When Our Words Return

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A Note on Consistency

Readers will notice that different terminologies and forms of address are used by the authors of these essays. The authors follow the conventions for group and individual designation considered appropriate by the people of the area where they work. For example, indigenous Canadian groups are called "First Nations," whereas Alaskan groups prefer to be called "Alaska Natives." Similarly, the authors have chosen personal designators which best reflect their relationships with individuals or follow the local custom. For instance, Mary Odden refers to Wendy Arundale and Eliza Jones as Wendy and Eliza, Phyllis Morrow calls Elsie Mather by her full name, and Julie Cruikshank prefers to use a more formal title for Mrs. Angela Sidney to reflect the respect she holds for this elder. Preserving this variation makes the point that local conventions are important (e.g., "Mrs. Angela Sidney" because Mrs. is the common respect term in the Yukon, but not amongst Yup’ik people in Alaska, where first names are often used even in situations non-Yupiit may consider relatively formal).

There are also differences in group self-designations. The terms "Yup’ik" and "Iñupiaq" are used by peoples known collectively as Inuit (in Canada) and Eskimos (in Alaska). "Eskimo" carries no negative connotations in Alaska and is often considered preferable because the Yup’ik people do not share the term inuit as their word for people. When referencing specific groups, authors also use other locally preferred terms (e.g., Inuvialuit, Tagish, Cup’ig, etc.)

Even with self-designation, there is variety in usage due to historical convention and the transference of Native language forms into English phonology, spelling, and plurals. In English-language writings, for example, Yupik (plural, Yupiks) is widely acceptable, while in the Native language orthography, an apostrophe is used in the singular, Yup’ik, and the plural is Yupiit. This book employs the latter variations.
There are over 60 villages and hundreds of seasonal camps in the Central Yup'ik region of Southwest Alaska. Only those places mentioned in the text have been included on this map.

The Central Yup'ik region of Southwest Alaska. Map by Robert Drozda.