

**NUVENDALTIN QUHT'ANA: THE PEOPLE OF NONDALTON.**

By LINDA J. ELLANNA and ANDREW BALLUTA. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. 354 p., 11 maps, 98 figs., index, bib. Softbound. US\$19.95.

The Lake Clark area of Southwestern Alaska is home to the Inland Dena'ina, whose primary settlement today is the village of Nondalton. *Nuvendaltin Quht'ana: The People of Nondalton* is a portrait of these Athabaskan people. It comprehensively describes their history and their current situation.

I have to disclose that I cannot be completely objective about this subject. The book's descriptions bring back the smell of spruce wood smoke, the taste of strong tea, the feel of the wind off Lake Clark, and the sound of friends' voices from years ago. I lived in Nondalton in the mid-1970s, so the book may speak differently to me than to other readers. However, that experience allows me to vouch for its authenticity and accuracy.

Much of the traditional territory of the Inland Dena'ina is a remote, diverse, and beautiful area of lakes, rivers, foothills, and mountains that was established as the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in 1980. This area is wilderness by western standards. The book makes good use of place names, maps of historic camps and trails, patterns of fish and wildlife harvest, and family histories to document Dena'ina occupation and use of the area. It integrates information about traditional beliefs, relationships to land and resources, and economic and social organization in telling their story.

The authors set out several goals for the book. They intend it to be useful to the Dena'ina themselves as a record of their history. They expect it to help the National Park Service in educating its staff and the public who use Lake Clark National Park. They also hope to provide the lay reader with a variety of viewpoints on a different way of life. Finally, they aim to provide the academic community with a systematic ethnographic description and interpretation of the Inland Dena'ina. By and large, they accomplish these purposes.

Good descriptions of ways of life are difficult to write. They are in constant danger of swerving toward excessive detail on the one hand or of becoming superficial on the other. They often lean too heavily on theory and interpretation, or too far toward mere recitation of facts.

Linda J. Ellanna, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and coauthor Andrew Balluta, Nondalton elder and former park ranger, have crafted a workable balance between these extremes. One technique they use is to provide a variety of perspectives. Alternating chapters present scholarly description, analysis, and comparisons, balanced against chapters presenting Dena'ina perspectives — stories or events told and described by Dena'ina individuals themselves, often in their words. These chapters are very effective in conveying the flavor of Dena'ina life.

The book is based on anthropological research conducted between 1985 and 1990, supported in part by the U.S. National Park Service. Unlike much research in northern communities, this was a highly collaborative effort, closely involving many residents of the region who chose to share their knowledge and their interpretations. The descriptive and analytical portions of the book cover standard ethnographic topics, ranging from language and demography to economy, social organization, and religion. They carefully integrate the historic dimension.

The book examines the dilemmas facing a hunting and gathering group that is becoming increasingly caught up in the larger market economy and society. It addresses issues such as the loss of commercial fishing permits, changing hunting and fishing regulations, and changes resulting from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in their social and historic context. This provides valuable insights and comparative material that will be of interest both to lay people and to policy makers.

Another theme is the strong degree of cultural continuity among the Inland Dena'ina in the face of modernization. Despite major educational, political, economic, and technological changes, the Dena'ina continue many subsistence hunting and fishing practices, retain some aspects of traditional social organization, and maintain many beliefs

and values, including a strong attachment to traditional lands and resources. Circular migration between Nondalton and Alaska's urban center, Anchorage, is mentioned as a modern form of traditional Dena'ina mobility. This movement, which clearly has major implications for continuing social and economic change and adaptation among the people of Nondalton, should be explored in greater detail in some future work.

The volume's paperback binding is of moderate quality, and the printing and reproduction are very good. The narrative is well documented with an extensive and thorough bibliography. A large number of high-quality maps convey much information about the spatial dimensions of Dena'ina history, environment, place names, and resource harvest activities. The book is abundantly illustrated with historic photographs that have not been reproduced elsewhere and are an important contribution. It also includes a range of contemporary photographs that convey a sense of Nondalton today.

One of the book's strengths is probably also its major weakness. It is packed with information about the full range of subjects — economic and social organization, politics, belief systems, and the multiplicity of human experience, past and present, that it takes to characterize the richness of Dena'ina life. However, that context and coverage also make it long and complex. The reader must work to get full value. But overall the effort will be well worthwhile.

This book is a valuable synthesis of information about the Inland Dena'ina. It thoroughly documents their culture history and provides a case study of a single group of subarctic Alaskan Athabaskans. Scholars will find substantial material for comparisons with other Athabaskans and other hunting and gathering societies. It contributes to understanding modern foragers in northern North America and throughout the world. Perhaps most significantly, when I put it down, I still smell spruce wood smoke.

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**SALMON AND STORAGE: SOUTHERN TUTCHONE USE OF AN "ABUNDANT" RESOURCE.** By BETH LAURA O'LEARY. Heritage Branch, Government of the Yukon, Hude Hudän Series — Occasional Papers in Archaeology No. 3. Whitehorse, Yukon: Yukon Archaeology Programme, 1992. xii + 117 p., 7 maps, 13 illus., 3 charts, refs. Softbound. Price not given.

The question of the apparent linkage between environmental resources and the organizational forms cultures take has long been of interest to anthropologists. The culture area approach to understanding the distribution and patterning of cultures is an early example in the literature. In northwestern North America, early studies stressed the social and economic consequences of sea mammal hunting on Eskimo culture, of anadromous fish, such as salmon, on the cultures of the Pacific Northwest Coast, and of caribou migrations on native populations of interior Alaska and Canada. For example, the abundant salmon fisheries were seen by some to be an explanation for the high population densities, sedentary village life, social stratification, and complex ceremonial life of Northwest Coast cultures. These generalizations are best understood as initial efforts at understanding culture areas with apparently distinctive features. Later studies suggest that this uniformity was more apparent than real, and at best an oversimplification.

Beth Laura O'Leary has undertaken an examination of the Champagne/Aishihik band of Southern Tutchone, situated on the Klukshu River in the southwest Yukon, Canada. Her objective was to study the relationship between an apparently abundant resource, in this case salmon, and organizational responses to resource procurement. O'Leary believes that three variables — mobility strategies, group size, and the organization of labor — are interrelated and dependent on the