The art of oral narrative folklore is richly illustrated in this collection of traditional tales recorded by five Dena’ina Athabaskan storytellers. Presented here in the original Dena’ina with facing-page English translations are stories that describe the ways of the world and events that occurred in ancient times. Characters such as Raven, Lynx, and Wolverine had the ability to be either animal or human, and their stories convey essential Dena’ina beliefs. It was Raven who created the world and many of its inhabitants. Several of the stories tell of this trickster who produced anything he wanted merely by wishing for it, and who constantly outwitted strangers and friends alike for his own selfish reasons.

Six of the texts are mountain stories, which explain Dena’ina beliefs and attitudes about the relationship of humans to the land, how one should treat animals, and the value of group survival over the desires of an individual.

This set of 24 texts was compiled by linguist Joan Tenenbaum who worked on the recordings, transcriptions, and translations in Nondalton during the years 1973–75. The line and stanza arrangement serves to draw the reader closer to the pace and rhythm of the storyteller’s oral narrative.

Through story content and this vivid presentation of performance art, Dena’ina Sukdu’a gives the reader a lively insight into the Dena’ina people, their beliefs, their heroes, and their views of the world.

An accompanying audio CD includes a selection of six stories from the original Nondalton recordings. The CD represents all five Dena’ina storytellers. Tracks correspond to page numbers, allowing the reader to match the oral language with the written text.

The book includes 12 original works by renowned Alaskan artist Dale DeArmond. Sunshine Man (front cover) depicts the traveler who taught the people how to bring good weather and good hunting to the mountains in Dena’ina country.

Compiled by Joan M. Tenenbaum