

# Chukchi Collection of the Vega Expedition of 1878–1880: a Chukchi interpretation 140 years later

**Beringia Days 2023**

Anchorage, Alaska

October 23-25, 2023

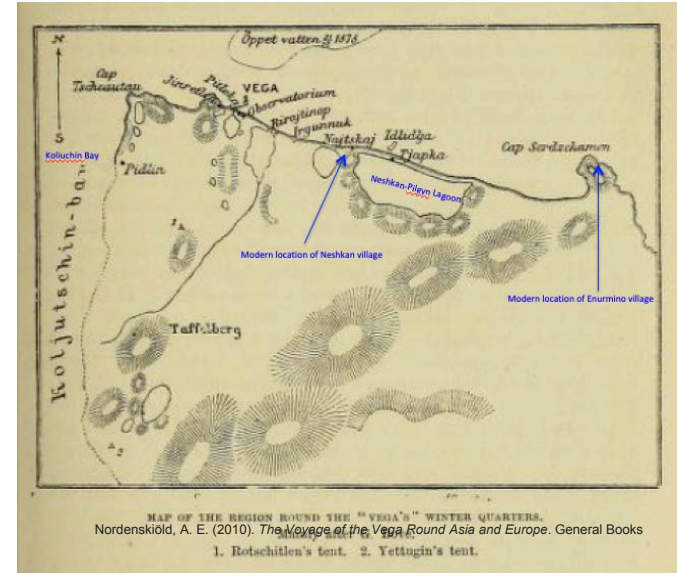
Liliya Zdor, Irina Nutetgivev, Valeriia and Eduard Zdor

# Vega Expedition: Winter of 1878-1879



## Map of Study Sites

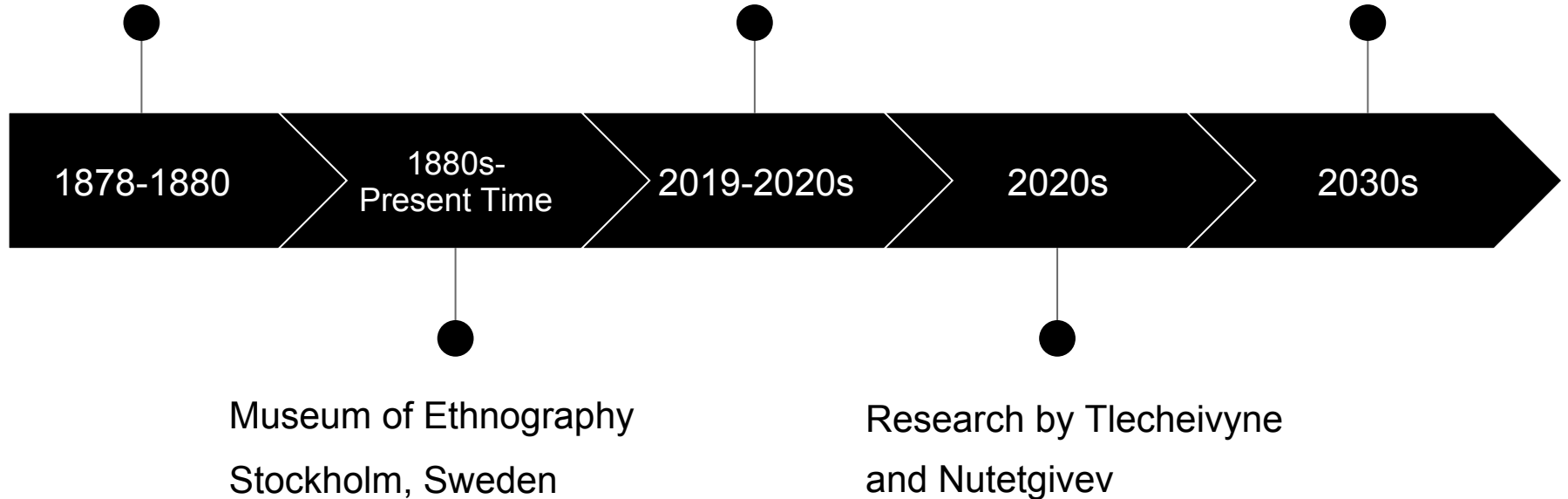
- Neshkan ● - Chukotkan Villages
- Netten □ - Hunting Camps
- Bering Sea - Geographical Feature



Sweden (Vega) polar expedition of 1878–1880, under Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld

Research by Igor Krupnik and Martin Schultz

Reunion?



In the collection, 1080 objects were identified as 'Chukchi', 25–30 drawings and over 70 photographs

# Research Team

## *Researchers and Consultants*



Liliya Tlecheivune  
Researcher  
*Neshkan*



Irina Nutetgivev  
Co-Researcher  
*Neshkan*



Galina Ettul'  
Consultant  
*Neshkan*



Nina Kyttagina  
Consultant  
*Neshkan*

# Research Team

## *Indigenous Knowledge Experts*



Vasily Roskhinaut  
*Neshkan*



Nikolay Etytne  
*Neshkan*



Nikolay Rovtyn  
*Enurmino*



# Kerker - Reindeer Fur Jumpsuit

Internal *kerker* –  
*Evysan'ker*;  
External *kerker* –  
*Gyrgosan'ker*

Edge made  
from wolverine skin –  
*K'epernelgyn*;  
from dog skin –  
*Yttyynelgyn*

Informant Irina Nutetgivev [45 years  
old]  
Informant Nina Kyttagina [70 years  
old]



Copyright ©2023 Etnografika Museet • «Guest access» • Log In...

Version: 3.8.12 • Client: carlotta@etnografika.se



[https://prochukotku.ru/photo/kultura/  
chukotskie\\_mastera\\_i\\_artisty\\_na\\_vystavke\\_ya  
rmarke\\_skazochnaya\\_kamchatka/](https://prochukotku.ru/photo/kultura/chukotskie_mastera_i_artisty_na_vystavke_ya_rmarke_skazochnaya_kamchatka/)

The only difference between these *kerkers* – caribou tendon thread and fabric thread used for sewing

# Fashionista



Yanranau.  
Neshkan 1970s.



A group of housewives in a Chukchi reindeer herding camp; Yanranau in the center.  
Neshkan tundra 1970s.

# Fur Clothing and Chukchi Worldview

## Chukchi and Space

Each unique landscape pattern has a special meaning in Chukchi culture. It could be a mountain and a river, but it could also be a small cliff and a stream. Life in each place is controlled by the Master. This belief determines the Chukchi's perception of space and time:  
Space and time are relative, and their states depend on the settings of the mind of a human being.

## Chukchi fur clothing:

Ensures survival in the Arctic and promotes the perception of space and time as a unit in which humans need to thrive rather than survive



# Bring an Indigenous Perspective to Museum Collections

## University of Alaska Museum of the North

- Wales collection
- Barter Island Collection
- Birnirk Collection
- Incorporating Iñupiaq into museum narratives
- Building an Indigenous Perspective in the Museum Database

## Preserving and Digitizing Archaeological Collections from Wales, Alaska

Scott Shirar, Josh Reuther, Lawrence Kaplan, Campbell O. Webb, and Eduard Zdor (University of Alaska Museum of the North)

### Introduction

In 2020 the University of Alaska Museum of the North received funding through the National Science Foundation Rapid Response Research (Grant #2040223) program to stabilize and curate archaeological collections, documentation, and data associated with four sites near the Native Village of Wales, traditionally referred to as Krignag. These collections were made during the Wales Archaeology Project led by Dr. Roger K. Harritt (2015) between 1996 and 2006 and include approximately 30,000 objects and faunal remains. Excavation and labeling was completed in refuse middens and house features at four sites, (Hillside site [TEL-025], Beach site [TEL-026], Kunglavik Mound [TEL-079], and Tin City [TEL-156]), associated with Iñupiaq culture, dating between 1,200 and 120 cal BP (AD 750 – AD 1830) (Harritt 2015).

### Preservation and Digitization

Preservation and digitization was needed to reduce the risk of accelerated degradation and to upgrade storage conditions as outlined in our curation guidelines. Objects, fauna, and ecological samples were rehousing into acid-free storage bags, trays, and/or boxes (Figures 1-2). Field documentation and collections catalogs were scanned and 3,800+ objects and faunal lots were photographed with all digital files stored on the museum server and backed up on an external hard drive (Figures 3-9). Catalog records were imported to the Arctos collections database for added long-term preservation, but also to create a searchable catalog with all associated information and existing photographs (Figure 10). These measures will not only prevent possible long-term irrevocable loss of contextual and research data but increases the accessibility of the physical collection and digital data to descendant communities and future researchers.

### Iñupiaq Terminology

Part of the digitization effort includes a pilot project to incorporate Indigenous language into the museum collection database. Toward this goal, work was completed with Iñupiaq speakers to match local terminology with object and material types included in the collection. In August of 2022 a trip was made to Nome to begin translation of a long list of terms. These terms and audio recordings of their pronunciation are presently being uploaded to the database. Table 1 lists terms added to the database so far. A database portal was created as a direct link to the Wales collection catalog to make records more easily searchable and accessible online (Figure 11). Within these records are links to easily listen to the all the related Iñupiaq translations (Figures 12-14).

### Future Work

The rehousing portion of this project is nearly complete as we continue entering catalog information into the database. Next steps primarily include those related to Iñupiaq terminology. Additional work with language speakers is planned, not only in and around the community of Wales, but a larger grant to expand this work to other communities will be submitted.

**References**  
Harritt, Roger K. 2015. The Wales, Alaska, Archaeology Project 1996-2006. University of Oregon Anthropological Papers No. 71. Eugene, OR.  
Also see reports on file with NSF for 2003, 2004, 2010, and 2013

University of Alaska Museum of the North  
Archaeology Department

Barcode ID: 049616-008  
IX-F-4775

**Barter Island Collection**  
Kittovik Cultural Heritage

IX-F-4775

Object Number: IX-F-4775  
Accession Number: 1996.008  
Date: 1996  
Material: Bone  
Description: A long, thin, light-colored artifact, possibly a bone or wood tool, lying on a white surface next to a ruler.

University of Alaska Museum of the North  
Archaeology Department

Barcode ID: 049616-009  
IX-F-4676

**Barter Island Collection**  
Kittovik Cultural Heritage

IX-F-4676

Object Number: IX-F-4676  
Accession Number: 1996.009  
Date: 1996  
Material: Bone  
Description: A small, dark, oval-shaped artifact, possibly a bone or wood tool, lying on a white surface next to a ruler.

10:49 AM Oct 1

The English-Eskimo Dictionary 1958, 142 translate yamvik as a necklace, beads, and according to this book a needle case is kapvik.

10:33 AM Oct 1

Joshua Reuther

I think we could put in the notes both yamvik and kapvik and see what people say.

10:47 AM Oct 1

Joshua Reuther

Yes, I think that is a good description based on Murdoch (pgs.401-405), but probably classify it as a "carving." Could be a seal or whale.

# Acknowledgement

Connecting Indigenous Peoples  
and Museums

Neshkan and Enurmino  
Communities

Nina Kyttagina

Galina Ettul'

Igor Krupnik, NMNH