

Land Acknowledgment

Take a moment to consider that wherever you are in Alaska, you are on the traditional homelands of Indigenous peoples.

The Anchorage Museum and Anchorage Outdoor School are both located on the traditional homelands of the Dena'ina people. We acknowledge the Dena'ina people and all Indigenous people of Alaska. We thank them for their past and present stewardship of the waters, plants and animals of this place.



Words from the Dena'ina language in this book are *italicized* and followed by their English translation.



Stewardship

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What is Stewardship?

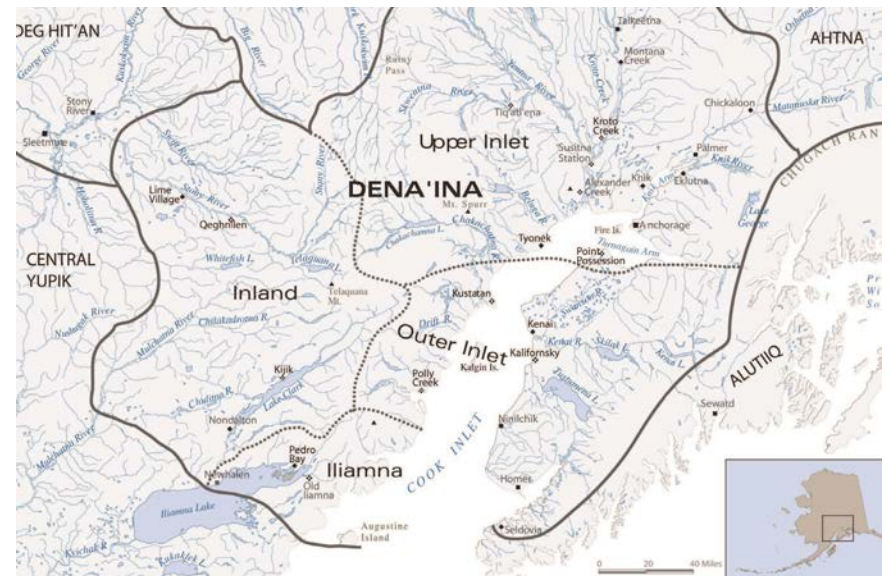
Stewardship is a way to care for resources such as other living things, materials, information, or services that are valued by the steward or caretaker. Some key components of Stewardship are:

- Shared responsibility for the resources
- Improve quality of the resources
- Care of the resources beyond personal need

People from many different places and backgrounds live in Alaska today and connect with the environment around them in different ways. Stewardship is a representation of connection to the natural world.

THE DENA'INA AND STEWARDSHIP

The Dena'ina are the Indigenous peoples of Southcentral Alaska. The Dena'ina homeland covers 41,000 square miles including Anchorage and much of the surrounding area.



Map courtesy of the National Park Service

**YE'UH QACH'DALTS'IYI
(WHAT WE LIVE ON FROM THE OUTDOORS)**

This Dena'ina phrase highlights the importance of the natural environment in Dena'ina culture and how stewardship is practiced within this culture. At the heart of Dena'ina culture and lifeways is a connection to all living things in the natural world. Traditional knowledge about living from the land and harvesting plants and animals is passed down from generation to generation.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through sustainable practices which seek to maintain and preserve the health of the environment and well-being of those that rely on it.

Environmental stewardship can be seen in the care of public lands such as providing access to these lands through trails, educating people about the animals and plants living there, and ensuring the quality and health of the environment for future generations.

There are organizations and groups throughout Alaska that have environmental stewardship as a focus of their work, including Anchorage Outdoor School and its partners.



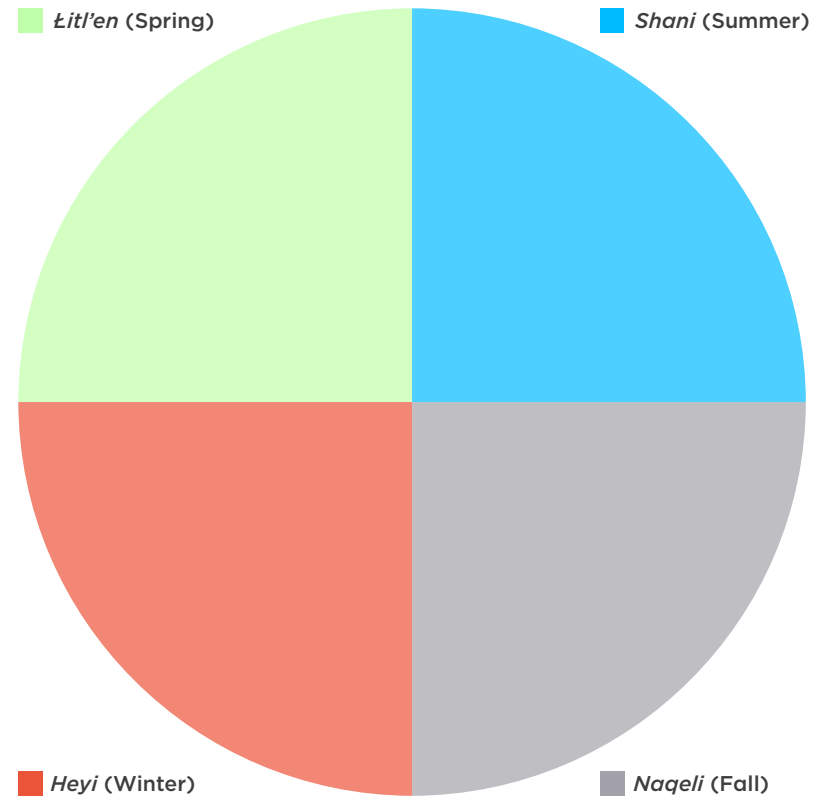
Nakeeta and family at fish camp near Knik and Fish Creek, circa 1906-1910. Robert Wheatley Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1982.52.255

Activity: Sketch how you connect to the natural world around you.

HOW SEASONS SHAPE ACTIVITIES

Seasonal availability of food resources shapes Dena'ina culture. The daily focus of harvesting food requires a deep spiritual relationship and understanding of the land and animals. Seasons mark a shift in harvest, with each season offering different animals and plants to hunt and gather.

Activity: What are activities or foods that are special to you during the different seasons?



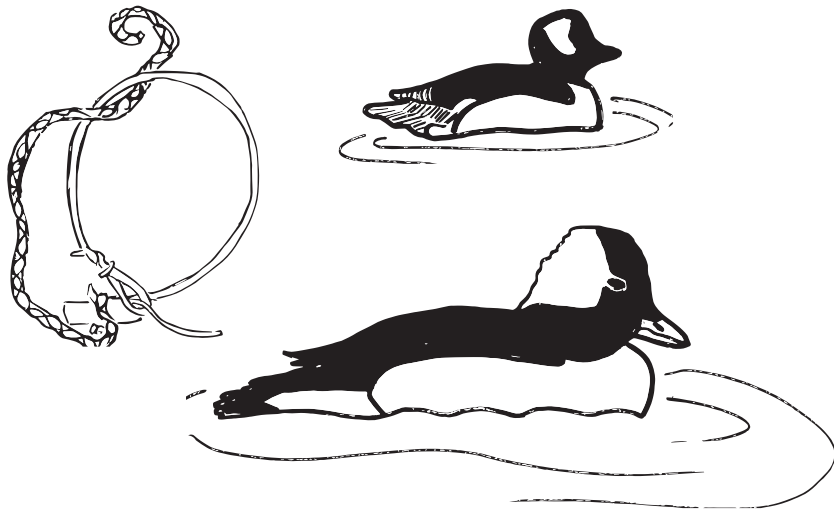
LITL'EN (SPRING): BIRD HUNTING

The springtime signals the return of migrating birds to the Dena'ina homelands and a celebrated change in food source from winter food to fresh spring food. Hunting for waterfowl usually begins in March or early April, when the first birds arrive, and continues until the birds begin to nest.

Migratory birds arriving in spring: Snow buntings, ducks, geese, swans and cranes

Harvest Methods: Snares, bows with sharp or blunt tip arrows, throwing sticks and sling rock throwers

Stewardship Connection: Hunters are careful to harvest birds in areas where they can be recovered, to prevent any waste. Children learn to hunt birds at a young age by going along on hunts to watch and observe as well as through independent exploration.



Left: Using a snare to capture birds is a common method used by the Dena'ina, as it is thought be one of the most humane ways to hunt. The snare is placed at the height of the birds' neck. When the bird is caught, it quickly dies.

Right: Male Bufflehead Duck, sukna tsighal (wool fabric hairnet)

Activity: Draw or write about signs of spring you observe.

SHANI (SUMMER): KING & SOCKEYE SALMON FISHING

The Dena'ina refer to June as 'King Salmon Month;' during this time the Dena'ina gather at an established fish camp located near a river to harvest salmon using different methods such as dip nets and fish traps. Putting up salmon or processing salmon at camp connects and strengthens the lifelong relationship with fish, food, and nature.

Harvest Methods: *tanik'edi* (dip net platforms; a large net is dipped into the river to catch salmon swimming up the river) and fish traps (device that captures fish as they swim up the river; once fish enter the trap they cannot swim out).

Stewardship Connection: Only as many salmon as can be processed in a day are kept. The rest are released to spawn, ensuring future generations of salmon.



Left: Dip Net, 2009, Anchorage Museum 2009.010.002. Made by Dena'ina elder Helen Dick.



Right: Dip nets have been made of spruce wood and spruce root and used by both men and women while standing on *tanik'edi* (platforms) over the Cook Inlet mudflats. Richard M. Jones Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1982.051.12

DENA'INA SALMON STORY

A synopsis of *Bel Dink'udlaghen: The One Who Swam Back Inside with Them (the Salmon)*
As told by Shem Pete, Dena'ina elder (-1900-1989)

"In the beginning the people had no salmon. A boy turns into a fish. Then the salmon come back to them for the first time. So the boy swims back to the ocean with the salmon. After staying with the salmon, he flies with the geese to the Kroto Creek area. He turns into a salmon and goes back a second time. When he returns he leads the salmon to Kroto Creek and the Dena'ina develop their salmon fishery there at specific places. Then the salmon boy turns into a human and gives them instructions on how to place him up by the bank to ritualize the catch of a small king salmon. While on the bank the Salmon Boy begins to transform himself into different types of animals. Also he shows them how to do a winter solstice ceremony in the steambath, which then brings the arrival of the migrating fowl, the land animals, and the sea animals."¹

Activity: Tell someone a personal salmon story. Where have you seen salmon? How do you fish for or eat salmon?



Kids at Kokhanok Fish Camp, near Lake Iliamna. Joan Townsend Photographs, Anchorage Museum, B2013.066.266

¹Kari, James, and James A. Fall. 2003. *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. 2nd ed. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

HEYI (WINTER): POTLATCHING

“[T]hey settled in for winter. And they celebrated—they ate and told stories.”¹ – Peter Kalifornsky, Dena’ina elder (1911-1993)

Since fewer resources are available during the winter, winter is a time for rest and spending time with family and neighbors. The Dena’ina often hold potlatches in the winter to celebrate special events and to honor a person who died. Potlatch activities include feasting, dancing, playing games, and storytelling.

Stewardship Connection: Potlatches are an example of how the Dena’ina care for one another by sharing resources and making sure everyone has enough food for the winter.



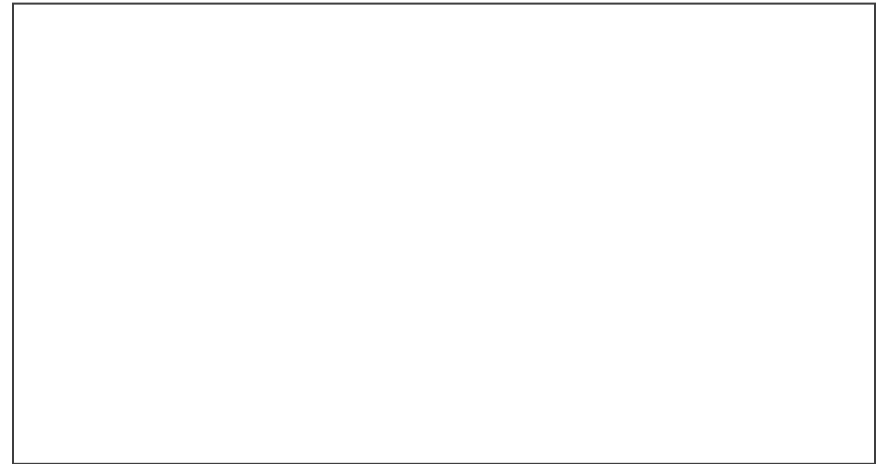
Spoon, c. 1847, Anchorage Museum 1980.072.003
This Athabascan² spoon may have been used for serving food at potlatches and is made from Dall sheep horn and colored with ochre.

¹Jones, Suzi, James A. Fall, and Aaron Leggett. 2013. *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina Way of Living*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.
²Athabascan² refers to the Dene language family, the largest Indigenous language family in North America. This language family includes the Dena’ina culture and eight other Alaska Native cultures, but the word ‘Athabascan’ does not come from Indigenous languages. These objects are known to be Athabascan but may not be from the Dena’ina culture.



Bowl, c. 1900, Anchorage Museum 1974.063.002
This Athabascan² serving bowl may have been used at potlatches. It is carved from wood and has a series of lines carved into the inside rim.

Activity: Sketch a serving dish your family uses or a food your family eats on special occasions.



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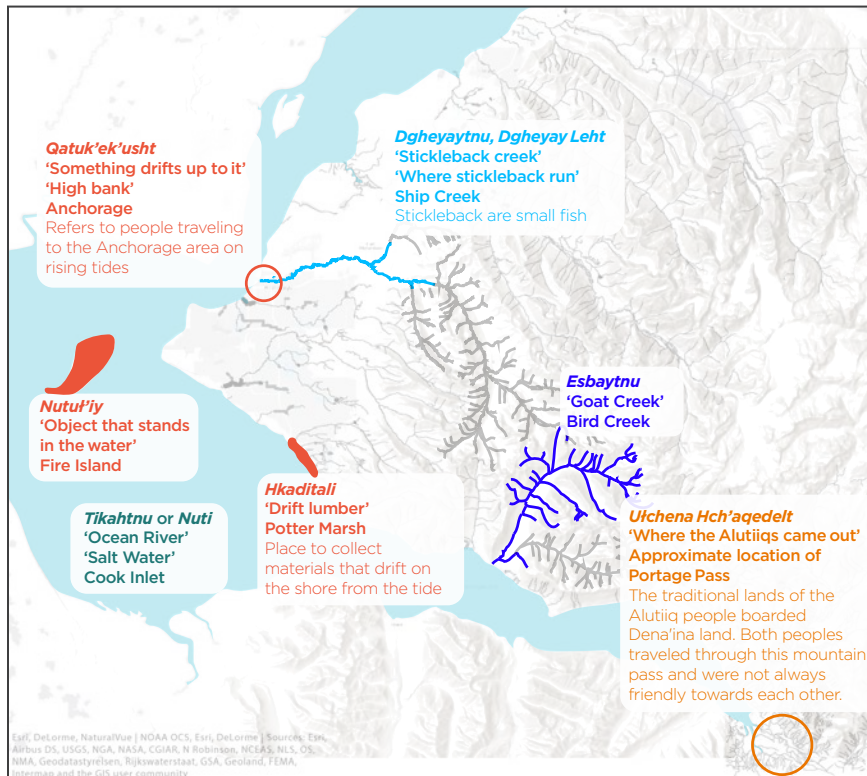
DENA'INA PLACE NAMES

Names help people understand who, what, and where others describe with language. Place names are particularly important to the Dena'ina language and way of life. The Dena'ina naming system reflects characteristics of each place and often references their relationship with the land and its abundant resources.

The Dena'ina people's strong connection to the seasonal availability of plants and animals means traveling to harvest different resources throughout the year, and place names are important for these journeys.

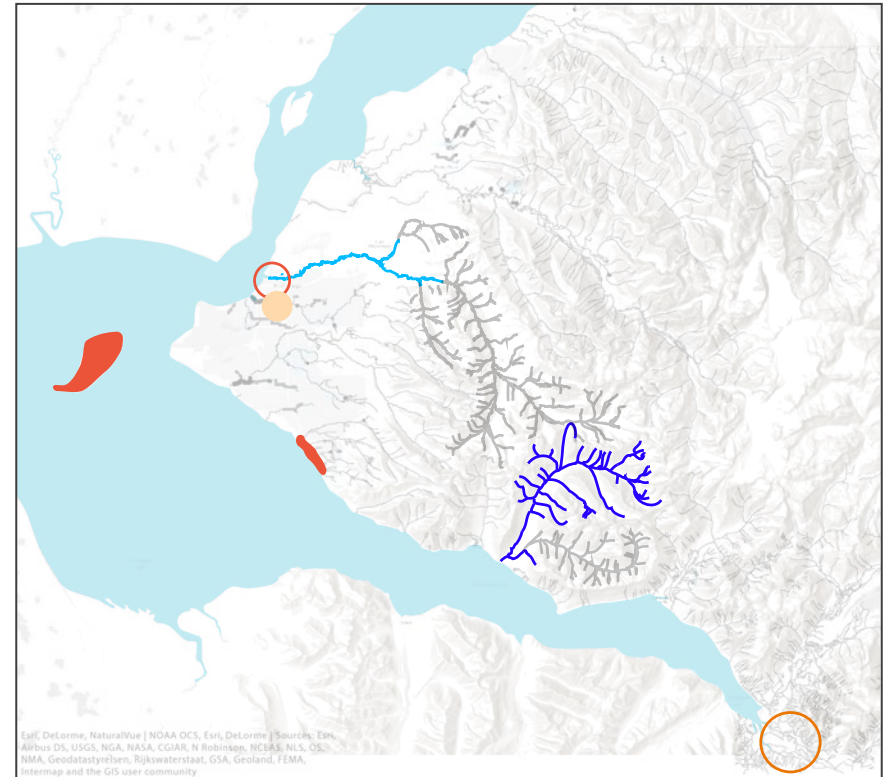
This map shows selected Dena'ina place names for the region around what is now called "Anchorage" and "Turnagain Arm."

Activity: Select one Dena'ina place name. Based on its English translation, what do you think are important characteristics of that place?



Map adapted from Kari, James, and James A. Fall. 2003. *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. 2nd ed. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

Activity: Select 2-3 places that are important to you and mark them on this map. Then complete this chart. If the place already has a name, write it in the "Existing Name" column. Then, create a new name for each place. Like Dena'ina place names, your new names should describe each place and their significance to you.



SYMBOL	EXISTING NAME	YOUR NEW NAME	NOTES
●	Sample: The Anchorage Museum	Exhibits for the community	I liked the colorful bear painting.

Map adapted from Kari, James, and James A. Fall. 2003. *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. 2nd ed. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

NOTES

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Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Anchorage Museum

Anchorage School District

Anchorage Park Foundation

National Park Service

University of Alaska Anchorage

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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