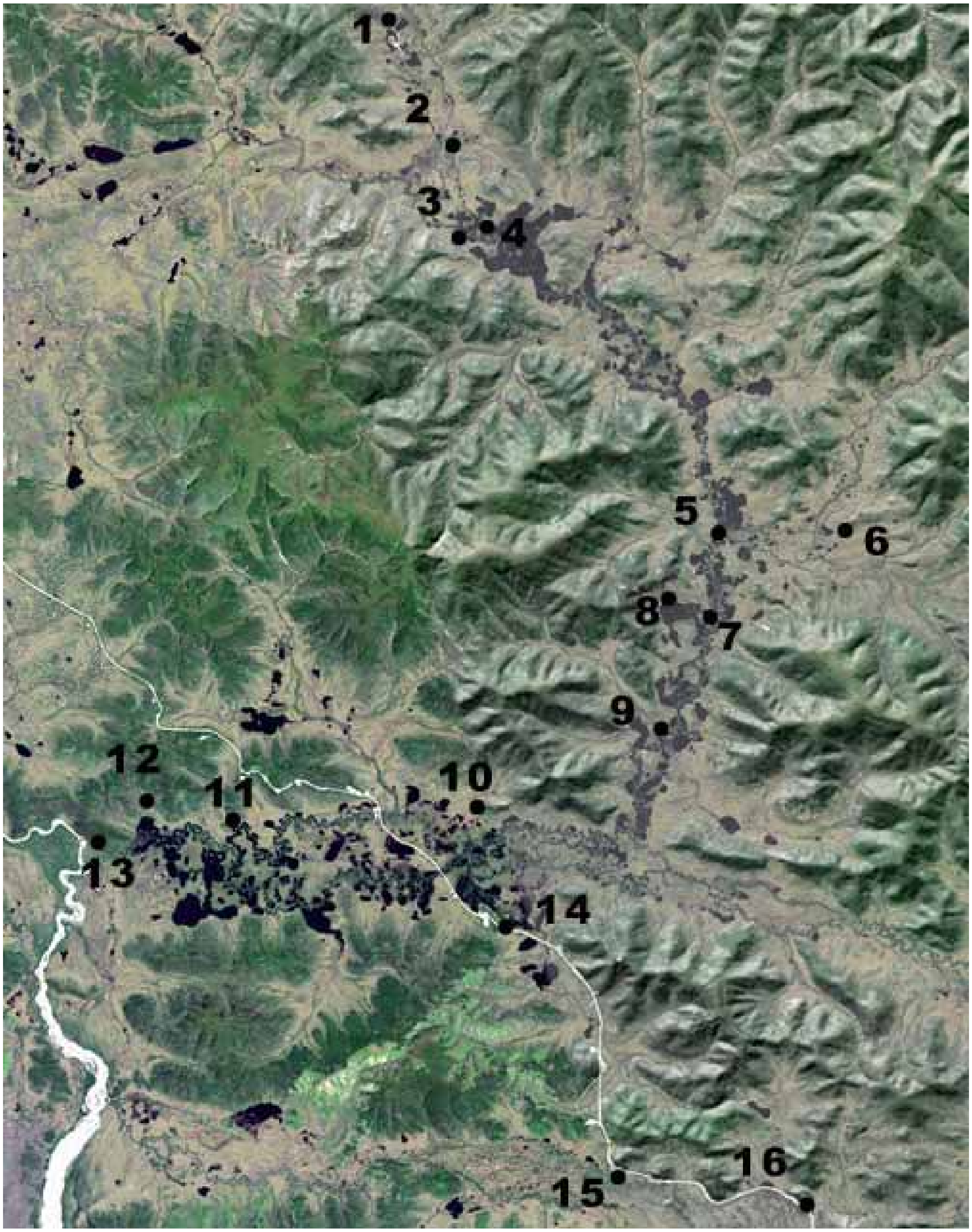

Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of Named Villages in the Scottie Creek Valley.

Surface features at *Ts'oogot Gaay* include large arenas (eight to ten metres) of roughly circular open space within the dense stands of willow which have grown up since its abandonment as a village after an influenza epidemic about 1919 (possibly the interior reach of the Spanish Flu epidemic). It is said that only two members of *Ts'oogot Gaay* survived. The area holds a number of graveyard localities, including the mass grave in which most of the village was buried during the great sickness. Mrs. Bessie John told me the open spaces were the locations of the large domed skin houses used in those days. *Ts'oogot Gaay* continues to be an important subsistence fishing spot to this day for her matrilineage.

The village site of *Tayh Chìį '* sits on a hillside north of Scottie Creek, overlooking the southwest. It's occupation reaches back to at least the mid-19th century, based on the genealogies of those buried in the locality. Eight cabin sites from the mid-20th century were identified, as well as abundant historic refuse, such as a broken phonograph, tins and bottles, a rotting axe handle, and, beneath the moss next to the communal firepit, a cache of peeled and coiled spruce root.

The village site of *Naagat Kaiy* occupies the higher ground on either side of *Łįį Tthìitth'ằnn Niik* **.** A well-used fishing site during the historic period, the locality also contains substantial archaeological deposits of the Late Prehistoric and the middle Holocene Northern Archaic traditions, as well as an unidentified occupation below these deposits (Easton 2001).

The small village of *Tayh Tsälh* sits on a bend in *Ch'atxą̀ą' Niik* ł ? stream / - (English - Desper Creek), just before it joins Scottie Creek. Mr. Andy Frank lived here for many years alongside his mother, Mrs. Bessie Mason. There is also a large cleared area on which wall tents were pitched and occupied by others coming to the location for fishing at the weir which was set up here. Excavations of ground caches for the storage and ripening of fish are present throughout the site.

Occupations at *Tthee K'ät* are subdivided into three sub-areas, two along the river and one up the hillside. The first sub-area was historically occupied by the famous *Dineh* shaman Titus John, and several other families from the upper Chisana; it was here that Titus had his near-fatal encounter with a malignant messenger in the form of a fish sent by a rival shaman. The second area, nearer the confluence with the Chisana, was occupied by Bell John and several other families, and lies along the bank from which the fish weir extended across the stream, from which this village takes it name. I was told that further downstream, closer to the confluence, were even earlier occupations, abandoned after they were flooded. The third sub-area climbs up the entire hillside to the very top; scattered along the hill are numerous house locations, occupied historically by White River Johnny, Mr. Andy Frank, and others. There are least three distinct graveyards along the hillside.

Altogether, to date some 300 place names have been documented within the Scottie Creek drainage, an area of about 2000 square kilometers. The density of these names on the landscape must somewhat reflect the intensity of its traditional use, as Hunn (1994) demonstrates for a number of other societies, leading us to question the traditional pre-contact population densities of the region.

The Cognitive Function(s) of Place Names

In recent years a considerable amount of writing has focussed on place names which function as, in the words of Keith Basso,

> durable symbols of distant events and as indispensable aids for remembering and imagining them . . . . place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of doing human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine (Basso, 1996:7).

This perspective, which I will here refer to as the "cognitive” approach to place names, has been fruitfully applied to the southwest Yukon by Julie Cruikshank (1981; 1990; 1998), and others throughout the western subarctic.

Drozda (1995:106), for example, writes that "names are not applied to places arbitrarily. The very fact that a place is named often establishes or reveals its significance."

> In the traditional Yup'ik order, nurturing harmony is essential in keeping places significant. That is, places are significant in relation to other places and to the individual and collective Yup'ik psyche and worldview. (Drozda, 1995:105).

Cruikshank (1990:71) concludes that

> What I am suggesting here is that for Athapaskan elders in the southern Yukon, the landscape is more than just an included theme; they seem to be using *space* (in the form of place names and travel accounts) to talk about and possibly to think about *time*. Familiar landscape features become symbols allowing people to talk about culture."

And although outside of the Athapaskan region proper, Thornton has demonstrated that place names among the *Tlingit* are multi-functional mnemonic symbols, repositories of both environmental and social knowledge, which “when strategically displayed in rituals and other communicative acts, [also] function to distinguish and unite social groups in myriad ways” (Thornton, 1997:295; see also Thornton 1998 for a review of the anthropological study of place names).

It is clear that, to paraphrase Levi-Strauss (1963), some place names are "good to think."

This articulation of place names and history and place names and mythical thought has proven to be very productive in demonstrating some of the cognitive interests and moral values of Athapaskan *Dineh*, but it has also diverted our attention away from the functional role of place names in navigation on the landscape.

It is commonly asserted, for example, that *every* place name has a story behind it, that they *all* make reference to an historical or mythological event. This claim is really only true in the most abstract way - in so far as someone, at some time, named the place, and that subsequently others have passed by it and had some experience nearby - in this way we can assert that "something happened here", but similar somethings have happened everywhere through all time. The point the cognitive approach is making is that *some* places are thought of more often and more intensely than others, not that *all* places are.

In the Scottie Creek valley there are clearly named locations which are associated with historical or mythological events.

Some are quite prosaic historical events, such as:

- *Ch'itl'ahtà' Mbòh Neetòł Dänh* / (unanalyzable personal name [of Bentley Mark's grandfather]) toboggan broken place where / - which we can gloss as the "place where *Ch'itl'ahtà*`s toboggan broke down."

And

- *Siik Mằnn'* / Ziik lake / which is the lake on which the mid-20th century trader Ezekiel (Zeke) Mullet had a cabin.

Others are more oblique, such as:

- *Yihkah Mằnn'* / daylight coming out lake /, which is a reference to its use as an overnight camp, and perhaps its use as a place to establish an animal relationship.

And

- *Stsǎy Tthìi'ààl*& / my grandfather's pillow /, which may be a reference to the burials of ancestors along its hillside.

Some are word compounds so ancient that they are unanalyzable within our knowledge of the current lexicon, such as

- *Ts'oogot Gaay* / ? - *gaay* = little or small /

a fact which suggests a very old occupation indeed (Sapir, 1916).[5]

While still others are frequently referenced due to their mythical allusions, such as:

- *Taatsàan T'oh* / raven's or crow's nest /.

Place Names as Navigational Aids

However, what is also clear in my oral history research of named places is the number at which nothing much of anything is recalled. For example, one exchange ran thus:

Interviewer:

"So, tell me about this place, *Gį̀ǫ Mằnn'* what happened there?"

Respondent:

"Nothing. People walk that trail along there. It's just a lake."

But it is a lake with a name, which the cognitive approach would maintain has further significance. My simple point to be made here is that the primary, and perhaps only, significance is that naming the lake *Gį̀ǫ Mằnn'* allows one to distinguish it from any of the other lakes in the area, such as *Tlohteeł Mằnn'* / grass lake / , or *Nàaxąy Ch'ildeèl Mằnn'* / frog eats something lake /. To name the lake allows one to say "The moose which I shot and need you to go get is on the shore of that specific lake, the one we call *Gį̀ǫ̀ Mằnn'*. "

Considering Upper Tanana place names as navigational aids leads us to another confusion however, which arises from the high degree of repitition in the choice of place names. For examples, *Ch'inaag Mằnh* / mineral lick lake / is used at least four times in the Scottie Creek valley, eight times within the Chisana-Nabesna drainage, and a futher eleven times (with dialectical variance) within western Upper Tanana territory. *Gį̀ǫ Mằnn*

[5] "The longer a country has been occupied,the more do the names of its topographical features and villages tend to become purely conventional and to lose what descriptive meaning they originally possessed (Sapir

/ [unidentified grass species] lake / is used at least three times in the Scottie Creek valley, once more within the Chisana-Nabesna drainage, and six times elsewhere in Upper Tanana territory. These are two extreme examples, but many other common place names are used two, three, or four times. Given this repetiveness of names applied to the Upper Tanana *Dineh* landscape, how can *G̀įą Mằnn* be used as a navigational reference?

Some years back, in a discussion of Upper Tanana place names, Athapaskan linguist Jim Kari suggested to me that repeated application of the same name for different places in Upper Tanana land might be a function of attempting to reduce the total number of place names within the semantic domain of geography to manageable, i.e. recallable, numbers. He also suggested that perhaps their occurence was regular or systematic.

I subsequently followed up Kari's hypothesis with the place name data I have been collecting and collating, however no systematic distribution of repetitive place names relative to each other could be demonstrated. However, pursuing this question with my primary linguistic collaborator did reveal a way to sort out one replicated place name from the another. The solution is simple and sensible, perhaps even predictable, but, to my knowledge, not previously documented.

Mr. Joseph Tommy Johnny was born, raised, and, with the exception of about ten years in his youth, has lived his entire 67 years on the land of Scottie Creek. In discussing place name repetition with Mr. John, he revealed how he applies a higher level of categorization to the landscape of the drainage. It is divided into at least twelve sub-areas, what Mr. John describes in English as similar to "blocks" in a city or "neighbourhoods".

1919:436) .

The neighbourhoods of Scottie Creek documented to date are listed in Table 2 (from the top of the valley - english Wienerwurst Mountain - moving southeastly), and located in Figure 2.

Map #	Table 2 Scottie Creek Valley "Neighbourhoods"
1.	*Tthee Maay* / rock grey /
2.	*Ch'ǫhtl'ąą* / ?? / (unanalyzable)
3.	*Mach'ìidląą* / ?? / (Mr. Johnny's gloss: "land of plenty")
4.	*Ttheedziin Dèe'ąą* / owl sits up there / (Mr. Johnny's gloss: "big rock sit right here")
5.	*Tets'eniik̲ąyy* / ?? /
6.	*Ts'ầt Dìitleek* / blanket rotten / (gloss: rotten blanket)
7.	*Mänh Ts'eek Ddhầl'* / lake skinny mountain / (gloss: skinny lake mountain)
8.	*Łįį Tthìitth'ầnn* / dog head bone / (gloss: dog skull)
9.	*Tsüü Hǫ̀ǫłįį* / bear root /
10.	*Tayh Chìį '* / hill point / (gloss: point of the hill)
11.	*Tayh Tsälh* / hill small / (gloss: small hill)
12.	*Tthee K'ät* / rock weir /

The principle is elegant. Reference to a name *within* a neighbourhood in which one is currently located is made *without* reference to its neighbourhood location, while reference to a replicated name *outside* of the neighbourhood one is currently in is made in combination with the outside neighbourhood. Thus, if we were camped at *Tayh Chìį* ,& and Mr. John wished to direct me to a lake nearby, he would simply say, "Go down to *Gìǫ Mầnn*." However, if he wished to direct my attention to a similarly named lake further up the valley, he would say, "Tommorow we are going to hunt near *Tets'eniik̲ąyy Gìǫ Mầnn*."

Figure 2. Geographical Distribution of the Named "Neighbourhoods" of Scottie Creek.

This principle is extended to the numerous *Na(h)k'eèt*, or hunting lookouts, found throughout the valley. Initial place name enquiries identified many of these hillside locations which were simply designated as a *na(h)keèt*, with no further distinction. Subsquent probing on how to speak of one *na(h)keèt* distinctly from another revealed that one did so by making reference to another nearby named location, usually a village or lake, such as *Taà̱łąy Mầnn' Na(h)keèt*, as distinct from *Tsüü Hǫ̀ǫłįį Niik Na(h)keèt*. Verification of this principle as more than an idiosyncracy of Mr. Johnny has been subsequently obtained from four other native speakers: Mr. Fred Demit, Mr. Jerry Isaac, Mr. David Johnny, and Mrs. Jenny Sanford.

In conclusion, my work with the *Dineh* and place names of the Scottie Creek valley has identified numerous named locations which are associated with rich historical and mythological oral traditions. These associations provide fertile information for further understanding of Upper Tanana *Dineh* culture and history through the use of the cognitive approach to place names, more intensive archaeological survey efforts at geographically named locations, such as village and lookout sites, and the documentation of the social history of the Scottie Creek valley.

However, in my interviews with *Dineh* of the region, many place names have no particular historical or mythological significance relative to the given speaker. They seem to function preeminently as navigational markers on the landscape, serving to allow the application of the linguistic principle of displacement - making reference to something not present, in this case some place - in conversations about the landscape. But because of the repetitive use of some place names, one cannot really speak specifically of the land without knowledge of the "neighbourhoods" of Scottie Creek..

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