An Introduction to Dena’ina Ethnography and History

or

Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina Way of Living

OLE
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Anchorage

Fish camp on Tikahtnu (Cook Inlet), near Tyonek
DENA’INA
EŁNENA
Dena’ina Ełnena
The Dena’ina
(aka “Tanaina,” Kenaitze)

- Athabascan/Dene
- ~ 5,000 people
- ~ 41,000 square miles
- Borders salt water
- Diverse resources
- Seasonal abundance and scarcity
- Early contact
- Most Alaskans (60%) today live in Dena’ina territory.
Ts’itsatna: Original People
Bada q’u inlan?
Traditional social organization

- Age and gender
- Residence: *nichit*, villages, and regional bands
- Kinship: matrilineal clans and moieties
- Rank: leaders and followers

*K’enq’ena*
Where you live: residence and territory

- “Regional Bands”: -
  - *Ht’ana* (“people of [a place or area]”)
  - *Susitnu Ht’ana*
  - *Yentnu Ht’ana*
  - *K’enah Ht’ana*
  - *Tubughna*
  - *Dghelay Teht’ana*

- **Villages:** *qayeh*
  - [locations with *nichif*]
  - *Tubughnenq’*
  - *Tuqen Kaq’*
  - *Tsат’ukegh*
  - *Tanltunt*
  - *Dashq’e*
  - *Bentalit*
  - *Tiq’atl’ena*
  - *Benteh*
  - *Niteh*
  - *Idlughet*
## Who you’re related to: kinship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relatives and Kinship Terms</th>
<th>Clans</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Kindred”: the web of relatives &amp; roles</td>
<td>Matrilineal: descent from mother’s line</td>
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<tr>
<td>shingha, shkela</td>
<td>Two “sides” (“moieties”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shuda, shdaja</td>
<td>Why are there clans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shtuya, shey’a</td>
<td>Nulchina &amp; Tulchina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chishyi and K’kalayi</td>
<td>Clan origin stories</td>
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</table>
Ghelchiłna ch’u Qeshqa: Clanspeople and Leaders
### Leaders and followers: rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaders and people of high rank</th>
<th>Some Upper Inlet Dena’ina Qeshqa</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qeshqa, qiy’u, jiggi</td>
<td>Diqelas Tukda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duyeq, yagastsik</td>
<td>K’ełnuts’ehen</td>
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<tr>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Benił’a Ch’ulyaļen</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ghelchitna, ukilaqa (-kilaqa), elnu</td>
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“The Master of the Cache”

- Organize and stimulate production
- Manage redistribution
“Paternal Guardian” & “General Superintendent”
Insignia of Rank
Qeshqa gallery

Qeshqas:
(Top, left to right) Mike Alex, Simeon Chickalusion, Chief Billy Nicholi, Chief Evan, Chief Ephim,
(Bottom, left to right) Chief Stephan, Chief Wasilla, Chief Zackar Evanoff, Eklutna Alex, Big Chilligan, Chief Ezi.
Traditional subsistence and economy

• Patterned seasonal round
• Efficient harvest strategies and technologies
• “Village people, not nomads.”
• Cooperation and redistribution

*K’iytin*: backbones
Ye’uh qach’dalts’iyi: Living with the Land
Łitl’en: Spring
Yuyqul

Nacheyakda'ina quyushi uhu qul'ih
Our grandfathers used to hunt beluga
Shani: Summer

Tanik’edi: dipnetting platform
Tay’in:
fish trap with weir in stream
Vashla/Bashla
Nondalton: Subsistence Salmon Today
Nuqeli: Fall
Heyi: Winter
Benen Q’ank’elich’deldiži
Month for Going about Singing
Listening to sukdu in a nichit