

## HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGY:

# THE DECLINE OF THE NORTHERN KENAI PENINSULA DENA'INA\*

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### ABSTRACT

Historic, linguistic, genealogical, and archaeological data can be used to identify the Dena'ina Athabaskans who once inhabited the Sqilantnu archaeological district and other abandoned communities on Alaska's northern Kenai Peninsula. The argument is made that not just one catastrophe, but rather a succession of events precipitated the near-disappearance of these people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These events include the interception of large numbers of migrating salmon enroute to their spawning grounds, the intentional setting of large forest fires, a series of devastating epidemics, placer mining, and extensive intermarriage with northern European immigrants. When vital statistics such as birth, marriage, and death records are enlisted in service of ethnohistorical research, much can be learned about the fate of specific villages, families, and individuals.

**KEYWORDS:** Athabaskan, Dena'ina, ethnohistory, Kenai, population, genealogy

### INTRODUCTION

The collapse of cultures and civilizations around the world has recently attracted a good deal of interest and attention through the writing and lectures of Jared Diamond (2005). In Alaska, we have only to look at the northern Kenai Peninsula for historic and late prehistoric evidence of vanished peoples. In the Sqilantnu archaeological district, not far from Kenai Lake and near the present community of Cooper Landing (Figure 1), there are dozens of house and cache pits that reveal the presence of large numbers of aboriginal people who have no known living biological descendants. The richness of these cultural resources

seems to go largely unnoticed in the local press, although they are a major part of what is driving the issues of widening the Sterling Highway or building bypasses (see Loomis 2006 and the Alaska Department of Transportation project website [www.sterlinghighway.net](http://www.sterlinghighway.net)).

The cultural affiliation of features at three Sqilantnu sites (KEN-092, KEN-094, and SEW-214) excavated by the Alaska Archaeological Survey on the Kenai Peninsula in 1984–1985 remains a most intriguing and complex puzzle. However, in contrast to the Easter Islanders, the Greenland Norse, the Anasazi, the Mayans, and many

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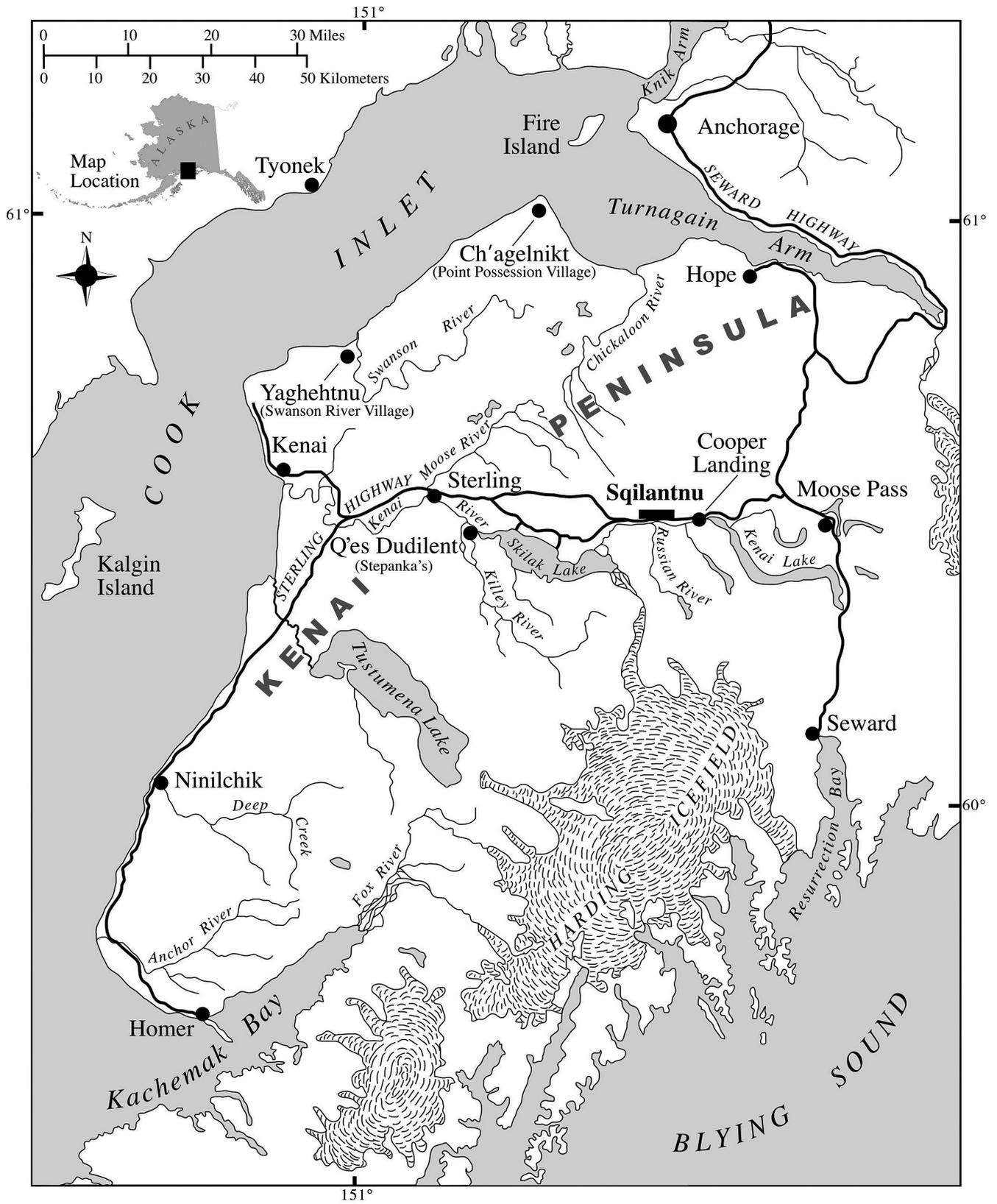


Figure 1. Kenai Peninsula, Alaska (adapted from Holmes 1988).

others recounted by Diamond, the Kenai Peninsula peoples who once thrived at Sqilantnu and other places seem to have disappeared not as a result of their own mistakes in managing environmental resources but because of external forces largely beyond their own control.

All of the historic, linguistic, and archaeological data now available make it highly probable that at least one component of one of these sites, situated near the mouth of the Russian River where it joins the Kenai River, is historic Dena'ina Athabaskan. I say this in spite of the fact that most of the artifacts excavated outside the two large house pits at sites KEN-094 and SEW-214 look Eskimoan, as do the human remains found in several associated graves. But because it is widely known that Eskimos buried their dead while Dena'inans and other Athabaskans practiced cremation, the discovery of a human cremation locus situated precisely on top of a burial at site SEW-216 strongly suggests that Athabaskans occupied this area more recently than Eskimos. At the same time, Charles Holmes (1988), who directed the 1984–1985 excavations, has hypothesized that both groups may have come together at this place simultaneously to fish and to trade. Radiocarbon dating for the hearth charcoal at KEN-094 was determined to be in the range of AD 1750–1800, while the hearth charcoal at SEW-214 suggested an occupation within the range of AD 1670–1820. Another larger house pit, identified as KEN-068, was excavated in 1989 and determined by dendrochronology to be in use during the mid-to-late nineteenth century and abandoned no later than 1890 (Yesner and Holmes 2000:61). For more on the archaeology of the area see Reeger and Boraas (1996) and Reeger (1998).

Physical evidence that Athabaskans were living at Sqilantnu (a Dena'ina placename meaning 'ridge place river') in the late nineteenth century is inferred from the glass seed beads, iron bracelets, and iron knives excavated with the SEW-216 cremation. James Ketz (1983:227, 239) claims that such beads were not manufactured until the late nineteenth century, being first introduced by American traders sometime after 1872. Recovered faunal remains at these sites were almost 50 percent fish, mostly salmon, and resulted in no identifiable moose or caribou (Yesner 1986, 1996). Reliance on fish is not surprising considering that even today the Russian River is probably Alaska's most popular salmon stream for sport fishermen.

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game web site, "The Russian River sockeye salmon fishery is the second largest fishery for this species in Alaska being surpassed only by the Kenai River sockeye salmon fishery.

Annual [sport fishing] harvests in the Russian River routinely exceed 50,000 and in some years have approached 200,000" ([www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/areas/kenai/kenhome.cfm](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/areas/kenai/kenhome.cfm)). There are two major sockeye runs on the Russian River. One begins about June 15 and tapers off at the end of June. A second and larger run begins about July 20 and ends by mid-August. But the Russian River and the Kenai River also support healthy stocks of rainbow trout and coho salmon. Two runs of coho arrive in August and September, with the second run continuing well into October. The Kenai River also has two substantial runs of Chinook salmon, which appear in late May and late June, respectively. Certainly the late prehistoric and early historic Dena'inans knew all of this, which is undoubtedly what induced them to build log dwellings and live at Sqilantnu.

In addition to fish, however, the subsistence economy of the people living in the houses at KEN-068, KEN-092, KEN-094, and SEW-214 was quite diverse, revealing a strong focus on snowshoe hare, with bones also of various birds, brown bear, Dall sheep, hoary marmot, beaver, porcupine, muskrat, river otter, and red squirrel. Again, there was a notable absence of faunal remains for large game animals such as moose and caribou (Yesner 1986, 1996).

### FEODORE SASHA

As the only historian/ethnographer in the 1984 Sqilantnu excavation crew, I was challenged to answer these questions: when did Athabaskans first arrive in the area, how did they adapt to new conditions during the historic period, and when and why did they leave it? While no living persons have apparently ever witnessed Dena'inans living in the Sqilantnu district, there are several circumstantial sources of information that lead us to confirm such an occupation in historic times. The most significant of these is Cornelius Osgood's life history sketch of Feodore Sasha, whom Osgood met and photographed in Kenai during the summers of 1931 and 1932 while doing field work for his classic *Ethnography of the Tanaina* (1966). According to Osgood, Sasha was "born in the country between Skilak and Kenai Lakes, from which his father and mother also came and his ancestors before them as far as he knew" (Osgood 1966 [1937]:23). The Kenai Mountain Dena'inans inhabiting this region were known as the Tsah'tana, and those living near Kenai Lake were called the Sqilan Hr'ana (Kari 1977:92; 1996:57).

Feodore Sasha's familiarity with this mountainous area was also demonstrated to Frederica de Laguna, when she elicited from him Dena'ina names for six archaeological sites in the Kenai River drainage in 1930–1932 (de Laguna 1934:134). It is important to state that the Dena'ina place-name inventory compiled by Peter Kalifornsky (1977; also 1991), one of the last fluent speakers of Dena'ina on the Kenai Peninsula, was based largely on the oral legacy of Sasha, who was his personal mentor as well as Osgood's and de Laguna's. In fact, Kalifornsky dedicates his book to the memory of Sasha (see 1991:v). Kalifornsky's ethnogeography of the Kenai River takes on added significance because the first published account of exploration into the upper Kenai River, written by the Russian mining engineer Peter Doroshin (1865), also contains local place-names that are recognizably Dena'ina.

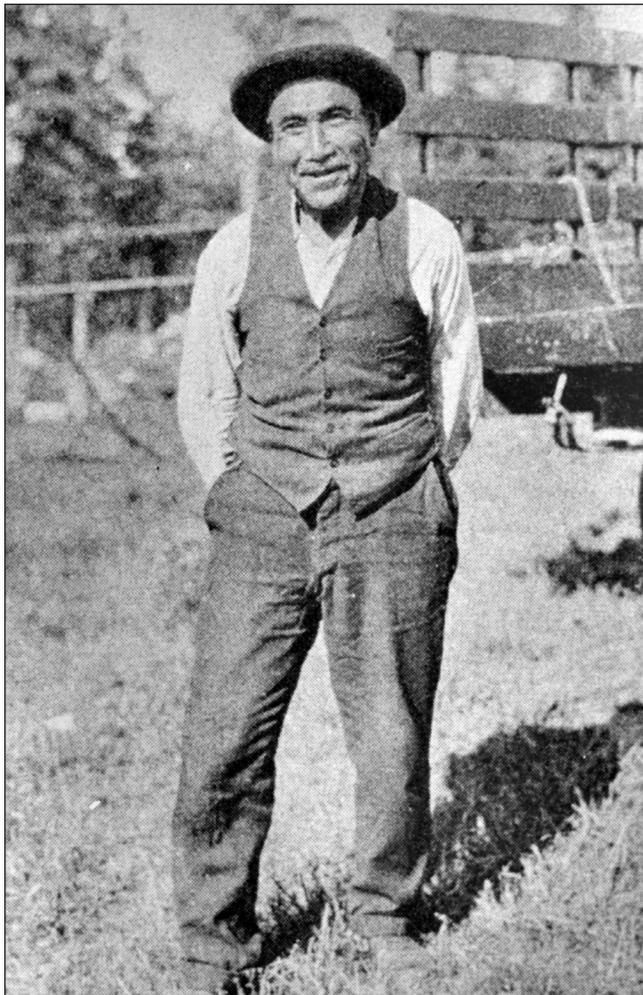


Figure 2: Feodore Sasha. Photo by Cornelius Osgood, reprinted from his *Ethnography of the Tanaina* (1966 [1937]). Courtesy of Yale University Department of Anthropology.

It is instructive to compare Doroshin's placenames (transliterated from Dena'ina into Russian Cyrillic and then into English) with those of Peter Kalifornsky (1977, 1991) and Kari and Kari (1982), who worked with Kalifornsky and other Dena'ina speakers to compile a comprehensive Dena'ina ethnogeography (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Comparative Kenai placenames.*

Doroshin	Kalifornsky/ Kari & Kari	English
1. Tusli-tnu	Tuslitnu	Skilak River
2. Ka-studilin-bna	Q'es Dudilent Bena	Skilak Lake
3. Ka-ktnu	Kahtnu	Lower Kenai River
4. Taslikh-ktnu	Tasdlihtnu	Cooper Creek
5. Chunu-ktnu	Chunuk'tnu	Russian River
6. Skiliankh-ktnu	Sqilantnu	Upper Kenai River
7. Skiliamna	Sqilan Bena	Kenai Lake

From this comparison, it cannot be disputed that Doroshin relied on the Dena'ina language to orient himself to the interior part of the Kenai Peninsula. Moreover, it seems very likely that he either had a Dena'ina guide accompany him upriver or that he met Dena'inas residing along the river who taught him these placenames.

As Osgood suggests, the persons known to be most closely associated with Sqilantnu in the twentieth century were Feodore Sasha, his siblings, and his parents. Very little has ever been published about Sasha except Osgood's thumbnail sketch, which mentions his penchant for heavy drinking and his great wealth of knowledge about traditional Dena'ina culture. Fortunately some key events in Sasha's life and his genealogy can now be reconstructed through documents made available in the Kenai Courthouse Records (KCR) and the Alaska State Office of Vital Statistics (OVS) in Juneau.

For information about Sasha, I took advantage of an Alaska state law, House Bill No. 91, passed by the Alaska legislature on April 5, 1984. This act made public for the first time all death, marriage, and divorce records more than 50 years old and all birth records more than 100 years old. Since the Territory of Alaska did not start keeping vital statistics in these categories until about 1900, this means that most public birth records are still closed but that all death and marriage records before 1957 are now accessible as public documents.

At the Alaska Office of Vital Statistics in Juneau, an annual surname and village placename index allows researchers to readily find information on specific individuals and communities. Death certificates contain a wealth of information on the place of death, the cause of death, the age at death, the names of surviving kin, the deceased person's occupation, ethnic identity, and occasionally the height, weight, and hair color. Marriage certificates include the names of the conjugal couple's mothers and fathers, their place of birth, and their date of birth.

Such data are extremely useful to ethnohistorians interested in documenting how contagious diseases affected specific areas, and they allow the additional luxury of reconstructing genealogies. When death and marriage certificates are tied into U.S. census schedules from 1900 and 1910, the demography becomes very exciting. There is an opportunity for researchers to learn a great deal about family size, population movements and marriages and to find clues about when and why certain historic villages were abandoned.

Feodore Sasha's parents' names, for example, can be learned both from census records and death certificates, and this is important because Osgood tells us that both of Sasha's parents came from the Squalantnu area. The 1900 U.S. Census schedules from Fort Kenai (Bureau of the Census 1900) list "Alexander" as the head of a household born in 1850, and of course "Sasha" is the Russian diminutive for Alexander. Alexander's wife was named Maria (born in 1857), and they had three sons: Feider [Feodore], born in March 1881; Dunofay, born in June 1884; and Alexander, born in August 1890. These data are consistent with local death certificate records (KCR Book 1), which show that a trapper named Alexander Shasha [Sasha] died at age 68 from "asthma" in Kenai on May 14, 1918. The only survivors listed on the certificate are a wife, Mary Shasha, and a son named "Theodore." Surely this "Theodore" was Feodore Sasha.

From these two independent sources we can deduce that: (1) Feodore's father, Alexander Sasha, was born about 1850 and would have been just an infant when Doroshin made his first ascent of the Kenai River; (2) Feodore's two brothers, Dunofay and Alexander, must have died sometime between 1900 and 1918; and (3) the Sasha family probably moved from Squalantnu to the village of Kenai sometime before 1900.

From vital statistics some information about Feodore Sasha's marriage comes to light. His wife was Alexandra Osipoff, who at 32 years of age gave birth to daughter

Pelagia (Polly) Shasha [Sasha] on May 14, 1919. Apparently the couple lost two other children before this, for although the number of children born to Alexandra (including Pelagia) is listed as three, only one of them was still alive when Pelagia was born. It was not long, however, before baby Pelagia also died, on December 13, 1920 (OVS). Feodore's wife Alexandra may well have been a grandchild of the Russian-American Company retirees, Peter and Evdokiya Osipov, who helped found the village of Ninilchik in 1847 (Arndt 1996:246).

In retrospect, it appears that although Feodore Sasha was one of the last of the Kenai Mountain Indians, he apparently spent much of his adult life in the vicinity of Kenai. In fact, he was incarcerated in the Kenai tribal jail on March 24, 1929, when the Fifteenth U.S. Census was taken there, although he may still have returned often to the mountains at Squalantnu where he was born.

We also learn from Vital Statistics records that Feodore became a widower when his wife Alexandra died at age 49 on May 14, 1938, from "probable heart failure" (OVS). From Feodore's own death certificate (KCR Book 2), we discover that he burned to death in his house due to an overheated stove on February 17, 1945, that he was 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighed 145 lbs., and was born July 17, 1880. This birth date does not exactly match the birth date for Feodore given in the 1900 Census schedule (where it is given as March 1881), but the discrepancy only amounts to about eight months. Moreover, since Feodore was the only surviving child in his family by the time of his father's death in 1918, had lost his only known daughter in 1920, and became a widower in 1938, it is logically consistent with earlier records that when he himself died in 1945, no living relatives were named.

## EPIDEMICS

The logical question one must ask when faced with a large number of archaeological sites known to have been occupied in late prehistoric as well as historic times is this: why is there no one left to tell the tale of these people? Feodore Sasha could have told much or all of this tale, but my hypothesis is that the Squalantnu Dena'inas, along with those in many other outlying villages on the Kenai Peninsula, died from contagious diseases introduced during the historic period, that major ecological changes led to a collapse in their subsistence economy, and that the few survivors took up residence in Kenai village where they intermarried with non-Natives.

Much has already been written about the diseases that struck the Dena'ina in the early and mid-nineteenth century, but the first known epidemic was reported to Aleksander Baranov in the spring of 1798. This illness, which also hit Kodiak that same year, was distinguished by symptoms of nausea followed by chest pains and then death within twenty-four hours. Khlebnikov (1970:16) says the epidemic "was rampant in Kenai Inlet, where many deaths had occurred." James Fall (1981:117-118; 1987) provides an excellent summary of the smallpox epidemic that struck the Tlingit in 1836 and then reached the Dena'ina in Cook Inlet about 1838. He concludes that the population around Cook Inlet declined by 50% in the next seven years, following not only the impact of the disease but the related starvation brought on by disruptions in subsistence activities.

In an unpublished manuscript at the Bancroft Library, Zakhar Chichinoff, an employee of the Russian-American Company, tells very graphically how hard the Dena'ina were hit by this: "During the following winter [1836-1837] I traveled continually from village to village in the Kenai district, trading, but at nearly every place the population had been reduced by at least one-half by the ravages of smallpox. In many places the people were still of the opinion that the dreadful disease had been sent among them by the Russians. . . . Quite a number of orphan children, whose parents had died of the disease, were taken to the Redoubt [St. Nicholas at Kenai] and supported there at the expense of the Company" (Chichinoff 1878:3).

Katherine Arndt (1985) has made a detailed study of how the smallpox diffused and how the Russian-American Company tried to contain it. Practically the only doctor in Alaska in the 1830s and 1840s was a German, Dr. Blaschke, who began a program of vaccinating the Indians around Sitka and who proceeded to organize teams to inoculate the residents of Unalaska, the Alaska Peninsula, Bristol Bay, and Cook Inlet. The Russian trader Malakhof was put in charge of vaccinating the people of Cook Inlet (Bancroft 1886:562n).

Again in 1862 the Indians at Kenai and on the Kenai River were being inoculated, and this time the Russian Orthodox clergy rather than the Russian traders administered the shots. While there is no indication why these particular vaccinations were being given, there is ample evidence from both written and oral sources (Blackman 1982:45, 63) that a smallpox epidemic killed many of the Haida in the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1862, and this epidemic may have also spread to Cook Inlet. In his travel

journal for November 12 of that year, Abbot Nicholas wrote: "My songleader went to Skilakh village, about 150 versts [160 km] from Kenai, to vaccinate the people. He has to walk that distance, and there is no road. The Indians of that village, learning that we had a vaccine, petitioned me to send someone to vaccinate them." On December 3, the Abbot added that his songleader had returned from Skilakh Village after vaccinating about 100 people (Nicholas 1862; also Townsend 1974:9).

When Ivan Petroff visited Kodiak to do archival research and oral history interviews in July 1878, he met there several men who had just arrived from Cook Inlet and reported that "the Natives and half-breeds around the Inlet are dying away very fast, mostly from the effects of syphilitic disease and consumption [i.e., tuberculosis]" (in Hinckley and Hinckley 1966:17). In the mid-1880s Petroff learned that the Dena'ina had coined words for both syphilis (*iyatcinaqe*) and smallpox (*na-akniklde*) (Staffeief and Petroff 1885-1886:189).

After traveling to villages in Upper Cook Inlet in the summer of 1881, Hieromonk Nikita of the Russian Orthodox Church observed that "the prevalent diseases are catarrhs, fever, tuberculosis, and sore eyes, which explains why there are so many blind among them" (Nikita 1881: II, 63). Again in 1884, Nikita reported that an outbreak of influenza killed nearly all the children under the age of two in the villages of Kenai, Ninilchik, Alexandrovsk (Nanwalek), and Seldovia (Nikita 1884:I, 357).

Although little hard evidence has been found, a major flu epidemic in Alaska in 1889 was remembered as "the Russian flu" (*Seward Weekly Gateway*, October 8, 1918:1). In 1888, for example, Governor A. P. Swineford was alarmed that "a very heavy rate of mortality is...reported from Kenai and Bristol Bay, occasioned by pulmonary diseases" (Swineford 1888:1). More specifically, the old Dena'ina village of Yaghehtnu, situated near the mouth of the Swanson River (Figure 1), was reported to have been wiped out by a flu epidemic "around 1890" (Lynch 1980).

Joan Townsend (1965:330-348) also reports a long series of epidemics among the Dena'ina, beginning in the 1880s with diphtheria and broncho-pneumonia, followed by a combined measles and influenza epidemic in 1900-1901, and another measles epidemic in 1913. Although Townsend has focused her research in the Nondalton, Kijik, and Iliamna communities on the west side of Cook Inlet, it is significant that in the Iliamna region, village abandonment and regional consolidation was the emerging pattern.

At least some of these epidemics had as much impact on the Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina as they did on the Dena'inas across Cook Inlet. In 1913, for example, we can say specifically that at least eight Natives at Kenai died from the measles, four died from tuberculosis, and five others died from measles and tuberculosis combined (KCR; OVS). Records from the Kenai Mission show that among the Orthodox population (which was predominantly Dena'ina and creole), the number of deaths outstripped the number of births in 1907, 1914, and 1916 (Alaska History Research Project 1936-1938:331-334). One disease, well known among the Dena'inas as "iich" (Kalifornsky 1984b), is not even mentioned in the official records, though it may well have been a abbreviation for "iyatcinaqe" (syphilis).

### ABANDONMENT OF THE SQUILANTNU DISTRICT

One early population estimate of the Squilantnu district comes from the missionary Hegumen Nikolai (apparently the same person as Abbot Nicholas above). Nikolai endured great hardship to ascend the banks of the Kenai River on snowshoes and give communion to seventy-four Kenaitze living somewhere in the mountains upriver from Skilak Lake on February 17, 1861 (Znamenski 2003:87). Since it is unlikely that communion would have been offered to small children, this number probably reflects adults only. However, in 1897 the resident Orthodox priest, Ioann Bortnovskii, did not include either Skilak or Squilantnu in his inventory of Kenai mission villages, and by 1916 the priest Pavel Shadura wrote about Skilak village as a place that existed only in the distant past (Znamenski 2003:204, 267).

Oral testimony from Beryl Lean (1984), the oldest resident of Cooper Landing until her death in September 1984, suggests that the Dena'inas had already left the Squilantnu area by 1919, the year she arrived to settle there at the age of 19. At that time she remembered a few Indians passing through Cooper Landing, but none that were still residing there permanently. This observation also dovetails with data about the "Spanish flu" epidemic, which struck Alaska in 1918. Exactly how devastating this epidemic was to Alaska's Native population is only now coming to light.

In 1921, Father Pavel Shadura observed from the Kenai mission that the Natives in his parish were "prone to various infectious diseases and in case of a minor epidemic die out like flies. Thus, measles and influenza wiped

out five villages. The parish population declined by half" (Znamenski 2003:272). To understand this devastation in raw numbers, it is instructive to look at the total number of deaths in the territory recorded between the years 1913-1919, as given by Alaska Office of Vital Statistics (see Table 2):

*Table 2. Death Statistics (taken from Territorial Records, OVS, Juneau).*

Year	Number of reported deaths
1913	505
1914	661
1915	694
1916	874
1917	956
1918	2,200
1919	794

While no one has yet ascertained what percentage of the 2,200 reported deaths in 1918 were caused by influenza and what percentage of deaths caused by influenza were Alaska Natives, it is pretty evident from the data on death certificates and from all the newspaper publicity that the 1918 flu epidemic was a major factor in the 130% death increase over the year before. With reference to Squilantnu, it is fruitful to examine population trends elsewhere on the northern Kenai Peninsula, at least in those communities known to have been inhabited by Dena'inas. Table 3 is designed to show these trends.

*Table 3. Population of northern Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina villages (from U.S. Departments of Interior and Commerce, Bureau of the Census Reports for 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1929). See community notes in Appendix.*

	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1929
Skiliakh	44					
Chkituk & Chernilia	58					
Kalifonsky			16	34		
Kasilof	53	117	159	5**	45	
Kenai	44	159*	186*	250	332	286
Titukilsk & Nikishka	57		8			
Kultuk	17					
Pt. Possession			15	17		
Hope			27	35	44	15**

\* Adjusted by the author to exclude seasonal cannery workers identified as "Orientals" and whites from outside of Alaska.

\*\* No Alaska Native or partly Native households are identified by the author in these census schedules.

It is easy to get lost in all the notes that go with this table (see Appendix), but the point I want to stress is that between 1880 and 1920 at least eight Dena'ina villages on the northern Kenai Peninsula (see Figure 1) were abandoned (leaving only Kenai and Point Possession). This pattern undoubtedly reflects the devastation wrought by epidemics but also increasing consolidation and urbanization in the villages of Kenai and Tyonek. It is specifically known, for example, that the Kasilof people all moved to Kalifonsky [Kalifornsky] village, that all the Kalifonsky village people in turn moved to Kenai or Tyonek in 1925 or 1927 (Kalifornsky 1977:10; 1984a:95; Brelsford 1975:46), and that in 1910 some of the Kustatan people moved to Kenai after suffering from a disease believed to have been inflicted by a Susitna shaman (de Laguna 1934:138). The rest of the Kustatan people, those who managed to survive the flu, apparently moved to Tyonek in 1918 (Kalifornsky 1991:301).

Though never officially counted in the first population censuses, the people at Swanson River village (Yaghehtnu), who were decimated by an earlier flu epidemic, are said to have moved to Kenai or Tyonek during the early 1890s (Lynch 1980). Other historic Dena'ina villages include Q'es Dudilent or Stepanka's, a winter community of twenty-five to thirty people located near where the Kenai River comes out of Skilak Lake (Monfor 1983:24; Kalifornsky 1991:349), and Chik'el'unt or Tsik'el'unt, located on the Chickaloon River either near its mouth in Chickaloon Bay or perhaps farther inland near its headwaters in American Pass (Kalifornsky 1984a:91; 1991:314–315, 345). Chik'el'unt was named after the last Dena'ina who had two wives.

## NICHOLAI'S BAND

Something usually unnoticed about the 1918 "Spanish flu" epidemic is that influenza was only one of the diseases that struck the Dena'ina that year. In fact, although there were no deaths in Kenai attributed to influenza in 1918, eight Natives there died from tuberculosis and twelve (mostly infants) perished from the whooping cough. At the same time, however, the 1918 flu appears to have been disastrous to the small Dena'ina community at Point Possession (Ch'aghañikt), where ten Natives were recorded as perishing from the epidemic (KCR Book 1). Apparently only one family, the Kallanders, still remain there, returning seasonally.

The census schedules from 1900 show Point Possession to be a tiny community of fifteen people divided into three families (Bureau of the Census 1900). By 1918 it may have been somewhat larger than this but probably not much larger, and it is logical to conclude that the ten individuals who died there in 1918 probably made up about half of the total village population. Of those ten who died at Point Possession, five were from a single family (the Chikloons), seven were children under the age of 8, and three were adults (KCR Book 1). The three adults were between 27 and 32 years of age, and all of them were listed as parents of young children—undoubtedly key individuals in the small-scale hunting, fishing, and trapping economy of the village.

Ironically, Point Possession village is said to have been founded in modern times by the survivors of an earlier epidemic that destroyed the old village on Fire Island (de Laguna 1934:136). The Dena'inats at Point Possession Village, also known as Ch'aghel-nikt or Nicholai Village, were in dismal health as early as 1916 when visited by a U.S. Forest Service ranger. In his field diary for July 17, Keith McCullagh wrote:

Visited Chief Nicholai village—found himself and seven children all in one room badly gone with consumption (Nicholai died four days later). As they had no food we sent some ashore from the boat and about the same time the cannery sent a large supply of staples. This village is in urgent need of medical attention. Antone was found with his wife and three children (one 13 days old) in another cabin, both pretty sick (McCullagh 1916).

Another visitor to Point Possession who seems to have arrived at about the same time as McCullagh found every member of the two families living there (a total of about twelve persons) afflicted with measles and tuberculosis, many of them too weak to even step out of the cabin: "They were sprawled upon the floors of their cabins coughing and moaning in a most pitiful manner" (Bennett 1921:47). Some food was left for them, and an Anchorage doctor was summoned, but too late to save the father of one family. Chief Nicholai's own death from consumption was reported in the *Anchorage Times* on July 27, 1916. The obituary writer said he "was looked up to by his tribesmen as a man of good judgment; he was authority in all matters pertaining to their fishing and hunting rights and he was a picturesque character, well known to the old-timers in the inlet." The oral life history of Feodoria Kallander

Pennington (2002), the granddaughter of Chief Nicholai, confirms these written records.

Five members of the Chikloon family living at Point Possession were reported as dying from influenza in November 1918 (KCR Book 1). It appears that Kenai Village residents may have been spared deaths from the 1918 flu epidemic by having a medical doctor residing in the community who successfully treated the illness or who gave inoculations well ahead of time. The 1918 catastrophe at Point Possession, however, was mirrored at Susitna Station, an Upper Inlet Dena'ina community on the Susitna River where the flu almost completely decimated the population (Pete 1977; Fall 1981:100).

### AFFANASI'S BAND

Though not known to be associated in any way with Feodore Sasha, Chief Affanasi was a contemporary of Sasha's father and one of the few northern peninsula Dena'inans for whom there is any concrete biographical data. Affanasi, who lived in and around the village of Hope on Turnagain Arm, apparently took his name or was given his name in memory of Hieromonk Afanassy, the Russian Orthodox monk who helped found the first mission in Kodiak in 1794 and stayed on at Afognak until 1824 (Gregory 1977:21, 47). An imposing photograph shows him formally dressed in a fancy cap and dentalium necklace, wearing face paint (Figure 3). Affanasi's name appears in the source literature under an even wider variety of spellings than those attached to Feodore Sasha. Some spell "Affanasi" with one *f* and two *s*'s, others with two *s*'s and one *f*, others with two "f"s and two "s"s, and still others with a final *ia*, Affanasia. None of these various spellings can really be considered standard.

At the time of the 1900 U.S. census, Affanasi and his family were living at Hope along with two other Indian families, making for a total Indian population of fourteen. All of them were said to be from Knik. The census tells us that Affanasi himself was born in 1850 and originally came from Knik. His wife's name was Mary (born in 1870), and he had one biological child, William (b. 1888) as well as two adopted sons: Stephen (b. 1872) and Pedro (b. 1881). Affanasi also had a son named Wahska who died in Hope on December 21, 1907, after a long illness, and the chief and his wife loaded the body in a small boat to take it to Kenai village for burial (*Seward Weekly Gateway*, December 28, 1907:4). Affanasi's adopted son

Stephen died of tuberculosis on January 31, 1918, and was also buried at Kenai (KCR Book 1).

By the time of his death in 1909, Affanasi had earned quite a reputation among white people in the area. The author of his obituary revealed a begrudging respect for him:

Chief Affanacy, the hiyu big chief of the Aleuts [sic] of the Cook Inlet region, has been gathered to his fathers. His end, unlike his career, was peaceful. Time was when Chief Affanacy was a power—a veritable monarch—among his people. All paid tribute to him, and he thus amassed considerable wealth. He was a natural leader, firm and unyielding. His personality was strong and magnetic, and when in his presence the other Natives recognized in him one who must be obeyed.

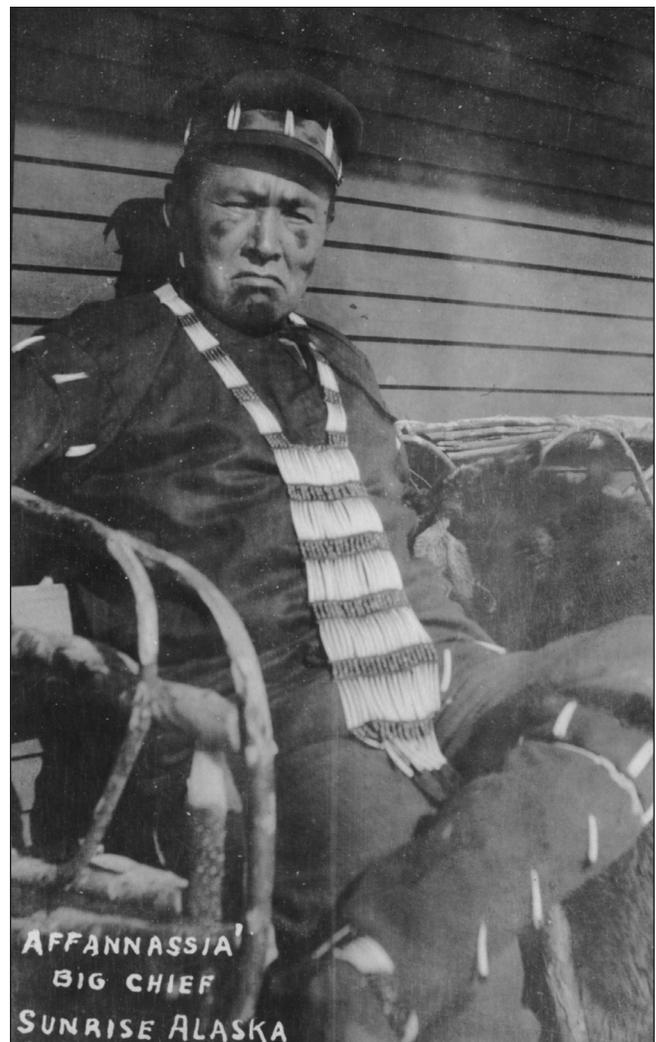


Figure 3. Chief Affanasi, ca. 1900–1904. Sylvia Sexton Collection, Album 6. SCL-1-804. Courtesy of the Seward Community Library.

Affanacy once had his headquarters at Old Knik [Eklutna]. Years ago, when the region was chiefly inhabited by Natives, an agent of the Alaska Commercial Company [George Holt] at that place was murdered. The crime was laid at the door of the Native chief; not the actual commission, but the instigation. The law's delay, the lack of testimony, permitted this foul crime to go unpunished. . . . When he died a few days ago at Kenai he was living in poverty, shorn of his power, and but a relic of his former greatness (*Seward Weekly Gateway*, July 24, 1909:3).

James Fall (1981:432) concludes there may have been more than one Dena'ina named "Affinassa." One of these was an Upper Inlet *qeshqa* (rich man) of the *nulchina* sib originally from Eklutna and Knik, the same area ascribed to Chief Affanasi in the 1900 census taken at Hope. Today there are several Kenai Peninsula placenames that bear Affanasi's name. Affanasi Creek is one of the tributary streams for Abernathy Creek and Resurrection Creek and lies approximately 32 km north of the Sqilantnu district. Its direct historic association with Chief Affanasi is unknown, but since this placename appears on Sleem's (1910) early map of the Kenai Peninsula, it may once have been associated with Affanasi.

The name most closely associated with Chief Affanasi's life is Affanasi Point, the site of a small Dena'ina village on Turnagain Arm at Hope. At one time there were three or four houses on Affanasi Point, but white people later moved into the cabins and eventually burned everything down. About all that remains is a very small graveyard, and even that is getting difficult to identify (Clark 1984). Field notes for the U.S. cadastral survey of this Indian graveyard indicate the presence of "about 3 graves" (Conklin 1966), though Affanasi himself was probably buried in Kenai where he died and where his sons are interred. Without further archaeological surveys and testing, there is no way of knowing whether Dena'inats occupied the Hope area before the gold rush of the early 1890s.

### FOREST FIRES, FUR TRAPPING, AND PLACER MINES

Diseases were surely not the only factor contributing to the depopulation and migration of Dena'inats from Sqilantnu to Kenai. Forest fires apparently played a significant role also. In his short history of early fires in Alaska, H. J. Lutz (1959, 1974) recalls that Peter Doroshin (1865) was the

first to report a major forest fire on the peninsula, observing one in the Tusli-tnu (i.e., Skilak River) valley in 1851. Lutz also calls attention to Dufresne (1955:21), who attributed the disappearance of caribou on the peninsula to a major fire in 1883, and to Bennett (1921:72), who says that in 1890 a big fire raged for months over the interior part of the Peninsula from Tustumena Lake to the mountains and was followed by another at the lower end of Tustumena Lake in 1911. These last two fires covered over 25,900 ha between Tustumena Lake and the Kenai River and Skilak Lake. While the causes of these 1883, 1890, and 1911 fires remain unknown, it is known that the influx of several thousand white prospectors on the peninsula during the 1890s led to a dramatic increase in forest fires.

Some of these fires were natural or accidental, but others were purposely set to destroy the breeding grounds for flies and mosquitoes (Moffit 1906:50). In 1896 gold miners intentionally burned the entire length of Canyon Creek (Lutz 1956:15). But in addition to destroying insects, such fires must have killed or driven out many of the fur-bearing animals trapped by the Dena'inats. While some mammals such as beaver, moose, hare, black bear, and lynx are known to thrive in burned-over areas, other important fur-bearers such as marten are severely devastated since they are dependent upon climax spruce forests for their habitat (Lutz 1956:81; Viereck and Schandelmeyer 1980:82–85).

Marten were at the core of the Russian fur trade economy, and Osgood (1966:96–97) illustrated how Dena'inats trapped marten with two kinds of deadfalls. The historical importance of marten to the Dena'ina during the late eighteenth century is well established in the journals of Captain Cook's Lieutenant King (Beaglehole 1967:1422) and Captain George Vancouver (1984:1223–1224). In 1778, Lt. King met some men at Point Possession who were wearing marten skin cloaks, and sixteen years later, in 1794, while his ship was anchored between East and West Foreland, Vancouver bartered European goods (iron, beads, snuff, and tobacco) for marten skins with a Native named Sal-tart.

The Russians also had a strong desire for sable and marten pelts, which supplied the primary motive for the colonization of Siberia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Fisher 1943:17; Gibson 1968–1969:209). However, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, just as the *promyshlenniki* were moving into Alaska, market demand began to lean heavily in favor of the sea otter, and from 1804 until 1850 a single prime sea otter pelt

was worth fifty to sixty prime marten skins (Tikhmenev 1978:201–204). There was still a demand for marten after 1850, but it was not as strong.

The diversity and abundance of fur-bearers trapped by these upper Kenai River Dena'ina is revealed in a short note made in an Alaska Commercial Company (1876–1877) logbook kept at “Kennay [Kenai] Station.” This logbook dwells mostly on daily weather conditions, but on April 26, 1877, the unidentified trader noted that “today three Indians arrived from Skilak, having been gone about two months. bought — (18) Marten (11) Mink (4) Land otter (1) Silver grey fox (1) Cross fox (1) Lynx (1) Wolverine, and (1) Beaver. paid \$85<sup>40</sup> for the lot.” Today, this may not seem like a lot of cash, but if converted to 2006 dollars using the Consumer Price Index, adjusted for inflation, the three Dena'ina trappers received the substantial modern-day equivalent of \$1,592.03 for their fur (see [www.austintxgensoc.org/calculatecpi.php](http://www.austintxgensoc.org/calculatecpi.php)).

This already devalued marten pelt did not seem to deter the trappers, but it was made almost worthless by a sudden across-the-board plummet in fur prices just twen-

ty years later. Between 1897 and 1899 the prices paid for Alaska furs dropped by over 50 percent, and the Alaska Commercial Company had already stopped issuing supplies on credit to the Indians as early as 1883 (Townsend 1965:161–164). Thus, if there was any Dena'ina marten trapping still going on in the upper Kenai River drainage in the late nineteenth century, human-caused forest fires and this major market collapse should have put an end to it. However, according to Peter Kalifornsky (1984a:101; 1984c:177; 1991:330–335), the trapping of small fur-bearers on the northern peninsula lasted until after World War II, when he claimed that stocks began to be depleted. Kalifornsky recalled, for example, that the Demidoff and Darien families were still actively trapping in the upper Kenai River and Cooper Landing area up until that time, and his verbal mapping of all the lakes and streams on the northern Peninsula where he and other Dena'inans were trapping reveals a vast economic network.

A rare turn-of-the-century photo (Figure 4) showing an unidentified Native hunting party in the forest near Seward appears to portray a northern Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina family, perhaps on a visit from the Squilantnu



*Figure 4. Native family with hides and guns after a hunt, near Seward, ca. 1896–1913. Elsie Blue Collection, SCL-15-84. Courtesy of Seward Community Library.*

area, near the time when Squilantnu appears to have been abandoned. This photo is diagnostic for ethnicity based not on the photographer's caption but on the detail of the woman in the photo holding a rifle. We know that historically, Alutiiqs (Chugach Eskimo) have also lived in the region around Seward and the Kenai Fjords, but to draw an ethnographic analogy from contemporary subsistence patterns, Alutiiq women rarely handle guns and hunt game while Athabaskan women commonly do (see Peter 1992:63; Mishler and Simeone 2004:xxx). The woman's gun shown here in Figure 4 is a Winchester Model 1906, either .22 short or .22 long, with slide action and a Marbles or Lyman tang sight. Since this rifle was manufactured continuously from 1906 until 1932, the circa date in the photo credit needs to be adjusted forward by at least ten years.

The large contingent of gold miners who descended on the Kenai Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries must have had a dramatic direct impact on the Dena'inas living at Squilantnu. Today commercial placer miners must receive an anadromous fish protection permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and a wastewater disposal permit from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation before starting operations. Biologists have long known that the heavy silt discharge and the erosion of stream banks that result from dredging and hydraulic mining can severely damage salmon spawning areas and salmon migrations (Smith 1940).

Although mining on the Kenai must have come under the jurisdiction of the Chugach National Forest, as designated by President Roosevelt in 1907, there were no state or territorial agencies to regulate mining, and the discharge of silts surely had a negative impact on the reproduction of salmon and other fish in the area, such as rainbow trout. The Kenai Mining and Milling Company, for example, began hydraulic mining in the area of Cooper Lake and Cooper Creek during the summer of 1908. This was a very large camp that operated day and night, around the clock. Cooper Creek joins the upper Kenai River just a few kilometers above the mouth of the Russian River, so all of the heavy runoff from Cooper Creek must have affected fish going into the Russian River at Squilantnu. Then starting in 1910, Charles Hubbard and the Kenai Dredging Company built and began operating two gold dredges right on the upper Kenai River, which surely produced even more turbidity and bank erosion (*Seward Weekly*

*Gateway* 1910:4; 1911b:3; Barry 1997:111–112, 140–144). That same year other prospectors reported successful finds on the Russian River and at the mouth of the Russian River (*Seward Weekly Gateway* 1911a:3). There they would have had direct encounters with any Dena'inas still living at Squilantnu.

## FISH TRAPS

It is important to recognize that in the late nineteenth century, fish traps, gill nets, beach seines, and boats operated by the canneries at the mouth of the Kenai River also substantially curtailed the salmon runs at Squilantnu. As early as 1886 there were small canneries at the mouths of the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers (Elliott 1886:93–94). The Northern Packing Company was established at Kenai in 1888 and operated there until 1891, packing between 12,996 and 18,712 cases of salmon each year (Moser 1899:51–52). Figuring an average of fourteen fish per case, this means the cannery harvested between 181,944 and 261,968 fish per season. It's impossible to tell what percentage of these were taken from traps set directly in the Kenai River, but since no regulations prevented fish traps from being set right in the river mouth where migrating salmon are the most vulnerable, one can assume that Northern Packing took full advantage and that a large percentage of their pack came from river traps. Even five years after the Northern Packing Company closed in 1891, one of the canneries at Kasilof continued to work three traps at the mouth of the Kenai River, putting up 3,000 to 10,000 cases (42,000 to 140,000 fish) per season (Moser 1899:140).

Cut off from their subsistence fishing by commercial competition (Bortnovskii 1897:82), an increasing number of Dena'inas went to work for the canneries during the summer. Just before the turn of the century, the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries (Kutchin 1899) reported that twenty Natives were employed by the new Pacific Steam Whaling cannery at Kenai, while another ten were working at the older cannery at Kasilof. In 1916, Hugh Bennett (1921:47) also recognized that the Kenai Indians were doing far less trapping than formerly and were making money both by working in the canneries and by fishing for the canneries with gill nets. Others found seasonal employment as packers and hunting guides in the burgeoning big game trophy hunting industry (Cassidy and Titus 2003:11, 40). They

were being quickly absorbed into a cash market economy, but it may have been their only way to survive.

### INTERMARRIAGE AND ETHNIC MIXING

Finally, we must recognize that many northern Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina women, in the process of moving away from the small rural settlements and into the village of Kenai, married Russian and Scandinavian immigrants. One visitor who landed there in July 1900, wrote that "the population of Kenai is more than doubled in the summer by the Cannery men and Chinese who come up from S.F. [San Francisco]. The town is a mile or so from the wharf and cannery and consists of a few little log buildings and the Greek [i.e., Russian Orthodox] Church. The people are mostly mixed Russians and Indians" (Walpole 1900). By this time Russian fur traders and other settlers had been living in Kenai for over fifty years, so that intermarriage was already an established practice by the time Scandinavian men began to arrive and develop the Cook Inlet commercial fisheries in the 1880s (see Znamenski 2003:13–14). These Scandinavian fishermen represented the second wave of European bachelor immigrants.

The 1920 U.S. Census schedules for Kenai list twelve women who were born in Alaska and married to Outsiders. Of these men, one was a Canadian (with the surname of March), two were Russian (Koshako and Shadura), two were Finnish (Mann and Wik), three were Norwegian (Gregerson, Juliussen, and Hermansen), three were Swedish (Hedberg and two Petersons [aka Pettersons]), and one was an Anglo-American named Miller from Illinois. In 1916 the priest Pavel Shadura complained bitterly about these sailors and fishermen because they were "indifferent" to Russian Orthodoxy and discouraged their children from attending church services (Znamenski 2003:267). By 1929, however, there were sixteen women born in Kenai or Alaska and married to non-Native men (Bureau of the Census 1920, 1929). Such marriages signify a dramatic shift in Dena'ina social structure, marking the collapse of cross-cousin marriage, matrilineal moieties and clans, the disappearance of potlatching traditions, and the loss of language. We have observed a similar process of intermarriage at work among the Han Athabaskans in more recent times (see Mishler and Simeone 2004:92–93).

While the ethnicity of these Alaskan-born wives is blurred, it seems likely that they were Native women of

Dena'ina or mixed Dena'ina and Russian descent. Their maiden names are not supplied in the census, but their given names are largely Russian: Anna, Vallea [Valya], Inga, Alexandra, Katherina, Eva, Matrona, Theodora [Feodora], and Feona. Numerous other household heads in the 1920 Kenai census have Russian surnames, but the census taker observed that both husband and wife were born in Alaska. Spouses in these households were probably Dena'inas or Russian creoles with Dena'ina blood: viz., the Pansiloffs, Oskolkoffs, Demidoffs, Bokoffs, Panshins, Sashas, Soroborikoffs, Simenoffs, Michikoffs, Kalifornskys, Komdidoffs, Pinfedoffs, Konikoffs, Knikoffs, and Phitsoffs.

It is quite telling, too, that three of the six Native elders from the northern Kenai Peninsula interviewed by A. J. McClanahan in the book *Our Stories, Our Lives* (2002) are the children of Danish or Swedish fathers and Dena'ina mothers, and a fourth is the daughter of creole parents who spoke both Dena'ina and Russian. With both Russian and Scandinavian bloodlines, some Dena'inas living in Kenai today can be thought of as doubly creolized. However they saw themselves, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Dena'inas as a group became much less visible as Natives as a result of adopting Russian and Scandinavian surnames, even when their surnames were conferred on them by Russian Orthodox baptisms rather than intermarriages. Intermarriage between northern European men and Alutiiq women residing in Kodiak area villages also occurred widely during this same period (see Mishler and Mason 1996; Mishler 2003).

### CONCLUSIONS

From all of this circumstantial historic evidence, particularly the pattern of migration and consolidation that prevailed along the coast of Cook Inlet, it seems reasonable to extrapolate and conclude that the Dena'inas residing at Sqilantnu and other places in the interior of the Kenai Peninsula suffered a fate very similar to their brethren on the coast. That is, they thinned out or perished altogether not just from a single horrendous epidemic but from wave after wave of disease that struck between the late 1830s and 1918. These diseases included not only the well-known outbreaks of smallpox and influenza (both Russian and Spanish varieties), but also measles, typhoid, whooping cough, syphilis, tuberculosis, and the mysterious "*iich*."

Sometimes two or more of these diseases arrived simultaneously, attacking different age groups.

In the very midst of these epidemics, moreover, the interior northern Kenai Peninsula Dena'inas were hard hit by forest fires, falling fur prices, loss of credit, placer mining, and heavy unregulated commercial harvesting of river-run salmon. Taken together, the depletion of small mammal and fish resources not only ruined the Indians' fur trade but seriously cut into their subsistence economy. If this depletion of resources was really severe, and we have every reason to believe it was, the Sqilan Ht'ana would have been starved out and burned out, forced to move elsewhere, becoming refugees in their own land.

From this perspective, Feodore Sasha's family history is like a tracer bullet. When their families moved to Kenai to find cannery processing work, to catch fish for the canneries, or to guide big game hunters, some Dena'ina men such as Feodore Sasha met and married the granddaughters of Russian immigrants. But more significantly, many young Dena'ina women met and married northern European men. Mixed marriages were clearly their ticket to survival in the newly emergent wage labor and cash economy. Of all the factors that led to their decline as a distinct people, this was perhaps the only one that could be ascribed to personal choice.

Ironically, and perhaps tragically, the Dena'ina may have blamed themselves rather than the Europeans and Americans who were invading their homeland for this ecological collapse. It was a widely held Dena'ina religious belief that if animal bones were discarded carelessly, or if fish were mistreated, the spirits of those creatures would feel disrespected and would not be reincarnated again, leaving the people to starve (see Alexan 1965:38–39; de Laguna 1996:72; Boraas and Peter 1996:184–188). Each edible species had its own set of protocols. Animal bones were supposed to be stacked carefully away from the dogs and then later deposited in water or burned in a fire.

Obviously the thousands of small mammal and fish bones excavated in middens and other features at KEN-068, KEN-092, KEN-094, and SEW-214 and later examined by David Yesner (1986, 1996; also Yesner and Holmes 2000:69) demonstrate that this ceremonial practice was not always carefully followed at Sqilantnu. It is possible that moose and caribou bones at Sqilantnu were properly burned or placed in the river, but it is also possible that the region did not support large moose and caribou populations during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Evil shamans were also believed to disrupt the

natural order and cause declines in animal populations (Boraas and Peter 1996:190).

Population census data for the village of Kenai (Table 3) shows a marked increase in that community's population between 1880 and 1890, which can largely be attributed to white gold miners and Asian cannery workers, yet some of it is also surely attributable to migrations by the Dena'ina away from places such as Sqilantnu, Skilak, Shk'ituk't, Ch'aghałnikt, Ch'anilnat, Chik'el'unt, Yaghehtnu, Tiduqilts'ett, Kalifornsky Village, and the three Nikishkas. Part of the problem with the census numbers is that in 1900 the totals of three separate U.S. census schedules were combined. One head count was done at Fort Kenai, another at Old Kenai, and still another at the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's cannery, established in 1897. In the published abstract (Bureau of the Census 1901), however, all three of these are lumped together under the single placename "Kenai." Presented in summary form without detailed analysis and social context, the rapid population growth that census takers reported for Kenai between 1880 and 1920 masks the very rapid and catastrophic decline of the Dena'ina virtually everywhere else on the northern part of the Peninsula.

Counting Sqilantnu, along with those communities enumerated in the 1880 census (Table 3) and several others never included in the censuses, it becomes quite evident that at least a dozen historic Dena'ina villages on the Peninsula were abandoned before 1929. It needs to be said that when archaeology, genealogy, natural history, and vital statistics are enlisted in service of ethnohistorical research, much can be learned about the mysterious fate not only of specific villages, but of families and individuals. Along with the collection of oral life histories, this will humanize our narrative reconstructions.

## REVIVAL

As a postscript, it is encouraging to know that there is now a vigorous effort underway by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and other Dena'inas to recapture their language and cultural history (see <http://qenaga.org/index.cfm>). In recent years Kenaitze tribe members have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to run an interpretive archaeological site and gift shop during the summer months at K'Beq ('Footprints'), located at mile 52.6 of the Sterling Highway, directly across from the entrance to the Russian River Campground. Under the leadership of Alexandra (Sasha) Lindgren (whose name neatly embodies the tribe's

Russian-Swedish ancestry), the Kenaitze have produced a short *Footprints* video to demonstrate their sense of ongoing stewardship over the Squalantnu sites (Kenaitze Indian Tribe IRA 1994).

Looking to the future, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have worked out a major agreement with Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), spelled out in the Russian River Lands Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-362, 107th Congress), to convey \$13.8 million for constructing an interpretive visitors center and for the design of a Squalantnu Archaeological Research Center near the mouth of the Russian River. This hopeful agreement, to which the Kenaitze Indian Tribe is also a party, settles without litigation the outstanding 14(h)(1) land claim selections made by CIRI under Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971.

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### APPENDIX: COMMUNITY NOTES FOR TABLE 3

#### SKILIAKH [SKILAK]

It is not known exactly where Ivan Petroff found Skilak village. Judging from the ethnological map that accompanied his 1880 census (Petroff 1884), Skilak village was situated on a river that entered Skilak Lake from the south (perhaps at the mouth of the Killey River?), but he also shows Skilak Lake as the head of the Kasilof River, which means he merged Kenai Lake with Tustumena Lake and

totally confused the two. In the midst of all this confusion, Petroff may have intended to show that Skilakh village was on the upper Kenai River, at Squalantnu. Abbot Nicholas's (1862) estimate that Skilakh village was about 150 versts (about 160 km) from the village of Kenai only muddles the matter further, since the Squalantnu archaeological district is only about 80 km from Kenai as the crow flies and probably only half again as far by river. Skiliakh is most likely the same place known as Stepanka's (Monfor 1983:24), also known in Dena'ina as Q'es Dudilent. The name "Skilak" was first reported by the Russian Ilia Wosnesenski about 1840 (Baker 1906:580), several years before Peter Doroshin explored the area.

#### CHKITUK AND CHERNILIA

In modern orthography (Kari and Kari 1982:31) these two villages are Shk'ituk't (Skittok) and Ch'anilat (Chinila/Chinulna Point). Shk'ituk't is situated on the lower part of the Kenai River. De Laguna (1934:133) says Tc'k'itu'k' (Shk'ituk't) was located on both sides of a small stream flowing into the Kenai River from the north, where the Kenai Packing Company was later built, while Kalifornsky (1991:347) says it was at the former site of the Northwest Fisheries Cannery. It was occupied until a Russian priest moved the villagers to the present site of Kenai in 1910. Shk'ituk't or Skittok may well be the same as the mouth of Slikok Creek (aka Shlakaq'), where two archaeological sites, KEN-063 and KEN-147, with conspicuous house pits have been located. Ch'anilat or Chinila is a fish camp located just south of the mouth of the Kenai River (Kalifornsky 1991:343) and appears on the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey as KEN-035.

#### KALIFONSKY (UNHGHENESDITNU)

More properly called Kalifornsky, after the family with that surname. All sixteen members of this community were identified as Kenaitze (Kenai Peninsula Dena'inas) in 1900. The 1910 U.S. census records a population of thirty-five "Aleuts," an obvious ethnicity error repeated again for that year at Kenai, Point Possession, and Hope.

#### KASILOF (ALSO KASSILOF)

See Peter Kalifornsky's notes on the etymology of this Russian placename (1991:318–319). The sudden jump in population at Kasilof between 1880 and 1890 was due to

the establishment of the Alaska Packing Company's fish cannery at the mouth of the Kasilof River in 1882; a second cannery was built there in 1890 by George W. Hume of San Francisco (Alaska Department of Fisheries 1951:72–74). Of the 159 persons counted at Kasilof in the 1900 census, 16 were crew members on the steamer *Centennial*, 136 were employees of the Alaska Packers Plant, and only 7 were locals. Of these 7, only 2 were Kenaitze. The closest Dena'ina communities to the canneries were Humpty's Point Village (K'echan Dałkizt), located 4.8 km south of Kasilof, and Kalifornsky (Unhghenesditnu), 6.4 km north of Kasilof.

#### KENAI

Among the 264 persons counted at Kenai in 1890, Porter (1893:4) found 41 persons of mixed blood (i.e., creoles), 93 Indians, 51 whites, and 79 Mongolians (the latter presumably cannery workers). Since Petroff (1884:29) had counted 42 creoles and only 2 whites in Kenai but no Athabaskan Indians ten years earlier, it seems likely that a large number of Indians from Shk'ituk't and other villages began moving into Kenai between 1880 and 1890. The 1900 census schedules show a total of 156 people in Fort Kenai (including 61 Indians), 30 in Old Kenai (including 24 Indians, 5 of mixed blood, and 1 Caucasian), and 104 men (mostly Chinese from San Francisco) living at the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's cannery, built in 1897–98. To rectify the misleading nature of these figures for 1900, I subtracted the 104 identified as seasonal cannery workers (both white and “oriental”) and adjusted the total downward from 290 to 186.

I have also adjusted the 1890 total at Kenai downward from 264 to 159 to exclude the 79 “Mongolians” and 26 of the 51 whites listed, on the supposition that there were at least 105 seasonal residents associated with the cannery. Although this figure is somewhat speculative because no census schedules are available for that year, it closely approximates the number of cannery workers known to have been employed at Kenai in 1900 and 1910. In 1910 the census taker counted 112 cannery workers at Kenai, but in this instance, the cannery workers were not incorporated into the official published abstract figure of 250 persons. By making adjustments for 1890 and 1900, therefore, the 1910 total can be seen in a more balanced perspective of steady population growth.

It is virtually self-evident that the boom in Kenai's population in 1890 came principally from the seasonal

importation of cannery workers from Outside, for the Northern Packing Company built its cannery at the mouth of the Kenai River in 1888 (Alaska Department of Fisheries 1951:72). In spite of this boom, the ethnic breakdown shows a slight decline in the total number of Indians living in and around Kenai between 1890 (when there were 93) and 1900 (when there were 85). All this notwithstanding, by 1910 there were 155 “Aleuts” (Dena'inas) living in Kenai, a substantial increase. This near-doubling of the Native community in just ten years almost certainly reflects regional village consolidation, migration, and urbanization, although a higher birth rate or lower death rate might also have played a role.

#### HOPE

Of the twenty-seven persons counted at Hope City in 1900, fourteen were Indians, all identified as coming from Knik. These Indians were probably all in Chief Affanasi's band. The 1910 census schedules (taken a year after Affanasi's death) list only four “Aleuts” and four creoles in Hope (out of a total population of thirty-five), but of the four full-bloods, three were Indian women married to white men, and the fourth was an adopted daughter. By 1920 the only Natives left in Hope were a woman named Olga Ivanoff and her three children. By the time of the 1929 census even they were gone.

#### POINT POSSESSION (CH'AGHALNIKT)

It is not known why Point Possession, Hope, Nikishka, and Kalifornsky Village are found on the local census schedules but are omitted from the published summaries of the Alaska census for 1900 and 1910. A short oral history of Point Possession may be found in Pennington (2002).

#### TITUKILSK, NIKISHKA, AND KULTUK

In modern orthography (Kari and Kari 1982:32) the first of these census-counted villages (Titukilsk) is Tiduqilts'ett, also called Nikiski No. 2 or Nikishka No. 2, which is located somewhere between Swanson River and Bishop Creek. Tiduqilts'ett literally means ‘disaster place,’ so named because many of the people there died from sickness (Kalifornsky 1984a:77). Judging from the census data (Table 3), an epidemic may have struck this place sometime between 1880 and 1900 and greatly reduced the population.

Historically, there were three different Nikishkas or Nikiskis (de Laguna 1934:134; Brelsford 1975:67–68), named after three brothers bearing that name. Nikishka No. 1 was not included in Petroff's 1880 census, but Orth (1971:688) equates it with the modern-day Nikiski Wharf, and de Laguna (1934:134) said "a mile or a mile and a half up the trail from Nikishka 1 to the lake, are reported old houses belonging to Tukyektat" [Tuqyankdat in modern Dena'ina]. Kalifornsky (1984a:81) has written an intriguing story about this village, told in both Dena'ina and in English.

De Laguna thought Kultuk was probably the site now known as Nikishka No. 3, also called Treja'lux, where she located and tested one housepit. Nikishka No. 3 was occupied at least as late as 1931 by the Antone family (Monfor 1983) The population figure of eight persons in the 1900 census schedule is for Nikishka only, but the schedule does not specify which Nikishka was intended (Bureau of the Census 1900).

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