

The 50-Year Arctic Career of Ernest S. Burch, Jr.: A Personal Ethnohistory, 1960–2010

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Abstract. The paper explores the scientific legacy of Ernest S. Burch, Jr., 1938–2010, one of the leading experts on the social life and ethnohistory of Alaskan indigenous people. Burch’s professional career is viewed through the lenses of five monumental projects (initiatives) that he accomplished over 50 years: the study of subsistence ecology in Kivalina, Alaska (1960–1985); reconstruction of the early 1800s Iñupiat nations in North Alaska (1969–1980); the *National Geographic* map, “Peoples of the Arctic, ca. 1825” (1979–1983); the multivolume series, *Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska* (1983–2003); and the history of caribou herds in Alaska (late 1990s–2010). Several projects that Burch had started but did not bring to conclusion are also discussed. Burch’s research set the highest professional standards in the discipline of arctic anthropology for over four decades, and the resulting loss of knowledge and expertise will be hard to overcome.

Introduction

This paper provides the first and rather preliminary overview of Ernest S. Burch’s professional life and his many legacies. Its other objective is to introduce a certain general framework under which individual contributions to this volume come together as a collective tribute to our late colleague. It is not an exhaustive summary, and it leaves many issues untouched or barely covered two years since Burch’s untimely passing in 2010.

I deliberately apply the term “personal *ethnohistory*” (rather than biography) to this outline of Burch’s 50-year professional career. Unlike a usual biography, it reviews Burch’s life not in a chronological order or as a succession of certain phases but, rather, through the lenses of several major projects he initiated and accomplished

(or not) during 50 years of active research. It reveals how earlier efforts, even if aborted, influenced his methods and vision, and how they materialized (or not) years, even decades later. Also, if, following Simmons (1988:10), we view ethnohistory as “a form of *cultural biography* that draws upon as many kinds of testimony as possible over as long a time period as the sources allow,” this paper, despite its limited time frame of 50 years relies upon many testimonies (sources), including Burch’s published and unpublished writings, interviews, memoirs, and personal correspondence. I am certain Burch would be pleased that his colleagues approach his life as ethnohistory, though he preferred to call his research simply “history” or “ethnographic reconstruction.”

Burch had a commanding presence in

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Figure 1. Ernest S. (Tiger) Burch, Jr., June 2008 (photograph courtesy of Deanne Burch).

northern anthropology for almost four decades (Fig. 1). His writing was clear and captivating, and he was a monumental figure in any professional setting. This is how I remember him from our first encounter in 1979, which occurred at the symposium on the North American–Northeast Asian cultural connections (Michael and VanStone 1983). That meeting started a professional relationship and friendship of 31 years (Fig. 2)

1938–2010: A Brief Timeline

Burch recalled his entry to the field of arctic anthropology twice: in writing (Burch 2002:33–34) and in a published interview with Rachel Mason in 2003 (Mason 2007:147). His journey into the Arctic started in 1954, at age 16, when he became a junior crewmember on Rear Admiral Donald B. MacMillan’s expedition to Labrador, Baffin Island, and Greenland (Fig. 3). In his own words, when he left for the North in June 1954, he wanted to be a field biologist or a naturalist. When he returned three months later, however, he “wanted to be an anthropologist and work in the Arctic” (Burch 2002:34).¹ His mother claims that at age 13 he was already covering his school notebooks with the drawings of Eskimos and igloos, and the trip with

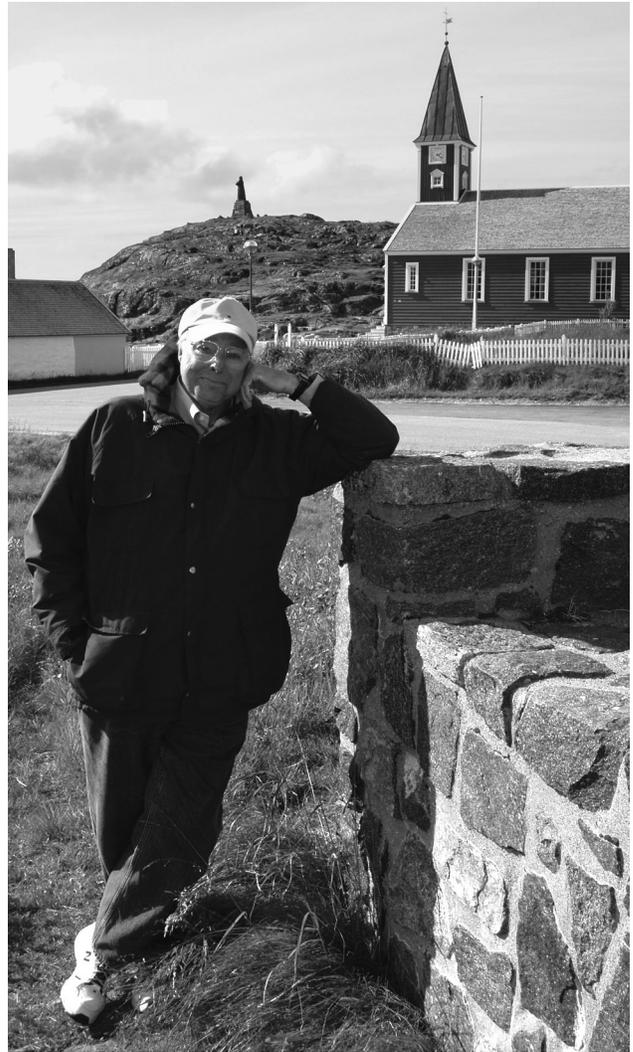


Figure 2. Burch during the International Congress of Arctic Social Scientists–VI meetings in Nuuk, Greenland, August 2008 (photograph by Igor Krupnik).

MacMillan was simply a realization of his dream (Elsie Burch, personal communication 2011).

The decision to become an arctic anthropologist took him first to Princeton (B.A. in Sociology 1960, *cum laude*) and then to the University of Chicago (Ph.D. in Anthropology 1966). In summer 1959, prior to his last Princeton year, he spent two months in Labrador (Burch 2002:34–35). A year later, as he started his Ph.D. program in Chicago, he was hired as a field assistant on an 11-month subsistence study in Kivalina for the University of Alaska Fairbanks (see below). He left several short accounts on his work in Kivalina as a part of the “Project Chariot” of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (Burch 2002; Mason 2007) and a detailed project report (Burch n.d. [1962]) covering his life in the village from fall 1960 until summer 1961.



Figure 3. “Tiger Burch playing accordion aboard Bowdoin, 1954.” Photograph taken during Donald MacMillan’s expedition to Labrador, Baffin Island and Greenland (AM1994.5.3981; courtesy of the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum, Bowdoin College).

Burch returned to Kivalina with his wife Deanne in 1964 for a year-long doctoral field study of changing social organization and human ecology. It was during that fieldwork, in December 1964, when he was burned terribly trying to save his field notes; nonetheless, he and Deanne returned to the village the next spring for three more months to complete the work (Burch 1985:128–129). After graduating from Chicago in 1966, he taught for eight years in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg (Correll, this volume). In June 1975, he resigned from a tenured university position and moved with his family to central Pennsylvania to become a self-employed anthropologist.² In 1979, he secured a nonpaid affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution and served as its Research Associate for 31 years until his passing (Fitzhugh, this volume).

Working for decades out of his basement in suburban Pennsylvania and missing daily communication with his peers, Burch took it upon himself to attend major professional meetings. He did it diligently, often at his personal expense. He also maintained intensive correspondence with dozens of his colleagues, which he painstakingly preserved in his personal archives that is now open to students interested in his research and his many professional connections.³

One Man’s Ethnohistory

My overview of Burch’s legacy is structured by phases and viewed through the lenses of eight major projects he undertook over 50 years, between 1960 and 2010. Despite being a self-employed scholar for the last 35 years and without demand to report on his work annually, he kept meticu-

lous performance tabs that listed his professional activities for every year. He compiled these two-page annual summaries, starting from his first appointment in 1966 at the University of Manitoba through to 2010. They were originally organized by university academic year, from September until August, and then shifted to “performance” (fiscal?) year, starting July 1 and ending June 30 of the next year.⁴

By checking these annual professional activity charts, as well as the full bibliography of his publications (Krupnik 2010; Stern, this volume), I was able to compile a list of more than 20 major projects he had pursued during his research career (Table 1). From that list, I selected *five* of his most formative undertakings, described in more detail below. These include: (1) a study of subsistence ecology in Kivalina in the early 1960s and in 1982–1985; (2) reconstruction of the 19th-century social groupings (societies or nations) in North Alaska, 1969–1980; (3) circumpolar map, “Peoples of the Arctic ca. 1825,” 1979–1983; (4) multi-volume series, *Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska*, 1983–2003; and (5) an unfinished manuscript on caribou herds in Northwest Alaska, 2006–2010 (Burch 2012). Three lesser known efforts are reviewed in another section (The Unknown Burch). Several of his initiatives, both finished and not, are also addressed in other papers (Bockstoce, Correll, Mishler, Wheelersburg, this volume). Cumulatively, these works cover the greater part of his research career.

Subsistence Ecology in Kivalina, 1960–1985

We know from Burch’s writings and recollections that he was greatly influenced by his early field experience of living in Kivalina, a small Alaskan rural community of 160 at the age of 22 (Burch n.d. [1962], 1985, 2002:36; Mason 2007:147–149) (Fig. 4). As a field assistant on a long-term project run by Doris Saario from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, he had to report on village hunting activities, people’s movements, and daily life. He also had to learn to hunt, fish, drive his own dog sled, and process his catch for himself. It was a field school that few anthropologists of today’s generation could replicate. Even though the data he collected were later published by others (Saario 1962; Saario and Kessel 1966), he underwent priceless training, and he also secured a friendly community setting for his next study when he became a researcher in his own standing.

That second study took place three years later, when he returned to Kivalina for his doctoral research on contemporary Eskimo kinship relations (Figs. 5, 6). This research was, again, framed as a subsistence survey. In Burch’s words,



Figure 4. Kivalina, April 1961 (photograph from Burch's personal collection, courtesy of Deanne Burch).



Figure 6. Kivalina, view from the roof of Howley's house (photograph from Burch's personal collection, courtesy of Deanne Burch).



Figure 5. Kivalina from air, winter 1964 (photograph from Burch's personal collection, courtesy of Deanne Burch).

The plan was for my wife and me to live in Kivalina as participant observers for a year. I was to hunt, fish, and generally try to live like the village men, while keeping weather records, and noting the movement of people into and out of the village. Three experienced hunters were hired to collect the raw harvest data (Burch 1985:125).

Largely inconspicuous was his main work for his dissertation on Eskimo kinship (see below), as he conducted in-depth interviews, compiled genealogies, and recorded people's interactions.⁵

The project went smoothly from May until December 1964, when Burch was severely injured in a fire and had to be evacuated from the village. He returned to Kivalina in May 1965, and resumed his work for three more months; subsequently, his village partners then carried the study on for another year. The result was an impressive subset of 104 weekly summaries that outlined environmental conditions, major subsistence events, people's

travels, and village food production by key game species (Burch 1985:158–228). Surprisingly, none of these materials was directly used in his doctoral thesis on kinship completed in 1966. A year later, in his annual chart for 1967–1968 he reported that he had started working on a monograph on the “Eskimo Hunter of Kivalina.”⁶ That work was short-lived, as it was soon put on hold and then abandoned. Even its very title was later subsumed for another of Burch's books about Point Hope published in 1981 (Burch 1981).

Nonetheless, Burch kept returning to Kivalina over the next 20 years. In 1981, upon advice of his colleague, Linda J. Ellanna, he secured a three-year grant from the Division of Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, to replicate his early subsistence study under a new title, “The Modern Eskimo Hunters of Kivalina, Alaska.” This time, hired local assistants conducted all the recordings in the village. Burch made four short visits to Kivalina during the project years and delivered a 350-page project report (Burch 1985). His second study documented surprisingly little change in people's hunting patterns and consumption of local food in almost 20 years, 1964–1966 to 1982–1984, despite substantial population growth and economic modernization.

Burch was the first among anthropologists working in Alaska to reexamine his earlier data on local subsistence and wildlife harvest to assess the scope of long-term change. Anthropologists often conduct “revisiting” surveys after 20, even 30 years (e.g., Chance 1990; Gessain 1969). Few, however, succeed in producing comparative reviews of the same community thrice in 25 years and establish solid time series against which subsequent changes could be evaluated. Burch's data from 1964–1966, 1982–1984, and partly from 1960–1961 were recently used as an invaluable

starting point for a new survey in Kivalina, which evaluated changes in wild food use, harvest, and economic security over 50 years (Magdanz et al. 2010). This study made Kivalina's subsistence record one of the longest of any community in Alaska, thanks primarily to Burch's pioneering efforts.

Iñupiat Societies, 1968–1980

After a few years of teaching at the University of Manitoba, Tiger Burch went through a major professional transformation in 1968–1970. He offered several descriptions of how it happened (Burch n.d.[1981], 1988, 1991a, 1998). The most striking being a *revolutionary* shift in his perspectives that resulted in a new vision of the history of indigenous arctic societies, for which he was most revered by his colleagues. According to one account (Burch n.d. [1988]:35–36), his perspective shift started after a small university conference in Winnipeg in winter 1968, at which David Damas, a former peer from the University of Chicago, recommended that he “take another look” at his Alaskan data collected for his doctoral dissertation. Per another version (Burch 1998:14–15), it started in late 1967, when he and Thomas C. Correll, a colleague at the University of Manitoba, attended a workshop of the International Biological Program-Human Adaptability (IBP-HA) in Barrow, Alaska (Correll, this volume). Here Burch reportedly raised objections to the many assumptions made by biologists and physical anthropologists about the aboriginal populations they intended to survey for the program. He was ignored, and then he simply walked away; the next day, Correll also withdrew. The two of them decided to launch their own study on the social and demographic history of the two arctic populations they knew best, the North Alaskan Iñupiat and the Caribou Inuit. For their project they secured five-year funding from the Canada Council (CC); ⁷ the rest is history.

In the summer of 1968, Burch spent eight weeks in Eskimo Point, then in Canada's Northwest Territories (now known as Arviat, Nunavut), working among the Caribou Inuit. Subsequently, in the summer of 1969, he used the CC grant to take a full-year leave from the university and moved his family to Kotzebue, Alaska. He returned a different man—he discovered that the traditional Iñupiat social system he had observed during his 1964–1965 dissertation research did *not* apply to the earlier years. He also learned that by interviewing knowledgeable elders about their parents' and grandparents' years, or the time *prior* to 1890, a very different social order could be revealed, one that governed indigenous life around 1825–1850. As he put it: I was just plain lucky in the [late 1960s and] early 1970s—I was able to work with

the last generation [of experts] who controlled the relevant information. I knew it and my sources knew it, and we both worked very hard to compile a picture of the social units and social boundaries that had existed in the middle and early 19th centuries (Burch n.d. [1988]:36). The CC grant supported cumulatively more than 20 months of fieldwork in northwest Alaska and arctic Canada from 1968–1971. Out of that project, Burch and Correll published a pioneering paper that outlined a network of 37 “regional groups” in North Alaska around 1825–1850 (Burch and Correll 1972:22–23; see Fig. 7). In his following publications, Burch called them “societies” (Burch 1975, 1980) and, later, “nations” (Burch 1994, 1998). He revised and reprinted that iconic map several times (Burch 1975:11–12, 1980:261, n.d. [1983], 2005:221), as it became the keystone of his vision of the Native Alaskans' contact history. He also invested much effort in refining and describing his methods on how the original social system that ceased to exist around 1880–1890 might be reconstructed (Burch 1980:254, n.d.[1988], 1998, 2010). He rightly viewed it as the most important scientific discovery of his life.

Burch was not the first person to advocate for the existence of established Native sociopolitical entities in the Arctic prior to Euro-American contact (e.g., Dolgikh 1960; Ray 1967); however, he was the most tenacious. As his knowledge increased, he broadcasted his vision in publications related to the Canadian Arctic (Burch 1979, 1986), western Alaska (Burch 1984),⁸ the Bering Strait (Burch 2005), Australia (Burch n.d. [1988]), and the broad circumpolar zone (Burch n.d. [1983]). By 2010, his concept of indigenous societies was widely embraced by his many colleagues in northern anthropology (see Friesen, Ganley and Wheeler, Mason, Mishler, Pratt, this volume).

“Peoples of the Arctic” Map: 1979–1983

In March 1979, Burch was invited to join a team from the *National Geographic* magazine that was working on a special issue on indigenous peoples of the Arctic.⁹ The project was tentatively called “The Top of the World.” For that issue he volunteered to produce a circumpolar map showing the areas of indigenous groups in the Arctic around 1825 (Wheelersburg, this volume). In his typical fashion, he opted for a one-man bold assault on the unknown, as no map featuring the people of the Arctic in 1825 (or at any point prior to the 1950s) was then available. It had to be compiled from many regional sources of various origins and in several languages.

Burch advanced on the project with remarkable speed.¹⁰ Obviously, he viewed it as once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to test and disseminate his

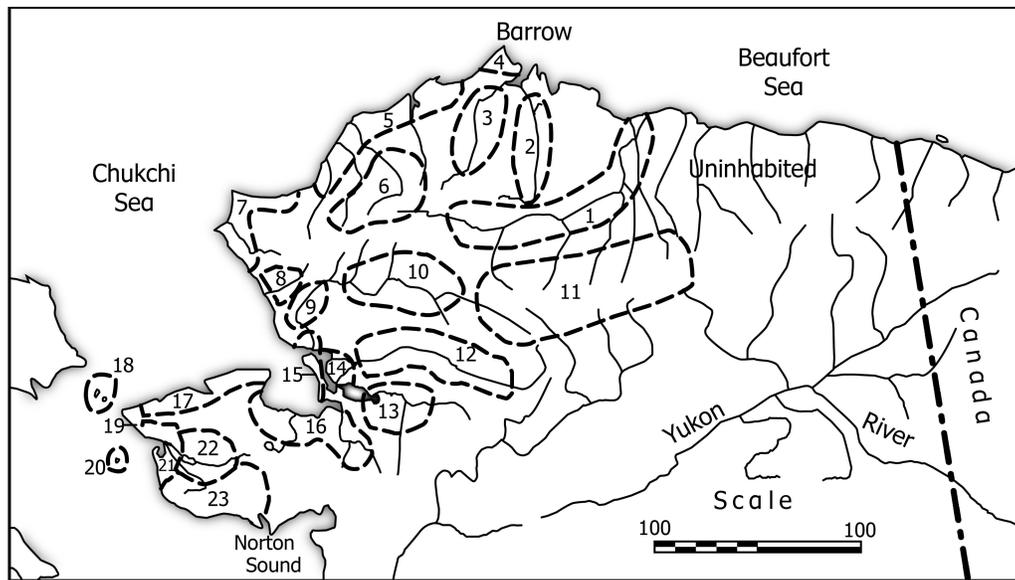


Figure 7. Map of Northwest Alaska Eskimo Societies, ca. 1845–1955 after Burch (n.d. [1972]:16). Key to map numbers: 1) Colville River, 2) Ikpikpuk River, 3) Meade River, 4) Barrow, 5) Northwest Coast, 6) Utukok River, 7) Point Hope, 8) Kivalina, 9) Lower Noatak, 10) Upper Noatak, 11) Mountain People, 12) Kobuk River, 13) Selawick, 14) Kobuk Delta, 15) Kotzebue, 16) South Kotzebue Sound, 17) Tapqaq, 18) Diomedes, 19) Wales, 20) King Island, 21) Port Clarence, 22) Kauwerak, 23) Nome.

concept of indigenous societies across the entire circumpolar world and to the broadest public audience. By December 1979, the sketch maps and preparatory materials for the Alaskan and Canadian sections were completed, featuring 81 and 60 indigenous groups respectively—the Eskimo (Inuit, Inupiat, Yup'ik), as well as the subarctic Athapaskan and Algonkian. Drafts of the Scandinavian and Eurasian (Russia and Siberia) sections were prepared (Wheelerburg, this volume) by early spring of 1980, and Greenland was finished in April 1980.¹¹ Then in June 1980, Burch submitted what he considered his “final” project report to *National Geographic*. The full file included a list of about 300 indigenous groups he identified across Alaska, Greenland, and Polar Regions of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. It eventually grew to almost 350 units. In addition, he produced an extensive file of historical sources organized by region and a list of approximately 170 European “outposts” in the North around 1812, which included European and mixed contact settlements, missionary stations, trade, and military posts. None of these materials appeared in the final *National Geographic* map.

At a certain point in summer 1981 the title of the map and of the entire *National Geographic* issue was changed from “Top of the World” to “Peoples of the Arctic.” Burch prepared an 11-page master file featuring all indigenous groups organized along 11 language-based clusters.¹² How-

ever, in February 1982, the Greenlandic section was completely revised following his meeting with Robert Petersen at the Institute of Eskimology in Copenhagen. Substantial changes were also introduced to the Siberian section as a result of his two-week trip to Russia, and our joint work on the Siberian groups in February–March 1982.

By January 1983 the pressrun version was finally available and Burch requested 37(!) author copies of the printed map from the *National Geographic* to distribute among his many colleagues who assisted him in the project. The map finally appeared as a folded supplement to volume 163 (no.2) in February 1983. Surprisingly, Burch’s name was not mentioned in the issue’s table of contents nor was his input in the preparation of the map properly acknowledged.¹³ Unfortunately, he did not organize the extensive materials he generated for the four-year map project—his list of arctic native groups around 1825, voluminous sources, ideas about the ways to identify arctic indigenous societies (“minimal ethnic units,” in his words)—for later publication. To this day, the “Peoples of the Arctic” map, an unparalleled professional achievement, remains one of the least known pieces of his legacy (see Wheelerburg, this volume). Nonetheless, he never underestimated what he learned from this project and how it helped transform his primarily north Alaskan and Canadian focus into a broad knowledge of indigenous peoples of the entire circumpolar zone.

The Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska, 1983–2003

While working on several papers, a popular book, and the Kivalina subsistence survey, Burch signed a contract with the NANA Museum of the Arctic in Kotzebue for a major overview of the cultural and natural history of Northwest Alaska (the NANA region) in 1983. The idea was reportedly introduced by John Schaeffer, then President of the NANA Regional Corporation, who advocated for the production of a “heritage compendium” on Northwest Alaska useful to local readers (Burch 1990:vii). It became a prologue to the series of volumes titled *Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska*, which Burch fondly called his “NANA Encyclopedia.”

The project was an endeavor of almost mythical proportion, a one-man encyclopedia aspiring to cover everything from rocks and plate tectonics to the local people’s ideas about the universe, albeit for a small region. Originally viewed as a three-year work on a book of ten thematic chapters,¹⁴ it eventually became a venture of a proposed *ten* volumes (see Stern, this volume) that consumed 20 years, from 1985 until 2006. The first volume, *Geology*, of almost 600 pages, with a 70-page Index (!) appeared in 1990. Burch then skipped volumes 2, 3, and 4 (“Climate and Vegetation”, “Animal Life”, and “People and Cultures: A Temporal Perspective”), to concentrate on volume 5, *The Iñupiaq Nations of Northwest Alaska* (Burch 1994a, 1998b). Eventually, two more volumes were produced, *International Affairs* (vol. 7) in 1998 (Burch 1998a) and *Organization of National Life* (vol. 6) in 2003; after that the project was quietly put to rest. Meantime, Burch converted three of the NANA volumes he self-published in 130 copies into seminal monographs (Burch 1998, 2005, 2006). These major books became acclaimed sources in Alaska ethnology and ethnohistory.

Burch’s one-man NANA Heritage Series seems even more brazen when viewed against some encyclopedic projects in the social sciences of the time, like the 11-volume *Encyclopedia of World’s Cultures* (1991–2002) or the Smithsonian *Handbook of North American Indians* of 20 volumes (1971–).¹⁵ All were products of large teams and often engaged several lead editors for individual volumes. Nonetheless, Burch decided that he could produce the NANA Heritage Series (encyclopedia), like the earlier “Peoples of the Arctic” map, all on his own.

In hindsight, the 20-year work paid off; it created a steady research focus, new connections, and, later, crucial financial support from the National Park Service. It also offered a valuable research lesson—as one’s knowledge advances in many directions, from geology to culture and so-

cial history, the benefits also increase manifold. By producing four NANA Heritage Series (and collecting sources for at least four more), Burch honed his encyclopedic knowledge of northern lands and peoples, for which he was greatly admired.

The “BOO Book”

In 1995, while working on volume 7 of the NANA Heritage Series, Burch wrote a 90-page paper titled “Caribou Management in Northwestern Alaska: Cultural and Historical Perspectives” (Burch n.d. [1995]) that he submitted to the “Man and the Biosphere – High Latitude Ecosystems Directorate.” It was a typical Burch paper—long, detailed, structured, and with a 30-page list of references. In addition though, it was also the most provocative analysis of the wildlife-management system in Alaska I have ever read, but it was never published. Burch redrafted it into a slimmer (64-page) paper called “Caribou Management in Northwestern Alaska: An Historical Perspective” that he mailed to scores of his colleagues, mostly wildlife biologists, for comments in 1998. Several people responded with extensive critical remarks. Burch called these responses “the finest set of comments I have ever received on anything I have ever written” (Ernest S. Burch to James Dau, December 28, 1999; Dau 2012:xiv).

A normal response of a scholar being chastised by colleagues from another discipline would be to partner with one of his critics on a joint paper, so that each party covers its respective expertise. Burch assumed he knew better, and he decided to rewrite that paper to prove that his critics were wrong. This goal took him on a 10-year research and writing project, which was the last of his life. The resulting text, *Caribou Herds of Northwest Alaska, 1850–2000*, eventually evolved into a 450-page manuscript with over 2000 bibliographic entries (Burch 2012). Burch lovingly called it “The BOO Book.” He shared draft copies of its chapters with several of his colleagues, asking for comments, data, and criticism (Burch 2012; Bockstoce, Mager, this volume). Unfortunately, he did not live to finish the last two chapters of the book. After his passing, a group of his colleagues retrieved the manuscript and prepared it for publication by the University of Alaska Press (Burch 2012; Dau 2012; Krupnik 2012).

In reconstructing historical caribou dynamics in Northwest Alaska between 1850 and 2000 from the Yukon River to the Canadian border, Burch followed a vision of wildlife biologists that caribou constitute a “meta-population” of several major herds or large groupings with defined-habitat areas. As an anthropologist, he nonetheless assumed that such herds were in constant change—they moved, expanded, and shifted their home ranges.

To track the dynamics of individual herds he relied on sources he inaugurated over his career: oral histories recorded from Native elders, and reports of explorers, traders, miners, and other early visitors.

In the most general sense, the *Caribou Herds* study followed the same paradigm and methodology that Burch had mastered in his ethnographic reconstructions of North Alaskan Iñupiat societies. It demonstrated that caribou populations, much like human communities, have complex histories that cannot be construed by simply projecting contemporary situation back into the past. The animal groupings emerge at a certain time, then develop, and may eventually become extinct—often to be replaced by new animal communities taking over the same area. This idea was strikingly elegant in its historical vision, but also in its similarity to traditional indigenous beliefs that animals, like people, live as communities that may reside in place for generations but then, at a certain point, take off and leave or die. Whenever the animals return, years or generations later, they are, much like people, descendants of a few surviving “tribes” that have been spared by luck or isolation.

Writing a book in response to his critics was exemplary of Burch’s dedication to learning. It was also a dazzling extension of his knowledge and methods into a new domain. The lasting power of Burch’s “historical herd” model is its insight into the natural history of other species or other regions that he himself never considered (Krupnik 2012: xi–xii).

The Unknown Burch

Burch’s remarkable productivity helped produce an image of a highly accomplished career that was meticulously planned and structured as an orderly succession of projects, the vast majority of which were thoroughly researched, completed, and published as seminal books or articles (Table 1). This, of course, was part of a legend. Like so many colleagues, he had his share of aborted plans, abandoned manuscripts, and studies that ran aground. Burch’s letters, particularly from the 1970s and 1980s, often expressed his frustration with the work backlogs and projects that spiraled out of control. Going over his annual activity charts, I was amazed to learn about efforts of his that I barely had heard of or hardly anticipated. A few were recently published (Burch 2010; 2012). This section introduces aspects of Burch’s work, of which few people beyond his research partners were aware. Other papers in this collection, similarly, explore his initiatives that never saw the light of the day (Bockstoce, Correll, Stern, this volume).

Before the Iñupiaq Nations, 1964–1972

Burch’s entry to the field of arctic anthropology was marked by a string of impressive papers he published in 1970–1972 (Burch 1970a, 1970b, 1971, 1972) and, particularly, by the pioneer article that introduced the concept of historical “regional groups” (societies) in North Alaska around 1850 (Burch and Correll 1972). All of these papers (except Burch 1970b) followed his Alaskan fieldwork of 1969–1970 on a CC grant (see above).

It is worth noting that aside for the subsistence records Burch rarely cited the data he collected in Kivalina in 1964–1965 or his resulting Ph.D. dissertation, *Authority, Aid, and Affection: The Structure of Eskimo Kin Relationships* (Burch 1966). In his annual chart for 1967–1968, he reported that he had submitted a manuscript on “Eskimo kinship” to the University of Chicago Press, which was most certainly his revised dissertation. However, the work on that book was put on hold in the summer of 1969 and was not revisited until 1972, by which time he had a remarkably different vision on traditional social systems of the Alaskan Iñupiat people. Thus, his dissertation and first published paper (Burch 1970b) are the only known products of what may be construed as his pre-1970s vision. Burch was remarkably frank on how his early work of 1964–1965 was anchored in his preconceptions about Iñupiat social life:

In 1964, and again in 1965, I returned to Northwest Alaska. On these visits I was carrying out a study of Native family life for the purpose of writing a Ph.D. thesis. Once again, I was interested primarily in the present, not the past. . . . Furthermore, some of the older people began to tell me a bit about what they called “Eskimo nations.” . . . By the end of 1965, I had collected enough genealogical data and enough family history data to prove that, as far back as 1890, Eskimo family groups in Northwest Alaska were geographically mobile, and that a high percentage of the inhabitants of any particular region were related to the inhabitants of several others. This meant that the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos could not have been divided into separate tribes, not to mention separate countries (Burch n.d. [1981]:2–4).

Based on the data he collected, he claimed in his doctoral dissertation that:

My most general hypothesis is that all the people living in the area bounded by the coast between (roughly) Beechy Point on the north [between Point Barrow and the Canada–U.S. border] and the northwest corner of Norton Bay on the south, and the entire inland area that was drained by rivers reaching the sea between those two points, were members of a *single social system around the middle of the last century* (at least) (Burch 1966:19 [emphasis added]).

Table 1. Ernest S. Burch, Jr.: Major Research and Writing Projects, 1960–2010.

Project Title	Years Active
Documentation of Native Subsistence Harvest in Kivalina, Alaska	1960–1961, 1964–1966
Authority, Aid, and Affection: The Structure of Eskimo Kin Relationships (Burch 1966)	1963–1966, 1967–1968
Two Eskimo Populations: A Comparative Analysis	1968–1974
Caribou Eskimos	1968–1971
North Alaskan Iñupiat	1969–1974
Eskimo Kinsmen (Burch 1975)	1972–1975
Peoples of the Southern Barrens	1974–1977
The Ethnography of Northern North America: An Overview of Current Research (Burch 1979)	1977–1979
Peoples of the Arctic (map – Burch n.d. [1983])	1979–1983
The Traditional Eskimo Hunters of Point Hope, Alaska (Burch 1981)	1980–1981
The Eskimos (Burch 1988)	1981–1983
Subsistence Production in Kivalina, Alaska (Burch 1985)	1982–1985
The Central Yup'ik Eskimos (1984a)	1983–1984
The Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska	1983–2003
Vol. 1 – Geology (Burch 1990)	1984–1990
Vol. 5 – Iñupiaq Nations (Burch 1994a)	1991–1994
Vol. 7 – International Affairs (Burch 1998a)	1996–1998
Vol. 6 – The Organization of National Life (Burch 2003)	1998–2003
The Work of Knud Rasmussen (Burch 1988)	1987–1988
Key Issues in Hunter-Gatherers Research (Burch and Ellana [eds.] 1994)	1991–1993
The Organization of Arctic Social Scientists (Burch 1993)	1991–1993
International Directory of Arctic Social Scientists (1997)	1994–1997
Management History of Western Arctic Caribou Herds	1995, 1998–1999
The Iñupiaq Eskimo Nations of Northwest Alaska (Burch 1998b)	1995–1997
Sociocultural Anthropology in Alaska, 1972–2002 (Burch 2005)	2001–2002, 2004
The North Alaskan Eskimo – Revisited	1999–2002, 2006–2007
Alliance and Conflict (Burch 2005)	2003–2004
Social Life in Northwest Alaska (Burch 2006)	2004–2005
Caribou Herds of Northwestern Alaska, 1850–2000	2006–2010

Burch went on to rebuke all claims to the contrary provided by earlier researchers (e.g., Heinrich 1960; Rainey 1947; Ray 1967; Spencer 1959) and argued “that a considerable body of circumstantial evidence supports my hypothesis, and in fact renders it more plausible than any alternatives mentioned above” (Burch 1966:20). He was soon to learn that he had erred, and he subsequently had to switch to the very same position he challenged so aggressively in 1966.

We may zoom on the date of that remarkable turnaround with certain precision. Burch’s original proposal to the Canada Council in early 1968, and his later application for logistical support to the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) for his Alaskan fieldwork in 1969–1970 (written in early 1969), still referred to the same basic hy-

pothesis that “the Eskimos of northwestern Alaska constituted the membership of a single society at the time of early European contact” (see also Correll, this volume). The home area of this hypothesized “Traditional North Alaskan Eskimo Society” was defined exactly within the same geographic boundaries used in his Ph.D. dissertation (Burch 1966:19). The proposal also stated that “Central Canadian Eskimo Society is hypothesized to have involved all the Eskimos living in Canada between (roughly) the central portion of Dolphin and Union Strait, on the west, and the northern portion of Baffin Island, on the east” (Correll, this volume).

Less than three years later, a joint paper Burch and Correll presented at the meeting of the American Anthropological Association in No-

vember 1971 advocated for a totally different scenario, at least for North Alaska (see above; Burch and Correll 1972:21–22). In a subsequent report to the Canada Council (dated January 3, 1972), Burch (1972) had to acknowledge that, “field research in 1968 demonstrated that both hypotheses were untenable, and that there were several societies in Northwest Alaska, and also in the Caribou Eskimo area alone in Canada.”¹⁶ The report enclosed the list of 23 Northwest Alaska Eskimo societies with their names and a map showing their distribution. The Alaskan map attached to the January 1972 report is *possibly* the earliest version known to this time, as it differs in various details from those published shortly after (Burch and Correll 1972:23; Burch 1975:11–12).¹⁷ A similarly arranged list and a map featuring *five* Caribou Inuit societies were not published until 1977 (Burch 1977:145).

By radically shifting his vision, Burch acknowledged that David Damas’s earlier advice to take another look at his Ph.D. data (Burch n.d. [1988]:35–36) was sound.¹⁸ He realized that before the so-called “traditional society” of the late 1800s that he analyzed for his dissertation, an earlier social system used to be in place—one he never recognized nor was even aware of in 1966. The new paradigm required a major restructuring of his first book based on his dissertation. Thoroughly rewritten in 1972–1973, it was eventually published nine years after his Ph.D. under a new title, *Eskimo Kinsmen* (Burch 1975). Few people could stomach a situation where one has been proven wrong but then turn it into a crowning achievement. Burch did exactly that; he also wrote about his personal conversion “from skeptic to believer” several times, often with remarkable humility (Burch 1981; 1991a; 1998:13–14). He was among few scholars who made his own previously erroneous statements, as well as those of others, a topic of special analysis (Burch 1976, 1991a, 1991b).¹⁹ He also learned a lesson that he used for the rest of his life: Even well-designed and solid studies could end up with misleading conclusions due to misconceptions or a systemic error.

Barrenland Societies: 1974–1978

In March 2011, on my way to the Alaska Anthropological Association meeting honoring Burch, I met Thomas C. Correll, his former research partner, at the Minneapolis–St. Paul Airport. It was our first meeting following several weeks of email correspondence, and during that talk Correll pulled out of his bag a 350-page manuscript titled “Barrenland Societies: Caribou Eskimo Social Organization in Perspective.” It was their major joint writing project that they undertook in 1974–1976 but put aside in 1977. All that was missing in the

manuscript was its final section: “Conclusions.” One could imagine my anxiety, as Burch referred to his plans to complete that monograph in a few letters he wrote to me in 1980 (ESB to IK, 17 January 1980; 22 July 1980) but never talked about it again. Over the next 30 years, he did not make a single reference to that manuscript in his many publications, including his summary paper on the Caribou Inuit (Burch 1986).²⁰

The “Barrenland Societies” was yet another outcome of the 1968–1972 Burch–Correll collaborative study of the North Alaskan Iñupiat and Caribou Inuit on the CC grant (see above; Correll, this volume). Burch’s project report of January 1972 cited several finished papers, as well as an article, “The Caribou Eskimos: A Demographic Reconstruction,” that he had expected to complete by May 1973. It also listed its Alaskan counterpart, a proposed book titled “The Eskimo Population of Northwest Alaska: A Demographic Reconstruction,” that was obviously never written, despite being mentioned in Burch’s annual charts for 1972–1973 and 1973–1974.²¹ Instead, a new title, “People of the Southern Barrens: Caribou Eskimo Revisited,” another joint work with Correll, appeared in the chart of 1974–1975 and was listed until 1977.

The manuscript that Correll shared with me in the spring of 2011 had a monumental structure of five large chapters (“Introduction,” “The Human Environment,” “The Nonhuman Environment,” “The Framework of Caribou Inuit Societies,” and “The Operation of Caribou Inuit Societies”), with several subsections and copious endnotes. It covered the history of the Caribou Inuit from 1717, the year of first-documented contact, to 1970. It also contained sections on climate, flora, fauna, and the “nonempirical elements” of the Caribou Inuit land. It looked strikingly familiar, as its structure has been later replicated in several of Burch’s volumes of the NANA Heritage Series, particularly volume 6, *The Organization of National Life*. In this volume (Burch 2003), and even more explicitly in the resulting published monograph (Burch 2006) used similar headings (“The Economic Process,” “The Political Process,” “The Information Process,” and “The Integration Process,”) to organize data on aboriginal life in Alaska in the early contact era. The only portion of the *Barrenland Societies* missing in the 1976 copy was the concluding chapter, which summarized the functions of the traditional Caribou Inuit societies and their “termination” in the 20th century, due to starvation, dispersion, and acculturation.²²

Burch kept a copy of the 1976 version with his handwritten edits;²³ nonetheless, despite his many intentions, he never returned to the manuscript. He certainly used its data for his overview article on Caribou Inuit history (Burch n.d. [1983],

1986) and for later comparative papers (Burch 1988, 2010). However, it was not until after his passing and my fortuitous meeting with Correll that the *Barrenland Societies* was revisited and is now being assessed for publication.

Whatever happened in 1976–1980, the *Barrenland Societies* inaugurated a template for a detailed compendium volume on a certain indigenous group or region that Burch applied successfully to his NANA Heritage Series a few years later (Burch 1998, 2005, 2006), as well as to his planned book on Robert Spencer in 1999–2001 (see below).²⁴ The lesson of the abandoned *Barrenland Societies* was simple: Major writings should not be delayed nor put on hold but to be completed and published in due time.

The “North Alaskan Eskimo—Reconsidered”

In early 1999, Burch received a grant from the National Science Foundation for an 18-month research and writing project titled “Robert Spencer’s *The North Alaskan Eskimo* – Forty Years Later.”²⁵ It was aimed at re-evaluating Spencer’s seminal monograph on the 40th anniversary of its publication (Spencer 1959). Burch’s annual charts indicate that he had been working on the project in 1999–2000 and in 2000–2001 (already with a new title, “The North Alaskan Eskimos – Reconsidered”), but the work was put on hold because of other commitments. Although he returned to this study in 2006 and 2007 (albeit briefly), he was fully consumed by that time with his manuscript on the history of caribou herds in North Alaska (Burch 2012). On several occasions in personal talks we had over the years he stated that he still had “one more book to write,” likely referring to his abandoned work on the “North Alaskan Eskimo.”

I recall our many discussions in 1999 and 2000 about his Spencer project and, specifically, about a 35-page text titled “Chapter 1-Introduction” that he produced in early 2001. It unveiled an outline of a substantial book of several chapters, with Chapter 2 covering the changing physical and social landscapes of arctic Alaska during the 19th century and Chapter 3 discussing the “social framework,” that is, the family, village, and societal structure during three “focused periods” of the 19th century (early contact, mid-century, and the 1880s). In subsequent chapters, Burch aimed to review new data on the early-contact North Alaskan Iñupiat concerning the individual and life style, the economic process; the political process, and the integration process. The book would have concluded with a summary of his findings and a discussion of “methodological lessons that

might be acquired from this exercise” (Burch n.d. [2001]:22–23).

This was yet another monumental plan, as Burch obviously aspired to combine the structure of the *Eskimo Kinsmen* (1975), the *Barrenland Societies* (1976), and the *Iñupiaq Nations* (1998) in a new book focused on the section of Alaska north of the Brooks Range. I remember my feeling of awe but also of confusion about whether such work was feasible. I knew that Burch had been in an ongoing intellectual discussion with Spencer and his monograph for several decades (Burch 1966, 1976), but it was obvious from his new writing that his argument with Spencer had started when he first set foot in Alaska:

I first went to northern Alaska in the fall of 1960, roughly a year after Spencer’s book appeared. . . . I had not had time to prepare for the trip, and I arrived . . . completely ignorant of the literature on the region. Fortunately, my supervisor, Doris Saario, had a copy of Spencer’s book, which I read over the course of the winter. In general, I found it to be an impressive piece of work. However, Spencer’s few statements about the Eskimos living in my study area, which was south of his, were so far off the mark as to make me suspicious of the entire volume. As my knowledge increased over several subsequent years of research in northern Alaska, my opinion of the book fluctuated, usually varying according to the specific subject I was investigating (Burch n.d. [2001]:1).

Thus by 2001, Burch had revised his original plan and decided to use Spencer’s book as a mere prologue to his own monograph about the Iñupiat nations of the North Slope region. This is where we parted. I was very enthusiastic about the “Spencer” portion of his research and anticipated a book telling how new data and methodological approaches could bring better results 40 years later, despite the passing of time and loss of more knowledgeable elderly informants (Igor Krupnik, written correspondence to Ernest Burch, 2001). I was fascinated by Burch’s concluding statement in that chapter:

A point that is almost too obvious to state is that, even though I write this in the 21st century, I have at my disposal more information on the 19th century Iñupiat of Arctic Alaska than Robert Spencer could have even dreamed of when he did his field research in the 1950s (Burch n.d. [2001]:22).

He could not be more right. Spencer’s slim reference base of barely 140 items (Spencer 1959:455–461) was no match to Burch’s voluminous records amassed over the subsequent 40 years. Also, following his usual pattern, Burch visited Spencer’s widow, Marietta Spencer, who kindly shared with him copies of Spencer’s original field notes so that he could check the names of Spencer’s informants, as well as the dates and details of his fieldwork. Burch also had cop-

ies of field journals and notes of the researchers who preceded Spencer, often by 100 years, which Spencer apparently did not consult (such as Beechey (1832), Kashevarov ([1838] 1977), Kelly (1901; Wells and Kelly 1890), Maguire (1855; Bockstoce 1988), Murdoch (1892), Simpson (1855, 1875; Bockstoce 1988), Woolfe (1894)). It could have been an eye-opening guidebook on the methods of ethnohistorical reconstruction that Burch was, by far, the most qualified person in the world to write. Burch was unmoved by my pleas. Of course he was interested in Spencer, but he was more anxious to summarize his data on the North Slope Iñupiat nations as a companion volume to his earlier book on the NANA region (Burch 1998).

It did not work either way, as that writing was soon abandoned to give time to the preparation of volume 6 of the NANA series and to the publication of two other monographs (Burch 2005, 2006). But as soon as these tasks were over, he briefly returned to the *North Alaskan Eskimo*. Two later versions of that first chapter were revised in May 2006 and May 2007, respectively. In the latter, the subtitle “Chapter 1” was already dropped and references to the future book were deleted. It was clear that the project was winding down, as Burch was then fully subsumed by his *Caribou Herds of Northwest Alaska, 1850–2000* manuscript. Unfortunately, he did not live to return to it again. Unlike the “BOO Book” and Caribou Eskimo manuscript, “The North Alaskan Eskimo” is most probably beyond salvation, except for its first chapter, and four boxes of records and notes under the title “Robert Spencer Project” in Burch’s personal collection (ESBP, Boxes 126–129).

The Legacies

Of many legacies Burch bestowed on us, none are more important than the way he treated arctic people’s history and how he worked. The depth of his historical knowledge was astounding. He was the only anthropologist who could talk and write about aboriginal life in the Arctic, in North Alaska, specifically, in the early 1800s, almost 200 years ago, without using a time machine or lifting an archaeological trowel. No one else, to my knowledge, is, was, or will be capable of achieving it again.

We are yet to evaluate his many contributions to arctic social studies at the crossroads of Native oral histories, documentary records, and social theory, as well as the methods of ethnohistorical reconstruction he perfected over the years. His main legacies in our field are that that he single-handedly expanded the horizon of our historical vision on indigenous societies by almost 100 years and that he validated the remarkable accuracy of indigenous oral tradition preserved by aboriginal

experts, elders, and people he called “native historians” (Burch 1991a).

Burch was also a person who loved to work in big blocks and to write major books. He composed several “trademark” papers of 60–70 pages, many times a standard academic-size manuscript, all supplied with hundreds of references and endnotes. These became seminal synopses for his colleagues in northern North American ethnography (Burch 1979a), methods of ethnographic reconstruction (Burch 2010), the organization of arctic social sciences (Burch 1993), sociocultural research in Alaska (Burch 2005), Native Claims era in Alaska (Burch 1979b), and caribou-herd management (Burch n.d. [1995]). He was the first person to compile the *International Directory of Arctic Social Scientists* (Burch 1997) that listed 1000 names of individual researchers and institutions in the field, though he pledged never to do it again. His map, “Peoples of the Arctic” (Burch n.d. [1983]) is a piece of monumental scholarship that still awaits its deserved appreciation (Wheelerburg, this volume).

Not all of his undertakings have been completed. We are yet to retrieve his many unpublished texts, including his early theoretical papers (e.g., Burch 1976), as well as those he cited in his CC reports (Correll, this volume),²⁶ besides the three book manuscripts described above. Perhaps the most intriguing portion of his legacy yet to be analyzed (or construed) is his (changing) theoretical views on the development of hunter-gatherer societies and the laws governing social interactions. From his training at Princeton, and later at the University of Chicago, he received a strong penchant for large-scale theory inspired by his Princeton mentor, sociologist Marion J. Levy, Jr.²⁷ In the early 1970s, he obviously aspired to produce some high-level theoretical writings on the general theory of social evolution of small-scale societies (Burch 1976; Correll, this volume); these remain unaccounted for. He made another effort in the late 1980s through his involvement in the conferences on hunting and gathering societies (CHAGS) that he attended on several occasions (Burch n.d. [1988]; 1988; Burch and Ellanna [eds.] 1994). For the one held in 1990 in Fairbanks, Alaska, he coedited the proceedings volume with Linda J. Ellanna, to which he contributed a general introduction (Burch and Ellanna [eds.] 1994), eight editorial pieces to each constituent section and an inspirational conclusion with the overview of major theoretical issues of the field (Burch 1994b). His latest theoretical attempt was the application of world-system theory to early-contact Iñupiat societies (Burch 2005), which he acknowledged was only partly successful. These are but a few traces of his lifelong interest in anthropological theory that await further evaluation.



Figure 8. Burch's professional office in his house basement, December 2010 (photograph by Igor Krupnik).

He was more devoted to, and more prolific in, the issues of research methods and epistemology, comparative approaches to data interpretation, and cross-referencing of records coming from sources of different origins, such as early historical accounts and oral histories (Burch 1976a, 1988, 1991a, 2010; Mishler, this volume). As a researcher, he definitely had a pronounced perfectionist streak, and he always demanded that scholarly work was done properly, first and foremost his own. He was a standing rock against the forces that plague our professional careers: shortened commitments, multitasking, and grant jumping. Burch loathed it.

He was also exemplary in his painstaking planning, the ways he kept his records and surveyed resources that he carefully identified for each of his projects (Bockstoce, Mishler, this volume). This is why he was legendary in his many personal ways. He carved his unique academic path and built his own world of science in his private basement, which he lovingly called his "truth factory" (Fig. 8). He steadfastly preserved his style and his world for 45 years. He also worked hard to gain financial independence, so that he could afford extra time if needed for his trademark archival research. The message Burch left to us is that good science takes time and requires thorough planning and long-term concentration. His other more subtle message is that how to work, what to write, and how to organize one's life is a matter of personal choice.

Why It Is Important

We have to address one more question related to Burch's work: *Why was it important?* Burch himself offered two reasons; I will explore two

more. In a paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies in Darwin, Australia (Burch n.d. [1988]), he argued that human beings evolved and lived for many hundreds of thousands years in a world in which *all* people were hunters and gatherers. However, as most of these societies later switched to food-producing economies, only two large areas in the world remained until historic times where hunting and gathering communities continued to be the *only* type of society—Australia and arctic North America. As a result, these were the only parts of the world where theories about human historical sociology and social evolution could be studied and tested against the historical data.

In an earlier lecture titled *Studies of Native History as a Contribution to Alaska's Future* (Burch n.d. [1981]), Burch posed another question: What do Native Alaskan histories have to do with the real world of today or of tomorrow? His answer was that greater historical knowledge transforms into greater respect; both self-respect among Native people and mutual respect between Native and nonnative citizens of Alaska. And both would likely make all parties more open to work cooperatively on common issues and on building a mutually satisfactory future for all Alaskans.

I may add my explanation to why his work was so important. His research set the highest professional standards in our discipline, and it helped keep the bar high in the field of arctic anthropology, history, and ethnohistory for almost four decades. A science community always benefits when it is blessed with highly qualified intellectual leaders, people whose role is to maintain the high standards of professional discourse and introspection. Society also benefits from the process that is enshrined in the Smithsonian mission, "*The Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge*." This calling was also inscribed in his heart. He worked tirelessly to increase his own knowledge and to share it openly with everyone who might benefit from it. In that pursuit of knowledge, he was generous, unstoppable, and extremely supportive to other people (Friesen, Mager, this volume). A young colleague (personal communication, 2011), then a graduate student, described her first meeting with Burch in the following words:

He was an amazing scholar and a sweet and humble man. I remember the first time I met him was at the Beringia Days [conference] in 2006, and he approached me after my talk with great questions and stories describing his similar experiences in northwest Alaska. I was beaming.

Conclusion

To many younger members of our discipline and others with no personal memory of Tiger Burch,

his image will soon be of a legendary “tribal elder.” Native people love to say that “When an elder dies it is like a library is burned to the ground.” While not all elders are living libraries, Tiger Burch was the richest library we had after the passing of Frederica de Laguna in 2004. This place has now been emptied, and the resulting loss of knowledge will be hard to overcome.

Among the many messages of sympathy posted to the online “Ernest S. Burch, Jr., Guest-Book” after his passing, none is perhaps more touching than the one from the community of Kivalina, Alaska sent on September 21, 2010:

Hello Deanne and Family! . . . Sorry to hear about the passing of Tiger . . . I remember him coming around to Kivalina many times n staying with my Grandparents Bobby n Sarah Hawley . . . I’ve been looking online trying to find his home address to let you all know that Aaka Sarah also passed on July 18, 2010, 82 years old . . . I’ve included a pic of her, I hope it finds its way to you all! Our love n sympathy to your family from the Hawley family here in Kivalina! (Myra “Ahquk” Wesley, Kivalina, Alaska).

Life often goes in cycles. Bobby and Sarah Hawley were Burch’s closest family in Kivalina in his early years (Fig. 9). Bobby Hawley, born 1931, was his main teacher and field assistant; he later became the field director for his 1982–1984 subsistence documentation project (Burch 1985).

Tiger Burch was more than a colleague or a friend of 30 years. I was 28 when we first met and



Figure 9. Burch interviewing his old friend Bobby Hawley, Sr., of Kivalina, 1968–69 (photograph from Burch’s personal collection, courtesy of Deanne Burch).

he was 41. In the following decades, his words and writings have been with me at every turn of my life, as was his presence, guidance, and insight. Blessed be your memory, my beloved friend. It will be a different world without you.

Acknowledgments. Many people contributed to this paper by sharing their knowledge and insight. I am grateful to Deanne Burch, Tiger’s wife of 47 years, his mother Elsie Burch and brother John L. Burch. My colleagues, John Bockstoce, Tom Correll, Yvon Csonka, Ann Fienup-Riordan Bill Fitzhugh, Nelson Graburn, Erica Hill, Sergei Kan, Ken Pratt, Richard Stern, and Bob Wheelers-burg provided valuable input, data, and many helpful comments, as did Christyann Darwent, John Darwent, Susan Kaplan, and an anonymous reviewer. All shortcomings in this introductory sketch of Tiger Burch’s life and legacy are entirely my own.

Endnotes

1. In 1959 Donald MacMillan lectured using rare, silent film footage of his 1954 expedition to Labrador, Baffin Island, and Greenland. His film footage and a recording of his lecture are preserved at the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine. In 2009 the Museum released a 98-minute DVD in which the film and MacMillan’s narration of it were joined. The DVD features only an eight-second shot of Burch (Fig. 3), but offers a very detailed perspective on the places and people he encountered on that trip. I am grateful to Susan A. Kaplan, Director of the Peary-MacMillan Museum, Bowdoin College, for kindly sharing the DVD with Burch’s colleagues and family.
2. When we first met in 1979, Burch told me that he was earning his living being a partner in his father’s financial consulting business. He had a very tight daily regime, with three growing kids, and he mostly worked on his research and writing from 6 a.m. till 10 a.m. and then again during his night hours. He also relied on research contracts and grants to cover his travel and field expenses.
3. See E.S. Burch, Jr., Papers, 1960–2010 (ESBP), USUAFV6-627, boxes 23–32.
4. ESBP, Box 18.
5. “Since we were focusing our attention on kin relationships, every instance of observed interaction between kinsmen was properly subject to notation, as was every opinion or factual remark offered by the villagers. Technically, every time we saw two or more kinsmen just walking along the path together, we should have noted who we

saw with whom, what they were doing, and so forth. . . . Each instance of interaction or opinion that we recorded for the relationship between two specific individuals was noted on cards reserved for that specific relationship” (Burch 1966:104).

6. That title was clearly a parallel to several papers written by Don Foote on Point Hope from “Project Chariot” (Foote 1960, 1961), although Burch did not acknowledge serious influence by Foote on his subsistence research in his writings nor in our many conversations.
7. Presently known as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).
8. According to Kenneth Pratt, around 1983 Burch was invited to guest edit a special issue of the journal *Études/Inuit/Studies* on the Central Yup’ik people of Western Alaska (Burch 1984a). Evidently, he identified contributors based primarily on his personal contacts and familiarity with their work. Many (including Pratt himself) were already aware of his research on North Alaskan Iñupiat societies (e.g., Burch 1980) and contributed rejoinders based on their experience with the respective groups from the Central Yup’ik area. That special volume helped establish Burch’s vision across the area he never visited or researched himself (Kenneth Pratt, personal communication 2011).
9. According to John Bockstoce (personal communication, 2011), the *National Geographic* editors first asked him to prepare such a map in early 1979. Bockstoce responded to Bill Graves, the *National Geographic* editor at the time, that his colleague Ernest Burch was the only person fully capable of doing a first-class execution and would be a better candidate. *National Geographic* followed that advice and contracted Burch in March 1979.
10. The following account on the “Peoples of the Arctic” project is based upon my meetings and correspondence with Tiger Burch in 1979–1982, including several draft maps he shared with me, as well as upon our later discussions and related documents in his collection reviewed in 2010. The files related to the *National Geographic* project are available at UAF (ESBP, boxes 51–53).
11. This progress came with a steep price. Burch wrote, “I have spent most of the winter [of 1980] researching a map for the National Geographic Society and have not done any writing at all for several months. I hope to finish my work on that project within a few weeks” (Ernest Burch, written correspondence to Igor Krupnik, April 29, 1980).
12. Aleut, Eskimo, Athapaskan, Algonkian, Lapish, Samoyedic, Komi, Manchu-Tungus, Turkic,

Yukagir and Luoravetlan (Chukchi and Koryak) – in Burch’s original spelling.

13. The map itself features the names of Gilbert M. Grosvenor, President of the National Geographic Society; Wilbur E. Garrett, editor; John B. Carver, chief cartographer; Richard J. Darley, associated chief; and John F. Shupe, associated chief. Burch’s name is listed below in miniscule font as “principle consultant” together with Henry B. Collins of the Smithsonian Institution. In the left bottom corner of the map there is a four-line biographical blurb on “Anthropologist Dr. Ernest S. ‘Tiger’ Burch, Jr., who provided the map compilation data.”(!)
14. Already by 1987, Burch realized that the project would expand to some 4000 (!) written pages, but he still hoped to complete it in 1988 or 1989 (Ernest Burch, written correspondence to Igor Krupnik, April 7, 1987).
15. Other important encyclopedic projects in anthropology of the same era included the *Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Lee and Daly 1999) and the *Encyclopedia of Prehistory* (Peregrine and Ember 2001). Burch was definitely inspired by his work for the *Handbook of North American Indians*, to which he contributed two chapters for its *Arctic* volume (Burch 1984b, 1984c).
16. Burch, E. S., Jr., (n.d. [1972]) Final Report—Canada Council Research Grant S71-066. January 3, 1972, p. 13.
17. The 1972 Canada Council map (Burch n.d. [1972]) listed 23 Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies ca. 1845–1855, whereas the later map (Burch and Correll 1972:23) features 37 regional groups, including the Yup’ik and the Athapaskans. The date is also ca. A.D. 1825–1850. The 1975 map (Burch 1975:11) lists 20 traditional Eskimo societies in Northwest Alaska in the mid-19th century (Iñupiaq-speakers only). It also provided the first population estimates for each group.
18. David Damas, 1926–2010 (see Szathmáry 2011), was a graduate student at the University of Chicago a few years prior to Burch (Ph.D. in Anthropology, 1962). He remained his close colleague and a friend for the rest of his life.
19. In 2010 he told me that he did not want to republish his early very influential paper on human and caribou interactions (Burch 1972) because it was “wrong on many counts.”
20. Yvon Csonka (personal communication, 2011) told me that Burch alluded a few times in the late 1980s to his “unfinished manuscript” on the Caribou Inuit in their discussions on the status of the

Caribou Inuit research. Nonetheless, he did not share that unfinished manuscript with his colleagues. It is currently on file in his collection at UAF (ESBP, Box 246), with another copy at the Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution (thanks to Thomas Correll).

21. The annual chart for 1973–1974 states that the first chapter of the book, “The Iñupiat of Northwest Alaska — A Demographic History,” had been written and that the project has been suspended. The manuscript has yet to be located in Burch’s personal papers at UAF.

22. That latter section under the title of “Denouement” is briefly summarized in Burch 1986:128–131.

23. ESBP, Box 253, Folder 38.

24. Yvon Csonka (personal communication 2011) brought to my attention the fact that out of 118 boxes in Burch’s personal collection at the Rasmuson Library listed as professional works, 32 are from his latest *Caribou Herds* project, 27 from the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Northwest Alaska project (1983–2003), 17 from the Caribou Inuit project of the 1970s, and all others have less than five boxes each. Of course, the number of archival boxes is hardly an absolute indicator, but it is an interesting fact on the scope and importance of Burch’s unpublished work on Caribou Inuit.

25. National Science Foundation, Office of Polar Programs, Award #9817922 (Electronic Document. <http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward.do?AwardNumber=9817922>); see also Burch n.d. [1998].

26. The 1972 CC Report cites a paper titled “The Structure of Small Scale Societies” to be written “shortly” (Burch n.d. [1972])

27. It should be noted that Burch treated his Princeton and Chicago training very differently. He cited the works of Marion J. Levy, his Princeton professor in every book and many papers he produced over 40 years. To the contrary, he rarely if ever made references to the works of his professors at the University of Chicago, including Fred Eggan, his dissertation supervisor, and he was openly skeptical of David Schneider’s kinship theories that he cited but once (Burch 1975:55; Fienup-Riordan, this volume).

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