

## **Dena'ina Qenaga Henu Galegga**

*Dena'ina Language Workbook*

**2022 Dena'ina Community Language Workshops**

**Dena'ina Language Institute**

**Kenaitze Indian Tribe, IRA**

**Kenai, Alaska**

Language lessons by Helen Dick, Yvonne Flynn, Joel Isaak, Andrea Ivanoff, Will Norton, and Jennifer Williams.

Source materials by Peter Kalifornsky, Alan Boraas, and James Kari.

Workbook compiled by Will Norton.

"Fluency Transfer System" courtesy Salish School of Spokane, WA.

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***Prelude.***

Un'i

Ada ndgheshnini

Ndahduh k'ushu qch'aninyu

Gu shaninyu.

*Come,*

*Let me welcome you with love.*

*Wherever you come from,*

*Come to me.*

Un'i

Ada ndgheshnini

Ndahduh quk'e'ush hk'ushu qch'aninyu,

Shqenaga k'usht'a beq'aynizdilnik' hq'u

*Come,*

*Let me welcome you with love.*

*Even if you come from where the sun rises,*

*Even if you don't understand my words,*

Un'i

Ada ndgheshnini.

*Come.*

*Let me welcome you with love.*

—*Peter Kalifornsky*

From *A Dena'ina Legacy: K'tl'egh'i Sukdu*, page 234. Revised English translation by Will Norton.

## **Introduction.**

**Nagh nduninyu! Welcome** to the Kenaitze Indian Tribe 2022 Dena'ina Community Language Workshop Series.

These workshops are intended to introduce the fundamentals of Dena'ina for current and future language learners. They are open to students of all ages, levels of experience, and tribal statuses.

Besides this workbook, the only supplies you will need are a **pencil or pen**. **Post-it notes** and **highlighters** may be helpful for marking passages in your workbook.

### *Using your workbook*

This **henu galegga** (**work book**) will be your guide to the workshops. It contains all the materials we will use in class, lists of other useful resources, and background information. It has wide margins for note-taking—don't be afraid to write in it! The henu galegga contains three chapters. Each workshop will cover a single chapter. You will probably find it helpful to read over the relevant chapter of the henu galegga before each workshop.



## Useful Resources:

**Books** [\* = included in the KIT Dena'ina At-Home Library]

\**A Dena'ina Legacy: K'tl'egh'i Sukdu*. By Peter Kalifornsky. Fairbanks: ANLC, 1991.

*Treasury of traditional stories, biography, songs, prayers, place names, and language patterns by the first Dena'ina writer.*

*Dena'ina Etnena, a Celebration*. Edited by Karen Evanoff. Anchorage: National Park Service, 2010.

*Place-names, stories, and culture of the Lake Clark area, richly illustrated.*

*Dena'ina K'et'una: Tanaina Plantlore*. By Priscilla Russell. Anchorage: Alaska Geographic, 2013

*Guide to Alaskan plants and their Dena'ina names and uses.*

\**Dena'ina Qenaga Duch'duldih: Dena'ina Junior Dictionary*. By Albert Wassillie. Anchorage: National Bilingual Materials Development Center, 1980.

*Easy-to-use collection of helpful words and phrases.*

\**Dena'ina Sukdu'a: Traditional Stories of the Tanaina Athabaskans*. Edited by Joan Tenenbaum. Fairbanks: ANLC, 2006.

*Traditional stories from Nondalton in Dena'ina and English.*

\**Dena'ina Topical Dictionary*. By James Kari. Fairbanks: ANLC, 2007.

*Authoritative reference for Dena'ina nouns, arranged by subject matter.*

*Kut' Dena'ina Qenaga Galeq: Helen's Dena'ina Language Pocket Dictionary*. By Helen Dick. Kenai: Kenaitze Indian Tribe, 2021.

*Quick portable reference for Dena'ina words and phrases.*

\**Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. By James Kari and James Fall. Fairbanks: UA Press, 2013.

*Comprehensive list of Dena'ina names and history for places around the Upper Inlet region.*

*Shtutda'ina Da'a Shel Qudel: My Forefathers Are Still Walking with Me*. By Andrew Balluta. Anchorage: National Park Service, 2008.

**Web**

Anchorage Museum, "Sharing the Dena'ina Language."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBMrURyxXqo>

*Elders discuss language and traditional crafts.*

UAF Alaska Native Language Archive: <https://www.uaf.edu/anla/>

*Archival text and audio materials from every Alaska Native language.*

Dena'ina Language Institute: <https://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/>

Audio dictionary: <https://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/audio-dictionary/>

*Online dictionary of Dena'ina phrases with recordings.*

Dena'ina Transcription with Joan Tenenbaum:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIQg5rWNHcYjqSLu13Jb6DFV5afXZL1kp>

*Walkthrough of reading, pronouncing, and writing Dena'ina sounds.*

Kalifornsky project: <https://artistsproofeditions.com/from-the-first-beginning/>

*Interviews with Peter Kalifornsky in free e-book format.*

Kenai Peninsula College, "Kahtnuht'ana Qenaga."

<https://web.kpc.alaska.edu/denaina/index.html>

*Online introduction to Dena'ina grammar.*

# Ts'etq'i

## Chapter 1.

### Lesson 1: *Yadi di Dena'ina Qenaga Nlan?*

#### *What is the Dena'ina Language?*

The **Dena'ina** people are the **indigenous** people of Cook Inlet, the Kenai Peninsula, and the Southern Alaska Range. They have lived in this area for thousands of years. **Dena'ina Qenaga**, "the Dena'ina Language" is the language traditionally spoken by the Dena'ina people.

**Indigenous:** the first people to have inhabited a particular area.

There are many **equally correct** ways to pronounce "Dena'ina." "de-NIE-na," "den-na-EE-na," "DIN-na-IN-na", and "de-NAY-ee-na" are some you may hear. In older sources, it is often spelled "Tanaina."



Map by Barbara Bundy, National Park Service

Because it has been spoken in this place for such a long time, **Dena'ina Qenaga** is uniquely fine-tuned to the environment of **Tikahtnu** (Cook Inlet).

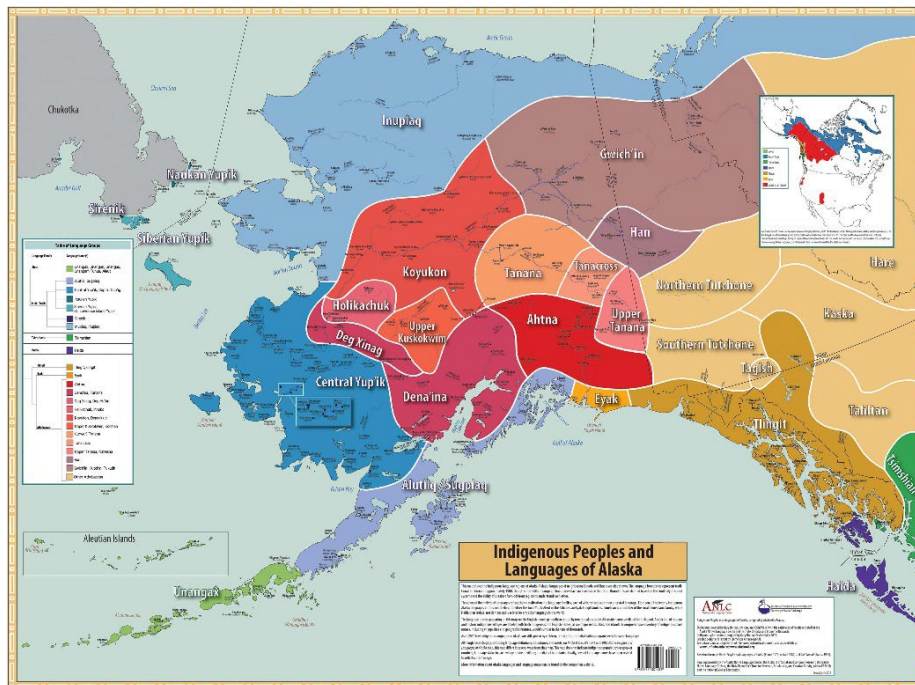


Dena'ina belongs to a **language family** called **Dene** (or **Athabaskan**). There are around fifty Dene languages in total, spread across the Western part of the United States and Canada. Other Dene languages include **Navajo, Apache, Hupa, Denesuline (Chipewyan),** and many, many others.

**Language family:** a group of languages descended from a single common ancestral language. For example, English, French, Russian, and Hindi are all **“Indo-European”** languages.

**“Dene”** is based on the word for **“person”** in most Dene languages.

Map from Wikimedia Commons



Map by Michael Krauss, Alaska Native Language Center

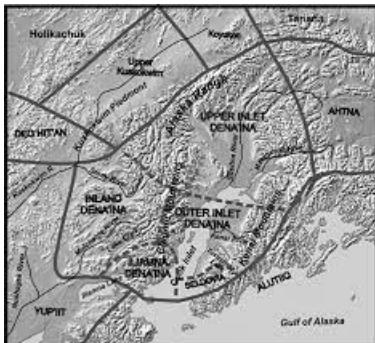
The larger family, or **“superfamily”** to which Dene, Tlingit, and Eyak belong is sometimes called **“Na-Dene.”**

Eleven Dene languages are indigenous to Alaska, including **Dena'ina, Ahtna, Gwich'in, Koyukon,** and others. **Tlingit** and **Eyak** are related to, but not part of, the Dene language family. Other Alaska Native languages belong to the



Eskimo-Aleut family (**Unangam Tunuu, Yup'ik, Sugpiaq, and Iñupiaq**), or separate families of their own (**Haida, Tsimshian**).

Like any language, Dena'ina varies across time and space. Not everyone speaks or has spoken Dena'ina in the same way. There are four major regional varieties, or "**dialects**," of Dena'ina. They are:



Map by Alan Boraas, Kenai Peninsula College

- **Upper Inlet:** spoken by people from the **Tyonek, Susitna River, Knik Arm, and Anchorage** areas.
- **Outer Inlet:** spoken by people from the **Kenai Peninsula, Kustatan, and Polly Creek** areas.
- **Inland:** spoken by people from the **Stony River and Lake Clark** areas.
- **Iliamna:** spoken by people from the Eastern part of **Iliamna Lake** (most people on the Western part of the lake speak Yup'ik).

**Dialect:** the way in which people from a particular region, family, or social group speak. Most languages, including English, are composed of many dialects.

The term "**Kenaitze**" is not derived from Dena'ina. It comes from a Russian word meaning "people of Kenai." The Dena'ina equivalent is **Kahtnuht'ana**.

Although these varieties are different from one another, they are **all the same language**. Think of language like a house. While it can be decorated in many different ways, the **basic structure remains the same** and holds the roof up no matter what it looks like. You can learn the basic structure of Dena'ina from any dialect and apply that structure to learn any other dialect.

Unfortunately, because the effects of colonialism, there are very few people who speak Dena'ina as their **first language** today. This is why it is so important to study and learn it now. Dena'ina elders and expert speakers have left a great legacy in their language and culture. By studying what they have left us, **you can make a real difference** in keeping this legacy alive.

**First language (L1):** the language(s) you learn as a child and speak most comfortably. Also known as "**native language**" or "**mother tongue**." A **second language (L2)** is one you learn in school or as an adult.

The materials we are learning from were made in partnership with **Helen Dick**, an expert speaker of Inland Dena'ina from Lime Village. Helen has been working to preserve her language for decades and is still working closely with the Dena'ina Language Institute.



Photo from the Dena'ina Pocket Dictionary

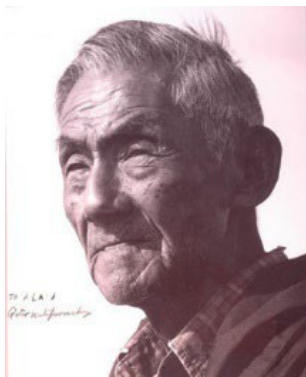


Photo by Sam Kimura

We will also touch on materials made by other expert speakers of Dena'ina. **Peter Kalifornsky** was an elder from the Kenai area who became the first Dena'ina writer. His book, *A Dena'ina Legacy: K'tl'egh'i Sukdu*, is a classic collection of Dena'ina stories, songs, and language patterns. We will read and listen to recordings of a few of them in these workshops.

**Fedosia Sacaloff** was an expert speaker of Outer Inlet Dena'ina and the Kenai Peninsula dialect of Russian, and had particular expertise in traditional plant knowledge.



Photo by Priscilla Russell

Fedosia is picking **ggis** ("pushki" or "cow parsnip"), an important source of food and medicine.



orkbook

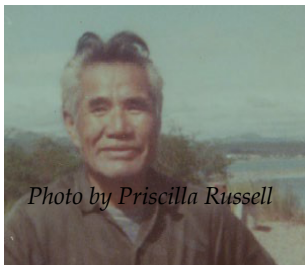
**Shem Pete** was an elder from Susitna Station and Tyonek who had an unmatched knowledge of Dena'ina place-names, history, and songs. Much of what he knew is documented in the book *Shem Pete's Alaska*, an excellent source for Upper Inlet place names.

*Photo by James Kari*

Many Dena'ina elders from Nondalton, including **Antone Evan, Alexie Evan, Katherine Trefon, Mary V. Trefon, and Gulia Delkittie** contributed to *Dena'ina Sukdu'a*, a book of traditional Dena'ina stories collected by linguist Joan Tenenbaum. Their stories are too advanced for this workshop, but reading them in Dena'ina would be a good long-term goal for any language learner.



*Antone Evan  
Photo by Priscilla Russell*



*Photo by Priscilla Russell*

Expert Dena'ina speaker **Albert Wassillie, Sr.** of Nondalton wrote a classic series of books in the 1970s and '80s, including a junior dictionary, a book of written traditional stories, a book of **k'ich'ighi** (riddles), and many Dena'ina language readers.

*Lesson 2: Greetings*

In this lesson, you will learn how to say hello, ask how someone is doing, and explain how you yourself are doing. Read and listen to the following Dena'ina phrases:

**Nt'i, yagheli du?**

Hello, are you well?

**Aa', yagheli. Nenhdi?**

Yes, I am well. How about you?

**Nch'u yagheli ghi'eshle.**

No, I'm not well.

**Chi'eshnah**

I am sick

*or*

**Tagheshdneq**

I am tired

**Nuntghesht'ih yida.**

See you again later.

**Q'u ugha.**

Goodbye.

After you have listened to your teachers perform this dialog several times, try it out for yourself! Turn to the person next to you and ask them how they are doing in Dena'ina. Then wait for them to respond according to the script. You can choose to reply either that you are doing well or that you are not. Repeat this activity until you can respond without looking at your henu galegga. The next time you come to class, remember: don't say "hello, how are you?" – say "**nt'i yagheli du?**"



Lesson 3: Introducing yourself

In this lesson, you will learn how to introduce yourself in Dena'ina. A **formal Dena'ina introduction** includes not only **your name**, but also the names of your **relatives**, your **village or hometown**, and the **clan** you belong to.

For this class, you are not expected to know what clan you belong to, or to have a clan affiliation at all. Instead, you can substitute an ethnicity (such as **Dena'ina**), or you can skip this step.

Listen to your teachers demonstrate the script below. You can use the blank spaces to write in your name and the names of your relatives. Skip the lines that do not apply to you.

\_\_\_\_\_ **sh'izhi qilan**

my name is [ ]

\_\_\_\_\_ **eshlan shida**

I am [ ] (insert clan or ethnicity here)

\_\_\_\_\_ **shu gu shqayeh qilan da.**

My village/hometown is [ ]

**Q'udi** \_\_\_\_\_ **yeshdu da.**

Now I live in [ ]

(use this line if you live somewhere other than where you grew up)

*Local Town Names:*

**Kahtnu:** *Kenai*

**Ts'eldatnu:** *Soldotna*

**Qeghnen:** *Nikiski area*

**Nilbentnu:** *Sterling / Moose River area*

**Ggasilat:** *Kasilof*

**Niqnalchint:** *Ninilchik*

**Tuggeght:** *Homer*

**Dgheyay Kaq':** *Anchorage*

\_\_\_\_\_ **shchida'a nlan**

[ ] is my grandmother

**Clan:** a family grouping in Dene society. Clans are inherited through the maternal line – you belong to the same clan as your mother.

For a more traditional introduction, start with your grandparents and introduce your own name last.

\_\_\_\_\_ **shchada'a nlan**  
[ ] is my grandfather

\_\_\_\_\_ **shunkda nlan**  
[ ] is my mother

\_\_\_\_\_ **shtukda nlan**  
[ ] is my father

\_\_\_\_\_ **sh'u nlan**  
[ ] is my wife

\_\_\_\_\_ **shqen nlan**  
[ ] is my husband

\_\_\_\_\_ **shgguya nlan**  
[ ] is my child

\_\_\_\_\_ **shkuya/stsiya nlan**  
[ ] is my grandchild

For relatives who have passed away, change **nlan** to **ghila'en** "the one who was," or **ghilana** for more than one person.

If you are a man, say **stsiya** for "my grandchild." If you are a woman, say **shkuya**.

Once you have watched and listened to the teachers demonstrate this script, turn to the person next to you and introduce yourself. If you want to, you can bring pictures of relatives to show when you say their names. Repeat the introduction until you can do it without looking at your workbook.

*Lesson 4: Entrance dialog*

In this lesson you will practice a dialog between a host (H) and a guest (G). Some of the lines are repeated from the greetings you have already learned.

H: **Un, ndunilggux**

Come, walk in.

**Yagheli du?**

How are you?

G: **Aa' yagheli eshlan. Nenhdi?**

Yeah, I'm good. How about you?

H: **Aa' shi k'i yagheli eshlan**

Yeah, me too, I'm doing good.

**Sdulq' egh nitsut**

Sit at the table.

**Chayich' na'in'u du**

Do you want tea?

G: **Aa' chayich' na'esh'u**

Yes, I want tea.

**Nenhdi sheł k'tghizhezh du**

How about you, are you going to drink (tea) with me?

H: **Aa' neł k'tgheshzhezh**

Yes, I will drink (tea).

**Chayi tudgheshlu**

I will make tea.

Once your teachers have demonstrated this dialog, break into small pairs. Pick one person to be the Host and one to be the Guest. Practice speaking the

script aloud. Then practice acting out the actions described (coming in, sitting down, making tea) without speaking. The third time you practice the dialog, speak the lines aloud and act out the actions at the same time. Then switch roles with your partner and repeat.

*Conclusion.*

Now that you have learned three dialogs, try to find time to use the phrases in your daily life. When you meet someone you know, try greeting them by saying, **nt'i yagheli du?** If they don't speak Dena'ina, even better! You can show off your knowledge and teach them what the phrase means and how to respond. Like any skill, learning a language requires **practice**. Keep this henu galegga and any other Dena'ina resources you have in a place where you won't forget them. Consult them frequently, both during and after the workshops. Use highlighters and post-it notes to mark words and phrases you want extra practice with. When we return for the next workshop, we will start by reviewing what we learned in the first one. We will begin by presenting a full Dena'ina introduction to the rest of the class. To prepare for this, please practice your introduction at least once daily over the next week.

*Chin'an gu ninyu!*

*Thank you for coming!*

## Nutiha

### Chapter 2.

*Lesson 1: Nuch'ul'anni "Let's do it again"*  
*Review.*

At the beginning of the second workshop, every participant will introduce themselves to the full class in Dena'ina. Practice your introduction beforehand. If you need prompts during your introduction, you can consult pages 13-14 of your henu galegga.

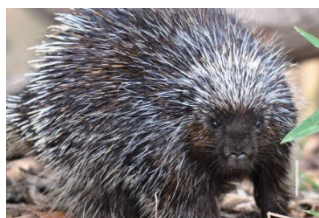
Once everyone has introduced themselves, turn to a partner and ask them, **yagheli du?** Then proceed with the greeting dialog from page 12.

Finally, your teachers will ask two students to volunteer to perform the entrance dialog (page 15) for the class.

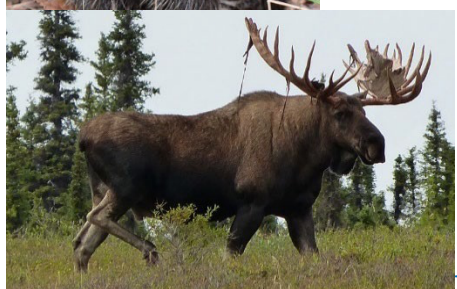
Lesson 2: *Qeneshi*

*Animals*

In this lesson, you will learn the Dena'ina names of Alaskan animals and practice pronouncing them. For each animal, **watch** as your teachers show a picture of the animal and **listen** as they repeat its Dena'ina name. Listen **without speaking** first. When your teachers direct you to, **repeat** the word after them.



**Nini**  
**Qanchi**  
*porcupine*

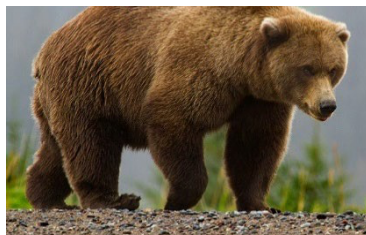


**K'uhda'i**  
**Dnigi**  
*moose*



**q'a**  
**luq'a**  
*fish/salmon*

NOAA Fisheries



**Ggagga**  
*Brown bear*

National Park Service

In this lesson, **Outer Inlet dialect** will be in blue, and **Inland dialect** in orange. Words that are the same in both will be in **brown**.

**Luq'a** are so important that the word can mean either 'salmon' or 'fish' in general. Any non-salmon fish must be specified by name. Likewise, **ggagga** can also mean 'animal.'



National Park Service

**Yeghdishla**

**Elt'eshi**

*Black bear*

**Vejex**

**Bejex**

*Caribou*



Wikimedia Commons



Cornell Ornithology Lab

**Chulyin**

**Ggugguyni**

*Raven*

**Ts'elga**

**Lega**

*squirrel*



AK Dept. of Fish and Game



**Ndaŋika'a**

**Daŋika**

*Eagle*

**Idashla**

*wolverine*



Wikipedia

**Łik'a**

*Dog*

**Kazhna**

*lynx*



WA Dept. of Fish and Game



Lesson 3: *Nudnelyahi*

*Plants*

In this lesson, you will repeat the process from lesson 2, this time applying it to Dena'ina names for important local plants.



**Ch'vala**  
**Ch'bala**  
*Spruce/tree*

**Giga gheli**  
**Ts'igek'a**  
*Blueberry*



**Q'eytsay**  
**Chuq'eya**  
*Birch*

**Eltsunłtsa**  
**Eltsuntsa**  
*cranberry  
(high-bush)*



**Eseni**  
**Esni**  
*Cottonwood*

**K'inghildi**  
**Hey gek'a**  
*cranberry  
(low-bush)*



**Qenq'eya**  
*Alder*

**Nqutl'**  
**Nqitl'**  
*salmonberry*





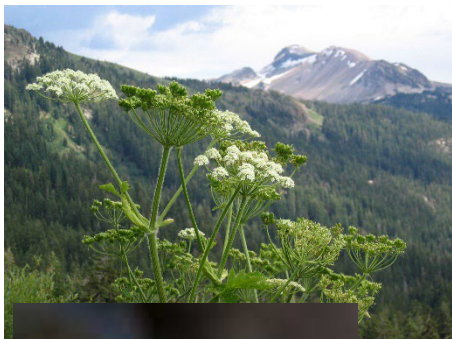
**Nan**  
*Moss*

**K'elug'ey**  
**Kenhughudza**  
*Labrador tea*



**Hesh**  
**Heshkegh**  
*Rose*

**Ch'deshitleq'a**  
**Nildghuligi**  
*Fireweed*



**Ggi**  
*Pushki*

**Uh**  
*Fern*



**Ts'elveni**  
**Ts'elbeni**  
*Wormwood*

**Gigazhna**  
**Dghilingek'a**  
*Crowberry*



Lesson 4: *Etnen h'izhi*

*Local place names*

In this lesson, you will learn the names of local landmarks and places in and around the Kenai Peninsula—**Yaghnen**, "the good land." For this lesson, it is best to be outside if at all possible. If there is no way to hold the lesson outside, or if visibility is low, you can rely on the pictures/maps in the henu galegga, as well as any others you may have handy.

Names in this picture, south to north along the west coast:

<b>Tikahtnu</b>	'Great water river' <i>Cook Inlet</i>
<b>Ch'naqa'in</b>	'Something keeps rotating' <i>Mt. Iliamna</i>
<b>Nilá Bena</b>	'Island lake' <i>Iliamna Lake</i>
<b>Ta'in Ch'iltant</b>	'Where we found a whale' <i>Polly Creek</i>
<b>Qezdeghnen</b>	'Pointed land' <i>Kustatan, West Foreland</i>
<b>Qelghin</b>	'Rises up' <i>Kalgin Island</i>
<b>Bentuggezh K'enulgheli</b>	'One with a cleft forehead' <i>Mt. Redoubt</i>
<b>Tubughnen</b>	'Water's edge land' <i>Tyonek</i>
<b>K'idazq'eni</b>	'One that burns on the inside' <i>Mt. Spurr</i>





Cook Inlet and Kenai Peninsula

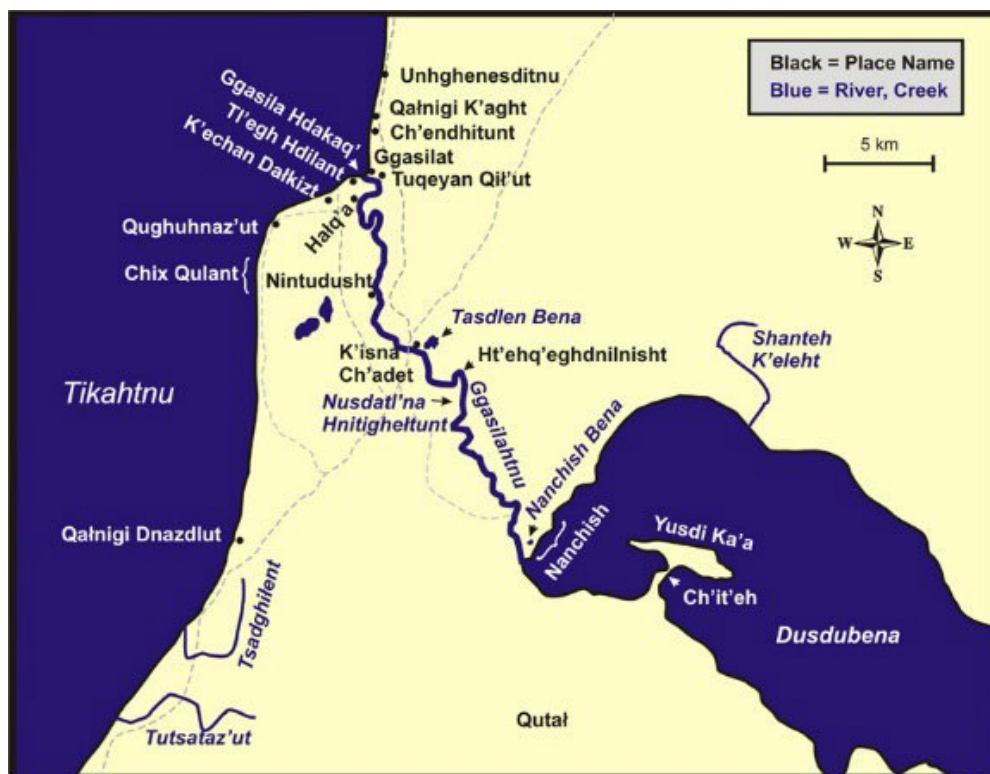
Map by Barbara Bundy, National Park Service / Anchorage Museum

South to north along the east coast:

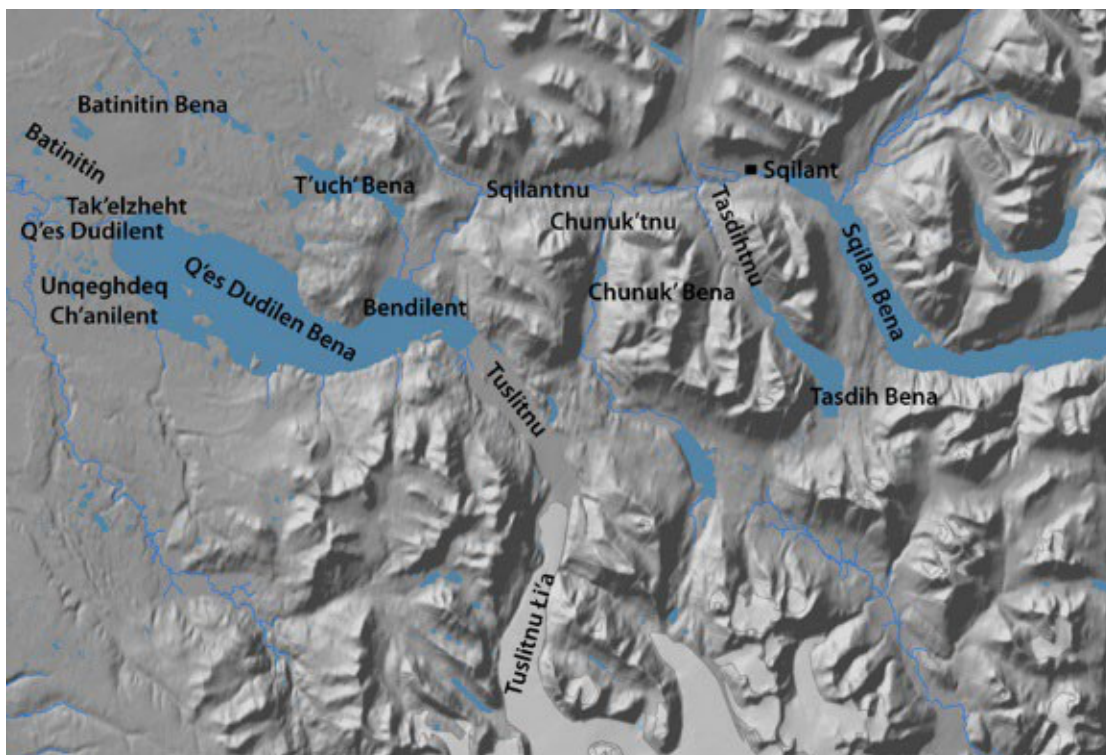
<b>Angidahtnu</b>	'Unknown + river' <i>Seldovia</i>
<b>Uzintun</b>	'Sticks out' <i>Homer Spit</i>
<b>Tuggeght</b>	'Where the water bends' <i>Homer</i>
<b>K'kaq'</b>	'River mouth' <i>Anchor Point</i>
<b>Niqnalchint</b>	'Where a lodge is built' <i>Ninilchik</i>
<b>Dusdu Bena</b>	'Peninsula lake' <i>Tustumena Lake</i>
<b>Qughuhnaz'ut</b>	'Where a mound rises' <i>Humpy Point/Cohoe</i>

<b>Ggasilat</b>	Unknown (possibly Aleut) <i>Kasilof</i>
<b>Unhghenesditnu</b>	'Last creek down' <i>Kalifornsky Village</i>
<b>Kahtnu</b>	'River-mouth river' <i>Kenai/Kenai River</i>
<b>Ch'k'ituk't</b>	'Where we slide down' <i>Historical village near Kenai</i>
<b>Qeghnen</b>	'Nearby land' <i>Nikiski area</i>
<b>Tiduqilts'ett</b>	'Disaster place' <i>Village near Nikiski</i>
<b>Yaghetnu</b>	'Good river' <i>Swanson River</i>
<b>Tuzqunt</b>	'Where the water is clear' <i>Point Possession</i>
<b>Ch'aghañnikt</b>	'Protected place' <i>Historical village at Point Possession</i>
<b>Tutl'uh</b>	'Rear water' <i>Hope/Turnagain Arm</i>
<b>Tl'ubugh</b>	'Rear shore' <i>Seward</i>

*Kasilof Area  
Map by Alan Boraas*







Upper Kenai River Area  
Map by Alan Boraas

<b>Q'es Dudilent</b>	'Where current flows out' <i>Stepankdas, historical village on Skilak Lake</i>
<b>Q'es Dudilen Bena</b>	'Current flows out lake' <i>Skilak Lake</i>
<b>Ses Qilantnu</b>	'River where there is a ridge' <i>Upper Kenai River</i>
<b>Chunuk'tnu</b>	Unknown <i>Russian River</i>
<b>Sqilan Bena</b>	'Lake where there is a ridge' <i>Kenai Lake (misapplied to Skilak Lake)</i>
<b>Dzel Ken</b>	'Mountain base' <i>Kenai Mountains (or Alaska Range)</i>



## Tuq'i

### Chapter 3.

*Lesson 1: Nuch'ul'anni "Let's do it again"*  
*Review.*

First, repeat the greeting and entrance dialogs from lesson 1, as you did at the beginning of lesson 2.

Then, **without looking** at the henu galegga, watch as your teachers show the class pictures of various plants and animals. Say the Dena'ina name of the plant or animal when you see its picture.

To prepare for this review, you may want to go over the animal and plant pictures during the days before the workshop.



Lesson 2: *Ditbaji Galeq* "The Brown Book"

How to read about Dena'ina grammar

This lesson will be a crash course in using Dr. Alan Boraas's 2012 textbook, *An Introduction to Dena'ina Grammar: The Kenai (Outer Inlet) Dialect*—sometimes called "the brown book." We will explain some of the linguistic terms used in the book and show how it can be used to help understand Dena'ina.

The brown book is a work in progress and has not been published, but a digital version is available from the Dena'ina Language Institute. To download it, go to the DLI website (<https://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/>) and click the blue "Grammar Book" button. Printed copies may also be available from DLI. A printed copy of the Brown Book is highly recommended for this lesson, but not required.

For the rest of the lesson, we will quickly go over each section of the book, clarify what the terms mean and how to use the chapter, and answer questions. Certain pages of the Brown Book will be highlighted, like this: **Page 14**. These are especially useful pages that you should mark with post-it notes so you can find them quickly. You may even want to print these pages and hang them up on your wall.

As its title suggests, the Brown Book focuses on Outer Inlet Dena'ina. For this reason, some of the rules and examples in it differ from materials in Inland, Iliamna, or Upper Inlet Dena'ina.



### 1. Introduction

*document pages: 1 – 4*

*PDF pages: 9 – 11*

This section covers more or less the same things we went over in the first lesson of workshop 1. The brown book does go into more depth on Dena'ina history, and includes brief explanations of what is coming up in the next chapters, so it is worth a quick read after the workshop.

### 2. Dena'ina Sound System and Orthography

*Document pages: 5 – 6*

*PDF pages: 13 – 14*

**Orthography:** The set of letters used to write a language, plus rules for using them correctly.

This section explains the sounds of Dena'ina. In general, its descriptions are very good. However, it is very hard to learn how to pronounce a sound just by reading a description, even a very good one, so your teachers will demonstrate each sound by pronouncing it aloud, along with a short word that includes the sound. We will give special attention to Dena'ina sounds that are very different from the sounds of English.

Manner the Sound is Made		Place the Sound is Made								
		Front							Back	
		Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Alveolar	Lateral	Alveo-Palatal	Palatal	Velar, front	Velar, back	Glottal
Stops	Voiced	b		d	dl	dz	j	g	gg	'
	Aspirated			t	tl	ts	ch	k	q	
	Glottalized			t'	tl'	ts'	ch'	k'	q'	
Fricatives	Voiced		v		l	z	zh	y	gh	
	Voiceless				l'	s	sh	x	h	h/hh
Nasals		m		n						
Glides	Voiced	w					y			
	Voiceless									

Figure 2. Dena'ina Consonants

From page 5 (PDF page 13)

### Dena'ina Vowels

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i		u
		e	
Low		a	

Figure 3. Dena'ina Vowels

From page 6 (PDF page 14)

After you have listened to your teachers pronounce all the sounds and example words several times, repeat them aloud several times yourself. You can also watch the transcription videos by Joan Tenenbaum—a link can be found in the list of web resources on page 6 of the henu galegga.

Dena'ina Qenaga Alphabet Poster					
'  Etl'	A  Alitga	B  Baba	Ch  Chik'ish	Ch'  Ch'nal'in	D  Dem
DI  Dlin'a	Dn  Dnigi	Dz  Dzal kena	E  Eba	G  Gech'	Gg  Ggwa
Gh  Ghelja	H  Hesh	H  Hwidil	I  Idashla	J  Jabila	K  Kazhna
K'  K't'un	L  Luzhnich	L  Li	M  Masla	N  Nutí	Q  Qenq'a
Q'  Q'es	S  Sem	Sh  Shagela	T  Tahwil	T'  T'ash	TI  Tlaq'sel
TI'  TI'inqin	Ts  Tsel	Ts'  Ts'ix	U  Ush	V  Vashla	W  Wanlay
X  Bejex	Y  Yes	Y  Suý	Z  Zitan	Zh  Zhezh	 Illustrations by: Jasmine Koster Jennifer Williams Joel Isaac

### 3. Words, Morphemes, and Sentences

*Document pages: 7-12*

*PDF pages: 15-20*

This section introduces the building blocks used to construct Dena'ina words. The most basic building block is the **morpheme**. Most Dena'ina words are built up of several morphemes. The best way to understand what a morpheme is is to see examples. In this section of the henu galegga, Dena'ina words will be shown broken down into morphemes, like this:

<b>Dena'ina</b> "people"	
<b>dena</b>	<b>-'ina</b>
person	plural

In this section, Boraas explains several different types of morphemes that can be found in Dena'ina words. For now, we will not go into these distinctions. They will start to become clear as we look at more Dena'ina words in action.

### 4. Nouns and Non-Verb Parts of Speech

*Document pages: 13-53*

*PDF pages: 21-61*

Nouns are probably the easiest type of word to learn. They are usually defined as a "**person, place or thing**." Basically, any word that can serve as the subject of a sentence – anything that can do an action, exist in a state, or have some kind of quality – is a noun.

Here are some examples of Dena'ina nouns:

<b>K'isen</b>	<i>woman</i>
<b>Kił</b>	<i>man</i>
<b>Annie</b>	<i>Annie (proper noun)</i>
<b>Qenq'a</b>	<i>house</i>
<b>Zaga</b>	<i>tiredness, exhaustion</i>
<b>Ghuynisdi</b>	<i>mind, thought</i>

**Proper noun:** The name of a particular person or place. Proper nouns cannot be possessed.

Most nouns can be **possessed**. This means they are owned by, related to, or part of another person or thing.

Some nouns **must be possessed**. They cannot be said unless they are preceded by a **possessive pronoun**. In the Brown Book, this is called "**inherent**

**possession.** Most inherently possessed nouns refer to relatives (father, sister, etc.) or parts of the body (foot, stomach, etc).  
**Page 14** of the Brown Book (PDF page 22) lists the possessive pronouns and examples of nouns being possessed. Here is a short version of Boraas's example, color-coded for ease of reading:

<b>Shunkda</b> "my mother"	
<b>sh-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
my	mother
<b>Nunkda</b> "your (singular) mother"	
<b>n-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
your (singular)	mother
<b>Bunkda</b> "his / her mother"	
<b>b-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
his / her	mother
<b>Nabunkda</b> "our mother"	
<b>na-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
our	mother
<b>Hunkda</b> "your (plural) mother"	
<b>nh-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
your (plural)	mother
<b>Qbunkda</b> "their mother"	
<b>qb-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
their	mother
<b>Shunkda</b> "my mother"	
<b>sh-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
my	mother
<b>K'unkda</b> "someone's mother"	
<b>k'-</b>	<b>-unkda</b>
someone's	mother

Notice that "mother" is **inherently possessed**. You **cannot** say "**unkda**" by itself. If you want to say "mother" without saying whose mother you're talking about, use **k'unkda** "someone's mother."

Other nouns are **non-inherently** possessed. They do not need to appear with a possessive pronoun. Most words for inanimate objects are non-inherently possessed. **Page 16** of the Brown Book lists examples of non-inherent possession. The possessive pronouns are the same as with inherent possession, but a **suffix** (-'a) is also added.

Here is a short version of the example from the brown book:

<b>Shlugech'a</b> "my gloves"		
<b>sh-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
my	gloves	possessed
<b>Nlugech'a</b> "your gloves"		
<b>n-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
your (singular)	gloves	possessed
<b>Belugech'a</b> "his / her gloves"		
<b>b-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
his / her	gloves	possessed
<b>Nalugech'a</b> "our gloves"		
<b>na-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
our	gloves	possessed
<b>Hlugech'a</b> "your (plural) gloves"		
<b>nh-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
your (plural)	gloves	possessed
<b>Qbelugech'a</b> "their gloves"		
<b>qb-</b>	<b>lugech</b>	<b>-'a</b>
their	gloves	possessed

**Suffix:** A type of morpheme that is attached to the end of the word, such as English "-er" in "runner."

The next part of this chapter of the Brown Book is about **postpositions**. A postposition explains how a noun is positioned in space or time. They are similar to English **prepositions** (such as "on, over, behind") but, as the name suggests, they come after the noun instead of before it.

For example:

<b>Milni det</b>	<i>Without water</i>
<b>Milni at</b>	<i>In the water</i>
<b>Milni hugh</b>	<i>Near the water</i>

**Pages 19 to 37** in the Brown Book (27 to 45 of the PDF) list most of the independent postpositions in Dena'ina. For now, you do not need to worry about the difference between an independent postposition and a dependent postposition.

The rest of this chapter of the Brown Book explains other "miscellaneous" types of Dena'ina words. Many of these words are relatively short and simple, but they are important to constructing complete Dena'ina sentences. We will not go into depth on them in these workshops. Page 50 (PDF page 58), "Evidentials and Emphatics," is out of date.



## 5. Verbs

*Document: pages 53 – 152*

*PDF: pages 59 - 158*

Dena'ina verbs are very complex. A single verb may be equivalent to a full English sentence. The Brown Book jumps directly into the full structure of Dena'ina verbs. **Page 102** (PDF page 108) lists almost every morpheme that can appear in a verb. If you only ever look at one page of the Brown Book, it should be page 102.

To make Dena'ina verbs more accessible, we will approach them in the opposite direction from the Brown Book, by starting with the easiest fully-formed verbs. Although many Dena'ina verbs are complex, some can also be very simple. For example:

<b>Chegh</b> "he / she is crying"	
<b>chegh</b>	
cry	

Now let's make it a little bit more complicated:

<b>Eshchegh</b> "I am crying"	
<b>esh-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
I	cry
<b>Nchegh</b> "You are crying"	
<b>n-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
you (singular)	cry
<b>Ehchegh</b> "You are crying"	
<b>eh-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
you (plural)	cry

Notice that each of these words contains two parts. One part, **chegh**, means "cry" and does not change. This part is called a "**verb stem**." The other part is a **prefix** and changes based on who is crying. In the Brown Book this is called the **inner subject pronoun**. Don't worry about what "inner" means for now.

**Prefix:** Like a suffix, but attaches to the beginning of a word instead of the end.



This is a simple version of the way all Dena'ina verbs work—they all consist of a **verb stem** and a number of **prefixes**. A single verb can have anywhere from zero to nineteen prefixes.

Let's see what happens when we add another prefix to this verb:

<b>Ghichegh</b> "He / she was crying"		
<b>ghi-</b>	<b>Ø-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
perfective	he / she	cry
<b>Gheshchegh</b> "I was crying"		
<b>ghi-</b>	<b>esh-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
perfective	I	cry
<b>Ghinchegh</b> "You were crying"		
<b>ghi-</b>	<b>n-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
perfective	you (singular)	cry
<b>Ihchegh</b> "You (plural) were crying"		
<b>ghi-</b>	<b>eh-</b>	<b>chegh</b>
perfective	you (plural)	cry

Notice that we have added one more prefix: *ghi-*. In the Brown Book this prefix is called the "**perfective mode**." The perfective mode means that an action has already been completed. It is a bit like the past tense in English. If an action has not been completed yet, this is called the **imperfective mode**. There are also two other modes: **future** and **optative**. We won't worry about these for now.

Different verbs require different prefixes for the same mode. The rules for which prefixes to use will not be explained here, but you can read about them on [page 85](#) of the Brown Book (PDF page 93).

Sometimes, a verb stem will change its form. For example:

<b>Ichagh</b> "He / she cried out"		
<b>mode</b>	<b>subject pronoun</b>	<b>verb stem</b>
<b>i-</b>	<b>Ø-</b>	<b>chagh</b>
perfective	he / she	cry out

Notice that the stem is now **chagh** instead of **chegh**. This is because it is in a different **aspect**. Aspect means the manner in which an action is carried out. For example, **ichagh** is in the **momentaneous aspect**. This means it happens all at once and does not last for a long time. In the **momentaneous aspect**, the verb 'cry' takes the stem **chagh** in the **perfective mode** and **chih** in the **imperfective mode**. Our earlier examples are all in the **durative aspect**. This means that the action is carried out over a period of time and takes a while to complete. In the **durative aspect**, the verb 'cry' takes the stem **chegh** in every mode.

Let's look at a few more examples of the momentaneous aspect:

<b>chih</b> "He / she cries out"		
<b>subject pronoun</b>		<b>verb stem</b>
<b>0-</b>		<b>chih</b>
he / she		cry out
<b>Nchih</b> "You cry out"		
<b>subject pronoun</b>		<b>verb stem</b>
<b>n-</b>		<b>chih</b>
you (singular)		cry out
<b>Eshchih</b> "I cry out"		
<b>subject pronoun</b>		<b>verb stem</b>
<b>esh-</b>		<b>chih</b>
I		cry out
<b>Ehchih</b> "You (plural) cry out"		
<b>subject pronoun</b>		<b>verb stem</b>
<b>eh-</b>		<b>chih</b>
you (plural)		cry out
<b>Inchagh</b> "You cried out"		
<b>mode</b>	<b>subject pronoun</b>	<b>verb stem</b>
<b>i-</b>	<b>n-</b>	<b>chagh</b>
perfective	you (singular)	cry out
<b>Eshchagh</b> "I cried out"		
<b>mode</b>	<b>subject pronoun</b>	<b>verb stem</b>
<b>i-</b>	<b>esh-</b>	<b>chagh</b>
perfective	I	cry out

<b>Ehchagh</b> "You (plural) cried out"		
mode	subject pronoun	verb stem
i-	eh-	chagh
perfective	you (plural)	cry out

A complete list of aspects can be found on **page 65** of the Brown Book (PDF page 73).

As noted before, the prefix used for mode also changes from aspect to aspect. Notice that the momentaneous examples (**ichagh**) take the perfective prefix **i-**, while the durative examples all take the perfective prefix **ghi-**.

Almost all verbs can take on multiple aspects. Each aspect comes with a set of stems, usually one for each mode, and a set of prefixes. We have seen that different aspects require different prefixes for perfect and imperfect mode, but in many cases, other prefixes may be required as well. The combination of stem plus required ("thematic") prefixes is called a **verb theme**. The inner subject pronouns are not part of the verb theme because they are not required.

The verb theme for the first examples we saw could be represented in this way:

**(Ø gh) + Ø + chegh** 'cry' (durative)

The prefixes in parentheses are the **modal prefixes**. These indicate mode. The parentheses means that the first prefix (**Ø**) is used for the **imperfective mode**, while the second prefix (**gh**) is used for the **perfective mode**. The second **Ø** is a **classifier**. Classifiers are prefixes that come just before the verb stem. They tell you how many people or things are involved in an action. **Ø** usually means that only one person is involved, in this case, the person crying (**subject**).

**Ø (zero):** Indicates the absence of a prefix or suffix.

Let's see what happens when we change the **classifier** to **ɫ-**:

Verb theme:

**O** + (0 gh) + **ɫ** + **chegh** 'make someone (O) cry'

Example:

<b>Shiɫchegh</b> "You are making me cry"			
object	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
sh-	i-	ɫ-	chegh
me	you (singular)	causation	cry

Notice that an "**O**" has been added to the beginning of the verb theme. This **O** is short for **Object**. The object of a verb is a person or thing who is affected in some way by the subject's action. The classifier prefix **ɫ-** usually means that a verb must have an object. This object can either be a **pronoun**, like **sh-** in the example above, or a noun.

Here are some more examples:

<b>Neɫchegh</b> "I am making you (singular) cry"			
object	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
n-	esh-	ɫ-	chegh
you (singular)	I	causation	cry
<b>Yeɫchegh</b> "He / she is making him / her cry"			
object	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
y-	Ø-	ɫ-	chegh
him / her	he / she	causation	cry

We can also combine classifiers and object prefixes with other prefixes we have used before:

<b>Shghinłchegh</b> "You were making me cry"				
object	Mode	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
sh-	ghi-	n-	ł-	chegh
me	perfective	you (singular)	causation	cry
<b>Yeghilchegh</b> "He / she was making him / her cry"				
object	Mode	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
y-	ghi-	Ø-	ł-	chegh
him / her	perfective	he / she	causation	cry
<b>Nghełchegh</b> "I was making you cry"				
object	Mode	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
n-	ghi-	esh	ł-	chegh
you (singular)	perfective	I	causation	cry

So far, all of these examples have been in the **durative** aspect. But we can also use the **momentaneous** aspect.

<b>Nełchagh</b> "I made you cry out"				
object	Mode	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
n-	i-	esh-	ł-	chagh
you (singular)	perfective	I	causation	cry out
<b>Shinłchagh</b> "You made me cry out"				
object	Mode	subject pronoun	classifier	verb stem
sh-	i-	n-	ł-	chagh
me	perfective	you (singular)	causation	cry out

This concludes our overview of Dena'ina verb structure. This lesson is not intended to teach you how to perfectly conjugate any verb, but it should give you an idea of the basic process involved. Using these lessons together with the Brown Book and other resources, such as Jim Kari's *Dena'ina Verb Stem Dictionary* or Joan Tenenbaum's dissertation *Morphology and Semantics of the Tanaina Verb*, you should be able to figure out how to say almost anything.

As your understanding of Dena'ina verbs improves, you may want to read the sections of the Brown Book about the following advanced topics:

<b>Theme class categories</b>	<i>page 60 (PDF p.66)</i>
<b>Negatives</b>	<i>page 86 (PDF p.92)</i>
<b>Suffixation patterns</b>	<i>page 94 (PDF p.100)</i>
<b>Morpheme changes</b>	<i>pages 146-149 (PDF pp. 152 – 158)</i>

If you ever feel daunted by the complexity of Dena'ina verbs, try to focus on the most common and simplest ones. Most verbs, even in advanced stories, are fairly simple. It is only a minority that are difficult to translate. If you focus on listening to and reading language in context, verbs will become easier over time.

### *Conclusion*

Thank you for participating in the 2022 Dena'ina Community Language Workshops. By studying this language, you are making a valuable contribution to the indigenous culture of **Yaghenen**, the **Good Land**.

The motto of the original Dena'ina Language Institute in the early 2000's was **Dena'ina Qenaga Qunuhdelzex** "The Dena'ina Language is Coming Back." It is thanks to students like you that we can continue to say this.

If you want to continue to learn about Dena'ina grammar, you can take **Dena'ina 1**, a language class offered by Kenai Peninsula College. Keep an eye out for more language classes and events offered by Kenaitze and other organizations. You are also encouraged to continue working on the Brown Book and the other resources listed at the beginning of the workshop. Your henu galegga is also a resource! Keep it and use your class notes to help you study further.

Most importantly, as you travel around **Yaghenen**, allow the landscape, animals, and plants to act as reminders of the Dena'ina words you have learned. When you see a **moose**, think **dnigi**. When you cross the bridge in Kenai or Soldotna, think of **Kahtnu**, the "river-mouth river." There is no better way to learn than by incorporating the language into your daily life.

If you ever have questions about learning Dena'ina, contact your teachers! We will be happy to help you learn this challenging and beautiful language.

*Chiqinik, nunhch'tut'ih yida!*

*Thank you, and see you again soon!*