~Alaska~
the Great, Grand Prize

The Americanization of Alaska was not quick, easy, or thorough, but Alaska has proven to be a great prize for the U.S.

The Great Unknown

Seward visited Southeast Alaska in 1869. He travelled to Klukwan, near present-day Haines, where the Chilkat leader, Kohklux, drew a remarkable map of the region. Seward recognized that the U.S. knew little about its vast new territory, and in fact, had not even surveyed the Alaska-Canada border.

Traditional Knowledge

Like Kohklux, many Alaska Natives provided valuable information about the land to Americans seeking Alaska's resources or sent to map the land. Many of the Native people acted as guides and translators. They explained their ideas of government, justice, and land and resource ownership to the newcomers. At the time, most Americans would not consider ideas different from their own. Neither the *Treaty of Cession* nor Congress provided much guidance for the new territory.

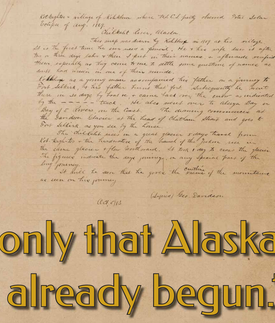
Early Struggles

Not surprisingly, the Native people and the Americans did not always understand each other. Several violent incidents occurred during the early years of military rule. Finally, in 1884 Congress passed the Organic Act, creating civil government and setting the path for Alaska's future. Looking forward, what will the next 150 years hold for Alaska and its people?

George Davidson photograph shows George Shotridge (known as Kohklux), center, with his young son Louis.

Photo courtesy of Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley

Background map courtesy of NOAA's Historical Map & Chart Collection



"These...are the guaranties [*sic*], not only that Alaska has a future, but that the future has already begun."

Excerpt from *Alaska Speech of William H. Seward*, at Sitka, August 12, 1869

Courtesy of Washington, D.C.: Philp & Solomons. 1869 from *Our North Pacific States: Alaska Speech of William H. Seward, in Alaska, Vancouver's, and Oregon, August, 1869.*

Timeline:

March 30, 1867	April 9, 1867	June 20, 1867	October 18, 1867	July 27, 1868	July 27, 1868	August 1, 1868	August 15, 1868
Seward and de Stoeckl negotiate Treaty of Cession	U.S. Senate ratifies treaty	Russia and U.S. exchange ratifications	Ceremonial transfer of territory at Sitka	Congress appropriates $7.2 million to complete purchase	Congress passes Customs Act for Alaska	U.S. Treasury issues check	Russia cashes check

150th Anniversary
Alaska Treaty of Cession
1867~2017