

Yukon Fisheries News

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

Special Summer Edition

See YRDFA's tour on the Yukon River to the communities of Emmonak, St. Mary's, Anvik, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Allakakeet and Eagle

SUMMER SPECIAL 2023



News from the Director

Serena Fitka

YRDFA Executive Director

We decided to publish a special edition of Yukon Fisheries News because we feel like the projects we are doing are important for everyone to stay engaged in. In this addition we will share what is happening in some of the communities. YRDFA took a 2 week trip visiting Emmonak, St. Mary's, Anvik, Ruby,

Tanana, Allakaket and Eagle. During our debrief meeting, it was evident that more meetings in the communities are needed, and we need to be sharing the information with the whole river. In correlation with that we need to be reaching everyone else.

Everyone; not only those who live and work on the Yukon River, should be made aware of the disastrous number of salmon returning to our river and the devastating impacts to our people who rely on salmon. The changes in our communities, mental health, and diet are rapidly changing. Telling our story is the only way we can elevate the urgency in areas where they have fallen on deaf ears.

I encourage everyone to tell their story and if you cannot find someone who will listen, we will. Reach out to us and we will make sure your voices are heard.

Serena Fitka

Inside this issue

Thank you and Farewell Stan Zuray!

YRDFA Board Member for 26 years

Page 3

Elodea? Why should Alaskans care?

An invasive species invading into Alaska's waters

Page 4

Meet our new employees:

Michelle Smith and Mike McIntyre

Page 7

YRDFA's Yukon River Tour Overview

An overview of YRDFA's Yukon River tour through Yukon Communities

Page 8

Engaging with Fishersmen

In Research on Yukon Chinook and Chum Salmon

Page 10

HOW DO I BECOME A YRDFA MEMBER?

- Go to yukonsalmon.org
- Go to YRDFA's Facebook page
- Fill out and mail in the form on page 11

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE
FISHERIES ASSOCIATION



YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

1

Yukon River In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences



**Every Tuesday from June through August
1:00 PM Alaska Standard Time**

Your voice is needed to participate in your fishery. Managers and other fishermen need you! You may need other fishermen and their observations in their part of the river.

All Yukon River fishermen and those interested in Yukon River fishing are invited to call in to the Yukon River In-Season Salmon Teleconference on Tuesdays at 1PM from June 1 through August 31st.

These calls are an opportunity to:

- Share what you are seeing in your part of the river.
- Hear what is happening in other parts of the river.
- Hear what the managers have learned from the monitoring projects
- Hear what the managers have planned for upcoming management actions.
- Ask managers questions directly.

Call 1-800-315-6338 code 98566# (YUKON)



Yukon Fisheries News is published by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
PO Box 2898 • Palmer, AK 99645
Phone: (907) 272-3141 • Fax: (907) 272-3142 • TOLL FREE 1-877-99-YUKON(98566)
www.yukonsalmon.org

Funding for this publication provided by the USFWS through the Restoration & Management Fund
All photos © YRDFA unless otherwise credited.



Thank you and Farewell to Stan Zuray!

YRDFA Board member of 26 years

The YRDFA Board, staff, and members thank Stan Zuray for serving on the YRDFA Board for District 5 from 1996 to 2022 – 26 years!! We wish him well on his new adventures at the Alaska Board of Fish and hope he can continue to serve Yukon River fishing families in this role.

Stan is a fisherman and a scientist. He moved to Alaska from Boston as a young man and homesteaded on the Tozitna River. During this time, he had many adventures some of which are recorded in his book, Carry on. He later moved to Tanana and set up his fish camp upstream at the Rapids. At his fish camp, he fishes for people and his dogs. He also fosters greater fish science and communication about Yukon River salmon at his camp. Some of his work includes early Ichthyophonous work with Dr. Richard Kocan, water temperature monitoring, and youth education projects such as the Tanana Conservation Outreach, where he worked with Tanana youth, fisheries scientists, and Elders to increase understanding of fisheries information. Stan also runs a fish wheel that video records the fish passage. Stan is a wonderful voice for the Yukon River and this captures only a fraction of his work. Whether it's on the show, Yukon Men or on his Facebook page, Stan represents Yukon fishers well and we are proud to have had his representation for 26 years.

Stan began surveying fishers in his area for YRDFA's In-season Salmon Survey in 2019 and is continuing in this role. Thank you Stan for your 26 Years of service as a YRDFA board member 1996–2022!!

Elodea?

Why should Alaskans care?

Ashley Lutto

Invasive Species Outreach &
Education Biologist

US Fish and Wildlife Service

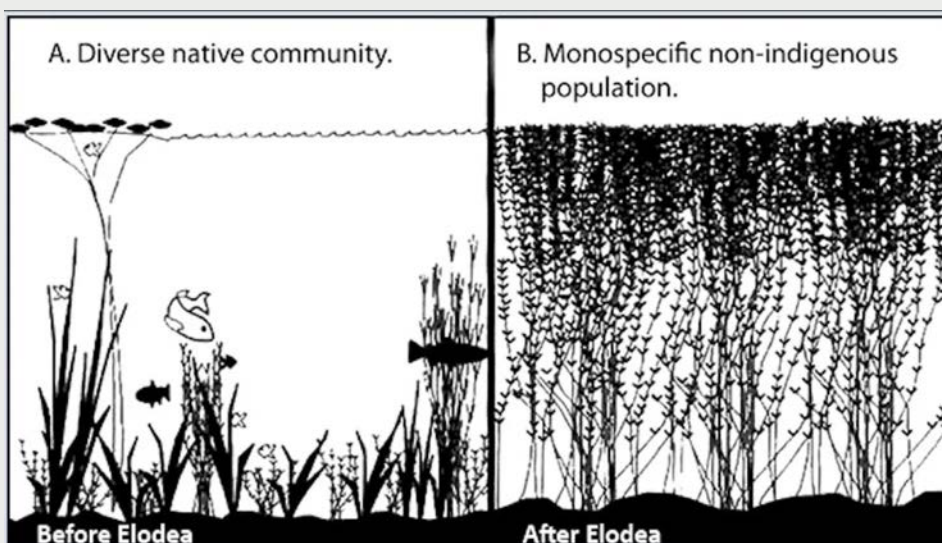
Alaska's first and only invasive aquatic plant, Elodea, was first discovered in Cordova in 1980s. For the next three decades it was believed to be contained there; however, everything changed in 2010 with the discovery of Elodea in Chena Slough outside of Fairbanks. Not only

Elodea. Credit: Dan Coleman, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

was it discovered, but it had aggressively taken over. Unfortunately, since then it has been discovered in ~25 unique water bodies across the state. If allowed to spread unchecked across the state, Elodea will cause serious, irreversible harm to aquatic habitats and ultimately fisheries.

What is Elodea? Why should Alaskans care?

Elodea, also known as waterweed, is a fast-growing aquatic plant that can outcompete native vegetation. It grows submerged in lakes and slow-moving rivers and streams as tangled masses. It blocks out light and takes up nutrients for native plants, eventually creating a monoculture where it is the only remaining vegetation. The lack of vegetation diversity ultimately impacts the entire aquatic ecosystem from invertebrates to fish.



Simplified example of what can happen when non-native plants are introduced to freshwater habitat.
Credit: Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District.

The tangled mats can grow so dense that it reduces stream flow and mixing rates. This allows sediment to deposit from the water and cover up gravel bars important for salmon, whitefish, and grayling spawning. The vast rapid growth compromises water quality and reduces dissolved oxygen content. A recent study estimates a loss of upwards of \$159 million per year in revenue to commercial sockeye fishing industry alone.

In addition to ecological impacts, Elodea can reduce recreational opportunities for Alaskans and visitors alike. Boating and other watercraft operations can be hindered or even completely impeded from tangled motors and paddles. Floatplane operation can become hazardous. Property values can be reduced.



Elodea on Paddle Credit: Dan Coleman, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

How did Elodea get here? How is it spreading?

The initial introductions of Elodea are likely the result of aquarium dumps. Elodea is a popular aquarium plant (now banned in Alaska). Aquarium owners probably dumped unwanted contents, including plants and animals, into nearby lakes and streams without realizing the consequences.

Unfortunately, from these initial populations Elodea can spread easily to new locations. It reproduces vegetatively, meaning new infestations can establish from just a tiny fragment, less than 2 inches. Once a fragment is transferred to a new environment it can rapidly grow and take hold. Fragments can be spread via boat motors, trailer, float planes, waders, and anything in between.

To make matters worse, Elodea can withstand periods of freezing. It even grows under the ice during the winter when native plants have died. During spring break up, fragments can be carried downstream and spread to new locations many miles away.

What does Elodea look like?

The distinguishing characteristics of Elodea are the leaves arranged in whorls of 3 (occasionally 4) around the stem. They are densely packed along the stem and approximately 1cm long. The stem itself is long, slender, and generally branched. Often the stem is lighter in color than the leaves.

Elodea grows fully submerged in the water. Once established it forms tangled dense mats. It can grow within and around native vegetation.

What can you do?

The first step to prevent the spread is being aware of Elodea; what it looks like and where current infestations are. You can view areas that have been surveyed for Elodea and known infestations with Alaska Elodea Survey Map Viewer (<https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/invasive-species/non-native-plants>) before heading out into the field. You can download the Alaska Invasive ID app to your smartphone and tablet to help with plant identification (<https://apps.bugwood.org/apps/alaska/>).

To prevent the spread of Elodea and other invasive species, remember to the easy mantra: Clean Drain Dry. Thoroughly inspect and clean all your gear between uses, including fishing equipment, nets, waders, boat motors, paddles, trailers, backpacks, and anything else. Remove all plant material, sediment, and other debris from gear while at the waterbody. Drain all water from equipment, including bilge, livewell, motors, and other containers, before leaving waterbody. Dry all gear as best as possible before moving to a new location. If possible, let gear dry at least 5 days or wipe dry with towel before use in a new waterbody.



Elodea fragment displaying leaves in whorls of 3 around stem.

Credit: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

How can you report suspected Elodea?

If you suspect you found Elodea, or any other invasive plant or animal, report it! Note the date and location. Use GPS coordinates available on handheld unit, smartphone, or tablet or identifying landmarks to find the same site again. Take many pictures of the suspected plant/animal from different angles. Make sure to include an object for size reference, such as a quarter, credit card, or pocketknife to show scale in several photos.

Reports can be submitted:

Online: Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Invasive Species Reporter

(<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=invasivespeciesreporter.main>)

Over the phone: Call the Invasive Species Hotline **(1-877-INVASIV)**

On the smartphone app: Alaska Invasives ID

(<https://apps.bugwood.org/apps/alaska/>)

Submit any suspected reports as soon as possible. Because Elodea grows so quickly delayed response actions can have dramatic consequences. Alexander Lake serves as a cautionary example. Elodea was first detected in the lake in 2014 with an infestation estimated at 10 acres. By the time treatment could take place in 2016, the infestation had grown to over 500 acres, a nearly 5000% increase in 2 years. This increase resulted in significant monetary and time costs of treatment.



Elodea collected on rake. Credit: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

It's not all doom and gloom!

Quick response actions have led to successful Elodea eradication in areas across the state! Following treatment, Elodea has been eradicated from seven lakes on the Kenai Peninsula and four lakes in the Anchorage area. This includes several popular floatplane lakes that could serve as source populations for new infestations, such as Lake Hood, which was successfully eradicated in 2015 and free of infestations ever since. Eradication and early detection survey projects continue across the state. The success of these projects is due to dedicated partnerships from federal, state, and tribal agencies, local government and non-governmental entities, industry, and private stakeholders.

You can learn more about Elodea and other invasive species in Alaska from:

<https://alaskainvasives.org/>

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=invasive.main>

<https://www.fws.gov/project/early-detection-invasive-species-alaska>

<https://www.fairbankssoilwater.org/elodea.htm>

<https://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/elodea.htm>

It takes everyone to help keep Alaska wild and free of invasive species.

Typhoon Merbok Relief

Coastal residents of the Yukon River region who have experienced hardship during Typhoon Merbok due to the loss or damage of their fish camps, fishing gear, boats or vehicles, and housing are eligible for a one-time payment of \$500 through Native Movement's Community Resiliency Grant,

<https://www.nativemovement.org/nm-blog/2023/6/14/typhoon-merbok-community-resiliency-grant>

Welcoming new YRDFA Employees



Michelle Smith Program Coordinator

Michelle “Qakvaralria” Smith is Yup’ik originally from Nunapitchuk, AK. Her parents are Mark & the late Elena (Tobeluk) Gleason, maternal grandparents are the late John Tobeluk Sr. & Helena (Evon) Tobeluk of Nunapitchuk, AK. Michelle spent her childhood on the Kuskokwim before moving to Bristol Bay, where she commercial and subsistence fished, and raised her three children.

Michelle graduated from University of Fairbanks in 2014 with a degree in Applied Business and Sustainable Energy (OE). Before that, she attended Wenatchee Valley College and Shoreline Community College where she began her Computer Science Degree, becoming MSCE and A+ certified.

Most recently, Michelle was a drift boat commercial fisherwoman in Bristol Bay during the summer and worked as an Accountant/Office Manager the rest of the year. Professionally, Michelle has experience working with IHS hospitals, tribal associations, and other non-profit organizations in both I.T. and case management.

Michelle now resides on Dena’ina Benteh land (Wasilla, AK) with her youngest child. She is passionate about her cultural & traditional ways of life, enjoys fur sewing, beading and everything that involves nature.



Mike McIntyre Communications Coordinator

Mike “Aucukuaq” McIntyre is Yup’ik who grew up in Eek, Alaska and moved to Bethel when he was very young. His parents are John and Agnes McIntyre. His grandparents are the late Tom and Elena McIntyre from Eek, Alaska; Julia and the late George Nevak from Toksook Bay, Alaska. Mike has recently moved to the Mat-su Valley to be closer to his family and new baby.

Growing up in and around the Kuskokwim River, commercial and subsistence fishing since he was a toddler. Mike has a close connection to salmon, growing up in the summertime at fishcamp helping his parents and grandparents fish, cut and smoke their most prized salmon strips.

Mike has been working in the Information Technology & Communications field for the past 20 years. Creating media through graphic design, publications, photography and videography, creating electronic form processes, developing websites and developing social media for organizations.

Outside of work, Mike has been making art with Yup’ik mask carving, painting canvas, creating music and writing songs in Yup’ik for his band Frozen Whitefish. I hope you enjoy the new newsletter layout ;)

Crowdfunding Campaign for the Yukon River

The newly formed Smokehouse Collective has created a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to “huv a Bristol Bay commercial fishing drifting gillnet permit to distribute fish to communities in need on the Yukon River and tributaries that have been closed to fishing, in addition to preparing for future distribution climate-impacted communities.” This campaign as of June 19, 2023, has raised \$36,000 and counting be used solely to support Yukon River community members and fill their homes, freexers, and smokenouses. The Smokehouse Collective has a goal of \$180,000 so that a drift permit can be bought outright, and distribution can begin as soon as possible. This is a locally run, locally led cooperative to support mutual aid of Yukon River community members who have been missing fish for years now. Please check out the GoFundMe and the Smokehouse Collective to make this possible.

https://www.gofundme.com/f/drift-permit-for-fish-distribution-to-yukon-river?utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheets&utm_source=facebook

Yukon River Tour Overview

Rachael Kangas-Madros

YRDFA Project Manager

I'm hoping everyone is getting the opportunity to fish this summer. Even if it's one or two openings, that opportunity is a blessing and we can only hope to see more future fishing opportunities for our people along the Yukon.

This summer we started a project that began in the community of Emmonak and ended in Eagle, Alaska. The journey started on May 31st, 2023 and consisted of our team of many dedicated partners who share the same passion in protecting our wild Yukon salmon and other species.

We spoke on many of the projects we are currently working on with our project partners. The Yukon-Watershed Ecosystem Action Plan which is important as one of our goals to collect Traditional Ecological Knowledge. We will be creating a comprehensive database that will develop a historical timeline of past and present observations collecting the traditional knowledge from the fishermen along the Yukon especially the historical past seen changes from our elders will give us important data to be collected.

We had a goal of hiring seven field technicians to do water quality sampling and surveying vital areas along with interviews for the crucial traditional ecological knowledge data. We currently have four technicians that will be looking for areas of concern in their home community and around other surrounding villages in their area. We are ensuring to locate any sites that are impacting crucial salmon spawning grounds such as culverts not being maintained and old mining areas or any areas marked as possible contaminated sites.

With each village meeting they all had the same concerns; the lack of salmon and Area M was one of the biggest topics of conversation. To hear people speak about the importance of fishing for our traditional native foods for our elders to enjoy and our future generations to not go without was not an easy topic especially with me being a fisherwoman on the Yukon. It was also very heartfelt as many of the communities honored our team by performing their traditional Yup'ik singing and dancing and the Athabascan singing and dancing in the middle Yukon. Listening to such beautiful and powerful singing made my heart full and my soul happy.

In our meetings, we had brought food to share for each community and it would have been an honor for the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association to have our Chinook Salmon on those tables other than foods bought from a commercial store. Every village understands the importance of conservation. Seeing the participants in our community meetings was very uplifting and gave me a sense of hope, hope that our numbers will come back and that it will reflect in the numbers which we are regulated by.

We are honored to be partnering with all of our project partners and other nonprofit organizations. We all have the same goal of protecting and preserving healthy waterways such as our Yukon River and as a combined effort will benefit all of our Yukon people as a whole. We can only hope to see the future of our Chinook and other salmon species return in abundant numbers to ensure our future of putting sustenance back on our indigenous people's plates. I truly hope to see our fish camps flourish once again, our smoke house full and our children learn the tradition art of cutting and preserving salmon for years to come.

Basee'
Rachael Marie Kangas



Emmonak



St. Mary's



Ruby



Tanana



Allakakeet



Eagle

Engaging Fishermen in Research on Yukon River Chinook and chum salmon

Catherine Moncrieff

YRDFA Anthropologist



YRDFA is excited to be working with the communities of Alakanuk, Emmonak, St. Mary's and Huslia on a new salmon research project. This project, funded by the North Pacific Research Board, focuses on Chinook salmon health and water temperature monitoring and also partners YRDFA with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Ocean Ecology Program and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Through this project YRDFA is engaging with fishers in Alakanuk and Emmonak through Traditional Knowledge interviews about their observations of Chinook salmon health. YRDFA staff anthropologist, Catherine Moncrieff, traveled to Emmonak in March and Alakanuk in June to hold community meetings and to conduct interviews. Much was learned from these extremely knowledgeable fishers and processors.

The YRDFA team also traveled to St. Mary's and Huslia in June to kick off the water temperature monitoring aspect of this project.

Director Serena Fitka worked with the communities to select a boat captain to deploy and monitor a water temperature logger and to test the river water temperature daily during the hottest part of the summer. If the river temperature reaches the threshold for salmon for three consecutive days, a heat response team will be deployed to assess whether salmon are being impacted in their area.

Additionally, while the YRDFA staff members were in each community, a meeting was held to share information about the new project, other YRDFA activities, and to discuss community concerns. Vanessa von Biela, of the USGS, was able to join our community meetings and project kick off activities in Emmonak and St. Mary's and Holly Carroll of USFWS was able to join us in Emmonak to discuss the Ichthyophonous project taking place on the Yukon River over the next few years.

We appreciate the warm welcome and support from the communities of Emmonak, Alakanuk, St. Mary's and Huslia and we look forward to continued partnership on this project.



TEAM DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **Serena Alstrom Fitka**
Cell: 907-799-4336 | Email: serena@yukonsalmon.org

ANTHROPOLOGIST: **Catherine Moncrieff**
Cell: 907-382-8990 | Email: catherine@yukonsalmon.org

FINANCE MANAGER: **Richell Carmichael**
Cell: 907-982-7120 | Email: richell@yukonsalmon.org

POLICY COORDINATOR: **Gabe Canfield**
Cell: 907-617-7280 | Email: gabe@yukonsalmon.org

PROJECT MANAGER: **Rachael Kangas-Madros**
Email: rachael@yukonsalmon.org

PROGRAM COORDINATOR: **Michelle Smith**
Email: michelle@yukonsalmon.org

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR: **Mike McIntyre**
Email: mike@yukonsalmon.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT	NAME	COMMUNITY
Coastal, Seat 1	Lester Wilde	Hooper Bay
Y-1, Seat 1	Stanley Pete	Nunam Iqua
Y-1, Seat 2	Allen Hansen	Alakanuk
Y-1, Seat 3	Paul Andrews	Emmonak
Y-2, Seat 1	Bill Alstrom	St. Marys
Y-2, Seat 2	Mike Peters	Marshall
Y-2, Seat 3	Stanislaus Sheppard	Mtn. Village
Y-3, Seat. 1	Alfred Demientieff Jr.	Holy Cross
Y-4, Seat 1	Fred Huntington, Sr.	Galena
Y-4, Seat 2	Richard Burnham	Kaltag
Y-5, Seat 1	Charlie Wright	Tanana
Y-5, Seat 2	Brooke Woods	Rampart
Y-6, Seat 1	Dorothy Shockley	Manley Hot Springs
Y-6, Seat 2	Victor Lord	Nenana
Koyukuk River	Pollock Simon, Sr.	Allakaket
Flats, Seat 1	Jan Woodruff	Eagle
Canadian, Seat 1	James MacDonald	Whitehorse, YT

YOUNG FISHERS REPS

DISTRICT	NAME	COMMUNITY
Lower River	Kerri Kelly	Pilot Station
Upper River	Katlyn Zuray	Fairbanks (Tanana)

ALTERNATES

DISTR./SEAT #	REPRESENTATIVE	COMMUNITY
Coastal, Alt. 1	Richard Tuluk	Chevak
Coastal, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y-1, Alt 1	Marvin Okitkun	Kotlik
Y-1, Alt. 2	John Strongheart	Alakanuk
Y-2, Alt. 1	Rex Nick	Pilot Station
Y-2, Alt. 2	William Riley Jr.	Pitka's Point
Y-3, Alt. 1	Basil Larson	Russian Mission
Y-4, Alt. 1	VACANT	-
Y-4, Alt. 2	Robert Walker	Anvik
Y5, Alt. 1	Julie Hyslop	Tanana
Y-6, Alt. 1	Phillip Titus	Minto
Y-6, Alt. 2	Kathleen Dimientieff	Nenana
Koyukuk Alt.1	Darrel Vent Sr.	Huslia
Flats, Alt. 1	Rochelle Adams	Fort Yukon/Beaver
Canadian, Alt 1	Carl Sidney	Teslin, YT

Yes!

I want to be a part of the United Voice on the Yukon River and support YRDFA!

Individual Membership:

- ☐ \$50 newsletter subscription
☐ \$75 newsletter subscription with beanie
☐ \$100 newsletter subscription with hoodie
☐ Other amount \$_____

Agency/Business Donor:

- ☐ \$5000 Chinook ☐ \$1000 Chum ☐ \$500 Coho ☐ \$200 Pink
 Includes advertising on website, Facebook, and during public gatherings.

Payment Method:

(Online donations can be submitted at <https://yukonsalmon.org/support/>)

- ☐ Check #_____ enclosed (payable to **YRDFA**)

- ☐ Card (Circle one): VISA Mastercard Discover AMEX

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Company/Organization/Fishing District: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail completed slip & donation to:

Phone:

Y R D F A
PO Box 2898
Palmer, AK 99645

1-877-999-8566

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) is a 501(c)3 organization.
 Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Cut & mail



Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
PO Box 2898 • Palmer, AK 99645

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Anchorage, AK
Permit #643

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

