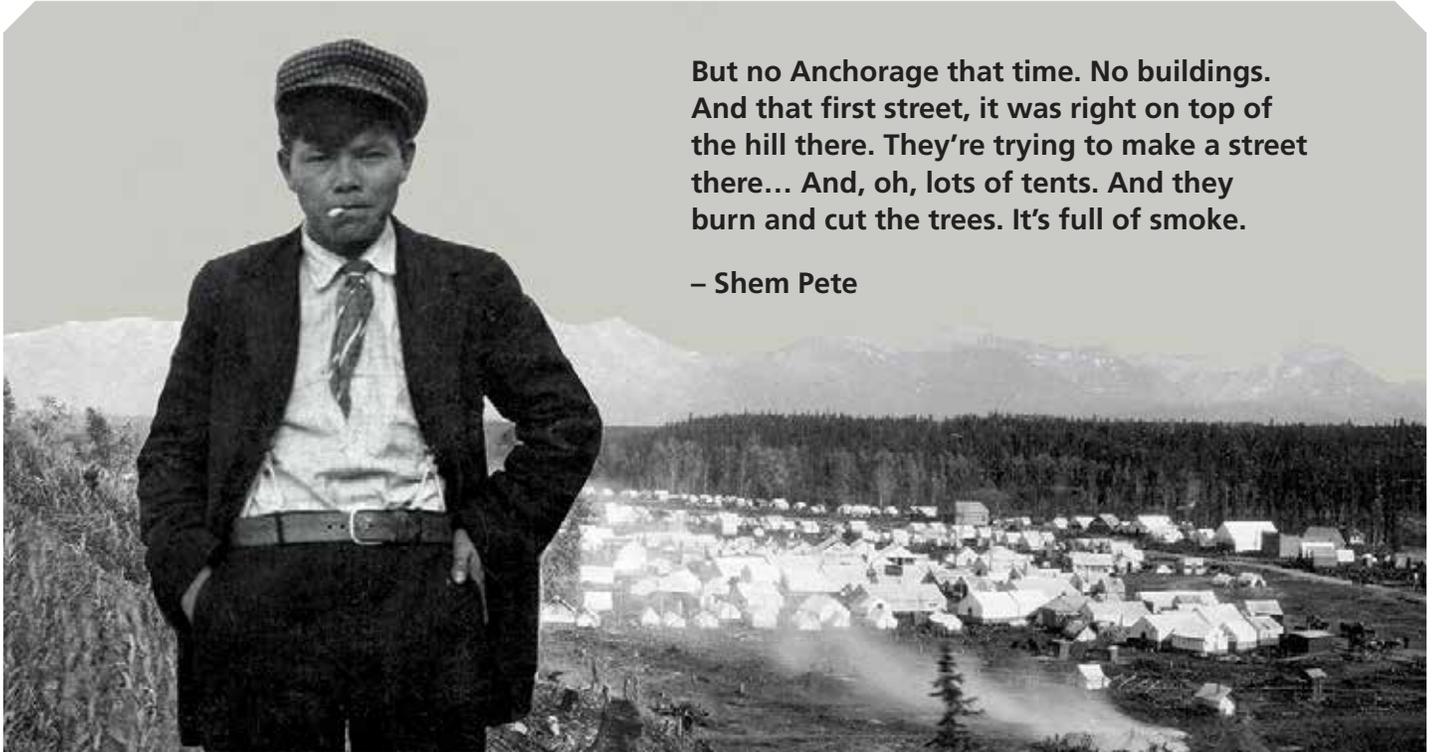


Territory of Alaska 1912-1959

1912 1915

1959

YOU
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But no Anchorage that time. No buildings. And that first street, it was right on top of the hill there. They're trying to make a street there... And, oh, lots of tents. And they burn and cut the trees. It's full of smoke.

– Shem Pete

1915. ANCHORAGE IS FOUNDED

Land near the mouth of Ship Creek, the site of Dena'ina fish camps and hunting grounds, is chosen as the base for the construction of the Alaska Railroad. And in 1915, the federal government sells the first lots for the new town of Anchorage. To support

resource development and settlement, railroad construction from Anchorage north to Fairbanks cuts through the traditional territory of the Upper Inlet Dena'ina. The Dena'ina soon become a minority population within the Cook Inlet Basin.

Tent City, which later became Anchorage, 1915. USGS, Steven Capps Collection, csr00698

Dena'ina Elder Shem Pete witnessed the first settlers to arrive at tent city. Photo courtesy of Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, Alexandra Allowan Collection

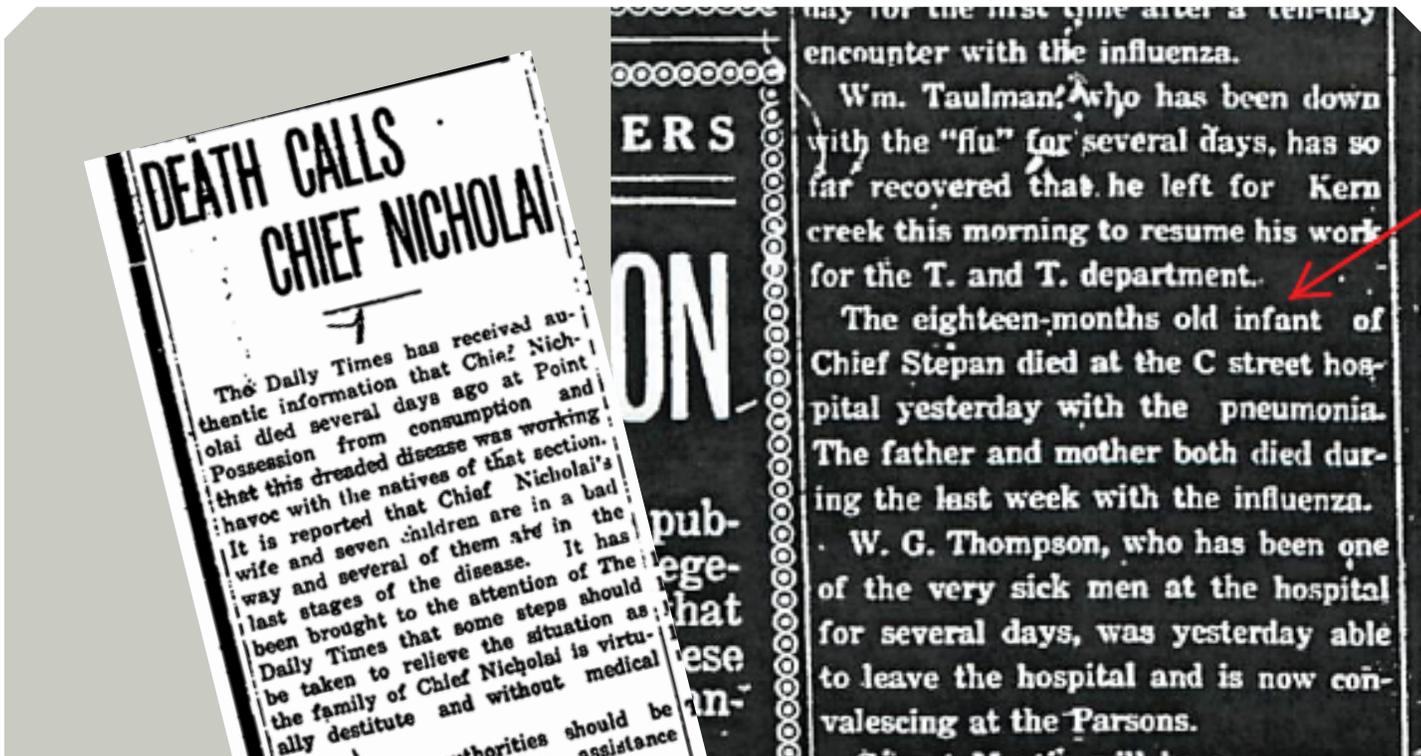
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1918. INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC SWEEPS THROUGH DENA'INA VILLAGES

In the early 20th century, epidemics continue to take a huge toll on Dena'ina lives. A measles outbreak in the winter of 1901-1902 kills 300 Inland Dena'ina at Kijik on Lake Clark, and perhaps half or more of the population of Cook Inlet and Lake

Clark Dena'ina villages perish during the 1918 influenza pandemic. Many tradition bearers, key providers, and children are lost, undermining traditional social and political institutions.

Left: Anchorage Daily Times, July 27, 1916. Right: Anchorage Daily Times, November 25, 1918

Territory of Alaska 1912-1959



**1920S. ŁUQ'A DIQELASHI DINGI - CANNERY TOKEN
SNUG HARBOR, COOK INLET**

Many Dena'ina worked in the salmon and clamming canneries in Cook Inlet. These cannery tokens come from the Snug Harbor clamming cannery on the west side of Cook

Inlet. Peter Kalifornsky, who traveled with his uncle during the 1920s to the cannery, recalls that the Dena'ina were paid one token for each wooden gas can box of clams.

Łuq'a diqelashi dingi, cannery token (view of both sides), Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center 1997.002.002. Photograph courtesy of Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center. Photograph by Chris Arend.

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1925. SCHOOL BUILT FOR NATIVE CHILDREN ORPHANED BY FLU

The Eklutna Vocational School is built by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Education to house and educate children orphaned by the 1918 influenza epidemic. The school builds and maintains a fish camp to provide training in subsistence fishing and

to help provide food for the children. Most classes are vocational training courses. By 1930, 110 students are enrolled. In 1945, the school buildings are condemned, and it is permanently closed.

Eklutna Vocational School, mid-1930s. Anchorage Museum, 1980.026.1.20

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1920S – 1930S. DENA'INA VILLAGES CONSOLIDATE

As the Dena'ina population declines in the 1920s, communities decide to consolidate for mutual support and access to stores, schools, and churches. Long-established villages such as Susitna Station, Kustatan, Kijik, and

Qeghnilen are abandoned, leaving most Dena'ina living in Eklutna, Kenai, Tyonek, Pedro Bay, Nondalton, and Lime Village, as well as the growing city of Anchorage.

Qizjeh (Kijik) was abandoned shortly after this photo was taken in 1902. Photo courtesy of National Park Service, H-177.

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1930S. AVIATION LINKS INLAND DENA'INA TO THE OUTSIDE

During the early 1930s, aviation becomes an important link to the outside world for the Inland Dena'ina. The airplane allows people to travel great distances through rugged terrain and completely changes the way

they move across the landscape. Today, it is the only means of transport for the Inland Dena'ina. Fuel, groceries, medical supplies and mail all come by air.

Dena'ina people with beaver pelts standing in front of airplane at Seversen's Roadhouse, Iliamna, 1930. Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum Collection

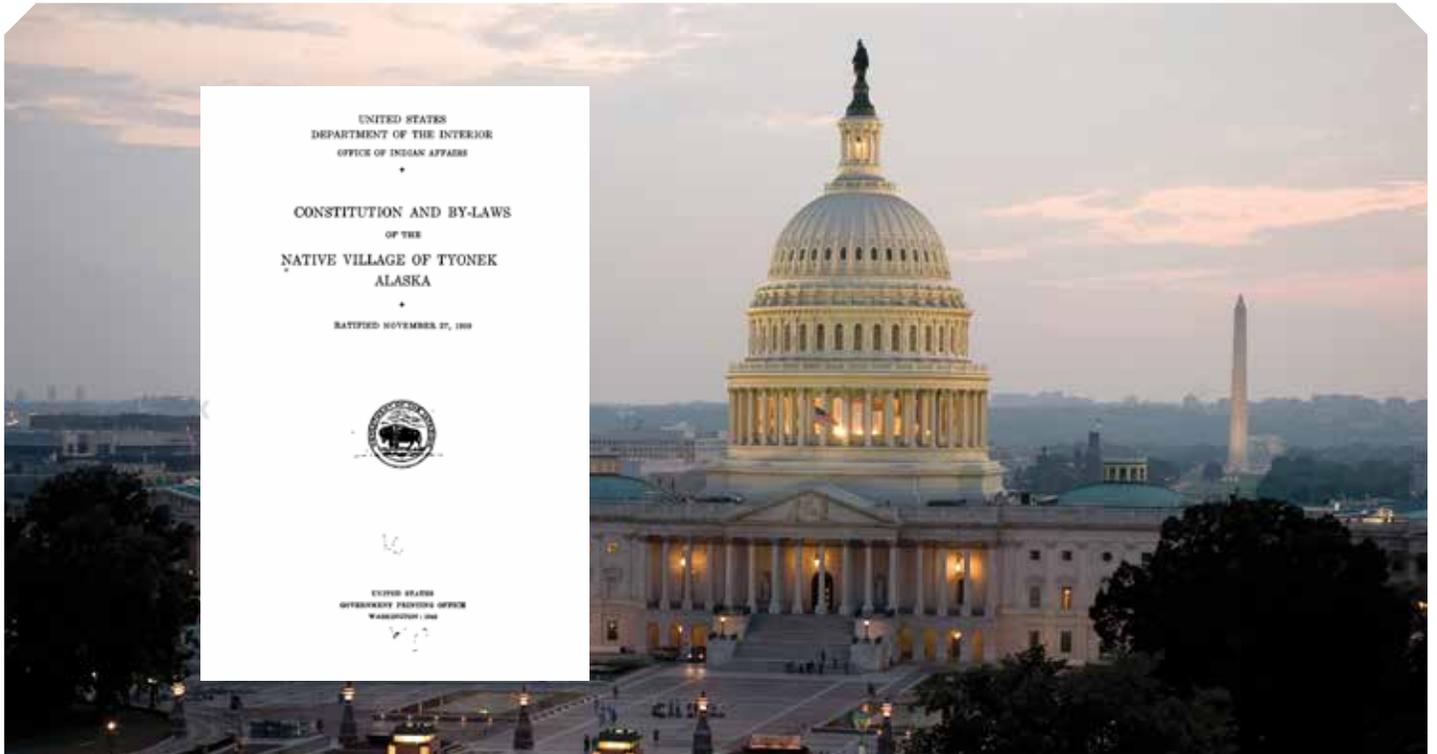
Territory of Alaska 1912-1959

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JUNE 18, 1934. CONGRESS PASSES INDIAN REORGANIZATION ACT

The Wheeler Howard Act, also known as the Indian Reorganization Act, is signed into law by President Roosevelt. It recognizes the right of self-determination for Native Americans and permits tribes to establish

formal governments with limited powers. In 1939, the Native Village of Tyonek ratifies its constitution and by-laws under the Indian Reorganization Act.

Constitution and by-laws of the Native Village of Tyonek. Photo of the US Capitol, courtesy Architect of the Capitol.

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1930 – 1940S. "INDIGENIZED" RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

By the early 20th century, most Dena'ina have adopted Russian Orthodoxy as "the Native church," but they do not do so passively. An "indigenous Orthodoxy," blending Christian and Dena'ina beliefs and practices, develops. Shamans continue as community leaders and

perform traditional curing ceremonies. To accommodate Russian Orthodoxy's objections to the traditional cremation of the dead, Dena'ina funeral practices shift to burial below a "spirit house," which the soul could inhabit before departure to the spirit world.

Nick Bobby and Seraphim Alexie starring during Russian Christmas, Lime Village, 1943. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service, NPS 70H

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1940S. WORLD WAR II: MORE PEOPLE ARRIVE

At the outset of American involvement in World War II, the Cook Inlet area experiences a growing military presence, including construction and enhancement of highways linking Anchorage with the Lower 48 and construction of Elmendorf Air Force Base.

Non-Native population growth accelerates as many newcomers decide to remain in Southcentral Alaska. The population of Anchorage, about 4,000 before the war, explodes to more than 43,000.

Military men at the docks in Whittier, early 1940s. Anchorage Museum B1979.3.782

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Alaska Indians Sue U. S. To Get Valley Area Back

By The United Press.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, Aug. 15—A representative of an ancient Alaska Indian tribe claimed today 2,500 square miles north of Anchorage, including the rich Matanuska Valley farming area and a \$25,000,000 power project.

William Ezi, one of the few remaining original residents of the Oik Knik Indian Territory, has claimed the vast area in behalf of his tribe in a suit filed with the Court of Claims in Washington. Mr. Ezi stated he and his countrymen "have been forced out of our lands by the roads of the white men."

The claim said that "from time immemorial the Indians of the Matanuska Valley (known as Alaska's breadbasket) have claimed the lands on grounds of continuous use, occupancy and prior rights."

The Indians alleged that continuous use of their land had been denied them and on this basis asked redress before the Indians Claims Commission, established by Congress in 1946.

The New York Times

Published: August 16, 1951

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AUGUST 1951. DENA'INA MAN FILES LAND CLAIM

Bill Ezi, a Dena'ina from Niteh, files what becomes known as the Palmer Land Claim. The claim was an early attempt by the Dena'ina to force to the United States government to deal with unresolved Native land claims. No formal action was taken on this claim, and it was extinguished with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971.

Ezi land claim reported in the *New York Times*.
Copyright *New York Times*, 1951.

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1950S. OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT OCCURS ON KENAI PENINSULA AND IN COOK INLET

Further economic development and population growth takes place in the Dena'ina homeland with the discovery and development of oil and gas reserves under Cook Inlet and the Kenai Peninsula in the 1950s. Consequences for the Cook Inlet Dena'ina include the destruction of fish and wildlife habitat and increasing competition for depleted fish and wildlife populations.

Pan American Petroleum Corporation oil rig near Tyonek.
Anchorage Museum, B1983.091.S4560.10