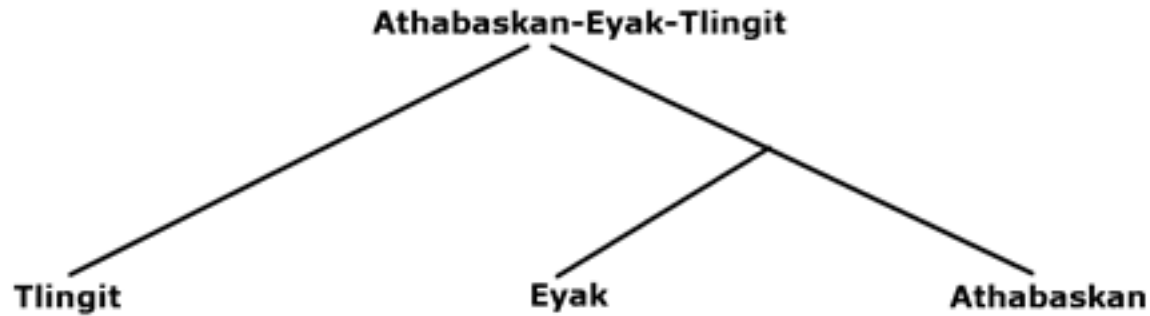


Current Efforts at Dena'ina Language Revitalization

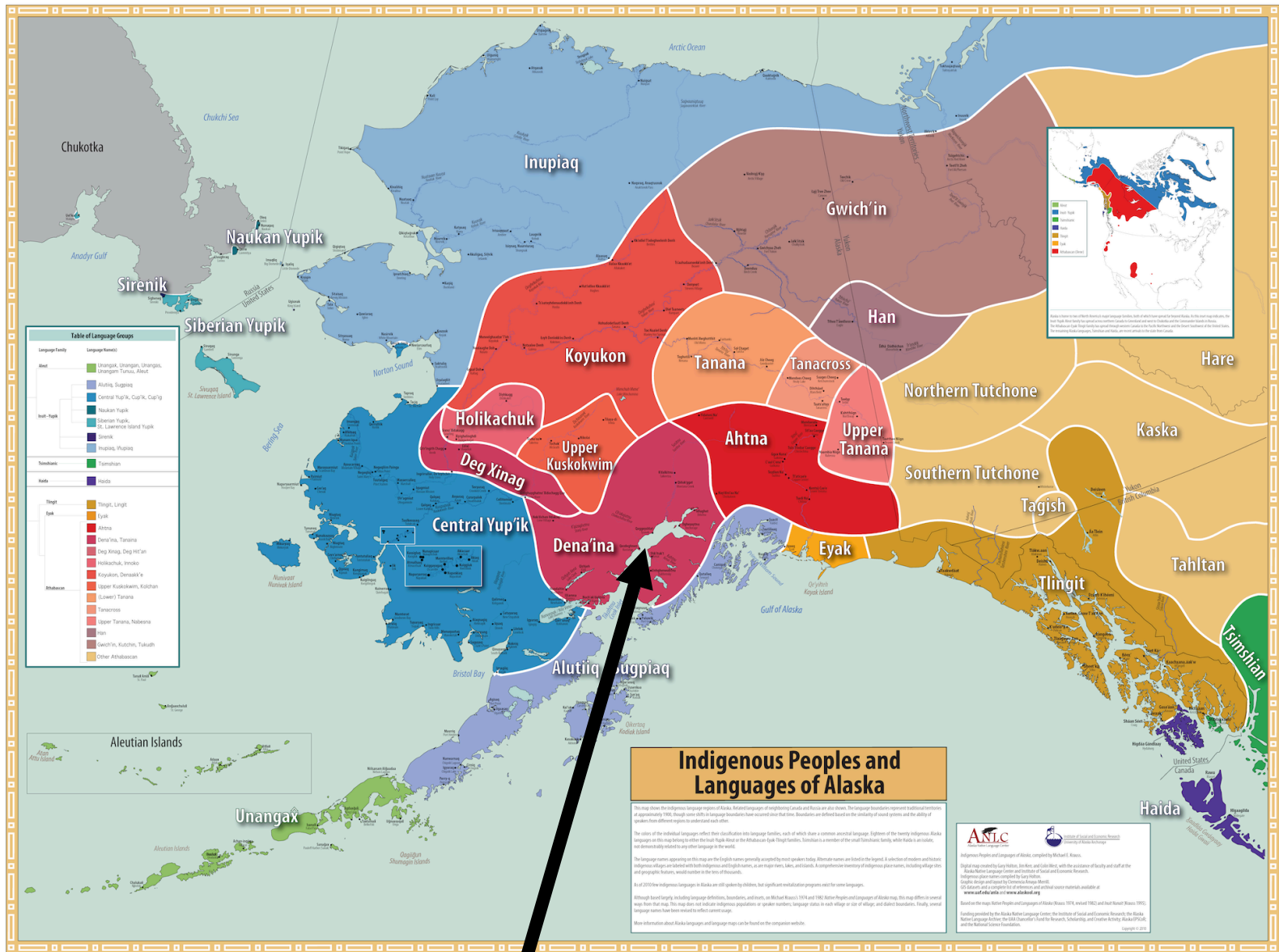
Alaska Native Libraries Archives and Museums conference 2016

Aaron Leggett Former Dena'ina
Cultural Historian, Alaska Native
Language Center and Curator of
Culture and History Anchorage
Museum

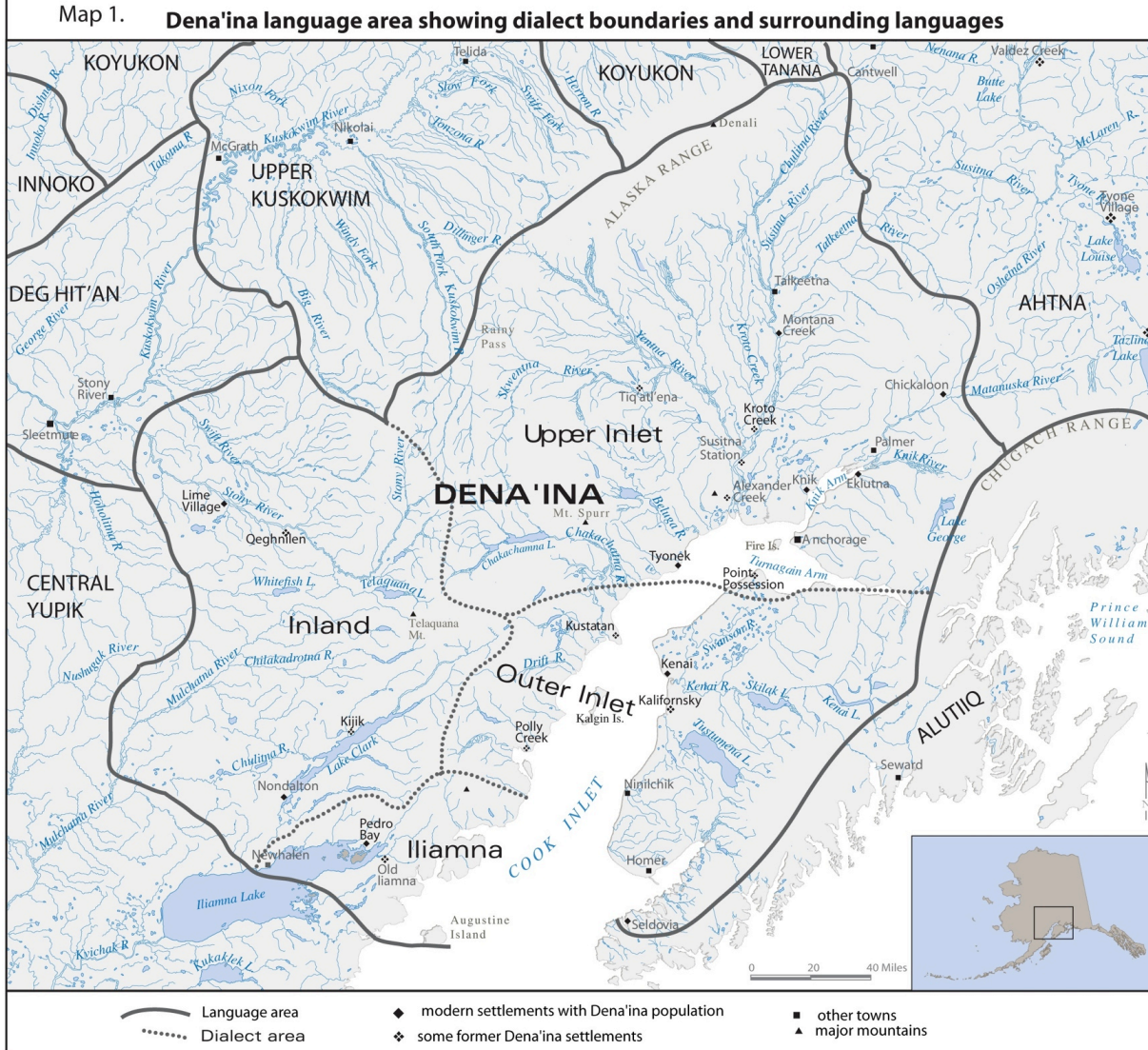
Na-Dene Language Family



One Tlingit language, one Eyak language, and over 40 Athabaskan languages



Dena'ina Athabascans



Base map by Barbara Brundy of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve; map text by James Kari.

Dena'ina area

41,000 Square Miles about the size of Ohio

- Dena'ina like almost every indigenous language wasn't a written language and didn't have an official orthography until the early 1970's
- From 1975-1990 there was steady output of Dena'ina language material









Dena'ina Sukdu'a

Traditional Stories of the Tana'ina Athabaskans



Compiled by Joan M. Tenenbaum

A Dena'ina Legacy

K'TL'EGH'I SUKDU

*The Collected Writings of
Peter Kalifornsky*



TUBUGHNA EŁNENA



THE TYONEK PEOPLE'S COUNTRY

DENA'INA QENAGA DUCH'DULDIH



DENA'INA ATHABASKAN Junior Dictionary



However, by the early 1990's with the death of Shem Pete (1989) Albert Wassilie (1989), Antone Evan (1983), Katherine Nicholie (1990), most of the Dena'ina language work with a few exception had ceased.

However, by the early 2000's a new generation of Dena'ina who had read these books(if they could find them) working with the last generation of fluent speakers started to realize that now was the time if ever to save our language from extinction.



"You know, all these recordings ... if we don't get it out and learn about it, where are we going to learn from? These are old recordings. We want to get it out and teach our younger children what the elder people are talking about. I think that's a very good idea for getting it free so we can listen to them."

Jim Wilson 2004

Dena'ina Language Grants

- 2003-2006 Dena'ina Language Institutes through a US Department of Education Title VII grant
- 2003-2005 *Dena'ina Archiving, Training and Access* project, (grant NSF-OPP 0326805), the *Alaska Summer Research Challenge* (grant NSF 0139634.), and the *Northern Indigenous Languages Archive* (grant NSF-OPP 0503782) UAF
- 2004, 2007 Kenaitze Indian tribe, ANA grant
- 2005-2008 ANHC received DOE grant to teach Dena'ina afterschool and in one middle school
- 2008-09, U.S. Forest Service grant
- 2008-10 ANA Language Preservation grant, ANHC
- 2009-10 KNBA Dena'ina lifeways grant
- 2008-11 NSF Documenting Endangered Languages grant



Congratulations to Professor James Kari, winner of the 2009 Alaska Humanities Forum Governor's Award for the Humanities!

Congratulations to Professor Alan Boras, winner of the 2009 University of Alaska Foundation's Edith R. Bullock Prize!

Dena'ina language lessons now available on YouTube.

"Dena'ina Lifeways" on KNBA features elders' narratives, photographs, and curricula.

[Click for more news.](#)

Featured Word

Click to listen!

edji

'cold'

or visit the

[Featured Word Archive](#)

Search Archive

[Qenek \(News\)](#)

[About this Site](#)

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Nagh Nduninyu! Welcome to Dena'ina Qenaga

The Dena'ina Qenaga website is a web-based resource for the Dena'ina Athabascan language. This site is designed to provide information about the Dena'ina language, including information about language structure (grammar, pronunciation, spelling, etc.); information about learning the Dena'ina language (phrases and conversations, stories, etc.); and information about community language revitalization programs. This phase of website development is very much in its initial, beginning stages. We welcome ideas for additional content.

Dena'ina Qenaga Digital Archive

One of the primary goals of this site is to provide access to Dena'ina archival materials currently housed at the Alaska Native Language Center Archive. The need for access to materials was stated quite eloquently at a language workshop held at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in February 2004.

"You know, all these recordings ... if we don't get it out and learn about it, where are we going to learn from? These are old recordings. We want to get it out and teach our younger children what the elder people are talking about. I think that's a very good idea for getting it free so we can listen to them."

The web-based archive currently provides access to a database of more than two hundred documents and more than two hundred audio recordings relating to the Dena'ina language. Original copies of these materials are housed at the Alaska Native Language Center. Digital copies of some of this material can be downloaded directly from this site. In some cases, access restrictions prohibit web-based access to digital materials. However, digital copies may still be available directly from the Alaska Native Language Center.



Website development is supported by the Dena'ina Archiving, Training and Access project, funded by US National Science Foundation grant NSF-OPP 0326805. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. See [About this Site](#) for additional information.

Materials on this site are copyrighted by the original authors, the speakers whose voices are recorded, and the Alaska Native Language Center. There may be additional copyright holders as well as others who have provided funding or support for work presented here. Materials may be used freely for non-commercial, educational purposes as specified in the license agreement. Alaska Native Language Center Archive materials made available through the Dena'ina Qenaga Digital Archive may be subject to more restrictive conditions of use as specified by the original depositors.

Suggestions for future development are welcome. If you have questions or comments about this site, please contact the DATA Project at ata@ingustlist.org or ANLC at fyani@uaf.edu.



Welcome to the Dena'ina Qenaga Digital Archive

The Dena'ina Qenaga Archive provides digital access to more than five hundred documents and recordings relating to the Dena'ina language, including nearly everything written in or about Dena'ina language. You may browse or search the available records. Some of the records have associated digital audio and text files which can be downloaded. In some cases, access restrictions prohibit web-based access to digital materials. However, digital copies may still be available directly from the Alaska Native Language Center.



[Browse All Records](#)



[Browse Documents](#)



[Browse Recordings](#)




[Search](#)



Browse Documents

Displaying records 1 to 20 of 236

Identifier:	TI003R2003 (print) [view full record]
Title:	Alaska Native Education Summit
Date:	2003
Participants:	Jonathon Ross
Identifier:	TI004M2004 (print) [view full record]
Title:	Y-Subject in Dena'ina
Date:	2004
Participants:	Olga Mueller
Identifier:	TI004P2004a (print) [view full record]
Title:	Dena'ina Qenaga: Language Basics
Date:	2004
Participants:	Donita Peter
Identifier:	TI004P2004b (print) [view full record]
Title:	Tebughna Nidush Qeyel Qitelneshi K'eliga: Tebugna Songs
Date:	2004
Participants:	Donita Peter
Identifier:	TI005R2005a (print) [view full record] 
Title:	Dena'ina Language Lessons
Date:	2005
Participants:	Wanda Reams
Identifier:	TI005R2005b (print) [view full record] 
Title:	Shdesnaqa-Bacha'ina: My Family the Loved Ones
Date:	2005
Participants:	Wanda Reams



Browse Recordings

Displaying records 1 to 20 of 242

Identifier:	T11262 (audio) [view full record] 
Title:	[Recording: Gabriel Trefon]
Date:	1961-08-22
Participants:	Clark Davis ; Michael Krauss ; Gabriel Trefon
Identifier:	T11264 (audio) [view full record] 
Title:	[Recording: Ephim Baktuit; Peter Kalifornsky; Bertha Monfor; Fedosia Sacaloff]
Date:	1972-06
Participants:	Ephim Baktuit ; Peter Kalifornsky ; James Kari ; Bertha Monfor ; Fedosia Sacaloff
Identifier:	T11265 (audio) [view full record] 
Title:	[Recording: Peter Kalifornsky; Bertha Monfor; Fedosia Sacaloff]
Date:	
Participants:	Peter Kalifornsky ; James Kari ; Bertha Monfor ; Fedosia Sacaloff
Identifier:	T11266 (audio) [view full record] 
Title:	[Recording: Shem Pete; others]
Date:	1974-10-07
Participants:	Shem Pete ; - others
Identifier:	T11268 (audio) [view full record] 
Title:	[Recording: Antone Evan; Gabriel Trefon]
Date:	1961-08-22
Participants:	Clark Davis ; Antone Evan ; Gabriel Trefon

Dena'ina Lifeways

- A series of Twenty Six Dena'ina Language clips aired on KNBA Tuesday and Thursdays at 7:30 A.M. and 5:30 P.M.
- In addition, there is a website that houses all of the clips as well as the audio transcripts, Google map of the location and photo's associated with each story



Welcome to KNBA Dena'ina Lifeways

Welcome to Dena'ina Lifeways - a Web site that complements the KNBA 90.3 FM radio series of the same name. Dena'ina Lifeways airs every Tuesday morning and afternoon (7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.). The programs in the 26-part series contain original archival recordings of Dena'ina Elders from Southcentral Alaska speaking in the Dena'ina language. The recordings describe place names, sacred landmarks, history, and ancient practices that allowed the people to thrive for thousands of years. An English translation follows each Dena'ina recording. Listen to the stories, locate them on an interactive map of Southcentral Alaska, see photographs of the places, people, and practices that are described in the stories, and learn a bit about the Dena'ina people from their rich past to their promising future. This site and the radio series are made possible by a grant from the U.S. Park Service, and by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, The CIRI Foundation, and the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

KNBA Radio Programming

We have chosen 26 short narratives from the huge Dena'ina language archive for broadcast on the Dena'ina Lifeways radio series. [Click here to hear the stories and learn more about them.](#)

Curriculum Resources

Teachers, parents, and students can download or link to lesson ideas and materials that teach Dena'ina language, history, and culture.

Links, Credits and Contacts

Learn more about the series and the Dena'ina language and people. [Contact us with questions or comments.](#)

A SERIES BY

koahnic

BROADCAST
CORPORATION

KNBA Radio Programming

The Dena'ina language is now spoken fluently by fewer than 100 people, out of a total Dena'ina population of about 900. Another 20 are learning the language from Elders and at the annual Dena'ina Language Institute sponsored by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. In spite of the few speakers, we have a rich archive of hundreds of hours of recorded stories made by Elders and linguists who have worked together for the past 35 years. We have chosen 26 short narratives from all four dialects of Dena'ina for the Dena'ina Lifeways radio series to represent the diverse information in the archive, including: How important places got their names Traditional hunting and gathering practices Events in Dena'ina history How to build houses, make recipes, and fashion tools and weapons Each recording is about one minute long and is followed by an English translation and commentary by Eklutna Dena'ina Chada Aaron Leggett. The stories are broadcast every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on KNBA 90.3 FM which is streamed at www.knba.org. To hear a program, click on an entry in the Stories Archive at the right. There you'll also find maps, photos, information about the storytellers, and commentary about the stories. A new story will be added each week for 26 weeks to coordinate with the KNBA broadcast.

Stories Archive



2007...



Bear Hunting

Ggagga Ahdults'ih ha Ggagga Nil'unilyaxi
They Stay (Hunting) for Brown Bear at
Night and Bear Butchering/...



The Giant's Rock

K'ghushaghalen Qantnk'a ch'u Tutl'uht
The Giant's Rock By Walter Johnson
Aired on September...



Fire Island and Turnagain Arm

Nutu'iy ch'u Tutl'uh

Photo Archive

View the entire photo archive here

A SERIES BY

koahnic

BROADCAST

Fire Island and Turnagain Arm

Nutul'iy ch'u Tutl'uh

Fire Island and Turnagain Arm

Aired on September 8 and 10, 2009

Dena'ina Lifeways Weekly Radio Quiz

Q: Who gave Fire Island its English Name?

Listen live to 90.3FM KNBA 12:30pm Wednesdays, for the question of the week. Call 279-KNBA with your answer.

Shem Pete was born in 1896 in Yusdishlaq', near Susitna Station. He was one of the most versatile Dena'ina storytellers and historians of late twentieth-century Alaska. In the 1970s he began working with James Kari and James Fall, recording Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina stories and ethnography. He tape-recorded more than seventy hours of narratives and music. His published stories showcase his rare talent, but only about one-third of Shem's tape-recorded materials have been transcribed and translated. Some of his knowledge has been published in *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. The depth of his understanding of Dena'ina territory illustrates his remarkable memory and the strength of Dena'ina culture. (downloaded from qenaga.org/people.html)

This story was recorded in 1985 by Shem Pete and linguist James Kari, and tells about events that occurred in 1778.

Dena'ina text (originally published in Shem Pete's Alaska pg. 348):

Captain Cook nqaniyu ghedghu Fire Island huydila'un.

Yet huqeydila'un ch'u yet k'qulqet'.

Yeh hqugh nihghinnik, nqahghinnik.

K'qulqet'.

Dach' ghuda shughu Fire Island h'iyi dilan.

Dach'lu hqu'uyi ghuda.

Qeyq'e niqendintsiyi ghuda yedahdi Fire Island beq'e dayq'eni Island yadin'un.

Yeh qubel hkayiqats' yun'e.

"Qil," ni.

"Naqandghelghelni,"

Turnagain Arm h'iyi datchin.

"Niqaandghelghel," ni.

Turnagain Arm h'iyi dilan.

Listen to Fire Island and Turnagain Arm

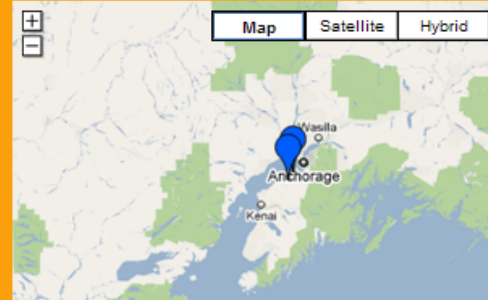


Track #1

0:00



Fire Island; photo courtesy of Aaron Leggett



Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi

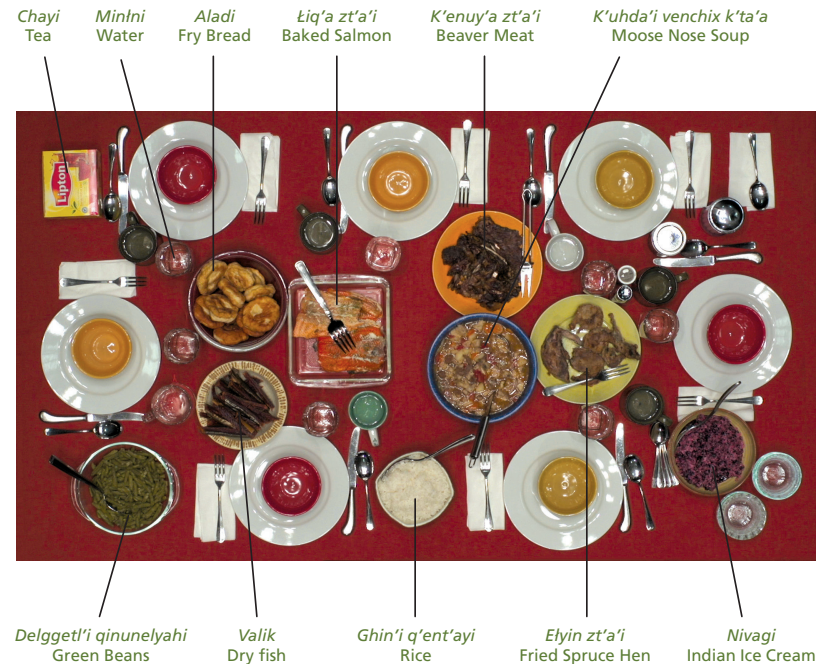
The Dena'ina Way of Living



Dining Film Project

On November 11th 2012, a group of Dena'ina people gathered to record the film you are watching. In attendance were, Karen, Gladys, and Yvette Evanoff, Butch and Pauline Hobson, Helen Dick and Aaron Leggett. Each person made a specific dish to share with each other. The foods that were prepared that day were moose nose soup, baked salmon, fried spruce hen, roasted beaver meat, dry fish, green beans, rice, fry bread, Indian ice cream and tea. The following film is in real time and shows the meal as it progressed. In it you will hear English and Dena'ina as well as a variety of stories related to the various foods and how they are gathered today and in the past. Please, join us for dinner.

<http://denaina.anchoragemuseum.org/multimedia/dinner-time.html>





Gheich'ehi BIRCH BARK CONTAINER

1940, Stony River
Birch Bark, wool, grass
Katie Museum of Native History and Culture 1.22.1718

Birch bark was a versatile material that the Denai'na used for a variety of purposes. The Denai'na highly valued birch bark since it is flexible, water-resistant, and does not rot easily. Some of it was included in roofing material, coverings for canoes, and a variety of containers. Also, birch bark is one of the best fire starters found in nature, as it will burn easily even if it is completely wet.



Shqul LADLE

1970, Peter Kikilash, Nondalton
wood
Joni Chambers Collection

*Kheh' khesa'e n'lahna poyghulghul'ah!
Chu, chu jhi gheigher! poygh'er pay!
F'okhas. Kade lq'hashego nli y'i'g'eh'ty'i
s'igge' l'oh'eh' nli g'ho' poygh' k'ayep'eh'eh, chu jhi
ghin' j'eh.*

This is something that the men used to use in the past. They used to have beaver tooth cracked bark that they carved with. They used to carve out various spoons, wooden plates, and such with that beaver tooth bark.

—Arbore Egan

Shqul LADLES

1970, Peter Kikilash, Nondalton
wood
Joni Chambers Collection

Gheich'ehi BIRCH BARK CONTAINER

1970, Emma Alaska
birch bark
Joni Chambers Collection

Birch baskets were used to collect berries. Blueberries and low bush raspberries are the most harvested berries throughout the Denai'na area. Blueberries are picked during the late summer, and care must be taken to preserve them since they rot quickly. Raspberries, collected in the late fall and into the winter, store better.



Emma Hill picking high berries, Peter Bay



Sulchi Stories

While you were out in the cold in the Denali, what they got... [text is small and partially illegible]

Nichi Winter Ho

Multifamily Dena'ina house... [text is partially illegible]



Dach' hdi u t'qudyuq . . .

"And that's the way it happened"

**Two expert Dena'ina
storytellers, Fedosia Sacaloff
and Peter Kalifornsky sitting
on the beach telling stories.**

Photo courtesy of Priscilla Russell



**Click a story on the left to learn more
and listen in Dena'ina or English.**

Told in Dena'ina by Shem Pete of Susitna Station in 1979

This is another example of a mountain story told by the Dena'ina. Many of these stories contain powerful songs that were traditionally sung in the mountains and that helped a hunter be successful and have good weather while they were in the mountains.



Photograph courtesy of Priscilla Russell



03:42



02:45

<http://denaina.anchoragemuseum.org/multimedia/denaina/the-wolverine-story.html>



Qunsha / Arctic Ground Squirrel



Qunsha dghak / Squirrel Parka

Qunsha yes
Ground Squirrel Skin

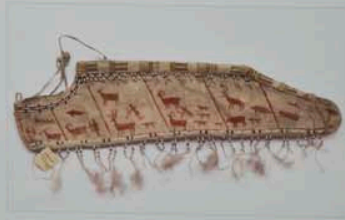


Q'us / ARROW QUIVER

Before firearms were widely available, a Dena'ina man almost always had a bow and arrows that were carried in a quiver wherever he went. The bow was his main weapon for hunting and self-defense.

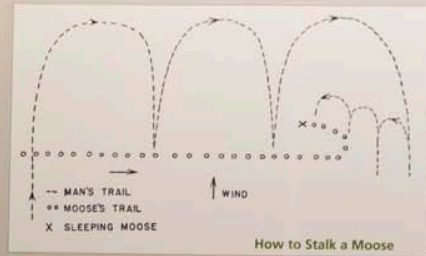
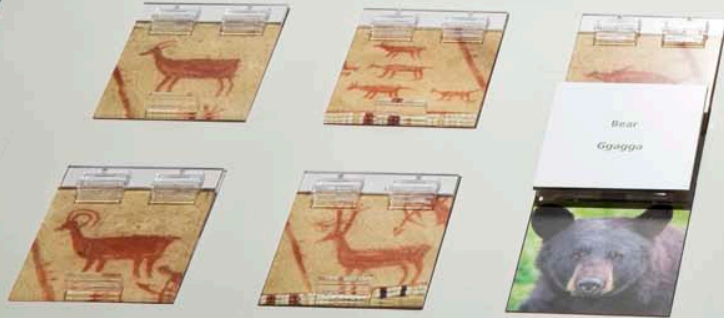
Because every man had his own quiver, he would want to personalize it. This usually meant decorating it with feathers and porcupine quills or beads, and drawings made with red ochre paint.

Using a beautifully made quiver was one way that a hunter showed respect to the animals that he hunted. These animals provided food and clothing for his family, and his respectful attitude helped insure a successful hunt.



ACTIVITY:

- 1 Look closely at these animal pictures. They are some of the animals painted on the arrow quiver in the case to your right. Can you identify them?
- 2 Lift the flaps up to reveal the answers.



FALL HUNTING

In early fall, unskilled hunters traveled upriver into the mountains and surrounding foothill regions. Caribou, some of the mountain sheep, and moose were hunted and dried with bones and pieces of tanned moose were also hunted in the fall and throughout the winter. They were tanned and dried with bones and pieces of tanned moose. The Dena'ina hunted both black and brown bears in the fall for food, fat, and skins. Bears were taken on mountainside, in meadows, and swamps. On mountain ridges, hunters scouted their animals as they approached from which they could shoot bears.

Q'us

1865, Alaska

Native: Tulu, Alaska. Materials: porcupine quills, deer, caribou, moose, and tanned moose.

Object: An arrow quiver.

Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

Twitters

1865, Alaska

Native: Tulu, Alaska.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

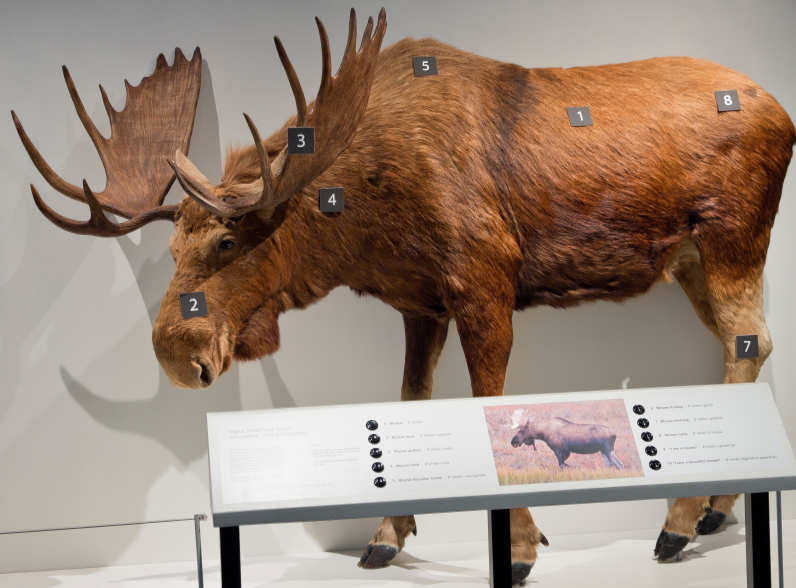
Object: A bow.

Object: A quiver.

Object: A bow.

On the Bear Twitters, and among the other twitters, the length of the bow was varied to suit the distance between a man's feet and the arrow. The longer the twitters, the longer the distance between the feet and the arrow when the arrow was launched.

The Dena'ina had all Northern Alaskan and produced the distinctive type of bow with a notched arrowhead to the belly of the bow. When the bow is struck, a notched arrowhead strikes the arrow, causing the arrow to fly. The twitters were made of tanned moose.



Alcega, Alcega (moose)
Alcega (moose) is a large member of the deer family. It is found in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

1 - Body
2 - Head
3 - Antlers
4 - Neck
5 - Back
6 - Side
7 - Leg
8 - Tail



9 - Moose
10 - Elk
11 - Caribou
12 - Reindeer



1 Moose *K'uhda'i*



2 Moose nose *K'uhda'i venchix*



3 Moose antlers *K'uhda'i veda*



4 Moose neck *K'uhda'i q'es*



5 Moose shoulder hump *K'uhda'i veyinghala*

e Dena'ina
oose with

ord that



[http://denaina.anchoragemuseum.org/
multimedia/speak-denaina.html](http://denaina.anchoragemuseum.org/multimedia/speak-denaina.html)

DENA'INA LANGUAGE SHORTS

The Alaska Office of the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center hosted the Dena'ina Language Institute in 2010 at the Living Our Cultures exhibit gallery located in the Anchorage Museum. Elders Helen Dick and Gladys Evanoff shared their knowledge about Dena'ina heritage objects in the Smithsonian collections, using the objects as tools to teach the Dena'ina Athabascan language. They worked with language learners, linguists and museum staff to script and record these language learning videos.

DOG PACK



<http://denaina.anchoragemuseum.org/multimedia/denaina-language.html>



DENA'INAQ' HUCH'ULYESHI

The Dena'ina Way of Living

Suzi Jones, James Fall, Aaron Leggett, Editors

CHIN'AN GU NINYU

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM



MUSEUM