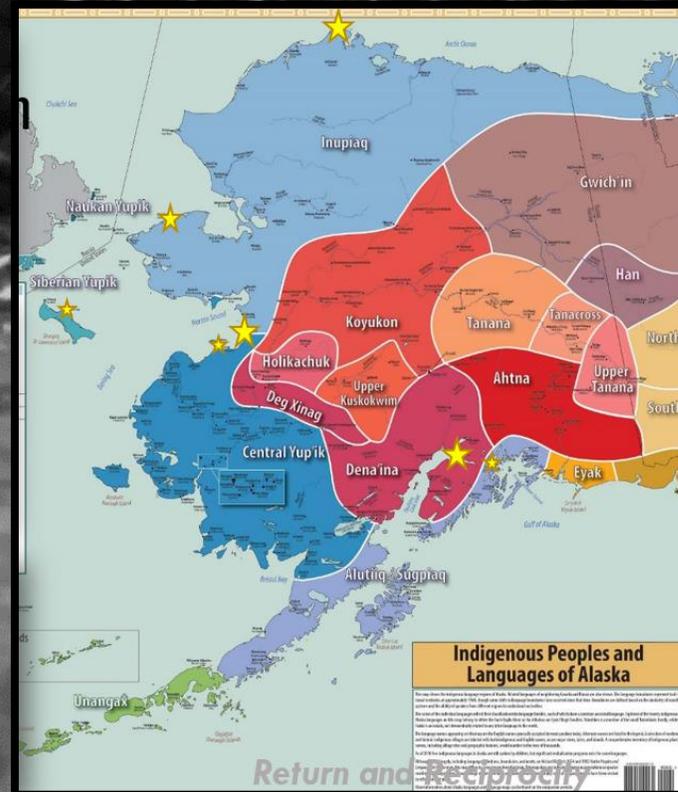
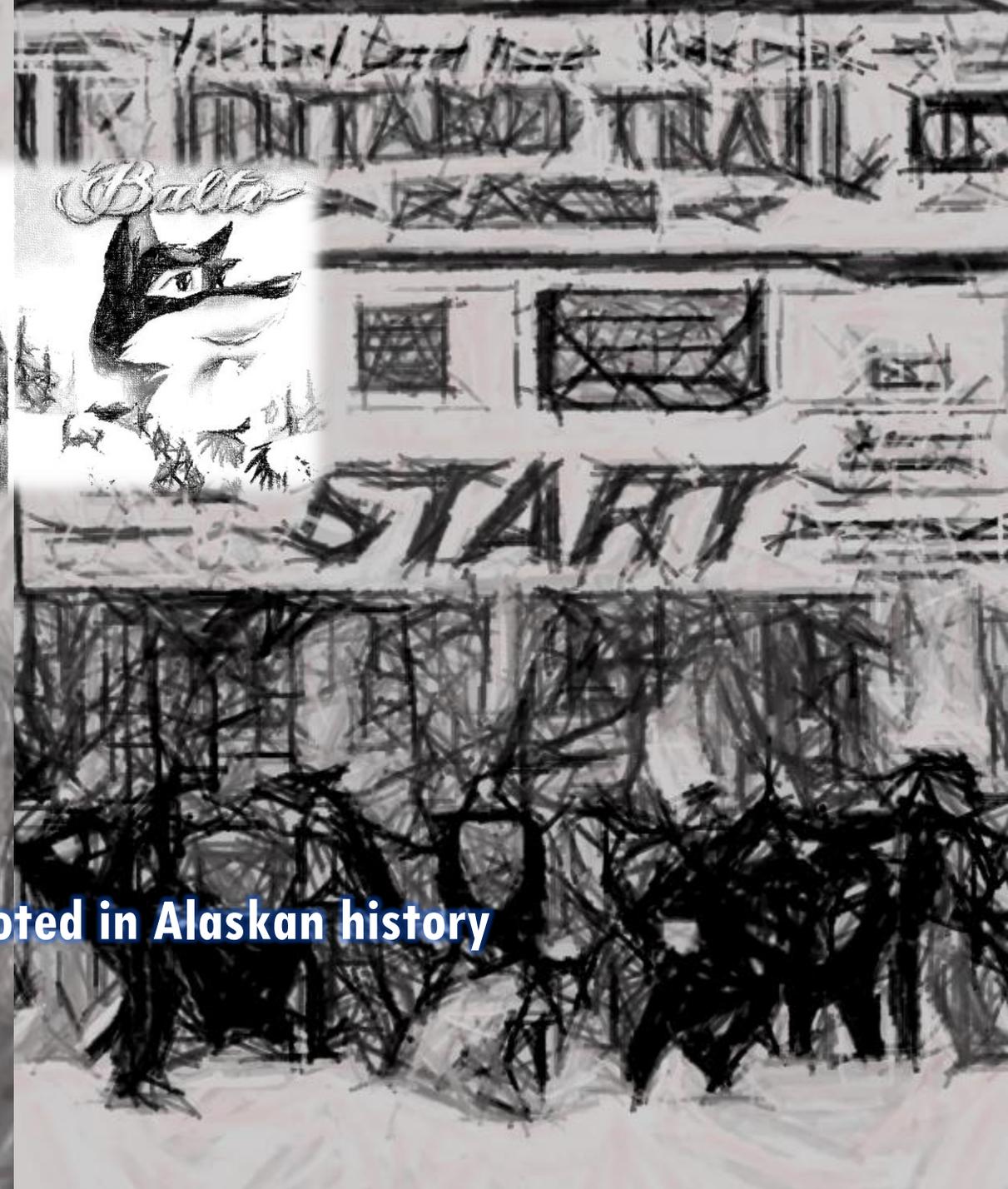
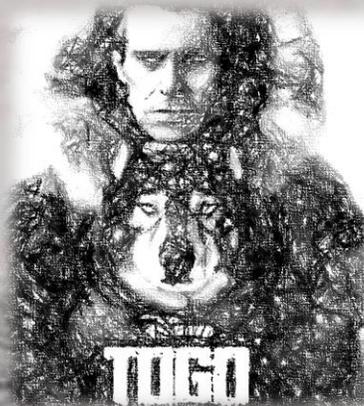


# Impact of past pandemics on rural Alaskan communities



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**Pandemics and epidemics in Alaska...deeply rooted in Alaskan history**

**e.g. Iditarod Sled Dog Race, Serum Run, Balto, etc.**

Image: Carrie McClain Museum

# The Great Death: 1770s-1940s A Very Dark Chapter in Alaska Native History

Biological and social contexts can interact to increase the impacts of epidemics in the rural Arctic  
*Remote*  
*Limited healthcare*  
*Variable living conditions (e.g. access to clean water)*

Example: 1918-1919 Influenza on Seward Peninsula  
9 out of 24 villages in Sew Pen region lost ½ or more of their population, the worst being 90% of Brevig Mission population (Mamelund, et. Al. 2013)

Has contributed greatly to generational trauma (Napoleon 1996)

This is a big part of our oral history  
e.g. Shishmaref guards story,  
Unalakleet old site story



Image: NN Cannery History Project

## History told as narrative:

**Example: SLI 1878-1880 (Crowell and Oozevaseuk 2006)**

Illness: Unknown

At least 1,000 dead

Cultural and historical contexts of the narrative of history heavily cited:

**SLI Yupik oral history:** H. Aningayou 1989; J. Aningayou 2002; Kava 1987:161-63; Kingeekuk 1987a, 1987b; R. Silook 1976:62-63

**Euroamerican “witnesses”** (e.g. whalers, federal workers): Elliott 1897:456-57; Hooper 1881:1-11, 1884:100-01; Muir 1917:108-109; Nelson 1899:269-70; Rosse 1883:20-21

**Ethnographers:** Collins 1937:22-24, 2002:226; Doty 1900:187 215-18; Geist 2002:235-38; Geist and Rainey 1936:10-11; Hughes 1960:11-13; Moore 1923:352-56

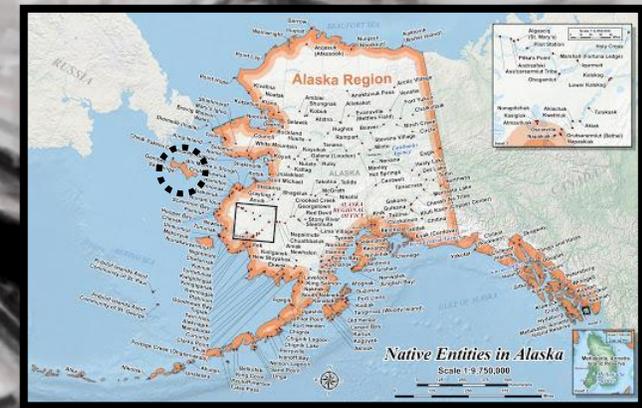
*Alcohol?* “...the emphasis on alcohol in initiating the disaster... seems to be more a reflection of Euro-American prejudice or special interests than a logical or satisfactory explanation,” (Crowell and Oozevaseuk 2006: 7)

Also, Hooper and others affiliated with the U.S. Revenue Service likely exaggerated alcohol problem to “increase Congressional alarm and funding for the Service’s arctic operations” (Crowell and Oozevaseuk 2006: 7 and Bockstoece 1986:139)

Survivors remembered the illness that was “rapid onset of illness, which killed people in their sleep, and in large numbers, so that the dead could not be buried,” (Crowell and Oozevaseuk 2006: 8)

Estelle Oozevaseuk: “Some villagers from other parts of the island, we tried to find out what caused them to die. Some thought about starvation. But when they check their meat caches most of them are full,” (Crowell and Oozevaseuk 2006: 8)

**Be careful what you believe, and (try to) be aware of authors’ biases**



**This dark history sets the stage for current AK Native healthcare and how Indigenous people and others in rural AK responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**AK Natives grow up learning about the past and lessons learned (e.g. stories)  
Rural Alaska: Still remote, Still limited healthcare, Still variable living conditions**

**Does the history of pandemics in rural Alaska inform the perspectives of people in Alaska?  
Not if they don't know it!! Deeper systemic issue with education**

**AK Public Media story *"Eligibility differences between state and tribal health systems frustrate some Alaskans waiting for vaccines"*  
(1/30/21) and following public apology (1/31/21):**

**"Our story left readers with an incomplete picture and did not capture the longstanding trauma inflicted on Alaska Native people around health-care and pandemic disease, and I'm grateful to the Native people who have helped me to better understand this over the past 24 hours... This experience has demonstrated the urgency for us to form deeper, direct connections to the Alaska Native community"**

**-Nat Herz**

**Public apology step in the right direction, opened the door for dialogue**

**As humans we are all vulnerable beings (e.g. vulnerable to being misled, ill-informed, or to disease)**

*Keep up the good work for our people in Alaska and around the world*

*Thank you very much to all the wastewater and sanitation service providers and to those dealing with the pandemic and vaccine rollout*

*Let's move forward together*

*Thank you USARC*

*QYANAQPAK*

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Background: Growing Up Village Fine Art

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