

selected quotes from *Shem Pete's Alaska* 2016
Proto-Dene *Lex Loci*

PDLL (Proto-Dene *Lex Loci*), xii, 14, 39, 141, 154, 214–215,
217, 221–222, 227–229, 309

xii

- Two new articles replace two from the 2003 edition: “Introducing the Proto-Dene *Lex Loci* with selected Dene Place Names South and West of the Alaska Range” and “Recent Advances in Ethnogeographic Research Methods.”
- Sixteen new photographs and five maps have been added or substituted for figures in the 2003 edition. Many figures have expanded captions.
- Cross-references to feature names, maps, and figures are much more detailed.
- New references are presented in a 2016 Bibliography
- The three indexes have been updated.

In sum, the 2016 edition has a wide range of new and revised information as well as indexing and cross-referencing features that will enhance the book's utility for research or as a field guide.

Our friend and mentor Shem Pete continues to inspire us.

*The theory Kari calls the “Proto-Dene *Lex Loci*” (PDLL or ‘word/law of location’) is based upon historical linguistic inferences from ethnogeographic data from contiguous Alaska Dene languages. While the PDLL requires a book-length presentation, the main article on pp. 144–147 is adapted to SPA's atlas format with cross-references to various topics, place names and figures.

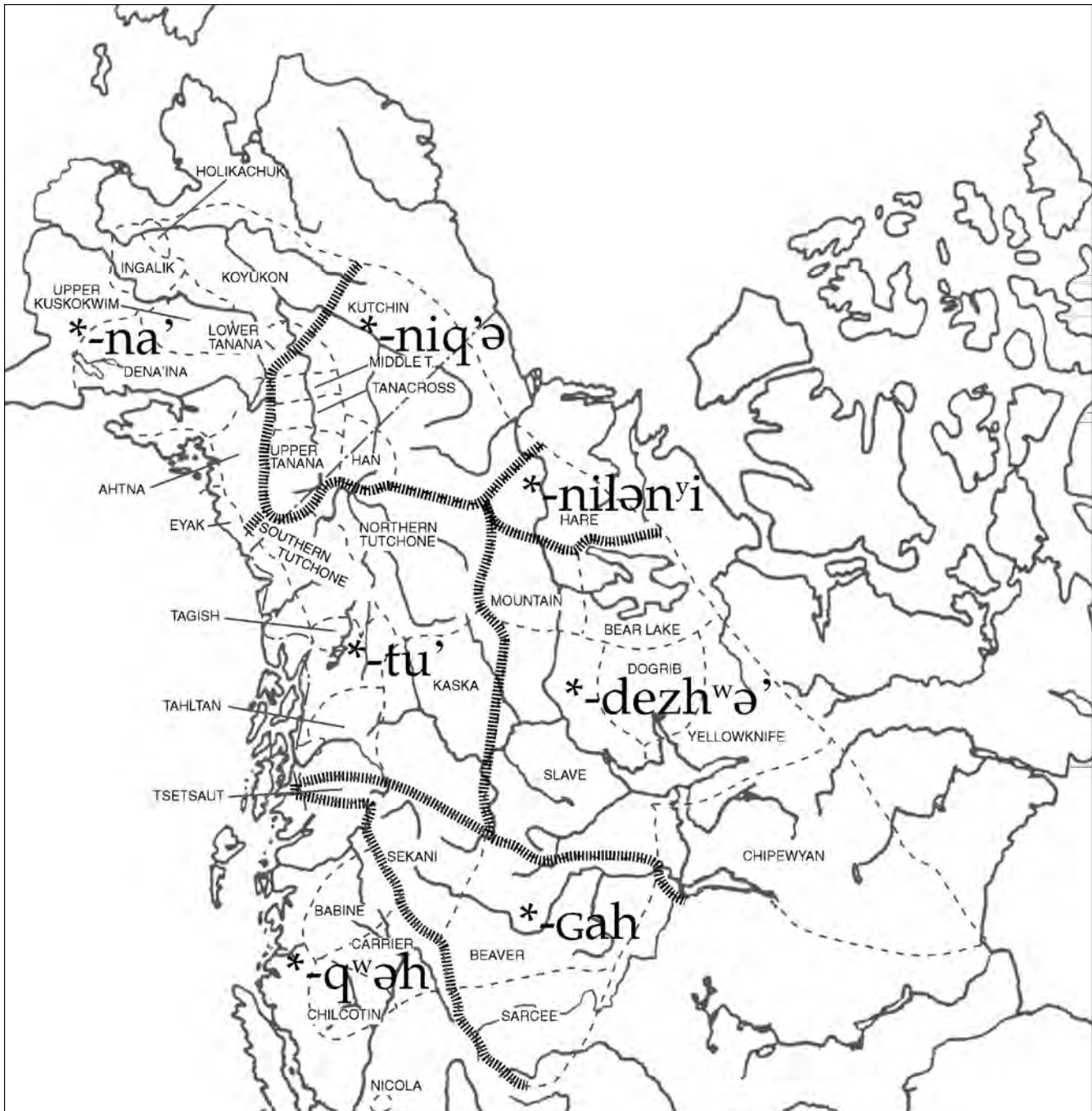
p. 14

16a †Kari's views on Dene and Na-Dene prehistory have altered since the Dene-Yeniseian Hypothesis (Vadja 2010, see p. 144) and by archaeological assessments of Northern Archaic sites on the Upper Susitna River. Ben Potter (2010:151–152) has noted “There does seem to be consensus that once established, Northern Archaic represents continuous populations, perhaps linked with Na-Dene (Workman 1978), given the extended dichotomy between interior-focused Northern Archaic and various coastal groups (related to Arctic Small Tool and/or Norton tradition) from ~5000 cal BP to recent times. Northern Archaic tradition subsistence economy was focused on terrestrial hunting (principally caribou) and fishing.” Kari now estimates that Upper Inlet Dena'ina-Ahtna interactions span 5,000 years or longer.

p. 14

‡Key points for this edition and for the Proto-Dene *Lex Loci* theory (PDLL, see pp. 144–147):

- Nichols 1992 and Fortescue 1998 characterize the coast of the North Pacific as an ancient multilingual diffusion corridor (also Kari 2010b:209, 211, 213). Cook Inlet Basin was occupied by other vanished languages, and there are signs of substrate non-Dene languages in Dena'ina vocabulary. Notable are the esoterogenic coinings (i.e., obfuscations) for common words, such as water, blood and fire (symbolized as □ in Kari 2007:xxi-xxii).
- When we compare substrate influences for all twelve Alaska Dene languages (Kari 2010b:207): “Cook Inlet Basin is likely the only part of Alaska where Athabascans have expanded into lands that were previously occupied by non-Athabascans.”
- On pp. 146–147 we present the striking toponymic evidence for a set of founding place names that reflects the initial Dene (Athabaskan) arrival and a Proto-Dena'ina homeland in the *Htsay Nenq'* area (plateau at upper Stony, Holitna, and Mulchatna Rivers) perhaps by 10,000 years BP. The Dena'ina place names network expanded around Cook Inlet Basin in phases. Some layers of names and trajectories can be detected. It is notable that the Dena'ina vigorously rejected substrate place names in favor of their rule-driven Dene names.



MAP 9

Hydronymic districts in Northern Athabascan languages.

‡The hydronymic district was the first key concept for Kari's theory of Dene prehistory "The Proto-Dene *Lex Loc*" ('word/ law of location', or PDLL) that is introduced on pp. 144–147. Some concepts presented in Kari 1996a, 1996c, and 2010b that are central to the PDLL theory are *hydronymic districts* (seven regional terms for 'stream' in Northern Dene languages), *reverse hydronyms* (use of a minor hydronym to highlight streams such as *-niq'ə* instead of *-na'* in Western Alaska), and *oronymic districts* (where PA **dzəl* 'mountain' shifts to **dəghilayi* south and west of the Alaska Range, see. 7.61). The hydronym *niq'ə* literally means 'on the upstream'. The *na'*/ *niq'ə* hydronym boundary on the Tanana

River is at Delta River and Goodpasture River. Kari 1996a:463:

"the *na'*/ *niq'ə* innovation is only one piece of evidence of the gradual westward/ downstream expansion of the Athabaskans into western and Southcentral Alaska. The Tanana River, with four [to five] smallish language areas gives every indication of having been the ancient center of Northern Athabascan culture." Also introduced on p. 144 is the PDLL term *watershed tenure* that includes hydronymic districts and several other pragmatic/ intentional place naming devices that are detectable in Alaska Dene place names.

MAP BY JAMES KARI AND DIXON JONES

‡Introducing the Proto-Dene *Lex Loci* with Selected Dene Place Names South and West of the Alaska Range

by James Kari

For further study on PDDL refer to discussions and examples on pages xii, 14, 39, 141, 154, 214–215, 217, 221–222, 227–229, and 309.

Since 2010 I have been taking notes and lecturing on a theory of Dene prehistory I call the “Proto-Dene *Lex Loci*” (‘word/law of location,’ or PDDL). This theory is based upon historical linguistic inferences from place name networks and other linguistic patterns from contiguous Alaska Dene languages. With this article, Table 12-ABC (three groups of place names selected for their traits of significance), and with annotations and cross-references to entries in *SPA*, we can provide a brief introduction to the PDDL.

The PDDL was prompted by the Dene-Yenseian Hypothesis. Edward Vajda’s 2010 article presented grammatical and lexical evidence that the Na-Dene languages of North America are genetically related to Ket and other extinct Yeniseian languages of western Siberia. The symposium volume (Kari and Potter 2010) provided discussions and initial scientific support that a Dene-Yenseian language stock was located in Beringia, c. 14,000–15,000 yrs. ago. One consequence of the DY language stock is that Proto-Na-Dene must have been in Alaska by 12,000–14,000 BP. For background reading see Kari 2010b that discusses the *geolinguistic conservatism* of the Dene (or Athabascan) language family, and a “slow chronology” for the Na-Dene in Northwest North America, with Tlingit and Eyak branching off at early dates from the other Dene languages.

The PDDL theory has accelerated in the past ten years with advances in place names coverage for eight contiguous Dene languages surrounding the Alaska Range (Ahtna, Dena’ina, Upper Kuskokwim, Upper Koyukon, Lower Tanana, Middle Tanana, Tanacross, Upper Tanana); there are nearly 9,000 names on record in similar database formats. (See p. 232, re: a database field “match” that tags names of significance.)

We can reconstruct for Proto-Dene a bipartite SIGN+GENERIC naming system. The more detailed place names lists are very informative. We find technical hydrological or geological naming. Lithic prospecting is indicated by place names for certain stones or minerals. On occasion we can detect band movement trajectories, name provenance (where a name was coined), founding place names ϕ , or environmental change \mathbb{N} . Early Dene bands used clever variations of the SIGN+GENERIC formula to coin names for certain streams, landmarks, and favored habitats. I use the term *watershed tenure devices* for several intentional, pragmatic naming devices such as hydronymic districts and reverse hydronymns (p. 39, Kari 1996a, 1996).

For Table 12 I selected significant names for three subregions south and west of the Alaska Range. Table 12A-B-C has three regional diachronic layers with a convention \mathring{A}^2 - \mathring{A}^3 - \mathring{A}^4 . Table 12A has oldest group of selected names, \mathring{A}^2 , Ahtna in the Upper Susitna River (mainly in Chapter 10 of *SPA*); 12B has the next oldest, \mathring{A}^3 , Upper Kuskokwim or Dena’ina names along the western piedmont of the Alaska Range; and 12C, \mathring{A}^4 , has eight place names that stimulate discussion about phases of the Dena’ina occupation of Cook Inlet Basin.

This is the current outline of *PDDL traits of diachronic significance* (some traits are not presented in Table 12). A selected name can be noted for two or more traits.

1. Locational, overt, or contextual information in the Dene place names networks: overtly informative \odot , environmental change \mathbb{N} , founding place names ϕ , boundary markers \parallel , pass-markers \asymp , favorite themes (lithics \blacktriangle , anatomy \heartsuit), contextually informative (clan-origin locations, myth locations(c)).
2. Watershed tenure (WT) devices: pragmatic SIGN+GENERIC patterns that enhance memorization and recognition of features
 - 2.1 Generic WT: hydronymic districts, reverse hydronyms: \uparrow , double reverse hydronymns ($\rightarrow\uparrow$), regional generic terms (Dena’ina **-tnu** ‘stream’).
 - 2.2 Sign WT: patterned duplications \equiv , $x\equiv$; geo-duplicates $g\equiv$ (noticeable local place name duplications), name ensembles \mathfrak{H} , pairs \gg , resemblant pairs \approx .
3. Dene historical linguistic traits: Dene lexical archaisms \mathring{A} ; semantic opaqueness Ω (esp. hydronymns); irregular sound correspondences in bilingual Dene names \neq ; morpheme or stem irregularities $m\neq$ (ellipsis, contractions); substrate place names ∞ ; regional comparisons of substrate, irregular & opaque names.

PDDL is a stimulating theory for Dene and Na-Dene prehistory due to the interplay between the selection of significant names among the rule-driven Dene name networks, and the traits that span a wide range of information types. These three regional case studies demonstrate how the PDDL leads to hypotheses on relative antiquity, temporal benchmarks, and trajectories for Alaska Dene band movements

TABLE 12. DIACHRONICALLY SIGNIFICANT DENE PLACE NAMES SOUTH AND WEST OF THE ALASKA RANGE

Å ² SPA#	Ing	first Copper R Basin names	location, Maps 41, 55	literal	PDLL traits	comments; other sources
10.64	A	'Atna'	Copper River	beyond river	☀	coined in Tanana Valley
10.63	A	Ben Daes Bene'	Old Man Lake	shallows lake lake	x≡	7 distant duplicates, Healy L., Mentasta L, cf. ⑧
10.29	A	Hwtsaay Nene'	West Ahtna Uplands	dwarf tree country	x≡	3 PA duplicated ecoregions, cf. ⑨
10.62	A	Nen' Yese'	Nen' Yese' Ridge	land ridge	≡, »	also Nen' Yese' Ggaay (esker N of Glennallen)
10.61	A	K'ey Tsaaygha	hill N of Tyone R	by dwarf birch	≡	same as name for Hogan Hill
10.24	A	Sasnuu' Bene'	Lake Louise	sand island lake	≡, g≡	same as Summit Lake
10.12	A	Nataghi'aade	Devil Canyon	current flows down	≡	same as Baird Canyon, see Fig. 135A,
10.28	D	Yusdikda,	Lone Butte	dear one far ahead	, ~	cf. 10.35, both with nes , overt boundary marker
10.35	A	Xensdii	ridge W of Tyone Lake	the next one ahead	~	cf. 10.28, both with nes
14.71	A	Siz'aani	Gunsight Mountain	inside me, my heart	≡	also mt. at Copper Glacier, Figs. 190, 190A
14.1	A D	Ts'itonh Na' Ch'atanhtnu	Matanuska River	trail comes out river	≠	reanalyzed in both A and D

TABLE 12A. EARLY AHTNA NAMES (Å²) ON THE UPPER SUSITNA RIVER

A case study on the Tanana River with 45–50 names shows that the Tanana Valley has the oldest Dene place names within the current corpus. When we summarize *all* linguistic documentation for the Tanana Valley Dene languages and Ahtna in Copper River, there is little substrate linguistic data; there is no linguistic evidence of non-Dene languages having been present in the circum-Alaska Range uplands. Kari 2010b:207, "For the Copper River Basin and the Ahtna language area a strong case can be made for long-term occupation without the presence of any other non-Athabascans."

Table 12A has eleven Å² Ahtna or Dena'ina names in Western Ahtna country. We can point to strong evidence that the Dene entered Copper River from the Tanana Valley (and not the reverse) and that names were coined both before and after Glacial Lake Ahtna was at its maximum: 11,000–10,000 BP. The name 10.64 '**Atna**' 'Beyond (the range) River' Copper River is overtly informative, i.e., the provenance of this name was the Tanana Valley. The initial evidence about early Dene band movements came from three upland ecoregion names with a rare term for

'dwarf trees,' PA **h^wttha:x* 'dwarf tree' which is a true Dene lexical archaism. Kari (1993:242): "These three names suggest an ordering or seriation of band movements: 1st Ketchumstock uplands, 2nd Susitna-West Fork Uplands [10.29], 3rd Mulchatna-Holitna-Stony River Plateau ⑨."

Several patterned duplications ≡, and geoduplicates g≡, indicate that the Dene/Ahtna were naming places in Copper River Basin prior to and following the breaching of Lake Ahtna c. 10,700 BP (Shimer 2009, Reger et al. 2012). Citing just six place names, the pre-/post Lake Ahtna evidence is unequivocal. See the annotations for 1) geoduplicates **Sasnuu' Bene'** (10.34 Lake Louise and Summit Lake), 2) a patterned duplication **K'ey Tsaaygha** (10.61 hill on Tyone River and Hogan Hill, the island of Lake Ahtna; and 3) the two Lake Ahtna shoreline names, a patterned pair **Nen' Yese'** (10.62) and **Nen' Yese' Ggaay**. See other Å² name annotations 10.12, 10.60, 10.61, 10.63, and 10.64 and others not on Table 12 (7.61, 10.57, 10.58, 14.70, and 14.71). There are many affinities between Ahtna names and place names in Tanana Valley (e.g., five mountains that are named for a shiny ochre).

Å³ Map 26	Ing	founding names W of Alaska Range	location, Map 26	literal	PDLL traits	comments; other sources
① 6.61	UKD	Dichina Nek' Kenaniq'	Kuskokwim R	stick river	-↓, φ	Ξ 1st order stream w reverse hydronym
②	UK	Tsat'asr Nek'	Highpower Ck	stone charcoal stream	»-↓, Λ, φ	Ξ linked reverse hydronym
③ 6.42	D UK	Idzitnu, Izitnu Edze No'	South Fork Kuskokwim R	Ω stream	Ω, ≠, ≡, φ	iconic, ambiguous, see 6.42
④	UK	Mazr'a Nek'	Kuchaynanik Ck	stone type stream	»-↓, Λ, φ	Ξ clever, double reverse hydronym cf. ⑥
⑤	UK	Hwtsash Nek'	Creek on Middle Windy Fork	ahead/first stream	-↓, φ	Ξ
⑥	D	Vazh'atnu	North Babel River	stone type stream	»-↓, Λ, φ	Ξ clever, cf. ④
⑦	D	K'qizaghetnu	Stony River	Ω "distant" stream	Ω, ≠	ellipsis, irregular
⑧	D	Ven Dash Vena	Tundra Lake	shallows lake lake	x≡	cf. Old Man Lake 10.63, Mentasta L, Healy Lake
⑨	D	Htsay Nenq'	Stony-Holitna- Mulchatna Plateau	"first land"	x≡, ≠, φ	ancient homeland; cognate w A.10.29, also in Tc 'dwarf tree land'
⑩ 6.41	D	Dzel Ken	Southern Alaska Range	mountain base	x≡	same as UT pass at Nabesna-Chisana- White R
⑪	D	Nduk'eyux Dghil'u	Telaquana Mt	game enters mountain	☀	rare mythic place name; Kari 2007:ii
⑫	D	Talchatnaq'	Hook Ck	muskrat stream	≠-↓, φ	Ξ, irregular sound for 'muskrat'
⑬	D	Valts'atnaq'	Mulchatna R	Ω-stream	Ω -↓, φ	Ξ, irregular and opaque

TABLE 12 B FOUNDING DENE NAMES WEST OF ALASKA RANGE (Å³)

Thirteen Å³ names on Map 26 are ordered north to south along the west piedmont of the Alaska Range. These Å³ names appear to be a set of initial pioneering Dene place names. From the corner of the Central/Southern Alaska Range to Mulchatna River is a set of seven reverse hydronyms (Map 26: ①, ②, ④, ⑤, ⑥, ⑫ and ⑬); a trail of *linked founding place names* (first presented in Kari 1996a:458–59).

The Upper Kuskokwim name for Highpower Creek ② illustrates ancient Dene geographical naming ingenuity. Highpower Creek at the northwest corner of the Alaska Range was the first sidestream in the Kuskokwim drainage to be named with a reverse hydronym:

Tsat'asr Nek' (in UK). The Dene also gave a name **Tsat'asr No'** to a small tributary of Highpower Creek, the same sign 'black rock' with the dominant hydronym **-no'**, a clever device that flags this confluence as a trail intersection. I call this a *double reverse hydronym* (»-↓). Note that two streams to the south ④ and ⑥ are another double reverse hydronym. The south-most founding name, Mulchatna River **Valts'atnaq'** is conspicuous; the syllables **val-ts'at** are opaque. Two stems for 'stream' **na'** and **niq'** were blended into **naq'**. The name for Hook Creek to the north **Talchatnaq'** has this same blended stem. Opaque and irregular hydronyms (Ω or ≠) are relevant to the PDLL.

One other likely founding place name is **Nduk'eyux Dghil'u** Telaquana Mountain (see Kari 2007:ii). This is an overtly informative name (☀) 'game enters mountain,' and a rare instance

of a Dene place name referencing a sacred myth, an emergence story. A connection between the Dene of the upper Tanana River and the west piedmont is indicated by the extra-territorial duplication (x≡) of the UT names **Ddhāl Chin** and Dena'ina **Dzel Ken** Southern Alaska Range. The Upper Tanana name refers to the valley and passes that connect the upper White-Chisana-Nabesna Rivers. This pair of x≡ cognates at opposite ends of the Alaska Range horseshoe is striking. The most conspicuous Å³ names show meta-pragmatism: the trail of eight reverse hydronyms, the two x≡ distant duplications for ecoregions **Htsay Nenq'** and **Dzel Ken**.

The Inland Dena'ina regard **Htsay Nenq'** as the ancestral homeland (Balluta 2008). The Stony River was the first sockeye salmon that early Dene named. Wherever Dena'ina coined stream names, they have the unique Dena'ina stem **-tnu**. Also there are suggestions of an early "westward Dena'ina spread" based on numerous stream names with syllables ending in **-tneq** in Yupik, and **-tno'** in Lower Koyukon, and Deg Hit'an. The initial place names in this Proto-Dena'ina homeland could have been coined 10,000 years ago. The arrowheads, bone points, & microblades at the Lime Hills Cave site (Ackerman 1997) that date from ca. 8100–9500 are situated in time and space to represent this early Dene presence.

Å ⁴ SPA#	Ing	notable Cook Inlet names	location Map 26	literal	PDLL traits	comments; other sources
14	D	Ulcha Dghil'u	Roadhouse Mountain	a people's mountain	∞	ul'cha, ul'chena an ancient people, Norton-era, true substrate p.n.
15 6.2	D	Shqitnu	Swentna River	∞-stream	∞	possible substrate p.n. in D; shqit in two others 16.18 and hill in Kenai
16 7.19	D	K'ich'atnu	Kichatna River	Ω-stream	Ω	opaque ancient name, see 7.19
17 1.30	D	Tubughnenq'	Tyonek area	beach land	☀, φ, 🖐	founding ensemble, overt proclamation
18 1.121	D	Qezdeghnen	Kustatan Peninsula	peninsula land	φ, 🖐	founding ensemble
19 16.23	D	Yaghenen	Kenai Peninsula	good ... land	φ, 🖐	founding ensemble, yaghe- an innovation
20 16.23	D	Unhghenesditnu	creek at Kalifornsky	farthest ahead stream	☀,	boundary name, cf. nes in 10.28, 10.35
21	D	Ggasilatnu	Kasilof River	∞ stream	∞	true substrate p.n. in D

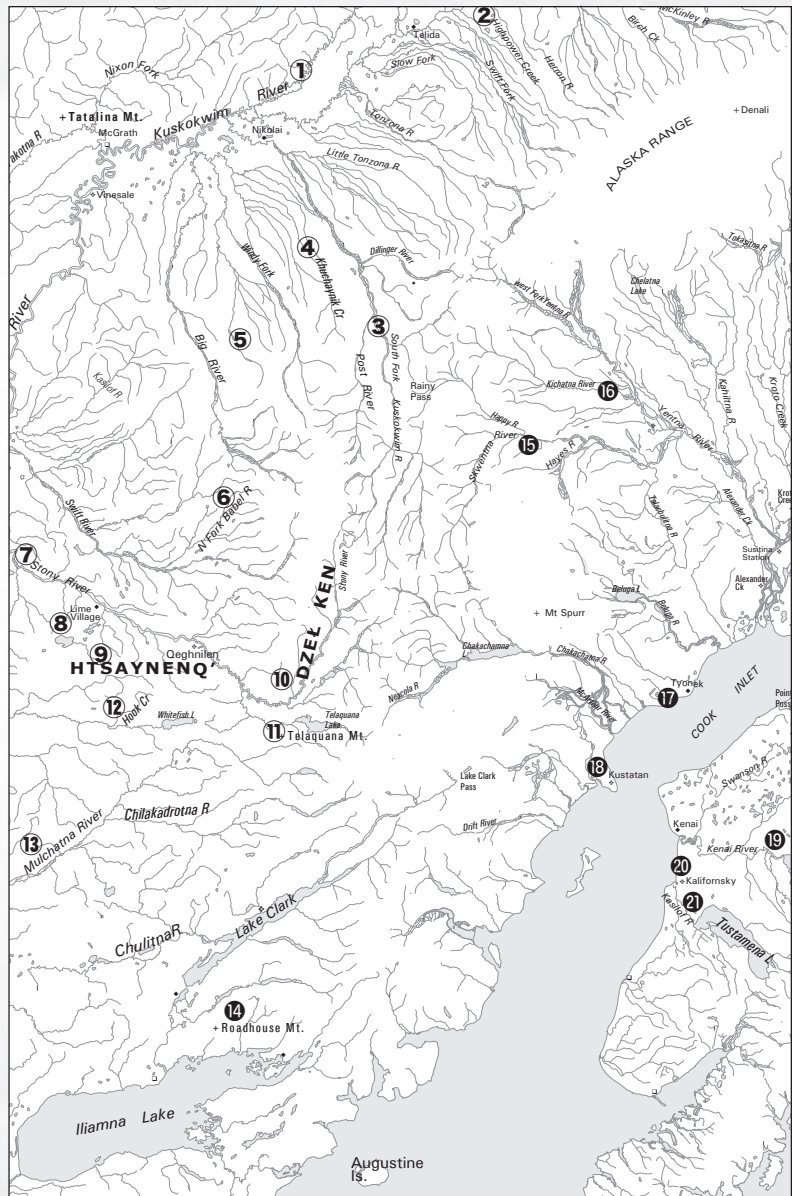
TABLE 12C. SOME SIGNIFICANT DENA'INA NAMES AROUND COOK INLET (Å⁴)

There have been some vanished languages and place names around Cook Inlet, however the Dena'ina vigorously rejected substrate names. Eight names around Cook Inlet point to distinct layers of naming in Cook Inlet Basin. We can note three substrate place names (∞): **14 Ulcha Dghil'u** Roadhouse Mountain refers to a vanished people who were at Iliamna Lake (perhaps at c. 3000–4000 BP). The name **Shqitnu 15** Skwentna River stands out as a likely substrate name. (There are two other Dena'ina names with the stem **shqit**). **Ggasilatnu 21** Kasilof River has a substrate word with D. -**tnu**. Opaque hydronyms such as **3** South Fork of the Kuskokwim, and **16** Kichatna River stand out as likely founding place names (φ) that mark several passes (≡).

Three ecoregion names with **nen** 'land' on the shore of Cook Inlet **17, 18, 19** have the sense that they were coined as an founding ensemble of names, with an implied trajectory from west-to-east. This set of names branded the first Dena'ina coastal habitats. We can speculate about the date of this ensemble. Three names—**19, 20, 21**—on the Kenai Peninsula show that the Dena'ina moved south after arriving at the Swanson River area. The overt boundary name for the small stream at Kalifornsky **20**, only ¼ mile from the mouth of a substrate name **Ggasilatnu 21**, implies there was communication between the first Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina and the last Riverine Kachemak people, which could be dated at c. 1000–1100 BP (Reger & Boraas 1996).

MAP 26

‡Selected Upper Kuskokwim and Dena'ina names west of the range and in Cook Inlet Basin.



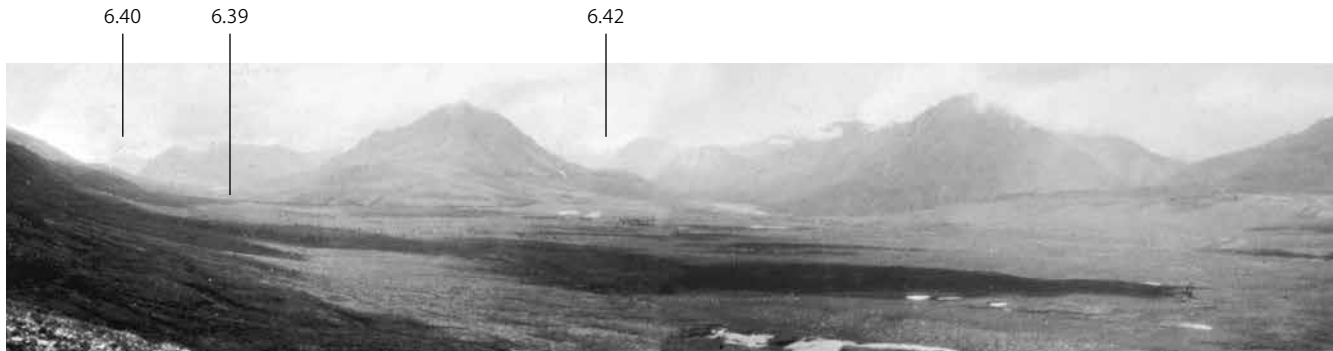


FIGURE 91

The south end of Ptarmigan Valley past Rainy Pass, in the Ptarmigan Creek drainage **Htal Betnu** (6.57) in 1926. The valley in the distance to the left is **Nik’uhhay Niljenghiyut** (6.39, Hellsgate), and beyond this is the lower valley of **Qulch’ishtnu** (6.40, Styx River) and **Idzitnu** (6.42, the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River).

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beyond Ptarmigan Valley; i.e., there were areas beyond the Iditarod Trail traffic that the Dena’ina still regarded as their hunting country.

When the Spurr party crossed through Ptarmigan Valley on July 18, 1898, on their first day descending a Kuskokwim drainage, just above the junction of the Styx River with Ptarmigan Creek Spurr (1950:58–59) wrote: “The next day in the afternoon I was able to bestir myself, and discovered a well-marked Indian trail following down above the stream.” On July 21 Spurr noted: “At the end of the Indian trail, where we had camped, there had been an extensive and long-established Indian camp. There was a banya, or log sweat-bath house, and I found a pair of fine [Dall] mountain-sheep horns which had been chipped as if to make spear-heads. I still have these. On the portage trail which led to this camp we found comparatively fresh mocassin tracks.... We had not seen even an Indian since the 30th of May.

“The Indians who had been hunting in the region of this pass and who had remained a long time in the camp which we found, had probably had a winter camp here and had left the country at the time of the break-up or soon before, having come up when all was frozen and hard. They were evidently Kuskokwim Indians.”

Writing in 1921 Hubback (1929:182–83) described what is the most westerly documentation of an Upper Inlet Dena’ina hunting party, on the Styx River in the Kuskokwim drainage, in the early twentieth century. Hubback wrote: “Our camp was 3000 feet above sea-level. In the evening we saw about three miles from us, at the mouth of a canyon, a wisp of smoke. We knew that there were no prospectors in that part of the country, and we suspected that some Indians whom we had seen on the Skwentna River, and who stated that they were going up to the headwaters of the Skwentna to hunt for their

winter moose meat, might have found their way into the canyon, which we believed, and afterwards found correct, provided a pass into Portage Creek from the valley of the Styx....

“We found out subsequently that they had killed some dozens of young caribou; in fact, we saw evidence of the destruction of two small caribou, where merely the skins had been taken and the meat left. In one place we found a pile of meat and close to this meat were the udders of a young cow caribou. Possibly the udders had been cut out to destroy the identity of the sex of the skin should any questions be asked. The Indians killed these caribou, specially selecting females and young, because they wished to utilize the skins for snowshoe webbing. I understand that the thicker hides of the older animals are not so suitable; possibly are not so easy to prepare for the purpose for which the Indians take the skins.”

6.41 **Dzel Ken** • ‘Mountain Base’

The Alaska Range, especially the southern Alaska Range

This regional name is most commonly used in the Lime Village and Lake Clark areas. Note that Brooks incorrectly stated, “It [the Alaska Range] does not seem to have been named, for the Alaska Indian has no fixed geographical nomenclature for the larger geographic features” (1911:22). ‡Both 6.41 and 6.42 are on Table 12, see discussion on p. 146.

6.42 **Idzitnu** (*U-Dena’ina*), ‡**Izitu** (*I-Dena’ina*); ‡**Edze No’** (*Upper Kuskokwim*) • ‘-Ω-River’

South Fork of Kuskokwim River

‡In the 1987 and 2003 editions we neglected to cite significant differences between the Upper Inlet, Inland Dena’ina and Upper Kuskokwim names for the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River. The Upper Inlet and Upper Kuskokwim forms use high front vowels -i- (UK-**e**-) and the consonant -dz-, but the Inland Dena’ina name has -z-. The name is a classic example of an opaque (Ω) Dene place name. All three forms are ambiguous and are not readily translated by expert speakers or linguists. This is an archaic Dene hyronym. The name recorded by Herron in 1900 as “Echeatnu” corresponds with U-Dena’ina **Idzitnu**.

In 1844 the Russian explorer Zagoskin wrote, “The Kenai [Dena’ina] people travel on the winter trail to



10 **Upper Susitna River**

from Talkeetna to Devil Canyon and Above

As of 2015 over 380 Ahtna names have been recorded on the upper Susitna River and over 600 for the Western Ahtna dialect area (Kari 2008, 2014). For the 2016 edition we added Ahtna names to Chap. 10 that offer insights into ancient Dene/Ahtna prehistory. Eleven names from Chap. 10 are grouped as Å² on Table 12 (pp. 145–146), to indicate these are potentially the second oldest Dene names surrounding the Alaska Range. See the place annotations at Fig. 135A (10.12), 10. 29, 10.34, 10.57, 10. 58, 10.61, 10.62, and 10.64.

Devil Canyon was the Ahtna-Dena'ina boundary on the main river, although the Dena'ina regularly hunted in the Oshetna River country. Included in this section are all of the names in the upper Susitna area remembered by Shem Pete as well as a selection of Ahtna names between Devil Canyon and head of the Susitna River. Shem never traveled on the Susitna above **Ch'ak'ul'ishi** (10.11), but he had been on the Oshetna River trail to Tyone Lake.

The Tyone River system was the focal area or the **Hwt'saay Hwt'aene** 'Small Timber People' (Ahtna). The Ahtna recognize that the central Talkeetna Mountains, including the Oshetna River drainage, used to be Dena'ina country, and that they, the Ahtna, have also been incursive into the upper Nenana River area. Based upon an analysis of the Athabaskan-origin place names and descriptions in Wrangell 1980 [1839], it appears that the upper Nenana River was, as of 1830, mainly Lower Tanana territory, rather than Dena'ina or Ahtna territory. Also see 10.29 **Htsay Nenq'e** and p. 145.

Reckord (1983:30): "The Western Ahtna, the **Hwt'saay Hwt'aene** or 'Little Tree People', inhabited an area not dominated by the Copper River. During the nineteenth century, their location near the upper Susitna and Matanuska rivers encouraged trading at Russian posts on Cook

Inlet. As a result a few western **denaes** [chiefs] became middlemen in the trading network."

Reckord (1983:76): "In several cases [Western Ahtna] main fishing sites, permanent winter villages, and hunting camps were all located in close proximity along lake-shores."

Irving (1957:38–40) has a detailed geographic description of the Western Ahtna country and its resources. "The lakes country is strongly marked by the effects of relatively recent glaciation. Much of the topography in the vicinity of Lake Louise consists of steep, densely wooded ridges and knobs of till. Interspersed are numerous small ponds and creeks following erratic courses among drift remnants. Most of the remaining portion here is taken up by partly forested hills with long, low slopes, broad treeless marshes, meadows and many large ponds...."

"Food resources available to aboriginals, in order of importance are fish, especially whitefish, but also lake trout, ling cod, a type of herring [round whitefish], and grayling. In the way of large game, there are caribou, moose, black and grizzly bears. Of the rest, muskrats, beaver, rabbits, ducks, geese, grouse, and ptarmigan probably were important. Such animals as porcupines and squirrels, although present, apparently did not figure importantly in the menu. Generally most of the land-dwellers were taken individually although, in the case

Sources: Shem Pete, Johnny Shaginoff, Annie Ronning, Jack Tyone, Jim Tyone, Jake Tansy, Henry Peters, Jim Sinyon, Jimmy Secondchief, Dick Secondchief, and Charlie Hubbard

2003 revisions: names revised 10.39–10.56; locations revised 10.3, 10.4.

‡2016 revisions: names added 10.57–64; names revised 10.13–10.17, 10.21, 10.22, 10.28, 10.29, 10.32, 10.37, 10.42, 10.44, 10.50, 10.54; figures added 135A, 140A; figure replaced 139; map revised 43; map replaced 45.

MAP 41

(Opposite) Place names map of the Upper Susitna River, showing Nos. 10.1 to 10.64.

MAP BY MATT GANLEY

of the caribou, the drive was used in several forms. Fish traps accounted for large quantities of whitefish from late summer until January. Salmon do not occur in this part of the Susitna system.

“Blueberries and cranberries are abundant on hillsides and a number of edible roots and herbs are present. Generally speaking, on a year-round basis, the country is not rich enough in these food resources to sustain large villages. On the basis of recent houses discovered and information from local informants, it would appear that the early post-contact population was no more than one hundred persons. Presumably, these were living in scattered groups of five to thirty individuals following a semi-nomadic existence....

“They would go into the hill country often as far as the Talkeetna Mountains. They would remain hunting caribou until midsummer, when they returned for fishing. Travel was usually on foot; infrequently by canoe.... Vestiges of an elaborate system of trails may still be seen, and even now foot travel for distances of forty or fifty miles is routine.” See also 10.34 for further quotes from Irving 1957.

Most of the Russian trade items and loanwords noted in Kari 1990:628–32 entered the Copper River area by means of Upper Inlet Dena’ina or Western Ahtna traveling the Matanuska trail to either Tyone Lake or Tazlina Lake.

Griffen (1990:69–70) has summarized the upper Susitna River archaeological work of the 1980s:

Most of the archaeological research conducted with the Susitna drainage, located southeast of DENA [Denali National Park], has been associated with hydroelectric development....

By far, the most intensive phase of Susitna research was accomplished during the Susitna Hydroelectric Project cultural resource program undertaken by the University of Alaska Museum between 1979 and 1985 (Dixon et al. 1985). A major goal of the research was to establish a preliminary cultural history sequence within the study area, which extended along the middle Susitna River.

Nearly 250 new archeological sites were located during five field seasons of archeological survey. Ten sites/loci were assigned to the Euroamerican tradition (AD 1900 to present), 114 sites/loci were assigned to the Athabascan tradition (1,500 BP to approximately 100 BP), 38 sites/loci were assigned to the Late Denali complex (3,500 BP to 1,500 BP), six sites/loci were assigned to the Northern Archaic tradition (approximately 5,200 to 3,500 BP), and seven sites/loci were assigned to the American Paleoarctic tradition (5,200 to 10,500 BP) (Dixon et al. 1985: 172–186).

Probably the most important result of the [University of Alaska] museum’s research was the formation of a regional stratigraphic chronology based on a sequence of three distinct, prehistoric volcanic tephtras (volcanic ash deposits) found in

the area; Devil tephtra, dated from 1,400–1,500 BP, Watana tephtra, dated from 1,800–2,700 BP, and Oshetna tephtra, dated from 5,200–5,900 BP. When the tephtras are present in an archeological site, they are sufficiently distinct from other sediments and from one another that the archeologist can date the cultural strata in relation to the tephtras.

‡Continuing archaeological research in the middle Susitna River basin continues to be primarily associated with ongoing hydroelectric explorations. During three field seasons, the cultural resource management firm Northern Land Use Research (2012 and 2013), and subsequently Northern Land Use Research Alaska (2014) were able to report an additional 151 previously undiscovered sites. 127 of these new sites were prehistoric in nature, with preserved technocomplexes representing preservation from the Northern Archaic tradition to the protohistoric period. (Gerad M. Smith p.c.)

10.1 Łch’ibay Keght • ‘At the Big Whirlwind’ *bluff on Susitna River near Chase*



FIGURE 135

Annie Ronning, originally of Talkeetna, was a source of information about the Mountain People. Photo taken in Palmer in 1981.

PHOTO BY PRISCILLA RUSSELL

MAP 42

The Dickey sketch map of 1896.

The Dickey party ascended the Susitna River to Devil Canyon in 1896, some of the first Euro-Americans to ascend that far up the Susitna (Cole 1983:74–75). In this area they met one group of the Mountain People, perhaps at Indian River, which is marked “Indian village” on Dickey’s sketch map.

Note this early documentation of salmon fishing here at the upper limits of the Susitna River salmon run. Dickey: “About seventy miles from the great forks [at Talkeetna] we came to a small village of the Kuilchau [Gheltsana] or Copper River Indians, tall and fine looking, and great hunters. Throughout the long and arduous winter they camp on the trail of the caribou. They build huge fires of logs, then erect a reflector of skins back from the fire between which, reflector and the fire they sleep, practically out of doors, although the temperature reaches 50° below zero. We were surprised to find them outfitted with cooking stoves, planes, saws, axes, knives, sleds sixteen feet in length, 1894 model rifles, etc. They were encamped near a fish trap which they had constructed across a small side stream, and were catching and drying red salmon. They had no permanent houses, living in Russian tents.... They informed us that we could go no further with our boats, as the Susitna now entered an impassable canyon” (Dickey 1897b, cited in Moore 1981:14). In 1897 Dickey returned to this area and made a marker at Portage Creek.

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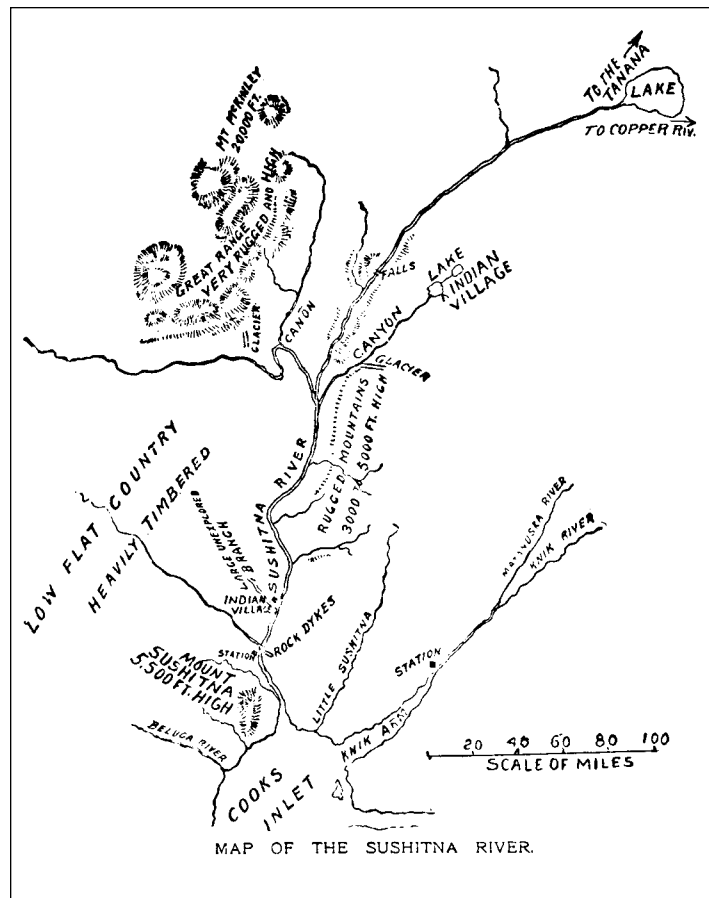


FIG. 135A

‡Aerial view of Devil Canyon, a treacherous 20 mile stretch of the Susitna River. The Ahtna name **Nataghił'aade** employs an innovated Ahtna verb theme for 'current flows.' Kari has recently noted that this name is also used for Baird Canyon/Abercrombie Rapids on the lower Copper River, the area where the glacial ice of Lake Ahtna breached. This is a case of a *patterned duplication* among Ahtna names. Also we conclude that the Ahtna name for Devil Canyon preceded the name **Nataghił'aade** for Baird Canyon.

PHOTO BY BILL SIMEONE



northeastwards from the northern angle of the straits and travel 7 days' fast march, or 10 days at the usual speed, through the mountain canyons as far as a very high ridge; the women and children and the poorer hunters stay at its foot while the rest travel 7 days farther to the small lake Chtuben which lies on a plateau not far from the source of the Sushitna." See also 10.34.

Shem Pete also walked this trail: "[Coming from Matanuska River] we went over the mountains to **Q'usatnu** and to **Benq'etgge** [Tyone Lake, 10.33].

"«The Ahtna would leave and go upriver. They came to the Oshetna River and they stopped somewhere up there. They had a village there, and they hunted. That is a big river, the Oshetna. On the upriver side there is a lake [probably Crater Lake, Kari 1983:76]. They used to chase caribou into that lake».» Knik and Eklutna Dena'ina continued to hunt caribou and sheep in the Oshetna country until the 1920s.

Jack Tyone, speaking in 1983: "We just crossed that **Segeli Na'** [Tyone Creek]. We not go up the creek though. Go to **K'aasi Na'** [Oshetna River]. We go north side, past there we hit the **K'aastle Na'** [Little Osheta River] and then goes in that big Oshetna."

§10.45 **K'aas Cae'e** (*Ahtna*) • 'Quiver Mouth' or 'Cliff Mouth'

mouth of Oshetna River

James Sinyon, interviewed by Lillian Boston in Sept. 1973 for West (1973) "Q: Where were you born?" JS: "It's on the river, just about six or seven miles below mouth of Tyone River, on the Susitna River. My daddy was coming back from Susitna Station, woman that time was just about cramping, she got the pain. They just been waiting and camp right there on the island in the river. There I was born, some day in March 1894. Nobody live there, just the country...nobody go around there. **K'aas Cae'e** [mouth of Oshetna River]. Oshetna whiteman call it.... There's lotta game in that creek. They came right straight over the mountains from Chickaloon when I was born."

Jim Tyone mentioned to Kari in 1981 that the farthest he had been from Tyone Lake down the Sustina River was to the mouth of the Oshetna River.

10.25 **Tulchuntnu** (*Dena'ina*); **Teldzaan Na'** (*Ahtna*) • 'Dark Water River'

Black River

This is the most northeasterly Dena'ina-pronounced name reported by Johnny Shaginoff in March of 1985. The English name is a translation of the Dena'ina/Ahtna name.

10.26 **Q'usa Dhelaya** or **Q'usaltqest** • 'Quiver Mountain' or 'Cliff Mountain'; '¿-'

mountain, elev. 7055', at head of Oshetna River

Shem Pete: "That mountain, every time they walk that way they drag [?] up and down on their back. Nice clear place. No brush. Lots of caribou."

Shem Pete mentioned both names. The second name



†FIGURE 139

Jake and Lily Tansy in Cantwell, in the 1960s. Jake Tansy (1906–2003), the expert traveler and storyteller of the Valdez Creek–Cantwell Ahtna, is the strongest speaker on record for the Ahtna language

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROY TANSY

is not analyzable. This may be the "high ridge" referred to in the passage from Wrangell cited in 10.24.

§(10.46) **Ben Ghetgge** • 'Between the Lakes'

unidentified location in upper Oshetna River area

Shem Pete knew of this place through a story of the 'The One Who Died at Between the Lakes.' A man was getting sheep in the mountains when he got covered in an avalanche. A rock at this lake looks like the head of this man with his hair tangled in the alders.

10.27 **Q'usashlatnu** (*Dena'ina*); **K'aasi Sletna'**, **K'aastle Na'** (*Ahtna*) • 'Little Quiver River' or 'Little Cliff River'

Little Oshetna River

Since the Ahtna name has both the stem **-sle** 'little' and the stem **tna'** rather than **na'** for 'river,' we can conclude that this is originally a Dena'ina place name. This name and the following place name provide evidence that the Dena'ina boundary once extended at least to here.

10.28 **Yusdi** (*Dena'ina*); **'Usdii**, **'Usdicde** (*Ahtna*) • ‡'Ahead in the Distance'

Lone Butte

The trail to the Oshetna area passed north of here. Jim and Jack Tyone said that this is originally a Dena'ina name, and this ridge formerly was a boundary between Ahtna and Dena'ina territory. Moreover, both this name and 10.35 **Xensdii**, contain the directional root ***nes**, that means 'ahead, perimeter,' with **nes** reducing to **ns** or **s**. ‡The pair of names 10.28 and 10.35 are on Table 12 as a *resemblent pair* of names. This is a boundary region between Ahtna and Dena'ina and these two names are overt boundary-marking place names.

Glenn 1900a: 640 “The trail from Bubb River passes along the divide between the Copper and Sushitna Rivers. In returning to my own trail of last summer and fall it is only necessary to add that it leads through a very good pass in the Alaska Range, and showed evident signs of having been used by the natives from the Copper, Sushitna and Tanana rivers for an indefinite period. This was apparent from the number of trails we found leading into it.”

10.29 Htsay Nenq’e (*Dena’ina*); **Hwtsaay Nene’** (*Ahtna*) •

‡‘Dwarf Tree Country’

‡*Western Ahtna uplands (upper Susitna-upper West Fork Gulkana river)*

‡One of three cognate *distant patterned duplications* for ecoregions. See discussion on pp. 144–147. These three distant cognate place names provided some of the initial data for the theory PDLL. This term is used to designate the **Hwtsaay Hwt’aene** (*Ahtna*), the Western Ahtna band. The Western Ahtna note that this area lacks birch, large spruce, and salmon, and has vast stretches of tundra with abundant caribou.

Shem Pete: “«Tyone country, **Htsay Nenq’e**, I stayed there one month. That’s Jim Tyone’s father’s country».

“They make caches there, just like beaver house. It freezes up. Four, five, six pile up. They put in fish eggs. They keep it for two, three years. «It dries and they use it». No trees around there.”

10.30 Nilben Caek’e (*Ahtna*) • ‘Mouth of Water-Surges’

site at mouth of Tyone River

Hickok (1968:260): “A site at the confluence of the Tyone and Susitna Rivers is reported to be one of the largest inland Athapascan villages prior to 1500 A.D.” This site is also mentioned in Reckord 1983:179.

The 1904 Moffit map (Map 44) indicates a house on the Susitna River between the Tyone and McLaren rivers as “second chiefs house.” Moffit on his 1904 map refers to the Tyone River as “Tyone Creek.”

Moffit (1915:21): “The Indians who hunt on the Jack River and Yanert Fork also have their cabins on Valdez Creek. Formerly they lived in the vicinity of Tyone River and the big bend of the Susitna.”

Jack Tyone: “In 1908 I see that place, Jimmy Secondchief’s daddy and Oly Nikolai’s daddy, two families there.”

James Sinyon (West 1973): “There used to be village this way from there. Mouth of Tyone River. Used to be village there.... That’s Secondchief’s family used to live there, and Cantwell Nikolai was there, and then another Valdez Creek Jack, they used to call em. Him and his mother and brother used to live, they had a big village there.”

Jake Tansy: «**Nilben Caek’e** when I was small was covered with houses. In summer, in ‘moulting feathers month’ (August), ‘leaves red month’ (September) they would leave in a group. Every family they would walk about the glaciers (at heads of Susitna and Nenana

Rivers). They would kill bull caribou that were moving through in the uplands. Then they made the dry meat. The skin boats were assembled with a willow pole-frame. The women would sew together the skins.... All of the meat, everything was stuffed inside (the skin boats). Then they came back in several boats to **Nilben Caek’e**. As they returned back downstream there, they put everything up in elevated caches. Then with the snowfall they would harvest marten; they would harvest fox too.» (Kari 2014)

§10.47 Nilben Na’ (*Ahtna*) • ‘Water Surges Stream’

Tyone River

‡10.61 K’ey Tsaaygha (*Ahtna*) • ‘By the Dwarf Birch’

hill north of Tyone River

The name is a significant *patterned duplication*. It is the same as the name for Hogan Hill. Hogan Hill was an island in glacial Lake Ahtna, whereas this hill on Tyone River is northwest of the outlet of Glacial Lake Ahtna. Also **tsaay** ‘Dwarf Tree’ is cognate with the root in **Hwtsaay Nene’**.

§10.48 Snuu Na’ (*Ahtna*) • ‘Brushy Stream’

Sanona Creek

West (1973:37) via James Sinyon: “A village was located on the Tyone River six or seven miles upstream from its mouth. Mr. Jim Secondchief with his family and Mr. Valdez Creek Jack with his mother and brother lived here.” This may be near the mouth of Sanona Creek.

West (1973:32) via James Sinyon: “A cache was seen still standing along the Tyone River by Mr. Sinyon where his mother’s family and Mr. Tom Neely were raised. The place is called In-u-ind-na. In 1907 there was a big fish camp there.”

10.31 Snuuni (*Ahtna*) • ‘Brushy One’

Big Bones Ridge

Shem Pete: “I been all over that country, trapping beaver. I learned this name there. «I know that area».”

10.32 Saltigi (*Ahtna*) • ‡‘Sun Protrusion’

unnamed hill, elev. 3537’, marked as “Tyone”. See Fig. 141.

This is the major spiritual location for the **Tsaay Hwt’aene** and an important site and game lookout. The Tyone Village chieftainship, recently held by the late Jim Tyone, is referred to as **Saltigi Ghaxen** ‘Person of **Saltigi**’. This is the westernmost of the titled Ahtna chieftainships (Kari 1986:15).

This is also Irving’s site #9, about which he comments, “Nearby on the Tyone River are salt licks and a caribou crossing. That locality seems to be a concentration point for game of all sorts. The hill top affords an excellent outlook over the nearly flat surrounding country.... Most of the material was found on the southern side of the knob, which suggests use of the site during the winter months when this section would be favored by the low sun” (Irving 1957:43).

West 1973:34: “A single house depression is located about two-thirds of the way up a hill called Su-sta-ki. It is said to have been occupied by a powerful war leader.”

Jack Tyone: “«My grandparents stayed at **Saltigi**. There was no village at **Ben K’atggeh**. They had a village on top of **Saltigi**, my great grandfather.»”

10.33 Ben Q’etgge (*Dena’ina*); Ben K’atggeh (*Ahtna*) •

‘Between the Lakes’

Tyone Village

“Chiefs house” is noted here on the 1904 Moffit map (Map 44) and “Tyon’s House” is shown on the 1899 Johnston and Herning map (Map 45) and the 1906 Herning map (Map 59). This village is also mentioned in de Laguna 1970:38, West 1973:33, and Reckord 1983:181.

Shem Pete: “Tyone Village was below that mountain [**Saltigi**]. Tyone had a big house. I stay in there, 1945. John Shaginoff and I, we go up. We stay one month. Right next to Susitna Lake. That’s where Mrs. Ezi was raised. Johnny and I sledged house logs there from **Snuuni** [10.31]. Haul it a long ways to Tyone house.”

Johnny Shaginoff reported that this is good caribou country. The people of this village maintained a caribou fence which funneled the caribou to the shore of Lake Louise. Men chased the caribou into the lake and then speared them from canoes. “That’s how they got meat for the village.”

Shem Pete recalled trapping muskrats with Johnny Shaginoff here, staying for one month in the spring of 1945. Eagles stole the muskrats Shem and Johnny had caught and brought them to their nests. The eagles even took their traps. Shem Pete: “I don’t know why they take the traps. Maybe for souvenir.”

10.34 Susni Bena (*Dena’ina*); Sasnuu’ Bene’ (*Ahtna*) •

‘Sand Island Lake’

Lake Louise, locally “Susitna Lake”

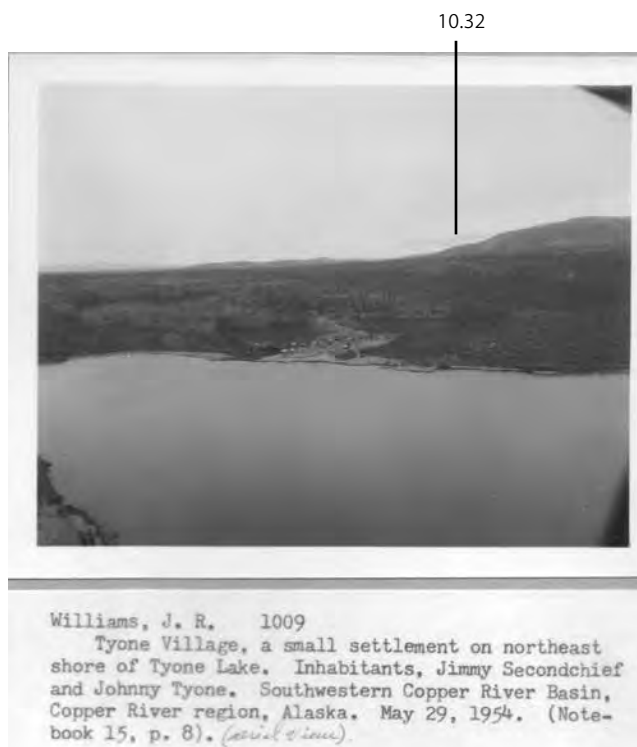
This place name designates this lake as the source of the Susitna River. Compare the related name for the Susitna Delta, **Susni Kaq’** ‘Sand Island Mouth’ (2.3). Note that the uppermost lake in the Gulkana River drainage, Summit Lake, is also named **Sasnuu’ Bene’**. This duplication of names of the largest lakes at the heads of Gulkana and Susitna rivers appears to have been intentional and reflects Dene planning of the name system at the time these names were coined by the ancient Dene. Kari refers to such noticeable duplications in names as *geoduplicates*.

Jack Tyone: “**Sasnuu’**. That’s islands, got three on there, **Sasnuu’ Bene’**.”

Lake Louise is shown on the 1898 Mendenhall map and 1900 Meiklejohn map from the 1898 surveys as well as on the 1904 Moffit map (Map 45), where it is labeled “Susitna Lakes or L. Louise.”

This is an area rich in Ahtna lore and history. The fishery in the area Lake Louise area was used nearly year round and was especially important during fall and winter. Irving (1957:40) has a good summary of the subsistence round for the Ahtna of Tyone Lake and Lake Louise:

“Jimmy Second Chief, a willing and able informant, the following was learned. The annual cycle was divided into two major phases, dependent upon the feasibility



†FIGURE 140A

Tyone Village **Ben K’atggeh**, (10.33) the hill to the right is **Saltigi** (10.32). The photographer notes that the only residents at the village were Johnny Tyone and Jimmy Secondchief.

PHOTO BY J. R. WILLIAMS, BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

of fishing. From midsummer through December, the principal activity was fishing. The group at this time would accordingly locate near spots suitable for using ‘V’ and basket traps.

“Caribou and moose would be killed from time to time throughout the year, but were given particular attention in late summer and early fall. At this time bulls were fat and skins most suitable for clothing. Fish, however, formed the most important food item. By midwinter, shallow places in the lake would freeze to the bottom and fishing would no longer be profitable. By this time, also, the meat stores from the previous fall would be exhausted. It was then necessary that extensive hunting of moose, bear, and beaver be carried out. It is not known whether this involved actual breaking up of the small community or whether it merely entailed groups of hunters fanning out over the countryside. Moose and caribou fences, in conjunction with snares and the surround, were used. This would continue until breakup, after which the hunters would go into the lakes and creek valleys.”

§10.56 ‘Skosii’den (*Ahtna*) • ‘Where We Peel Birch Sap’ *lake at southwest end of Lake Louise*

This name always brings a smile to Ahtna speakers. It refers to the peeling of birch trees for sap in springtime. Jack Tyone and Johnny Tyone were the most recent residents of this old fishing site.

Andy Tyone: “Good place for whitefish. Catch them with fishtrap and with fence. Cover it up and one place



FIGURE 143

Henry Peters (1912–1999) of Valdez Creek and Cantwell was a major contributor to Ahtna language and traditions. He and his mother Jenny Peters told the story of the war at **Nay'nadeli** (Peters 1977). Henry also discussed details about life at Valdez Creek in Dessauer and Harvey 1980.

PHOTO BY JAMES KARI IN 1981



FIGURE 144

Hester Evan of Nenana was born at Toklat village in January of 1906 and died in February of 2002. A master storyteller, she has been the major contributor for the Toklat dialect, a Koyukonized variant of the Lower Tanana language (see Jetté and Jones 2000).

PHOTO BY JAMES KARI IN 1993

as Butte Lake, and a caribou fence down the Nenana River at **Hwditsicghi'aaden**. A skirmish at **Nay'nadeli**, a hill west of Butte Lake, in about 1865 (described in Peters 1977), resulted in several deaths and forced the Nenana River Athabascans to retreat downriver. Shem Pete was not familiar with the details of these territorial shifts in this area.

‡The multi-component site Butte Lake Northeast was first described by Bob Betts (1987) and recently by Michael Wendt (2013). Four components (Northern Archaic to Ahtna) date from 10,000 BP until historic times and prompt discussions of site use, technology and climate change. Jake Tansy was Bob Betts' source for information on Ahtna use of the area.

10.37 Qunk'eltl'asht (*Dena'ina*); **Kanc'eltl'aesde** (*Ahtna*) • 'Where the Game (Caribou) Migrate Through'

‡sites on Lake Creek, 1 mile west of Swampbuggy Lake, locally called "Swampbuggy Lake"

The north-most features on the 1904 Moffit map (Map 45) are in this area. This important Western Ahtna hunting location is described in Reckord 1983:177–178. Archaeologists have called this place the "Ratekin site" after a Bureau of Land Management employee. This site was incorrectly located at Swampbuggy Lake in Kari 1983 and in Reckord 1983. Apparently this lake along

Lake Creek has receded. "The upper Susitna Indians report that this site has probably been used by their ancestors for generations" (Reckord 1983:177). Henry Peters described this as being the caribou hunting site most valued by the Ahtna. The Nenana River people were approaching here when the battle took place at **Nay'nadeli** in about 1865 (Peters 1977). This site is described by Jake Tansy as his uncle Peter Secondchief's camp in the early 1900s. It is both a whitefish camp and as a major caribou harvesting area

‡Jake Tansy (Kari 2014): «Right now at **Kanc'elts'esde** they do not migrate, but the caribou always used to migrate back there. That is why it is called 'where something (caribou herd) moves up'. Above there is a mountain extending out there they named **K'a' K'ae** 'arrow cavity' (hunting blind) (mountain "Gate" & ledges, & benches). Above on the mountain is there is a series of rocks in a circle [a rock blind]; they stay inside there (waiting) for them (caribou).»

Shem Pete: "That is the farthest village I know on the Susitna River. It was about four or five days above Talkeetna. **Sghay Tu'** was the last man from **Qunk'eltl'asht**. He died in 1917. I know his song. **Qunk'eltl'asht** means where the caribou go in spring-time. They stay there waiting at **Qunk'eltl'asht**." Shem



FIGURE 190 AND 190A

Siz'aani, (14.71, Gunsight Mountain) and mountain north of Copper Glacier.

Another *patterned duplication* that provokes thought: why should two mountains have the same Ahtna name, **Siz'aani**? viz, Gunsight Mountain and the distinctive 6580' unnamed mountain at the head of the Copper River, (Fig. 190A just N of Copper Glacier). This name is metaphoric, 'Inside Me', and is a pun on the word **sciz'aani** 'my heart.' Gunsight Mountain can be seen from a large radius, but the mountain at Copper Glacier can only be seen from nearby to the north (e.g. the Slana area). This duplication must have been pragmatic and intentional.

LEFT: PHOTO BY LORRAINE BASNAR ELDER IN 1981 RIGHT: PHOTO BY CARL BENSON, UAF GEOPHYSICAL INSTITUTE

14.65 **Tsedghaazi Na'** (Ahtna) • 'Rough Rock Creek' >

Alfred Creek

The trail here went on to **Neltsii Na'**, (14.119) the Little Nelchina River via Crooked Creek, **Bakaey Ts'elaes Na'**, and has been mentioned by Johnny Shaginoff and Jack Tyone.

14.66 **Tsedghaazi** (Ahtna) • 'Rough Rock'

Syncline Mountains

14.67 **Nalk'uugi** (Ahtna) • 'Jagged One'

mountain at the head of Caribou Creek, possibly west of Billy Creek

§14.111 **Nalk'uugi Na'** (Ahtna) • 'Jagged One Creek'

Billy Creek

Johnny Shaginoff knew the pass from Billy Creek to the Little Oshetna River.

14.68 **Beznae** (Ahtna) • '(A type of) Stone'

Sheep Mountain

Jim Tyone noted that the name refers to a specific type of stone.

Frank Stickwan (West tapes 1973): "Grandpa hunted from Tyone Lake to Tazlina Lake, Tazlina Glacier. That way they used to hunt for sheep. Some they go to Sheep Mountain on Glenn Highway. Sheep Mountain. That's where they hunt sheep."

§14.112 **Beznae Na'** (Ahtna) • '(A type of) Stone Creek'

Gypsum Creek

14.69 **Dzel Ghaan' Na'** (Ahtna) • 'Half Mountain River'

South Fork of Matanuska River

§14.113 **Dzel Ghaan' Luu'** (Ahtna) • 'Half Mountain Glacier'

Powell Glacier

14.70 **Dzel Ghaan'** (Ahtna) • 'Half Mountain'

mountain between the Nelchina River and the South Fork of the Matanuska River

‡14.126 **Siz'aani Bene'** (Ahtna) • 'Heart Lake'

Lake Leila

14.71 **Siz'aani** (Ahtna) • 'Heart'

Gunsight Mountain

14.72 **Siz'aani Na'** (Ahtna) • 'Heart Creek'

‡Gunsight Creek (location revised)

§14.73 **Tsendil'aats Kulaen Bene'** (Ahtna) • 'Heart Lake'

Trail Lake

§14.114 **Tsendil'aats Kulaende** (Ahtna) • 'Where Game Migrate Downland'

Trail Creek

Revisions in 14.72 and 14.73 and this location are based upon the travel narrative by Jim Tyone (p. 223): « Now at 'where game migrate downland' that is where the trail used to be.»

§14.115 **Unatadel'aade** (Ahtna) • 'Where The Water Flows Around'

hill near Sheep Mountain and Trail Creek

Mentioned by Jim Tyone, see p. 223 and Map 43.

§14.116 **Naghilenden** (Ahtna) • 'Where Current Flows Down'

East Fork of Matanuska River

Name via Frank Stickwan

14.74 **Hwyiis Tes** (Ahtna) • 'Mirage Hill'

‡hill 3447' by Knob Lake

‡It is remarkable that the name for this hill was doc-

with fishtrap and with fence. Cover it up and one place open, put fish trap in there. They fish from first part of August until creek freeze up.”


10.35 Xensdii (*Ahtna*) • ‘The Next One Ahead’

mountain, elev. 3350', west of Susitna Lake

This is listed on the 1904 Moffit map (Map 45) as “Kunstee Country,” with his comment “North of the Kunstee Country and east of the Sushitna is a rolling country.”

‡**10.62 Nen' Yese'** • ‘Land Ridge’

Nen' Yese' Ridge

An iconic and informative name for a ridge that was a shoreline or isthmus of Glacial Lake Ahtna 11,000 to 12,000 years ago. On Table 12 this is marked with  to indicate a name that denotes environmental change. Also notable is a low north-south esker c. 3 miles to the east called **Nen' Yese' Ggaay** ‘little land ridge,’ so this pair of names mark two shorelines of Glacial Lake Ahtna.

‡**10.63 Ben Daes Bene'** (*Ahtna*) • ‘Shallows Lake Lake’

Old Man Lake and village site. See Map 56.

A popular ancient Dene place name; cognate names include Mentasta Lake, Healy Lake, Cooper Lake, Fish Lake (near Tanana), and Tundra Lake (Lime Village); see p. 146.

‡**10.64 Utnu** (*Dena'ina*), **'Atna'** (*Ahtna*) • ‘Beyond River’

Copper River

For years Kari treated the syllable **'at-** in ‘Atna’ as unanalyzable. But it is clear that **'at-** is from the directional root set **'ane'**, **'aat'**, **'aax'** ‘beyond, over, outside.’ The stream name **'Atna'** ‘beyond (the Range)’ is *overtly informative* (☀). The name was coined by the Tanana Valley Dene prior to earliest expansion of the Dene into Copper River Basin, perhaps over 11,000 years ago. Kari considers **'Atna'** to be the oldest Dene name on Table 12.

§**10.49 Banazdleni** (*Ahtna*) • ‘The One That Current Flows Around’

mountain, elev. 4503', “Oshetna,” at the “Big Bend” of the Susitna River



FIGURE 141

Hwniidi Ben (10.36, Butte Lake) in 1981. Jake Tansy has recorded detailed information about Ahtna life and land use here.

PHOTO BY PRISCILLA RUSSELL

Annabel (1938:88–89) mentions killing a caribou here with a Talkeetna Indian man.

10.50 C'iidze' Na' (*Ahtna*) • ‘Fierce Stream’

McLaren River

C'iidze' is a rare Ahtna term applied to fiercely cold winds. This name is written on the Moffit map (Map 45) as “Ka–cha–nah.”

10.51 Snuu Na' (*Ahtna*) • ‘Brushy Stream’

lower Clearwater Creek

10.36 Hwniidi Ben (*Ahtna*) • ‘Upriver Lake’

Butte Lake, formerly Nadiwen Lake

This lake appears on the 1839 Wrangell map as “Knitiben” (Map 17). It is to this lake that Wrangell says that the Galtzan [Tanana River Athabascans] “travel ten days over the mountains to the Lake Knitiben. The Kenai also travel to this lake to trade with the people of Titlogat [Toklat, 10.38, north of the Alaska Range]” (1980:52). Before 1951 this lake was known as Nadiwen Lake, a name based upon the Ahtna place name. The historic association of the place is now erased by the English name, Butte Lake.

The following additional information on **Hwniidi Ben** was obtained by Kari from Jake Tansy in 1983. A rack at the site at the head of the lake was still visible when Jake first came to this lake in about 1910. Jake’s mother remarked that the lake used to be a **Ghaltsaane** (or Lower Tanana) camp. Jake heard that the **Ghaltsaane** carried the poles to Butte Lake on their shoulders from the timber on the upper Nenana River. Jake thinks that the nearest **Gheltsaane** location with timber was the whitefish camp known as **Ghaltsaane Ciisi K'ae** ‘Lower Tanana dipnet place’ on the Nenana River near Monahan Flat.

The account by Wrangell from the early 1830s, combined with Jake Tansy’s information, suggest that in the early nineteenth century the entire Nenana River was Lower Tanana territory. The Ahtna based in the



FIGURE 142

Cabins at the village of Cantwell in 1930. The man in the foreground is young Henry Peters, then age 18. Photo by Stephan R. Capps, Jr.

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