

# Traveling by Story Through Copper River Country

~ Sharing the voices of Copper River Country to promote stewardship of our resources ~



Copper River Country is home to a wealth of stories that fill the valley: from the last American homesteads in Slana, to the salmon that sustained the Ahtna people, to the geologic forces shaping the basin and its gold and copper mining riches, a trip through Copper River Country has much to offer.

In spite of such incredible historic and cultural resources, this history is not readily available to visitors traveling through or to residents living in Copper River Country. We at CRWP and our partners want to change this by highlighting the stories distinctive to Alaska's Copper River Country to help deepen connections with this powerful landscape. At the same time, we aim to capture the stories in the voices of the people of the region in hopes to preserve the stories for generations to come so they are not lost as people pass on or move from the region.

## Project Summary:

Visitors to Copper River Country are the target audience for this project, but residents, too, will also find value in the products. Community scoping and development of initial products began in 2008 and has progressed as funding became available. During spring 2012, CRWP hosted a talking circle in Slana, Copper Center and Kenny Lake. The purpose of these gatherings was to pull together elders from each community and facilitate the sharing of stories they wanted to tell (rather than asking them to speak on a specific topic). From these gatherings, an individual was selected by the group to share a more lengthy oral history. These recordings are the raw materials we plan to integrate into a variety of outreach materials, including:

**Audio clips for Alaska App.** These audioclips will be geo-referenced. Therefore, when travelers with the Alaska App on their smart phone or iPad travel near the community the story is from, they will be able to hear stories of that place in the voices of the people from that place.

**Printed mapguide.** Featuring the artistically rendered map of the Copper River watershed, the printed mapguide will be made available to visitors via tourist stops and businesses (restaurants, lodges, charters, etc.). The map will feature short snippets collected from the oral histories and story circles that highlight unique historic and cultural aspects of the region, similar to National Geographic's Geomaps.

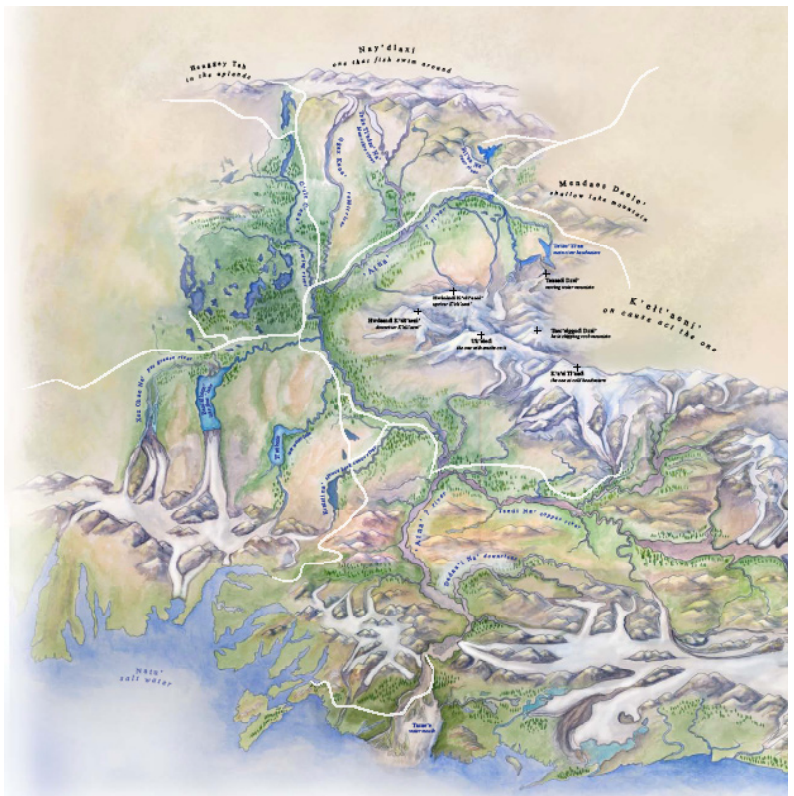
Examples of maps that are similar to the vision for this project:  
*National Geographic Geomaps:* [http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/programs\\_for\\_places.html#mapguides](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/programs_for_places.html#mapguides)  
*International Selkirk Loop:* <http://www.selkirkloop.org/>



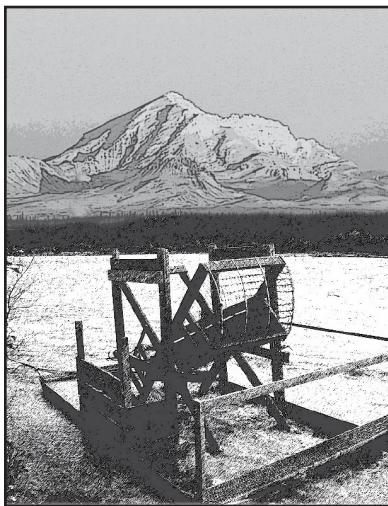
*Copper River Country Copper River Country is defined to be along Richardson Highway from Tonsina to Paxson; the Glenn Highway from Eureka to Mentasta, including Nabesna on the Nabesna Road; and the Edgerton Highway and McCarthy Road from Willow Creek to Kennicott (roughly the area inside the dotted line). The area inside the thin, solid line is the Copper River watershed (Ecotrust, 2005).*

**Tour our Watershed website.** The original website was developed in 2011 in order to provide an opportunity for “virtual visitors” to explore and connect with the unique landscape and lifestyle in the Copper River watershed ([copperriver.org/watershed-tour](http://copperriver.org/watershed-tour)). Currently the site uses a Google map interface. CRWP plans to update the interface using an artistically rendered watershed map and create a more user-friendly and inviting interface to draw visitors in. This web interface also will allow for more of the content and materials collected from the region to be hosted because we will not be limited by space.

*CRWP also hopes to host more story circles and collect more oral histories in the future to continue to add more content to the products described above.*



*Artistic map of the Copper River watershed commissioned from artist Kristin Link for roadside educational signs installed in Copper River Country in 2011.*



Larz Enterprises

## Project Timeline

- Fall 2008:* Initial planning team convenes to establish common vision for Copper River Country tourism project.
- 2009 - 2011:* Assistance from National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program secured to guide project team through planning activities and initial fundraising efforts.
- Fall 2011:* Grant from Alaska Humanities Forum awarded to support hosting story circles and collecting three new oral histories.
- May 2012:* Story circles held and oral histories recorded in Copper Center, Kenny Lake and Slana.
- Summer 2012:* Development of audio story scapes for Alaska App and Tour our Watershed webpage.
- Current:* Continued development of audio storyscapes and written text for printed mapguide.

## Project Partners to date:



Alaska Region  
Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program