



Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi

The Dena'ina Way of Living



TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

Lesson Plan 5

**Living with the Land
and with the Seasons**

Elementary (Grades 3-5) and Secondary (Grades 6-12)

Overview

Students learn about the Dena'ina annual subsistence cycle through one or more strategies, including:

- Taking an outdoor fieldtrip to explore the environment of Dena'ina Ełnena (for students who live in Southcentral Alaska)
- Examining information about Dena'ina objects to determine the materials used in their manufacture
- Designing an annual cycle calendar
- Observing and writing about the environment of Dena'ina Ełnena

Goals and Desired Outcomes

Overarching Understanding

- The Dena'ina survived in Dena'ina Ełnena by knowing and using the natural resources wisely.

Essential Questions

- What information does a person need to know in order to survive in Dena'ina Ełnena without modern conveniences?

Assessments

- Plant display or resource map following an outdoor fieldtrip
- Classification and presentation of the natural resources used in making Dena'ina objects
- Creativity and accuracy in designing a seasonal cycle calendar
- Writing assignments

Learning Activities

Materials

- 24 Photographs of objects from exhibition – see lesson plan 2 for images
- Seasonal Activity Chart

- Art supplies for collages or displays
- Reading: “Beluga Hunting” by Shem Pete
- The book *Tanaina Plantlore: Dena’ina K’et’una* by Priscilla Russell Kari, available in bookstores and from the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

Strategies

Strategy 1: Take a fieldtrip outside

1. By way of introduction, remind students (especially younger students) that they will have to use their imaginations to understand what Dena’ina Ełnena was like before the city of Anchorage was here. One way to accomplish this, if you live in Dena’ina country, is to take a short walk outdoors to investigate the environment.
2. Take a fieldtrip to a natural area in Southcentral Alaska. As students walk outdoors, have them map the resources they see and identify and collect plants or animal signs.
3. Dry and press the plants in the classroom and have students present a display of them. The display should include information on each plant, such as how the Dena’ina harvested and used it, and other details that relate to Dena’ina culture. A good resource for this information is the book *Tanaina Plantlore: Kena’ina K’et’una*.
4. Have students draw resource maps of the area you traversed during the fieldtrip. The map should show where various plants, animals, and natural features (such as streams and hills) were located. Encourage students to identify as many kinds of plants and animals as possible.

Strategy 2: Determine the natural resources that were used to make exhibition objects

5. Assign students to examine one or more objects from the exhibition. Supply the information about the objects. Have students list the natural resources that were used to make the object or objects.
6. Have older students (Grades 6-12) compare information and classify the objects based on the natural resources that were used in their manufacture.
7. Issue a writing prompt: “Based on our classification of 24 objects from the Dena’ina exhibition, I can make this generalization: . . .” (followed by a generalization of the student’s devising).
8. Have younger students (Grades 3-5) produce a collage that depicts a chosen object in use, along with the plants and animals that were used to make the object.
9. Alternatively, students choose one natural material that was important to Dena’ina people historically. They prepare a graphic display showing how that material was or is harvested, prepared, and used. Have students share their displays.

Strategy 3: Design an annual cycle calendar

10. Print and distribute the seasonal activity chart. Have students research one or more of the animals that appears on the chart using information on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Education, Wildlife Notebook website. For each animal researched, ask students to identify:
 - a) Its habitat
 - b) Which times of the year the animal is in Dena'ina Etnena
 - c) What the animal eats
 - d) What eats the animal
11. Create a seasonal cycle poster for the traditional Dena'ina lifestyle based on the information in the seasonal activity chart. Illustrate it. Consider differentiating land, sea, and air resources, perhaps through concentric circles on the chart.

Strategy 4: Write about the environment or a subsistence practice

12. In class discussion, compare and contrast the traditional Dena'ina footprint on the land with that of the modern Anchorage residents. Provide this writing prompt: "We could decrease our footprint on the land today by . . ."
13. Writing prompt: Write a multi-sensory description of your favorite place in Dena'ina Etnena.
14. Read Shem Pete's description of the beluga hunt. Ask students to imagine they are the hunter on top of the upturned spruce tree. They are to write a story about their imaginary experience on the hunt. Their ideas should be presented in a sequential order, and the story should have a beginning, middle, and end.

“Seasonal Round of Activities, Cook Inlet Dena’ina Regional Bands”

From *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina way of Living*. Edited by Suzi Jones, James

A. Fall and Aaron Leggett (2013), p. 13. © Anchorage Museum.

Season	Months	Primary Activities
Spring ƙitl’en	April Nut’aq’i N’u “Geese Month”	Beluga & seal hunting Trout fishing Beaver hunting and trapping
	May K’gguya N’u “Baby Month”	Bird hunting
Summer Shani	June ƙiq’aka’a N’u “King Salmon Month”	King salmon fishing
	July Chilug’a Ni’u “Fish Run Month”	Sockeye salmon fishing
	August Benen K’enedlidi “Month of Ripe Berries”	Berry picking

Season	Months	Primary Activities
Fall Nuqeli	September Benen Hhidechiqi "Month It Turns Yellow"	Snaring ground squirrels Silver salmon fishing Hunting & snaring caribou, moose, and other big game
	October Benen Nuk'nedeli "Month Birds Fly Back"	
	November Benen Qatgge Ntdalna "Month Going House to House"	Trapping Visiting and trading
Winter Heyi	December Benen Yach' Naqank'delyashi "Month Bear Turns over on Other Side"	Potlatching
	January Benen Q'ank'elich'delditi "Month for Going about Singing"	Ice fishing
	February Benen Tunteyashi "Month Water Increases"	Trapping and hunting
	March Benen Tich'enashi "Month We Go out"	Hunting bears in their dens

“Seasonal Round of Activities, Inland Dena’ina Regional Bands”

From *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina way of Living*. Edited by Suzi Jones, James

A. Fall and Aaron Leggett (2013), p. 14. © Anchorage Museum.

Season	Months	Primary Activities
Spring ƙitl’en	April Venen Nuk’net’ehi “Month They Fly Back”	Migratory bird hunting Fishing for pike and whitefish Beaver hunting and trapping
	May Venen Dghazhi “Egg Month”	Egg gathering Spring camp fishing and hunting continue
Summer Shani	June Ts’ek’dzelghaxi N’u “Month We Put Up Fish”	Sockeye salmon fishing
	July Ch’ishanich “Midsummer”	Sockeye salmon fishing continues
	August Venen K’enijuni “Month of Ripe Berries”	Berry picking

Season	Months	Primary Activities
Fall Nuqeli	September Venen Niłtuk'el'eshi "Rutting Month"	Snaring ground squirrels Hunting & snaring caribou, moose, and other big game
	October Venen Nuk't'unłqasi "Month the Leaves Fall"	Hunting continues throughout winter Harvest of spawned sockeye salmon ("red fish")
	November Shagela N'u "Trout Month"	Ice fishing for trout, grayling, and other fish Trapping
Winter Heyi	December Venen Nunqelts'edi "Month Sun Descends"	Trading, visiting, and potlatching
	January Venen Nuyilqu'i "Month Getting Light Again"	Ice fishing
	February Venen Nutchili "Month of Snow"	Trapping and hunting continue
	March Ndałika'a N'u "Bald Eagle Month"	Hunting bears in their dens Beaver trapping

Note: The charts highlight some key activities within each month. Activities may occur in multiple months.

Note: The Dena'ina equivalents for English-language names of months are approximate. Rather than being lunar months, the Dena'ina names are based on events within the annual cycle.

Excerpt from
“Quyushi Uqu Che’el’ani: Beluga Hunting”
by Shem Pete

Original story in *Shem Pete’s Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena’ina*. Edited by James Kari and James A. Fall (2003), pp. 78-79. © University of Alaska Press.

Nacheyakda’ina quyushi uhu qul’ih.
Our grandfathers used to hunt beluga.

Ch’ubetnu Tubughnenq’ qech’ tabagh quyushi qughidił.
Beluga come near the beach between Chuitna [Chuit] River and Old Tyonek.

Ch’bala beggats’a dnaghelt’ayi sht’a qunuhggats’hghighi’uk ch’q’u
They used to dig up a spruce tree with a big root structure and

beggats’a ghini badahdalqeyh t’qeyeghilik.
they hewed out the root structure (into a perch).

Tsenqeydghiltuk’ ch’u belutuna ghinhdi łuq’u qeyech’anqeyedghigits’.
They carried it down to the water, and they tore off all the inner bark.

Qeydełt’ich’ ch’q’u yethdi heyetnełggush.
They peeled it and then they dried it.

Łduntutset gheli hdi yuse gheli nintutset sht’a quhqelash ch’u hq’aqeydeyef.
At low tide, when the tide had gone quite far out, they
would dig a hole and put it [the tree] in.

Ch’bala lu hniqeyduyef hq’aqeydełchet.
They stuck the top end of the spruce in a hole, and they stood it up.

Nacheyakda’ina quyushi uhu qul’ih.
Our grandfathers used to hunt beluga.

Ch’ubetnu Tubughnenq’ qech’ tabagh quyushi qughidił.
Beluga come near the beach between Chuitna [Chuit] River and Old Tyonek.

Ch’bala beggats’a dnaghelt’ayi sht’a qunuhggats’hghighi’uk
ch’q’u beggats’a ghini badahdalqeyh t’qeyeghilik.

They used to dig up a spruce tree with a big root structure and they hewed out the root structure [into a perch].

Dnigi deyes k'qalen ghini tuq'i nilanh qeyetl'i ch'q'u jahtl'in eł naltlah t'qeyel'ish.
They braided three strips of moose skin and smeared it with pitch.

Ch'q'u ch'bala lu ghu hniqeydghitseyi ghu tl'i ghini yutgge sht'a benyestkeyh ghu t'qeyeghil'ik.
They tied ropes onto the spruce that was standing there.

Ch'u tl'i ghini dnaghelt'ayi sht'a bech'annayk'et'h t'qeyeghil'ik.
They had many ropes extending out in different directions.

Ch'qiluna k'uych'ena hyighitih, ts'itq'i tl'i.
Five or six people held one rope.

Yethdi ggaqeydelnesh dghu tl'i ghini luq'u hyitih ch'u qeyenenish ch'u ggaqeydelchet.
Then they stood it [the tree] up when they pulled on all the ropes and they held on to it.

Ch'q'u tl'i ghini luq'u hyitih.
They held on to those ropes.

Ch'q'u yethdi ts'i'un hnidi'ush hnuq'u tl'i ghini benułtu hnitsanaltsadi yi'enhyeyish tl'i ghin.
And then when it [the tree] was sticking straight up, they tied the ropes to stakes.

Yach'en elugh yin k'a qenhyuyish hyitih ch'q'u yina kiq'u ts'ilt'an ghunen qeyuyish.
They held on [to the ropes] on the other side while one man tied up those that were still untied.

Dach' ghunen diq'u qeyuyish qughesht'a qitket hnuq'u yethdi yina kiq'u qenhyitkis.
Thus he tied them to stakes very well, and it was secure when they tied it over and over.

Yuyqul k'atnili qeynułtu dghit'chik.
They made a pole ladder for the spearing tree.

Q'uyethdi bantadusht hnuq'u yuyqul deduhna ghuna nik'uhdel'ush.
When the tide came in, they took out [in a canoe] the ones who would sit in the spearing tree.

Qeyeqadghilggesh ch'u yuyqul ghini qeyalggesh beggats'a badahdalqeyi ghini.
They climbed up the spearing tree and got into the hewed-out roots of the spruce tree.

Tiqeshi ghin luq'u qeyeduqeyedel'el tiqeshi k'ghenidi ghini k'elises bedinghilin tl'i benaltl'in lu.
They passed up to them spears with bladder drags tied onto them with braided sinew ropes.

Qutsaghi'i k'deyes bighejetl'i k'eghenidi t'ghit'a lu.
It is said that the drag was an inflated sealskin.

Bedinghilin tl' ila yaghelisht' a quhnaghits'egh t' qeyl'ish.
They coiled the braided rope neatly.

Ts'ilghetna ch'qilu beq'edi betetneshi lu betl'ila k'ghila lu.
The rope was said to be twenty-five fathoms long [measured by outstretched arms].

Nishhqugh nintudushi dghu quyushi liq'a tl'uyeh ch'adeł.
At half-tide, the belugas come after the salmon.

Quyushi qeye'idelqay lu.
Then they speared a beluga.

K'ghenidi tuhyildeł hch'abesyilchesh.
They threw the drag into the water and it [beluga] pulled it away.

Hnuq'u ki dahdi qughena qudeł yiki q'u k'a qeydelqay.
Whenever it swam up by them, they speared it another time.

Yezech' ghu t'qet'ih ch'u dahdik'a aqeydelqay.
They did that and they would spear it several times.

Yungget dghu baydalgi at hdalts'ina dendałteyna quyushi ghin qeyel k'uhnedel.
Up there on shore, strong men who sat in bidarkas went out together in their boats after the beluga.

Kiq'u qeye'idelqay yi kiq'u hk'uhnedel.
They speared the beluga too as they went out.

Yethdi quyushi ghini qeyetl'uyeh neqash ch'u k'ghenidi ghini hyilket yethdi
hch'abesqubelchesh.
Then they caught up with it in the chase and they grabbed the drag and it [beluga] pulled them behind it.

Tahyelneh gheli.
They really tired it out.

Nilghenaq'u qunudleh qadelchet k'eldunahdi tl'iłhyitih qeyenenish.
Now and then it swam back up and surfaced, and some of them would hold on to the rope and pull on it.

Tahyelneh ch'q'u q'aditin el nuhyiggat ch'u qubelaq'aydelyesh.
They tired it out, and they stabbed it with the spear and they caught it.

Qeyats'ena qeyk'eneggesh.
They strung a rope through its jaw.

Daha tabagh hech' daghitggeh' besqeytelish.
They started to drag it to whatever beach was close by.

Niqahyiltash.
They brought it ashore [above the tide line].

Nil'unihyiltash.
They butchered it.

Nughelkidi hyighush.
They cut the blubber into blocks.

Yethdi baydalgi q'eduhyilash yethdi nuhqitdel'ush.
Then they loaded it onto bidarkas and transported it back.

Qayeht'ana niltehyel'ih.
They divided it among the villagers.

Paul Chuit betukda, Bidyaka'a qeyelnihen, quyushi chich'e'ishi qeshqa ghila.
They said that Paul Chuit's father, whom they called Bidyaka'a,
was the one who was the chief of beluga killing.

Yen undaden yuyqul beq'e dghiduhen ghila.
He was the last one who sat on a beluga-spearing tree [in about 1880].



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