

HB

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Alaska State Legislature

Juneau

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Sponsor Statement

HB 249: Koyukuk Station Veterans' Airport

The original village of Koyukuk, primarily all Koyukon Athabaskan Indians, was established around 1867. It used to be called Koyukuk Station, because a military telegraph line was constructed along the North side of the Yukon, and Koyukuk became the site of the telegraph station. In naming the airport, the residents also wish to honor the many Native military veterans who have served their country.

Koyukuk is located on the Yukon River, 30 miles west of Galena and 290 air miles from Fairbanks. It is adjacent to the Koyukuk and Innoko River Refuges.

The Russian traders were a big influence in this area, opening a trading post around 1880. Roman Catholic Missionaries also had a major impact on the Athabascans. The first school was constructed in 1939, this resulted in the Koyukon people living in the village year around.

Up until then, the Koyukon Athabascans lived a subsistence lifestyle, moving among seasonal fish and game camps. They moved as the wild game migrated. Most of the people who settled here were from up the Koyukuk River, as far as the Dolbi River, which is close to Huslia. Even when people settled in Koyukuk they continued to travel up the Koyukuk to winter trapping camps and returned in the spring.

The Native name for Koyukuk is, Meneelghaadze T'oh. Meneelghaadze is the name of the mountain at Koyukuk. Madeline Solomon, now deceased Elder from Koyukuk, had said the mountain was named Meneelghaadze, because long ago, the Koyukon people used to go get clay at the mountain and mix with bird feathers to make clay pots. Eliza Jones an Elder from Koyukuk said that in Athabaskan, "T'oh" would be

added on, meaning at the base of the mountain. Meneelghaadze T'oh means, "at the base of the Koyukuk Mountain."

Today Koyukuk people are still living a subsistence lifestyle. The main employment is the local government, clinic, school, store and any firefighting and construction seasonal jobs.