

Сепир и атабаскские ЯЗЫКИ

Sapir and Athabaskan languages

Andrej A. Kibrik

(Institute of Linguistics RAS and Lomonosov MSU)



Российский
научный
фонд

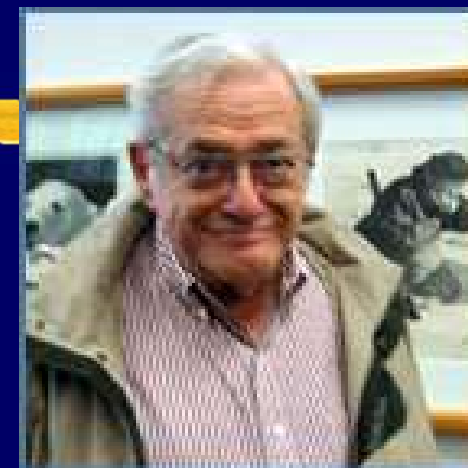
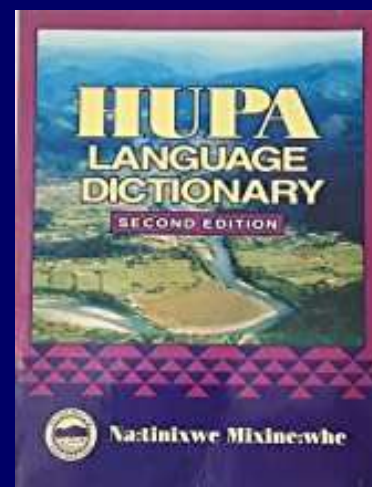
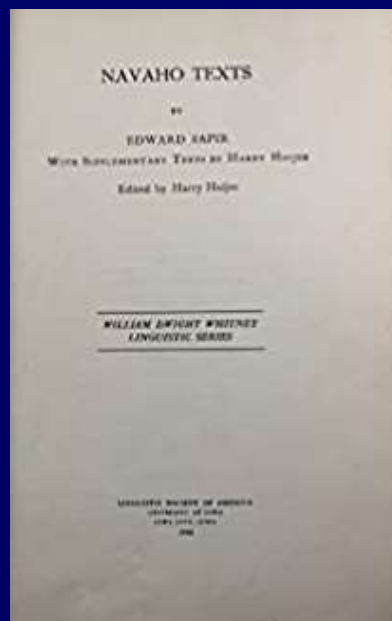
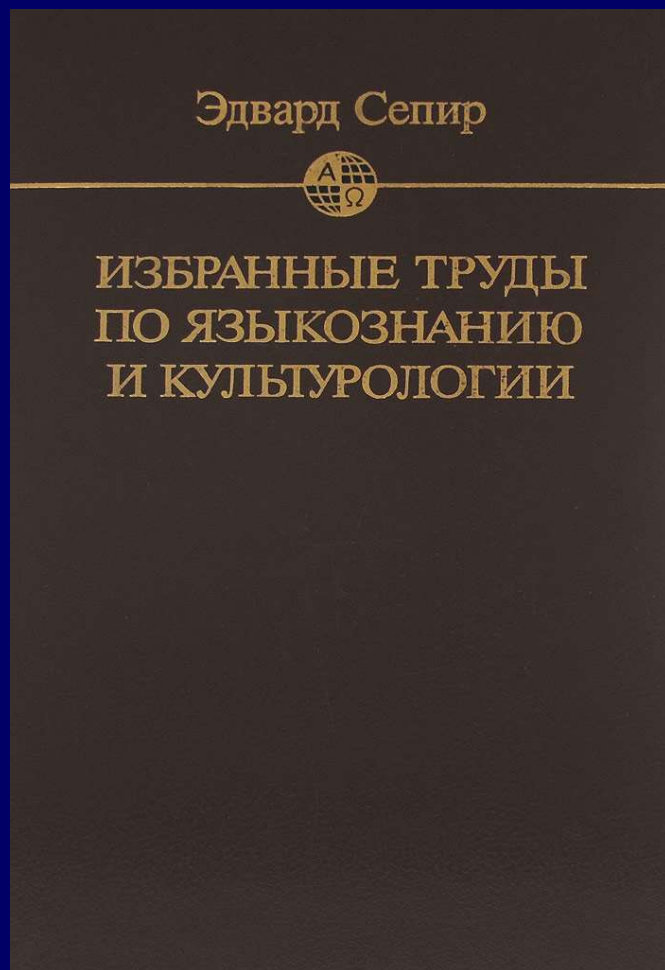
Языковое разнообразие
в глобальном мире (KILS-2021)

November 16, 2021

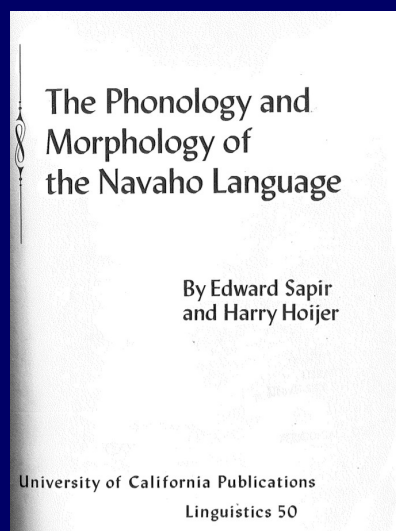
Kazan Federal University

Project #17-18-01649

Sources



Michael Krauss
1934 - 2019



Victor Golla
1939–2021

Sapir: development of his research interests

- General theoretical studies
 - “Language”, 2021 (Sapir is 37)
 - Many other studies in linguistics, anthropology, literature, psychology, etc.
- Empirical studies
 - Over 20 languages
- Towards the end of his short life (1884-1939) more emphasis on:
 - Empirical issues
 - Particularly Athabaskan, its peculiarities and potential external connections
 - Particularly Navajo

Outline



1. American Indian Languages
2. Na-Dene
3. Athabaskan languages: field work
4. Complexity
5. Tones
6. Resistance to borrowing

In each part I will compare Sapir's ideas with the modern views

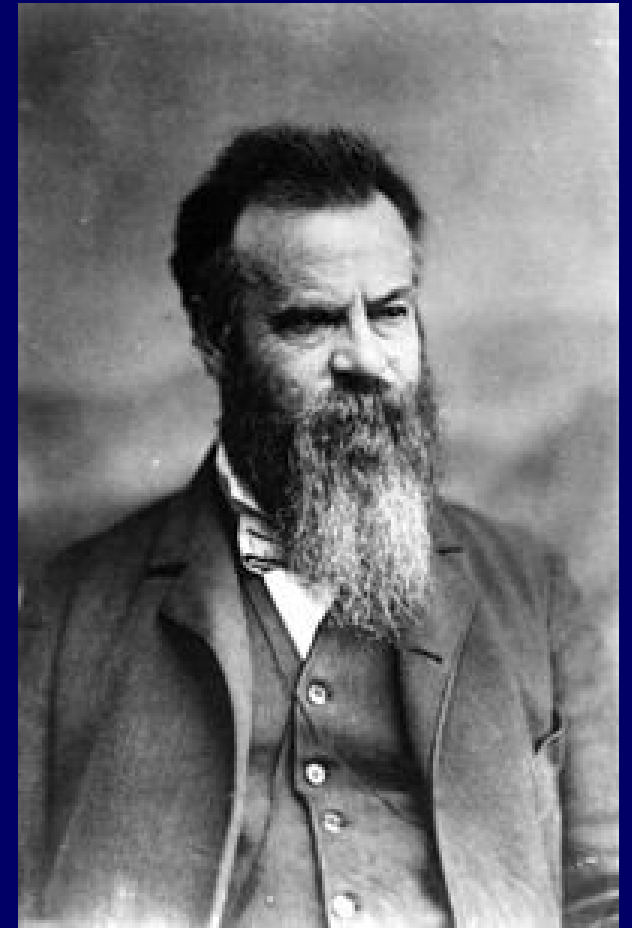
1. American Indian Languages



- Sapir studied over 20 native American languages
- and established the tradition of genuinely linguistic analysis of these languages
- I concentrate on his classification of American Indian languages

Major J.W. Powell

- Classification 1891
- 58 families
 - including many isolates
 - 22 families in California



Sapir (1921, 1929)



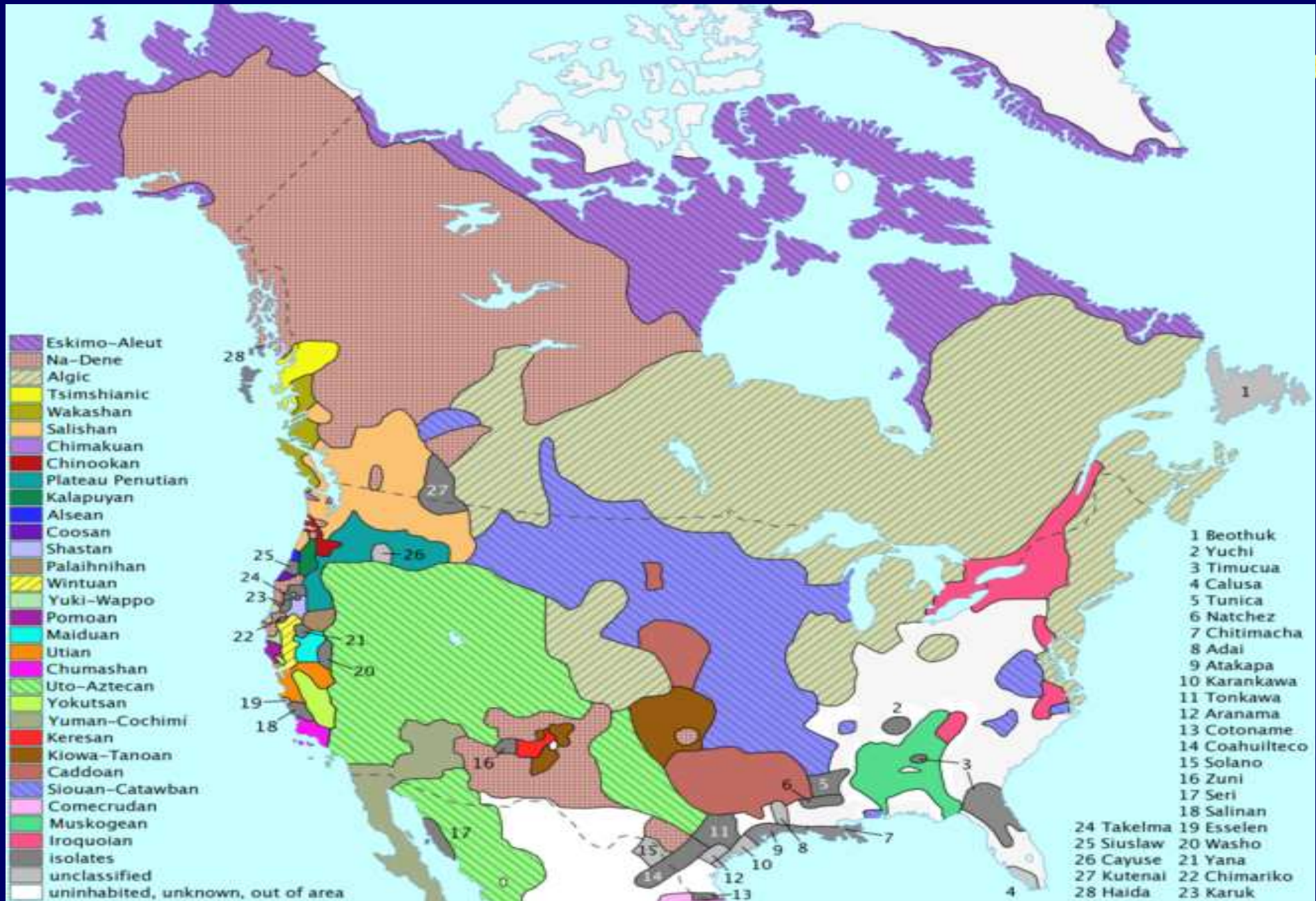
- 6 superstocks
 - Eskimo-Aleut
 - Algonkin–Wakashan
 - Nadene
 - Penutian
 - Hokan Siouan
 - Aztec-Tanoan
- These were preliminary hypotheses
 - “Such a scheme must not be taken too literally” (Sapir 1925: 526)
- But they were uncritically used in many publications
- Cf. Greenberg

Modern stage



- A consensus classification 1964 (transitional)
- Campbell and Mithun 1979
 - 62 families
 - “Scholars contributing to this volume are clearly *splitters*, yet they do not hesitate to *lump* when the evidence is sufficient” (p. 37)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Indian_languages



Genealogical density

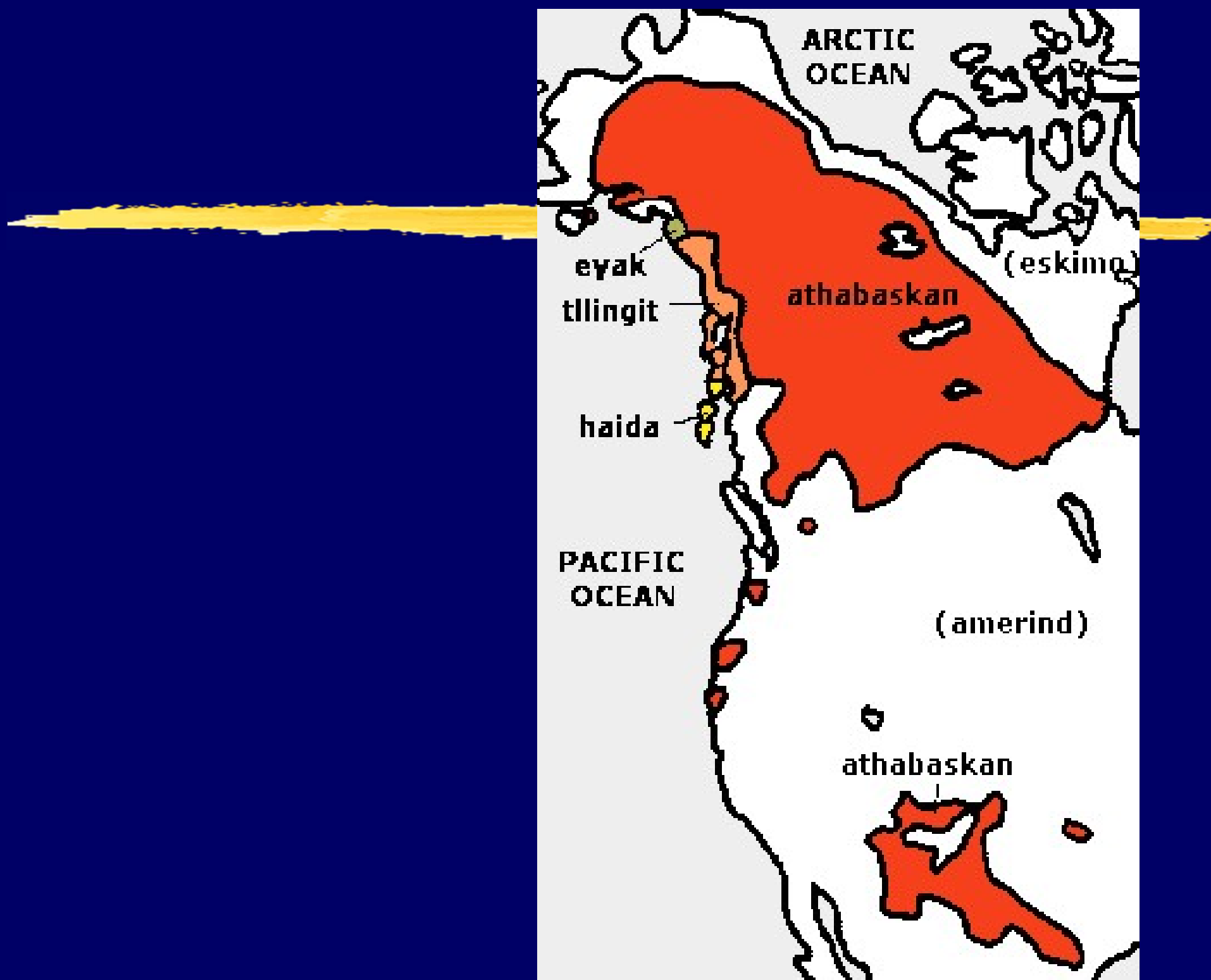


- Austerlitz 1980, Nichols 1992
- Number of genealogical groups per square unit
- Extremely variable across various areas
- Sapir: implicit desire to bring the diversity of North America to “Eurasian standards”

- NB: some specific Sapir’s ideas are being gradually rehabilitated
 - Miwok-Costanoan

2. Na-Dene

- Sapir:
 - Athabaskan
 - Tlingit
 - Haida
 - Krauss, Levine, Leer, and others:
 - Athabaskan
 - Eyak
 - Tlingit } Athabaskan-Eyak
 - Haida is an isolate
- Sapir's guess of the relationship between Tlingit and Athabaskan was an excellent insight



ARCTIC OCEAN

(eskimo)

athabaskan

eyak

tlingit

haida

PACIFIC OCEAN

(amerind)

athabaskan

3. Athabaskan, or Dene, languages: field work

- Hupa, Sarsi, Kutchin, Ingalik, Navajo
- Golla p.c. on Hupa fieldwork (1927)
 - Just a bit over 2 months
 - Unique completeness
 - Pace of transcribing



Herman Sherman

Bill Carpenter



4. Complexity

- “The Nadene languages, probably the most specialized of all...” (Sapir 1929)

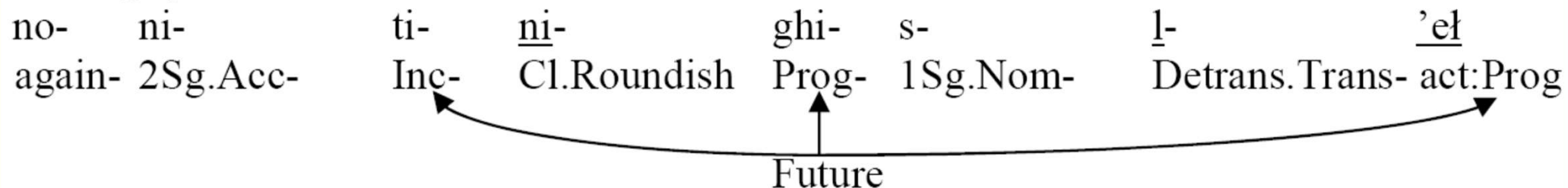
Quantitative complexity

“Standard average Athabaskan” verb template

- 18 proclitic
- 17 (b) Oblique +
(a) preverb
- 16 various derivational
- 15 reflexive Accusative pronoun
- 14 iterative
- 13 distributive
- 12 incorporate
- 11 number
- 10 Accusative pronoun
- 9 non-1/2 person Nominative pronoun
- 8 transitivity decrease
- 7 qualifier
- 6 inceptive
- 5 qualifier
- 4 conjugation
- 3 mode
- 2 1/2 person Nominative pronoun
- 1 transitivity indicator
- 0 ROOT**
- +1 (often opaque) old mode/aspect suffix
- +2 enclitic

Qualitative complexity

nontinghiji'el



'bye', 'I will see you next time'

- Upper Kuskokwim, Alaska
- Long words
- Many morphological positions in the verb
- Almost exclusive prefixation (unusual)
- Complex verb lexeme derivation
- Derivation and inflection are intermingled
- Order of inflectional morphemes is not canonical
- Transitivity indicators, sensitive to both lexical and inflectional factors
- One grammeme is conveyed by several devices (multiple exponence)
- Complex morphophonemics: s+l > j
-

Qualitative complexity

- Transparency vs. entanglement of structure
- One-to-one vs. many-to-many correspondence between meanings and forms
- Structural order vs. entropy
- Agglutination vs. non-agglutination

Final truth



- “Dene is probably the son-of-a-bitchiest language in America to actually *know*...
- most fascinating of all languages ever invented”

(Sapir’s letter, cited according to Krauss 1986:157)

5. Tones



- First acquaintance with Chasta Costa (1906), without tones
- In his 1921 “Language” Sapir still cites Navajo without tones
- Fieldwork on Sarsi (1922)
 - “so fundamental is tone to the phonetic and morphological understanding of Sarcee that it is inconceivable that it should not be shared by the other Athabaskan dialects as well” (Sapir 1925)
- “The next year after Sarcee, 1923, he worked extensively with Kutchin, which had tones fundamentally agreeing with the Sarcee. However, that same year, 1923, he also worked briefly with Ingalik, which had no tone at all. About 1926 he began firsthand work with Navajo, which again directly confirmed the tones he had heard in Sarcee and Kutchin.” (Krauss 2003: 3)
- Sapir’s idea of some relationship to Chinese

Fang-Kuei Li and Michael Krauss

- 1926: Fang-Kuei Li – Mattole, Sarsi
- “In his 1928 fieldwork with Chipewyan, and again in 1929 with Hare, Li now found high tone, not low, before old glottal stop, basically the reverse of the Navajo-Sarcee-Kutchin” (Krauss 2005: 3)
- Sapir 1936: thinks that Chipewyan has reversed the Athabaskan pattern
- Krauss 1964
- Sino-Tibetan and unrealized Sapir’s trip to China



Michael Krauss teaches an Eskimo language class at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1961. Note that a technical orthography is used rather than the standard Yup'ik orthography, which was developed in the years 1967-1972. Seated at the table left to right are Annette Bork (partially obscured), Maggie Panek, Charles Degnan, Martha Teeluk, Irene Reed, and Ambrose Towarak.

Non-constricted stems (Krauss 2003)

	“sky”	“water”	“stone”	“sun”	“grease”	“day”
PA	*ya [•]	*tu [•]	*ce [•]	*ša [•]	*xe [•]	*ʒ ^w e ⁿ (ə)
Ku	zé [•]	čú [•] čù [•] ; čù [•]	kír [•]	s ^r é [•]	x ^w áy [•] -ɣ ^w áy [•] ; -ɣ ^w áy [•]	d ^ɣ in
Sr		-tú [•] -tùwà [•] -tù [•]	cá [•] -cá ^h à [•]		xá [•] -ɣá ^h à [•]	ʒín-
Nav	yá [•]	tó [•] -tò [•] ; -tò [•]	cé [•] -cè [•]	šá [•]		ʒí [•]

Chp	yà [•]	tù [•] -tú ^w é [•]	tθè [•] -tθé [•]	sà [•] -zǎ [•]		ʒì [•]
Chl		tù [•]	čì [•]	sà [•]		ʒìn
TC	šyà [•]	tù [•] -tú [•]	t ^θ è [•] -t ^θ é [•]	sà [•] -sǎ [•]	xè [•] -xé [•]	ʒè ⁿ [•]
Hup		to [•]	ce [•]	Wa [•]		ʒiŋ-
Mat	ya: [•]	-to [•]	ce [•]	xa [•] -xa [•]	ke: [•]	ʒiŋ
Gal	ya: [•]	to [•]	se [•]	sa [•]		sin-

Constricted stems (Krauss 2003)

	“father”	“head”	“foot”	“beaver”	“louse”	“arrow”	“man’s daughter”
PA	*-taʰ	*-ciʰ	*-qeʰ	*čaʰ	*yaʰ	*qʰaʰ	*ceʔə
Ku	-tʰiʰ	-kʰiʰ	-kʰwʰayʰ	čèʰ	žìʰ	kʰiʰ -kʰiʰ	-kʰiʰ (?)
Sr	-tàʰ	-cìʰ	-kòʰ	cà càŋ	yàʰ -yàʰ		
Nav	-tàʰ	-cìʰ	-kèʰ	čàʰ -čàʰ	yàʰ -yàʰ, - yàʰ	kʰàʰ -kʰàʰ, - kʰàʰ	-cìʰ

Chp	-tá	-tʰí	-ké	cá	yá	kʰá -kʰáí	
Chl	-tá	-čí	-kí	cá	yá	kʰá	-cí
TC	-táʰ	-tʰíŋ	-kéʰ	cáʰ -cǎʰ	šyáʰ -šyǎʰ	kʰáʰ -kʰǎʰ	

Hup	-taʰ	-ce-	-xeʰ	čʰaʰ	yaʰ -yaʰ, - yaʰ	-qʰaʰ	-ceʰ
Mat	-taʰ	-ciʰ	-keʰ		yaʰ-	kʰaʰ	-ciyeʰ
Gal	-taʰ	-siʰ	-keʰ	saʰ-	yaʰ		-siʰʔe(ʰ)

6. Resistance to borrowing

Properties of a language

Classical view

- Inheritance from the ancestral language
- NB: still found in some special traditions

Realistic view

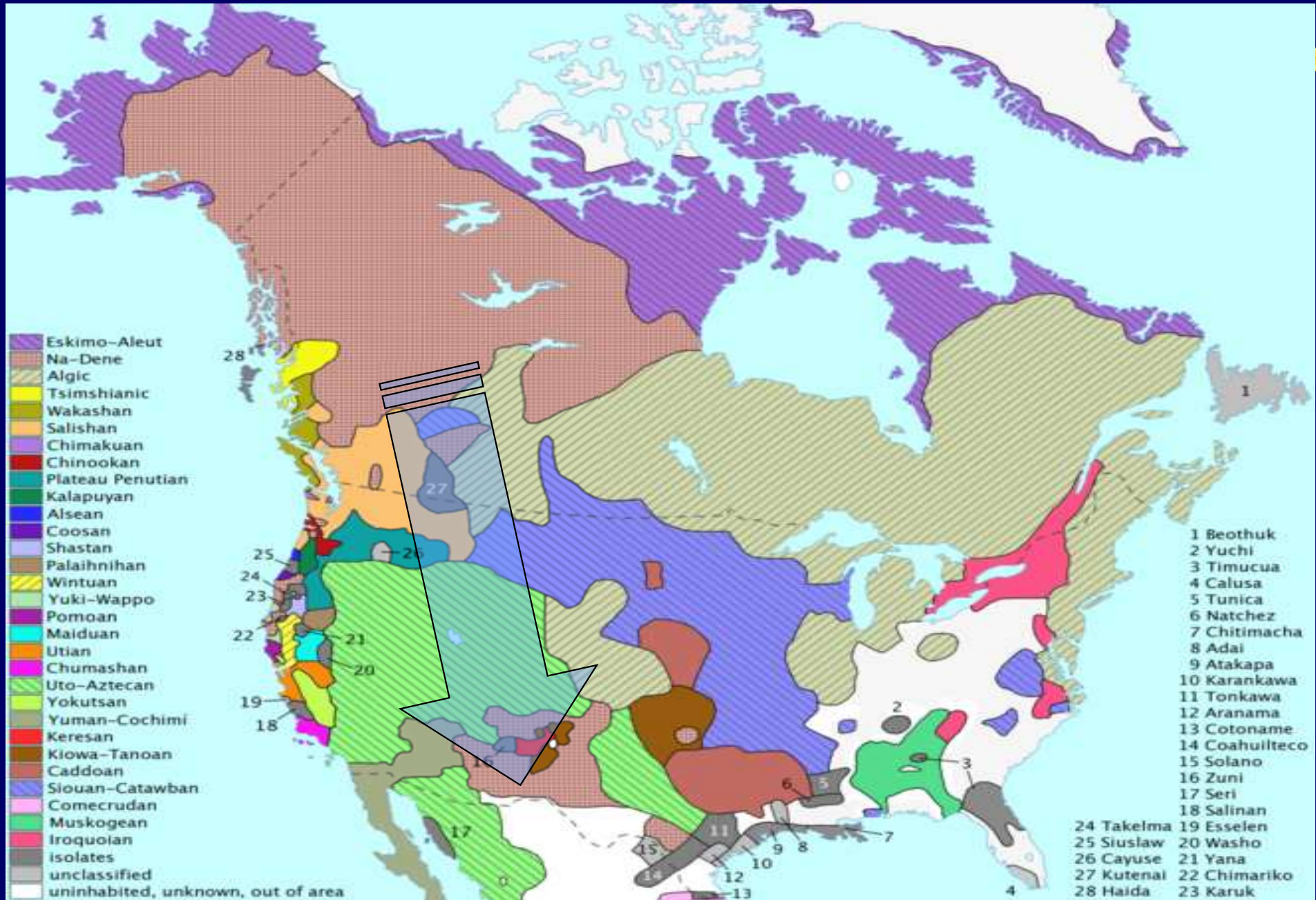
- Inheritance
plus
- Interference
 - ranging from convergence phenomena to contact languages

However



- Some languages are quite close to the classical model
- Athabaskan languages
 - Sapir 1921: 209 (Сепир 1993: 176):
 - На атабаскских языках Северной Америки говорят народы, у которых поразительно разнообразные культурные связи с другими народами, и все же мы не можем усмотреть, чтобы какой-либо атабаскский диалект сколько-нибудь широко заимствовал слова из какого-нибудь соседнего языка <...> В них по этой причине проявилась высокая степень сопротивляемости языковому отражению внешнего культурного опыта говорящего на них населения

The case of Navajo



The case of Hupa

- Spence 2016, "Lexical innovation and variation in Hupa (Athabaskan)"
- Brown's (1999) metrics of "lexical acculturation"
 - percentage of borrowed vocabulary
 - convergence index
 - from -1 (coinages based exclusively on native material)
 - to +1 (exclusive borrowing)
- Hupa
 - 20% / 10%
 - -0.67



Upper Kuskokwim language

- Less than 15 speakers left out of the population of about 450
- The youngest fully-fledged speaker born in 1952
- Latent speakers among younger people (in their 50s)
- Teaching UK at school since 1973, no result
- Prior work – Collins and Petruska 1979
- Our team – eight field trips between 1997 and 2019

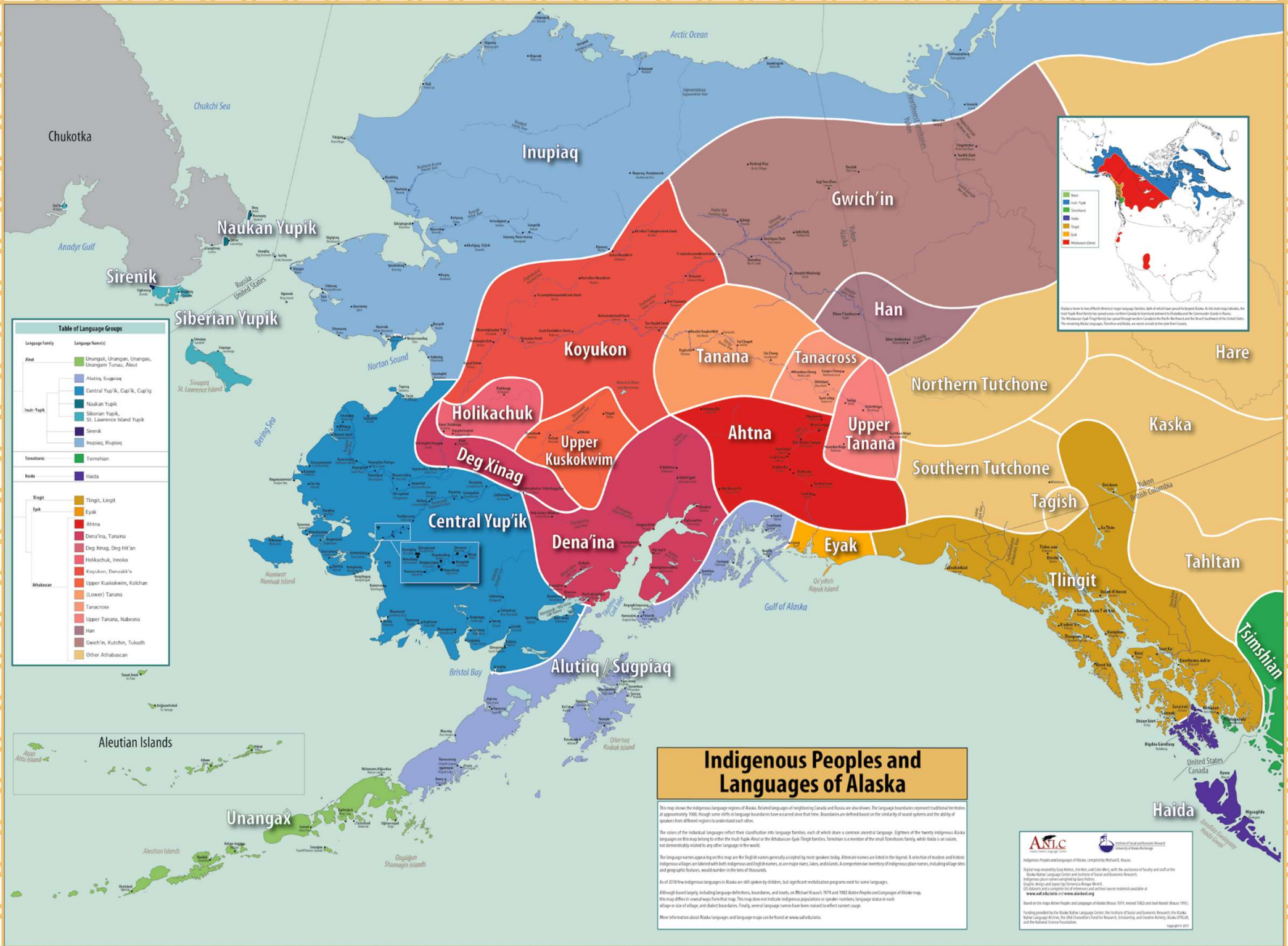


Table of Language Groups	
Language Family	Language Name(s)
Alut	Unungax, Unangan, Unangas, Unangam Tunuk, Aleut
	Akutan, Sugieq
	Central Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Cup'ig
Inuit-Yupik	Naukan Yupik
	Siberian Yupik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik
	Sirenik
	Inupiat, Iñupiat
Tsimshian	Tsimshian
Haida	Haida
Tlingit	Tlingit, Lingit
	Eyak
	Ahtna
	Dena'ina, Tanana
	Deg Xinag, Deg Hit'an
	Holikachuk, Imeko
	Koyukon, Dena'uk'u
	Upper Kuskokwim, Kolchan
	(Lower) Tanana
	Tanacross
Upper Tanana, Nabesna	
Athabaskan	Gwich'in, Kutchin, Tukudh
	Other Athabaskan

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska

This map shows the indigenous language regions of Alaska. Related languages of neighboring Canada and Russia are also shown. The language boundaries represent traditional territories as of approximately 1900, though some shifts in language boundaries have occurred since that time. Boundaries are defined based on the similarity of sound systems and the ability of speakers from different regions to understand each other.

The colors of the individual languages reflect their classification into language families, each of which share a common ancestral language. Eighteen of the twenty indigenous Alaska languages on this map belong to either the Inuit-Yupik or the Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit families. Tsimshian is a member of the small Tsimshianic family, while Haida is an isolate, not demonstrably related to any other language in the world.

The language names appearing on this map are the English names generally accepted by most speakers today. Athabaskan names are listed in the legend. A selection of modern and historic indigenous villages are labeled with both indigenous and English names, as are major rivers, lakes, and islands. A comprehensive inventory of indigenous place names, including village sites and geographic features, would number in the tens of thousands.

As of 2010 few indigenous languages in Alaska are still spoken by children, but significant revitalization programs exist for some languages.

Although broad largely, including language definitions, boundaries, and maps, as Michael Krauss 1978 and 1982 show Peoples and Languages of Alaska map, this map differs in several ways from that map. This map does not include indigenous populations or speaker numbers, language status in each village or size of village, and dialect boundaries. Finally, several language names have been revised to reflect current usage.

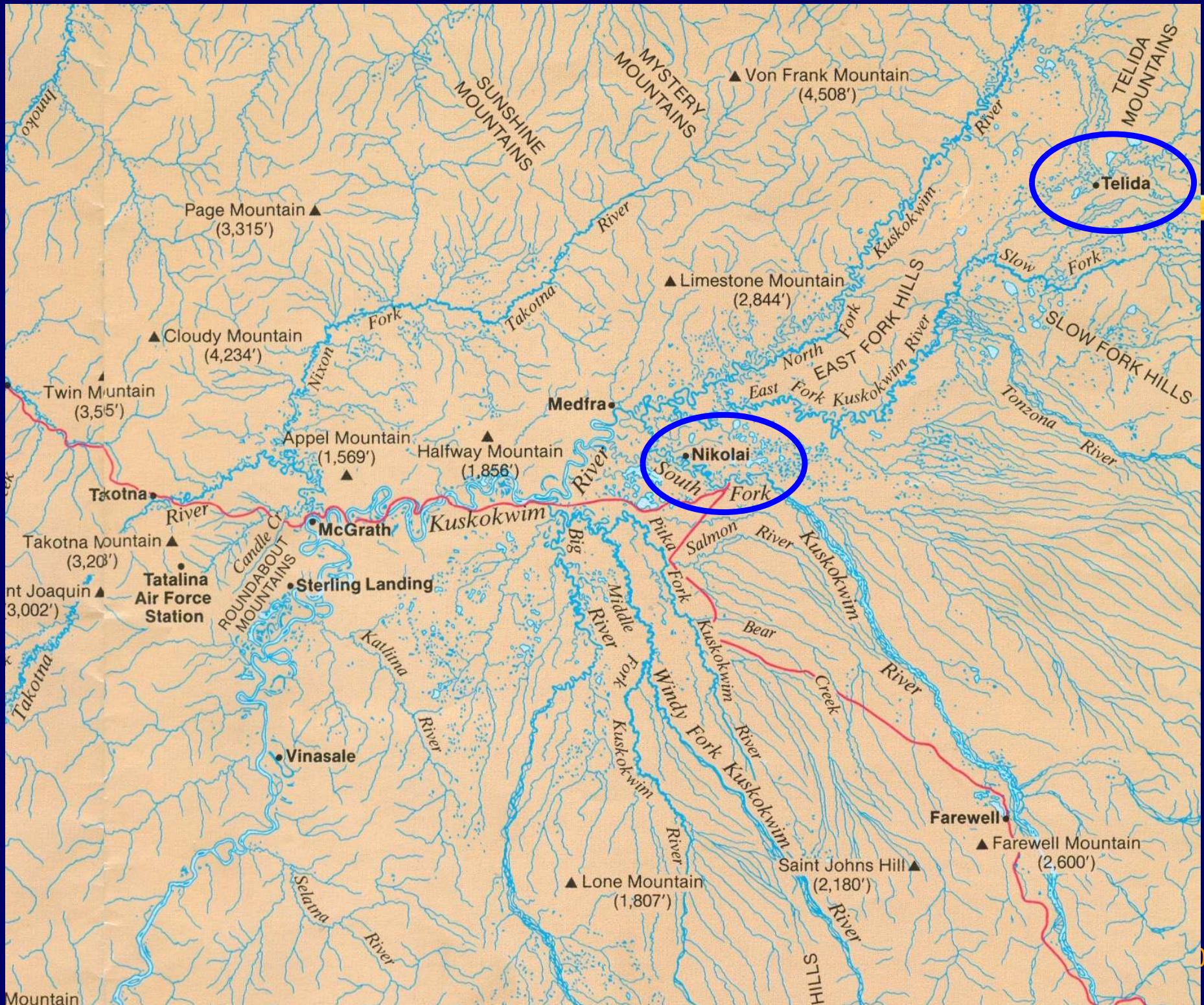
More information about Alaska languages and language maps can be found at www.uaf.edu/ala.

ANILC
 Alaska Native Language Center
 University of Alaska Anchorage

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska, compiled by Michael Krauss.
 Digital map prepared by Gary Waters, Jim Ken, and Cole Wren, with the assistance of Emily and staff of the Alaska Native Language Center and Institute of Social and Economic Research.
 Indigenous place names compiled by Gary Waters.
 Graphic design and layout by Christine Knapp Merrill.
 GIS software and a complete list of references and archival source materials available at www.uaf.edu/ala and www.alaska.org

Based on the maps *Alutic Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (Shoemaker 1917, revised 1962) and *Alutic Peoples* (Krauss 1995).
 Funding provided by the Alaska Native Language Center, the Institute of Social and Economic Research, the UAF Alaska Native Language Center, the UAF Center for Arctic Research, the UAF Center for Arctic Studies, the UAF Center for Arctic Studies, and the National Science Foundation.

Copyright 2011



Unusual purity of UK



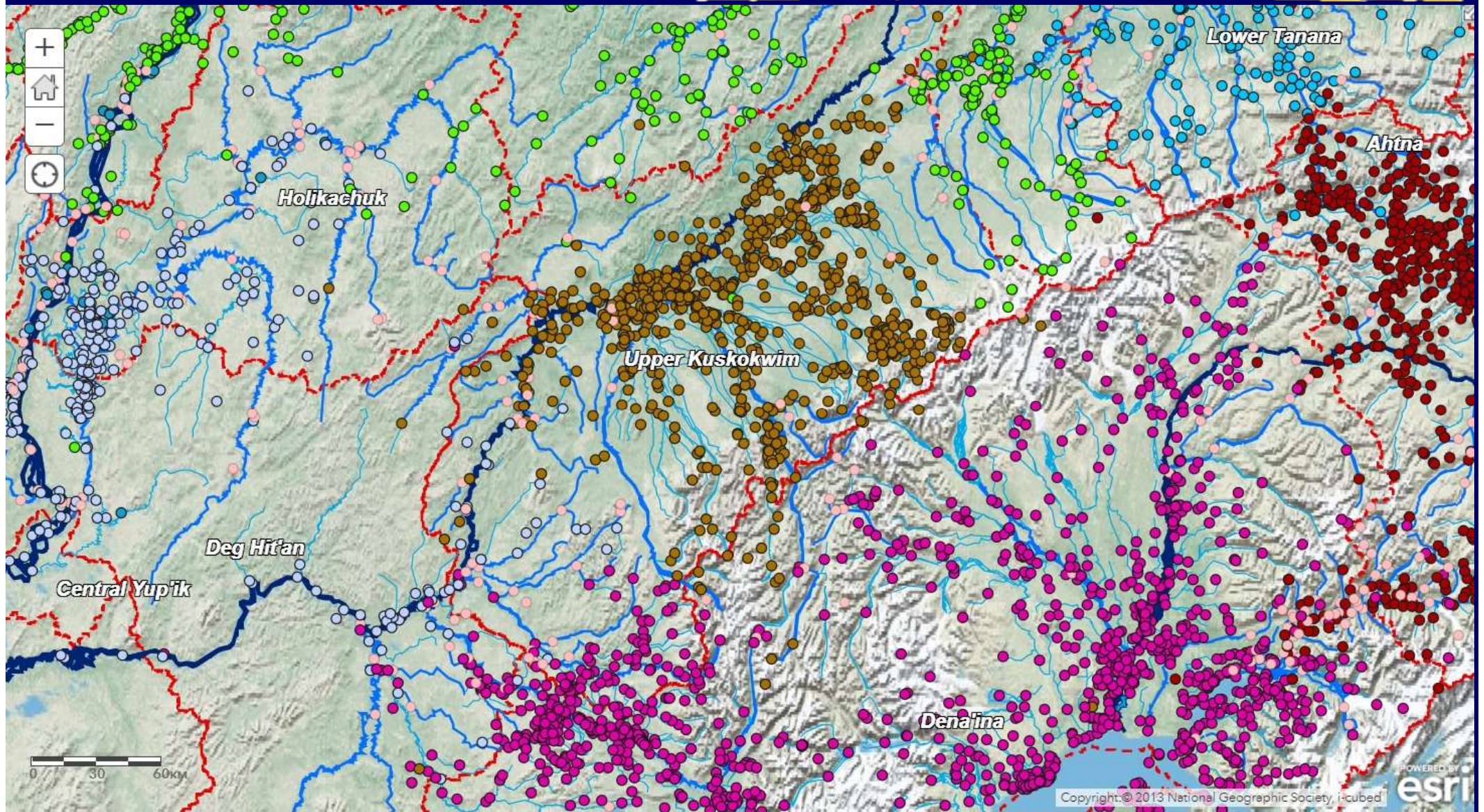
- Very few loanwords
 - Partial exception: some Russian nouns
- No identifiable grammatical influence
- UK largely conserves the original Athabaskan type

Old prehistory



- The UK area is close to (or is included in) the original Athabaskan homeland (Krauss 1980; Kari 2010; Hargus 2016)
- The area was occupied by Athabaskans for thousands of years
 - According to different opinions, about 3.5 K years (Krauss 1980) or from 6 K years up to 12 K years (Kari 2010)
- Athabaskan languages are characterized by “geolinguistic conservatism” (Kari 2010; Sapir 1921; Fortescue 1998; Campbell and Poser 2008)

Kari and Smith's toponymic map



Place names

- James Kari and associates have collected over 900 UK place names (streams, lakes, mountains, landscape forms, etc.)
- All of them (with very few exceptions) are native Athabaskan descriptive terms, such as:
 - *diniltseje noʔ* 'red paint creek'
 - *tohwnagheʔo di* 'where a hill comes into water'
 - *ʔizdlaghe zighash noʔ tʔogh ʔizʔone*
sheefish harvest river headwaters standing
'Mount Hesperus', lit. 'the one at headwaters of sheefish are harvested stream'
- There are no signs of borrowing place names from any substrate language

Geographic isolation



- Remote area
 - separated from the South by the Alaska range
 - far from the coast
 - connected to the coast by the Kuskokwim river, far smaller than the Yukon
 - difficult swampy terrain, hard to cross in summer
- As a result, it was accessed the least of all by Russian and American travelers
- Even though a very small language, it was preserved somewhat longer than other Alaskan Athabaskan languages

Four kinds of potential contacts

A. Other Athabaskan

B. Yup'ik Eskimo

C. Russian and Church Slavonic (from mid-19th century)

D. English (from the beginning of the 20th century)

Koyukon

Holikachuk

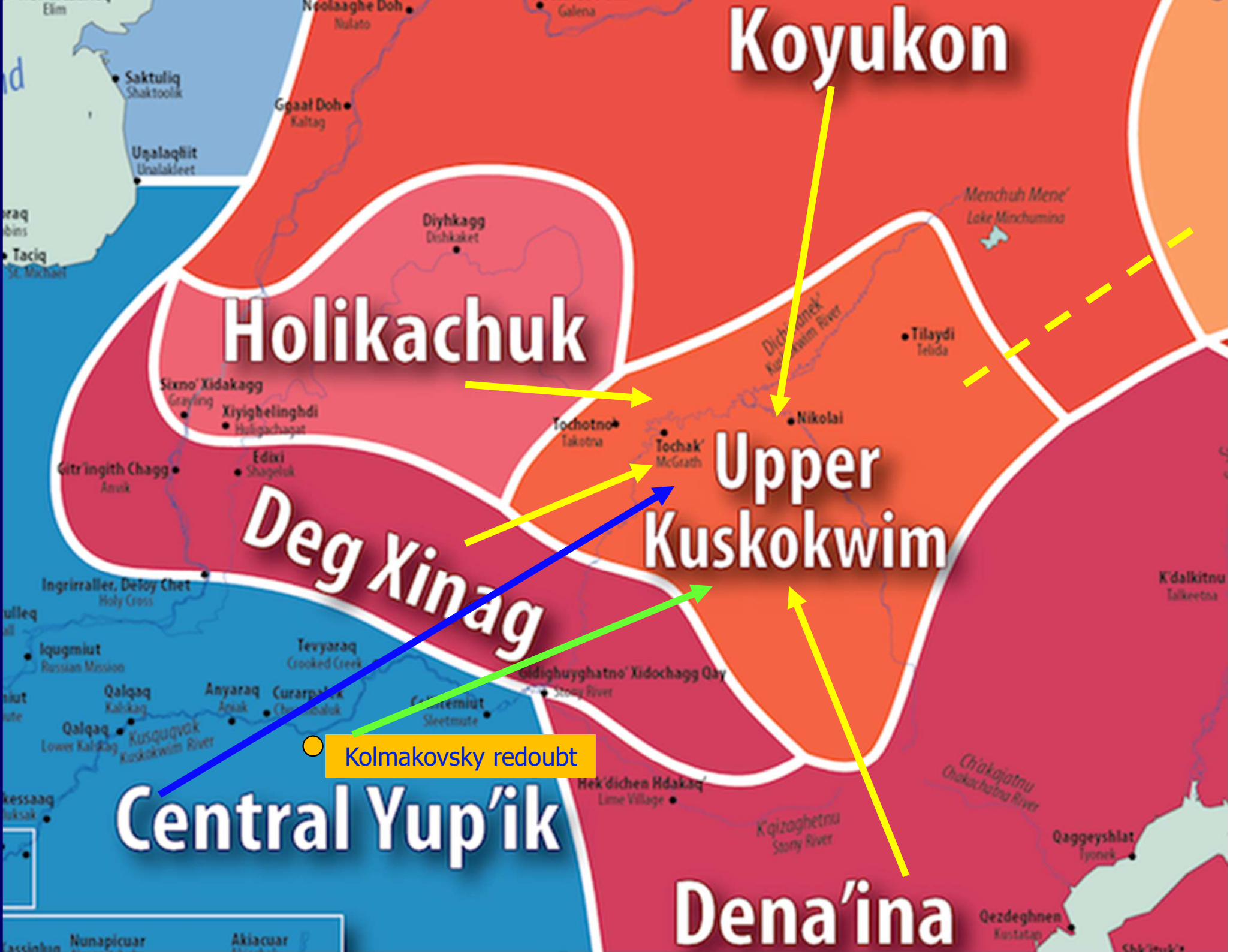
Upper Kuskokwim

Deg Xinag

Central Yup'ik

Dena'ina

Kolmakovsky redoubt



A. Contact with other Athabaskan

- Interior Athabaskan languages constituted a dialect chain/network
 - At least this concerns Lower Tanana – Koyukon – Holikachuk – UK
 - including chief Nikolai, born in the 1850s
 - from Holikachuk
 - and from Lower Tanana
- UK was not a well-defined language itself: profound dialectal differences between older speakers (born in early 20th century)

Michael Krauss (1981) : “Native comparative Athabaskan linguistics”

- “With speaker’s awareness of phonological correspondences potentially affecting the form of diffusions, it can become unknowable whether a form which appears to be descended from the proto-language by regular phonological development is in fact so descended by always having been in the “language”, or was at one time not in the language, but borrowed into it from a related language or dialect, with correct phonological adjustment, thus no longer detectable as a loan or dialect borrowing” (p. 7).



1934 - 2019

Mount McKinley / Denali



- 'the tall one'
 - KY: *Deenaalee*
 - UK: *Denaze*
 - LT: *Dinadhi*
 - DH, HO: *Denadh*

B. Contact with Yup'ik Eskimo

- Very few Yup'ik loanwords
 - *duyuk* 'salt' < *taryuq* 'salt, brine, ocean'
 - DH *dighiyuq* (K)
 - HO *daghiyuq*
 - KY *degheyukk*
 - *dwhjak* 'pipe' < Ing. *tuxgaq* < CY *tugkar* 'tusk'
 - *yolwhk'a* 'window' – from Alutiiq *yaaləq* (CED: 108)
 - probably via Dena'ina: *yuleq* 'window, windowpane'; *yulq'a* 'window opening'
 - or via DH *yolq'a* 'window, smoke hole'
 - *-k'a* 'cavity, opening'
 - *londik* 'thimble'
 - probably from Yup'ik (CY *tekeq* 'index finger, thimble')
 - via Dena'ina: *lukdeq* OR *lukdeq*
 - *lo-* 'hand'
 - *ghw/wk* (endearing particle) < CY *ruluq* 'poor, nice'
 - *tsuyda ghw/wk* 'the poor grandma'
 - the only identified borrowing directly from Yup'ik

UK as a typical Athabaskan language with respect to language contact

- Very few lexical borrowings from Yup'ik
- No known grammatical borrowing
- Verb structure prevents borrowing in principle
- Athabaskans developed a highly complex and impenetrable system and were content with it for an unlimited period
- Not a hint of participating in a linguistic area, God forbid Sprachbund

C. Contact with Russian

- Started in 1844 (Lavrenty Zagoskin's expedition) or a few years earlier
- Lasted well beyond the official end of Russian America (1867)
- No evidence that UK people ever learned to *speak* in Russian (unlike coastal native peoples in Alaska)
- But they learned OCS prayers and chants by heart, without understanding lexical and grammatical content

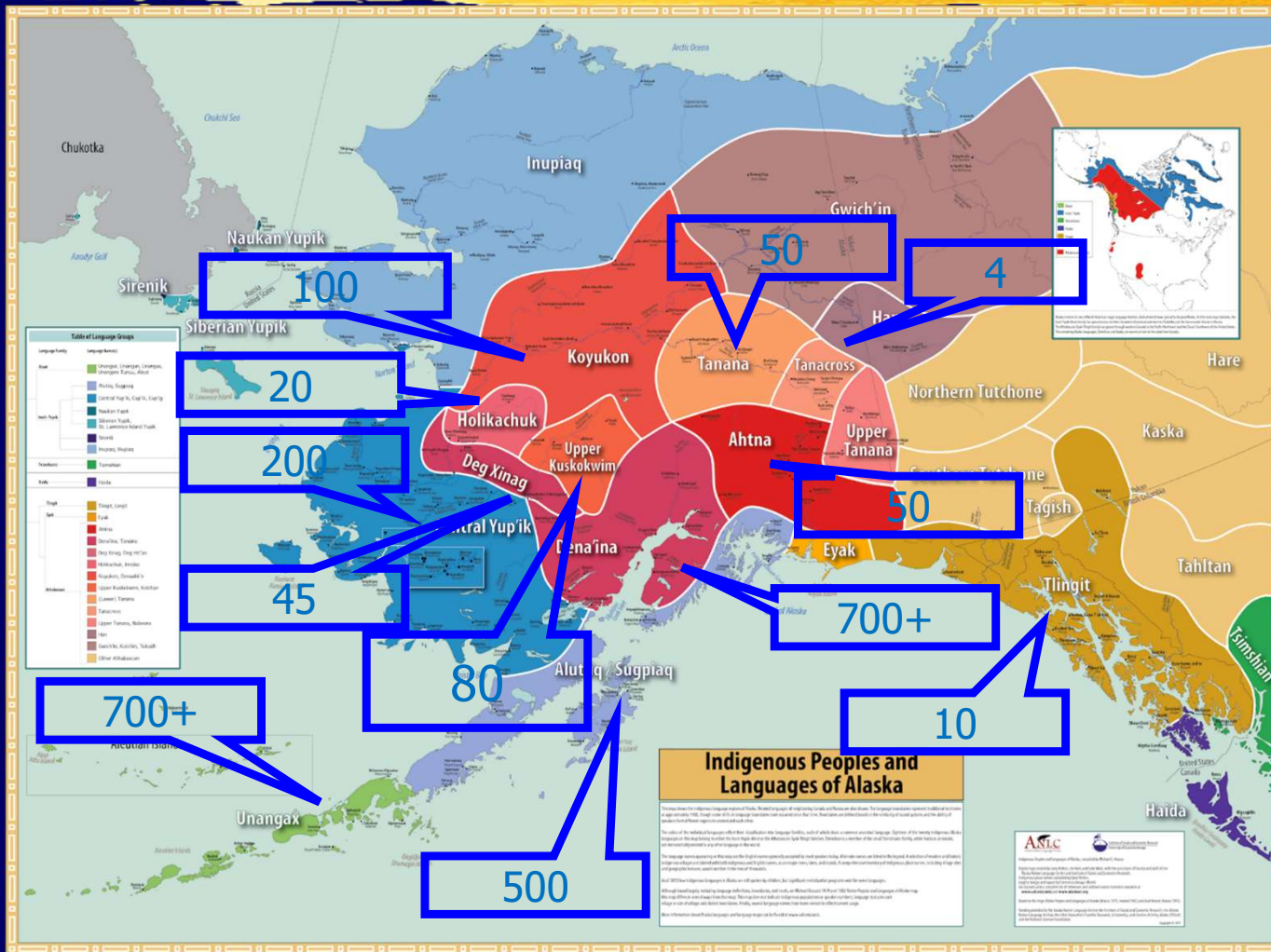


Russian borrowings



- Athabaskan languages open up somewhat for borrowing only under culture shock:
 - Alaska – from Russian
 - Canada – from French and English
 - Pacific – from English
 - Navajo – from Spanish
- About 80 nouns of Russian origin
 - European artefacts (tools, food)
 - cultural (mostly religious) concepts
- Borrowed phonemes: *boze* 'God', *anhere* 'archpriest'
- The UK people learned individual Russian words
 - *suhale* 'crackers' < *suxari*
 - *mesruk* 'sack' < *mešok*
- Hypothesis: not via entrenched bilingualism but rather via ostensive acquaintance with and nomination of particular referents

Number of Russian loanwords



Russian loanwords

- mesruk 'мешок'
- malgasr 'баркас'
- tsasja 'чашка'
- milhudik 'пароход'
- manjak 'банка'

Via Koyukon *maalgaas*,
cf. Koy. *kk'es* – UK *k'isr*

Via Dena'ina *chashga*, cf.
Den. *bach* – UK *mats*
Den. *gega* – UK *jija*

Via Eskimo,
cf. CY (also Alutiiq)
palagg'uutaq

via Eskimo,
cf. CY *paankaq*, Alutiiq *paankaaq*,
and then via unidentified Athabaskan

Evidence of some
familiarity with Yup'ik
morphology

Russian loans shed light on old language contact

- Most “Russian” loanwords actually arrived via the mediation of other languages (both Athabaskan and Eskimo)
- Native comparative linguistics: loans via Dena’ina, Koyukon, and Deg Hit’an
 - Some borrowed toponyms from Athabaskan
- Contact with Eskimo languages mostly via the mediation of Athabaskan
- Some limited direct contact with Russian and Central Yup’ik
- We thus discern the old network of inter-language and inter-dialect relationships

D. Contact with English

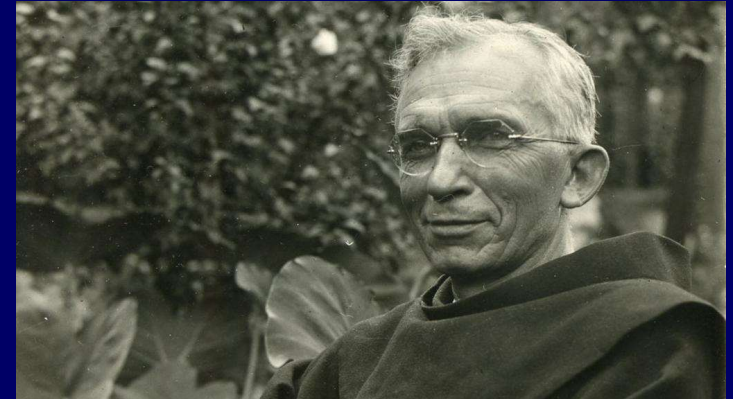
- Began in early 1900s
 - Several early borrowings, e.g. *fala?ena* 'guys'
- Very limited bilingualism before WWII
 - Traditional lifestyle: semi-nomadic, long distance travel
 - Much of the time in small isolated groups, gathering for church holidays
 - But Anglo people penetrate the area (see Raskladkina 2019)
- Contact became massive in 1948 (missionary school)
- Bilingualism spread during the following decades
- Balanced bilinguals: those born in 1940s
- This generation also leveled out the dialectal differences
- Language shift in 1960-70s
- Complexity of Athabaskan helped to preserve these languages intact but now it speeds up their decline

Conclusions on UK: Causes of purity

- Geographical isolation
- Long residence in the area, without any unrelated languages in the vicinity
- General disinclination of the Athabaskan languages to borrowing and “geolinguistic conservatism” (Sapir 1921, Brown 1999, Kari 2010)
- Native comparative knowledge of Alaskan Athabaskans
- Scarcity of contact with Yup'ik and of bilingualism in Yup'ik
- Lack of bilingualism in Russian
- Brief period of partial bilingualism in English
- Special morphology, almost excluding borrowing of verb roots or affixes

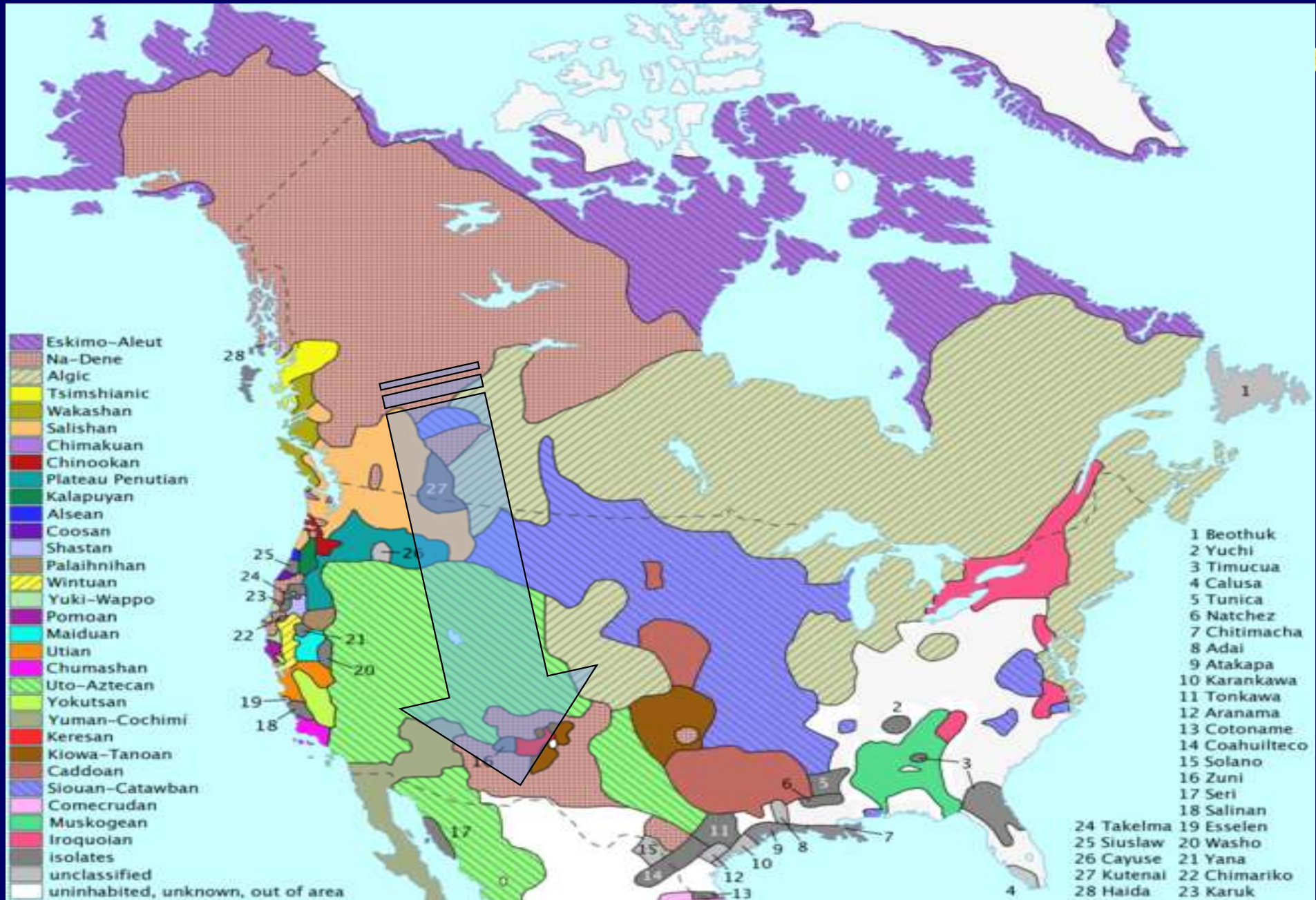
Late work on Navajo

- Towards the end of his life, Sapir became primarily interested in the intricacies of the Navajo language
 - He developed friendship and mutual respect with the Franciscan Berard Haile
- Sapir 1936: "Internal linguistic evidence suggestive of the northern origin of the Navaho"



Berard Haile
1874-1961

The case of Navajo



Northern origin of Navajo



- 'adee' 'horn' > 'horn ladle' > 'ladle' > 'ladle made of gourd' > 'gourd'
- naadaqá 'enemies' food', 'Pueblos' food' > 'corn'
- Very deep diachronic analysis

Conclusion



- Athabaskan, or Dene, were Sapir's favorite languages
- Sapir's work built a foundation for all the subsequent work on Athabaskan
- I am sure much valuable still remains uncovered in his personal archive