

Student: Luke Holton

Faculty Mentors: Daniel Monteith, Glenn Wright

Film Project: *Sayeik*

The original purpose of this film project was to document the current sociopolitical attitude towards revitalization of Tlingit place names within Southeast Alaska. Several high-visibility name revitalizations (Utqiagvik, Denali, Tlux'satanjin, etc) have been facilitated by the Alaska Historical Commission in the previous years, and this film addresses the cultural impact that name revitalization might have on Alaska Native populations.

The film was completed in July of 2018 and will premiere at the Alaska State Historical Society Conference on September 14th, 2018 in Nome, Alaska. Subsequent screenings across the state and film festivals are not yet scheduled, but in arrangement. My goals in dissemination of this film are:

1. Present Alaskan residents with a historical background of naming systems that have been used in Alaska by Alaska Native tribes, non-native settlers, and contemporary government systems.
2. Discuss historical traumas (Burning of the Douglas Indian Village and Gastineau Elementary School graves) and how the Douglas Indian Association sponsored healing of these traumas through name changes.
3. Demonstrate the agenda of Alaska Native tribal associations as interested in name changing as a form of healing and forgiveness.
4. Alleviate racial tensions among native justice institutions and other interest groups.
5. Sponsor place name revitalization across the US.

I consider the research and interviews conducted during the production of *Sayeik* to be the greatest accrument of knowledge during my education career. The URECA grant allowed me to immerse myself between dozens of subject matter experts, anthropologists, historians, politicians, Native Elders, artists, and private researchers who shared their support and worries for place name revitalization. Specifically, Mary Beth Moss (National Park Service Hoonah), Heather Janice McClain (SEALASKA), Lance Twitchell (UAS), and Daniel Monteith (UAS) who had the greatest influence on my perceptions of Native/ Non-Native relationships in Alaska.

The pre-production stages of this research were challenging and alerted me to inherent dilemmas that film production might present in all forms of social science research. For this reason, I chose to let my interview results drive the thesis of the film project rather than allow a non-native student document a native story. For this reason, some of the original film agenda items were removed at the passive direction of my interviewees and advisors. The agenda items I chose to remove from the rhetoric of this film are:

1. Exposure of historical wrong-doings by federal offices towards Alaska Natives. Specifically, the unfortunate actions of the National Park Service and US Forest Service. The current cultural offices in these departments are actively interested in sponsoring strong relationships with Tlingit people, and wisely steered me away from damaging those healthy community relationships.

2. Illustrating non-native explorers and cartographers as racist. My historical research supported theories that 19th and 20th century exploration and name charting was conducted in disregard to native presence on the land. I altered this illustration to include the notion that all cultures overwrite place names, and it is more so a human function, rather than an Anglo-American function. (Dr. Brinnen Carter, National Park Service Sitka)

Finally, my URECA experience molded my approach to learning through art. Ever since my interest in documentary film, I've maintained that film is the most efficient way to convey rhetoric; it satisfies aural and visual learning in one medium, whilst allowing the creator to methodically arrange the rhetoric into bite-size segments for emotional connection to an audience. As a student, I retained and better understood my agenda material by methodically processing it in the video editor and in script writing.

Although art has *always* been a form of science and learning, it is relatively recent that universities and scientific institutions considered art a tool to for communication with community members. I believe the URECA program is the greatest tool that the University of Alaska has in creating community dialogue for important social and scientific issues.

Thank you to the URECA/ UAS staff, my faculty mentors, SEALASKA, and research participants.



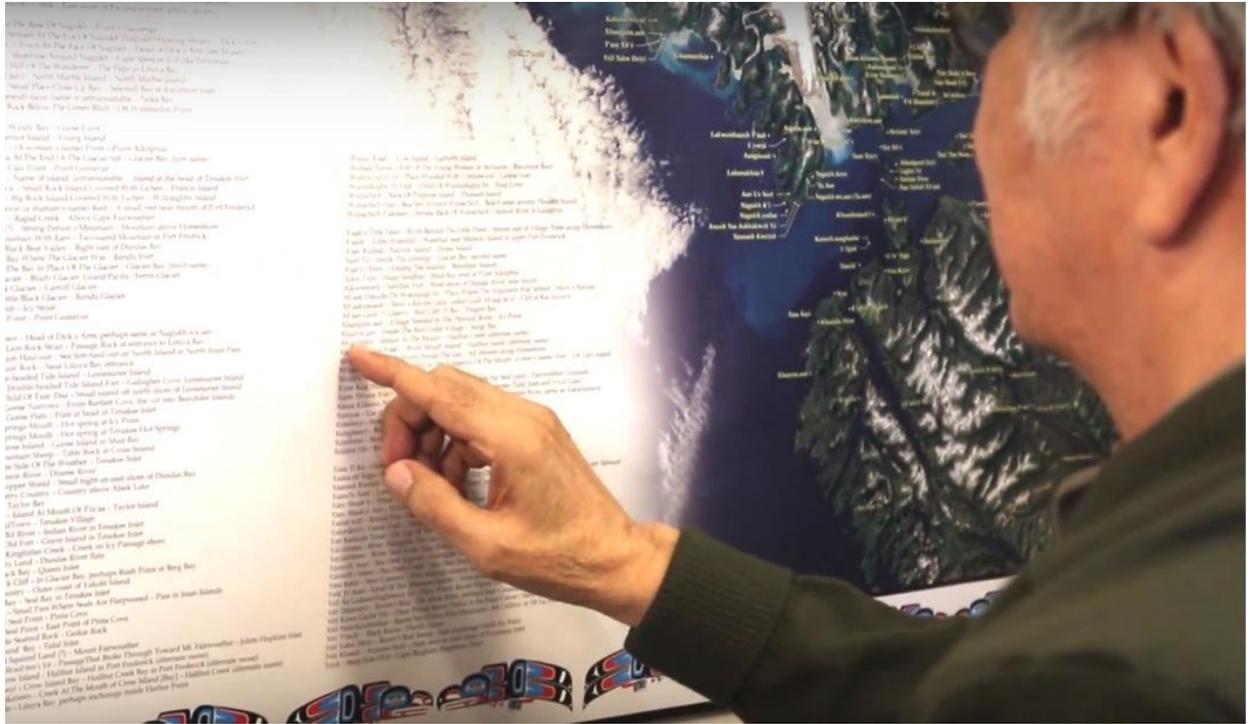
One of the “cinematic scenes” of Sayeik involved recreating a burning building to illustrate the burning of the Douglas Indian Village. This was a large doghouse aflame in Tee Harbor, AK.



SEALASKA was extremely generous in offering interviewees and filming locations for Sayeik. The Clan House stage offered great backdrop for interviewing Dr. Chuck Smythe and Dr. Thomas Thornton



Dr. Brinnen Carter participating in an on-camera interview in Sitka, AK.



NPS Officer and Tlingit Elder, Ken Grant sharing the Huna Kawuu Place Name map of Glacier Bay



Professor Lance Twitchell participating in an on-camera interview at the UAS campus in Auke Bay, AK.

