

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Preliminary Study of the Western Gwich'in Bands

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6nw7c8d7>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 23(2)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

Raboff, Adeline Peter

**Publication Date**

1999-03-01

**DOI**

10.17953

**Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

# Preliminary Study of the Western Gwich'in Bands

**ADELINE PETER RABOFF**

---

---

The K'iiit'it and Di'hajj Gwich'in were once two distinct subgroups of the Gwich'in people. The Gwich'in people once occupied all the mountainous terrain and river valleys between the Arctic Red River and the MacKenzie River Delta westward to the Upper Noatak River valley in northwestern Alaska.<sup>1</sup> The K'iiit'it and Di'hajj were the westernmost bands and were gradually displaced through a series of raids and counter raids by the Inland Inupiat, or Nunamiut, as they will be called here.<sup>2</sup> The situation was further exacerbated by internal feuding, famine, and disease. Weakened and reduced in numbers, the K'iiit'it and Di'hajj merged and moved further to the east where they were absorbed by the Neets'ajj, Vantee, and Draanjik Gwich'in and by the Koyukon Indians who moved into the middle Yukon River basin in the vicinity of Stevens Village.

Although the Gwich'in have long been recognized as a discrete group in northeastern Alaska and northwestern Canada, stories of the K'iiit'it and Di'hajj Gwich'in have come to the attention of the academic community only in the last thirty years. The other subgroups—the Gwichah, Teet'it, Vantee, Dagoo, Hantee, Draanjik, Gwichyaa, Deenduu and Neets'ajj,<sup>3</sup>—were well known from the earliest records of the Hudson's Bay Company traders and missionaries. The K'iiit'it were mentioned first on a map drawn by William Lucas Hardisty, the clerk in charge at the Fort Youcon (Yukon) trading post in 1853 (see fig. 1). William Hardisty called them the "Keetla Koochin" and had them clearly placed in the Upper Koyukuk River valley. The K'iiit'it were mentioned in the journals of the Anglican priest Reverend Robert McDonald, who called them the "Kitlikutchin." In McDonald's journal entry for March 12, 1867, the K'iiit'it were already "enroute to their own country from the country formerly occupied by the Siffleux."<sup>4</sup> Here McDonald was referring to the Di'hajj who were called Siffleur or Siffleux at the time. The term *Di'hajj*

---

Adeline Peter Raboff is a Neets'ajj Gwich'in who lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. She is currently working on a book about the K'iiit'it and Di'hajj Gwich'in between 1800 and 1900, and does storytelling both in English and Gwich'in.

did not surface in academic literature until anthropologist Robert A. McKennan conducted his ethnographic field work of the Neets'ąįį Gwich'in in the summer of 1933. McKennan was the first to document the presence of the Di'hąįį.

Of the two groups the Di'hąįį Gwich'in have received the bulk of academic attention. McKennan mentioned the Di'hąįį in his ethnography of the Neets'ąįį Gwich'in,<sup>5</sup> and then Frederick Hadleigh-West, who wrote his dissertation on the Neets'ąįį Gwich'in in 1963, likewise mentioned the Di'hąįį and included a map of their former territory. More recently, archeologist Edwin S. Hall, Jr. wrote an article about the Di'hąįį/Nunamiut conflict.<sup>6</sup> It was the first article that dealt specifically with the Di'hąįį Gwich'in and forwarded the notion that the Gwich'in ranged much further to the west of their present territorial boundaries than was previously supposed. Most recently, Ernest S. Burch, Jr. and Craig W. Mishler wrote about the Di'hąįį.<sup>7</sup> Burch and Mishler pieced together fragments of information to come up with the most complete picture of the Di'hąįį Gwich'in to date.

The K'it'it Gwich'in have proven to be far more elusive for contemporary scholars. The earliest indirect reference to the K'it'it Gwich'in is in Alexander Hunter Murray's journal, where he states, "The Indians to the west and south of us, between (here) and the coast have a great difference in pronunciation, but they all understand each other, and it is undoubtedly the same language that is spoken all over the country between the mouth of the

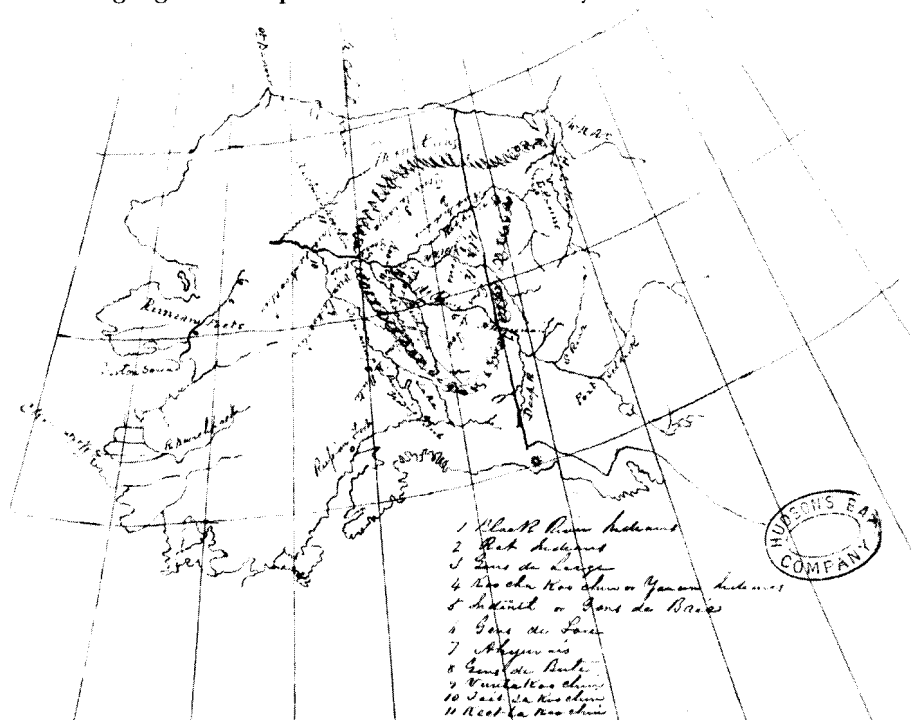


FIGURE 1: W. L. HARDISTY, HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES, PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA, 1853.

McKenzie and Behring Straits.”<sup>8</sup> William Hardisty, who was stationed in Fort Yukon from 1852–1860, probably had the most intimate knowledge of the K’iit’it Gwich’in. Yet it is striking that in 1853 Hardisty did not designate a location for the Di’hąjį Gwich’in or Siffleur on the map (fig. 1). Reverend McDonald, who was fluent in Gwich’in, made references to the K’iit’it Gwich’in as a group from 1866 to 1877. In the same journal entry for March 1867, while visiting the Neets’ąjį Gwich’in, McDonald reports meeting three K’iit’it Gwich’in men. Among them was “Sahtaii” or “Suhtaii” who told him that there were forty men, forty women, and one hundred children in their band. McDonald, who spoke Dagoo Gwich’in, noted that “Sahtaii” spoke Dagoo and that, “Their own language is similar somewhat to the Chipewyan.” McKennan made one reference to the “Ki tlit Kutchin” in his field notes. The K’iit’it Gwich’in are not addressed by name in any academic papers save briefly by Robert Kennicott as “Ketlit Kutchin,”<sup>9</sup> by Katherine Arndt<sup>10</sup> in her 1996 thesis, by Catherine McClellan who listed the “Keet la Koo chin” as unidentified,<sup>11</sup> and by Richard I. Ruggles who reproduced William Hardisty’s map in his book, *A Country So Interesting*.<sup>12</sup> This then is the extent of the current academic literature on the K’iit’it Gwich’in.

Given the limited materials available on both groups, in writing about the K’iit’it and Di’hąjį Gwich’in one must first establish that there were indeed two separate bands of Gwich’in people and reconstruct the territories for both groups. The strongest evidence for this are the ethnonyms themselves, K’iit’it and Di’hąjį Gwich’in. The group names in and of themselves say that they are *a* group with *a* territory. Then these territories must be confirmed, if possible, from the written records of Murray,<sup>13</sup> Hardisty,<sup>14</sup> Maguire,<sup>15</sup> McDonald,<sup>16</sup> Dall,<sup>17</sup> McKennan,<sup>18</sup> Zagoskin,<sup>19</sup> Jette,<sup>20</sup> and the delineation of Di’hąjį territory as presented by Frederick Hadleigh-West.<sup>21</sup> Further evidence can be found in linguistic material relating to ethnonyms. The greater part of this paper will be devoted to this subject.

The second problem that must be addressed is, what happened to the K’iit’it Gwich’in? How was it that between the late 1870s and the time of McKennan’s visit in 1933, they simply disappeared?

The third element to piece together is the series of raids and counter raids and internal feuding that resulted in the displacement of first the K’iit’it Gwich’in, and finally the Di’hąjį. This will be done through the oral accounts of the Iñupiat, Gwich’in, and Koyukon Indians; the journals of Rochfort Maguire who was stationed aboard the Plover at Pt. Barrow; the journal of Murray; the diary of McDonald; through the papers of Hall, and Burch and Mishler; and from the oral accounts of my late father, Steven Peter, Sr.

Finally, I want to piece together the story of the K’iit’it and Di’hąjį Gwich’in survivors because it would answer many questions for the present generation of Gwich’in people and scholars who have never had a written account of this history. As a Neets’ąjį Gwich’in person I have spent most of my life wondering about our history, only to be told that “the Gwich’in have no history” or that I should forget about the past. The past and the present history of the Gwich’in people is a part of my identity, and therefore I have chosen to pursue our history. Heretofore, McKennan, Hadleigh-West, Hall, and

Burch and Mishler all have assumed that there was only one other western group of Gwich'in, mainly the Di'hąjį. It is now possible to distinguish which group was active where and where they migrated.

Much of the material that I will bring to this work is new. Most of the information from the Gwich'in perspective was provided by my father, Steven Peter, Sr., from 1987 to 1997. He was a monolingual Neets'ąjį Gwich'in speaker until his early twenties. My father was born in 1906 on the north shore of Old John Lake near Peter's Hill, and spent all of his childhood and most of his adult life in the upper Chandalar and Khiinjik (Sheenjik) River valleys. His mother, Soozun Peter, was born in approximately 1870 near the mouth of the Chandalar River. It was from her that he learned most of the extensive genealogies that he has imparted to me over a ten-year period. My father's father, Peter Shajool John (born approximately 1865) was a storyteller in his own right, whom McKennan met in 1933. It was through stories related to my father by my father's mother that we have the personal names, place-names, and genealogies of the Western Gwich'in.

Taken as a whole, the genealogies begin in approximately 1790, well before European contact and the first Nunamiut conflicts. The personal names from the genealogies have proven to be invaluable to this work. And, finally, my father knew several Gwich'in place-names of the upper Koyukuk River, which helped pinpoint the lower limits of Di'hąjį Gwich'in territory.

Other Gwich'in sources include the stories of Dahjalti' and K'ehdan and his wife, which can all be tied to the Nunamiut and Koyukon accounts. Koyukon sources include the Yukon-Koyukuk School District's biography of Moses Henzie,<sup>22</sup> Annette McFadyen-Clark,<sup>23</sup> the journal of Jules Jette, S.J.,<sup>24</sup> an Oblate priest, and linguistic evidence provided by Dr. James Kari, at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

#### K'IITŁ'IT AND DI'HĄJĪ GWICH'IN TERRITORIES

The starting point to establish K'iitł'it and Di'hąjį Gwich'in territory is to interpret the locations of the K'iitł'it Gwich'in as presented by William Hardisty's map of 1853 (fig. 1), Simpson's map of 1854<sup>25</sup> (fig. 2), and the northwestern section of W. H. Dall's map of 1875 (fig. 3) and the comments of Jules Jette, S.J. In the north, Simpson located the K'iitł'it and Di'hąjį at the headwaters of the Colville and Upper Noatak Rivers. To the south, Hardisty has the K'iitł'it territory starting below the Kanuti River. How far below the Kanuti River the K'iitł'it ranged cannot be ascertained. Dall's map shows the Melozitna River and the Tozitna River valleys within Koyukon territory, but no further north than that.

However the K'iitł'it/Koyukon boundaries can be delineated further through the writings of Russian explorer Lieutenant L. A. Zagoskin. In 1843, Zagoskin, on a trip up the Koyukuk River, reported that

on the upper reaches of the river, however, where it has many tributaries, there are a good many natives. They also belong to the tribe of the Ttynay. *Nevertheless they differ from their down river fellow tribesmen in speech*, and unlike them they have not adopted various coastal customs:



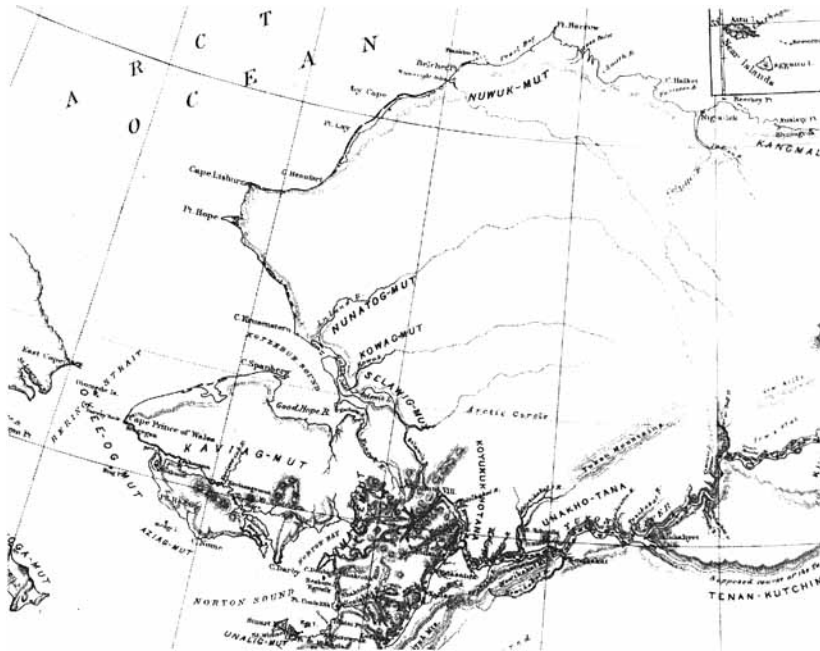


FIGURE 3: W. H. DALL, NORTHWESTERN PORTION OF "DISTRIBUTION OF NATIVE TRIBES OF ALASKA," UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ARCHIVES RARE MAPS COLLECTION, 1875.

that goes from the Tozitna along the Kanuti to the Alatna rivers. We can not know how far back this trail has been in use. The southern and southeastern K'iiit'it border must have been the Kanuti River.

In 1910 Jules Jette, S.J. wrote of Kodeelkkaak'et<sup>29</sup> or the mouth of the Kateel River: "Kodilkakat, mouth of the 'Kodilno'<sup>30</sup> on the left bank of the Koyukuk river, 40 miles above its mouth and native village, now deserted, once famous among the Ten'a for its medicine men and as *the starting point of various migrating parties* who settled on the Yukon. Written Kateelkakat, Koteelkakat, Kodelkakat and Cotillakakat by explorers" (emphasis added).<sup>31</sup> This would suggest that the K'iiit'it occupied the area north of the Kateel River as of 1853 and that the Koyukon moved progressively to the Yukon River and eventually into the area of the upper Koyukuk. Jette continues: the "Kodilno, tributary to the Koyukuk river from the west, 40 miles above its mouth called Kateel river in the Dictionary: etymology not obtained ... all the natives I could consult declared that the word presents no meaning to them."

While these sources present substantial perimeters, there are other sources and in particular some linguistic clues that bear examination. One linguistic clue presented by Dr. James Kari is that "place names for several major streams of the Koyukuk River are opaque<sup>32</sup> and have no clear place name translation in Koyukon. Also Alatna is not analyzable in Koyukon or Inupiaq. These names could be from a Gwich'in substratum of place names (i.e., orig-

inal Gwich'in origin place names that have been adopted and reshaped into Koyukon)."<sup>33</sup> The Alatna, Kanuti, and Hogatza rivers are in question. None of these rivers has a place-name translation in Koyukon.

Of the three rivers, the Alatna was clearly within Hardisty's boundaries for the K'iił'tit Gwich'in. In Gwich'in *alaa* means "to float"; *ahłaa* means "one causes something to move in the water." The stem *-njik* is used to describe a fast-moving shallow body of water. The Gwich'in word for the river could have been *Alaa njik* or *Ataa njik*; that is, "float river" or "float down river." The Koyukon stem for stream is *-tna'* or *-tno'*. The Koyukon speakers could have simply substituted *-tna'* or *-tno'* for the Gwich'in stem *-njik*.

The place-name Kanuti could be a misrepresentation of the Koyukon word *Kk'oonootna*, which is the Koyukon name for the Kanuti River.<sup>34</sup> The partial Koyukon translation for *Kk'oonootno'*, or variously *Kk'oonootna'*, is questionably "island river," *kk'oo* being uncertain in meaning.<sup>35</sup> "Island river" in Gwich'in would be *Njuu K'oo* or *Njuu njik*<sup>36</sup> depending on how the river flows, slow or fast.<sup>37</sup>

Using linguistic data alone, the case for the Hogatza River remains questionable. To quote Dr. Kari again, "The Hogatza River, Koyukon, *Xwgaadzaatno'*, is even more opaque." Although I can think of no translation for "Hogatza," this should not discount the possibility that it is of Gwich'in origin.

My father knew John Vindeegwizhii, also known as Old John, one of McKennan's Fort Yukon informants. Old John spoke Di'hąjį occasionally and said that although he could speak K'iił'tit Gwich'in as well, no one in Fort Yukon would be able to understand him. It was difficult enough for them to understand Di'hąjį. Referring again to McDonald's March 1867 entry we can see that the language of the K'iił'tit Gwich'in was sufficiently divergent that McDonald had to converse with "Sahtaii" in Dagoo Gwich'in. Although it is debatable, one can speculate that since there are no translations for the Hogatza in Koyukon, this area was once K'iił'tit Gwich'in territory.

In looking at the southwestern boundaries of the K'iił'tit Gwich'in, based on Dall and Hardisty's maps, Jette, the place-name material just provided, and Zagoskin's account of his journeys, the area below the Kanuti River and the area north of the Kateel River are open to dispute. Hardisty's map does not include the Hogatza River; neither does Dall's. Maybe the K'iił'tit Gwich'in occupied the Hogatza River valley before European contact and up to 1842, but shortly before 1853 they did not—or it was a no-man's area where the Koyukon and K'iił'tit moved through seasonally to trade with the Iñupiat along the Selawik and Kobuk rivers or with other interior Native groups along the Yukon. The smallpox epidemic of 1838–39 in Norton Sound<sup>38</sup> no doubt had a devastating effect upon the K'iił'tit, since the groups along the trade routes had opportunities for contact. If there were survivors, they went south to join the Koyukon and/or more likely north to join the remaining K'iił'tit Gwich'in there. This would have left the Hogatza River wide open for complete Koyukon takeover, but that had not taken place as of Zagoskin's visit in 1842.

The next area of uncertainty is the Upper Kobuk River valley. Hall assumed the Upper Kobuk was occupied by the Di'hąjį Gwich'in. Hall's sources were from Nicholas Gubser<sup>39</sup> and Helge Ingstad.<sup>40</sup> Their main informant, in turn, was Simon Paneak, an Iñupiat from Anaktuvuk Pass. Burch,



however, contends that “there is now compelling reason to believe that the Upper Kobuk River (above the mouth of the Kogoluktuk River) was occupied by Koyukon speakers, not Gwich’in or Inupiat, during the first half of the nineteenth century.”<sup>41</sup> I would agree with Burch in regard to the physical surroundings because the portage from the Upper Selawik River, where there were Koyukon speakers, to the Upper Kobuk are very close, but I would place them there in the second half of the nineteenth century. I simply can not discount Kitsyakaka, Zagoskin’s informant, or Simon Paneak’s account.<sup>42</sup> Why did Kitsyakaka not mention the Koyukon along the Upper Kobuk in 1842? Maybe there were no permanent Koyukon residents on the Upper Kobuk at the time. If there were Inupiat, Koyukon, and K’iit’it Gwich’in who frequented the area we can safely assume that they were able to communicate with each other and that at least some were trilingual. The transfer of place-names from one group to another would take less than ten or twenty years under those circumstances. There is no doubt, though, that the Upper Kobuk had Koyukon place-names in recorded times.<sup>43</sup> The K’iit’it Gwich’in, Koyukon, and the Inupiat probably frequented the upper Kobuk River area in the early spring to trade, but I would stop short of calling it K’iit’it Gwich’in territory.

The K’iit’it Gwich’in northern boundaries can be studied from the map drawn by Dr. John Simpson, ships’ surgeon aboard the British ship *Plover*, which wintered at Point Barrow 1852–54<sup>44</sup> (fig. 2), and the comments of Captain Rochfort Maguire, captain of the *Plover*. On this map the “Mountainous Indian Country” includes the Upper Noatak, Killik, the Upper Colville River, the Itkillik River, and all of the mountains to the south of the coastal plain. We can be sure that the K’iit’it Gwich’in occupied the Upper Noatak and were known there as *Iyagaagmiut*.<sup>45</sup> The *Iyagaagmiut*/K’iit’it ranged as far down the Noatak as the area just above the Aniuk River.<sup>46</sup> They evidently had access to the Etivluk/Aniuk portage.<sup>47</sup> According to Gubser, the *Uyagamiut* had settlements on the upper Nigu, Killik, Okokmilaga, Chandler, Anaktuvuk, and Itkillik valleys.<sup>48</sup> The Kobuk people called the K’iit’it Gwich’in “*Iyagaagmiut*,” while the Anaktuvuk people called them “*Uyagamiut*.” (The contemporary spelling *Uyagaagmiut* will be used through the text.) Going back to the Simpson map (fig. 2), the “mountainous Indians” also occupied the Upper Killik and Upper Itkillik rivers.

Maguire made reference to two separate groups of Indians: the “*Ko-yu-akuk*,” who were considered hostile, and the generic “*It-Kal-ge*” (which means Indian), who were regarded not only as friendly but who would have been received well at the village (Point Barrow).<sup>49</sup> Maguire refers to the Indians of the interior as “*Ko-yu-akuk*.”<sup>50</sup> This may have been his own name for the Indians because he was familiar with that group<sup>51</sup> and his informants, Erksinra and Omigaloon, merely agreed. The *It-Kal-ge* were seen during the spring trading season when all groups were more open to interaction. I think that Maguire was referring to the K’iit’it and/or Di’hąjį in both instances.

Regardless of what Maguire or Simpson called the K’iit’it, Maguire and Simpson established the northern limits of K’iit’it and Di’hąjį Gwich’in territory as of 1854. To distinguish between the two groups we must turn our atten-

tion to the establishment of Di'hąjį territory and the east-west boundary between the K'it'it and Di'hąjį Gwich'in people.

The first documentation for reconstruction of the K'it'it/Di'hąjį territorial boundaries is the "Distribution of Kutchin Bands" map provided by Hadleigh-West<sup>52</sup> (fig. 4), who in turn drew his map after Cornelius Osgood<sup>53</sup> with some variation. Hadleigh-West wrote, "... Robert McKennan (1936, p. 369)<sup>54</sup> brought to light the existence of a ninth tribe of the Kutchin-speakers of northeastern Alaska and adjacent Canada. These were the Dihai Kutchin the remnants of whom, he said, had 'two generations' previous to his writing deserted their former territory about the north fork of the Chandalar and the headwaters of the Koyukuk, and had moved in among, and been assimilated by, the neighboring Nedse [*sic*] Kutchin."<sup>55</sup> In his own words (regarding the Di'hąjį), McKennan states, "Their territory included the Middle and North forks of the Chandalar River and the headwaters of the Koyukuk River... The Eskimo settlement at 'Little Squaw' on the North Fork of the Chandalar River and at Coldfoot on the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River are said to be in the heart of territory formerly inhabited by the Dihai Kutchin."<sup>56</sup> But Hadleigh-West warns, "Pending future investigation and confirmation, the boundaries shown for the Dihain Kutchin should be viewed with some scepticism."<sup>57</sup> Hadleigh-West and McKennan together have independently mapped out the basic boundaries of the Di'hąjį Gwich'in territory.

To hone in on more specific boundary markers we must study the linguistic evidence as presented in the place-names provided by Steven Peter,

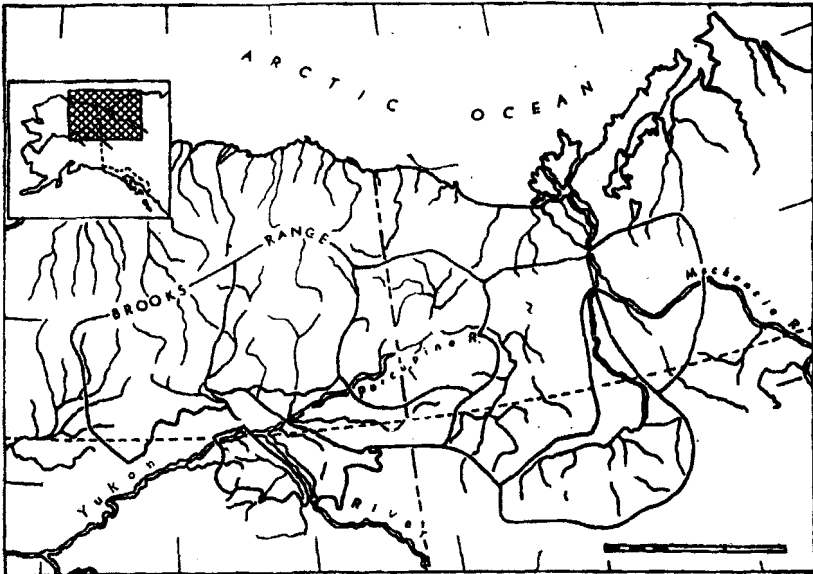


FIGURE 4: F. HADLEIGH-WEST, "THE DISTRIBUTION OF KUTCHIN BANDS," DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, 1959. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAPERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA.

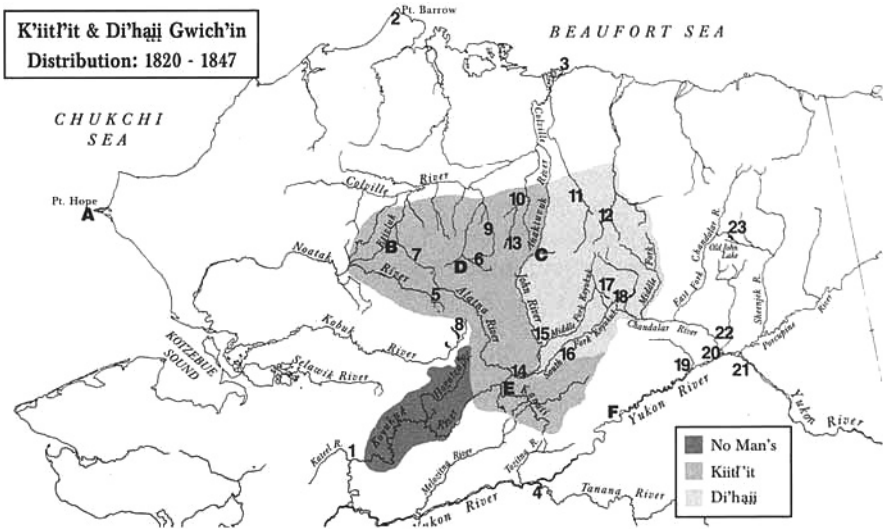


FIGURE 5: K'IT'IT AND DI'HAIJ GWICH'IN DISTRIBUTION: 1820–1847, RABOFF AND FARRELL, 1997.

#### Battles:

- A. Nuvularuaq, 1820, Burch
- B. Etivluk also archeological site, Paneak, et.al.
- C. K'it'it/Anaktuvuk Pass, Steven Peter, Sr.
- D. Killik River, Paneak
- E. Kanuti River, McFadyen-Clark
- F. 25 Miles below Stevens Village, S. John, Steven Peter, Sr.

#### Settlements and Sightings:

1. Trade at Kateel River Settlement, 1842, Zagoskin
2. The boy Passak, 1854, Maguire
3. Four Di'hajj Gwich'in, seen by Maguire
4. Trade at Tanana, McDonald, 1866–77
5. Portage Creek, Joe Sun
6. Killik Settlement, Paneak
7. Nigu Settlement, Paneak
- 8, 9, 10, 11, 12: K'it'it and Di'hajj Sightings
13. Chandler Lake, Paneak
14. K'it'it along Alatna, Steven Peter, Sr.
15. K'it'it'uu, Peter
16. Koyukon meet Di'hajj, Joe Beetus, 1870
17. Schrader; Horace Mt, Phoebe and Robert Creek, 1899
18. Chandalar Lake, Mary Ch'antsihch'ok, S. Peter, Sr.
19. White Eye, S. Peter, Sr.
20. Kahts'ik, S. Peter, Sr.
21. Fort Yukon, Murray, Hardisty, McDonald
22. Tsuk K'oo, S. Peter, Sr.
23. Tr'ootsyaa Vathal, S. Peter, Sr., Hadleigh-West, 1866

Sr.<sup>58</sup> The K'ii River or "Birch" river is the Gwich'in name for the Koyukuk River<sup>59</sup> and the K'iit'uu River or "Birch Bark Shavings" river is the John River. K'iit'it then is the headwaters of the K'iit'uu and K'ii rivers, that is, the headwaters of the Koyukuk River. K'iit'it is also the Gwich'in place-name for Anaktuvuk Pass. K'iit'it Gwich'in are those who come from K'iit'it, the Upper Koyukuk River, and more specifically the area of Anaktuvuk Pass. Anaktuvuk Pass and the John River would be the eastern boundary of the K'iit'it Gwich'in territory, but since it is an important caribou migration route which provided access to the lower Koyukuk River, the area may have been shared with the Di'hąįį at least on a seasonal basis.

Another important linguistic clue is the personal name of Ditsii K'iit'uu/Ditsii Giit'uu,<sup>60</sup> the patriarch of the Di'hąįį Gwich'in, who moved into the Chandalar River valley. The name Ditsii K'iit'uu literally means "our grandfather K'iit'uu," but in this particular case it means that *his* grandfather came from K'iit'uu.<sup>61</sup> K'iit'uu was the name of the community located about six miles up the John River from its confluence with the Koyukuk River.<sup>62</sup> The Lower John River, as located through place-name, is the southwestern boundary of the Di'hąįį Gwich'in territory. The linguistic material taken as a whole increases the size of the former Di'hąįį territory as presented by McKennan and Hadleigh-West.

In reviewing the K'iit'it and Di'hąįį territories it is simplest to follow the rivers. If one were to follow the river valleys north and south, then the upper Etivluk, Nigu, Oolanmagavik, Killik, Chandler, and Anaktuvuk rivers fall within K'iit'it territory on the north; and the Upper John, Alatna, Kanuti, and possibly the Hogatza rivers are in the south (see fig. 5). The K'iit'it western boundary would be the Upper Noatak above the mouth of the Aniuk River. This would put the upper Itkillik, Atigun, and Sagavanirktok rivers within Di'hąįį territory to the north and the Lower John, North Fork, Middle Fork, and South Fork of the Koyukuk River to the south. The Di'hąįį Gwich'in eastern boundary was the Middle Fork of the Chandalar River. Such, then, are the reconstructed territories of the K'iit'it and Di'hąįį Gwich'in peoples.

#### K'IITĽ'IT GWICH'IN DISPLACEMENT

The starting point for the displacement of the K'iit'it Gwich'in would have to be the earliest events that the Iñupiat and Gwich'in could remember. Since the earliest events reported by the Iñupiat can be dated more reliably than the Gwich'in version of the events, I will begin with the Iñupiat version.

According to Burch, the Iñupiat at Nuvuraluaq, which was probably akin to a suburb of the major settlement of Tikiraq (Point Hope), experienced a raid on their settlement from a group of Indians. Burch states, "The specific Indian group involved is unknown, but it was probably the Dihai Kutchin, who in the early nineteenth century, were apparently living near the headwaters of the Noatak River. The raiding party crossed the Lisburne Hills by going either from Tukungarok Creek to Kukirarok Creek, giving rise to the name Itqilik Narzaq, "Indian Pass;" one of their number is reportedly buried along the lower Ipewik River. They attacked Nuvuraluaq at night, trapping its inhabitants inside their houses. The entire population was annihilated. If my

sources are correct, this could have involved the loss of more than fifty people.<sup>63</sup> Burch and Mishler place this event in about 1820.<sup>64</sup>

Another piece of evidence Burch ties to this event is the “genealogy from a person of Nuataagmiut (Upper Noatak) ancestry whose father’s, father’s, father was half Indian/half Inupiaq, with the specific cultural back ground of the Indian being unknown. The time indicated for the birth is the 1820s, so it could have been either a Di’haññ (from the headwaters district) or a Koyukon (from the upper Kobuk).<sup>65</sup>

I agree with the dating of the first conflict, 1820, from the Gwich’in perspective. The Gwich’in perspective must begin with genealogies because the events the Gwich’in recall are the fragmented memories of a defeated and displaced people. The genealogies begin approximately in the late 1780s to 1790s, with the earliest participants of Iñupiat/Gwich’in conflict being adults at the time of the first Gwich’in response.

The best person to begin with is Ditsii K’iit’uu, the Di’haññ Gwich’in patriarch. He was born in approximately 1795. His contemporaries were Kōehdan, T’eevi’ti<sup>66</sup> and his brother Herilu,<sup>67</sup> Dahjalti’,<sup>68</sup> Dahjalti’s uncle Olti’,<sup>69</sup> Ch’igiioonta’,<sup>70</sup> Ch’ich’i’oonta’, Ditsii Gehikti’,<sup>71</sup> Ralyil, Sha’ats’alaaviti’, and Aldzak. The K’iit’it Gwich’in included “Sahtaii, Veyilyo, and Choowhalhzi”<sup>72</sup> in McDonald’s diary; and Saityat and his nephew Qivliquraq from Joe Sun’s story; and Qawatik, Tajutsik, and Tullik<sup>73</sup> from Simon Paneak; and chief Staka.<sup>74</sup> Kōehdan, Dahjalti’,<sup>75</sup> and Olti’ were probably five to fifteen years older than Ditsii K’iit’uu.<sup>76</sup> Ch’igiioonta’, Ch’ich’i’oonta’, Ralyil, Ditsii Gehikti’, T’eevi’ti’, Kōnii’ak,<sup>77</sup> Sha’ats’alaaviti’, and Aldzak were the same age or younger than Ditsii K’iit’uu.

Of the men, Dahjalti’ and T’eevi’ti’ are identified as Neets’aññ Gwich’in.<sup>78</sup> Olti’ was a Vantee Gwich’in.<sup>79</sup> Ch’igiioonta’, Ch’ich’i’oonta’, Kōehdan, Ditsii Gehikti’, and Ralyil were K’iit’it Gwich’in.<sup>80</sup> Kōnii’ak, Aldzak, and Sha’ats’alaaviti’ were Di’haññ Gwich’in.<sup>81</sup> Kōnii’ak was the father of John Vindeegwizhii, McKennan’s oldest informant, whom McKennan estimated to be about one hundred years old in 1933. According to Johnny Frank, T’eevi’ti’ was a contemporary of his parents.<sup>82</sup> His father, Frank Drizhuu, was born in approximately 1857.<sup>83</sup> None of these men were converted to Christianity, for they did not have Christian names. Reverend McDonald first visited Fort Yukon in 1862 and began teaching Christianity immediately. If these men were never converted, they must have died before 1867/69,<sup>84</sup> or else they did not wish to convert, or they were not in the vicinity of Fort Yukon.

The oldest Gwich’in story about the Iñupiat/Gwich’in wars is the story of Kōehdan. There are many versions, but using the Kōehdan story as told by Henry Williams<sup>85</sup> and with embellishments by Steven Peter, Sr.,<sup>86</sup> we have the following abridged version:

It was springtime and Kōehdan and his younger brother were having a feast for the men in the men’s house. It was hot, so they took off their outer garments. When the Iñupiat came upon them Kōehdan and his brother slipped into their snowshoes and made a run for it. His brother was killed and so were all the men in the men’s house. Kōehdan escaped to safety on a steep cliff. One Inupiaq named ‘*Khi Choo*’ (Big

Silver/fall chum Salmon) was killing *Kóehdan's* brother with a club. As he was doing so he said, "*Kóehdan*, is that really you, is this your younger brother that I am doing this to?" *Kóehdan* looked down upon the scene. He was helpless. He had no clothes and no weapon. The Iñupiat warriors finally marched off and among them was his wife *Lihteerq̄hdyaa*. He asked her to mark her trail; she did this. Finally the last man was his trading partner. The man pleaded with him, "*Kóehdan* come down to me." But *Kóehdan* refused to come down to him, so his trading partner left him a pair of gloves. He went back to the village to find his sister-in-law wounded. They snared rabbits. They ate them and made a rabbit skin wrap for *Kóehdan*. She asked him to leave her since she was too badly wounded. He took some cinders with him to light his fires and set out to find his people. The fire coals went out and for some time, until he found his people, he had no fire, and he suffered greatly from the cold. That is why he is called *Kóehdan*, "without fire". When he finally arrived at a community he put together a group of warriors to take his revenge. He spent the summer recuperating and preparing for the coming battle.

They started off in late August or early September during the fall chum salmon run. They went back to *Kóehdan's* former settlement and followed the trail of the aggressors. It was the better part of a month that they followed their trail, and finally they ended up along the shores of a big lake along the shores of the ocean. His wife and the other women saw them and brought them food secretly. Then under cover of the fog they cut up all the umiaks. They killed the Iñupiat there and took back their women. *Kóehdan's* wife slit the throat of her Iñupiat mate. Meanwhile *Kóehdan* had warned his trading partner, and he was relieved to find that his trading partner was not among the dead men. He saw his trading partner at a distance then and asked him to come with them, but his trading partner replied, "You were the one whom I could not convince to come down to me, so now I must refuse you." *Kóehdan* left those things that his trading partner would need to survive. They did a victory dance and departed. That's how he got his revenge.

In reviewing the story we can ascertain the following: (1) hostilities were already taking place; (2) the Gwich'in had a men's house; (3) trading partners knew each other and were able to offer each other protection; (4) the Iñupiat/Gwich'in were able to communicate with each other fluently; (5) *the Iñupiat settlement was along the shores of a large lake by the ocean*; it was foggy and the Iñupiat umiaks were cut up; (6) the Iñupiat raid took place during the spring when the snow was still on the ground;<sup>87</sup> (7) *Kóehdan* had another name before *Kóehdan*;<sup>88</sup> (8) the retaliation party took off in late August or early September during the fall chum salmon run, which narrows it down to three rivers based upon present-day chum distribution: the Noatak River, the South Fork of the Koyukuk River, and the Chandalar River in the Yukon Flats;<sup>89</sup> (9) the trip to the Iñupiat settlement took the better part of a month, which brought them to the Iñupiat settlement in mid-September or early October;<sup>90</sup> (10) *Kóehdan's* settlement was at some distance from the other Gwich'in settlement he went to; (11) he didn't know in which direction to go

to find another community;<sup>91</sup> (12) his wife and other women were carried away by the Iñupiat; and (13) Khii Choo (Big silver/fall chum Salmon), the Iñupiaq man, probably came from the Noatak where there is a salmon run.

The Nunamiut accounts and the Kōehdan story both agree that there was a fairly large Gwich'in community,<sup>92</sup> but in the Gwich'in accounting no location is set for this site. Kōehdan, we can gather, was a K'iit'it Gwich'in and his settlement was probably at the northwestern border of their territory along the Upper Noatak River. This attack on the K'iit'it Gwich'in settlement must have been a big blow to the group. If Burch's informants were correct, the K'iit'it suffered another blow the following year when they were ambushed at the same Iñupiat community.

The likelihood that this was the attack on Nuvuraluaq, near Point Hope, is very strong. As Burch and Mishler point out, the Koyukon were much further to the south and shared more peaceful relations. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that the Tikararmiut of Nuvuraluaq would not come to the Upper Noatak River area at least seasonally to trade or to raid the Gwich'in. The Gwich'in version clearly states that the Iñupiat community was by the ocean and that the settlement was on the shores of a large lake. If raids and counter raids began in the Upper Noatak on the K'iit'it Gwich'in northwestern borders with the Tikararmiut, then the initial battles involved major losses for both sides, but more so for the K'iit'it Gwich'in, since they probably did not number more than 180 to 250 people. The Di'hājj probably did not number more than 90 to 140 people.<sup>93</sup>

Strangely enough, the Gwich'in give no reasons for this conflict. The Iñupiat, by contrast, provide reasons. Simon Paneak was quite clear that the quarreling began over the harvesting of caribou in the area.<sup>94</sup> The Gwich'in wanted the caribou conserved, while the Iñupiat took as many as they could. This makes sense as the Gwich'in were more permanent residents of the area, whereas the Iñupiat were in the area only seasonally, specifically to harvest caribou. The secondary reason offered by Paneak was the issue of women. The Iñupiat and Gwich'in were intermarrying.

The war took the form of ambush and surprise attack<sup>95</sup> and went from the area north and west of the Upper Noatak to the area south, mainly the Middle Kobuk River. Accounts are given on both sides of heroic men and isolated incidents, Tt'eevi'ti' among the Di'hājj Gwich'in, Aaktukpak and Uularagauraq of the Middle Kobuk River,<sup>96</sup> and Aquaquqsit of Anaktuvuk Pass.<sup>97</sup> The K'iit'it were probably pushed out of the Upper Noatak first, but still occupied the main river valleys of the Alatna and John Rivers and Anaktuvuk Pass. The situation remained tense, and both sides were wary of each other.

#### INTERNAL FEUDING

The Gwich'in had an added internal problem, which can shed some light on the question of women. Beginning as early as 1805–06 with the establishment of Fort Good Hope on the MacKenzie River, the Gwich'in people entered a period of internal feuding, which took place among the phratry lines and

which lasted until at least the 1830s.<sup>98</sup> The Gwich'in have three phratry lines: the Ch'itsyaa, Naatsajj,<sup>99</sup> and Teenjaraatsyaa. Each group is exogamous; that is, ideally they do not marry into the same phratry, and phratry identity is determined by the phratry of the mother. Fathers were not the same phratry as their children. Paternal uncles were also of a different phratry. The internal feuding started as a result of the added trade and trade goods brought in by the Hudson's Bay Company. Families started vying with each other to control the avenues of trade. In this situation large polygamous families had a decided advantage. The western Gwich'in family of Dahjalti', who had five wives and numerous children, persevered after Dahjalti's family killed his uncle Olti', the Vantee Gwich'in.

The internal feud was effectively stopped after Olti's death, however, not before all the groups were reduced in numbers. The Teenjaraatsyaa comprise the group which was formed by outside women marrying Ch'itsyaa and Naatsajj men. They were not as numerous as the Ch'itsyaa and Naatsajj. The children of these unions were Teenjaraatsyaa, and after a few generations they would end up being absorbed into one of the other two groups. During this period of infighting, the Teenjaraatsyaa suffered greatly and to such an extent that they were wiped out for the better part of the century.<sup>100</sup>

Given this situation, the K'iit't'it and Di'hajj Gwich'in were not exceptions. They would have been more or less forced to drive away or kill their Inupiat women and children resulting from those relationships. This would have created major problems with their Inupiat and/or Koyukon in-laws and trading partners. (The Inupiat did not share this kinship pattern, but were drawn into it by marriage.) If the woman was killed, then either the death would have to be revenged or paid for.<sup>101</sup> In any event, this would have caused a major rift in relationships.

It was about this time that the smallpox epidemic broke out in Norton Sound and spread inland. The epidemic was at its height on the Koyukuk River in 1839. The K'iit't'it and Di'hajj Gwich'in could not have escaped this plague, because they were active members of the trading system, which requires physical contact. This would have reduced their numbers further and made them vulnerable to famine since they would not have been able to provide for themselves. The survivors went looking for each other and consolidated along the northern borders at the headwaters of the Colville. Severely reduced in numbers, they were vulnerable to attack.

#### THE DISPLACEMENT AT K'IIT'T'IT/ANAKTUVUK PASS

The major battle that turned the tide was fought by the Nunamiut Eskimos and the K'iit't'it Gwich'in just north of K'iit't'it/Anaktuvuk Pass at the mouth of Itigamalukpuk Creek.<sup>102</sup> According to Simon Paneak, the Uyagaagmiut/K'iit't'it Gwich'in lost more than twenty men, and the remaining ones fled into the Chandler Lake area. The survivors would have gone first to their fellow tribesmen, the K'iit't'it Gwich'in; they moved to the west to Chandler Lake which was right in the heart of their territory. Hall dates this event before 1850. Burch and Mishler estimate "the mid to late 1840's for the battle,"<sup>103</sup> which they say was fought between the Di'hajj and Nunamiut.



Again I concur with Burch and Mishler. John Deeghoozhraji, or Vatr'oogwilsii<sup>104</sup> and Ch'ich'i'tsooti', was the youngest son of Sarah Shaaghan Dik at the time.<sup>105</sup> He was a small child and his mother packed him away from the scene with a group of women and children. John Deeghoozhraji was born approximately 1842. The battle date could have been in the spring of 1844 or 1845.

The ten-year-old Gwich'in boy, Passak, whom Omigaloon from Point Barrow had adopted as his own, had a history: "that a small party of Indians had been cut off by the Nuatagmun [Nunamiut] and that a man, a woman, and a child escaped down the Colville in a boat and fell in with Omigaloon near the sea. Whether the woman by fear or persuasion or wishing to ensure her escape by being rid of her burden, she parted with the child to Omigaloon who gave the man some beads."<sup>106</sup> If, as Maguire thought, Passak was about ten years of age in 1854, he would have been about one or two years old at the time of the battle. His mother probably gave the child up thinking that at least he would survive if she could not.

Now severely reduced in numbers, the K'iid'tit Gwich'in fought another battle on the Killik River.<sup>107</sup> It was spring and the K'iid'tit went south to join the Di'haji Gwich'in at K'iid'tuu on the lower John River about 1846.<sup>108</sup> About this time the Koyukon, sensing the struggle, started to expand northward. Alexander Hunter Murray reported in the fall of 1847 that "a large party of Indians had been at war with another band (the people of the Shade) down the river, and of course had little time to make provisions."<sup>109</sup> The "people of the Shade" are the Teetsii Gwich'in, the Gwich'in name for the Koyukon. Here we run into a particular description for the K'iid'tit among the Gwich'in in the Yukon Flats. They refer to the K'iid'tit as "yeedi' Gwich'in najii" or the "down river Gwich'in," but definitely made a distinction between the "yeedi' Gwich'in najii" and the Teetsii Gwich'in. Murray or his translator could easily have misunderstood this to mean "down the river."

Annette McFadyen-Clark, an ethnographer of the Koyukon, estimated this battle to be about 1851. McFadyen-Clark says, "The story of the battle was from an old Indian who had learned the story from his grandfather. This battle occurred just after spring break-up when many Koyukuk Indians had gathered to fish at the mouth of the Kanuti River. About twenty-five Kutchin warriors came upon the camp by surprise and engaged the Koyukuk in battle. According to my informants, the Koyukuk were the victors and killed many of the invaders, although some escaped."<sup>110</sup>

The battle of K'iid'tit/Anaktuvuk Pass (1844-45) and the one on the Kanuti River, which Murray dates as spring 1847, took place within a two- to three-year period. Both battles were fought by the remaining K'iid'tit Gwich'in men. The Kanuti River was well within K'iid'tit Gwich'in territory before the battle. According to Murray, they (the Gwich'in) had little time to make provisions. This would further interface with Simon Paneak's account of the Nunamiut meeting again with the Uyagaagmiut/Gwich'in, when they were weak and thin. A battle involved the loss of twenty men, a group of providers whose loss of cooperative seasonal hunting techniques could not be made up for in that same year. To sustain such losses over a two- or three-year period must have been terribly stressful for the survivors.

The K'it'it' Gwich'in were effectively displaced from the Kanuti River by 1847, but families continued to live and hunt on the Alatna River for the better part of the next generation. Some members of the K'it'it' joined the Di'hajj Gwich'in (group 1) and others lived with the Alatna/Allakaket K'it'it' Gwich'in (group 2), and another group lived at Chandalar Lake (group 3) until the late 1860s. Note that there were three groups of Gwich'in on the Koyukuk and at Chandalar Lake between 1847 and 1868 and they moved eastward at about the same time (see fig. 6).

### DI'HĀJĪ GWICH'IN DISPLACEMENT

Recalling the Di'hajj Gwich'in territory, starting about 1847, the combined Di'hajj (group 1) now occupied the South, North, and Middle Forks of the Koyukuk River, the lower John River, and the North and Middle Forks of the Chandalar River. It was at K'it'it'uu on the lower John River that Ditsii K'it'it'uu became the husband of the surviving K'it'it' Gwich'in women. Among the surviving women, Lihteerāhdya, the wife of Kōehdan; Neeshih; Natthaii; and Sarah Shaaghan Dik, the wife of Ch'igiioonta' Others were Naach'aatsan and Lucy Shijjuut'oonyyaa,<sup>111</sup> also known as Shijyaat'oonii,<sup>112</sup> and, according to Mishler, Shijyaa Tr'oonyyaa, Jandii, and Deedzii. Ditsii K'it'it'uu renamed Lihteerāhdya (one whom we take back and forth) "Shifeeteerāhdyya" (my one whom we take back and forth). The meaning of her name in and of itself is significant, but the fact that she could have no children comes into play when interfaced with Simon Paneak's Nunamiut story.<sup>113</sup> She was taken back and forth between the Iñupiat and Gwich'in and may have had relatives in both camps. Like the men of her generation, she and the others, except for Sarah and Lucy, did not have Christian names.

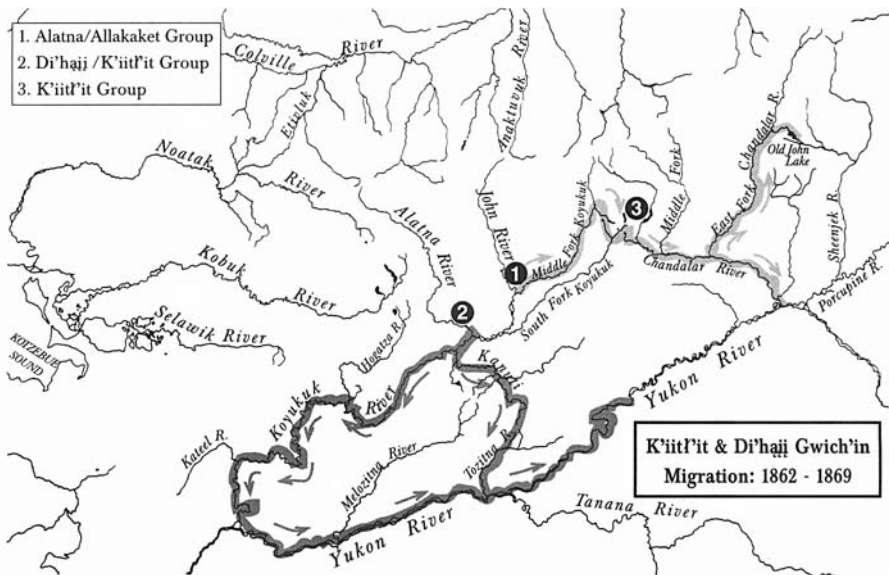


FIGURE 6: K'IT'IT' AND DI'HĀJĪ MIGRATION: 1862-1869, RABOFF AND FARRELL, 1997.

In 1862 McDonald wrote, “a few Siffleux Indians also came [to Fort Yukon], four to five families, the remnant of a once numerous tribe who have been reduced by war with Eskimos and other Indians.”<sup>114</sup> In 1866, he met fifteen men and seven or eight women of the K’iit’it Gwich’in at Nuklakayit, a trading center at the confluence of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers; by contrast, in 1877 there were only a few. By 1875, the K’iit’it were now on the other side of the Ray Mountains going to Nuklakayit.<sup>115</sup> In that year, ten families were able to make it to Tanana. This was Alatna/Allakaket K’iit’it Gwich’in (group 2), which had moved from the Alatna River to the area below the confluence of Birch Creek and the Dall Rivers on the Yukon.

Members of group 2 settled into the area of Stevens Village and Beaver. The grandfather of Kilbourn George of Stevens Village was called Dihch’i’<sup>116</sup> George.<sup>117</sup> Dihch’i’ George was another son of Ditsii K’iit’uu, and he went to Fort Yukon before settling in the Stevens Village area.<sup>118</sup> Another member was Ch’ich’i’oonta, the father of Natthaii (who was one of Ditsii K’iit’uu’s wives); William, the father of Birch Creek Jimmy; Mary Ch’antsihch’ok, the mother of Peter John; and finally a younger brother who was the father of Johnny Ross. In the following years the K’iit’it Gwich’in there intermarried with the Koyukon from Tanana because they became embroiled in a feud with the Ch’indee K’aa<sup>119</sup> band of Gwichyaa Gwich’in at White Eye.<sup>120</sup>

To trace the displacement of the Di’hãjï Gwich’in (group 1), Alatna/Allakaket K’iit’it Gwich’in (group 2), and Chandalar Lake (group 3), we must rely on a statement made by Old John Vindeegwizhii in McKennan’s field notes: “Susan (Peter John’s wife) her uncle and other came to Chandalar about time of great plague.” McDonald was relieved on January 5, 1866 that the scarlet fever epidemic had not reached the (Siffleux) Di’hãjï Gwich’in, and on January 11, he mentions Tr’ootsyaa, the uncle of Soozan (Susan) Peter. By this time he had already constructed a caribou fence by Old John Lake called Tr’ootsyaa Vatthal. It was disease that dealt the final blow, and all three groups moved into the Yukon Flats and the Chandalar River proper by 1869. But as before, families into the next generation still returned to their former hunting grounds. Joe Beatus’ (a Koyukon man from Hughes, Alaska) mother Ida remembers camping with a few presumably Di’hãjï Gwich’in on Jim Creek along the South Fork of the Koyukuk in 1870.<sup>121</sup> F. C. Schrader<sup>122</sup> ran across Mary Ch’antsihch’ok and her sons Robert and Morris (not Horace, as Schrader thought) at the headwaters of the North Fork (upper Koyukuk) in 1899.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have demonstrated that the K’iit’it Gwich’in were a distinct subgroup of the Gwich’in people, with their own territory, and that the main piece of evidence for that is the ethnonym itself. But the ethnonym did not delineate the extent of their former territory. This had to be pieced together from the fragmentary evidence that has been passed down. Place-names and personal names provided some major clues. Fortunately, in this case Maguire, Simpson, Murray, McDonald, Dall, Hardisty, Zagoskin, Schrader, McKennan,



FIGURE 7: HOUSEHOLD OF CH'ICH'T'SOOTI', FROM LEFT TO RIGHT; EMMA, ELLEN, LAURA, MARGARET, ROBERT, JEAN VIRGINIA, UNKNOWN CHILD, PHOEBE, UNKNOWN CHILD, MARY AND MORRIS. F. C. SCHRADER, U.S.G.S., 1899.

McFadyen-Clark, and Hadleigh-West provided written records. Then the oral histories of Joe Sun and particularly of Simon Paneak were invaluable, and, of course, the stories of the Neets'ąįį Gwich'in and the oral tradition of my father, Steven Peter, Sr., have been paramount in piecing together the K'iitł'it and Di'hąįį territories.

Some topics can still be debated. For instance, in returning to the contested area of the K'iitł'it Gwich'in territory between the area north of the Kateel River and the Kanuti rivers, it seems to me that if the K'iitł'it were in control of this area, they could also have controlled the headwaters of the Kobuk River and Walker Lake. The passage and distances are not that great. This would confirm Simon Paneak's story that the K'iitł'it were a few miles to the north of Walker Lake. If we review Zagoskin's account, we understand that Kitsyakaka, his Koyukon informant, said that there were Koyukon along the Selawik River. Kitsyakaka does not include the Kobuk River, nor does he say that other communities of Koyukon exist up the river from where they were, at the mouth of the Kateel River. These are two major omissions if one is informing a man who plans to establish trade with the various Native communities of the time in the area. I think we can assume that as of 1842, the K'iitł'it and then the Di'hąįį Gwich'in were in control of the Koyukuk River from the area north of the Kateel River to its headwaters and the area just north of Walker Lake. This would not conflict with the contemporary notion that the Koyukon lived in the Upper Kobuk at least in recorded times and that all the place-names in the Upper Kobuk were Koyukon by 1900.

I must include the U. S. geologist Frank C. Schrader's meeting with Mary and her family at the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River in

1899, because this was my father's, father's mother, and it would clear up some questions raised by Burch and Mishler.<sup>123</sup> This last meeting with Mary Ch'antsihch'ok, also known as Ch'iyikgwaddhah and Vitsii K'iid'tit,<sup>124</sup> was propitious. Her last name, Vitsii K'iid'tit, means that her grandfather came from K'iid'tit. She was a K'iid'tit Gwich'in woman who became the second wife of a Di'hajj Gwich'in man, John Deeghoozhrajj, sometime after 1860 but before 1864. She was raised along the shores of Chandalar Lake, and if the 1900 census is correct, she was born about 1844. This would have meant that she was an infant at the time of the K'iid'tit/Anaktuvuk Pass displacement. She was in the same community as Shaht'aii, Veeyilyo, and Ch'ookhwalzhii. The Chandalar Lake community (group 3) was still there in 1868 when Peter Roe, a Christian leader of the Neets'ajj Gwich'in, paid them a visit. The other people with Mary were her sons Robert and Morris (called Horace by Schrader); her daughters Margaret, Emma, Ellen, and Laura; and her daughter-in-law, Jean Virginia<sup>125</sup> (see fig. 7). Phoebe was the sister of Sarah "Ghoo" Tritt, the wife of Albert Tritt of Arctic Village. (Two other unidentified younger children were probably Jean's children, since none of the girls had any children at the time and Mary Ch'antsihch'ok was past her child-bearing years.) Jean Virginia was a Teet'tit Gwich'in woman.

The displacement of the Alatna/Allakaket K'iid'tit Gwich'in (group 2) has not been thoroughly researched. The bit of information I have provided here is only a portion of the oral accounts that are available, and there probably are other materials gathered from the people at Stevens Village and Beaver that are not in my possession. In the few conversations I have had with people from Stevens Village, they have all consistently said that their parents and grandparents came from the "Allakaket area." All of their parents or grandparents were at least bilingual; they spoke Neets'ajj Gwich'in, Koyukon, K'iid'tit Gwich'in, and Gwichyaa Gwich'in. Alexander Murray gave a confusing account about the "lower Indians" and their conflicts. I have not included his account in this paper, as this will require more review than I can provide at this writing. The history of the Yukon Flats starting at about the Dall River is a subject unto itself, which can be covered elsewhere.

One other point that remains is if McDonald was reporting about the K'iid'tit in the 1860s and 1870s in his journals, and the Hudson's Bay traders reported about the K'iid'tit, why was it that between then and 1933, when McKennan visited the Neets'ajj Gwich'in, there was only one reference to the K'iid'tit Gwich'in (in McKennan's notes)? The people in Stevens Village identify themselves as Koyukon, not as K'iid'tit Gwich'in.

The answer to this riddle lies in the way the Gwich'in identify themselves. Look, for instance, at what happened to Sarah Shaaghan Dik. She was a K'iid'tit Gwich'in woman who fled to K'iid'tuu, a Di'hajj Gwich'in community, where she was taken into the household of Ditsii K'iid'tuu. She spent the next nineteen to twenty-one years there. She and her children became identified as Di'hajj Gwich'in because they lived in Di'hajj hunting territory. When they moved a second time into the Chandalar Valley, the next generation became Neets'ajj Gwich'in because now they were living in Neets'ajj hunting territory. But Henry John, the younger brother of Robert and Morris<sup>126</sup> and the

Neets'ąįį Gwich'in son of John Deeghoozhrąįį,<sup>127</sup> was careful to identify his parents. His father was a Di'hąįį,<sup>128</sup> and his mother was K'iił'tit.<sup>129</sup> One to three generations had already passed since their move from the K'iił'tit and Di'hąįį country in 1933. Also, McKennan interviewed people from Di'hąįį (group 1) and Chandalar Lake (group 3), but none from Alatna/Allakaket (group 2). McKennan was in the country for the summer and was primarily interested in the Neets'ąįį Gwich'in. He did not follow up on these leads about the other groups, nor was he able to communicate with everyone. It must have been frustrating to his informants and to him to encounter such communication problems, as he said he was relieved to find a good translator in Fort Yukon in John Fredson.

In this paper I have identified the K'iił'tit Gwich'in people and separated them from the Di'hąįį Gwich'in people. Furthermore, I have delineated their territories as completely as one can and have followed their displacement. I think that more information from the Koyukon side can help define the flow of events better. Other Iñupiat oral histories collected by the North Slope Borough could be interfaced with Simon Paneak's account, and there may be additional Hudson's Bay Company records that could bring more focus to these events. We can definitely say that their displacement began in the 1820s and ended in approximately 1869<sup>130</sup> and that their final displacement into the Chandalar and Yukon river valleys took place because of the scarlet fever epidemic of the 1860s. This identification of the K'iił'tit Gwich'in, in particular, will help other scholars and the Gwich'in to understand their own history.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper was made possible in part by a Phillips Fund Grant from the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

#### NOTES

1. Nicholas Gubser, "Comparative Study of Intellectual Culture of the Nunamiut Eskimos at Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska" (University of Alaska, 1961), 81.

2. Simon Paneak, Interview 1971, American Indian Oral History Collection, Transcript Record, University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research, Collection #MSS 314 BC, Box 22, Folder 8, Tape #842, p. 3.

3. The contemporary spelling for all Gwich'in subgroups will be used throughout unless they appear in a quotation.

4. McDonald's "Suffleux" may have been "Suffleur"—The "r" having been mistaken for an "x" either by transcribers or McDonald himself.

5. Robert A. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*, Arctic Institute of North America Technical Paper No. 17 (Montreal, 1965).

6. Edwin S. Hall, Jr., "Kutchin Athapaskan/Nunamiut Eskimo Conflict," *The Alaska Journal* 5:4 (1975): 248–252.

7. Ernest S. Burch, Jr. and Craig W. Mishler, "The Di'hąįį Gwich'in: Mystery People of Northern Alaska," *Arctic Anthropology* 32:1 (1995): 147–172.

8. Alexander Hunter Murray, *Journal of the Yukon, 1847-48* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1910), 84.
9. June Helms, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6, Subarctic* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 771.
10. Katherine Arndt, "Dynamics of the Fur Trade on the Middle Yukon, Alaska, 1839-1868" (University of Alaska, 1996), 134.
11. Catherine McClellan, "History of Research in the Subarctic Cordillera," *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6* (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1981), 37.
12. Richard I. Ruggles, *A Country So Interesting* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), Plate 57.
13. Journal of Robert McDonald, Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, 1910.
14. Richard I. Ruggles, Plate 57.
15. Rochfort Maguire, *The Journal of Rochfort Maguire*, ed. John Bockstoce (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1988), 505.
16. Journal of Robert McDonald.
17. W. H. Dall, Map Showing the Distribution of the Native Tribes of Alaska and Adjoining Territory (Washington, DC: N. Peters, 1875), University of Alaska, Rasmusen Library Rare Map Listing, #G4371/E1/1875/D37; Falk.
18. Robert A. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*.
19. L. A. Zagoskin, *Lt. Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America 1842-1844*, ed. Henry N. Michael (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).
20. Jules Jette, *On the Geographical Names of the Ten'a* (Spokane: Gonzaga University, 1910), Ms. file 14, drawer 13.
21. Frederick Hadleigh-West, "On the Distribution and Territories of Western Kutchin Tribes," *Anthropology Papers of the University of Alaska* 7:2 (1959).
22. Moses Henzie, *Moses Henzie* (Vancouver, BC: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1979).
23. Annette McFayen-Clark, *Koyukuk River Culture*, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 18 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974).
24. Jules Jette, *On the Geographical Names*.
25. Rochfort Maguire, 503.
26. L. V. Zagoskin, 153.
27. James Kari, personal communication, February 1997.
28. Robert McDonald, Journal entries, June 6, 1966, June 7, 1970, and June 4, 1977, Alaska Native Language Center Library.
29. In the contemporary Koyukon orthography.
30. Kateel River.
31. Jules Jette, *On the Geographical Names*.
32. Linguistically, unclear, uncertain.
33. James Kari, personal communication, March 1997.
34. Moses Henzie, 14.
35. James Kari, personal communication.
36. The morpheme *njuu* has two different meanings in Gwichyaa and Neets'ąįį Gwich'in. In Gwichyaa Gwich'in the word means "an island with a stand of trees," whereas in Neets'ąįį Gwich'in it also means "a ridge of succeeding peaks without a fordable pass between the peaks."

37. The same name may occur in other Gwich'in band territories such as the Juunjik River, which is at the headwaters of the East Fork of the Chandalar River.
38. L. V. Zagoskin, 147.
39. Nicholas J. Gubser, *The Nunamiut Eskimos: Hunters of Caribou* (Ithaca, NY: Yale University Press, 1965), 49–50.
40. Helge Ingstad, *Nunamiut* (W. W. Norton & Co., 1954), 129–34.
41. Ernest S. Burch, Jr. and Craig Mishler, "The Di'hajj Gwich'in: Mystery People of Northern Alaska," 147–172, 152.
42. Simon Paneak, Transcript Tape #842, p. 2.
43. Ernest Burch, personal communication, November 1997.
44. Rochfort Maguire, 501.
45. Joe Sun, *My Life And Other Stories*, comp. David Libbey (Kotzebue, Alaska: NANA Museum of the Arctic, 1985), 113.
46. Burch and Mishler, 152.
47. Edwin Hall, 250.
48. Nicholas Gubser, "Comparative Study," 82.
49. Rochfort Maguire, 369.
50. Rochfort Maguire, 126.
51. The Plover spent the winter of 1849–50 in Kotzebue Sound.
52. Frederick Hadleigh-West, "On the Distribution and Territories of Western Kutchin Tribes," 114.
53. Cornelius Osgood, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kutchin*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).
54. Robert McKennan, "Anent the Kutchin Tribes," *American Anthropologist* 37:2 (1935).
55. Frederick Hadleigh-West, 113.
56. Robert A. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*, 23.
57. Frederick Hadleigh-West, 114.
58. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication, 1987–97.
59. Not to be confused with Birch Creek on the Yukon River below the Chandalar River.
60. Ditsii K'iit'uu is spelled "Ditsii Giit'uu" by Craig Mishler, ed., *Neerihinjik, We Traveled From Place to Place* (Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center, 1995). Ditsii Giit'uu means "one who was born after his grandfather was deceased." Throughout this text "Ditsii K'iit'uu" will be used.
61. The Gwich'in have a complicated name taxonomy.
62. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
63. Ernest S. Burch, Jr., *The Traditional Eskimo Hunters of Point Hope, Alaska: 1800–1875* (Barrow, Alaska: North Slope Borough, 1981), 14, 15.
64. Burch and Mishler, 158.
65. Ibid.
66. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*, 67. McKennan's spelling is "Kleviti."
67. Ibid. Probably "Kheeriluu" in modern spelling.
68. Ibid. McKennan's spelling is "Datculti."
69. Silas John, Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
70. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication. Unless otherwise stated, all names have been provided by Steven Peter, Sr.



71. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication; Mishler, *Neerihinjik*, 676.
72. Probably Shaht'aii, Veeyilyo, and Ch'ookhwalzhii.
73. Helge Ingstad, 132.
74. Ingstad, 130.
75. Goghwaii (Eastern Gwich'in) and Dahjalti' (Western Gwich'in) are one and the same person, the difference being where the story is related. Dahjalti' in his lifetime moved from west to east.
76. Steven Peter, Sr., family genealogies in author's notes, 1987–1997.
77. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication; Craig Mishler, *Neerihinjik*, 677.
78. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*, 67; Silas John and Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
79. Silas John, Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
80. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
81. Ibid.
82. McKennan, *The Chandalar Kutchin*, 68.
83. Mishler, *Neerihinjik*, 670.
84. The appointed Christian leader Peter Roe, also known as Peter Khaihkwaii, visited the K'iid'tit Gwich'in during the winter of 1867–68 to instruct them in Christianity. Being a layperson, he could not baptize them. McDonald journal entry, July 13, 1968.
85. Henry Williams, *Kóehdan*, trans. Moses P. Gabriel (Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, n.d.).
86. Henry William and Steven Peter, Sr. are first cousins once removed. Henry would have heard the story through his grandmother who was Steven Peter's aunt.
87. People started moving around in the spring to trade and travel.
88. Gwich'in men and women had as many as four names, which changed during the course of their lives. Formal names that end in *-ti'*, "the father of," and *vahan* and *vinh'*, "mother of," were often used in storytelling. Also name usage depended on the age and gender of the speaker.
89. David Daum, Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife, Fairbanks Office, personal communication, April 1997.
90. Assuming that they could travel twenty miles a day, and taking the better part of the month to be fifteen days, the men would have traveled approximately three hundred miles. They were traveling through mountainous terrain, walking through fields of hummocks, and fording streams and mountain passes. This would not be travel as the crow flies.
91. The people probably moved to their winter campsites.
92. Nicholas Gubser, 81.
93. These are the author's estimates.
94. Simon Paneak, Transcript, tape 844, 9.
95. Gubser, Ingstad, Burch, Hall, Burch and Mishler.
96. Joe Sun, 115.
97. Helge Ingstad, 132.
98. Raboff, notes.
99. Naatsajii and Nantsajii are variations in dialect between the Neets'ajii and Gwichyaa Gwich'in. I will use Naatsajii throughout this text since this is the word I have been most familiar with.
100. Raboff, notes.

101. Murray, 57. One chief's sister was killed or accidentally died in another chief's household. The first chief demanded payment in beads. Maguire, 410.
102. Gubser, *Nunamiut Eskimos*, 86; Pancak, tape transcript, 842, 3.
103. Burch and Mishler, 155.
104. My father's, father's, father was John Deeghoohraii, also known as Vatr'oogwiltii and Ch'ich'i'tsooti'. This was verified also by Sophie John of Venetie, who was married to Henry John in 1970. John Deeghoozhratii's father in turn was Ch'igiioonta', a K'iit'tit Gwich'in man from K'iit'tit. Mishler has Sarah Shaaghan Dik married to Vatr'oogwiltii as a first spouse. Mishler, *Neerihinjik*, 669.
105. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication; McKennan field notes.
106. Maguire, 410.
107. Gubser, *Nunamiut Eskimos*, 87.
108. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
109. Murray, 67.
110. Annette McFadyen-Clark, 186.
111. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication. According to my father, her name was Shijutr'oonyaa (literally means "We regard her as our younger sister") because she was the youngest of his wives and the other wives regarded her as their younger sister. In Di'hajii that would be Shijutr'oonii.
112. Isaac Tritt, Sr., personal communication. Isaac was not quite sure about the name.
113. One of the women captured by the Nunamiut was not able to have children.
114. McDonald, journal entry, December 4, 1962.
115. McDonald, journal entry, June 9, 1975.
116. "Old man" in Gwich'in. In Koyukon "old man" is *Denaahulone*.
117. Kilbourn George, personal communication, March 1997.
118. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
119. A son of Dahjalti'.
120. Raboff, notes.
121. Burch and Mishler, 159.
122. USGS, F. C. Schrader diary, Anchorage, Alaska.
123. Burch and Mishler, 162.
124. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
125. Steven Peter, Sr., 1997; Daniel Flitt, personal communication, Fort Yukon, Alaska, 1998.
126. Sophie John, personal communication, 1970. Steven Peter, Sr., personal communication.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. McKennan field notes.
130. The remaining Di'hajii Gwich'in living among the Neets'ajii frequently took summer trips back into their former territory.