

DEG XINAG ORAL TRADITIONS: RECONNECTING INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION THROUGH TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES

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Abstract

“Deg Xinag,” literally ‘local language’ is the westernmost of the Athabascan¹ languages. The language area is also referred to as “Deg Hit’an,” literally, ‘local people’. The Deg Hit’an are often referred to inappropriately in anthropological and linguistic literature as “Ingalik,” a Yup’ik word meaning ‘lice-infested’. There are currently three villages in western, interior Alaska where this language is spoken and about 20 fluent speakers of this language remaining. As I proceeded through my graduate research I came to understand the significance of indigenous language revitalization in relation to its potential contributions to indigenous and cross-cultural education. These contributions include establishing and enhancing self-identity and self-esteem for indigenous students, as well as contributing in-depth knowledge about local environments thereby enhancing place-based and funds of knowledge educational models (Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005: 15; Moll 1990).

This dissertation presents an interdisciplinary analysis of a complex, cosmological Deg Hit’an narrative entitled “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*” or “The Man and Wife” told in the Deg Xinag language by the late Belle Deacon of Grayling Alaska (1987b). Deacon also told her own English version and titled this “The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of the World” (1987c). Underlying structures and meanings used in the contexts of Deg Xinag oral traditions are currently lacking in most published materials for this language, making it difficult to learn and consequently, develop

¹ The term “Athabascan” has varied spellings within the literature, including “Athapaskan” and “Athabaskan.” In 1997, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), the interior Alaska tribal consortium adopted a resolution stating their tribes’ preference of the spelling using “b” and “c.”

culturally-appropriate language learning programs and curriculum. This analysis encompasses the fields of Alaska Native/indigenous studies, anthropology, and folklore/oral traditions using philosophical and pedagogical frameworks established by indigenous scholars including Gregory Cajete, Oscar Kawagley, and Greg Sarris.

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Preface

As a person of indigenous and non-indigenous heritages, this investigation and resulting analysis requires rigorous reflexivity, that is, a broad examination of my multiple “insider/outsider” roles (Smith 1999) in terms of my knowledge of the Deg Hit’an culture, growing familiarity with the Deg Xinag language as a second language learner, and, initially, general unfamiliarity with Deg Hit’an traditional narratives, and specifically, with Belle Deacon’s narratives. This research is, in many respects, an inter- or cross-cultural endeavor, considering my “borderlands” background (Anzaldua 1987; Rosaldo 1993); a background that resulted in my initial experience with oral traditions through written formats, then secondarily through listening to the original recordings.

As an indigenous researcher, I must rationalize and justify my research to both the academic community and the Alaska Native community members with whom I work. What is the purpose of this study and who will benefit from my research? I am the most obvious beneficiary, as if this thesis is accepted I will earn an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in cross-cultural studies. However, in addition to my committee and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who else am I accountable to? Who from the Deg Hit’an communities will benefit from my research? What are the expected positive outcomes to this research? Are there any negative outcomes to this research and who could be directly affected? (Delgado-Gaitan 1993; Kawagley 1995; Smith 1999; St. Denis 1992).

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the Deg Hit’an area, and a summary of my background interwoven with the research rationale, including some of the challenges and issues identified in this preface. The chapter concludes with basic linguistic information

about the Deg Xinag language accompanied by preliminary findings from my perspective as a second-language student.

Chapter 2 introduces Alaskan Athabascan oral traditions, focusing closely on Deg Hit'an culture and oral genres in indigenous knowledge systems and subsistence contexts.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research narrative, including an overview of the recording, transcription and translation contexts, and my paraphrased summary of the narrative. Selected sections of the narrative are presented and analyzed to uncover worldviews and paradigmatic structures not obvious in the translated document.

Chapter 4 examines the narrative within the context of indigenous education; this chapter begins with an analysis of cultural values inherent in the narrative. I then present an overview of second language pedagogy, indigenous adult language learning programs and language ideologies.

Chapter 5 re-presents the findings of the previous chapters and summarizes significant findings in terms of language revitalization and indigenous language education.

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I am deeply grateful to many people, without whom the preparation of this document would not have been possible. First, I dedicate this dissertation to my father, James Dementi, and my aunts and uncles, Gilbert Dementi, Louise Winkelman, Susan Dutchman, Katherine Hamilton, Hannah Maillelle, and Raymond Dutchman. In addition, I wish to recognize other honored Deg Hit'an Elders who have made significant contributions to the adult learning programs for Deg Xinag; these Elders include Alta Jerue, Ellen Savage, Lucy Hamilton and Edna Deacon.

I am very grateful to members of my "Indigenous Review Committee" for their support and guidance, including Lenora (Lolly) Carpluk, Director, Future Teachers of Alaska, University of Alaska Statewide; Dixie Dayo, Assistant Professor, Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development; Malinda Chase, Director, Association of Interior Native Educators Learning Styles Program; LaVerne Demientieff, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work; Linda Green, President, Association of Interior Native Educators; Esther Ilutsik, Faculty, Bristol Bay Campus; and Sharon Attla and Karen Dullen, Educators, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

In addition, I wish to recognize all the members of the Alaska Native Knowledge Network/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative for sharing their wisdom and concerns over the past few years. The Alaska Native Elders and other members of this network continue to be role models for indigenous scholars and I thank them for their leadership and gentle guidance.

Special thanks go to my husband, Michael, and daughter Samantha, for their patience, love, and support during this lengthy process. I am also grateful to my mother, Jean Aubrey Dementi, for instilling in me the love of languages.

Thanks also to James Kari, UAF Faculty Emeritus, who reviewed several sections of this dissertation, and whose course in “Athabascan Linguistics” many years ago inspired me to study the Deg Xinag language. I also wish to recognize others who mentored me during my undergraduate program, including my faculty advisor Charley Basham, UAF Faculty Emerita, and Susan McHenry, Advisor, Rural Student Services.

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Dogidinh Yixudz

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Deg Hit'an Area

The Deg Hit'an or Ingalik language area is one of the smaller Athabaskan language areas in comparison, for example, to the Koyukon or Gwich'in areas. The Deg Hit'an ('local people' or 'people from around here') refer to their language as "Deg Xinag" ('local language'). From this point forward I will refer to the language as "Deg Xinag" as this is the term that Deg Hit'an Elders use to refer to their language. Yale anthropologist Cornelius Osgood (1940) subdivided the Deg Hit'an into four distinct cultural groups: the Anvik-Shageluk group, the Bonasila group, the Holy Cross-Georgetown group, and the McGrath group of the Upper Kuskokwim River. To the north of the Deg Hit'an is the Holikachuk area, a language considered intermediary between Deg Xinag and Koyukon (Krauss 1980: 37-38). To the east of the Deg Hit'an is the Upper Kuskokwim language area; and to the southeast, the Dena'ina. The Yup'ik area is located beyond western and southern borders of the Deg Hit'an. For more detailed information on Alaska Native languages see the map Native Peoples and Language of Alaska (Krauss 1982). The following figure was taken from the Alaska Native Language Center website <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/languages.html>.



Figure 1: Alaska Native Languages Map

The Deg Hit'an language/cultural area currently encompasses the villages of Anvik, Grayling, Holy Cross, and Shageluk; there are currently no fluent Deg Xinag speakers living in Holy Cross at this time. According to the referenced language map, Grayling is located within the Holikachuk language area; however there are several Deg Xinag speakers living there as well. Anvik, Grayling and Holy Cross are located on the lower-middle Yukon, while Shageluk is on the Innoko River, a Yukon River tributary. Holy Cross is considered part of the Deg Hit'an area but borders the Yup'ik area and is currently is a mixed Athabascan-Yup'ik community. Many Grayling residents are originally from Holikachuk, an Innoko River village above Shageluk that was abandoned

in 1963. Holikachuk residents resettled at Grayling due to a variety of economic and practical reasons; prior to that time the Grayling site had been used during summer fishing by Innoko River residents (Arundale 1983). It should be noted that during the pre-European contact period, and for some time post-contact, most residents did not live year-round in one location, rather moved to different camps depending on the season.

Holy Cross is the largest of the four villages with a current population of approximately 232; Grayling is second with 204, Shageluk third with 145, and Anvik, the smallest, with a population of 102 (Williams 2004). Population in each of the four villages varies; some families transition back and forth from larger urban areas depending on the employment and educational opportunities. Although high school education is available in each of the villages, high school students may choose to leave the village and attend boarding schools in Galena or Nenana in interior Alaska, or Mt. Edgecumbe in the Southeast region. These schools may be able to offer a more varied curriculum, as often, the one or two village high school teachers in each village must be able to teach most, if not all, content areas.

In the past there were many camps and settlements along the Innoko River before the epidemics of the early 1900's, and subsequent relocations of family seasonal sites to year-round sites on the Innoko River that included Old Shageluk and Holikachuk; both now relocated. In the following quote my aunt Deg Hit'an Elder Hannah Maillelle describes her memories of the Innoko River communities:

There used to be lots of people on the Yukon and Innoko Rivers - nearly every bend there was a fishcamp in the summertime. There's so many people up the Innoko River, lots of people, and all around the Yukon there's lots of people. From Fox Point, there's a place coming like this and going all the way up to Thompson Creek, there's land, little hills going up this way. There was a big, big village around there, and the village was so big, so many people, that they couldn't have one kashim, so they built three kashims in that big village. There had to be three kashims to entertain each other for those dances and everything they do (Leonard 1996c).

The Deg Xinag place name for Old Shageluk is *Leggitno*, literally, 'rotting fish slough'. The following quote from a Deg Hit'an Grayling resident provides background information on the name and significance in terms of subsistence:

...[whitefish] go inside that creek from the Innoko River...Shageluk, they used to, ah, this slough above Old Village. Right side, I told you, used to set fish trap. She [his wife] knows about it. You used to set fish trap in that slough. See, I told you could haul off the whitefish...Old Village...It's called *Looge git no* ' [name of the slough]. (Brown, et al. 2005: 61)

As a result of excessive flooding, most of the residents of Old Shageluk moved to the new village site in 1966, approximately two miles downriver. The Deg Xinag name *Dzuxtse* refers to the name of a woman who, while going for berries, died climbing the

hill in back of the village. The spelling of the village corporation² name *Zho-tse*, illustrates an earlier spelling of *Dzuxtse*. There is an older name for the New Shageluk site, however this name has not been publicized at this time.

Deg Hit'an Resource Documents

Publications by Osgood (1940; 1958; 1959) provide a detailed social and cultural ethnography of the area. Osgood's data comes entirely from the Anvik-Shageluk cultural group and his primary informant was the late Billy Williams of Anvik. During four years in Anvik from 1968-1972, I was fortunate to meet and have several opportunities to visit with Billy Williams, and his wife Jessie on several occasions, although at the time I was not aware of his contributions to the Deg Hit'an culture. I remember visiting his house with my mother who was then serving as an Episcopal lay minister in the area. Billy Williams was very friendly to his visitors, both adults and children. While carrying on conversations or telling stories he would work on carvings – spoons, women's knives, walking sticks or toys. At some point during these years, he gave me a *sanh yix* or 'summer house' replica he had built, and a miniature *tavasr* or 'woman's knife'. These gifts symbolize for me the importance of the Deg Hit'an cultural beliefs and traditions as I continue my studies within this region.

James Vanstone's publications include the publication of E.W. Nelson's ninety-one page, handwritten manuscript of travels on the Yukon and Innoko Rivers in 1880 (1978), as well as a record of historic settlements in the Deg Hit'an area (1979a). Ingalik

² Zho-tse, Inc. is the Shageluk corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

Contact Ecology (Vanstone 1979b) begins with an ethnographic synthesis of subsistence rounds, social relations and beliefs, then examines in more detail the timeline and effects of European contact on this area beginning with the Russian fur trade in the late 1700's. The Handbook of North American Indians: Subarctic volume (Snow 1981), includes a chapter on the Deg Hit'an and Holikachuk, providing a summary of territory and environment, external relations, culture, and contact history.

Publications by Episcopal missionaries that contain references to the Deg Hit'an, include The Alaskan Missions of the Episcopal Church by Archdeacon Hudson Stuck (1920) and A Camp on the Yukon by Reverend John Chapman (1948). There are also a number of unpublished documents in the Archives of the Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, the Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus at Gonzaga University in Spokane, the Alaska Church Collection, Library of Congress, and the Russian-American Company Records (Snow 1981: 616). Published documents by Reverend Chapman and Archdeacon Stuck are rarely flattering, more often overtly demeaning, in their references to the Deg Hit'an people, continually criticizing their superstitious "animistic" ceremonials, and traditionally semi-subterranean housing. However, in my brief examination of Chapman's unpublished journals, it seems that as he learned more about the culture and the language, he began to re-think his formerly deficit opinions of the Deg Hit'an stating:

And yet these people, who once lived so near the ground, are intelligent, with a philosophy of their own, a picturesque conception of the Universe, and animistic beliefs of which a description would fill a large volume. (1946:8)

One of the more current publications about the Deg Hit'an area is Wheeler's doctoral dissertation The Role of Cash in Northern Economies: A Case Study of Four Alaskan Athabascan Villages (1997). This document includes a synthesis of the Deg Hit'an culture and history, as well as an extensive examination of subsistence practices within the area, and comprehensive bibliography. Under a similar subsistence usage theme, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Brown, et al. 2005) recently published a technical report containing ethnographic interview data focusing on the Traditional Ecological Knowledge regarding non-salmon fish species. Some of this interview data regarding the pike is presented in chapter three of this dissertation.

Personal Introduction

I was born in 1960 and spent the first five years of my life in Shageluk, then my family moved to Anchorage so I could begin school there. After four years in Anchorage, we returned to the area to the community of Anvik, then moved back to Shageluk in 1972. I attended West high school in Anchorage, the largest urban city in Alaska, graduating in 1978. My parents came from very different cultures and ethnic backgrounds; this has provided me with multiple perspectives and identities grounded in both indigenous and non-indigenous traditions. Subsequent sections explain more fully the origins of my perspectives.

The following is a self-introduction that was taught to me and other Deg Hit'an students through an Deg Xinag audioconference course (see Taff 2001) offered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Interior-Aleutians McGrath Center Campus. Our language instructors during this course have included my father, James Dementi of

Shageluk; aunts, Hannah Maillele of Grayling, Louise Winkelman of Anchorage and Shageluk, Katherine Hamilton, of Shageluk and uncle, Raymond Dutchman of Shageluk; as well as Edna Deacon of Grayling.³

³ The audioconference course is usually facilitated by linguist Dr. Alice Taff of the University of Alaska Southeast, with the assistance of Donna MacAlpine Miller. Milller is a longtime resident of Anvik and McGrath, and former Anvik teacher and language curriculum developer for the Iditarod Area School District. I have also taught this course as the official instructor of record past semesters. Our audioconference is still ongoing however we are currently unaffiliated with the University of Alaska Fairbanks as official courses require more students than are usually available from the Deg Hit'an area.

Table 1: Deg Xinag Introduction

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Beth Dementi-Leonard si'ezre'.</i>	My name is Beth Dementi-Leonard.
<i>Deg Hit'an itlanh.</i>	I am Deg Hit'an.
<i>Łeggijitno', Dzux-tse, Qay Xichux, Gitr'ingithchagg xinasiyoh.</i>	I grew up in Old Shageluk, New Shageluk, Anchorage, and Anvik.
<i>Siqing' Michael Leonard vi'ezre'.</i>	My husband's name is Michael Leonard.
<i>Siyotr'a' Samantha vi'ezre'.</i>	My daughter's name is Samantha.
<i>Fairbanks tr'iditl'tth'e.</i>	We live in Fairbanks.
SITO' VIDITHNIQAY	MY FATHER'S FAMILY
<i>Sidithniqay James Dementi, Jean yif xivi'ezre'.</i>	My parents are James and Jean Dementi.
<i>Sito' Didlang Tochagg nadheyoh.</i>	My father grew up in Spruce Slough (Swiftwater-below New Shageluk).
<i>Vidadr (sivadr) Katherine, Susan, Louise yif xivi'ezre'.</i>	His younger sisters (my aunts) are Katherine, Susan, and Louse.
<i>Louise viqing' Richard yif Qay Xuchux xiditl'tth'e.</i>	Louise and her husband, Richard, live in Anchorage.
<i>Sito' vichidl (sitoy) Gilbert vi'ezre'.</i>	My father's younger brother (my uncle) is Gilbert.
<i>Gilbert vi'ot Eleanor yif Cantwell xiditl'tth'e.</i>	Gilbert and his wife Eleanor live in Cantwell.
SINGONH VIDITHNIQAY	MY MOTHER'S FAMILY
<i>Singonh California xighela'.</i>	My mother was from California.
<i>Vichidl (sidhi'a) Keith, Don yif xivi'ezre'.</i>	Her younger brothers (my uncles) are Keith and Don.
<i>Don vi'ot Lucille yif Santa Barbara California xiditl'tth'e.</i>	Don and his wife Lucille live in Santa Barbara.
<i>Vidadr (siq'oy) Yvonne vi'ezre'.</i>	Her younger sister (my aunt) is Yvonne.
<i>Yvonne viqing' Richard yif Redding xiditl'tth'e.</i>	Yvonne and her husband Richard live in Redding.
SITSIY SITSEY YIL	MY GRANDFATHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS
<i>Sitsiy Charlie Cikal Dementi, Charles Aubrey yif xivi'ezre'.</i>	My grandfathers' names are Charlie Cikal Dementi and Charles Aubrey.
<i>Sitsiy Charlie Dementi Dishkakot xighela'.</i>	My grandfather Charlie Cikal Dementi was from Dishkakot.
<i>SitseY Lena Phillips Dementi, Ruth Aubrey yif xivi'ezre'.</i>	My grandmothers' names are Lena Phillips Dementi and Ruth Aubrey.
<i>SitseY Lena Dementi Didlang Tochagg xighela'.</i>	My grandmother Lena Dementi was from Spruce Slough.
<i>SitseY viyif xethdlan Clara, Albert xivi'ezre'.</i>	My grandmother's siblings are Clara and Albert.

In the preceding introduction, I introduce both maternal and paternal sides of my family using the verb stem –‘*ezre*’ to indicate personal names. I have also included Deg Hit’an place names for Anvik and Shageluk, and the name for Anchorage, *Qay Xichux* or ‘big village’. Deg Xinag words for siblings differ from those used in English as the Deg Hit’an distinguish between older and younger siblings by use of different word stems. For example, the terms for ‘my older sister’, is *soda* and ‘my younger sister’ is *sidadr*, versus English usage in which an adjective precedes the noun, for example, ‘older’ or ‘big’ sister. Aunts and uncles are also identified by maternal or paternal lineage. Maternal terms for uncle and aunt respectively are *sidhi’a* and *siq’oy*; paternal terms are *sitoy* and *sivadr*.

Other aspects of this simple introduction include proper way to convey information about someone who is still living, versus deceased. For example, my father (who is still living) grew up in *Didlang Tochagg* (Spruce Slough), so I use the phrase “*Didlang Tochagg nadheyonh*.” In contrast, to introduce the same information for my mother, I use the phrase “*California xighela*,” indicating that she was from, or grew up in California. Additional aspects of the Deg Xinag language will be explored in this and subsequent chapters.

Education, Literacy and Oral Traditions: Personal Reflections

Critical theorists argue for the importance of wrestling with the artificial dichotomy of self, other, and we/they boundaries between the researcher and culturally diverse communities which face constant scrutiny from academics. Such divisions...have forced us to think about the autonomous versus relational self. In some instances reflexive research in anthropology has been pejoratively labeled narcissism. But self adoration is quite different from self awareness and critical consciousness of the relational self. (Delgado-Gaitan 1996)

Indigenous research protocols require a reflective examination of identity and background (Smith 1999), that is, how does my personal history affect my choice of research projects, the research process itself, and my subsequent analysis? To initiate this self-reflective process, a process that will continue throughout this dissertation, I will present a brief background of family members who have, both directly and indirectly, influenced my academic and personal interests, and shaped my current research efforts in language, education, and oral traditions. These family members include my mother and father, and my paternal grandparents.

My mother, Jean Aubrey Dementi, a non-indigenous woman from California, was born in 1919. After earning a nursing degree from the University of California Los Angeles and working as a public health nurse there, she came to Alaska in 1951 to serve the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska. Prior to moving to Shageluk, she worked at the St. Mark's Mission in Nenana, and then the Hudson Stuck Memorial Hospital in Fort Yukon. During these years, she developed many deep, life-long friendships with Alaska Native

families and individuals, and became well-respected for her practical and often life-saving nursing skills. After marrying my father in 1958, my mother continued her work with the church in the communities of Shageluk and Anvik, and during the early 1970's began studying for ordination. After the Episcopal Church changed their canons regarding the ordination of women, she was first woman in Alaska ordained to the diaconate in 1972, and subsequently, the first woman in Alaska ordained to the priesthood in 1977. In 1978, she and my father moved to North Pole where she took over as vicar of St. Jude's Episcopal Church, until her retirement in 1986. My mother died in 1988 after a six-year battle with colon cancer, five days before the birth of my daughter, Samantha. During this reflective research process, I have had to investigate more deeply her influence on my life in terms of education and language. Published materials by my mother, or referencing her work in Alaska, include "In Real Life" (Dementi 1986), "One Good Woman" (Dorsey 1995), and Faces of Alaska (Lester 1988).

My father, James Dementi, was born in 1926 in a small community below Shageluk, *Didlang Tochagg*, or 'Spruce Slough,' also referred to as 'Swiftwater'. He is the oldest of five siblings. His father was from the Holikachuk language area, and his mother from the Deg Hit'an area, so he speaks two Athabascan languages in addition to English. Thanks to his knowledge and skill of his parents, my father is highly educated in the place-based subsistence system, that was, and still is necessary to the survival of the Deg Hit'an people. His father, the late Charlie Dementi, was originally from Dishkaket, an historic settlement at the confluence of the Dishna and Innoko Rivers. I did not ever meet my grandfather as he died in 1948 of tuberculosis. However, I still feel the influence

of my grandfather in my family as my father has described how my grandfather taught him how to live a subsistence lifestyle. My grandmother, the late Lena Phillips Dementi died in 1996. She spent time in the Anvik (Episcopal) Mission, learning to read and write the English language, as well as run a household that reflected some standards of the Episcopal missionaries, including cleanliness and organization. My father and his siblings remember my grandmother teaching them by candlelight to write and read the Bible. After my grandfather died, my father became responsible for providing for the family through hunting and trapping, and cash-based employment such as village maintenance, or seasonal jobs such as seafood processing in Bristol Bay. Most of my father's younger siblings went to the Shageluk elementary school operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Shageluk, and some attended high school outside of the community. My father was at that point too old to attend the elementary school, but he remembers "...the teacher used to give me a learning chart to bring down to Swiftwater...learning words, cards..." (Dementi, et al. 1995).

I was always very impressed by my father and his adaptability to contexts very different from those he was brought up in. My mother was also very proud of him and used to tell me how, as a store manager in Shageluk in the early 1960's, my father honed his literacy skills by reading food labels, and developed his mathematical skills by necessity within that same position. My father was also adept at assembling or repairing any piece of machinery present in our village life from small engines to generators. He once put together a generator from looking at a larger model and consulting diagrams in the technical manual, then wired our house for electricity. My mother often stated that

she could go look at a model generator or read technical manuals for several months without any visible, practical results. Although she may have been considered functional within several literacy domains (Erickson 1988; Scribner 1988), in this case her education would not have assisted her with a practical, albeit technical task. My father was also able to pass the written portion of the State of Alaska driver's exam with some assistance. He was not comfortable reading and deciphering the questions on his own, so the testing center allowed a proctor to read each question to him, with the restriction that each question could be read aloud only twice. This process required that my father analyze from aural input without the visual mnemonic device literacy allows. He was able to pass this test on his first attempt. Years later when I took the exam, I found the wording quite confusing, however, the test was then computerized and displayed visual images in addition to the text.

Even as English was the primary language used in our home, I grew up in an aural environment rich in oral traditions.⁴ Although I did not grow up hearing the traditional Deg Hit'an narratives⁵ in the Deg Xinag language, I was exposed to everyday conversations and the re-telling of ordinary and extraordinary events within the Deg Hit'an communities of Anvik and Shageluk. Since more modern entertainment such as television had yet to make their way into rural Alaska during the 1960s and early 1970s, my family listened to radio and records, played card and board games, and read books.

⁴ Although I use the terms "oral" and "aural", at this point I am not trying emphasize a gap between "oral traditions" and "literate traditions." Both traditions, if indeed separate, or separated on a literate-oral continuum, remain intertwined for the purposes of this analysis.

⁵ I choose to use the word "narrative" instead of story, folklore, or myth (mythology) as these terms historically have been used to describe, often in a subordinate way, the oral traditions of indigenous cultures.

One of my favorite activities as a child was to listen to my collection of records that ranged from folk music and folklore by Pete Seeger and other artists, to classical music and oral renditions of Swan Lake and the Nutcracker. Radio stations played 1960s songs of protest, country music, and presented religious programming that included oral renditions of traditional biblical stories and contemporary personal narratives. All of my family members participated in these aural activities, thereby communicating this as a valued and valuable pastime.

Despite suppression of traditional beliefs and language by the early Episcopal missionaries and the territorial and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, Shageluk has retained many of its cultural traditions and educational practices, including the mask dances documented by Osgood (1958) and Vanstone (1978). My uncles, Raymond Dutchman and Phillip Arrow are currently song leaders in Shageluk. As a child I was assigned “tea partners,” and as part of this winter educational ritual, was responsible for the reciprocal exchange of tea and food with my partners during the winter mask dance festival. Although I then lacked a deeper knowledge of (and am currently still learning about) the cultural beliefs and language, the dances were exciting, with the singing and drumming and the visitors from other villages. Some of the songs referred to the flight of Raven, or the jumping and spawning of the salmon. Some songs were more contemporary, reflecting personal experiences. For instance, during the 1950s, one of the song leaders (currently deceased) had been sent to Seattle to recover from tuberculosis. He became homesick and would ask his doctor when he could leave. The doctor would clasp his hands behind his back and say “too bad, too bad.” Upon his return to Shageluk,

this song leader composed a song and choreographed a dance, complete with a “white man doctor” mask with the dancer clasping his hands behind his back, shaking his head saying “too bad, too bad [you can’t return home yet].” Younger generations in Shageluk are currently learning the existing traditional songs and dances, and hopefully, the art of composing songs and choreographing dances.

In his book Keeping Slug Woman Alive Pomo/Miwok scholar Greg Sarris (1993: 43) discusses Bateson’s notions of “culture contact,” that is, cultures will come into contact not only “cross-culturally,” but “interculturally” as well. Intercultural and “border” themes are also prevalent in the publications of Chicana/Mestiza scholar Anzaldua (1987) and Chicano scholar Rosaldo (1993). In my discussion in the preceding two paragraphs on cultural and oral traditions, I position myself as both an insider to the culture in terms of some contemporary “aural” activities, and an outsider in terms of traditional “oral” activities, such as speaking the language, storytelling, singing and dancing. This discussion of my position as an indigenous, insider-outsider researcher, will continue throughout the presentation and analysis of the research narrative. In chapter three, I will summarize or re-present the research narrative, then look specifically at what aspects or features of the narrative I found important enough to relate, and others that I may have ignored. These issues of “translation as interpretation”(Sarris 1993; Tedlock 1983) are especially relevant in the development and presentation of educational materials.

Endangered Languages

A language has no livelihood apart from the people who speak it. (Farb 1993:17)

As I grew up in the villages of Shageluk and Anvik, I witnessed on one hand the absence of the Deg Xinag language in community and school life, while on the other hand the language obviously had status within the academic community. In the early 1970s linguists from the Alaska Native Language Center began their work documenting the Deg Xinag and Holikachuk languages. My father, my aunt, the late Susan Dutchman and uncle, Raymond Dutchman, all fluent speakers of Deg Xinag, were some of the expert speakers in the early documentation efforts who assisted noted linguist and scholar of Athabascan languages, James Kari⁶ of the Alaska Native Language Center, with production of a preliminary noun dictionary and literacy manual. These speakers also helped with the re-elicitation and interpretive translations of the Deacon (1987a) narratives recorded in the 1970s and the Chapman (1914) narratives recorded in the early 1900s.

I began learning about the Deg Xinag language during my undergraduate college experience, after taking a course with Dr. Kari. The course was titled “Athabaskan Linguistics,” however, with a brief introduction to some of the linguistic features of Athabascan language, the course then concentrated more heavily on the social and cultural aspects of the languages. Up to this point, I had not bothered to learn much

⁶ Dr. Kari is currently Professor Emeritus with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska Native Language Center.

about Deg Hit'an culture and the Deg Xinag language, as neither had been heavily emphasized in either my personal upbringing or educational experiences and therefore, lacked social status (Errington 1999; Schieffelin, et al. 1998). From reading publications by well-known Athabaskanist and scholar of Alaska Native languages and language loss, Michael Krauss⁷ (1980; 1992; 1997; 1981), I understood that Athabascan languages are considered endangered, but at the time I did not fully understand the complex relationships between cultures and their languages. Metaphors often used by linguists to describe languages include terms such as “dying,” “moribund,” “threatened,” or “disadvantaged.” These terms can often serve to de-emphasize people and communities, effectively separating languages from people from the people who speak them. Also, with much of this literature authored by non-indigenous scholars, “having outside experts...label the languages as *dying* or *moribund* can undermine the very notion of local control, local meaning, and certainly local hope” (Dementi-Leonard and Gilmore 1999: 39). Farb (1993), whose quote introduces this section, presents another, perhaps more inclusive term, that is, “the ecology of language.” Although the focus remains on language, this metaphor recognizes the social, cultural, and political webs that influence safety or endangerment of cultures and their respective languages.

In the past, much of the literature on indigenous language planning, revitalization, and shift was written by non-indigenous scholars; these scholars include Robert Cooper (1989), James Crawford (1997), Joshua Fishman (1991), Rosemary Henze and Kathryn

⁷ Dr. Krauss, now UAF Professor Emeritus, served as Director of the Alaska Native Language Center from 1972 until 2000.

Davis (1999), and Leanne Hinton and Jocelyn Ahlers (1999). Currently, there are increasing numbers of publications by recognized indigenous scholars including Stephen Greymorning (1997), Jeanette King (2001), Richard Littlebear (1999), Sam L. No'eau Warner (1999), Lucille Watahomigie (McCarty, et al. 2001), Laiana Wong (1999), and Ofelia Zepeda (McCarty, et al. 2001).

In my work with Tanana Chiefs Conference from 1995-96, I had the opportunity to examine the issues of language endangerment and planning more closely, as I coordinated meetings within four of their subregions to plan for community-based Athabascan language programs. Tanana Chiefs Conference is an interior Alaska consortium of 42 Athabascan tribal governments, encompassing a vast 235,000 square-mile region divided into six subregions. During this project, I planned and documented workshops for five Athabascan language areas, including Deg Hit'an, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, and Lower Tanana (Leonard 1996a; Leonard 1996b; Leonard 1996c; Leonard 1996d). Community delegates attending these workshops fully understood the connectedness of their languages and cultures, and the webs of influence affecting the health of their communities. Discussion topics ranged from support for school and community Athabascan programs, to the need to nurture younger language instructors, and concern for the rapid rate of rural teacher turnover. Broader topics included discussions of the Alaskan political climate that had resulted in funding cuts to rural education funding. Delegates also discussed their concerns with language ownership regarding language materials that are archived away from home communities. After completing these reports, I received permission from Tanana Chiefs Conference to more

closely examine this language planning data within a journal article entitled “Language Revitalization and Identity in Social Context: A Community-Based Athabascan Language Preservation Project in Western Interior Alaska” (Dementi-Leonard and Gilmore 1999).⁸

As I continued my work for Tanana Chiefs Conference as Athabascan Language Coordinator from 1997-1999, and again from 2002-2004, I looked for ways to reconnect language learning within the social and educational webs of communities, first through establishing an Athabascan language apprenticeship programs, and later attempting to transition the individual apprenticeship program to a family learning model. In the next section I describe how I began learning the language and how that process continues today.

Learning *Dinaxinag* (Our Language): My Own Journey

In my current role as language learner, along with other language learners from the Deg Hit'an area, I find myself struggling with the best way to learn the Deg Xinag language, and share the knowledge I have documented. Although some of us, as students, work directly with linguists, obvious differences between English and Deg Xinag are perhaps not fully understood and not articulated. I believe this is due in part to the lack of knowledge of the deeper Athabascan cultural contexts and constructs, and “the failure to

⁸ Dr. Perry Gilmore was co-author of this article; she was then Associate Professor with the University of Alaska Fairbanks' (UAF) School of Education and my master's committee chair. Dr. Gilmore is now Associate Professor at the University of Arizona's Department of Language, Reading and Culture, and UAF Professor Emerita.

⁸ Athabascan Language Development Institutes that included instruction in the Deg Xinag language (1998-2003) were funded in part by grants to the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, from the Alaska Humanities Forum and U.S. Department of Education.

document language beyond the lexical and grammatical levels” (Holton 2002).

Athabaskan languages are classified by linguists as “prefix-agglutinative,” that is, the stem or root of the word is preceded by a series of complex prefixes that signify “who is doing the action and when the action takes place” (Hargus and Taff 1994). This presents challenges for non-linguists, as many comprehensive (versus topical) dictionaries tend to be organized by the stem, rather than the “word-initially” or alphabetically. The non-speaker of the language, or speaker who does not know how to identify the word stem, needs to begin by looking at the English index to identify the stem for a particular word he or she is trying to research. For any one word, there can be multiple translations, hence multiple stems and multiple locations to research within a stem dictionary to find information related to one English word or topic.

Deg Xinag Language Materials

I was an undergraduate linguistics student when I began my study of Deg Xinag. At that time I had no experience in learning a non-European language and was accustomed to being taught conversational language by experienced teachers using immersion methods. I was also used to having an extensive collection of practical dictionaries and grammars at my disposal to assist in the learning process. Although there is not a published grammar for Deg Xinag, there are materials that can be used for language learning. To date, publications include the topically-organized Deg Xinag: (Ingalik) Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978), one set of verb lessons (Hargus and Taff 1994), a language curriculum for elementary students (Thompson, et al. unknown), one literacy manual that includes two traditional narratives (Jerue and Maillelle 1993), and two

volumes of traditional narratives (Deacon 1987a; Kari 1981). The traditional narrative publications provide a great deal of information although much of this is hidden within a translated format that lacks “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the cultural beliefs, and practices. These narratives can now be read or listened to in a context that is far from traditional in nature. In the chapter two I will address issues of transcription and translation of oral traditions.

Publications by the Iditarod Area School District also include several short children’s stories that will be listed and examined in more detail in chapter two of this dissertation. The verb lessons are probably one of the most useful documents produced to date for the language learner as they explain the linguistic structures at an elementary level.

Language Learning Methods and Challenges

Through my academic coursework I would often run across barriers to my own self-confidence in being able to someday speak Deg Xinag fluently. For instance, some studies on the relationship of age in second language acquisition conclude that if learning begins after adolescence (a “critical period”), the learner cannot expect to become fully fluent in the second language (see Baker 1996: 84-85 for a more complete discussion of this debate). In a similar vein, I have heard at least one linguist describe Athabascan “as one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn,” thereby subtly implying that one needs to be of above-average intelligence to indeed even attempt such a process. As a learner and student, I have been questioned as to the potential for true authenticity or purity of Athabascan when learned as a second language, and whether or not I think the

“back velars” will drop out of the language. Deg Xinag back velars are written with ‘kk’ and ‘gg’; for example, the following represents a minimal pair with front and back velars: *gag* or ‘berry’ and *ggagg* or ‘animal’.

I began my own language learning by asking for phrases in the language, and listening to taped narratives and literacy exercises. I also would sit down with my father and go through sections of the previously referenced noun dictionary to find the literal meanings of words. I found that, although writing and studying written language is not considered the best way to learn conversational language, it provided a base for further understanding of the language structure and helped with learning the sound system. I continue my study of conversational language through regular interactions with various members of my immediate and extended family. Sometimes this learning takes place in more formal environments such as audioconference classes, or on-campus immersion or partial-immersion classes sponsored by the Alaska Native Language Center’s Athabaskan Language Development Institute.⁹ On most occasions this learning takes place through informal language apprenticeship (Hinton, et al. 2002) interaction with speakers through visits or phone conversations. I still use a variety of learning methodologies, including listening to recordings, and reading and writing the language on a regular basis.

As I researched second language acquisition and teaching methods, I learned one of the more popular ways to teach and learn aspects of conversational language involves a method called Total Physical Response, often referred to as TPR (Asher 1996). In

⁹ Athabaskan Language Development Institutes that included instruction in the Deg Xinag language (1998-2003) were funded in part by grants to the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, from the Alaska Humanities Forum and U.S. Department of Education.

English, this requires the use of the imperative mode to give a series of commands that require some action on the part of the learner, for example, “come here,” “open the window,” “close the door,” etc. However, to utilize this method, it is important to consider cultural contexts that may be quite different those assumed in foreign or world language learning. For Deg Xinag and other languages it is important to research statements appropriate to the situation and respectful to the individuals involved. In my research with Deg Xinag, many of these phrases would not be imperative statements, but rather describe instead an appropriate action, that is, what someone should, or should not be doing. In the case of “wake up” for instance (when speaking to a child), a more appropriate way to express this in Deg Xinag is “*Xe’ledz tr’aningidhit he’?*” which translates as ‘Are you waking up (feeling) good?’. Examples such as these reflect the deeper value system, that is, a gentle way of relating to children as they awake. Traditionally, parents were careful to speak gently at this time of day the child is more impressionable and vulnerable than at other times of the day.

I am continually impressed with the Deg Xinag speakers’ command of English and Athabascan, and their strength and resilience considering the damage that has been done since contact. In the past there was a great deal of travel and intermarriage between the Deg Hit’an and Holikachuk areas, so many speakers have command of at least two Athabascan languages. As multilingual speakers, they are aware of our difficulties in learning these languages, and are able to provide the context we often ignore. I have observed that in immersion or partial immersion situations, Elder speakers will naturally “scaffold” their use of language so as to not totally overwhelm, but assist learners

through individual levels of learning by varying the complexity of their speech (Vygotsky 1978).

Language Documentation: Initial Methodologies

Alaska Native worldviews are oriented toward the synthesis of information gathered from interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds so as to accomodate and live in harmony with natural principles and exhibit the values of sharing, cooperation, and respect. (Kawagley 1995:11)

The Deg Hit'an and other indigenous peoples have established complex, respectful relationships with non-human members of their environment. Yup'ik scholar Kawagley's observations about Alaska Native worldviews are reflected in my initial research with the Deg Xinag: (Ingalik) Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978). In reviewing this topical dictionary with my father, I found that the literal translations were not included. For a beginning language learner, literal translations provide fascinating glimpses into the system of worldviews and values, providing further impetus for ongoing investigation. In the following tables, I have provided literal translation from my initial research. The following entries for bears were taken from the "Mammal" section of the dictionary (Kari 1978: 3):

Table 2: Deg Xinag Terms for ‘Bear’

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English	Literal Translation
<i>Srisr</i>	Black Bear	?
<i>Ggagg</i>		animal
<i>Gichidl</i> (nickname)		‘its’ or ‘the little brother’
<i>Iliy Ggagg</i>	Grizzly Bear	dangerous animal
<i>Gegha</i> (nickname)		‘its’ or ‘the big brother’

The powerful black bear is rarely referred to as *srisr*, except by men; terms more often used include *ggagg*, a word commonly used to refer to any animal, or *gichidl*, a term that means ‘its/the little brother’. The more powerful brown or grizzly bear is referred to as a ‘dangerous animal’ or *gegha*, another kinship term that means ‘its/the big brother’. The kinship nicknames do not necessarily imply that the bears are related to humans, but rather reference the relative sizes of the animals, the brown bear being the larger of the two. Similar kinship terms are also noted for the neighboring Koyukon area in the Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000: 738), as well as Richard Nelson’s extensive ethnographic study Make Prayers to the Raven (1983: 175). Chapman’s collection of Deg Hit’an narratives (Kari 1981) includes one narrative about a woman who marries two men; in the narrative these men appear initially as brown bears and the narrator refers to them either as *gegha*’ or *ggagg* throughout, reflecting acceptable social language practices. Since bears are considered powerful, both physically and spiritually, the Deg Hit’an and other Athabascan people will usually not refer to the animal directly,

but rather make use of circumlocutive terminology similar to that listed above. For a language learner who is not knowledgeable about the culture, and is consulting a topical dictionary that lacks basic cultural information, he or she might mistakenly use the term *srisr*, not knowing that this is considered disrespectful.

The following entries for ‘raven’ and ‘rusty blackbird’ are taken from the “Birds” (Kari 1978: 13) section of the dictionary, and the single entry for ‘puffball mushroom’ is taken from the “Plants” section (Kari 1978: 23):

Table 3: Deg Xinag Terms for ‘Birds’ and ‘Plants’

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English	Literal Translation
<i>Yixgitsiy</i>	Raven	your (plural) grandfather
<i>Yixgitsiy Vozra</i>	Rusty Blackbird	Raven’s nephew
<i>Yixgitsiy Notchildl</i>	Puffball Mushroom	Raven’s (sewing) bag

At first glance, the non- or novice speaker of the language can see that these three entries are similar in that *yixgitsiy* is part of each. The stem *-tsiy* means ‘grandfather’. *Yixgitsiy* in the first example literally means ‘you guys’ grandfather’ or ‘your (plural) grandfather’. ‘Rusty blackbird’ appears farther down on the same page of the dictionary, and ‘puffball mushroom’ in an entirely different section. Without seeing these entries grouped together, however, a novice learner looking at the dictionary would not be to see the connections among these entries; nor would they necessarily be able to identify the significance of the kinship term used to identify Raven. For the Deg Hit’an people, the entity Raven (sometimes referred to as “Crow”) is significant as cosmological narratives

document how he brought light, and helped create different aspects of their environment. In the “Man and Wife” narrative, the focus of this dissertation, Raven, calls the man and his wife *sitthey*, or ‘my grandchildren’, and plays a central role in helping retrieve the wife through the creation of the pike (Deacon 1987b).

The last examples in this section are from the “Birds” (Kari 1978: 13) and “Fish” (Kari 1978: 7) sections of the dictionary:

Table 4: Deg Xinag Terms for ‘Birds’ and ‘Fish’

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English	Literal Translation
<i>legg Ney</i>	Junco, Flycatcher	“fish” it says (the junco calls when salmon are coming)
<i>Xitghiy</i>	Frog	

These examples differ from the previous two tables in that the Deg Xinag stems are unrelated, and there is no literal translation for ‘frog’. However, both of these animals play particularly significant roles in the spring and early summer, letting the Deg Hit’an people know when the whitefish or salmon, major subsistence sources, are coming. When I asked my father to elaborate on this he provided the following quote:

When frogs are making noise, the whitefish come in the springtime. When a whole bunch of frogs are making noise they say the fish are coming: “*legg ghilux*.”
(Dementi 2004)

Osgood (1959: 138) also notes the belief that “the longer the frogs croak in the spring, the more fish there will be in the runs.”

This section presented three brief examples of how, for the language learner, significant knowledge can be hidden by the organization of, and translations provided by topically based noun dictionaries. As the preceding examples illustrate, using oral traditions to further unpack these cultural constructs will provide a process for deeper analysis leading to a broader understanding of the language.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to summarize my background and how learning Deg Xinag as a second language led to an examination of traditional oral narratives. Through this process I hope to contribute to the existing literature on the Deg Hit'an from an indigenous perspective, as well as provide a resource document useful in language learning and other educational contexts. The previous section provides some of the expected positive outcomes to this study, that is, a better understanding of the social context and uses of language through examination of the research narrative. I will attempt to avoid negative outcomes, including the release of any sacred information, by utilizing a review committee of Deg Hit'an people who will provide comments and recommendations on the intermediary and final drafts of this document. At this time I do not expect the release of any new or sacred information, as the research narrative and translations have already been published, and the oral and video recordings are both available for public viewing.

To introduce to the Deg Hit'an area, I used both Western and local or indigenous source material in the form of quotes from Deg Hit'an Elders. The "Deg Hit'an Resource Documents" section will be further expanded in subsequent chapters, as I list and discuss

Deg Hit'an oral narrative genres, including the "*Chel Xudhoy*" series published by the Iditarod Area School District, as well as unpublished translated materials by Chapman. As Koyukon cultural beliefs, practices, and linguistic structures are similar to those of the Deg Hit'an, both the Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000) and Nelson's (1983) Make Prayers to the Raven will serve as important resource documents in completing the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

The personal introduction and reflection section was particularly difficult to summarize in terms of providing the research rationale for this dissertation, as so many people have been influential in my education, language learning, and current research direction. For the purposes of this document I chose to focus on three immediate family members. However, there have been many other influential people within my extended family and social circles, including University colleagues.

My research methods include examination of published and unpublished documents specific to the Deg Hit'an area. Methods also include formal and informal interviews with family members, most often my father. Interviews are most often not recorded, but written down initially, then verified for accuracy. Interviews focus most often on clarification of meanings for words or phrases, which may or may not lead to elaboration on a topic similar to the "frog" example listed above.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction to Athabascan Oral Traditions

Languages of the Athabascan family are generally classified as northern, Pacific Coast, or southern (Krauss and Golla 1981). The northern languages encompass a continuous area of the subarctic of interior Alaska and western Canada, also extending into the plains of southern Alberta. Related southern languages include Navajo and Apache of the Southwest, as well as several Pacific Coast languages including Hupa. The Native American and Alaska Native nations or tribes represented within this related language area are diverse, but may have similarities in terms of beliefs, values, social relationships, cultural practices and political status.

The Koyukon people or *Tl'eeyegge Hut'aane*, literally, 'people of one language' (Wright 1995) and the Deg Hit'an have a history of interaction and intermarriage. The Holikachuk or *Doogh Qinag* area between the Deg Hit'an and Koyukon language areas on the Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska map (Krauss 1982), is thought by linguists to be an intermediary language. The Holikachuk people or *Doogh Hit'an* (Kari, et al. 1978), speak a language similar to Koyukon. However, Krauss (1980) notes the language is closer to the Deg Xinag because of the social relationships between the two areas. In terms of linguistic similarities and cultural metaphor, both Holikachuk and Koyukon texts may be most easily compared to the Deg Xinag texts. The preliminary data presented later on in this chapter does indicate differences between the Koyukon and Deg Hit'an cultures in terms of animal names and specific beliefs about animals.

In addition to the Deg Xinag texts surveyed later in this chapter, a number of Alaskan Athabascan authors have published traditional and/or autobiographical narratives in Athabascan with English translations. The texts listed here are published under the names of the Athabascan authors; edited books and/or anthologies are listed later in this section. These authors include Koyukon Elder Katherine Attla (1983; 1989; 1990), Dena'ina Elder Peter Kalifornski (1991), Gwich'in Elders Belle Herbert (1982), John Fredson (1982), Katherine Peter (1992; 2001), Johnny and Sarah Frank (Mishler 2001), Upper Ahtna Elders Katie John, Fred John, Sr., Adam Sanford, Huston Sanford, Jack John Justin, and Nicholas A. Brown (John, et al. 1986), Upper Tanana Elder Mary Tyone (1996), and Dena'ina Elders Antone Evan, Alexie Evan, Gulia Delkittie, Katherine Trefon, and Mary V. Trefon (Evan, et al. 1984).

Several Alaskan Athabascan authors have published autobiographical narratives in English, including Koyukon Elders Poldine Carlo (1983), Sidney Huntington (Huntington and Rearden 1993), James Huntington (Huntington and Elliott 1966), Koyukon writer Jan Harper Haines (2000), Lower Tanana Elders Peter John (Krupa 1996) and Howard Luke (1998), Tanacross Elder Alice Brean (1975), Gwich'in writer Velma Wallis (1993; 1996; 2002), and Deg Hit'an Elder Dorothy Savage Joseph (1997). Educational materials include a series of sixteen biographies of Koyukon Elders, edited by Curt Madison and Yvonne Yarber, and produced by the Yukon Koyukuk School District (1979a; 1979b; 1980; 1981a; 1981b; 1983a; 1983b; 1983c; 1983d; 1984; 1985; 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; 1987a; 1987b). Other anthropological or historical materials

include publications by Koyukon scholars Miranda Wright (1995) and Phyllis Fast (2002), and Gwich'in scholar Adeline Peter Raboff (1997).

Anthologies edited by non-indigenous authors and other texts that feature presentation and analysis of Athabascan oral traditions in English translation include publications by Julie Cruikshank (1991; 1995; 2000; 2002), Phyllis Morrow and William Schneider (1995), James Ruppert (1995a; 1995b; 2001), and Robin Ridington (1988; 1990).

Oral Traditions: Aspects of Documentation and Analysis

When stories are written down, they lose a kind of fluidity. Words and phrases become fixed, more like objects....subjects of more interpretation...We who dare to pin meanings down do so precariously. (Mather 1995: 15)

The above-referenced quote by Yup'ik Elder Elsie Mather introduces this brief discussion of “written” oral traditions. In this quote, Mather addresses troublesome aspects of the documentation, translation, and interpretation or analysis of oral traditions. For example, different narrators may each know several variations of one narrative, however only one version may have been recorded and written. Students not familiar with the fluid aspects of oral traditions may assume only one authentic version exists, when in fact there may be several variations told by one or more narrators. Also, narrators may intentionally modify their version(s) depending on place and time of year or day, as well as the age range, gender, or cross- or intercultural nature of their audience(s). Authenticity of texts may come into question when narrative versions told in the indigenous language are translated into English and analyzed based on this English

translation. As Miwok/Pomo scholar Greg Sarris points out, it is necessary to have an “accurate sense” of the language, that is, “what might have been lost or gained in the transcription and editing of the speaker’s spoken words” (1993: 99). This process requires close examination of the quality and authenticity translated texts, as well as analysis of the thematic and conceptual frameworks put forward by earlier scholars and linguists.

In “A Bright Light Ahead of Us: Belle Deacon’s Stories in English and Deg Hit’an,” Ruppert (1995a), discusses how storytellers mediate oral narration of stories, using a range of performance styles, both traditional and non-traditional or “borrowed.” These styles may vary depending on the language and culture of the audience. For Ruppert, oral narration and written presentation in English does not diminish the quality of the information contained in the narrative. Instead, the storyteller adapts the story, thus conveying meaning both cross-culturally and interculturally. Tedlock (1983: 237) also refers to the “dialectical” relationship of the narrator and narrative. That is, the narrator “both respects the text and revises it” reflecting Mather’s (1995) observations regarding fluidity. Tedlock sees the narrator as performer, commentator and critic within this dialectical relationship. He disputes the idea that narrative is a “raw product” that can be improved upon through commentary and analysis in a decontextualized setting.

As referenced in Mather’s quote above, a traditional narrative, such as “The Man and Wife” discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, was not traditionally analyzed in a literary sense by either indigenous narrators or their audiences. I do not seek, in Tedlock’s words, “to improve upon the original text” (1983: 236). However, I have had

very different background experiences than Deg Hit'an Elder storytellers, and am learning the Deg Xinag language as an adult. As such, it is difficult to get an accurate sense of the depth of narrative through the current English translation, so some exploration is necessary.

In her introductory chapter of Reading Voices: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past, Cruikshank (1991) discusses ontology, or the construction of knowledge. Traditionally the construction of knowledge, or the educational process, took place through the practice of oral traditions for indigenous peoples. Cruikshank emphasizes that youth in the Yukon Territory have also experienced life very differently than their Elders, in many ways similar to my own inter- and cross-cultural experiences. Therefore, the construction of knowledge, and the passing on of this knowledge through oral and written traditions becomes an inter-cultural endeavor between older and younger generations. Similarly, in Little Bit Know Something, Ridington (1990: 14) frames the narratives of the Dunne-za of Canada within the analysis of social exchange, that is, narrative as “culturally coded interpretations of personal and collective experience.” Both personal and collective experiences, encoded in oral narrative add to a cultural knowledge base, and contribute to the lives of future generations. Chapter three will further explore these worldviews and ontologies, or cultural codes embedded in “The Man and Wife.”

Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Subsistence Beliefs and Practices

If you look deeply enough, you'll see that animals can help us to understand life as it is...animals understand you, but only if you know how to talk with them.

(The Gospel According to Peter John, edited by Krupa 1996: 25)

In chapter one, I presented selected examples from the Deg Xinag Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978). This section includes selected Deg Hit'an beliefs about Raven, the junco and the frog, and how, in Chief Peter John's words, these animals help humans to "understand life as it is." Since subsistence beliefs and practices are central themes within the narratives surveyed during this chapter as well as the research narrative, an exploration of indigenous knowledge systems and subsistence is essential. The referenced quotation by the late Athabascan Traditional Chief Dr. Peter John serves to initiate this discussion of indigenous knowledge systems and subsistence. Chief John of Minto, Alaska served as Traditional Chief of the Tanana Chiefs Conference region from 1992 until his death in 2003 at the age of 102. In 1994, Chief John was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.¹⁰

Subsistence is a term widely used, and for the most part narrowly understood, especially in contemporary political contexts when referring to the hunting and fishing practices and rights of indigenous peoples. For most of Alaska's non-indigenous residents, non-Native politicians in particular, the terms "subsistence" or "subsistence lifestyle" are rarely explored or understood beyond superficial levels. Shallowly defined,

¹⁰ For a more complete biographical summary see:
http://www.tananachiefs.org/corporate/chief_john.html.

subsistence seems to indicate a general knowledge of how to live off the land or “subsist” on what the land has to offer in terms of hunting, fishing and trapping. Dictionary definitions also provide the following limited information, that is, “continued existence, the state or fact of keeping alive, and/or a means of support.” For indigenous peoples, these limited definitions disconnect subsistence practices from spiritual beliefs. Chief John’s quote clearly articulates one of the disparities between Western and indigenous knowledge systems in terms of human-animal relationships and the status of their interactions. Publications by well-known indigenous scholars Deloria (1994; 2006) and Cajete (2000b) also documents similar Native American beliefs regarding relationships between humans and animals. In many Native American belief systems, animals were influential in the creation of the world, and all animals still have the ability to influence and guide humans.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a subcategory of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is largely informed by the subsistence practices of indigenous peoples. As contemporary societies struggle with environmental and ecological challenges, scientific communities are beginning to recognize TEK from indigenous communities as a legitimate field of inquiry.

I have chosen Chief John’s publication as one of my primary sources on indigenous knowledge systems and subsistence. Chief John is recognized as an expert in traditional subsistence practices by the Interior Athabaskan peoples, as well as other Alaskan scholars (see Kawagley and Barnhardt 1999). There are many publications by Interior Athabascans that also describe specific subsistence practices (see those listed in

introductory section above). However, Chief John's is one of few publications by an indigenous Elder that, throughout his discussion of the Christian and Athabascan beliefs, continually links subsistence practices with indigenous spiritual beliefs. In addition to Chief John's publication that focuses on Alaskan Athabascan knowledge systems, other indigenous Alaskan scholars who have published materials on indigenous knowledge systems, subsistence, and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge include Yup'ik scholar Oscar Kawagley (1995; 1998), and Koyukon cultural anthropologist Miranda Wright (1995). Other well-known scholars in this field include Sioux scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. (1994), Ellen Bielawski (1990; 1996), Robin Ridington (1990), Richard Nelson (1983), Martha Johnson (1992), and Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki (1992).

Underlying differences between Western and indigenous knowledge systems or worldviews are difficult to summarize in a few words. The scholars referenced above observe the following major distinctions including: oral versus written transmission of knowledge; contextualized pedagogies; epistemologies, or world views that provide different hierarchies or classification systems for all parts of the environment; and perhaps most importantly, practices of complex reciprocal social and spiritual exchanges. Within this system, humans have specific responsibilities in maintaining balanced physical, psychological, and spiritual systems in all parts of the environment. Oscar Kawagley's (1995: 16) tetrahedral model provides a visual example of the relationships among the human, natural and spiritual realms. Both the natural realm, including animals, plants, natural resources, and the human realms are connected to the spiritual realm.

Within indigenous knowledge systems humans do not see themselves either apart from or superior to other aspects of their environment.

In the video series “Communicating Across Cultures,” Russian Orthodox priest Michael Oleksa (1994) discusses differences between Western and Alaska Native cultures. In his analysis of the worldviews of Alaska Native cultures, Oleksa rationalizes why in indigenous cultures animals can hold the same status as humans: because they have visual, aural, olfactory and other sensory input that is superior, not inferior to the sensory input of humans.

In research with my father on the aspects of non-salmon species, I uncovered further evidence of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of the Deg Hit’an. Brown’s (2005) report on non-salmon species includes some of the data presented in table format below:

Table 5: Deg Xinag Terms for ‘Fish’

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English	Literal Translation	Comments by James Dementi (JD)
<i>Łegg</i>	Alaska Whitefish		
<i>Xiłch’edh</i> , ¹¹ <i>Itch’eddh</i> ¹²	Little Whitefish, Whitefish Fry		Looks like a sardine.
<i>Tilay</i>	Broad Whitefish		
<i>Taghiy</i> ¹³	Large Fat Lake Whitefish	Bottom of water ¹⁴ <i>Tax</i> - = underwater, submerged	

¹¹ No Koyukon cognate found.

¹² From Deg Xinag Stem Dictionary (unpublished electronic file).

¹³ elicited from JD; in stem files but not in Deg Xinag Noun Dictionary.

¹⁴ literal translation from Osgood.

Table 5 continued

<i>Xifting</i> ¹⁵	Round Whitefish		
<i>Q'ek</i> ¹⁶	Pygmy Whitefish		
<i>Q'ontoggiy</i>	Humpback Whitefish	By and by tomorrow ¹⁷	
<i>Tl'its T'an</i>	Male Fish	Has milt	
<i>Q'en' T'an</i>	Female Fish	Has eggs	
<i>Xozrigh</i>	Blackfish	Possibly 'spread upwards' ¹⁸	Mostly caught in winter.
<i>Gina' Yozr</i>	Baby Blackfish	Its young	
<i>Gidhiyh</i>	Burbot/Loche ¹⁹		Caught in the river during time of fish fence (fall). ²⁰
<i>Tritr Doggizr</i>	Dolly Varden	<i>Tritr</i> = wood <i>Doggizr</i> = something forked/gapped?	
<i>Giyiŋ Toghilimaq,</i> <i>Łegg K'idz</i>	Baby Fish, Salmon Fry	<i>Giyiŋ</i> = with the? <i>Maq</i> = root for eye or mask? Little fish	Also used in reference to hatchery fish <i>K'idz</i> = little
<i>Xiŋghiy</i>	Frog		When frogs are making noise, the whitefish come in the springtime. When a whole bunch of frogs are making noise they say the fish are coming: "Łegg ghilux." ²¹

¹⁵ No Koyukon cognate located.¹⁶ No Koyukon cognate located.¹⁷ literal translation from Osgood.¹⁸ Literal translation from Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones: 732).¹⁹ Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones: 403) lists cognate term *k'elehy*, stating that this term is "a rather obsolete term used by old people."²⁰ Osgood (1959: 136) notes a former belief that "it is taboo to keep loche which have been caught in any net."

Table 5 continued

<i>Srixno' legg</i>	Grayling	(Side) stream fish	
<i>Łeggided</i>	Eel	Long, skinny fish	When they get to Holy Cross it gets warm. When they get to Bonasilla it gets cold. Anvik – warm and wet snow. ²²
<i>Xiłtth'og, Xiłtth'ok</i>	Clamshell	Oval dish (literal name refers to shape of shell)	Lots (of empty shells) in some lakes – seem to come from pike.
<i>Giliqoy</i>	Pike	“a lance, something speared at something” ²³	JD unfamiliar with this literal translation; heard from upriver peoples that pike is the one that cleaned out the muskrat in the big lakes. When you're riding in the boat you can see them jump out of the water. (During) fall time in the Shageluk slough so many pike are (swimming) there they hit the boat.
<i>Giliqoy Ch'uq</i>	Pike (small)	Pointed lance? <i>Ch'uq</i> = pointed, sharp?	
<i>Tidhi'on Qatl'ox Tlton</i>	Sculpin, Bullhead	Bottom of fishtrap (<i>tlton</i> =?)	
<i>Sresr</i>	Sheefish		
<i>Tonhts'ix, Tonhts'ixgi</i>	Sucker	Stand still mouth ²⁴	Suckerfish had a lot of bones in it – when people would dip they'd get in the dipnet. Used for dogs now.
<i>Hik'oghilivay</i>	Rainbow Trout		JD not familiar with this name.

²¹ Osgood's (1959: 138) notes the belief that “the longer the frogs croak in the spring, the more fish there will be in the runs.”

²² Osgood (1959: 24) notes that the eels move “at a speed of about four miles in twenty-four hours” and that the sheer mass “seems to cause the water to rise in the river.”

²³ literal translation from Osgood.

²⁴ literal translation from Osgood.

Table 5 continued

<i>Vithye Legg</i>	Brook Trout	(Cut) bank of the creek fish	JD provided the literal translation
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Chapter three further explores subsistence themes embedded in the “Man and Wife” narrative.

Survey Of Selected Deg Hit'an Literature

In chapter three I begin the summary and analysis of Deg Hit'an worldviews through the summary of one specific narrative recorded in Deg Xinag, and transcribed using orthography developed during the 1970s. In this section I survey and briefly examine four Deg Xinag genres. These genres include *gits'i'an*, or ‘hunting narratives’, *Chel Xudhoy*, literally, ‘boys’ stories’, one creation narrative, and translations from English to Deg Xinag.

Deg Hit'an published literature includes the previously referenced *Engithidong Xigixudhoy: Their Stories of Long Ago* (Deacon 1987a) and John Chapman's Ten'a Texts and Tales (1914). Chapman's publication was re-transcribed in the current orthography and translated in *Athabaskan Stories From Anvik* (Kari 1981). Other publications include the *Chel Xudhoy* narratives referenced above, recorded by Deg Hit'an Elders Alta Jerue (1987a; 1987b; 1983) of Anvik and John Paul (1985a; 1985b; 1985c; 1987) of Holy Cross. *Deg Xinag Dindlidik: Deg Xinag Literacy Manual* (Hargus and Taff 1993) includes annotated versions of longer traditional narratives told by Alta Jerue (1993) and Hannah Maillelle (1993). The *Engithidong Xigixudhoy* and *Deg Xinag Dindlidik* texts I refer to have been transcribed as recorded, and these audio recordings

are available for review. The *Chel Xudhoy* narratives have also been transcribed from recordings, however many of these are not available, or the sound quality has deteriorated thus making aural review impossible.

The texts from the Deg Xinag collection I have chosen to survey are varied. In the following section, I will present a brief examination of two hunting narratives, eight *Chel Xudhoy*, and one creation narrative. This section concludes with three Lord's Prayer translations by Chapman and Deg Hit'an Elders Grace John of Shageluk and Belle Deacon of Grayling. Also included is the most recent translation of the Lord's Prayer by Shageluk Elders James Dementi, Lucy Hamilton, and Katherine Hamilton. I have chosen these genres as they represent the current, written literature of the Deg Hit'an region and I am most familiar with them through my own language learning process.

Hunting Narratives

"Dineg Xudhoy: Moose Story"

The first narrative I will present was told by my father James Dementi (2002), who interestingly, first thought about how he would tell this in English and then switched to Deg Xinag. My father's second wife, Jeanette Hall Dementi, audiotaped this narrative. I later helped transcribed and translate the Deg Xinag portion of the recording. I present the Deg Xinag and English translations in the table below the English version.

It's best to go out riding around in the afternoon or evening. It's fun to camp out for a night or two. I go alone sometimes. I ride around in the boat. I look for one close to the bank, standing in a good spot. When you cut up a moose, start on one side with arm and hind leg. Cut the hide all around the knee joint. Cut the joint

off. Do the same thing with the arm. Cut away all the hide all around on that side. Cut along the brisket. Cut all the belly part off too. Turn it over so the guts can come out. Do the same thing with the hind leg and the arm. Take them out. Take the hind leg and arm off and skin it. Take the whole brisket off with the belly. Take that off and pull the guts away from the meat. Start looking for the heart. Take the heart and cut some of the liver to take home. Save the kidneys. Then start cutting from there. Cut the ribs off. Cut the backbones. Take the tongue out and cut the nose off. Now it's time to load up the meat. Bring it home and hang them up.

Table 6: *Dineg Xudhoy* – Moose Story

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
1. <i>Dranedr xotl'ogh tux xiyan' gits'i'an siyif xigidughaf.</i>	During the afternoon only I go around (hunting).
2. <i>Dineg ogo q'u'idighaf xafts'in' tux.</i>	I look for a moose during the evening.
3. <i>Yixudz q'u'doghot'ux che xafts'in' q'o tr'inexaf.</i>	In the evening we camp (once in a while).
4. <i>Q'u'doghot'ux che side yan' dhist'anh.</i>	I go alone sometimes.
5. <i>Valggats ye siyif q'u'idighaf.</i>	I go riding around in the boat.
6. <i>Dineg ogo xinitl'an' vith q'i(dz) ndedhit tux.</i>	I looked for a moose standing on the bank.
7. <i>Vith q'i(dz) ndedhit xinitl'an'.</i>	I looked (for one) standing on the bank.
8. <i>Xezrenh ndedhit tux xinitl'an.</i>	I look for one standing on a good spot.
9. <i>Xezrenh ndedhit idhitl'anh.</i>	I got one (that is) standing on a good spot.
10. <i>Yitots'in' viggon yadz tr'ititeyh voghoth chenh.</i>	Then we cut its arm and the leg also.
11. <i>Voghoth dhitr'ilchif giffigdi.</i>	We start skinning one side.
12. <i>Yitots'in' che gits'an tr'ititayh.</i>	Then we turn it over.
13. <i>Yafits'in che yixudz.</i>	Other side, same way.
14. <i>Vitthethton yadz tr'ititeyh.²⁵</i>	We cut the chest bone this way.
15. <i>Viggon viq'ith tth'in yif yadz tr'itilayh.</i>	We cut the arm and neck bone this way.
16. <i>Yixudz voghoth dhitr'ilchif ts'in' ngifto tr'it'oth.</i>	We cut all of it up.
17. <i>Q'u'elyayh ts'ixighaf chux ts'in'.</i>	Cut it just right, so it's not too big (for packing).
18. <i>Vichox tr'igitr'ilayh xidettha ts'i ngifto tr'it'oth yitoghodlo.</i>	First you take the guts out and then cut it after that.
19. <i>Vichox tr'igitr'ilayh xotlogho viye q'id yif ogo tr'ixini'an – vitr'idr yif, vitthel yif.</i>	After we take the guts out we look for the heart, tongue also.
20. <i>Vichox yadz tr'itilayh vinghanhth'in yif.</i>	We cut the ribs this way and the backbone.
21. <i>Yixudz tr'iyentr'ilayh valggats yet.</i>	Then we put all of it in the boat.
22. <i>Viyif qay nitr'ididif ts'i xogho tr'ighidelayh.</i>	We go back to the village and hang it up.

In this section I briefly summarize a few general observations. Speakers commonly use a verb or verbs meaning 'to go around' when talking about hunting. Lines

²⁵ This phrase added later by narrator, not recorded on audiotape.

1 and 2 include these verbs, that is, *xigidughaʔ* and *q'u'idughaʔ*. *Xigidughaʔ* contains the areal prefix *xi-*, used to indicate a larger area versus a specific point of land. Generally, in conversation, speakers will not specifically mention the animal they are looking for. In this case, as my father is describing the process for school students, he does use the word for moose, *dineg*, in Line 2. In the beginning of the text, my father talks about the time of day one looks for moose and that it should be standing in a good place on the bank. In this part of the text he uses the first person singular imperfective form. Speakers do not usually specifically talk about what they are looking around for, as it is not considered respectful, and the animal might take offense and not show itself. In this case, my father does make mention of what 'he looked for' during this specific instance; however it is in the perfective, or past tense as he described the process. The main point my father wanted to emphasize was that the moose be standing on a good part of the bank (not muddy), and far enough back so as not to fall in the water, but not too far back to minimize the distance to the boat. When it was legal to take the cow moose, this was the animal he preferred. Now my father looks for a small bull moose as the meat is tender, he does not need a large amount of meat, and it is easier to move a smaller amount of meat.

Butchering procedures combine respectful, and highly efficient, skillful routines. In this part of the text my father uses the third-person plural imperfective form. The forelegs of the animal are referred to as *viggon* or 'arms', undifferentiated linguistically from a person's arm even though in English we would call these animals 'four-legged'. In order to be able to do a good job butchering, a person needs extensive knowledge of the construction of the joint systems, and locations of the inner organs so as not to

contaminate the meat by accidentally cutting the intestines, or ruin the prized organ meat such as the heart, liver, and kidneys. This narrative is a working document, as my father continues to think and talk about additional steps and observations in the butchering process.

“*Gits’i’in*: Hunting”

The second narrative was told by the late Grace John (1983) of Shageluk. Ms. John was the first Athabascan language instructor in the Shageluk school during the initiation of bilingual language instruction in the mid-1970s within Alaska’s school districts. John grew up living a subsistence lifestyle, and later learned to read and write the Deg Xinag language. During her tenure as bilingual instructor, she began writing down short stories for her students about her life.

Table 7: *Gits’i’in* – Hunting

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	Literal Translation
1. <i>Edixiyts’in tux sighon dhidon gits’i’in q’u’edoyh.</i>	Every fall the one who stays with me (my husband) he goes hunting.
2. <i>Digidał’tidl yif, yitots’in’ giq’o yif long q’u’elayh.</i>	His own rifle with, and lots of bullets with, he goes around.
3. <i>Xin ane’ tiqayh digivalggats yet.</i>	River, up, he went, his own boat, in.
4. <i>Vith q’idz dineg iftthonh yitots’in yidhitlghanh.</i>	Bank, on, moose, he saw, then he killed it.
5. <i>Yit yighuntthi’ifch’if.</i>	There, he skinned it.
6. <i>Digivalggats yenyighelo.</i>	His own boat in, he put it.
7. <i>Nelang long it’anh.</i>	Meat, lots of, is.
8. <i>Yidong gits’i’in q’otr’ididał.</i>	Long ago, hunting, we go around.
9. <i>Vav q’u’tr’idalyayh yitots’in’ gitr’ighifno’.</i>	Food, we bring around, then we eat.
10. <i>Dongan h giffigi tixveł viniq’it titr’inelo.</i>	Six nets, lake, we set.
11. <i>Tritr ditr’ighifan dinaginiłq’at xonet.</i>	Wood, our camp, we gather.
12. <i>Yit venhda’ tixveł nitr’inil’an’.</i>	Next day, net, we checked.
13. <i>Yitots’in’ niłq’osnal legg viyet.</i>	Then, 10 fish, in there.

14. <i>Togg vichingadh yitots 'in' dench'e nanhdal dinagidaftidl axa vitr'athdlanh.</i>	Three muskrats, then four ducks, with our rifles we killed.
15. <i>Nodi tr'inadhof yitots 'in' qagh nasrithidatl.</i>	Two (nights) we stayed then we returned (home).

Hunting Narratives Summary

The two narratives have minor differences in tense and style. For the first narrative I have provided a general translation, however, for the second I have provided a more literal translation reflecting the difference in word order between English and Deg Xinag. Both stories use the verbs meaning ‘to go around’ in reference to hunting, although John uses the imperfective forms *q'u'edoyh* and *q'u'elayh* that may indicate differences in the style of travel. John also uses the reflexive possessive form, in referring to both the rifle and the boat, that is, ‘his (her husband’s) own’. In terms of the butchering process, there is more detail in the Dementi version with one line in the John version referring to skinning (line 5). However, John includes other activities including hunting muskrat and fishing, with reference to killing an animal using the rifle, that is, *dinagidaftidl axa vitr'athdlanh*, that is ‘our rifle, with, we killed it’. My father’s narrative is more focused on moose hunting, while John’s narrative references several animals hunted during the fall seasonal round. Both of these stories have the original audiotaped versions available for reference.

Chel Xudhoy Narratives

The Deg Xinag word for ‘story’ or ‘narrative’ is *xidhoy* (older orthography) or in the most recent orthography, *xudhoy*. Osgood (1958: 224) notes that these short “inane” *chel xudhoy*, literally, ‘boys’ stories’, are told among children. Osgood’s use of the term

“inane” seems inappropriate, judging by the number of narratives that have been documented, and the fact that the elders thought they were important enough to write down for the benefit of future generations. Told by Alta Jerue of Anvik, and John Paul of Holy Cross, this series was published by the Iditarod Area School District for use in their bilingual program.

There are stylistic similarities and variations within each of the stories. The term *tr'in'ne*, ‘we say’, translated as ‘it is said’ is used consistently throughout most of the stories’. Narratives recorded by Chapman, Deacon, and Jerue generally end with *idixunili'on* or ‘it is finished’ or ‘I have finished’, *nidixunili'on*, ‘that is as far as the story goes’ or ‘this is the end’, and *yuk*, ‘this is the end’. These terms differ from the ending used by Koyukon Elder Attla (1989) who uses the phrase “*at'aght huyo hutalldhit yeenslinh da huyh ghon' naaltlgus*” or ‘I thought the winter had just begun and now I’ve chewed off part of it’. Osgood (1958: 37) noted that often Deg Hit'an storytellers used the phrase “I cut the winter in half”²⁶ to end their tale. His interpretation at that time was that the storyteller was apologizing for the time it took to tell the story. Attla (1989: 27) states that stories were ways of praying during hard times, and that if it took a storyteller a long time to tell a story, the winter would be long.

In several of the stories, I point out questions about the translations, particularly with verb forms and nominalization. Cruikshank (1991: 19) notes that the English language accentuates different features such as “time, space, and quantity” whereas

²⁶ Osgood uses only the English translation and does not provide the Deg Xinag term for this phrase.

Athabascan emphasizes “form and shape.” Athabascan verbs may have prefixes that indicate something is happening for the first time, or describe a process that is repetitive in nature. Athabascan classificatory verbs change depending on an object’s shape, rigidity or flexibility, animate or inanimate qualities, and other characteristics described in detail in the Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000). Athabascan verbs are very subtle in nature, with different boundaries than English for actions that have already occurred (perfective) versus those actions that are ongoing (imperfective). Some of these characteristics are examined briefly in the surveyed texts.

Several mouse stories have been recorded and transcribed within the Deg Hit’an cultural areas. In Deg Hit’an and generally within Athabascan cultures, all things both animate and inanimate are infused with spirit. Wolves, wolverines, and bears are thought to have powerful spirits, so people may not refer to these animals directly but use circumlocutive terms. For example, as noted in chapter one, speakers will use the term *gegha* for brown bear, literally ‘the big brother’, and *gichidl* for black bear, literally, ‘the little brother’. Children could potentially be harmed if they are told stories about these animals with more powerful spirits. The mouse, in comparison, does not have such a powerful spirit, so it is appropriate to tell mouse stories during the mid through late winter season.

Dlen Axa Nixudhidhit Ts’in’: The Adventures of a Mouse

The second mouse narrative was recorded initially by Chapman (1914) and was re-transcribed by Kari (1981). This begins with the mouse walking along an ocean beach; eventually it enters the water and begins swimming “*Yitots’in’ nitidhivanh tochux*

vigitthidangith yit' vigidran yit',” literally, ‘then it began swimming ocean, the evening and, the day’. Eventually it tires of swimming, spots a floating piece of bark, and climbs on to rest. The mouse falls asleep and when it awakens it has drifted into shore “*noqogg viyit' xa' iditex*,” literally, ‘shore, with him, it drifted’. The mouse sees two women playing, building a little house. One of the women glimpses the mouse and tries to club it. The mouse runs away and enters a cache full of dryfish, then proceeds to drag a piece down to the bank. During this process, the mouse slips on the bank – “*vith xiqighitl' iquit*,” literally, ‘it falls down the bank’ – “*xit' oghoftth' it yitots' in*,” then the dryfish falls on the mouse and it dies – “*yitots' in xilivizr viq' iyideftsitl, yitots' in datthon'.*”

This narrative has some familiar themes such as curiosity about large bodies of water, travel over water, interactions with humans, and the temptations of hunger, and possible downfalls if one does not act carefully in the search for food.

Dlen Xudhoy: Mouse Story

The second story told by Alta Jerue (1987a) is told from the perspective of an observer, and begins with the mouse climbing up, and sliding down a *traf' tth'et*, or men's house. The Deg Hit'an, unlike other Alaskan Athabascans, and like their Yup'ik neighbors, did have one or more men's houses in the village, depending on its size. The *traf' tth'et* was used as a workplace, steam bath, and sleeping area for the men, and was used for the traditional mask dances in mid-winter (Osgood 1940). As the mouse continues to slide down the *traf' tth'et*, he begins to lose body parts one at a time; first an arm, then the other arm, then his legs, tail, and teeth. Jerue utilizes verbs indicating repetition, including, *xantithiyo*, ‘[the mouse] is going back up repeatedly,’ and *che*

xonthighith, '[the mouse is] rolling back up again,' are used. Finally the mouse looks down into the *traf tth'et* through the smoke hole and finds that the people inside are "working with his body parts." Jerue uses the stems *-nek* and *nik*, when describing this process, literally, '[they were] working using [their] hands'. The mouse then falls in through the smoke hole, becoming angry whereupon his body parts all come back to him. He returns to his hole.

In this narrative, the smokehole of the *traf tth'et* seems to represent a doorway between worlds. In earlier times, when a person died, his body was brought in to the *traf tth'et* through the doorway, but had to be removed through a window or the smokehole, as once the ceremony that sent the person's spirit on its way was completed, it was not appropriate for the deceased to use the doorway used by living beings.

Osgood (1958: 225) presents a variation in English translation wherein the main character, "big mouse," again loses his limbs while sliding down a house, but also loses his head in the process. Here, another character, a "pointed nose mouse" tries to help "big mouse" out by lifting the head back on to the body. However, the pointed-nose mouse fails because the head is too heavy. Then "big mouse" requests that "pointed-nose mouse" lend his head but "pointed mouse's" head does not fit "big mouse," so "big mouse" returns the head.

Dlen Xithoy: Mouse Story

The final mouse story is told by Jerue and John (1983). Told from the perspective of an observer it begins with a mouse walking along the beach of a river. The mouse asks what he should do, "*ndadz che ditast'et?*," literally 'what again I will do?'. The mouse

takes out a tooth and begins to play with it. The tooth falls to the ground, “*ngan’ nidolningh*” (versus “he dropped it”). The mouse looks for his tooth but cannot find it. The mouse continues to search, *yit ngidhot ts’in’ trin’ne yoq xini’an’*, literally, ‘he looked in your mouth for it’. The English translation then says the mouse got mad and angrily took off upriver. However, “*dixo’in tr’in’ne viye xidolningh ts’in’ngine’ titl’ich’ax*,” literally translates as ‘why, they say, it fell in, upriver, he went in anger’. This translation seems to indicate the tooth fell in the river whereas illustrations in the book have the mouse searching the ground. As the mouse walked angrily upriver, he looked back and saw a little mountain with “a narrow trail of smoke rising from it.” He thought about it, “*yinedhinh*” as he went back to look at it, “*denedhit*.” The mouse went up to the little mountain and looked at it; there were all kinds of berries covering all of it, “*eydi gag vixelan axa viq’idz xiqul*,” meaning “there was no place on it not covered with all kinds of berries.” He began to eat the berries, and ate all the berries on it. Afterwards the mouse walked around the hill, found a mouse hole “*go xuzroloche*,” or ‘still there was a mouse hole’, and “went squeaking away into it,” “*yit xiyedafts’ets*.” This phrase can also mean a person’s voice has gone hoarse.

This version has the familiar traveling theme. In this case the mouse travels “upriver in anger” after losing his tooth, which is similar to the first mouse story in terms of losing body parts. The little mountain or *deloy k’idz* with the smoke coming out seems to represent a spiritual center with an abundance of food for the taking.

The next section continues with two *Chel Xudhoy tsodlig* or ‘squirrel’ narratives, the first told by Alta Jerue, and the second by John Paul.

Tsodlig Didag Q'at Nithitrax: The Tree Squirrel Cried for His Parka

This narrative is told from the perspective of an observer. The title uses the reflexive possessive “*didag*,” a form that literally means ‘his (own) parka’. This reflexive possessive was noted earlier in this chapter in the second hunting narrative. The commonly used term *q'at* means ‘to want (something)’ and the form remains the same for first-, second-, and third-person singular and plural forms. *Nithitrax* is a perfective form of the verb ‘to cry’ and the prefix *ni-* indicates that the squirrel “keeps on crying.” In this narrative, a tree squirrel meets a ground squirrel and both admire each other’s parkas. The two squirrels agree to exchange parkas; “*ngidag natagicheth*,” ‘I’ll wear your parka’, and “*sidag nitelcheth*,” ‘you’ll wear my parka’. Both squirrels agree they will return to their homes when the sun goes down – “*nigitidhi'on'di nitasdof*.” The term *nigitidhi'on'di* can refer to either the time of the sunset or the place where the sun sets. After this exchange they walk around, or perhaps go their separate ways for a time. When the sun begins to set, the tree squirrel wants his parka back saying “*sidag sitl'ongit'cheth*,” or ‘give me back my parka’. The classificatory stem *-cheth* indicates the handling of something cloth or skin-like in nature, reflecting the differences in verb construction noted in the introductory section above. The ground squirrel refuses and says he will go back to or among the mountains, *deloy tux*. The verb *diyatadhne*’ is used to indicate the squirrel then begins repeatedly to ask for his parka back. The ground squirrel continues to refuse saying “*viyan', yilne xingo*” – literally, ‘no, not for me he says during’. The ground squirrel finally leaves and the tree squirrel begins to cry and cries all night for his parka. When it begins to become light “*xititl'i'an' xiyif*,” the tree squirrel stopped crying and

questions why he cried as he is thinking the ground squirrel will never return his parka. He then leaves to go back. Jerue says at the conclusion “that this is why the tree squirrel looks as if he has cried a lot” (1987b: 16). The phrase “*Yixudz xighi’an’ n’a tsodlig vinaq’a nithitrax ts’i xiq’a dingit’a*,” literally means ‘then, squirrel, his eye, began to cry, during, while, he is doing’. This appears to be an observation about the dark spot near the inner corner of the eye.

It is also interesting to note that speakers connect the parts of the word *tsodlig* with *tso* meaning ‘cache’ (the noun) and the stem *-dlig* meaning ‘jump’, as tree squirrels are observed to jump around in caches. Holton (2002) notes that *tsodlig* is a proto-Athabaskan word, and the speakers’ literal translation may reflect what is referred to as “folk etymology.”

In comparison, Koyukon terms for tree squirrel include *tsegheldaale*, meaning ‘that which travels in the dark, or that which eats in the dark’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 121); *ts’ebaa kk’elyee* meaning ‘the one alongside the spruce’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 356), or *dleje* (Jette and Jones 2000: 156). The term *hundeggeze* is used for arctic ground squirrel, “so called because when emerging from its hole it stops erect on its hind legs to look around...’it spreads itself: stretches itself above the ground,’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 208); or *tleyeyh*, “Alluding to the animal’s habit of shaking its head” (Jette and Jones 2000: 403).

The narrative presents a social interaction between similar animals with different characteristics, in this case, skins or “parkas” that are exchanged, supposedly temporarily. The narrator makes several references to *deloy tux*, ‘among the mountains’ that are sacred

and powerful places. Osgood (1959: 103) also notes Deg Hit'an beliefs that animals came to the surface of the earth from within the mountains. These beliefs regarding the subsurface origins of animals are also present within other Athabascan cultures.

Tsodlig: Squirrel

This narrative was recorded by John Paul in 1987. It begins with a tree squirrel gathering spruce cones for winter. Verb themes reflect concepts of storing up, eating, or using up, and the presence of a “trickster” told from the perspective of the squirrel. The squirrel suspects ‘Somebody is stealing from me’ – “*Sighun' gini'en xelanh*”; however literally this can also be translated as ‘someone who is tricking me is here’. He then consoles himself “*Ine anigh doghit'a*” – ‘It’s all right’; “*Viqul ts'ixe'at didlang q'idz gilongh*” - ‘There are still a lot of spruce cones on the tree’. Although the second phrase translates as ‘none, later, spruce trees, on, (there are) lots’; this may imply indirectly that there are still a lot now. Some of the phrases in this narrative seem more complex than translated. The phrase “*Viyix xits'in' taseł dixighun*” is translated as ‘The one who is stealing will take them to his house’. However, when examining the phrase more closely, it could be translated as ‘(in) his house I will eat beside them (the ones who trick me)’ “*Yit xits'in' taseł dixighun*’.” The illustrations in the book seem to indicate there is more than one trickster at some point. Also, the terms ‘trickster’ and ‘the one who steals from me’ may have subtly different connotations in Deg Xinag than in English.

This narrative illustrates a fall gathering theme, as well as social interactions with the trickster who remains unidentified. The illustrations suggest that this character may be another squirrel or perhaps even human. The Deg Hit'an, as well as other Alaska

Native people, often gathered food from animal caches, such as the mouse cache (Ilutsik 1999).

The following section presents narratives on the porcupine, marten and crane; all were told by John Paul of Holy Cross.

Ggagg Tlagg: Porcupine

This narrative was published in 1985, and reflects traveling, place, and animal-social interaction themes. *Ggagg tlagg* when literally translated means a ‘bad’ or ‘bum animal’. The porcupine is also referred to as *noynik* in both the Deg Xinag and Holikachuk languages. This narrative, told from the perspective of an observer, begins by telling us about a porcupine living on the “other side” of a river. The phrase “*Ggagg tlagg xin engosin dhido*,” translates literally as ‘porcupine, river, (way) across, he stays’. The porcupine thinks it would like to go to a hill on the other side of the river, and begins walking on the shore of the Yukon. The porcupine looks across the river; then bows its head, “*Yiggininat’onh*.” A beaver splashes water with its tail; the porcupine looks towards it and makes a squeaking noise “*didlits’ets*.” The same stem used to refer to this squeaking noise is used in the final mouse story in the section above. The beaver inquires as to why the porcupine sits on the shore and the porcupine replies that he wants to go across (to the mountain) – “*deloy q’at*,” literally, ‘mountain, I want’. The beaver tells the porcupine to sit on his back and he (the beaver) will take him across. The beaver then inquires as to direction and the porcupine replies “Straight across.” The beaver begins to swim and quickly tires as the Yukon is a wide river; he starts to pant “*tithitats*.” When the two reach shore they are both facing upstream – “*Nginets’i tthitl’i’onh ts’i nogg*

nevanh.” The beaver tells the porcupine to go up the bank. Then ‘the beaver’s fat melted down to its stomach’ – “*Noya’ vigha’ vivit ts’idz nighilighanh.*” “The porcupine’s fat melted up to its’ back’ - “*Ggagg tlagg vigha’ vit’otsin xits’idz nighilighanh.*”

Traveling themes are similar to the other stories, including travel across the Yukon River to reach a *deloy* or ‘mountain’. Other interesting aspects of these narratives include the interactions among animal species, and the physical changes that take place in each of the animals afterwards. These aspects of physical change are also reflected in the narrative in the previous section about the ground and tree squirrels who exchanged parkas.

Gitsighiy: Marten

This narrative combines traveling and hunting themes, and is told from the point of view of the marten. Initially, the marten decides to go hunting upriver – “*Ggagg oqo q’u’tasdoyh, tasef lay ngine’ xin tasof,*” literally, ‘I will go upriver to look (around) for animals’. He glimpses a rabbit, kills it and is happy – “*vighu sidigits’eyh.*” Marten continues walking upriver to look for something to eat tomorrow and sees more game. Although the English text is present tense, the Deg Xinag reflects the perfective form, that is, *iltth’onh*, ‘I glimpsed’, *dhatlghanh*, ‘I killed it’, and *idhitlanh*, ‘I got it’. Marten then sees a muskrat – “*...vichingadh itlth’onh. Viq’a tatlnek,*” literally, ‘I glimpsed a muskrat. I want to kill/wound him’. The meaning of “*tatlnek*’ is not clear and could refer to killing multiple objects or wounding something. The marten jumps on the muskrat’s back and kills it. The verb “*xidhitlyif*” indicates something is seized by the back or bitten. The marten then says he has gotten a lot and will store it to eat later – “*do’in tasef lay*

xel'edz nitataf,” literally, ‘over there, I will eat, good, I will find it/him’.

This narrative is slightly different from the others, as it does have both traveling and hunting themes, and references the killing of other animals, specifically the rabbit and muskrat. The English text is somewhat inaccurate, as marten’s voice utilizes the perfective tense. The verb ‘glimpsed’ is used repetitively, instead of the past tense of ‘see’, or ‘look at’. The use of this verb could reflect the power that comes with “seeing,” rather than “looking at” or “staring at” something that is being hunted as the sighting process itself needs to be indirect in nature.

The last *Chel Xudhoy* narrative I survey is “*Niftiy*” or ‘Crane’ told by John Paul in 1987. In this narrative, similar to narratives from other Alaska Native areas, the crane helps the little summer birds return to Alaska in the springtime.

Niftiy: Crane

This narrative reflects themes of travel, flying back or returning, and social interactions among the crane, the song or summer birds, and the swan. Told from the perspective of an observer, the narrator relates how the crane came to be chosen by the little birds to help them in their journey. Little song or summer birds are referred to as *ggagg k'idz*, or ‘little animals’. In the beginning of the narrative, the crane circles about the village, calling as he does so. Then he lets the little birds off at the appropriate place—“*xiviqay xelanh ts'i yixi yandiniyh*,” literally ‘their village, there is, he remembers’. The illustrations seem to indicate that the birds travel on the crane’s back; however the text does not provide this information. My father has told me the birds attach themselves under the crane’s wings. The crane then continues to stop to let off the birds until all have

been returned. The swan saw what was happening and thinks he should do that too – “*yixildik tavo, sedig, inedhinh,*” literally, ‘then, swan, me too, he thinks’. The little birds came to him, but as the swan is flying he gets hungry and begins to eat some of them. The English translation suggests that the swan also lets them “off where they were supposed to go.” However, the verb used in this part of the text *neyilayh* suggests that the swan just “puts them off” somewhere appropriate, rather than remembering where they are supposed to be as does the crane. The little birds say “we’ll not fly with him anymore because he got hungry and killed some of us;” “*dina ixixdeghunh anh, detsan’ dixi’an,*” or ‘he killed us because he was hungry’. The little birds then decide to fly back only with the crane because “even if the crane is hungry, he never bothers them – “*dets’an ine’ xititldhit.*” If the crane is hungry they all stop to eat, then the birds board the crane again and they continue to fly. The story ends with the phrase “*getiy xiyugh srigididhinh vixi ya’ ngizrenh xifne ts’i,*” literally, ‘the little birds are very thankful they say’.

Examination of “*Niftiy*” uncovers some questions about the English translation and illustrations. Subtleties in expression are also difficult to explain, for example, regarding the crane’s and swan’s thoughts about the appropriate places or villages for the little birds. The story reflects traveling themes, and the social relationships among the small *sanh ggagg* and larger birds.

Chel Xudhoy Summary

Each of the *Chel Xudhoy* narratives, although relatively short, are complex, particularly for a non-Deg Xinag speaking intercultural audience, as well as a cross-cultural audience. For each of the narratives I pointed out some common themes, aspects

of verb use, structure and morphology, questions about the English translations and possible inconsistencies between the illustrations and the text. This section was intended to be a brief survey of the *Chel Xudhoy* literature. However it is evident that more extensive analysis of each of these narratives could cover several chapters. As I begin to examine the “Man and Wife” narrative in the next chapter, I will refer back to the *Chel Xudhoy* narratives to compare and contrast themes, verb use, and aspects of the English translations.

In the following section I briefly examine a creation narrative told by the late Alta Jerue of Anvik.

Creation Narrative: *Q'idighidhilinh Axa Nixudhidhit Ts'in'*

The following annotated narrative, “*Q'idighidhilinh Axa Nixudhidhit Ts'in'*,” literally, ‘What Happened to the Young Man’, was published in *Deg Xinag Dindlidik* (Jerue 1993: 67-83). Ms. Jerue indicated that this narrative has a longer version but was shortened for the purposes of inclusion in the literacy manual.

It begins by telling of a young man who lives alone, “*nixudodhit ts'i*,” literally, ‘year in and year out’. When the time comes to gather berries, “*Gag ghunonxodidhit xiq'i*,” the young man thinks about traveling downriver. He also thinks of how lonely he is living alone – “*getiy tr'inay axa*,” literally, ‘really, with lonesome/sadness (he is) with’. As the young man paddles downriver, he sees wood on the shore “*Teq'avon giftthonh: tritr didlang tritr ded...diq'idiliquyhiy yit*.” Literally this phrase translates as ‘on the shore, he saw wood spruce, wood narrow (long)...that was chopped down there’. The young man begins to wonder who chopped the tree down and if there are people in

the area. He pulls his canoe ashore, following a trail toward a house that resembles a kashim or *tr'at tth'et* – “*Antr'a tr'at tth'et di*” literally ‘like, kashim place’.²⁷ The house is empty but contains grass mats all around, “*yixudz edinitchen*.” Among the nicely made grass mats is one that is not made well – “*tl'ux tat tlagg*.”²⁸

The young man sits in the house until evening, when he hears women singing nicely – “*longhin xit'ache gidalyayh niq'o'dafin dhagg tux yan*’.” He also hears one rough voice among them – “*gitr'idalyayh xitlagg*.” The women enter the house and sit on their mats. The young man sees one woman who he finds particularly attractive – “*getiy yits'i xititldhit...Getiy ngizrenh, yinedhinh*,” literally, ‘very nice’, he thought. The women take out bowls and mashers and begin the mash blueberries, pouring whitefish oil into them. The “big woman” with the rough voice and poorly made grass mat also prepares a dish for him but mashes the berries with her heel in a rough looking bowl. The young man spends the night in the house and the next day he hears them talking about going again for blueberries – “*che nginigg nasrididi*” or ‘we’ll go back up (away from the river) again for blueberries’. The young man accompanies the women and begins ‘to go around with the girl that he liked’ – “*yiggi niq'o'fonh yits'i xitidlidhin' yiŋ q'utithiyo*.” The women and the young man pick berries all day, and when the sun sets they come back together. As they stood in the “*traŋ tth'etdi*” place, the women turned into blueberries hanging on the bushes. The phrase “*Niq'o'dafin an gag nonxidelanh ts'in*’

²⁷ The suffix, or verb enclitic *di*- attached to the end of the noun *traŋ tthet* in the preceding phrase indicates a specific place, versus the areal prefix *xi*- that indicates a general area. I point out additional examples of these prefixes and suffixes in the other narratives.

²⁸ The word “*tlagg*” or ‘bum’ is also used in the porcupine story referenced earlier in this chapter.

dighu xidinelo,” literally meaning ‘women, them, berries, they became changed into, and up, they were hanging up’. The term *gag* is usually a generic name for ‘berry,’ whereas “*nifyagh*” is used to refer specifically to the blueberry. The young man becomes a long blueberry – *nifyagh ded ngith athdlat* and the woman he like turned into a round blueberry and hung right beside him. The old “rough woman” became a bearberry – *gezrmay chux athdlat*, literally, ‘bearberry large, she became’. The bitter *gezrmay* is generally not eaten or gathered for other any purpose.

Summary of Selected Deg Hit'an Narratives

All the short animal-centered stories above have common themes of interactions among animal species, traveling, and gathering. Only two of the mouse stories tell of any interactions with humans. There are various spiritual center references such as the *tr'af tth'et(di)* and the *deloy k'idz*. The *deloy k'idz* or little mountain with the smoke coming out could reference a volcano, or perhaps a hidden *tr'af tth'et*. The animals in these stories are portrayed as fully sentient beings and able to interact with what we might consider as other animal “species.” The mice are able to interact with humans if the situation demands, although the places where these interactions occur in these stories are the *tr'af tth'et* or places like this. In “*Tsodlig*,” the term for ‘trickster’, appears for the first time, although perhaps references to this concept are more obscure or embedded in specific phrasing in other stories.

As in the shorter, animal-centered stories, “*Q'idighidhilinh Axa Nixudhidhit Ts'in*” introduces themes of travel to distant places and encounters with beings in spiritual centers like the *tr'af tth'etdi*. In contrast to the short animal narratives, this

longer, although still annotated, version reflects themes of living alone for extended periods and feelings of loneliness. Also different is the interaction between the male human and the female spirits of the plants or “blueberry women,” which may be part of a larger creation story. This story links the worlds of plants and humans in unusual ways that are not reflected in other Athabascan stories. The only reference I have found so far is in Osgood (1959: 116), who specifically refers to interactions with the “berry people;” these people differ from the woodsmen, or little people that do appear in other Athabascan stories.

There is a similar example from the Deg Hit’an area of interaction between plants and humans that involves the alder tree or “q’isr,” that is, it is said that when a woman has her menstrual cycle that the “alder man has visited” (Osgood 1958: 188). The word for ‘alder’ “q’isr” refers to both the tree itself, and the color red.

Translations From English To Deg Xinag: The Lord’s Prayer

As indicated in the previous sections, there are problems with translation from Deg Xinag to English. This section will talk briefly about the work that has been done translating English concepts into Deg Xinag, both in the early 1900s by John Chapman, and more recently by Deg Xinag students. Reverend Chapman, former priest in charge of the Anvik mission, learned enough of the language to translate the morning liturgy, marriage ceremony, and many gospel readings into Deg Xinag for use in the Anvik Church. In addition to the texts referenced earlier, Chapman also translated the Anglican Morning Liturgy, and a series of Gospel readings. In his writings, Chapman references the recording and transcribing narratives, recognizing the shortfalls of a written medium,

that is, “they can never give an adequate idea of the wealth of native idiom employed by a good storyteller, or of the variety of his intonations and the gusto with which he practices his art” (1948: 41). In his work translating the Lord’s Prayer, Chapman describes his struggle to find concepts in Athabaskan that represent obscure Biblical conceptions presented in the archaic language of the King James version:

There was difficulty with the Lord’s Prayer, as my Indian friends had no word or conception for “kingdom.” I found an old English translation of the Lord’s Prayer which read, “Thy kingdom come to Thee.”...This idea, and the words “Thy kingdom come to Thee” were translatable...I made the translation without using the word “kingdom” at all. The sentence became, “Let all men come to Thee, their king.” For the Indians have a word which means king, nearly, and they have a word for God, which means, “Our Father.” I concluded that by putting these two ideas together the prayer would mean to them that God is king of all the earth.
(1948: 44)

Chapman assumes that “kings and kingdoms,” or monarchical systems are generic terms that should have applications, either past or present in most cultures, when in fact the methods of governance among the Athabascans were/are very different. Chapman did finish translating the Lord’s Prayer, however, I have not listed this text as it has not been transcribed in the modern orthography. I have been unable to re-elicited parts of the prayer to provide a full transcription and translation.

More recent translations below reflect some of the concepts that Chapman tried to translate. There are variations depending on the background of the speaker and their

individual interpretation of the texts. In addition to the Chapman version, unpublished versions by Deg Hit'an Elders Ellen Savage of Anvik, Belle Deacon of Grayling, and Grace John of Shageluk were recorded by Kari.

Dinaxito' Q'unodle: John (1980) Translation

I present the texts in table format, with a literal translation that reflects the word order of the language.

Table 8: *Dinaxito' Q'unodle* (John)

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	Literal Translation
<i>Dinaxito' yoyet dhedo ts'in' ngi'ezre' yan' titl'i'o.</i>	Our father in heaven, your name only is high.
<i>Vighun' deningidhit ts'in'ngixiyo' axa yoyet xiq'i go ngan'qogg dighenax.</i>	Think about him in heaven, and here on earth.
<i>Go dranh xonet dina vav lay dinatl'ongila.</i>	Today you'll give us our food.
<i>Ngighu gits'i ditr'it'anh da' dinaghun' q'ith xiniñeyh.</i>	²⁹
<i>Dinaghun' gits'i dit'anhin xivighu q'ith tr'ixiniñeyh ts'ixiq'at.</i>	Don't take us to where it's bad for us.
<i>Tr'ixet'uxdi xits'idz dinatighelalin.</i>	Don't take us to dangerous places.
<i>Tr'ixet'ux ts'in' dinak'odz xindingifnek.</i>	Dangerous/bad places push/keep them away from us.

²⁹ I have not been able to get an accurate literal translation for this verse of the prayer.

Dinaxito' Q'unodle: Dementi/Hamilton Translation

Most recently there have been adaptations by James Dementi, Katherine Hamilton, and Lucy Hamilton of Shageluk (2001), which reads as follows:

Table 9: *Dinaxito' Q'unodle* (Dementi/Hamilton)

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	Literal Translation
<i>Dinaxito'</i>	Our Father
<i>Ngiz're' yan' ngizrenh.</i>	Your name only is good.
<i>Yitots'in' yoye dhedo.</i>	Therefore in heaven you stay.
<i>Yitots'in' ngitl'ogh xiye tr'iditl'tth'e.</i>	Therefore in your palm we stay.
<i>Go dran nighintl'itth'in dinadhon ghe'on.</i>	This day bread put in our mouths.
<i>Tr'ixet'uxdi xits'in dinatighelalin.</i>	Dangerous/bad places don't take us there.
<i>Yitots'in' tr'ixet'uxdi xits'in dinak'odz xidingilnek.</i>	Therefore dangerous/bad places push/keep them away from us.

In this case there has been an attempt to translate the prayer as literally as possible, for instance the word for “bread” is used, when the word for “meat” or “food” might be more culturally appropriate.

Translations Summary

The Deg Xinag word for “our father” contains the areal prefix *xi-* that signifies a concept of ‘all around (us)’, differentiating it from the concept of a single family’s father. The Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000: 541) lists another term “*bet'o hudeeft'aa*” or “*bet'o hudeeft'aaye*,” literally, ‘the one on whom things depend’. Eliza

Jones, Koyukon linguist and co-author of the referenced dictionary, adds the following commentary: “This word used for higher power before the introduction of Christianity. See “*Denaahuto*’,” ‘our father’ word, used for Christian God.” I have not found a similar Deg Xinag word for the Koyukon word that Jones references as used before the introduction of Christianity. However, in the Deg Hit’an culture, there is a close association with Raven or *Yixgitsiy*, literally, ‘your (plural) its/the grandfather’. In “The Man and Wife” (Deacon 1987b: 16-17) narrative, Raven says “*Gogide, sitl’ogh xiyet dingit’adi*.” The translation reads as follows: “All right, everything is in my palm.” The literal translation can be presented as ‘I’m here, my palm in it you (singular) are (doing/being)-place’. As in “What Happened to the Young Man” summarized above, the suffix *-di* in word *dingit’adi* marks the nominalization of the verb referencing either a place or time of day.

Chapman’s (1914: 4) informant distinguished Raven from the Creator, that is, “The Creator made all things good, but Raven introduced confusion.” The “our father” or creator concepts in both the Deg Hit’an and Koyukon cultures seem similar to what Oscar Kawagley (1995: 16-17) describes as “Ellam Yua,” ‘the Spirit of the Universe’ and its connections with Raven as the creator: “Some say that the creative force took the form of the Raven to make the world so that the Yupiaq will never think that they are above the creatures of the earth.” This also highlights the notions of kinship that cross animal-human boundaries in Athabascan and other Native American belief systems.

Both prayers refer to *tr’ixet’uxdi* or conceptions of ‘evil’ or ‘dangerous/bad places’. This also can tie into the notion of afterlife, although this is not directly referred

to in the Deg Xinag prayer. There is a Deg Xinag word *iliy* that can refer to something evil or dangerous. The brown bear can be called *ggagg iliy* or ‘dangerous animal’. In the forthcoming stem dictionary there is also a reference to *-naxqun* or ‘power of the evil eye’. However, for the Lord’s Prayer, the speakers chose to use the word *tr’ixet’uxdi*. *Tr’ixetuxdi* could function as a circumlocution acceptable to use on a more frequent basis, that is, saying the prayer would not bring on illness or bad luck by regular utterance or thought. In Krupa’s (1999: 136) dissertation as well as the volume The Gospel According to Peter John (Krupa 1996: 35), Chief Peter John discusses the cognate Lower Tanana term *tr’oxuteh* (*yenhk’o*) defining it as the “Evil Spirit. In this case the Lower Tanana term *tr’oxut’eh* indicates an entity, versus the Deg Xinag term *tr’ixet’uxdi* that signifies a place or location through the use of the suffix *-di*.

Other terms for dangerous entities noted in Osgood (1959: 108-113) include the terms *Giyeg*, literally, ‘its/the spirit’ and *Nakani* or “windman.” However, perhaps speakers did not feel comfortable directly referring to these entities. Both prayers also use the verbs *dinatighelalin*, ‘don’t take us there,’ and *xidingitnek*, meaning ‘push (these places) away from us.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

As stated in chapter one of this dissertation, I grew up surrounded by the culture and practices, but not speaking the Deg Xinag language nor understanding the many of the underlying cultural contexts and constructs. The narratives referenced in this paper became familiar to me as an adult, as I did not grow up hearing these in either English or the Deg Xinag language. My experiences with these narratives remain highly

decontextualized; that is, I am not hearing the narratives as told traditionally in the village or *trał tth 'et* setting by an expert narrator like Belle Deacon. Instead, I read the written texts, and listen to the audiotaped recordings at my home here in Fairbanks. When I have questions about the content of a particular narrative, or the translation of a word or phrase, I ask an Elder if they would be willing to explain some of this to me.

Through this brief overview of four Deg Hit'an literary genres I have tried to identify some of the basic linguistic features of the language, common themes, and translation questions. Basic linguistic features include differences between Athabascan and English in terms of word order or syntax, that is, Subject-Object-Verb (versus Subject-Verb-Object in English). Prefix-agglutinative verb construction allows a tremendous amount of detail to be encapsulated in a single word, reflecting tense, theme, mode and aspect. As I am still learning about verb themes and structures, it is likely that I have misinterpreted some of the translations presented in this chapter.

For language learners, explanations of core cultural concepts, epistemologies or "ways of knowing" are necessary in order to be able to communicate appropriately within social situations. These situations include not only human social interactions, but also social aspects of the physical and spiritual environments. These physical and spiritual environments include the overarching subsistence beliefs and practices discussed earlier in the chapter. From the preliminary analysis of these texts, as well as my work in learning conversational language from Deg Hit'an elders, three specific examples that are obvious include: the use of indirect references, such as the verb "to go around," to refer to hunting, or searching for something; references to animals with powerful spirits use

indirect terms, and can be gender or age specific; physical locations and time of day, for example, the *tr'al tth'et(di)* (kashim), *deloy tux* (among the mountains), and *nigitidhi'ondi* (the time/place of the sunset) are central, powerful concepts within the culture.

This chapter provides only a preliminary examination of selected texts. Further investigation into the social networks and cultural contexts and constructs will be accomplished through more extensive analysis of the focus narrative, “The Man and Wife,” with comparisons to several of the texts surveyed in this chapter, and Koyukon Athabascan narratives.

CHAPTER 3

Introduction to “*Engithidong Xugixudhoy*: Their Stories of Long Ago”

All of the narratives in this volume were audiotaped by James Kari, currently Professor Emeritus with the Alaska Native Language Center, and Karen McPherson. McPherson was then working with the Alaska State Library’s Alaska Native Oral Literature Project (Deacon 1987b: ix). The foreward, written by Donna Miller of Anvik and McGrath, presents some background information on Deacon’s parents, and influence of her grandmother Marcia Jerue in Deacon’s education. The volume is organized with the Deg Xinag version of the story appearing first, with each facing page containing a line-by-line English translation. The following is an excerpt from the first page of the research narrative “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*” (Deacon 1987b: 6-7):

Table 10: First Four Verses of “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*”

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin</i>	The Man and Wife
<i>Ni’oqay tr’in’ne deg nixidax srixno’ xudo’.</i>	A man and wife, they say lived at the mouth of a sidestream.
<i>Ts’an yixi xathdo nixudodhil ts’in’.</i>	They lived there year in and year out.
<i>Yix getiy hits’i tr’ixine’ots xiyif xantr’ixixuneg.</i>	They didn’t know how they got there.
<i>Ndagh sre’ hits’in’ xivixelanh to go.</i>	They didn’t know where they came from.

Kari transcribed, translated, and edited the texts with the assistance of the Deg Xinag speakers listed below. In the audio recording of oral traditions and subsequent transcription, aspects such as facial expressions or other kinesic or paralinguistic cues are lost. However, Kari's transcription modifies the appearance of the text, or "framing device" (Tedlock 1983) using italics to indicate Deacons's emphasis on a particular word or phrase, capital letters to show an increase in volume, and three hyphens to indicate increased word length. The transcript does not illustrate other features such as pauses and pause length; however a reader can listen to the audiotape for these types of paralinguistic cues.

Deg Xinag speakers who helped with translations included my father, James Dementi, Grace John and Bertha Dutchman of Shageluk, Hannah Maillelle and John Deacon of Grayling, Alta Jerue of Anvik, and Koyukon linguist Dr. Eliza Jones of Koyukuk. The text was published initially in 1987 as joint project between the Alaska Native Language Center and the Iditarod Area School District in McGrath. "The Man and Wife" or "The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World" (Deacon's title for her English version) is the first narrative presented in the text, and longest of the eight recorded in this volume. According to the volume preface written by Kari, this volume represents less than half of all the narratives Deacon recorded for the Alaska Native Oral Literature Project.

Deacon introduces the volume with a short section titled "*Deg Hit'an Guxudhoy*," literally, 'The People's Stories'. In this section she talks about how children were told to listen carefully to the stories, and instructed not to fidget or to fall asleep. They were told

to “think about everything” to obtain the old wisdom. Deacon describes the process of storytelling, saying “[a story] is like a bright light ahead of us, just as though it were written as we speak” (1987a: 3). On the audiotape, but untranscribed in the volume, Deacon refers to this “bright light” again during an interruption in her English audiorecording of “The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World.” I transcribed this statement in full and included it in the “Overview of the Recording Context” section below.

The other narratives transcribed and translated in Deacon’s volume include “*Taxghozr*” or ‘Polar Bear’ (1987a: 41-60); “*Niq’odaḥin Notin Ni’idaxin*,” ‘The Two Girls Who Lived There’ or ‘Two Girls and Crow Man’ (1987a: 61-81); “*Niteda Sugiluqye Yixo Dixodaḥdiyh*,” ‘Two Cousins Shooting Arrows’ (1987a: 83-89); “*Tr’an Sugiluq Tthux Ni’idhit*,” ‘The Old Woman Who Lived Alone’ or ‘The Old Lady Who Lived Alone’ (1987a: 91-105); “*Notdith Gixudhoy*,” ‘Hawk Owl Story’ (1987a: 107-109); “*Q’ivaḥdal Tixgidr Yiḥ*,” ‘Spruce Grouse and Mink’ (1987a: 111-119); and “*Tr’an Sughiluq Chighiligguy Gho’in Xididhitl’ighanh*,” ‘The Old Woman Who Killed Herself Because of the Fox’ (1987a: 121-127). All but three of the narratives include an English version by Deacon.

The next section provides an overview of the “long ago” or “far distant time” narratives including further analysis of the volume title *Engithidong Xugixudhoy*. I review relevant Koyukon literature by Elder Catherine Attla (1983), as well as analyses provided by Ruppert and Bernet (2001), Wright (1995), Thompson (1990), and McCurry and Jones (1985).

Overview of “Long Ago” or “Far Distant Time” Narratives

Koyukon belief stresses that in the distant past there was a time in the transition world when transformation of creatures was possible and all had transhuman aspects. Bear, wolf, wolverine, and lynx had two souls, like contemporary man, and could change from one form into another...After the great flood, man and other forms of nature underwent change. Man became denaa, or human, with other forms of nature taking on their distinctive features as we know them now, with transformation capacity lost at least to ordinary humans. (Wright 1995: 39)

In the quote above, Wright begins her discussion of two distinct historical periods. According to Wright, the transition world existed before the Great Flood with major changes occurring afterward. Ruppert and Bernet (2001: 10-11) discuss a similar model, noting that the “eras” of Native oral genres can be arranged along a continuum or “spectrum of narrative content.” The first is the “origin era” or distant time when the world was in a state of flux. The second is the “transformation era” when beings move “toward social forms.” After human-animal transformations became limited, there is an “historical era,” that focuses mainly on “the actions of named and known people.”

In the video “Make Prayers to the Raven: The Bible and the Distant Time” (Badger 1987), Catherine Attla briefly discusses “Raven’s Raft” or the Great Flood. In the following quote from the video, she compares Koyukon beliefs and the Biblical account of Noah’s Ark:

God put all the animals on Noah’s Ark by pairs. And that’s just exactly what our story says, but only it’s on the raft...Just like what you learn from Bible. Nobody

saw Bible. Nobody on Earth is living now that saw the first Bible. So it's the same thing. Our belief is same way.

"Raven's Raft" or the Great Flood is further explained in Attla's narrative "*Dotson' Sa Ninin' Athseen*" or "Great Raven Who Shaped the World" (1983: 127-138). In this narrative, Attla says that there were people, a village, "and giant animals in the world." A man in this world is told that if the giant animals go into the water it will flood, but if he kills them "then the world will remain as it is." The analysis by McCurry and Jones (1985: 84) describes this character as "very strong man, undoubtedly a medicine man," however he is apparently unable to kill the animals. The man is instructed by the "Great Raven" to build a raft as "the world was about to be taken back;" the seagull and robin are described as the animals most helpful to the man in building this raft. Animals and birds were put onto the raft so that "In the future, when the world is remade, all these good animals will exist..." As the raft begins to run out of food, Raven instructs the water animals to go search for land under the water. The muskrat brings "just a li---ttle mud" up from the bottom, then with the beaver's help they begin to make "the raft into land (by piling mud on it)." After the land had been reconstructed, Raven "made the rivers so that the current ran both ways" but later changes the current to one direction as he thinks "it's just like giving people a free ride." Raven then constructs humans first out of rock but finds that "people multiplied and were reborn after death, eventually yielding too many people" (McCurry and Jones 1985: 84). He then reconstructs humans from clay, fixing "it so they would only live once." Raven's final creation is the mosquito, created out of anger at men who took the woman Raven wanted to marry.

Jones (McCurry and Jones 1985: 85) states that during a traditional Koyukon storytelling context, the narrator might pause to discuss Raven's decisions with his or her audience. The narrator might focus on "the notion of limited resources, that too many people would quickly deplete the subsistence food supply of the earth." Raven's concern with overpopulation is echoed in a subsequent section of this chapter that summarizes Osgood's understanding of the four levels of the Deg Hit'an universe.

The Deg Xinag term *engithidong*, refers to a far distant time, or "long ago" (Kari 1978: 47). The suffix, *-dong*, is used in a number of other constructions or adverbs of time including a general term *q'idong*, referring to something that happened 'previously,' or "in the past." The Koyukon cognate is *-don*. Other terms familiar to me through conversational learning include *q'iydong*, literally, 'yesterday,' *adong*, 'the other day,' and the interrogative *ngidong*. *Ngidong* is used when asking a question, for example, *Ngidong sre' yiggit yix xighela'*, or 'I wonder when there was a house there?' (Kari 1978: 101).

The root noun *xudhoy* in *xugixudhoy*, is a commonly used term for story, historical narrative, or legend (Kari 1978: 94). The possessive prefix *xugi-* or *xigi-* functions as the third person plural reflexive pronoun, that is, "their own." Old stories can also be referred to as *q'iydong xunxinig* (Kari 1978: 95). Other adverbs of time using the stem *-dong* from the Deg Xinag Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978: 47) are presented in a table below with four related Koyukon terms (Jette and Jones 2000: 147):

Table 11: Deg Xinag and Koyukon Adverbs of Time

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English Translation	Related Koyukon Terms
<i>Xintthindong</i>	In the beginning	
<i>Adongdong</i> <i>Yidong</i> <i>Dinanatthidong</i> <i>Engithidong</i>	Long ago	<i>Yedone</i>
<i>Nigidong</i>	Some time ago	
<i>Q'idong</i>	Already, previously, in the past	<i>Kk'edone</i> “a long time ago in the legendary past (when animals were people)”
<i>Oghidong</i>	Several years ago	
<i>Q'iydong</i>	Yesterday	<i>Kk'odone</i>
<i>Yixi q'iydong</i>	Day before yesterday	<i>Kk'odon hunotle</i>

The Koyukon term *kk'edonts'ednee* (see the term *kk'edone* in the above chart) refers to “stories of the very distant past” (Jette and Jones 2000: 437). This term can be used to refer to individual stories themselves, the “distant past” genre, or the “distant past” time period (Thompson 1990: 2). The term Koyukon term, *yooghe don hukkenaage*’, utilizing the stem *'kkenaage*’ for ‘language’ can also refer to stories of long ago or historical accounts (Jette and Jones 2000: 429); the Deg Xinag cognate term is

yidong xinag, translated as, ‘the old language, language of our ancestors’ (Kari 1978: 94).

In the next section I include an overview of the recording context; this is particularly important in how the narration is structured by the narrator. It should be noted that linguist Kari and most of the elders who assisted in the translation of Deacon’s materials were not present during the audiorecording of “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*.” Among the Deg Xinag speakers who assisted with the translation, (all but one of whom are now deceased) Grace John, Alta Jerue, and Hannah Maillelle were most likely to have heard the same, or similar narratives to those published in Deacon’s volume. My father, James Dementi, the one remaining speaker who contributed to the project, told me that he had not heard any of these narratives prior to his involvement in the project.

Overview of the Recording Context

The first voice heard on the recording is that of Karen McPherson saying, “This is Belle Deacon from Grayling. She’s going to tell the story “The Old Man That Came Down from Above the Second Layer of This World.” She’s telling the story in Ingalik and she’ll translate it into English. It is April 17, 1973.” Deacon begins by recognizing the person who told her the narrative, and his advice about remembering and thinking about the traditional narratives. Most of Deacon’s introduction is transcribed in the volume (1987a: 5); however are a few words that were edited out, so I transcribed the following directly from the audiotape:

The story came from Anvik when I was around maybe 12 years old I was. One name of Old Jackson told this story to four of us girls. And he told us to listen to it

good, because when you don't get the things that...if you don't even get the stories, even you never even think about it that's when you don't get the story he tell us. And he told us to really think about it. It comes from way generation, from the story beginning it's just. They pass it on to one another. It's what he told us. (Deacon 1973).

Deacon takes about 38 minutes to tell the Deg Xinag version and approximately 33 minutes to tell the English version. The narrative is relatively long in comparison to the others in the volume. I use the terms "relatively long" in a contemporary context, as traditionally these kinds of narratives could have been substantially longer. Narratives might be told in sections over several evenings. For example in order to tell the Koyukon narrative "*K'etetaalkkaanee*: The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals" in its entirety, Thompson (1990: 4) writes that the narrator would need "at least a week", although Attla (1989: 27) cautions that "If we take a long time to tell a story, then the winter will be long" and "people would have a hard time." Attla generally ends her story with the phrase "I thought the winter had just begun and now I've chewed off part of it" in reference to hard times and "people would appeal for mercy by telling stories...It was their way of praying. Although this phrase was not used in the Deg Hit'an narratives I reviewed, Osgood (1958: 37) noted that "I cut the winter in half" was used in the Deg Hit'an area; also that "a story is never repeated in the course of a single winter."

All of the narratives in Deacon's book were recorded in her home in Grayling, Alaska so the audio also captures sounds including knocking as visitors come by, Deacon's little dog barking, her husband John talking, and the kitchen clock ticking. My

parents and I visited the home of John and Belle Deacon on many occasions, so listening to these recordings is like a trip back in time to those visits in the late 1960's and early 1970's. These background noises do not distract from the story, but instead add to the context and overall appeal of the audio, effectively bringing the past into the present for those of us who knew John and Belle Deacon. Between six and seven minutes into the narrative there is a pause in the recording of unknown length as Belle answers the door.

After Deacon has finished the Deg Xinag version, McPherson asks if she will tell an English version. At this point Deacon converses with her husband John in Deg Xinag saying "*Deg gashigh, deg xiq'i gashigh xigichigho'idatl*," or "I'll tell her in English." John then replies in English "you couldn't, you think you can pronounce..." Deacon says "well some words you know I..." John then replies:

"It's perfect you know when you talk in...the one you talk to, tell story, if they know how to understand Indian, they understand perfect. But trying to make it that white man way good as much as you can. That's good story. That old man has come from heaven. In the second...the second layer of the world." Deacon finishes this thought saying "That's what he said, that's above in there and nobody go in there only after you pass away. That's what he say that, he told."

Deacon then begins the story in Deg Xinag, saying the first line "*Ni'loqay tr'in'ne deg nixidax srixno' xudo'*...Oh" then laughs saying "I start to say it Indian way again!"

About two minutes into the English version, John says something and Belle pauses. "*Ts'an, she...sitsin xin dixideningith'ix...vogho xin'titeniy...that's...vandhiginix che* (I forgot again)...*axaxildik* (then) ...you know that story when somebody, when you

start to tell it it's just like a light ahead of us and the word is just coming to us just like just like a, because it's not written it's just, you got to really, it just coming just like some shining on you and just some and just tell that way and when somebody mix you up it's gone. You have to think quite a while before it comes back. Two times he mix me."

From listening to the audio recording, Deacon's primary audience appears to be her husband, John Deacon, and Karen McPherson. Since McPherson was probably unfamiliar with the Deg Xinag language, it is unlikely that Deacon modified her Deg Xinag version because of McPherson's presence. Rather, throughout the narrative, she seems to be in dialogue with her husband, John who spoke Holikachuk Athabascan. Holikachuk is more similar to Koyukon than Deg Xinag in terms of structure and phonology (Krauss 1980; Krauss and Golla 1981); however John obviously fully understood the Deg Xinag versions. Both Belle and John seemed concerned about translating this narrative into English, understanding that some depth might be lost for a person not familiar with Deg Hit'an culture.

In the next section I provide an analysis of Deacon's Deg Xinag title "*Niʔoqay Niʔidaxin*."

Overview and Analysis of "*Niʔoqay Niʔidaxin*: The Man and Wife"

When I began to learn Deg Xinag, I supplemented the conversational learning process by listening to audiotapes at home or while driving in my car. There are few audiotaped narratives for Deg Xinag that have good sound quality for the beginning language learner, however the Deacon audiotapes are very clear. I listened to *Niʔoqay Niʔidaxin* extensively; because of its length I did not have to rewind the tape to keep

hearing the language. The tapes are also useful for learning the orthography as Deacon's Deg Xinag narration has very few false starts and stops, so a smooth transcription follows in the volume. After I learned more of the language, I became interested in the Deg Xinag narratives in general, especially the creation themes. I was also interested in the dialogue between Deacon and her husband during this narrative, as these conversations concerning the content of the narrative were not originally transcribed.

The 13 1/2 pages of Deg Xinag text in "*Ni'iqay Ni'idaxin*" each contain 32 to 41 lines of single-spaced text per page. These lines are of varying length in terms of the word or phrase content in each. As I studied the Deg Xinag language and became more familiar with the morphology and basic terms and expressions, I began to question the translation of *ni'iqay ni'idaxin*, as "the man and wife." I was most familiar with the following terms for 'man' or 'husband' and 'woman' or 'wife' taken from the Deg Xinag Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978: 28-29):

Table 12: Deg Xinag Kinship Terms

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Dina</i>	Man, Person
<i>Niq'olonh</i> <i>Sraft'anh</i>	Girl, Woman
- <i>qing'</i> (unpossessed form)	Husband
- <i>'ot</i> (unpossessed form)	Wife

Further investigation using noun and stem dictionaries, and questions posed to Dr. Eliza Jones, shows the way the prefix *niŋ-* is used (as previously noted in the chapter two) to mark vital, reciprocal social relationships. A morphological examination of the term *niŋ'oqay* reveals a reflexive prefix *niŋ-*, meaning “with each other.” The affix -'o is a contracted form of the stem for “wife,” that is, -'ot (unpossessed form), and the final segment -qay can be used to indicate “multiple persons” or “village.” The reflexive term *niŋ'oqay* was not included in the referenced noun dictionary, hence my initial confusion. However other reflexive forms, used in a number of creative ways, were recorded as noted below (Kari 1978: 26-28):

Table 13: Deg Xinag Reflexive Kinship Terms

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English Translation	Comments
<i>Niŋgonhye</i>	Mother and Child	<i>ngonh</i> – “your mother”
<i>Niŋto'ye</i>	Father and Son	-to – unpossessed stem for “father”
<i>Niŋq'uye</i>	Aunt and Niece	-q'u – unpossessed stem for “aunt” (mother's sister)
<i>Niŋqing'qay</i>	Husband and Wife	-qing' – unpossessed stem for “husband”

Thompson (1990: 100-101) observes that many Koyukon stories “begin with the phrase “*Neelŋkun kkaa ŋedo*” ‘A man and wife were living together’...In such forms, the older or most important member of the pair is the only one explicitly stated...If a story begins with this phrase, one can assume that the couple will be broken up by either abduction or infidelity.” The Koyukon term used in this example, “*neelŋkun kkaa*”

indicates that the husband or man is the “older or more important member of the pair;” this term is cognate to the Deg Xinag term *niłqing’qay* above. Deacon’s use of the term “*nił’oqay*” in her title puts the emphasis on the woman or wife, indicating her importance in this creation story.

However, the meaning of *ni’idaxin* is not explained in the translation. Deacon also uses a similar term *nixidaxin* in the title of another narrative in this volume, “*Niq’odafin Notin Nixidaxin*,” translated as ‘The Two Girls Who Lived There’.³⁰ In examining the morphology of the word, the prefix *ni-* may refer to something specific in the environment. The areal prefix *xi-* indicates something within the wider environment. The stem *-dax* is often used to indicate movement or travel within the natural world, for instance the term “*tinħ edax*” is used to describe the movement of ice in the river in the fall or spring. Kari (2007) indicated that this verb theme *-dax* in this example means ‘plural events occur’, or ‘experience plural events’, rather than suggesting movement as in the previous example “*tinħ edax*.” The final portion of the word *-in* can be translated as ‘those who’ are in a position or constant state. The neuter verbs, as defined by Hoiijer (quoted in Witherspoon 1977: 52), “imply an absence or withdrawal of motion,” or as noted below, “something being in a position or constant state.” A morphological analysis of the narrative title is presented in table form below:

³⁰ Deacon titles her English version “Two Girls and Crow Man.” In this case the term *niq’odafin* refers to ‘girls’, or ‘young women’. As noted in Chapter 1, the term *notin* is part of the numerical system used to count humans; different terms are used for objects or animals (including fish, birds, insects, etc.).

Table 14: Narrative Title Morphological Analysis

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English Translation	Morphological Analysis
<i>Ni'oqay</i>	The Man and Wife	<i>nif</i> – reciprocal prefix
<i>Ni'idaxin</i>		<i>'o</i> – contracted form of kinship term 'wife' <i>qay</i> – plural P. (person) <i>ni</i> – <i>'idax</i> –plural events occur, experience plural events <i>in</i> – “those who” (are in a position or constant state)

In terms of the title of the research narrative, this is an additional example of the kinds of complex cultural information that remains veiled at the conclusion of the translation process. Without some accompanying explanation, the non-speaker may not be able to identify and understand the complex reciprocal social relationship between the man and his wife, and their connections with the land.

In the next section I summarize the narrative based on the line-by-line translation of Deacon's Deg Xinag version, unless otherwise noted. Differences between the English language versions and the Deg Xinag version are presented after the narrative summary

Narrative Summary of “*Ni'oqay Ni'idaxin*: The Man and Wife”

Deacon begins the narrative by identifying a couple living by themselves at the mouth of a side stream. When fall comes, the man spends a lot of time trapping, while the

wife stays at home chopping wood, sewing, and cooking for her husband. The wife would always make ice cream for her husband and after he had eaten he would specifically ask for this - “...*ey vanhgiq yan’ getiy q’at*” (1987b: 6), literally, ‘yes, ice cream only really I want’. As the man continues go out hunting and trapping for days at a time his wife begins to feel lonesome. This cycle of the same activities goes on for a number of years, with the wife making fat ice cream, or occasionally snow ice cream, for her husband. One day during the fall season she does not feel well, and does not make the ice cream for him. The man urges his wife to make the ice cream as he does not get full without it, and sleeps well after eating ice cream. His wife then goes outside for snow to make ice cream and does not return. The man searches for her and finds the bowl and spoon she had taken with her, but finds no tracks – “*dina ting xuqu*” literally, ‘people trail (or) tracks none’ (1987b: 12) beyond the water hole. He mourns for her during the subsequent fall and winter becoming thin and weak, and thinking that he will die.

At mid-winter an old man (whom the husband later learns is Raven) visits him and tells the husband that his wife was stolen by a giant and taken to “a land deep down in the water” (Deacon 1987b). Raven tells the man that he will not be able to get his wife back without his (Raven’s) help. After the man has eaten and rested, they begin work cutting down a large spruce tree with a stone axe. They then limb the tree, and cut the top off, making it about “twelve arm spans long” (1987b: 19). The spruce is then peeled and over the course of at least a month, carved into the shape of a pike, with the insides and mouth hollowed out. After the pike is complete, they tie a rope to it and drag it to the water hole. The carved pike is then painted with white spots. At this point in the story,

Belle comments that “...*legg xit’a chenh ngizrenh*,” ‘it was such a beautiful fish’ (1987b: 21). On instruction from Raven, the man then goes to the cache and brings “things [beads] that were like eyes. Raven uses a medicine song on the beads and then puts them in place, whereupon they begin to wiggle and move. Raven instructs the man to go fetch an ice chisel. They then measure the fish (again) found to be 12 arm spans long. The man is instructed to chop a hole in the waterhole big enough to accommodate the fish, and fetch other items for his journey. These items include birch punk, a clay lamp to provide light for the man while inside the fish, and weasel skins to provide a disguise once he reaches the underwater village. Raven then “blew with his hands and made medicine with a song”: “*dilo’ strif axa gileg axa dighil’an*” (1987b: 24). He then hit the fish on the back and it sank to the bottom of the river, and produces a humming noise that shakes the man. In this part of the narrative Deacon uses the English word “electricity” to describing the sound made by the pike. However, Deacon also uses the Deg Xinag phrase “*srosr igitr’inelo yeg*” that is translated as ‘a humming noise came out of the fish’ (1987b: 24-25). The term *srosr* means ‘drum’ so the literal translation of this phrase may describe the noise made by a hand rapidly pounding on a drum.

Upon reaching the underwater village the man leaves the fish and found himself in the underwater village with a “big kashim and many winter houses” where there were people “hollering and playing ball” (1987b: 25). Preparations were also underway for a mask dance. The man, hiding behind grass piled in the forks of trees, sees his wife being escorted by two women to the kashim. As the wife converses with the two women, she refers to herself at this point as their [the two women’s] “sister-in-law.” His wife tells her

escorts she must relieve herself and then encounters her husband who hands her a weasel skin. They both swallow the skins and turn into little weasels. At this point the punk the man left in the grass begins to talk to the two women in the wife's voice. The two women begin to look for the wife and discover the talking punk. Meanwhile, the man and wife return and enter the pike, whose head is resting on the shore. The giant and villagers prepare to shoot arrows at the pike, when it swamps the canoe and swims around. Belle says, "*Dif'yan' yif'yixudz xiti'ihoyh*," (1987b: 28) indicating there is blood all over. The pike then swamps the village with waves, then straightens itself out and begins the humming sound again. Upon their return, Raven is waiting for them and tells them to get a rag from the cache and urinate on it. Raven then washes the head and teeth with the rage, returning "the teeth-like bones to its mouth" (1987b: 31). Raven then instructs the fish to "stay in a place where there are lakes, where no one will go," and "For people who step there on the ice of the lake, you will shake your little tail" (1987b: 31), indicating "someone's impending death." The fish then "goes to the bottom," however they (man and wife) "don't know where."

Upon their return the wife begins to make fat ice cream, and she and her husband dress in new clothes. The wife plans to give Raven the ice cream and some cooked game. Raven tells the man and wife "I am Raven from the upperworld. I don't eat this food. I live only on food that is placed in the fire" (1987b: 31) and that he will stay with them one more night, leaving at the first light of the next morning. Raven then instructs them to build a fire and burn first the food, then the bedding he used while staying with the man and wife, and lastly the new clothes. Raven then "floated upward" and "disappeared

behind the clouds up in the other world” (1987b: 33). Belle ends the story with “*Idixunili'on*,” literally, ‘That is as far as the story goes’.

Deacon intersperses very few English words or phrases into the Deg Xinag version. These include “no I couldn’t” and “all day” used by the wife in describing how she had not felt well and did not make ice cream (1987b: 10). Deacon uses the words “all day” again when describing the long process of shaping the spruce tree with the stone axe (1987b: 16). The phrases “it will be fine,” “that’s my own fault” are spoken by the man while he grieves for his missing wife (1987b: 12). At one point Deacon uses the word “Christmas” to indicate the midwinter season (1987b: 12), “powder” to describe the crushed rock that was mixed with water and used to paint the fish (1987b: 20), and “electricity” to describe the sounds made by the pike (1987b: 24).

“The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World”

Deacon titles the English version of her story “The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World.” This English version is presented in seven consecutive single-spaced pages. Deacon’s use of the word “man” in her English title and text differs from the translation of the Deg Xinag version. In the translated Deg Xinag title “The Man and Wife,” the term “man” is used to identify the husband in a reciprocal relationship with his wife as noted above. Also, in the Deg Xinag version, Deacon uses the term *Yixgitsity* or “Raven” to refer to the character who comes to aid the man (husband). Interestingly, in her English version, Deacon does not use the term “Raven” at all, rather, she refers to Raven’s character as the “man” or “old man” throughout the narrative. Other differences between the versions are noted by Ruppert

(1995a: 126), including Deacon's deletion of specific sections in her English version.

These deletions include information regarding travel, "references to a mystical sense of knowing about people's actions, as if censoring information about shamanistic activity," and a reference to urine being used to clean the teeth of the pike after its journey.

To understand what Deacon means by the "second layer of this world," in the next section I refer to Osgood's documentation and understanding of the Deg Hit'an universe.

Four Levels of the Deg Hit'an Universe

Osgood's (1959: 103-106) discussion of Deg Hit'an spiritual beliefs includes a section titled "The Universe and Determinate Things" in which he talks about the concept of a four-level universe. The first level is "the apparent world of normal living things." According to Osgood, the *yeg*, or "spirits that have departed from their partner bodies" inhabit the other levels, however the shaman's *yeg* can continue to exist on the first level.

Most departed spirits reside on the second level is known as "Raven living" which is slightly below the surface of the apparent world." Osgood reiterates a story of how this level was created by Raven during the time when "the animals and man still spoke a common language" and people did not die as they do today; as Osgood describes it, "actually, there was no place to go." Raven married "a fine-looking young woman," but later became captivated with her mother and sought to find a way to live with her. Raven then began digging a hole, "finally coming out on a bank of a faraway river," a project that took two years. After building two summer houses on two adjacent points of land, he then returned to his village and "hoped that his mother-in-law would become sick" as

“the world was already too crowded with people.” His mother-in-law did sicken, and stopped eating. Raven then led her into the tunnel he had made and they spent four nights on this journey. The following excerpt from Osgood explains the rest of Raven’s rationale for creating the second level:

He then told the woman that he had made a place for people to come after they had died. He announced that the individuals would come through his tunnel and, of the females, if one were a good-looking girl, he would have intercourse with her for two days, but if not good-looking, only one day. The same arrangement could hold for his mother-in-law as far as the men were concerned.

The third level is called “up on top of the sky;” Osgood describes this as “a good place but little is actually known about it.” This level has “a very large lake with very large fish in it” and accommodates the *yeg* of people “who have frozen to death, who have been killed in war or murdered, who have died in childbirth, or who have committed suicide (except for those who drown themselves).”

The fourth level and lowest level is called “fish trail” and holds *yeg* of people “who have drowned, either accidentally or by intention...There they have a village which is neighboring to the several villages occupied by different species of salmon.” The *yeg* that inhabit this level can go up “through a hole in order to visit their friends in “Raven’s living”.”

The next section focuses on differences noted in a videotape of Deacon telling the same narrative three years later. In this case, the videorecording context is quite different from the original audiorecording context. It is difficult to ascertain from the video how

many people were in the audience, or what their cultural backgrounds were. Deacon's husband John is present. The rest of the audience may have been a mix of Alaska Native and non-Native people, and could have included members of Deacon's family who reside in Anchorage, or perhaps were visiting.

"The First Man and Woman"

In 1976, a videorecording was made of Deacon at the Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum Exhibit and Lecture Series entitled "Athabascans: Strangers of the North" (Deacon 1976). Deacon tells the same narrative in English, although she titles this version "The First Man and Woman." I have roughly transcribed Deacon's version from this videotape (see Appendix I). In this version, Deacon provides a great deal of thematic detail not present in her audiotaped English version. In the excerpt above, Deacon's introduction to the couple is further expanded in this version. She also provides an initial dialogue between the two characters that highlights the couple's lack of knowledge as to how they came to be living along the creek:

These two couples they find themselves standing along the creek. This is the way the story goes and they don't know where they came from. They just only standing there looking at each other. The man was beautiful, the woman was beautiful. And they were looking at each other "where we come from? I don't know. We just find ourselves standing here." They start to talk to each other. "Well I guess we'll have to do something. We'll make a igloo house where we can live," they were saying to each other. They were touching each other. "You'll be my wife," he say, this man. And she was agreed to it and she said "yes I'll be your wife

because we don't know nobody. Where in the world we come from? I don't know, we just came. We just find ourself this way"... Sometimes in evening they talk to each other "I wonder if there's anybody in the world? Only us in the world, this big world?" they talk to each other. This man said "well I don't know. Maybe there's lots of peoples some other world. How in the world we came to be how we are?" So they wonder and they just stay that way for years and years in there.

Deacon also provides more explanation about the pike's ability to foretell death or danger. This ability is referred to only briefly in the Deg Xinag version as after Raven reprimands the pike for killing the underwater villagers, he tells the pike "*Vaxa gits'i xin'in'get'ith ts'ixuyan' xit'dik, ngichal k'idz zro xitil'eyh iy gitel'ditth*," 'For people who step there on the ice of the lake, you will shake your little tail'. The following is an excerpt from the videotape:

Why you did that way?" he told this, this old man told this fish. I told you not to kill nobody. You done very bad thing. Well maybe that's what I thought because you have to do something to protect your wife, this man and his wife that's why you did it. Well it's alright. But I'm going to send you down where there's nobody wouldn't see you anymore. In some big lake that's where you'll stay on the bottom. That you'll only sometimes when it's going to be big flu or something your tail will be this way and the ice will crack and they'll know that's a sign that sickness is going to come.

Another detail not present in previously transcribed versions is that Deacon's notes that the pike takes four days to complete a one-way journey to the village where the giant lives:

So the old grandpa tells the man he must build a large fish that will carry him on a four-day journey...I know he blow on his hand like how the Indian medicine used to make medicine long time ago...Everything what I tell you to do he tell that fish. And it just went down with his...he didn't know but all he hear is zzzzzzzzzzz all the time just like some kind of a noise you know, buzzing noise. And he keep going to sleep and eat little bit and going to sleep and I guess by four days and four nights it went by.

The concept of four days and nights travel, and the number four seem similarly important in the Deg Hit'an culture. For funerals or potlatches for the dead Osgood (1958: 275) notes that these ceremonies "ideally last four days" and this practice continues today. Also four candles are placed in each corner of the casket to provide light during the night during the journey to the afterlife. The following quote by Elder Hannah Maillelle of Grayling describes "last rites" of stamping the feet four times, observed prior to the closing and nailing of the coffin lid:

At a funeral people stamp their feet four times the last thing when the coffin is still open, before they close it. They lift the person's spirit up so they don't bury the spirit with them. It's a spirit sending. There's always somebody there by the coffin that's supposed to be lifting the spirit up. You just tell the person "*Diggi*

ts'in'!,” “up” in Native. If you don’t do that they hang around all the time. But if you do that they go up. (Maillele 2002)

For the remainder of this chapter, I focus mainly on aspects of the pike in terms of Deg Hit’an epistemology and ontology, including subsistence uses. However, Deacon’s title emphasizes the importance of the wife, and abduction of the wife precludes and, in turn, provides the impetus for the creation of the pike. So the next section focuses on a brief analysis of terms used by Deacon in describing this character.

Epistemology and Ontology: Aspects of the Wife

Moore (1998: 271) provides the following definition for the term ‘epistemology’, that is, “the study of the cannons and protocols by which human beings acquire, organize, and verify their knowledge about the world.” In his introduction to the book Native Science, Leroy Little Bear (quoted in Cajete 2000b: x) talks about science as a “search for reality” and “knowledge,” thereby encompassing both epistemology and ontology within a single term. Cajete emphasizes that Native science is a participatory process with the natural world (2000b: 2) and that that the understanding of Native science requires developing the ability to “decode layers of meaning embedded in symbols;” symbols that “are used artistically and linguistically to depict structures and relationships to places” (2000b: 36). Stories, or mythology, according to Cajete “are alternative ways of understanding relationships, creation, and the creative process itself...how humans obtain knowledge, how they learn responsibility for such knowledge, and then how knowledge is applied in the proper context” (2000b: 44). These mythologies contain “expressions of a worldview in coded form...” (2000b: 62).

In all Deacon's versions she describes how the wife is very beautiful and a skillful seamstress. In the Deg Xinag version the character Raven explains to the man why the giant wanted his wife:

He [the giant] thought that your pretty wife was the only woman up above [his world]. So he stole her. (1987b: 15); and

The big man got [her] from [here] because he look all [around] in this second world, and there's no woman like her. She's the most beautiful and the most handy worker. That's why he took her from you. And that's his will that she didn't make ice cream. That's how he was going to get her. (1987c: 36)

In the her audiotaped English version, Deacon describes the couple as "really wonderful" and the young woman as "the most beautiful woman...really smart in hand work and everything...She make all kinds of parky...And they have everything [that] they think of or know, 'cause this woman is just too smart, and she do too much work, you know" (1987c: 34). Deacon also describes several subsistence activities the wife is skilled at including cutting and preserving fish and meat, gathering berries, cooking, and preparing fat ice cream.

In the videotaped version, Deacon describes both the man and woman as "beautiful." She then goes on to describe the activities of the woman. Deacon describes the woman's sewing activities in more detail than the audiotaped versions, including the kinds of skins the woman uses to make the parkas, boots, caps, mittens, and blankets. I include a longer excerpt from the video transcript below that highlights these details:

And she's a good worker too. She cook meat and he got lots of meat. And they love to eat only real fat meat, caribou. So she cook it and in the falltime they got everything ready in that igloo and they had nice place to live in. And he start to bring in lots of meat and fur and during this summer they got lots of fish and they dry it up. They hang it up. And she take, everytime they get whitefish and everything when it's fat she render it out for fat and she got lots of oil and everything.

She bring in marten skin and bunch of them. She wet it and tan it and everything and then she split them and then she start to sew it together and she sew it together. She make good parkies out of it, beautiful. And she make boots and they have sealskin even. They have sealskin its just like a handbag, big one... They had lots she just made up two or three cache full of clothes, different kind of clothes. And this last time she made boots out of wolverine skin and there was tassle on it so pretty on top...And the parky she made was gray squirrel skin. Fancy on top and fancy on the bottom. Most beautiful. Just like how they doing cow skin right now but it's made out of all caribou, black caribou and white one. So she made this one, this parka, she made cap, and she made mittens out of caribou skin and after it's just all outfit, Pants out of caribou skin just tan just white and just soft.

And so she put it together and she roll it up how we roll up our parky so the ruff and everything wouldn't get dusty. And she put it away like that. And she put it in the cache again. And then she went out and she got caribou skin. She tan it and it

was a beautiful with lots winter skin...And then she got a fawn skin...She sew it together. It's made out of blanket. And on the other side she made rabbits, what they call jackrabbits...Like as big as foxskin, she made blanket. And then she doubled this one, this blanket together. She made this blanket, pillow and everything. She finish it and she roll it up, and the belt, pretty belt she tie up this way. When she tie it together with parka and everything the sack she tie it together then she put it away again.

The videotaped version differs significantly from the audiotaped versions in several aspects, two of which I have already mentioned in the previous section. In the video, Deacon is obviously mediating for a non-Native audience, and anticipating a range of questions her audience members might have about the Deg Hit'an culture and lifestyle.

In her audiotaped Deg Xinag version, Deacon uses the following phrases to describe the wife:

Table 15: Deg Xinag Descriptions of the 'Wife'

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Niq'olonh yozr yixudz yeg viggaghidithitth'iq hiq'i hanh ts'il anh.</i>	This young woman was very neat, very clean and orderly.
<i>Dina'idelay getiy dezren ye'ithitl'enh.</i>	She was dressed in very pretty clothes.
<i>Niq'olonh xuyozr xit'a che ngizrenh.</i>	The young woman was very pretty
<i>Yixudz yeg dina' hiq'i hanh.</i>	She was just like a doll.

In the first example, the term *ts'il anh* can be used to describe someone “who is clean/cleanly” Phrases two through four, as translated in the volume, seem to describe the woman in terms of physical appearance only. In example two, the adjective *dezren* is used, as well as *ngizrenh* in example three. Both contain the root *-zrenh*, used to describe something that is ‘good’ or ‘pretty’. Jette (2000:743) provides a more in-depth definition of the cognate Koyukon stem *-zoo*, that is, “the root applies not only to moral qualities but to physical ones also; it expresses good health, strength, and in general fitness to purpose.” Jette’s analysis of this root seems to rank moral qualities above those of actual physical beauty, although a number of other qualities are inherent in the term. So the translation of the term *ngizrenh* as ‘pretty’ does not seem completely appropriate considering a narrow definition assumed by most English speakers that perhaps only means ‘pleasing to the eye’ or something similar. Although some may closely associate the terms pretty and beautiful, this might not be the case for all English speakers. This use of the word ‘pretty’ is also surprising considering Deacon’s frequent use of the term ‘beautiful’ in her English versions.

The Deg Xinag stem *-zrenh* is also used in a number of other constructions, for example when weather conditions are good speakers have taught us the phrase “*getiy xezrenh ngi'egh*” or ‘it’s really good outside’. Although this may be used describe warm or sunny weather, it probably also refers to the appropriateness of the weather to the season, and possibly, the lack of dangerous conditions. Deacon also uses the term *ngizrenh* in the phrase “*legg xit'a chenh ngizrenh*,” ‘it was such a beautiful fish’ (1987b: 20-21) noted in the narrative summary above.

Deacon's Deg Xinag version is the only one to describe the wife as "just like a doll" in number 4 above. Interestingly, the Koyukon Dictionary does not list a term cognate with the Deg Xinag term for doll. The terms for 'doll' – *dina*', and 'man' – *dina*, can sound the same to a non-speaker, as they differ in only the addition of a final glottal stop in the word for 'doll'. Deacon (1987b: 6-7) uses the following phrase to describe the wife's handiwork:

Di'ak neg yił yi'eghoyh giqułchin yił, gisr yił, ts'ix yił, ts'id yił... She made beautiful parkas, boots, mittens, caps, and blanket.

The term *neg* is generally used to describe something that is 'pretty, beautiful, or finely crafted'. The Koyukon cognate *neege*' is defined as 'precious, beautiful, pretty' (Jette and Jones 2000: 855). I have not heard this term used in Deg Xinag to describe a person, however the Koyukon Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000: 454) lists the terms *soft'aanh neege*', meaning 'a beautiful woman' and *sekoy neege*', or 'my precious grandchild'.

The Deg Xinag term listed above, *xezrenh*, as well as the Koyukon term, *hoozoonh*, are also related to the Navajo term *hozho*, "often translated as 'beauty'" (Witherspoon 1977: 23). According to Wyman (quoted in Witherspoon 1977: 23), this abstract term also represents other concepts such as "perfection, harmony, goodness, normality, success, well-being, blessedness, order and ideal." Witherspoon (1977: 24) goes on to discuss the term *hozho* more thoroughly, stating that previous interpretations do not take into account the prefix *ho-* (cognate to the Deg Xinag prefix *xi-*). *Ho-*, in contrast with the prefix *ni-*, "refers to (1) the general as opposed to the specific; (2) the whole as opposed to the part; (3) the abstract as opposed to the concrete; (4) the indefinite

as opposed to the definite; and (5) the infinite as opposed to the finite.” Descriptions of health and well-being of a person, according to Witherspoon, also use this areal prefix *ho-*. Witherspoon states that “positive health for the Navajo involves a proper relationship to everything in one’s environment, not just the correct functioning of one’s physiology,” a definition similar to Jette’s analysis of *-zoo* above. This holistic view of health and well-being is reaffirmed in publications by many Alaska Native and Native American scholars. Wright’s analysis of the Koyukon term *hutlanee*, presented in chapter two, is one example.

Epistemology and Ontology: Aspects of the Pike

They [pike] have a lot to do with the medicine man, shaman, you know. Some lakes, you know, they get pretty big, twenty feet long... (Grayling/Holikachuk interviewee, Brown, et al. 2005: 46)

Reflecting the epistemology and ontology of the Deg Hit’an, the name for pike in the Deg Xinag language is *giliqoy*, literally, ‘a lance’ according to Osgood (1959: 24) who equates the literal translation with the shape of the fish. It should be noted that the “noun” *giliqoy*, is a nominalized verb, that is, a noun derived from a verb form.

According to linguist Leer (2006), a comparative syntactic analysis with Koyukon reveals that the Deg Xinag term *giliqoy* may mean ‘something that is speared’. This form, in contrast to ‘something that is speared at something (else)’ or ‘a lance’ as stated in the chart below, significantly changes the way one can choose to interpret the literal translation for ‘pike’. As the pike is an aggressive, predatory fish, the literal translation ‘lance’ could then refer to the behavior of the fish as it pursues its prey, or to the shape as

noted by Osgood above. If the literal translation means ‘something that is speared at’, this may in turn reflect the traditional practice of harvesting the fish using the *niłq'adz ggik vaxa gindiggad* or ‘fish spear’.

Several different terms for pike are listed under different stems in the Koyukon Dictionary; these include the related term *k'oolkkoye*, literally ‘that which is speared at something’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 345), *k'ootaah dletone* or large pike, literally ‘that which stays on the bottom’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 527), *dolel*, literally, ‘that which floats’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 416), and *taah denaaltone* (Jette and Jones 2000: 502). The term *taah* refers to [something] being underwater, and *denaaltone* means a ‘slender stick-like object’. The term, *k'oolegghos*, is also referenced with an indication that the stem is “probably from an obsolete verb theme...plural fish swim”, but the stem “*ghos*” can also refer to “plural objects making noise” (Jette and Jones 2000: 259). The Ahtna Dictionary has a single reference ‘*olgaadzi*, or *c'ulgaadzi* that is said to originate from an “obsolete verb theme meaning ‘fish swims rapidly’” (Kari 1990: 179); the Ahtna terms are related to the Dena’ina term *ghelguts'i*, literally, ‘swift swimmer’ (Kari 1994: 13). The following charts list terms for pike for Deg Xinag, and five other Alaska Athabascan languages.

Table 16: Related Terms for Pike

Language	Related Terms for Pike	Literal Meaning
Deg Xinag	<i>Giliqoy</i>	something that is speared at
Holikachuk	<i>K'oolqoy</i>	something; a lance
Koyukon	<i>K'oolkkoye</i>	

Table 17: Other Terms for Pike

Language	Other Terms for Pike	Literal Meaning
Ahtna	<i>'Olgaadzi</i> (Central & Western Dialects) <i>C'ulgaadzi</i> (Mentasta Dialect)	fish swims rapidly
Dena'ina	<i>Ghelguts'</i> (Inland Dialect)	swift swimmer
Koyukon	<i>K'ootaah dletone</i> <i>Dolel</i> <i>Taah Denaaltone</i> <i>K'ooleghos</i>	that which stays on the bottom that which floats slender stick-like object underwater plural fish swim

The clay lamp the man takes to provide light while on his journey is also part of Deg Hit'an ontology regarding fish in general. In Osgood's (1959: 116-117) description of the "animal's ceremony," he refers to an "insignia which holds a clay lamp tied to the bottom crosspiece" in recognition "that each kind of fish...have their own light which corresponds to a person's clay lamp. When fish pass in the Yukon, the side streams are lighted up by other fish which look like lights in the houses of people. Among human beings of course, only shaman can see them." Other Deg Hit'an ontologies concerning pike and other fish are illustrated in one of

the names for “hunchback whitefish.” The Deg Xinag term *q’ontoggiy*, documented by Osgood, literally means ‘by and by tomorrow’:

The name was given to them because they do not eat little fish, it is said. Other species, like jackfish, for example, become uncontrollably hungry. Living in their kashims, they see their little ones swim out from underneath the benches, and being rapacious, devour them. The hunchbacks will not do this. They say, “by-and-by tomorrow, we will find something to eat. Consequently they always look poor in the spring. (1959: 25)

The Pike’s Role in Subsistence Practices

For the Deg Hit’an people, pike or “jackfish” as referenced by Osgood (1940; 1958; 1959) were an important part of the traditional subsistence cycle as they are abundant in the region and can be harvested year-round from lakes, side streams, and rivers. Pike are aggressive, predatory fish, and can grow up to six feet in length and 50 pounds in weight (Nelson 1983: 72-73). Data from the recent Alaska Fish and Game Technical Report #289 (Brown, et al. 2005: 46) states that pike in the Deg Hit’an area range “in size from two or three feet up to four or five feet long.” Pike are currently harvested using gill nets, or using hook and line during the winter months (Brown, et al. 2005: 54). Since the pike’s jaws and gills are laced with thin sharp teeth locals generally lift them from the net by inserting fingers in the eye sockets rather than the gills. Traditionally, pike were harvested in basket traps, *giliqoy tidhi’on*. Osgood (1940: 231) indicates that the traps were set as part of a fish weir during the fall and winter months and that the harvest was most abundant after breakup. Pike also could be harvested

individually, in clear water, using a double-pronged fish spear, *niłq'adz ggik vaxa gindiggad* (Osgood 1958: 238-239). Data from 1990-1991 indicates that Anvik's pike harvest consisted of 19.5% of its non-salmon harvest; Shageluk, 35.8%; and Holy Cross, 28.1%, demonstrating the continued importance of this fish in the current subsistence cycle (Wheeler 1997: 160-162). Pike is usually served boiled, roasted or fried. Pike meat is also used to make *vanhgiq*, described in the next section.

Vanhgiq: “Ice Cream”

Osgood observed that *vanhgiq* played an important role Deg Hit'an society, served during most of the major feasts, as well as other social occasions. Deacon refers to several types of ice cream in her narratives, including those made with fish, caribou or moose fat, or snow. Currently, pike is one of the fish used to make fish ice cream, as the meat flakes well and is readily available at most times of the year, although other white fish are used as well. Deacon also uses the terms *ginot yił ninth'ix* as this refers to the mixing of the fish meat; *yith vanhgiq* for “snow ice cream” (1987b: 8); and *giq'ux vanhgiq* translated as “grease ice cream” (1987b: 31). Other terms taken from the Deg Xinag Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978: 84), are presented in table form below:

Table 18: Deg Xinag Terms for *Vanhgiq* (Ice Cream)

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Vanhgiq</i>	Indian ice cream
<i>Gi q'ux Vanhgiq</i>	fat ice cream
<i>Gichatlton Vanhgiq</i>	rennet ice cream

In Deacon's English audiorecording, the husband "can't get along without Indian ice cream made with reindeer fat. It's almost [all] fat, and he just cut it up with a knife and eat it that way with berries. The day the wife does not feel well, her husband requests "moose fat ice cream and berries" saying "My!...I can't go without that ice cream. I want it. I want that moose fat ice cream and berries. That's [what] most I love to eat, my dear wife" (Deacon 1987c: 34-35).

In the videorecording, Deacon (1976) talks briefly about the oil needed to make ice cream and, again emphasizes the husband's reliance on ice cream to satisfy his hunger:

...everytime they get whitefish and everything when it's fat she render it out for fat and she got lots of oil and everything. She put it away. She was saying she's going to make Indian ice cream out of it in the wintertime. And this man was really happy. And when the snow came she made Indian ice cream. And my they put lots of berries, salmonberries any kind of berries he wants they put, they mix it with. And once when they finish that they make fish ice cream too. And that man couldn't get along without Indian ice cream, he has to have it. No matter how much he eat he wants that Indian ice cream. That was the food for him.

In Deacon's (1987b: 6-7) Deg Xinag recording the husband says "*Ey gil vanhgiq, ey vanhgiq yan' getiy q'at. Che vixighigi'an' yi giq'ux vanhgiq hey,*" meaning 'I really want some ice cream, that's all. I'm so accustomed to that fat ice cream'. Deacon says "*Ts'an giq'ux vanhgiq highun ni'iqoyh ts'ixuyan,*" literally, 'So, she [his wife] always took the ice cream to him'.

Traditionally, ice cream could also be made with the seed pods of the cottonwood tree as described by Osgood (1940: 193-194). This type of ice cream was usually made in the winter, however, Osgood (1959: 44) notes that the pods were collected in June or July or “may be gathered just as the cottony coma begins to appear, in which case the pods are stored in the smoke house until they open about a week later.” The cotton seeds were discarded, then the cotton was saturated with fish oil. The saturated cotton was then mixed with warm fish oil and snow until fluffy. According to Osgood, lamprey oil was preferred, although any kind of fish oil could be used. Osgood also notes that favorite berries for ice cream included *nifanht’asr* or winter berries (crowberry), *nenhtl’it*, bunchberries (lowbush cranberries) and rose hips.

The process of making fish ice cream is extremely time-intensive. *Vanhgiq* is made by combining fat (fish oil, or more recently, hydrogenated vegetable oil) with the boiled meat of the fish. After the fish is boiled, the skin removed and the meat de-boned. The liquid is then squeezed out of the fish meat by hand until it becomes dry and powdery. The fish meat and fat are combined and whipped using one hand until light and fluffy. During this process, people who may be in the house must remain quiet as the ice cream is being made. Sugar, berries, and sometimes milk or a sweetened cream mixture are then added to finish the dish. Blueberries, lowbush cranberries, crowberries, and/or salmonberries seem to be the most popular fruit to add to the ice cream currently. Today the Deg Hit’an people continue to serve *vanhgiq* in large quantities at potlatches, mask dances, and funeral feasts.

Creation, Transformation, Symbolism, and Hierarchy

The spruce tree, or *didlang*, that was used to carve the pike, was traditionally one of the most useful plants to the Deg Hit'an people, providing, for example, medicine in the form of new shoots in the spring which could be collected and made into tea to treat colds; pitch which was used for bandaging cuts and waterproofing canoes; and wood for burning, or the construction of items such as sled runners or household items. According to Osgood (1959: 45), the wood burns at a higher temperature than other woods, and is softer than birch, making it easier to work with.

The creation of the giant pike takes place through transformation of the spruce tree via medicine song and breath of Raven. Witherspoon indicates that the Navajo have established cultural categories or hierarchies that classify the world based on "potential for motion" (1977: 140) and acknowledge "air as the source of all knowledge and animation" (1977: 53). Native American scholars Momaday (1997) and Zepeda (1995) also describe air and words as infused with power. Posey (2001: 7) also references the energy stored in inanimate objects that can be transformed into an animate being. In a similar vein, Cajete (2000b: 108) emphasizes that "In many Native myths, plants are acknowledged as the first life, or the grandparents of humans and animals and sources of life and wisdom..." In the Deg Xinag language, the word *yeg* means 'breath' and 'spirit' and all aspects of the environment, animate and inanimate are infused with *yeg*. Deg Hit'an medicine men or shaman were often able to cure using their breath in ritual song, or blowing in a person's ear for example to cure an earache. When examining these ontologies that acknowledge the power of air, the relationships developed between humans and plants, and the potential for motion inherent in the *didlang*, the transformation of the spruce tree into a giant pike becomes a natural process.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

...Critical discourse and any activity that predicates interpretive acts depend largely on the thinker's tie to a given knowledge base and belief system and on the linguistic features associated with the belief system. (Sarris 1993: 153)

In chapter seven of Keeping Slug Woman Alive (1993: 151-152) Sarris discusses three assumptions made by non-Native American students that are illustrated in their analysis and retellings of American Indian literature. Sarris emphasizes how many students see "narrative and context of production as extricable," when in fact they are interdependent. Until I examined the recording, transcription, and translation contexts for Deacon's narrative I did not fully understand how these contexts subsequently influenced Deacon's narrations.

Sarris also notes that students tend to focus on "detail and plot" in their retellings. In focusing on "detail and plot" students assume that "each action on the part of Coyote...precipitate[s] the formation of the world," although it should be obvious from the context that this world already existed. In the creation narrative *Ni'loqay Ni'idaxin*, Raven comes into an existing world; and with the help of the man, creates the pike for a specific purpose. Although Raven can be closely identified with perhaps, a god, creator, or protective grandfather, the concept of a human aiding a bird in the creation process may be very unfamiliar for students who, for example, hold fundamentalist Christian beliefs. As Deloria notes "The overwhelming majority of American Indian tribal religions refuse to represent deity anthropomorphically...[although] there was an acknowledgement that the Great Spirit has some resemblance to the role of a grandfather

in the tribal society (Deloria 1994: 79). In all of Deacon's versions, Raven or the "old man" calls the husband and wife 'my grandchildren'.

Sarris' third observation concerns the structure of the Pomo language and how this influences narrative structure. As Sarris points out, verb-based languages, such as Athabascan and Pomo, thematize action, not subject. A minimal example of this is presented in the previous section that discusses the different terms for ice cream. As noted therein Deacon does not always use the nominalized form for ice cream (*vanhgiq*), but instead uses the verb [*ginot yif*] *nintth'ix*. *Nintth'ix* means 'he/she is mixing [ice cream]'; *ginot yif*, is literally, 'fish meat with'. The term *nintth'ix* does not identify the subject as 'him' or 'her', 'man' or 'woman', etc. However, "who" is actually doing mixing is apparent within the context of the narrative.

Similar to Sarris' observations, Thompson (1990: 5-6) references the importance of understanding cultural metaphor, metonymy, and simile; the breadth and depth of which is difficult, if not impossible, to convey in the publication of an oral literature text. Ironically, those most familiar with the Deg Hit'an knowledge base and belief systems – Deg Hit'an Elders - are probably the least likely to read Deacon's volume *Engithidong Xugixudhoy*. Depending on the time of year and their interest in traditional narratives, most Elders would probably be more likely to listen to the recorded versions. The few Elders I have known who have listened to Deacon's recordings talk about her inclusion of many "high" words that bring to mind images not thought of during everyday conversation.

Traditional narratives of Alaska Native or Native American people, often come across as overly-simplistic; significantly different than most texts used in our formal educational system – foreign in both content and structure. As stated previously, I have an elementary understanding of the language, and this in turn limits my understanding of the knowledge base and belief systems inherent in the Deg Hit'an culture. The Deacon narratives examined herein are very complex and I have chosen to examine only a few aspects; these include an analysis of the volume and narrative titles; an examination of Deacon's English and Deg Xinag descriptions of the wife; and discussions of the literal translations of terms for pike, including possible connections to ontology of the Deg Hit'an. For a second language learner, to come to an understanding of basic concepts inherent in both the title of the volume *Engithidong Xugixudhoy* and the title of the narrative, "*Ni'iqay Ni'idaxin*" required a significant amount of research.³¹

In the next chapter I continue my examination of *Ni'iqay Ni'idaxin* and further discuss Deg Hit'an narratives in terms of their implications for indigenous education and language revitalization.

³¹ It should be noted however that Kari and Deacon did discuss titles to each narrative. Deacon referred to the English title as "The Man and Wife." Kari's interpretation of the Deg Xinag terms listed in the Table 14 above is the 'man and wife are living, spending their lives' (Kari, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

In the previous chapter I highlighted some of issues of translation and interpretation in the Deacon narrative. I discussed only a few aspects of the narrative, highlighting how translations can be somewhat inadequate, but provide a useful starting point for language learning. The Deg Xinag versions with translations are valuable, however, this narrative contains complex language difficult for the beginning language learner to fully comprehend. I began with a discussion of the “Distant Time” narratives and brief analysis of the title of the volume. I then discussed the narrative titles, both in English and in Deg Xinag. The Deg Xinag title translated into English as “The Man and Wife” does not completely reflect the same meanings inherent in the Deg Xinag term that highlight the wife’s reciprocal relationship with her husband, as well as her importance in the narrative. In contrast, the title Deacon used in the English version focuses on the ‘Old Man,’ or the character ‘Raven’ as he is referred to in the Deg Xinag version, versus the ‘Wife’. Following the narrative summary, I examined the “Four Levels of the Deg Hit’an Universe” based on Osgood’s interpretations, and Deacon’s videotaped version of the narrative recorded in 1976. The next section of the chapter includes a discussion of Deg Hit’an epistemology and ontology in terms of both the wife and the pike. Part of this discussion focused on the transformation of the spruce tree into the pike. This transformation remains authentic because of ontologies that understand relationships between the human and non-human parts of the environment, and the power of breath

and air. In the chapter conclusion, I briefly discussed Sarris' observations when presenting Native American literature to cross- or inter-cultural audiences.

In the current chapter, I begin to address issues of traditional education and indigenous language revitalization relative to the cultural information inherent in the Deacon text. One of my central questions in this endeavor has been an examination of the personal implications of learning these and other traditional narratives. Would I have benefited by learning my heritage language, as well as listening to and learning from narratives by Deacon and other Deg Hit'an elders? If so, how? Since I did not learn these narratives as a child, how then can these enrich my education as an adult learner? Perhaps I am fortunate to have acquired a strong first language base in English. Considering the attitudes of the educational system at the time, if Deg Xinag had been my first language, it is unlikely that my educational path would have been as smooth as it was. My peers and I who learned English as a first language were not punished for "inappropriate use" of a non-English language in school, although there is a good deal of stigma attached to the local dialect or "village English" as it is often referred to. As many of Shageluk's parents at that time were fluent speakers, many people my age were partially fluent or latent speakers. However, among the younger people, the language remained invisible due to pressure from educators and missionaries. Although a different context, but parallel in some respects, research by McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda (2006) suggests that the stigma still remains for many Navajo youth who are afraid to admit fluency in their language.

As I briefly discuss in chapter one, my own background was rich in oral traditions from a Western standpoint, however, these traditions contributed to a very different worldview than those presented by Deg Hit'an narrators. As a child and young adult I did not question why I read and listened to literature derived from non-indigenous sources. At that time, during the 1960s and early 1970s, local Deg Hit'an or other indigenous sources were not recognized as "educational" either in the home or at school. Deg Hit'an cultural knowledge began to be more widely recognized and valued within the area in the late 1970s and early 80s. Some of these changes were due to culturally responsive schoolteachers, as well the establishment of the Iditarod School District that allowed more local control of the curriculum.³²

According to Cajete, the current educational system continues to disregard the fact that "myths, legends, and folk tales have been cornerstones of teaching in every culture" (1994: 116). Cajete goes on to say that children, prior to learning to read, enjoy a "mythopoetic" orientation; that is, they "show amazing metaphoric thinking and storying skills" (1994: 130). However, these skills may be soon forgotten with the rush to impart literacy skills as soon as possible to young pre-school children. Cajete's interpretation of this philosophy is that it is a "hidden message...stop being children and stop being Indigenous" (1994: 130).

This chapter begins with a discussion of oral traditions and traditional education, as well as a brief examination of theories and methods of second language acquisition. I

³² For more information on the establishment of Rural Attendance Educational Areas (REAAs) in Alaska, see "A History of Schooling for Alaska Native People," *Journal of American Indian Education* 40(1): 1-30.

also include a section addressing language ideologies for indigenous peoples. For many Native American and indigenous people, language transcends what is traditionally thought of in language ideology terms as “social relationships.” Social relationships as defined within any of the social sciences seem to be confined to the human realm. For Native American people, social relationships extend beyond the human realm, recognizing a “fellowship of life” with other beings (Deloria 1994: 89). In conclusion, I discuss ways both the audio and text-based versions of “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*” can be used by the adult learner to enhance linguistic and cultural knowledge.

The Roles of Oral Traditions in Traditional Education

“*Yixudz vighoyen’uxdhił. Agide yidong xinag yitotłchitłdi dina’ididine’ yidong...*

You should think about everything. Then you’ll get the old wisdom that was told to us in the past” (Deacon 1987a: 3-4).

In her introduction entitled *Deg Hit’an Gixudhoy*, or “The People’s Stories” Deacon uses the term *yidong xinag* to refer to ‘the old wisdom’. The word *xinag*, originally referred to earlier in this document as ‘language,’ takes on additional meanings when combined with the word *yidong* or ‘long ago’; that is, ‘the old language’, ‘the language of our ancestors,’ and notably, “the old wisdom.” One could argue that speakers may use the term *xinag* to refer to the vast stores of knowledge passed down to succeeding generations via the power of breath in oral traditions. In the previous chapter I described the transformation of the spruce tree into the pike through the medicine song and breath of Raven. The Deg Hit’an recognize connections among, and the power of, wind, breath, song and the spoken word. Indigenous scholars from other Native

American traditions also recognize the value and power of the spoken word. Consider the following quotes by Native American scholars Momaday (Kiowa) and Zepeda (Tohono O'odham):

...in the oral traditions...Words are rare and therefore dear. They are jealously preserved in the ear and in the mind. Words are spoken with great care, and they are heard. They matter, and they must not be taken for granted; they must be taken seriously and they must be remembered. (Momaday 1997: 15)

Throwing words into the air” – this is what the O'odham say about talking, storytelling, praying, singing – all of which make up the genre of oral tradition. The words are thrown into the air in the form of spoken word, song, oration or invocation...But everyday words, like the words that are meant to have power, also are embedded with their own strength. This is the reason why so many believe in the power of words and why the speakers must be careful and responsible for what they speak. (Zepeda 1995: 5)

Momaday's and Zepeda's poetic words cited above capture beliefs by Native American peoples about the importance of listening and learning from traditional narratives, as well as the inherent power of spoken words. Chief Peter John (Krupa 1996: 60) echoes these concerns stating that “in Athabaskan culture you have to be very careful because words have *power*. The white people don't understand the Athabaskan way with words.” Old Jackson, whom Deacon refers to in the introduction of her volume, taught her the importance of listening carefully and remembering these words as he passed on his

knowledge to the Deacon and the other young women who were present. As a student of Old Jackson, Deacon obviously took great care in the words she chose in her presentation of all the versions of this narrative. This is particularly evident in English versions of “*Ni’oqay Ni’idaxin*” wherein she mediated for a non-Native audience. She began this process of mediation by titling her English versions “The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World” and “The First Man and Woman.” Deacon’s concerns regarding her responsibilities as a narrator and educator are further highlighted during the conversation with her husband prior to her first English translation. This conversation referenced previously in chapter three, documents her uncertainties about her ability to provide an authentic translated version. Finally, Deacon’s frustration with noises and other distractions during her recitations mark the significance of these narrative events.

To continue with this section on oral traditions and traditional education, an exploration into the definitions of education for indigenous peoples is necessary. Traditional educational frameworks, that is, content, methods, and goals for pre- and early post-contact Alaska Native people, differed significantly from contemporary goals and practices. The assimilationist goals of Western education for Native American and Alaska Native people have been well documented in a number of publications (Adams 1995; Deloria and Wildcat 2001; Kawagley 1995; Reyhner and Eder 2004). Often practices that are not based in Western or “formal” traditions, are labeled as “informal” or “practical.” I will avoid using these terms in reference to traditional education as in many contexts, the terms “informal” or “practical” can also imply a less important, perhaps

inferior form of education. The process I will continue to refer to as traditional education involves developing and maintaining relationships within social and spiritual realms of the world based on respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991). Cajete, a leading scholar in the field of indigenous education, presents his definition of traditional education based on research of Native American and other indigenous cultures:

There is a shared body of understanding among many Indigenous people that education is really about helping an individual find his or her face, which means finding out who you are, where you come from, and your unique character...Indigenous education is, in its truest form, about learning relationships in context. (2000a: 183)

Deacon's narrative documents the education of the man and wife in terms of their own relationship, and other relationships within their ecological system. These developing relationships are explained in more detail in the subsequent section on cultural values. Traditional frameworks or models for becoming a whole, mature, balanced individual and member of one's community have been well documented for Alaska Native and Native American cultures by scholars including Archibald (1995), Kawagley (1995; 1999; 1998), Sarris (1993), and Stairs (1995). Inupiat scholar Ongtooguk (2000) states that for Inupiat youth, traditional educational processes began with observing cultural practices, then progressed through immersion in stories and customs, followed by apprenticeships with relatives or community members who were advanced scholars of and participants in the subsistence lifestyle. Alaska Native Elders and scholars have also

emphasized the importance of learning complex sets of guidelines for maintaining balance within the environment, community and the individual (Attla 1983; Attla 1989; Krupa 1996; McCurry and Jones 1985; Wright 1995). Success within the subsistence lifestyle depends on nurturing numerous delicate relationships within this ecological system.

Kawagley's tetrahedral referenced in chapter two, illustrates the connections among as well as the equity of the natural and human realms. From the perspectives of Chief John and other Native Americans, non-human beings such as animals and birds for instance, are considered to have superior wisdom in some respects because they existed or were created before humans (Cajete 2000b; Deloria 1994; Deloria 2006; Krupa 1996). Maintaining these relationships entails not only the appropriate actions, but also appropriate thoughts and language. Part of the process of becoming an educated Deg Hit'an involved individually thinking about and learning from these narratives that established guidelines for interacting with Raven and other animals.

Alaska Native cultural values and the recently published "Culturally-Responsive Guidelines" are gaining recognition both nationally and internationally; in the next section, I present a brief discussion of my perspective on how cultural values are reflected in "*Nito'qay Ni'idaxin*."

The Reflection of Cultural Values in Traditional Narratives

We forget that some of life's most important values are understood slowly over the course of a lifetime. (Mather 1995: 18)

Deacon's talent in learning and passing on traditional knowledge and skills, as well as her commitment to cultural values, seemed to be recognized early on by her family. Deacon's grandmother Marcia taught her "how to live a good life, never to swear, and always be kind and help old people" (Deacon 1987a: viii); these cultural values remain integral in contemporary educational contexts for the Deg Hit'an. In her publication "With a Vision Beyond Our Immediate Needs: Oral Traditions in an Age of Literacy," Yup'ik Elder Elsie Mather (1995: 18) cautions against the impulsively over-analyzing oral traditions via reductionist strategies. Instead, she advocates an inquiry-based approach to learning, emphasizing that some things cannot be understood right away and that there is a part of us, as human spiritual beings, "that is not explainable in mere words." Students who study their language using traditional narratives need time and maturity in order to begin to both understand the language, and subsequently understand the cultural values inherent in the narratives. As reflected in Mather's statement above, widely shared Native American and Alaska Native values include developing patience with others and self, and recognizing that learning is an individual process that takes place within an undefined time frame (Cajete 1999; Lipka, et al. 1998). In the following section, I include my perspective on several of the cultural values inherent in the narrative.

In 1985, Denakkanaaga, Inc., an association of Alaskan Athabascan Elders compiled an extended version of Athabascan values (Denakkanaaga 1985).³³ Published in

³³ These values are also listed on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network website: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/ANCR/Values/athabascan.html>.

poster form by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network in the late 1990s, these values are displayed prominently in many Interior schools, as well as Alaska Native organizations and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

- Self-sufficiency and Hard Work
- Care and Provision for the Family
- Family Relations and Unity
- Love for Children
- Village Cooperation and Responsibility to Village
- Humor
- Honesty and Fairness
- Sharing and Caring
- Respect for Elders and Others
- Respect for Knowledge & Wisdom from Life Experiences
- Respect for the Land and Nature
- Practice of Native Traditions
- Honoring Ancestors
- Spirituality

The first value of “Self-Sufficiency and Hard Work” is evident in the beginning of “*Nifo’qay Ni’idaxin*” as the man and his wife at that point cannot depend on others to provide for them. The “man and wife” are highly proficient in a number of subsistence skills, however are still learning about their place or level wherein they appear to be the

only humans. The relationship they develop with Raven or the old man over the course of time teaches them the importance of “Sharing and Caring” and “Honoring Ancestors” through “Practice(s) of Native Traditions,” for example, the reciprocal gifting (through burning) of food and clothing to Raven and others who inhabit the other levels. In Deacon’s audiotaped English version “The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World,” the old man (Raven) states:

But all that food which you put away for me – ice cream, things – you make big fire on the bank tomorrow morning. You burn the FOOD first. Then you put my bundle, my blanket, and BURN it up. And those boots, parky, mittens, cap, everything, bundle it up and burn it too. And it’ll come down to ashes. And then you’ll see me get out of sight. And it will be, when I get back to my place up there, it will be there just brand new; I’ll put it on. (1987c: 40)

Also overtly stated in Deacon’s videotaped version, the man recognizes the reciprocal obligation he has to the old man (Raven) saying:

So, well how I’m going to pay you?” This man say, “I got to pay you lots. You took my wife back for me.” “Well, my grandchild,” he say, “I couldn’t help it. You see my clothes what I came with? You see it’s very old. It’s very beautiful but it’s very old and I want new things. New squirrelskin parky and new mittens, and the wolverine boots that’s what you going to pay me with. It’s already made. You going to pay me with that one. And I’ll be very satisfied with that one... That parky well, as soon as he said that way this woman went out and went in the cache. And he got this blanket bundle, blanket, that parky what she made. He

brought it in. He look at it, he smile. He say "thank you ever so much. Now I'm going to be new again where I came from. But I'm not going to put it on right here. Tomorrow morning you got lots of wood out there. You make a big fire after I leave. You make a big fire on the bank. And just put that sack right on top of the fire and the blanket, burn it up. And all the food you been give me for all the time one month I stay here. You put on top that fire and burn it up. Because, then when I go back up to my place he says I'll have lots of food to eat. That's only the place I'm going to eat." And put on those clothes. (1976)

In the Deg Xinag version the reciprocal commitment is not explicitly stated as in the English versions. However, when the fish has been sent "to the bottom" Raven simply says "*Agide*" ('okay,' 'alright,' 'now then') to the man and wife. After this minimal statement the wife begins to work making fat ice cream and retrieving new clothes from her cache for Raven. The conversation then continues as Raven explains his position in the Upper World to the man and wife (1987b: 30-31).

Table 19: Raven's Explanation of the Upper World

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>"Ngo, ngidiggi gits'i'in ttheting Xigiyixgitsiy itlanh ts'an got.</i>	"I am Raven from the upper world." ³⁴
<i>Yitots'in' deg xivava' dhison ts'in'.</i>	I don't eat this food.
<i>Sitsi qun' q'udi'alyay yan' xitdi qaditlt'a ts'an go," ne lo.</i>	I live only on food that is placed in the fire.
<i>Gogide gitsighath da' getiy xadhinigginh ndigicheth," ne.</i>	I'm wearing this worn out marten parka," he said.
<i>"Axaxitdik ngiyix che nitreth qageldiq.</i>	"I'm wearing wolverine boots.
<i>Go iy che getiy xathdatl.</i>	They are old too.
<i>Getiy q'idong viye tasitl'e'.</i>	I've worn them a long time.
<i>Go iy zro q'atl'ot q'odet sinonduxlo agide getiy yixghu srigatasdhet,"xitne.</i>	If you dress me anew, I'll be very grateful to you," he told them.

After this exchange, Raven then gives the man and wife specific instructions in the proper protocol for sending food, clothing and other belongings to other levels.

³⁴ Literally, 'Well, up above, separate trail, your grandfather, I am so, here' (Kari, 2007).

Table 20: Raven's Instructions

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>“Go xildik yixudz duxdiyoq xotl’ogh yixudz ngi’o ngittegh vithq’idz xildik xatuxlq’ol,” xifne.</i>	After you do everything, you will build a fire out there on the bank,” he told them.
<i>“Yit xildik qun’ q’idz xildik sital ditux’ol.</i>	“You will put my bedding on the fire.
<i>Axaxildik go dina’ideloy viq’idz dituxdaŋ.</i>	Afterwards you will put the new clothes on it.
<i>Xotl’ogh xildi go vav chenh go vav detthat,” xifne.</i>	Put the food on the fire first,” he told them.
<i>“Vav dettha xitthiduxla xotl’ogh go iy vav neg xildik viq’i dituxlaŋ.</i>	First put the food in the fire, then put on the other nice food.
<i>Yit xildi voqo nigidenog’ol.</i>	Then it will all burn.
<i>Sinxiddhuxlnix xotl’ogh” xifne.</i>	You’ll make me disappear afterwards,” he said.

The process of burning the belongings of someone who has recently died has also been documented by Osgood:

Before a person dies he will indicate whether he wishes to have his property burned, inhumed with him, or given to friends... That which is to be burned is deposited in a fire made with birch bark a few hundred feet behind the river bank.

When burned, property goes to the deceased person immediately, whereas that which is given away goes to him only when it is worn out. (1958: 154)

In spite of opposition by early missionaries, the burning of food and clothing for the ancestors are still practiced in the Deg Hit'an area, highlighting an ontology that recognizes obligations to those that have passed to another level; in other words, the living may still contribute to the welfare of *gidhagiye* or 'those who have gone before'.

Continuing with additional values inherent in the narrative, "Respect for Land and Nature" is particularly evident in the video "The First Man and Woman" as the man continues to trap every day in spite of his wife's wish that he stay home with her for the day. Deacon's narrative includes the phrase, "you know my dear there's lots of fur in the world. If I let up one day you wouldn't have that much fur." The belief that humans must take the animals that offer themselves appears to be already established; if this protocol is not followed then there may be less offered in future ventures (Nelson 1983).

The value of "Care and Provision for the Family" is apparent in the reciprocal form used by Deacon to refer to the man and wife," *Ni'loqay Ni'idaxin*" previously explained in chapter three; a terms that highlights their vital social relationship. In all Deacon's versions, the man chides himself for insisting that his wife make ice cream when she was feeling poorly saying:

- "Sig'ho'in'a didiyog," 'it's all my fault' (1987b: 10-11);
- "That's my fault. I shouldn't force her to make that [to]night. She didn't feel good and I just force her. That's my own fault" (1987c: 35);

- “ Why I treat my wife that way? She say she was feeling bum and then I force her to get that snow while it’s dark. Now I couldn’t, she’s not here with me anymore” (1976).

Deacon’s statement at the end of her videotaped version also reflects this value, where she stated “All the time he, his... whatever his wife say, he do because he was...he didn’t obey to his wife. You know when she tell him to stay home one day and then he didn’t do it” (1976).

As noted in the Athabascan values above, in both traditional and contemporary contexts, the process of becoming a whole person involves commitment and service to one’s family and community. The values that place priority on family and community above the interests of the individual remain despite early Western educational efforts to individualize Native American and Alaska Native people (Adams 1995; Reyhner and Eder 2004).

Similar to the Athabascan values listed above, a composite of cultural values for all the Alaskan cultural regions have been compiled in recent years by members of the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, a partner organization within the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (see Barnhardt 2007):³⁵

- Show Respect to Others - Each Person Has a Special Gift
- Share What You Have - Giving Makes You Richer
- Know Who You Are - You Are a Reflection on Your Family

³⁵ See the Alaska Native Knowledge Website <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/ANCR/Values/index.html>.

- Accept What Life Brings - You Cannot Control Many Things
- Have Patience - Some Things Cannot Be Rushed
- Live Carefully - What You Do Will Come Back to You
- Take Care of Others - You Cannot Live Without Them
- Honor Your Elders - They Show You the Way in Life
- Pray for Guidance - Many Things Are Not Known
- See Connections - All Things Are Related

In both sets of values, ‘respect’ is overtly stated; also sharing and caring for others.

However, the last value of encouraging an ecological, or holistic worldview is not explicitly stated in the Athabascan list. In the previous chapter, I discussed the connections between *vanhgiq* (ice cream), and *giliqoy* (pike). I also noted that the *didlang* (spruce tree) may have been chosen by *Yixgitsiy* (Raven) because of its usefulness to the Deg Hit’an, as well as its potential for motion. The connections in the narrative are obvious if a person is fluent in the language and cultural practices of the Deg Hit’an. For those of us in the borderlands between Western influences and a familiarity with Deg Hit’an cultural knowledge, these connections are not readily apparent. Only through rigorous examination of these connections, can we begin to understand the cultural practices and language usage in any depth.

In the next section, I give an overview of second language pedagogy and adult learning programs prior to beginning a discussion of language ideologies.

Second Language Pedagogy

Although it is not the intent of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive review of language learning pedagogy, a brief discussion of current theories and methods is necessary. Much of the current literature focuses on the pre-K, K-12, and postsecondary classroom contexts; there is almost no literature on the cultural aspects of adult indigenous language pedagogy except the article on Mohawk that I reference later in this section.

Second language acquisition theories (Lightbown and Spada 1993: 23-31) include “behaviourism,” a system of positive reinforcement for “correct repetition and imitations” that promotes “habit formation” in the language learner. Errors are interpreted as “first language interference” as the structure of the first language tends to influence how the learner thinks about the second language. However, learners are aware that metaphorical structures used in their first language are not necessarily transferable to a second language. Cognitive theory, or cognitive “restructuring” theory, examines the construction of knowledge systems as languages are learned. As new information on the structure of the second language enters this knowledge system, the learner may experience “sudden bursts of progress” or “back-sliding” depending on the learner’s interpretation of new material. Creative construction theory, based on Chomsky’s innatist theory of first language acquisition, proposes that acquisition takes place internally as the learner is exposed to language. Krashen’s (Krashen and Terrell 1995) Monitor Model, probably one of the most well known creative construction theories, is composed of the following five hypotheses:

- The acquisition-learning hypothesis proposes that “acquiring” language through natural, socially-appropriate communication is more effective than language “learned” via structured repetition and grammar lessons;
- The monitor hypothesis that argues the “acquired system” is “responsible for fluency and intuitive judgments about correctness; a “learned” system of rules “only helps the speaker polish what has been acquired via real communication.”
- The natural order hypothesis suggests that learners acquire the rules of a language in a predictable sequence;
- The input hypothesis that proposes only “comprehensible input” contributes to second language acquisition; and
- The affective filter hypothesis suggests that learning can be affected by emotions, motivations, attitudes, and other intangible or “invisible” barriers.

Methods generally used in second language pedagogy include structural, functional, and interactional approaches (Baker 1996: 282-287). Functional and interactional approaches are the most common methods used currently; these methods emphasize socially-appropriate communication rather than relying solely on repetition, and grammar as used in the structural approach (see Krashen’s Monitor Model above). The Master-Apprentice Model (Hinton 2001) used by many indigenous adult learners without access to structured group learning encourages the use of functional and interactional methods. However, in using the Master-Apprentice Model, most beginning learners require a good deal of repetition from the speaker(s); many of the sounds or phonemes differ from those learned by English speakers. As with any effective language program, Master-Apprentice

methods also require self-study between the interactive sessions with fluent speakers. As recommended in this approach, some self-study tools I use include use of audio-recordings and writing, as these seem to complement my interactional learning process.

Academics discuss and debate the general cognitive and social benefits of knowing second languages extensively in books, academic journals and the media. This debate has intensified especially since the initiation of English-only propositions and the federal legislation “No Child Left Behind” that emphasizes fluency and testing in English. Those in favor of heritage or bilingual education strive to make a case for the importance of languages in the educational process. They argue that learning another language has cognitive benefits, and in the case of heritage languages, promotes the self-esteem of students whose languages and cultures may be marginalized. Languages are also considered a wealth of information, funds of knowledge, and resources for the world to draw upon. Should there only be only a few of the remaining thousands of languages spoken, language revitalization experts argue that that our knowledge will diminish with them. For languages with few speakers, scholars argue that these linguistic and cultural resources should be preserved through generations of second-language speakers. See publications by well-known scholars Krauss (1980; 1992; 1997) and Fishman (1991) for a more complete discussion of language shift and revitalization issues.

Adult Indigenous Language Programs

Aside from the article published by King referenced above, as well as Hinton (2001; 2002), and Mohawk scholar Kanatawakhon Maracle (Maracle and Richards 2002), there are few publications that focus on indigenous, Native American or Alaska

Native adult language programs, or ideologies. In Maracle's publication referenced above, he provides an overview of an adult immersion program for the Mohawk language, documenting some of the successes and challenges in working with speakers and adult learners. Although weekly language classes had been offered for Mohawk, this approach did not offer enough consistent conversational use for learners to gain intermediate levels of fluency. For those of us who participate in the weekly one-hour Deg Xinag audioconference, this is similar to our own experiences with the language learning; obviously, conversational fluency can be enhanced but not achieved solely within such a limited time frame.

The organizers of the Mohawk class capped enrollment at 12 participants with a prerequisite introductory course required. Participants met daily in a home environment, regularly preparing, serving and eating lunch during sessions. Challenges common to adult learning programs included finding ways to encourage the speakers to stay with the Mohawk language throughout the session. Speakers also had to learn to resist the urge to translate into English what was not immediately understood by students. Maracle observed that those learners who had an academic background, and/or those who had previously studied another language had more "language learning strategies" (2002: 129) available to draw upon in learning Mohawk. However, for learners, Maracle also observed that English fluency interfered with the language learning process because of the assumptions made by English language speakers about the structures of other languages. Maracle states that:

basic English...allows a speaker to use a small amount of English vocabulary in many ways...expressions like “I put on,” “I put in,” “I put under,”...English relies heavily on particles, which means that the speaker does not really need to know a great deal of vocabulary, just the situation in which the words occur. In Mohawk, you need a different word for each one of those expressions. (2002: 130)

Maracle’s observations of the structure of Mohawk correspond in many ways to the structure of Athabascan. For example, there is an extensive system of classificatory verbs; verbs for carrying or handling objects usually differ significantly depending on the size, shape, and texture of the object being handled or carried. The verb may also change if there are multiple objects being handled or carried. Students in the Deg Xinag Athabascan Language Development Institute learned approximately 25 phrases during the cooking portion of the course, including the following classificatory verbs, ‘to put and ‘to pour’. Verbs are marked in bold in the examples below; other parts of speech are color coded to illustrate the translations of numbers, nouns, prepositions, etc.

Table 21: Deg Xinag Classificatory Verbs

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
1. <i>Giliggi nalyagh ethok ye tas’of.</i>	I’ll put one potato in the pot.
2. <i>Teqa nalyagh ethok ye tatlaʔ.</i>	I’ll put two potatoes in the pot.
3. <i>Doghiyiq vito tastrik.</i>	I’ll put salt in.
4. <i>Te ethok ye tasngiʔ.</i>	I’ll put/pour water in the pot.
5. <i>Te ethok ye ngingiʔ.</i>	You put/pour water in the pot.

In examples one and two, the verb stem changes as the object changes from singular to plural. Although I listed only first person singular subject examples, the verb stem as well as the prefixes change if plural subjects are used (we, you [guys], they). Example three, translated again as ‘put’, illustrates the specificity inherent in the verb system, as the stem changes from –*’o* or –*la*, in the first two examples, to –*trik*. The reason for this change is that potatoes are classified by the Athabaskan system as a compact, round object, versus salt, which is in a granular form. Examples four and five also illustrate a different form, that is, the verb theme used for liquids, although in English we can use the verb ‘to put’. Maracle also observed that some English-speaking students seemed unaware of how they “use vocabulary flexibly or precisely and can frame meaning in many ways”...and “appeared unable to acknowledge the same kind of flexibility in Mohawk” (2002: 131). I discuss some of these issues in the penultimate section of this chapter referencing verbs translated as the English verb ‘to make’ from Deacon’s narrative.

Maracle brings out issues that arise when there are declining numbers of truly fluent speakers of the Mohawk language “who can quite literally talk the birds out of the trees using the language alone” (2002: 132). He states that many of the speakers that remain do not converse regularly in the Mohawk language; however, if the language is being used consistently, it becomes easier to develop vocabulary for new contexts. However, “coining” new words also becomes an issue, as English-speaking students will ask for noun-based forms without recognizing the verb-based structure of many Native American languages. Maracle suggests a return to “traditional forms of reference, such as

a mention of the object's function or state. For example, "refrigerator" might be "It keeps food cold," and "It's in the refrigerator," could be "It's staying cold" (2002: 133). Similar forms are used by Deg Xinag speakers to refer to 'cars' – *ngan' q'idz q'u'idighal* and 'snowmachines' – *yith q'idz q'u'idighal* that translate as 'land/snow, on, they go around'. As I have observed in interacting with Deg Xinag speakers, students will ask for words or phrases without providing the complete context for speakers to consider in formulating their responses (Leonard 2001). Thus, as Maracle also observes, speakers "can certainly tell you a way to say it, but the form that comes to mind may not be the one they actively use themselves" (2002: 132).

Many of the Deg Hit'an Elders learned English through an often physically, spiritually, and psychologically brutal submersion approach. For those of us currently learning our heritage languages as second languages, one would think this process would not be as difficult. However, as described previously there are a number of variables and challenges within each language area. For the Deg Xinag language, there are now very few fluent Elders remaining. I continue to work with my father who is fluent in Deg Xinag and Holikachuk, and his youngest sister Louise Winkelman, who is also a talented, partially-fluent (fully latent) speaker. Several other Elders continue to make a commitment to helping adult language learners. With the decline of fluent speakers, there remain fewer contexts for learners to be exposed to natural everyday spoken language.

In the next section I briefly examine language ideologies, including definitions by indigenous scholars.

Language Ideologies: Aspects of Indigenous Language Acquisition

We are all relearners...Education for Native Americans, was a journey to lead us away from who we really are...Language relearning is a journey back home.

(Kipp 2000: 5)

In the quote above, Blackfeet scholar Kipp presents a metaphor that recognizes indigenous language and educational revitalization efforts as part of “a journey back home.” Other indigenous scholars also choose to look at language education as a return journey, from forced assimilation back to a culturally-based values and practices. According to Baker (1996: 275), the reasons for learning a second language can be classified as “ideological, international, and individual.” Indigenous language revitalization efforts can be classified as both ideological and individual in nature, as indigenous people resist continuing assimilationist strategies by hegemonic dominant societies, while simultaneously gaining a deeper understanding of their culture and its worldviews. An example of continuing assimilationist strategies include current programs designed to improve K-12 education such as “English Only” propositions and the federal legislation “No Child Left Behind.”³⁶ My motivation for learning falls into the ideological and individual categories as explained previously in chapter one, as I did not grow up learning the language or learning many of the deeper meanings of cultural practices.

³⁶ For a more detailed discussion of these topics see the following websites:
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/>
<http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/>

As Maori scholar King (2003) points out, there are a number of different metaphors used in thinking and speaking about language; these include viewing language as a commodity, “treasure,” or “heirloom” to be found and preserved through active use. In a similar vein, several Alaska Native Elders including Elsie Mather and Chief Peter John have referred to Native languages as a gift:

I was impressed with the idea of our language as an important gift. It got me thinking about how we regarded animals we hunted in the past. We also considered them gifts and treated them with care and respect...The animals gave themselves to us to be used and shared. By sharing them with others, we paid them our greatest respect. And so, our language, as a gift, ought to be used and shared. (Mather 1995: 19)

The next quote by Chief Peter John describes *Denakenaga*’ (‘our language’) as a something God gave to humans; the language is to be used to praise and honor God.

Whichever village you come from, no matter what your background, Eskimo or Indian, try to live by the word, even if it is hard for you to understand it. God gave us a language to praise him with, *Denakenaga*’. (Krupa 1999: 225)

For others, parallel to Kipp’s quote above, language learning becomes a process instead of, or perhaps in addition to, a gift or treasure. These process metaphors can be expressed in a number of different ways, including “a pursuit,” or “a journey along a path,” or a reciprocal nurturing practice; processes decidedly transformative in nature. Adopting a process metaphor for thinking about language revitalization, I believe, is particularly useful for adults who choose to undertake this challenge.

Language or linguistic ideologies, as defined by Silverstein are “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (quoted in Kroskrity 1998: 104). The quotes by Mather and John in the previous section, clearly articulate the belief by Alaska Native people that language is a gift from the Creator; a gift to be learned from, and reciprocally shared within the wider social and ecological systems. Gordon Bussell, a Hupa apprentice, stated publicly at a Master-Apprentice workshop held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, that an elder had told him that the knowledge of language was inside of him, and he had a responsibility to reawaken the language within himself or draw it out. These cultural and spiritually based ideologies remain unrecognized in current language ideology literature or are often characterized as “myths” about second language acquisition.

In the final section, I present some examples from Deacon’s narrative and highlight ways this can be utilized by a beginning learner.

Traditional Narratives and Adult Second Language Learning

In reality, every myth is renewed with each time and in each place it is told.

Myths live through each teller and through each audience that hears and actively engages them. (Cajete 1994: 115)

As stated in the previous chapter, I listen to traditional narratives in decontextualized settings, that is, through audio or audiovisual recordings. However, because of these recordings, the narratives Deacon will be renewed through each student who listens to them and actively engages in cultural learning. In the Master-Apprentice language learning manual How to Keep Your Language Alive, Hinton, Vera, and Steele

(2002) suggest ways to use narratives in the language learning process, including “shadowing” or speaking along with an audiotaped narrative, and re-telling narratives, or constructing new stories or narratives. Early in my language learning process, I began reading this narrative, then subsequently listening to the audiotaped version in its entirety. Although initially I was unfamiliar with much of the vocabulary and often was unable to ascertain what part of the narrative I was hearing, this technique helped me to become accustomed to the flow of natural spoken language, as well as the sounds unique to Athabascan. This approach helped me to begin to further understand the language used within the social context of narrative. Using these techniques I approached comprehension of the narrative through cultural practices I was already familiar with, for instance, the process of making *vanhgiq* (ice cream). In addition, I also became familiar with the orthography and was able to add to the learning process by writing down words and phrases. The following section presents a discussion of several phrases drawn from specific contexts within the narrative.

Although the Deacon texts are quite complex in terms of content and use of language, there are a number of words and phrases useful to the beginning learner. For learners who prefer direct instruction, it may be helpful to section out portions of the text and look at nouns and common verbs that often surface during early conversational examples provided by speakers. Initially, the dialogue between the man and his wife centers around the man’s activities and his desire for ice cream. Examples of some partial exchanges from the beginning of the narrative are provided below (Deacon 1987b: 6-9). In lieu of providing a syntactic or morphological breakdown of each of the phrases, I

have color-coded each word as it relates to its English translation. Verbs are in bold; other colors are used to illustrate parts of speech; however the colors are not consistently coded throughout each example.

Table 22: Conversational Examples

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
1. <i>Gan dangif'an?</i>	What are you doing?
2. <i>Ey gil vanhgiq, ey vanhgiq yan' getiy q'at.</i>	I really want some ice cream , that's all
3. <i>Che vixighigi'an' yi giq'ux vanhgiq he.</i>	I'm so accustomed to that fat ice cream , that's all.
4. <i>Dingit'a q'idighutux dran dhedhig ts'in' ts'an vaxa ndadz ditet'el gan inaft'ay gidhidh dingit'an.</i>	Why don't you stay home sometimes; what will you do with all those skins you're getting anyway ?
5. <i>Dixulingith ts'in' dran tasdhiŋ.</i>	How many days will I be alone?
6. <i>Yixudz getiy tr'inay axa ts'an'a dist'a yixudz</i>	I [am] get very lonesome here.
7. <i>Xik'o xidinigitoyh ts'an' gide xidist'anh.</i>	I do it because I enjoy being out [doing things outside].
8. <i>A, gil tr'a'ine</i>	Ah, keep yourself busy.

The examples above contain four common nouns, *giq'ux* (fat) *vanhgiq* (ice cream), *dran* (day), and *gidhith* (skins). The terms for fat and skins require a possessive

prefix, in the case the prefix *gi-* previously explained as ‘its’ or ‘someone’s’. Setting the context for example 1, the wife is busy all day cutting wood and sewing. She stores all the clothing she has made in the cache, and is pleased as her husband never asks “What are you doing? Early on, language students may learn the term *gan dangil’an?* and some perfective and future variations of ‘doing’ early on, for example, *ndadz dangit’an’ dran?*, ‘what did you do today?’ and *ndadz ditet’el?*, ‘what are you going to do?’ The term *ndadz ditet’el* is also incorporated into example 4. In examples 2 and 3, Deacon establishes the man’s desire for ice cream. The term *q’at* or ‘I want’ is applicable to a variety of situations including shopping, and visiting or socializing, for example, *chay ntasq’at*, ‘I will buy tea,’ or *chay q’at he’?*, ‘do you want tea?’ In examples 4-6, the wife begins to express her discontent at being left alone all day; in example 6 Deacon uses the phrase *Yixidz getiy tr’inay axa ts’ana dist’a yixudz*. Learners often learn phrases to express emotions early on, and the phrase *tr’inay axa dist’a* or ‘I’m lonely’ can be used to respond to *ndadz dingt’a?*, ‘how are you?’. Example 7 uses a variation of *dist’a*, “*xidist’anh*” that uses the area prefix *xi-* explained in previous chapters allowing a speaker to refer to a variety of outdoor activities.

The next set of phrases I have chosen to examine have the familiar *vanhgiq* (ice cream) theme.

Table 23: Conversational Examples (*Vanhgiq*)

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
1. <i>Xiday iy vanhgiq?</i>	Where is the ice cream ?
2. <i>Ngo, vanhgiq ninistth'igh ts'in'</i>	Well, I didn't make ice cream.
3. <i>Vaxa getiy viq'at iy dafine' ethe niginatth'aq ts'i'a ngo, gitidhase ts'in' xiq'i dist'a</i>	Well, I really want it; you should still make [have made] it ; I won't get full [without it].
4. <i>Eyighod getiy an'a getiy xefedz gisonh ts'i yixudz tthidan'isidhik</i>	Whenever I eat that , I sleep well at night.
5. <i>Diyo ixan vanhgiq yozr ngoxo dhittse'?</i>	Well, why don't I make a little ice cream for you?
6. <i>Isre' lingith</i>	If you want to.
7. <i>Yith nagh ni'enastth'ix</i>	I'll make it with snow .
8. <i>Xidanh si'ot, ndadz didiyoq?</i>	Where is my wife, what's happening [happened] to her?

Examples 2, 3, 5, and 7 all refer to the making of *vanhgiq* or ice cream referenced in chapter three. In our adult learning classes, one of the contextual activities we have used is making ice cream, utilizing phrases such as *niginistth'ix*, 'I'll make ice cream'. In example 2, the phrase *vanhgiq ninistth'igh ts'in* ('I didn't [again] make/mix ice cream') provides an example of the negative perfective form. In example 3, the perfective form *niginatth'aq* is used, 'you should [have made] ice cream'. The following phrases are from

the newly released Deg Xinag Learners' Dictionary: *Deg Xinag Afixi Ni'elyoy*: 'the Local Language is Gathered Together' (Deacon, et al. 2004).

Table 24: Deg Xinag 'Mixing'/'Making' Phrases

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Dineg q'ux yif niginastth'aq.</i>	I made ice cream with moose fat.
<i>Dineg q'ux yif niginistth'ix.</i>	I'm making ice cream with moose fat.

All of the phrases dealing with the mixing of ice cream contain the continuative prefix *ni-* referenced in chapters two and three. This prefix indicates that an activity is done regularly, versus the first or only time. Also, in example 3, as well as the two phrases listed above, *vanhgiq* is not referenced specifically; instead the object is implied through use of the prefix *gi-*.

In example 5, *Diyo ixan vanhgiq yozr ngoxo dhittse'?* (Why don't I make ice cream [soon] for you), Deacon uses another verb *dhittse'*. Also documented in *Deg Xinag Afixi Ni'elyoy*, this form can also be used to construct simple phrases by the beginning learner, for example:

Table 25: Deg Xinag Verb 'To Make'

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Vaxa tetth'og tr'ittse diggath'iy.</i>	We make birch baskets with an awl.
<i>Tth'ok jingidh tiftse.</i>	He will make a bowl.
<i>Soxo tof ningiftse.</i>	[You] Make tea for me.

However, these forms may not be used in other constructions as in the following examples.

Table 26: Deg Xinag Verbs – Other Examples

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	English
<i>Dl'it'ay neg yi'eghoyh.</i>	She makes good fry bread.
<i>Nixidingilq'oyh.</i>	Make a fire.
<i>Sanh yix nixidingil'jet.</i>	Make smudge in the smokehouse.

Obviously, in English, the verb ‘to make’ can be used within broader contexts than are allowed in Athabascan.

Example 1 (Table 23), *Xiday iy vanhgiq?* (‘Where is the ice cream’), uses another common expression used in language learning, *xiday iy* or ‘where is [an object, or animal]’. Also used in example 8, and as noted in chapter two, the term *xidanh* is used to refer to humans. The term *ndadz didiyog*, translated as ‘what happened?’ or ‘what’s happening to her?’ seems to be used to ask about a death or other serious event, versus a superficial inquiry or statement. The Koyukon cognate *dedeyoh* is translated as ‘it happened,’ ‘it happened to him,’ or ‘he died’ (Jette and Jones 2000: 708). Example 4 includes the term *gisonh*, or ‘I’m eating [something]’. Verbs for eating are also commonly taught and learned early in any language learning process.

These are only brief examples of my experiences with the Deacon text. It may be useful to develop a more comprehensive supplement to these materials that would benefit learners who wish to use these recordings and texts to enhance interactional learning.

This supplement could be modeled after the narrative companion volumes by McCurry and Jones (1985) and Thompson (1990) referenced in chapter three. In addition the supplement could include language examples analyzed within social contexts as I attempted earlier in this section, morphological and syntactic analyses presented appropriately for the beginning learner, and sound clips for each of the theme areas.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

Most publications on indigenous language revitalization deal exclusively with the programs for children and youth (pre-adult). In this and previous chapters, as an adult learner, I examine my own experiences learning Deg Xinag as a second language through the use of oral recordings and translated materials. Speaking from my own experiences, learning Deg Xinag has been challenging, as I had not studied a non-European language prior to beginning this process. Other issues such as a lack of pedagogical materials add to this challenge.

I have attempted to use Deacon's narrative recordings in a holistic (although decontextualized) manner by first becoming familiar with the text-based narrative, and subsequently allowing time to listen to the complete Deg Xinag recording without interruptions. Second language pedagogy experts might criticize this approach as it presents a beginning student with a great deal of "incomprehensible input" (Krashen and Terrell 1995) with no "interactional modifications" (Lightbown and Spada 1993) to assist with comprehension. However, this context differs from a teaching context wherein the student is presented with incomprehensible input and then expected to respond. As I became more familiar with the vocabulary in the narrative, I was able to use this

knowledge to build more vocabulary, similar to the knowledge construction aspects of cognitive theories. This is also in line with current constructivist literacy theories.

Keeping in mind the cultural values of patience, I learned to put aside my frustration in not understanding everything immediately. Instead I concentrated on listening to the flow of narrative language, and the tones and emphasis of the Deacon's voice. I know that there are aspects of this narrative I may never understand, similar to Mather's comments in an earlier section of this chapter.

The beginning language learner could choose to reduce the narrative content to "simple" terms, for example, words and phrases reflecting kinship, animals, and plants. However is this approach desirable? Through reductionism we mimic Western ways of doing and knowing; that is, in order to learn about something, we must immediately divide it into parts to understand the whole (Deloria and Wildcat 2001; Kawagley 1995; Kawagley, et al. 1998). This is in direct conflict with traditional Native American ways of learning and knowing that look at all things holistically, as part of a larger social and ecological structure. In Athabascan and other Native American languages, words and phrases can be modified significantly depending on the larger context of the narrative or conversation. As I demonstrated in chapter three with the narrative title, it is important to have a sense of the narrative as a whole before beginning an analysis of any of the Deg Xinag words or phrases.

Also, as stated in chapter three, Belle Deacon's voice and the sounds within her home can elicit strong emotions for those of us who knew her. For me, these emotions tend to increase my motivation to continue this journey. These kinds of personal

connections to narrative are not usually examined within language ideology literature.

For future research, I believe it would be useful to define and examine new categories in the field of language ideology, that take into account the cultural and spiritual aspects of indigenous language learning.

The next chapter summarizes the results of my research and concludes with implications for further study in the areas of narrative analysis, and indigenous language pedagogy and ideology.

CHAPTER 5

Overview of Chapters 1-4

In chapter one I provided an introduction to the Deg Hit'an area, as well as a personal introduction to explain my rationale for pursuing this research on Deg Xinag oral traditions. My identity as Deg Hit'an and former resident of Shageluk continues to influence my interests in the cultural knowledge of this area. As I began my Ph.D. studies, I enrolled in the research course "Documenting Indigenous Knowledge Systems" (CCS 601) taught by Koyukon scholar Virginia Ned. Maori scholar Linda Smith's publication Decolonizing Methodologies (1999) was the primary text for this course. After taking this course, I was wary of conducting research that might reveal "new" information about the Deg Hit'an as currently, there is no local advisory committee for the Deg Hit'an area. As I struggled with the focus of a language-related research topic, I began to look at previously published materials to examine. In choosing the previously published narrative "*Niŋo'qay Ni'idaxin*," I was able to present my personal perspectives on transcription and translation, and the narrative's contributions to my own language learning.

In chapter two, I presented an overview of Athabascan oral traditions, followed by a discussion of subsistence beliefs and practices. I then focused on a survey of Deg Xinag literature that included two hunting narratives, the *Chel Xudhoy* (Children's Stories) series, and one creation narrative from Deg Xinag Dindlidik: Deg Xinag Literacy Manual. Most of this literature has been previously published by the Iditarod Area School District and/or the Alaska Native Language Center. Unpublished materials included Lord's

Prayer translations by John Chapman and Deg Hit'an Elders, and a hunting narrative told by my father. The *Chel Xudhoy* series and Deacon's volume are currently out of print.

Chapter three focused on the research narrative "*Niŋo 'qay Ni 'idaxin*," beginning with a introduction to Deacon's *Engithidong Xugixudhoy: Their Stories of Long Ago*. I discussed Athabascan "Distant Time" narratives, presented an overview of the recording context for "*Niŋo 'qay Ni 'idaxin*," and an analysis of the title translated as "The Man and Wife." After presenting a paraphrased summary of the Deg Xinag version, I then discussed the English title "The Old Man Who Came Down From Above the Second Layer of This World," presenting information documented by Osgood on the Deg Hit'an universe. Keeping the focus on translation and interpretation, I presented two aspects of the narrative, that of the "wife" and the "pike."

Chapter four provided a definition of traditional education, and discussed the roles of oral traditions in indigenous education. I also included an examination of the cultural values inherent in the narrative. I then discussed aspects of second language pedagogy and adult indigenous language programs, concluding with a section on language ideologies and potential uses of traditional narratives by adult language learners.

In the following section I address some of the indigenous research issues inherent in my data collection and compilation process.

Data Collection and Compilation

Smith (1999: 173) has developed several guiding methodological questions that researchers should address when working with indigenous communities:

- Who defined the research problem?
- For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so?
- What knowledge will the community gain from this study?
- What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?
- What are some likely positive outcomes from this study?
- What are some possible negative outcomes?
- How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?
- To whom is the researcher accountable?
- What processes are in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher?

In response to the first question, I defined the research problem that questions the translations of Deg Xinag texts, leading into a discussion regarding the usefulness of such texts to a beginning language learner. As a second language learner of Deg Xinag I use published narrative texts in English translation as learning aids. As a language learner, I am often unfamiliar with the depth of meaning and context inherent in many of the words and phrases as translated. I often misinterpret or misunderstand the meanings of words and phrases, and attempt to use them in contexts that are not appropriate. I believe further study in the use of narratives in language pedagogy will be worthy and relevant to others learning their heritage language as a second language. As such, this is my personal opinion. One of my recommendations in chapter four included the development of guides or companion volumes similar to those published by McCurry and Jones (1985), and Thompson (1990). Prior to beginning any further research in this area, I would seek

further input and guidance from the Deg Xinag community of learners and a local advisory committee.

As a researcher, I have gained a significant amount of knowledge about the Deg Xinag language during this process. In turn, I now have a reciprocal responsibility to share this knowledge with the Deg Hit'an communities and language learners. From my perspective, some positive outcomes to this study would be a renewed interest in traditional narratives, not only for their language content, but also as oral documents that contain cultural values, practices, and histories. Since this dissertation will become available to a larger public audience, some negative outcomes could include appropriation of the cultural information I have compiled during this process. As a researcher, I remain primarily accountable to the Deg Hit'an communities and secondarily to the academic community. Research into language and traditional narratives can be continued if the communities view this as a valuable process. However, in order to more fully benefit the communities, this process will require substantially more input from the communities and their direct involvement in the development of future research agendas. Although not formally affiliated with the Deg Hit'an communities, other indigenous scholars at UAF who have reviewed sections of my work include Lolly Carpluk, Dixie Dayo, Linda Green, and Esther Ilutsik.

In examining the topics and themes present in the narrative, my research entailed a compilation of information that related to Deacon's narrative; most of this data came from previously published sources including:

- Brown's (2005) Contemporary Subsistence Uses and Population Distribution of Non-Salmon Fish in Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, and Holy Cross: Technical Paper #289;
- Deg Hit'an (Ingalik) Noun Dictionary (Kari 1978);
- Deg Xinag Learners' Dictionary: *Deg Xinag Afixi Ni'elyoy*: 'the Local Language is Gathered Together, another on-line resource available via the Alaska Native Knowledge Network website at <http://ankn.uaf.edu:591/DegXinag.html>;
- "*Deg Xiq'i Xinatr'iditlghusr*" audioconference notes published on-line at www.alaskool.org;
- Koyukon Athabascan Dictionary (Jette and Jones 2000);
- McCurry's and Jones' (1985) volume *Sitsiy Yugh Noholnik Ts'in'*: As My Grandfather Told It (A Teacher's Guide);
- Osgood's Ingalik Material Culture (1940), Ingalik Social Culture (1958), and Ingalik Mental Culture (1959);
- Thompson's (1990) publication *K'etetaalkaanee*: The One Who Paddled Among the People and the Animals: An Analytical Companion Volume; and
- Wheeler's (1997) doctoral dissertation *The Role of Cash in Northern Economies: A Case Study of Four Alaska Athabascan Villages*.

Data that did not come from previously published sources includes informal interviews with my father on literal translations for words or phrases, or clarification of existing translations. Most of the data from these interviews is presented in chapter one.

In concluding this section on research issues, I will note some specific information about previously published materials on the Deg Hit'an. The Osgood

publications are the oldest materials, published before the introduction of indigenous research protocols; much of the data is of a “culturally sensitive nature” that was not “explicitly authorized for general distribution, as determined by members of the local community” (Alaska Native Educators 2000). Much of the data from the Deg Hit’an (Ingalik) Noun Dictionary published in the early 1970s, was drawn from Osgood’s publications. Speakers were consulted to verify and add to the existing information in these early documentation efforts; I am not sure if speakers signed consent forms during those early efforts.

The documents by Brown and Wheeler were researched and published in collaboration with the tribal councils of the four villages, and Tanana Chiefs Conference, the tribal consortium referenced previously in chapter one.

Several sections of the audioconference notes were published on-line and remain accessible through the Alaskool website. The decision to make these notes available was based on conversations with learners and speakers involved in the audioconference sessions. Jim Kerr, a student in the class, who works as a technical consultant to the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage, helped facilitate the on-line publication. Kerr also has family ties to the community of Anvik.

The most recent publication, Deg Xinag Afixi Ni’elyoy, is a publicly funded project through the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Administration for Native Americans. The proposal, submitted by the Anvik Tribal Council and Anvik Historical

Society, stated that project data would be published in a hard copy format by the Alaska Native Language Center, and made accessible on-line.

Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights

Alaska Natives have increasingly expressed concerns over research protocols and the appropriation of indigenous knowledge. Alaska Native people are currently in dialogue with other indigenous people through conferences such as the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE)³⁷ and other national and international conferences and symposia. Recent efforts to educate and monitor the appropriation of indigenous literature, and to recognize indigenous authors include the establishment of the working group, “Honoring Alaska’s Indigenous Literatures” or HAIL.³⁸ In 2000, the Alaska Native Educators, a statewide teacher organization, drafted and approved the Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge (2000) in an effort to promote awareness of these issues, and provide guidelines for action. These guidelines are particularly useful, as they delineate specific categories and responsibilities for indigenous community members and non-indigenous outside groups:

- Native Elders
- Authors and Illustrators
- Curriculum Developers and Administrators
- Educators
- Editors and Publishers

³⁷ For information on the 2008 WIPCE see <http://www.wipce2008.com/>

³⁸ For more information, see the following website: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/iks/HAIL/>

- Document Reviewers
- Researchers
- Native Language Specialists
- Native Community Organizations
- General Public

Recommendations under the Researcher and Native Language Specialist sections particularly relevant to my current and future research include:

- Cautions against “applying external frames of reference” in the analysis and interpretation of data;
- Working with communities to provide controlled access and distribution of data;
- Submission of research plans for review by communities;
- Use of multiple sources when translating new materials; as well as coining terms for new words; and
- Development and utilization of culturally-appropriate language teaching methods and materials.

The first recommendation has been the most challenging as I am by definition both an “insider” and “outsider” to the community; my interpretation of Deacon’s narrative is both inter- and cross-cultural in nature. In terms of the second and third recommendations, my future research interests include examining untranscribed audiorecordings by Belle Deacon and other Deg Hit’an Elders. If I were to transcribe and translate an unpublished narrative by Belle Deacon, I would, at a minimum, seek permission from Deacon’s daughters Dolly Deacon and Daisy Demientieff. However,

there are a number of other issues to consider, including the historic connections among the Deg Hit'an villages. Deacon was most recently affiliated with the communities of Grayling and Holikachuk, but has roots in the Anvik area as well. In the long term, I would prefer to work with oversight and approval of a local Deg Hit'an advisory board as suggested by indigenous research protocols. I have had several conversations with Native people who live in Fairbanks about research issues including Malinda Chase, originally from Anvik. Chase, who holds an M.A. degree in Cross-Cultural Studies, recently completed an unpublished paper that details some of her concerns regarding an unpublished collection of Billy William's funerary songs.

In terms of the fourth recommendation, in some cases I have clarified translations only with my father. However, in reviewing other published data, including the on-line dictionary and class notes, these data corroborate his interpretations. This dissertation provides a starting point for the final recommendation in terms of developing culturally appropriate language and educational curricula, suggesting a reclassification and recontextualizing of linguistic and oral narrative data into culturally appropriate categories.

Audio recordings and publications by Deg Hit'an and other indigenous people can be classified as cultural and intellectual property or "traditional resource rights" as defined by Posey and Dutfield (quoted in Greaves 2001). Posey (2001: 3) states that "trade has removed materials, ideas, expressions of culture...from their social and spiritual contexts to covert them into *objects* for commodification." Greaves (2001: 32) lists several "traditional resource rights" that are "at risk" for appropriation and use by

non-indigenous people: “religious beliefs and practices, ethnobotanical knowledge, knowledge of resources and localities within indigenous lands, traditional designs and symbols, and folklore.” According to Greaves, all “cultural capital” has potential for commercial use and is threatened by “millennial capitalism,” that is, “aggressive and unrestrained entrepreneurial greed” (2001: 32-33). In terms of religious beliefs and practices, there are many examples of “New Age” religions that have appropriated various philosophies and rituals from a variety of sources, including indigenous cultures. Churchill (1994) and Forbes (2001) describe degrading attempts to integrate “shamanistic” and “warrior” rituals into New Age religions or groups; these groups include the formerly popular “Men’s Movement” headed by Robert Bly. Battiste and Henderson (2000: 165-165) and Trask (1993: 179-197) also note the appropriation of performing arts that are commercialized and adapted for presentation to tourists.

Ethnobotanical knowledge, and knowledge of resources and localities within indigenous lands is of major concern to indigenous people, as pharmaceutical/multinational organizations can lay claim to this knowledge and devastate lands of resources needed for their products. Cajete (2000b: 273) references “biopiracy” noting that Western science can be considered “the new conquistador.” Traditional designs and symbols have always been targets for commercialization, from the copy of designs for individual sale to mascots of major sports teams. Native Americans are particularly angry and pro-active in protesting Native American caricatures portrayed by teams such as the “Cleveland Indians” and sports rituals such as the “Tomahawk Chop” (Churchill 1994).

Other cultural properties include human remains and cultural artifacts taken from indigenous peoples for scientific study or collection and display purposes. Federal legislation within the U.S. – the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 – now requires that museums and other federally-funded agencies inventory these kinds of artifacts “and gives a right of return based on an elaborate statutory framework” (Battiste and Henderson 2000: 154).

On an international level, Posey (2001: 14-15) references the inadequacy of current Intellectual Property Rights laws, which among other things do not recognize collective rights, tend to promote commercialization, are not easily monitored or enforced, and are easily influenced by those holding economic and political power. According to Posey, the Draft Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples developed over the course of two decades by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations is “the most important statement of basic requirements for adequate rights and protection.”

These issues remain relevant to the translation and publication of indigenous oral traditions. However, there are ways to restrict access to materials if communities do not want to make information available to the general public. To address the publication of new material, or that material with potential for outside appropriation, in my future research, I plan to work more closely with a cross-section of community members or a formal advisory committee as stated above.

In the next section, I briefly discuss related post-secondary research issues followed by concluding comments.

Research Issues in Postsecondary Institutions

As indigenous people enter the research arena and create new paradigms in alignment with their own traditional values, questions often arise concerning the competency of these researchers, and the validity of their research, especially within Western institutions. Indigenous people who conduct “insider” research are often considered unobjective, in comparison to the outsider who can study “other” from a distance, in an objective manner.

As documented by Maori scholar Smith (1993), and other indigenous scholars, many Western research models are based in Eurocentric theories and agendas concerning “other” or those cultures of non-European origin. Battiste and Henderson (2000), Henderson (2000b), Smith (1999), and Yazzie (2000) specifically investigate the philosophy of “social Darwinism” and Eurocentric concepts of “universalism,” “epistemological diffusionism,” “positivism, and assumptions about the “states of nature” that have influenced European political thought. In the edited volume, Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision, Henderson (2000a: 60) provides a detailed examination of the evolution of Eurocentric thought. Eurocentric philosophies and policies have resulted in colonial processes that continue to impact indigenous people today. One of the reasons that indigenous societies are viewed as inferior, backward, and savage, has to do with the diffusionist assumptions that separate European and non-European cultures. Diffusionist philosophy assumes that Europe is the center of civilization and culture, and that most non-European cultures are empty of rationality. Therefore, non-European cultures lack the potential for true progress. All aspects of European culture, progress, and rationality

can then “diffuse” outward to the empty “ahistorical, stagnant, and unchanging” people of non-European descent. This philosophy further justifies the invasion and confiscation of lands and resources, and the continuing oppression of indigenous peoples.

Also relevant is the concept of dualism that separates the biophysical realm (thoughts, inventions, ideas) from the physical realms of the body and surrounding environment. Both Henderson (2000a) and Forbes (2001) examine the dualistic framework in relation to indigenous people who were thought to be “natural” or “of nature,” therefore inferior, and incapable of the higher forms of thinking. As noted in the section on subsistence in chapter three, in contrast to the Eurocentric dualistic framework, indigenous philosophies do not separate the physical and biophysical realms; instead these philosophies acknowledge power, spirit, and thought in all parts of the environment.

As indigenous peoples have begun to take positions of academic power, they have begun to redefine and transform existing research paradigms into new paradigms based in indigenous values and worldviews. According to Henderson, this process has resulted in major paradigm shifts. The production of “counternarratives” (Giroux, et al. 1996) documenting this complex and challenging process of redefinition and transformation have been published by well-known indigenous scholars, several of whom are referenced within this document.

Conclusion

The idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary

indigenous life...The means by which these histories were stored was through their systems of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral *traditions* rather than histories. (Smith 1999: 33)

Oral traditions of indigenous people are often referred to as “folklore” or “mythology.” Both of these terms can imply oral traditions are not completely “truthful” or lack complete authenticity, in contrast to cultures with “objective” and “accurate” written histories. In her volume referenced in the section above, Smith presents a more detailed discussion of the status of indigenous peoples and why their histories remain contested within the larger political arena. In my experience, having been schooled within the Western knowledge system, I did not understand how indigenous histories and beliefs had been recast in this way. In addition, as I have discussed previously in this document, I did not immediately understand the differences in knowing and relating to the surrounding world. In my own elementary and secondary education, coursework dealing with oral traditions, and indigenous histories and societies was largely absent; also noticeably absent were indigenous teachers or teachers of color. However, when I began my postsecondary studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, I did have the opportunity to study my own, as well as other Alaska Native cultures. From a personal perspective, these courses and discussions with other students augmented my knowledge of the Deg Hit’an culture and validated my heritage. Also, as I continue to study of the Deg Hit’an culture through the language, I have begun to understand the differences in the way relationships are structured, and knowledge is constructed within this and other indigenous cultures. The Deg Hit’an and other Athabascan cultures recognize that their

languages remain an integral part of a larger ecological realm. As documented by Chief Peter John and other indigenous scholars, these languages were used to communicate with animals and other forms of life within the world. Language is recognized as a reciprocal responsibility within a larger ecological framework, used to maintain balance within the environment.

Within this dissertation, I have described my perspectives on documents that have been translated and published for the Deg Xinag language area. My initial observations and questions relate to the way in which language is classified within linguistic publications. For instance, in chapter one I identified relationships between *Yixgitsiy* ('your [plural] grandfather') or Raven, and *Yixgitsiy Vozra* (Rusty Blackbird – 'Raven's nephew') and *Yixgitsiy Nolchidl* (Puffball Mushroom – 'Raven's [sewing] bag'); literal translation are not provided in the Noun Dictionary, and these relationships were not obvious from the categories "Birds" and "Plants" used in the Noun Dictionary. I also examined how narratives have been translated, oftentimes without reference to larger social and cultural contexts. Because of my background many of these larger contexts are unfamiliar; lack of familiarity with these larger social and cultural contexts often causes me to unknowingly use language inappropriately. Examples of these larger contexts are presented throughout this dissertation. Krupa documented similar concerns by Chief Peter John, who often seemed frustrated with the "white man way" of studying languages and cultures, including comparative approaches used by linguists:

You just picking them different words and by mixing them up you don't get the real true meaning of what we try to find out. The language is too spread out.

Everybody get too mixed up to understand the life in which we're gonna live.

(Krupa 1999: 177)

In my research with Deacon's narrative, I have compiled and examined relevant material on several existing themes, and uncovered meanings not apparent from the document as translated. Although traditional narratives were not traditionally analyzed in this way, some examination was necessary in order to avoid the "mix-ups" that Chief Peter John refers to in the preceding quote.

I also discussed a need for further research into adult language learning programs; this research should address indigenous language ideologies and pedagogies, including the cultural and spiritual aspects of language acquisition for indigenous learners. For indigenous peoples, air, breath and spoken language are intricately intertwined. Language is viewed as a powerful gift, and a reciprocally shared responsibility and commitment within a larger ecological realm. Future research paradigms must be responsive to these ideologies or ontologies that emphasize interconnectedness, and the power inherent in oral traditions.

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APPENDIX

Draft Transcript of 1976 Belle Deacon video

~40 minutes

Alaska Native Cultural Heritage and Information Bank

University of Alaska Anchorage Media Services

The Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum

Exhibit and Lecture Series – Athabascans: Strangers of the North

Always stories begin with once upon a time – that’s Native. You know they always say once upon a time the Indian way and that’s how the story begin. These two couples they find theirself standing along the creek. This is the way the story goes and they don’t know where they came from. They just only standing there looking at each other. The man was beautiful, the woman was beautiful. And they were looking at each other “where we come from? I don’t know. We just find ourselves standing here.” They start to talk to each other. “Well I guess we’ll have to do something. We’ll make a igloo house where we can live” they were saying to each other. They were touching each other. “You’ll be my wife” he say, this man. And she was agreed to it and she said “yes I’ll be your wife because we don’t know nobody.” “Where in the world we come from? I don’t know, we just came. We just find ourself this way.”

After that they were just making igloo house. This man was a good hunter. And she's a good worker too. She cook meat and he got lots of meat. And they love to eat only real fat meat, caribou. So she cook it and in the falltime they got everything ready in that igloo and they had nice place to live in. And he start to bring in lots of meat and fur and during this summer they got lots of fish and they dry it up. They hang it up. And she take, everytime they get whitefish and everything when it's fat she render it out for fat and she got lots of oil and everything. She put it away. She was saying she's going to make Indian ice cream out of it in the wintertime. And this man was really happy. And when the snow came she made Indian ice cream. And my they put lots of berries, salmonberries any kind of berries he wants they put, they mix it with. And once when they finish that they make fish ice cream too. And that man couldn't get along without Indian ice cream, he has to have it. No matter how much he eat, he wants that Indian ice cream. That was the food for him. They eat berries and everything but he wants to eat that.

And then they stay there for years, you know all winter. And he put out lots of deadfalls you know that's what they catch fur with. And so he bring lots of marten all kinds of skin. And even once a day they make fire before supper she make fire and then while he's gone. She took what little fire in there she take it outdoors and then she cover on top. They eat in ___ place with skin. I think they get these kind like what Eskimo got – seal, thin skin sewed together it's waterproof and everything. They cover it up and make it the house hot, but when he comes back he goes up on top of this igloo place and he lower down his packsack. He got big packsack he pack on his back full of all kinds of fur.

And some hang around here [shoulders]. Sometime he leaves some out in the woods because he couldn't hardly pack it it's too heavy for him. So, he do that way all the time.

Interruption....."See that's history. That's not what made it. It comes from long time ago."

After that he brush his feet and he comes in and eat again. And start to skin. And his wife help him skin it. And while he's going to...oh and I forgot one...while he's gone she pick out all the best skin they have out in their yard they have hanging so much. She bring in marten skin and bunch of them. She wet it and tan it and everything and then she split them and then she start to sew it together and she sew it together. She make good parkies out of it, beautiful. And she make boots and they have sealskin even. They have sealskin its just like a handbag, big one. They sew it and they tie it together like she put it in there. And her husband doesn't know nothing about what she's doing during the day after she get through with her job. And when he comes back he never even ask her "what you been doing today?" Never. All he's asking for that Indian ice cream after they eat. And so they keep on doing that for years and they have all behind their place is all cache, all fur and meat and fish and everything. Those days when they're like that they're well to do. Because at that time all was starvation. So they got so much since they don't know what to do but they don't see nobody. Sometimes in evening they talk to each other. I wonder if there's anybody in the world? Only us in the world, this big world? They talk to each other. This man said well I don't know. Maybe there's lots of peoples some other world. How in the world we came to be how we are? So they wonder and they just stay that way for years and years in there.

They had lots she just made up two or three cache full of clothes, different kind of clothes. And this last time she made boots out of wolverine skin and there was tassle on it so pretty on top and lots of tassle and _____ sole. And the parky she made was gray squirrel skin. Fancy on top and fancy on the bottom. Most beautiful. Just like how they doing cow skin right now but it's made out of all caribou, black caribou and white one. So she made this one, this parka, she made cap, and she made mittens out of caribou skin and after it's just all outfit, Pants out of caribou skin just tan just white and just soft. She look at it and she admire it this one. And she say it's the most beautiful she think to herself. Best I ever did. And so she put it together and she roll it up how we roll up our parky so the ruff and everything wouldn't get dusty. And she put it away like that. And she put it in the cache again. And then she went out and she got caribou skin. She tan it and it was a beautiful with lots winter skin. She tan like what I seen in here, that kind. And then she got a fawn skin, that's a little...then she made, she tanned again. She sew it together. It's made out of blanket. And on the other side she made rabbits, what they call jackrabbits. That's big rabbits that parky over there but that one's old. It's white. Like as big as foxskin, she made blanket. And then she doubled this one, this blanket together. She made this blanket, pillow and everything. She finish it and she roll it up, and the belt, pretty belt she tie up this way. When she tie it together with parka and everything the sack she tie it together then she put it away again. Her husband don't know nothing about it. And there's two cache already just full, just full with all kinds of sack, all kinds of clothes what she make. So this one she put it away and put it one place. So she forgot all about it, she keep on sewing everyday,

Work, she work hard, Her husband never get wood, only her she gets wood. She pack wood in and do everything. When he comes back late how can he work? And she get all the water and everything. Get that ice melted_____. She get everything ready and they stay there for long time. And she don't have no children, nothing, only them. Once in a while, "your parky's getting old. Don't wear old stuff no more. We gots lots of fur we don't know what to do with." Wear the best clothes you can find he tell his wife. So his wife make, she always dressed up in good pretty fur clothes. And then she, himself too he goes out with the best kind of clothes, caribou skin clothes because it's cold in the wintertime. He never get cold. And they been doing that for so many years. And they never get sick both of them. They just keep healthy. And all at once, she told her husband "my dear you should stay home today. I'm lonesome for home. I'm staying by myself too long. You should spent a day with be cause I don't know why I just don't want you to go. And this man told her "you know my dear there's lots of fur in the world. If I let up one day you wouldn't have that much fur." "Well what you going to do with it she told him. I just want you. Well he said, I'll be home tonight, you'll see me again. So he went again. It was wintertime at this time. All at once soon as he went, she feel just sick. She start have headache and everything. She drink water but nothing could help. She lay down. Nothing didn't help her. So she laid down there all day she don't do nothing. She never work outdoors because she couldn't. Kind of dizzy with her like. She forgot, and she know there's no ice cream but she couldn't help it. She said I think one night it'll be, one night it's a, he can along with that ice cream without one night. She was thinking to herself. So she lay down and she don't even make fire. And the cover on top.

And he came on top and he got worried. He always have lots of ashes outdoors what she throw out and there's none today. "What happened to my wife?" So he went inside and there she was laying down. What happened? "As soon as you left I feel just, got dizzy and I couldn't even stand up I'm so sick. As soon as you come back I'm alright now she say. So she I didn't even cook nothing only what we get leftover from yesterday. That's all we have. That'll be alright he say. If you feel bum it's alright. And they eat that one. hey finish eating. There he sit. He tell his wife "honey, where's the ice cream?" Oh, no ice cream she say. We run out of it. I was sick I told you I couldn't do nothing today. Oh my he say, I cannot go without it even one night. You said you got better. Maybe you better go out and get that snow and make ice cream again. Oh yeah she said, you know I like you so much. Whatever you say I'll do. Because I'm better now I'm nothing wrong with me now she say. She dressed up with her clothes and she took a Indian dish and a wooden spoon what she's going to dip snow with. They have a trail down to where she gets water. So she went down there and along that, she put her, get snow. And she was just going to that snow and she was disappear. She don't know, that's all she know.

This man didn't know and she never came in the house. How in the world, where's my wife? he start to think. He went out and holler for her, no answer. He went all in the cache, hunt all over. No answer. Maybe she got mad and hid someplace. No, there's no place to be found. Started just never sleep all night. Then he couldn't sleep. He pick, took birch bark and put light to it and he walk all around the house. Nobody's trail, only his trail come in from the trapline. There's no other trail no place. He go down to the water and there's a big water hole only in there. He go in there. All he saw that woman's

trail was going down to this water hole. Well he couldn't make nothing. What happened? Maybe she got mad and jumped, drowned herself in that hole. But he couldn't believe it, he couldn't believe it happened. He come up and he start to cry and cry. In the morning he hunt all over nobody. And he start to cry all winter. He was just crying that. He was just mad himself. Why I treat my wife that way? She say she was feeling bum and then I force her to get that snow while it's dark. Now I couldn't, she's not here with me anymore. He start to get just thin, very thin. And he's just nothing but bones because he wouldn't eat too. He was, he feel so bad about his wife, losing his wife like this you know. Pretty soon he couldn't hardly get up. Well, it's alright, it's my fault he thinking to himself. Maybe I'll die here and my bone will be right in this igloo place. That's where my bone will be he start to think to himself. Well, he go to bed, he couldn't sleep, he just cry and make himself go to sleep. But this time he couldn't hardly sleep because he got so thin without food you know. He don't look like him, he was a stout man, a beautiful man. Now he's just nothing but bone. All at once in the evening he said "maybe I'll cook little meat for myself and I'll try to take the juice and try to make myself strength little bit so I'll walk around he start to think to himself. So he cook meat serve him there, he cry by the fire. He stop.

And all at once he hear somebody walking by the door. My, his heart pretty near stop. He just did this way "is she came back?" How in the world she came back? And there's somebody start to clean up, hitting his boots. That's the way we do in wintertime we tap it with little stick to get that snow out. And somebody do that, so, all at once that, they had a door made out of a bearskin. All at once this bearskin was start to go up. He

look, oh my he just. Little skinny old dry old grandpa came in. Beautiful little man but he's so skinny and thin. And he was on the other side the fire, this side he stay the other side he stay. And all at once this man that lost his wife "*dinafo xelanh*" he say. "*Hey*" he say this grandpa. "*Nginh qogg xiye dina longh ngin qogg xiye xiniginisitoyh tux ngideyan' ___ niginisitoyh*" he say. "When I look all over the world you and your wife you were the best people. You don't know nothing about anybody. And you was the best people. And you lost your wife and you are going to die in this igloo, and I don't want you to die in here like that. While I look at you from way above I'm on the third in the sky. That's where I come from" he say. This old man say. "And if I didn't bring you a word you'll died here before spring. You'll make yourself starve and you'll die. That's why I came." And this man said "thank you very much grandpa. I'm so glad to hear that. I want to know where my wife is." "My grandchild" he say, "you can't get your wife back, no way." "Oh no," this man said, "you're my grandpa, you know where she is. You said you'd know where she is. I'll pay you all this cache behind, pay you with it. You bring that, my wife back for me." "Oh no" he said "I couldn't do it. But there is, I have one power way to get that woman back for you if you are willing do what I say.

23:45

Because of technical difficulties a portion of the story is missing and the following is transcribed on the screen:

The man says "I'll do everything you tell me to do." So the old grandpa tells the man he must build a large fish that will carry him on a four day journey. He must also

take with him ermine balls and punk. After the fish was built the old man worked powerful medicine on the fish, ermine balls, and punk...

24:12

I know he blow on his hand like how the Indian medicine used to make medicine long time ago. And _____ he just touch, you go on what I want you to do. Everything what I tell you to do he tell that fish. And it just went down with his...he didn't know but all he hear is zzzzzzzzzzz all the time just like some kind of a noise you know, buzzing noise. And he keep going to sleep and eat little bit and going to sleep and I guess by four days and four nights it went by. And all at once he just woke up. No noise. He jump up. Gee it was a beautiful beach this pike was resting. His head was on the land, on the beach. And he jump up and he walk out of that thing. He stand there and listen. Oh my, up, up in there big village. Everybody was screaming. Ball game, you know they used to play ball game long time ago just like how they do now. And Indians they used to do that. They gather together and play ball games for about a week. And he heard this one. And right away he just crawl up on the, in the little, it's not timber like around here it's just kind of like Eskimo place. It's tundra but there's a little short willow. He crawl into it and he start to go up, crawl, amongst this brush so nobody wouldn't see him. And they don't see this fish because it's quite a ways down. So he went up there and he went, there was a one big way they call it community hall I guess, big wolverine on top. And wolf skin tied together. There's well to do people inside that one. And this giant man was good man I guess and he got this woman from this man.

And after they play, finish play ball game then everybody say “well she’s crying too much. She wouldn’t even eat. She’s just steady crying for her husband.” These people say “well she has to go in the community hall. We’re going to dance in front of her. That’s the way they going to make her kinda happy.” And two of her sister-in-law alongside her all the time holding her hand. And this man, at the same time, he got this two little ermine skin and this punk. And that man tell him what to do. And he went, there was another big igloo right near the community hall he went behind. There was a big pile of grass hanging over, they gather it for the winter and he went behind that one. He stand there. And he peek from in there looking at those lots of people going by, he never see people before in his life. He look at this one. Pretty soon two girls coming out with his wife. They were holding her arm. “Our sister-in-law don’t cry no more because you’ll never get back no more of your, you’re going to live with us forever” they tell this woman. He know it was his wife. My, feel so sorry and he thought he wouldn’t get this woman. And then he put that punk down near him, these two punk. And this woman say, “I want to go bathroom back there before I go in.” “Well go with you, we’ll hold your hand, you’re not supposed to walk alone.” “Oh no,” she say, “don’t hold me my arm like that and just, I never did that way at home because we didn’t have nobody. I don’t want nobody to hold my arm or nothing. I’m going to go back and I’ll come right back to you and I’ll go in with you. Why you fellas are just holding me everywhere I go? That’s not right, that’s why I cry so much. You’re treating me wrong way” she told her sisters. “Well I guess you know our brother don’t want us to let her go no time. But I guess we’ll have to let her go. Maybe that’s why she cry too much.” So she went back there.

There was her husband there. Her husband just grab her and kissed her. And she put that punk in there and she give her this little ermine what that old man tell him to do she swallow one, he swallow one. They turn into that little ermine skin, just like little ermine _____, little, from the different world. And they just ran, nobody don't know it. And this sister-in-law, "so long you're taking!" "Well wait for me in there. I'm not through yet. Why you make make me rush?" This punk was talking. And then they were start to, oh lots of womans in there. What's wrong she never say that before. I like to just ran so far and they just hid their head and this skin come out and they come to theirsself and they just ran into that fish, in mouth, two of them. These sister-in-law go back there, "wait," somebody say "wait, don't come." They went back there, nobody, only punk was in there. And when they went back there that punk don't say nothing. They ran out they were just hollering and crying. "Somebody took our sister-in-law." They went in that community hall just big kashim they call it. They went in there, "somebody took that our sister-in-law." And this, their brother, "I told you girls not to let her go. You should hang onto her hand all the time." "Say she don't want it." "Well if her husband ever come in here to get her back he's not going to live. His wife and him is going to die," giant say. He's going to, the whole village went in the canoe. You know it's like little, like little canoe just like that they have in here. They go in that kind of canoe and they go down to that, they see that fish resting in the shore. They saw it. "It's the one inside they got his wife back" that giant said. "I'm going to kill that fish, spear it and kill it." Well they all went, and they were just, that big spear they was just going to poke it. And this fish he just go out just slowly. The giant man said "you are, you both not going to live. You

going to be dead. I'm going to spear you and kill you. _____” And this fish just turn around and just turn himself around and just tip every one of them. And the pike just go back and forth up to the village and just big waves just went right over. Nobody left, everybody was dead. He just kill the whole thing. And when he get through, lots of canoes all torn. On top of the water is all full of blood, his mouth is all full of blood that fish. This man just hit it, down it went, and about four days and four nights it stop.

The old man was waiting there. “Hurry up he said, jump right out. Because, I, the fish didn't obey me. You have to come out right now. Because if you don't you'll not come.” They jump right up and they come up. And they hug him. And he told this man “hurry up and go in your cache and get the best kind of wooden bowl and put a clear water and a big fat and I'll wash that's teeth. Wash all of it off. I don't want it to go down with its face all full of blood” he told this man. So he went and got a some kind of a, like mooseskin, white one, little caribou skin I guess, tan. He went and got that and wash the teeth out. “Why you did that way? he told this, this old man told this fish. I told you not to kill nobody. You done very bad thing. Well maybe that's what I thought because you have to do something to protect your wife, this man and his wife that's why you did it. Well it's alright. But I'm going to send you down where there's nobody wouldn't see you anymore.”

34.50

“In some big lake that's where you'll stay on the bottom. That you'll only sometimes when it's going to be big flu or something your tail will be this way and the ice will crack and they'll know that's a sign that sickness is going to come.” Way back,

this old man told this fish. He hit it and it went down. That's all, they never, they don't know where it went. It just went down _____. And this old man told him to land where he's going to be safe and everything. So they were just happy, they kiss this old man, this woman, and everything. And this man and this woman they just clean up theirself and they put on new things and they cook for this man but he wouldn't eat. He say he's not, he couldn't eat their food. It's not that kind of a, he's not of this world so he couldn't eat food what we eat. He couldn't even breathe this air, he say, it's just he have hard time to breathe because the air is too tight for him he claim. "So, well how I'm going to pay you?" This man say, "I got to pay you lots. You took my wife back for me." "Well, my grandchild," he say, "I couldn't help it. You see my clothes what I came with? You see it's very old. It's very beautiful but it's very old and I want new things. New squirrelskin parky. And new mittens, and the wolverine boots that's what you going to pay me with. It's already made. You going to pay me with that one. And I'll be very satisfied with that one." He look at his wife. "How in the world we'll did that? Where we'll get"...and this woman said "we got it, we got it already." He couldn't hardly believe it. "When did you make it?" "Well, we got it," she say. "I'm going to camp only tonight and early in the morning before daylight, just about daylight I'm going to go out on the bank and you two couples with come out on the bank with you and you'll see me, how I came." That parky well, as soon as he said that way this woman went out and went in the cache. And he got this blanket bundle, blanket, that parky what he made. He brought it in. He look at it, he smile. He say "thank you ever so much. Now I'm going to be new again where I came from. But I'm not going to put it on right here. Tomorrow morning you got lots of wood

out there. You make a big fire after I leave. You make a big fire on the bank. And just put that sack right on top of the fire and the blanket, burn it up. And all the food you been give me for all the time one month I stay here. You put on top that fire and burn it up. Because, then when I go back up to my place he says I'll have lots of food to eat. That's only the place I'm going to eat." And put on those clothes. And so early in the morning he say,

38:54

Well, early in the morning_____. "Get up my grandchildren cause I'm already, it's time for me to go. I cannot wait a minute for when I'm going to leave."

So they got up and they went out with him and he touch their hand. He say "I cannot hug you because I'm not of this world but I love you" he say. "You both, I love you both, my grandchildren." While he said that he was just going up like this. And they can just see his, into the sky and there was a big, they just got him out of his sight in there while they look at him. And dried wood they pile up big pile of wood and they burn up what he agreed them to do. They burn it up. There was only ashes there. Then they went in the house. They start to live happy again like how they used to be. Nothing worry them no more. And they been living there for a good many years. All the time he, his, whatever his wife say, he do because he was, he didn't obey to his wife. You know when she tell him to stay home one day and then he didn't do it. So that was the end of the story.

Yuk – _____ that's the end. Everytime we talk Indian the story, I say _____, yuk they say. That's that old man, that's him, he, that's his language,

that's his story. His name is gits'i'an' gidinoʔ, that's Indian name, Old Man Woods,
Jackson Wood's dad. I always been told that when I was 12 years old.

41:12