



# Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi

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## The Dena'ina Way of Living

### TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

#### Lesson Plan 8

#### The Tide is Coming Back In (Cultural Renewal)



## Secondary (Grades 6-12)

### Overview

Students look at recent efforts to increase knowledge and awareness of Dena'ina culture. Older students create plans to further those efforts. Teachers may choose from among four strategies listed below. Teachers may want to adapt the activities in this lesson to the culture groups indigenous to their own area.

- Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt (all ages)
- Informative reading (Grades 6-12)
- Research Dena'ina revitalization efforts (Grades 6-12)
- Develop an action plan to further Dena'ina revitalization (Grades 6-12)

### Goals and Desired Outcomes

#### Overarching Understandings

- Cultural change is accelerated by contact with other cultures.
- As cultural groups become minorities, they need to expend great efforts to remain vital.

#### Essential Question

- How can cultures that have become minorities maintain their traditions?
- What can I do to help in the cultural education effort?

### Assessments

- If feasible, completed Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt sheets
- Class discussions
- Completion of fast-write
- Brief report on qenaga.org
- Brief report on KNBA Dena'ina Lifeways website
- Completion of a plan to promote awareness of Dena'ina culture and history

## Learning Activities

### Materials

- Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt
- Readings and text-based questions
  - *"Yagheli Du!"* by Clare Swan – see lesson plan 1 for reading
  - "Dena'ina History: The Twenty-First Century" by James A. Fall
- Computers and Internet connectivity

## Strategies

### Strategy 1: (Grades 3-12) Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt

1. Grades 3-5: Review the history of the Dena'ina and discuss the challenges to their lives and culture that the Dena'ina have faced. Make a list of those challenges on the board.
2. All students: Distribute the Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt. If any of the sites are near your school, consider taking a walk to see them. If not, invite students to visit these places with their families. Older students can go on individual fieldtrips to find the sites themselves.
3. As a summative activity for younger students, ask them to draw a mural that shows your school setting as it might have looked in Dena'ina days.

### Strategy 2: (Grades 6 – 12) Informative Reading

4. Revisit *"Yagheli Du!"* in Lesson 1. Note the metaphor for the tide from that reading. Explain to students that this last lesson is titled, "The Tide Is Coming Back In." Ask them what this might mean, in relation to Dena'ina life and history.
5. Read Excerpts from "Dena'ina History: The Twenty-First Century". Have students respond to the text-based questions.
6. Check for understanding based on responses to the questions.
7. Ask students to complete a fast-write in response to the question, "What do you think the greatest threat to Dena'ina cultural continuity has been?" Have students pair-share their answers and report back to the class as a whole.

### Strategy 3: (Grades 6-12) Research Dena'ina revitalization efforts

8. Have students connect to the Internet and go to [qenaga.org](http://qenaga.org), the website that encourages Dena'ina language learning. Their assignment will be to listen to one complete language lesson available through links from the website, to attempt to say the phrases taught in that language, and to report on the lesson (in writing):
  - a) What was the lesson teaching?
  - b) What methods were used to teach the language?
  - c) Did the written words help you?
  - d) What did you find most challenging about the language lesson?
9. Have students go to the KNBA Dena'ina Lifeways website, at <http://www.denainalifeways.org/?q=node/2> and listen to one of the stories, in both English and Dena'ina. Write a brief report:
  - a) Who told the story?
  - b) Give a summary of the story.
  - c) What message or understanding did you get out of the story?

### Strategy 4: (Grades 6-12) Develop a plan to promote cultural awareness

10. As a class, decide on a focus for helping increase the local knowledge and understanding of Dena'ina culture and history in Anchorage. Examples might be language, visibility through signs, more curriculum in the schools, etc.
11. Divide the class into work groups. Each group's task is to come up with a plan that will lead to greater knowledge and understanding of Dena'ina culture and history in Anchorage. In designing their plan, students should consider consulting with Dena'ina experts or working collaboratively with a Dena'ina organization. Students should consider the following:
  - a) The issue
    - i. What happened in the past to bring about the current state of "invisibility" of Dena'ina culture or language?
    - ii. Why is this particular issue or topic not adequately dealt with already?
    - iii. What is the desired outcome of your project?
  - b) People
    - i. Who will be allies?
    - ii. Who might be against the project, and why?
    - iii. Who has the power to make decisions that will allow your plan to work?
    - iv. What power do you have as students to alter the situation?

c) Resources

- i. What information is available to help in your plan?
- ii. What funding might be available to help in your plan?
- iii. Are there laws and regulations that support what you want to do?
- iv. Are there other laws and regulations that make your plan difficult to implement?

d) The plan

- i. What steps will you take?
- ii. How long do you expect your project to take?
- iii. Who will be responsible? (assign tasks)
- iv. How will you know when you have succeeded?

## Dena'ina in Anchorage Treasure Hunt

### Instructions

This is a treasure hunt to go on with your friends or family. Below is a list of some of the places and signs around Anchorage that are owned by or reveal something about the Dena'ina people. You will need a car or bus to find all these places. Look at them and decide whether you think they tell part of the Dena'ina story well. Check them off when you see them.

### Buildings

- Nat'uh, the Cook Inlet Tribal Council building, 3600 San Jeronimo Drive
- CIRI (Cook Inlet Region, Inc.), 2525 C Street
- Calista Corporation, 301 Calista Court
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation, 111 West 16th Avenue
- Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center, 611 West 7th Avenue

### Signs

- Chester Creek sign in the UAA ANSEP (Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program) building, Spirit Way
- Bird Ridge Trail parking lot, Seward Highway
- Chugiak High School mural
- Eklutna Lake Campground
- Kincaid Park Chalet
- North side of 4th Avenue along the outside wall of the mall
- Kiosk at the corner of F Street and 3rd Avenue
- Westchester Lagoon near the fish ladder
- Eklutna church and cemetery

Other signs that you see – write down their locations

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**Excerpts from**  
**“History: The Twenty-First Century”**  
**by James A. Fall**

From “Introduction to Dena’ina Culture and History” by James A. Fall. Original essay in *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina way of Living*. Edited by Suzi Jones, James A. Fall and Aaron Leggett (2013), pp. 44-45. © Anchorage Museum.

In the early twenty-first century, the Dena’ina were a minority within a minority within their own homeland: in 2010, 61 percent of Alaska’s population lived on traditional Dena’ina lands, including about 52,000 Alaska Native people from all over the state. At around that time, according to the Alaska Native Language Center, people of Dena’ina heritage numbered perhaps one thousand, constituting just 0.2 percent of the population of Southcentral Alaska and about 2 percent of the area’s Native population.

Efforts to support learners of the Dena’ina language were strong in the early 2000s. In 2003, the Kenaitze Tribe hosted the first Dena’ina Festival, followed by a three-week Dena’ina language course at Kenai Peninsula College (Gaul and Holton 2005). The Dena’ina Language Institute occurred annually from that beginning through 2011. In 2005, the Dena’ina language website, Qenaga.org, was established through the Dena’ina Archiving, Training, and Access project of Eastern Michigan University and the Alaska Native Language Center, with funding from the National Science Foundation. The website offers a guide to learning the language and a digital archive of more than five hundred documents and recordings relating to the Dena’ina language.

At the outset of the twenty-first century, little public acknowledgment of the Dena’ina heritage of Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city, existed. Through the efforts of the Dena’ina community and others, this situation began to change (Fall 2009; Langdon and Leggett 2009). In 2006, a citizen’s panel recommended that a new convention center in downtown Anchorage be named the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center, a recommendation that was unanimously adopted by the Anchorage Assembly. The center opened in 2008. Additionally, several interpretive signs about Dena’ina place-names, history, and culture were designed and placed in the city’s parks and along its trails, including one at Chansh Kaq’ Bena (Westchester Lagoon at the mouth of Chanshtnu, or “Chester Creek”) on the popular Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. A sign in downtown Anchorage featuring Captain Cook peering over a nameless group of Dena’ina that the Dena’ina community found offensive was removed in September 2008.

On the Kenai Peninsula, the Kenaitze Tribe conducted several programs to preserve and promote Dena'ina cultural traditions. The tribe has administered a cultural and educational salmon fishery in the Kenai River since 1989. In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the tribe hosts the K'beq' interpretive archaeological site at Cooper Landing at the location of a former Dena'ina village. At its headquarters in Kenai, the tribe has developed the Ts'itsatna Tribal Archives Collection, including books, audio and video recordings, and photographs. In partnership with Kenai Peninsula College, the tribe created the Kahtnuht'ana Qenaga website about the Dena'ina language.

### Responding to Change, Conserving Traditions

For centuries, the Dena'ina way of life thrived within a rich but challenging homeland. Material items, sociocultural traditions, stories and songs, and cultural and spiritual values all attest to effective and sustained adaptations to the natural and social environments of Southcentral Alaska. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing at an accelerating pace up to the present, Dena'ina communities have also faced the challenges brought by waves of newcomers, including depleted resources, epidemic disease, and socioeconomic and political changes and opportunities. In the twenty-first century, the Dena'ina continue to play an important and ever more visible role within the diverse lifeways of modern Alaska while nourishing links to their history and distinctive culture. It is the goal of Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living to enhance an understanding and appreciation of this history and culture and thereby enrich the lives of all who live in or visit Dena'ina Elnena, Dena'ina country.

### Text-Based Questions on the Reading

1. What does the phrase "minority within a minority" refer to in this selection?
2. Name three types of programs or projects that have aimed at strengthening Dena'ina culture and language since the late 1900s.





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