

Russian-Athabaskan language contact in the Kenai peninsula

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Our previous studies and this paper



- Our previous studies
 - Upper Kuskokwim: Athabaskan, interior Alaska
 - Ninilchik Russian: Kenai peninsula
- This study: Ninilchik Russian and Dena'ina (Athabaskan, Southcentral Alaska)

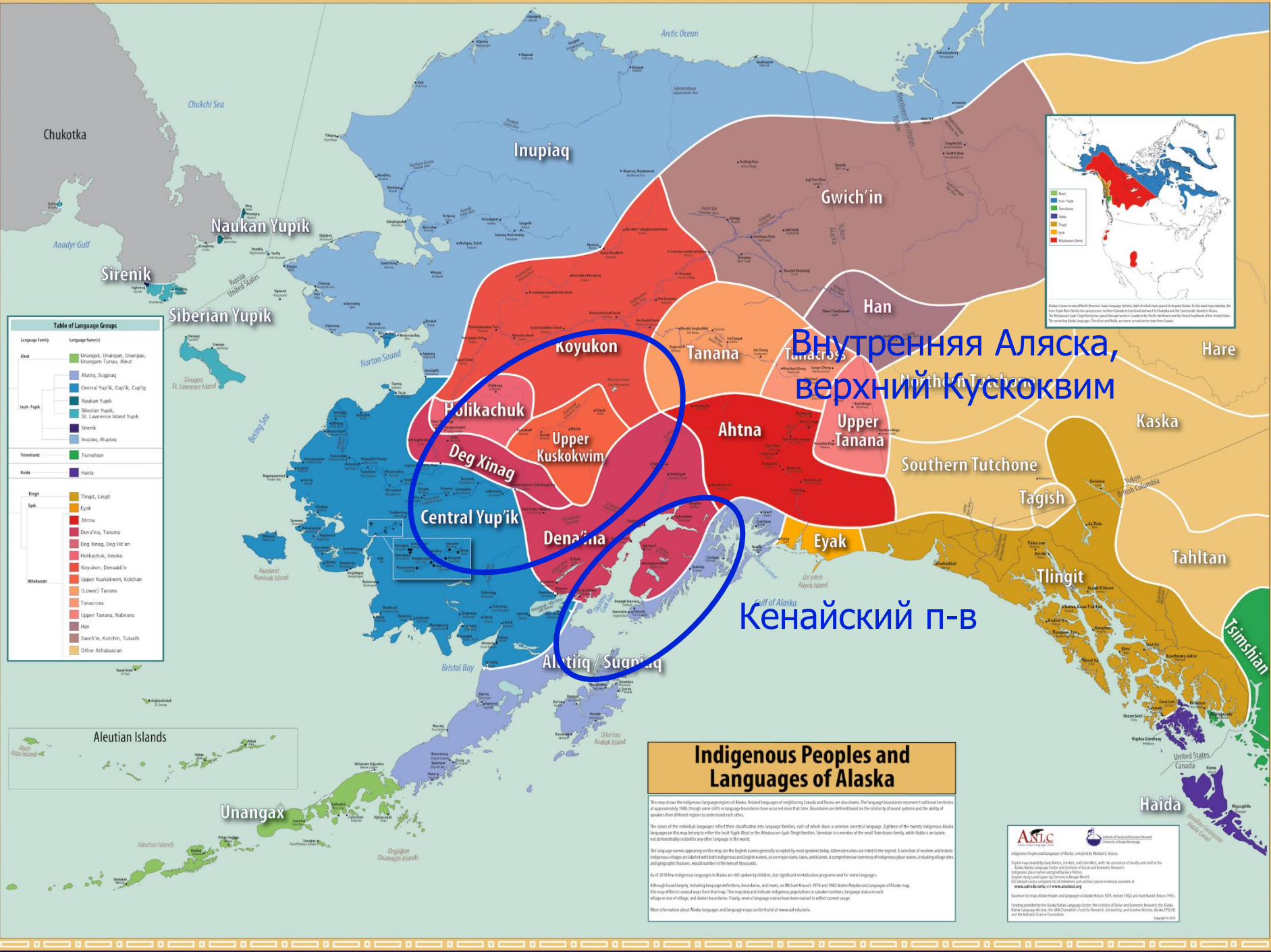
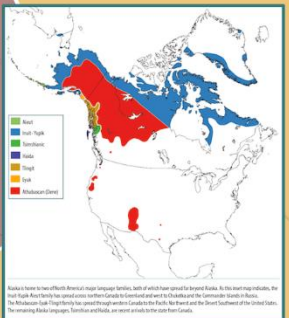


Table of Language Groups

Language Family	Language Name(s)
Alutic	Unangut, Unangan, Unangan, Unangan Tunuu, Alut
	Aktutik, Sugiqaq
	Central Yup'ik, Cap'ik, Cap'ia
	Nauyasik Yupik
	Siberian Yupik
	St. Lawrence Island Yupik
	Sirenik
	Inupiaq, Inupiat
Tsimshianic	Tsimshian
Haida	Haida
Tlingit	Tlingit, Lingit
	Eyak
Athabaskan	Dena'ina, Tanana
	Deg Xinag, Deg Hit'an
	Hoikachuk, Inocho
	Koyukon, Denasik'e
	Upper Kuskokwim, Kolchan
	(Lower) Tanana
	Tanacross
	Upper Tanana, Nubena
	Han
	Gwich'in, Kutchin, Tuluash
Other Athabaskan	



Внутренняя Аляска, верхний Кускоквим

Кенайский п-в

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska

This map shows the indigenous language regions of Alaska. Related languages of neighboring Canada and Russia are also shown. The language boundaries represent traditional territories as of approximately 1980. Though some roots in language boundaries have existed since that time, boundaries are defined based on the similarity of vowel systems and the ability of speakers from different regions to understand each other.

The colors of the individual languages reflect their classification into language families, each of which share a common ancestral language. Eighteen of the twenty indigenous Alaska languages on this map belong to either the Na-Dene, Alutic or the Athabaskan-Yukon-Tlingit families. Tsimshian is a member of the small Tsimshanic family, while Haida is an isolate, not demonstrably related to any other language in the world.

The language names appearing on this map are the English names generally accepted by most speakers today. Alternate names are listed in the legend. A selection of modern and historic indigenous villages are labeled with both indigenous and English names, as are major rivers, lakes, and deltas. A comprehensive inventory of indigenous place names, including villages and geographic features, would far exceed the space of this map.

As of 2010 the indigenous languages in Alaska are still spoken by children, but significant revitalization programs exist for some languages.

Although based largely on language definitions, boundaries, and trends, on Michael Krauss' 1974 and 1982 *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* map, this map differs in several aspects from that map. This map does not indicate indigenous populations or speaker numbers, language status in each village or size of village, and dialect boundaries. Finally, several language names have been revised to reflect current usage.

More information about Alaska languages and language maps can be found at www.uaf.edu/alutic.

ANILC
 Alaska Native Language Center
 Institute of Social and Behavioral Research
 University of Alaska Fairbanks

Special map created by Gary Wolfe, Jim Myers, and Colin Welch, with the assistance of faculty and staff of the Alaska Native Language Center and Institute of Social and Behavioral Research.
 Original map was created by Michael Krauss.
 GIS layout and cartography by a number of volunteers and archival resource materials available at www.uaf.edu/alutic

Based on the maps *Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (Krauss 1974, revised 1982) and *First Peoples* (Krauss 1995).

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language.org

Alaskan Russian: places



History: important dates



- 1740s – first visits of Russians to Alaska
- 1787 – St. Nicholas Fort/Redoubt (presently: **Kenai**) was established
- 1799 – establishment of Russian American Company, a mixed governmental-entrepreneurial formation
- 1847 – **Ninilchik** settlement for RAC retirees is established on the traditional Dena'ina territory
- 1867 – Alaska sold to the US
- 1900s – beginning of massive Americanization of Alaska

Alaskan Russian (AR)



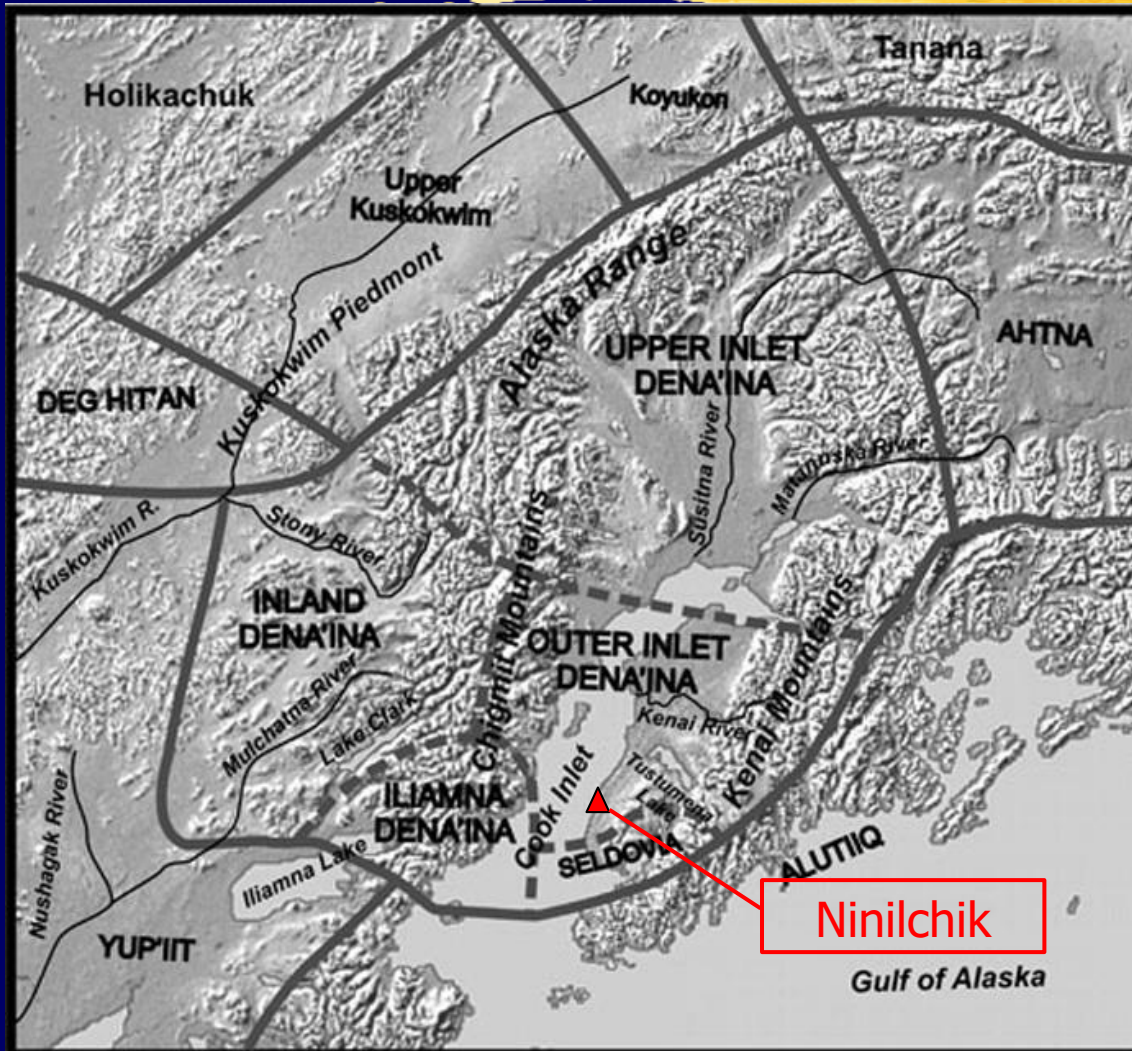
- Variety of Russian that developed in Alaska at the time of Russian America
- Different from any variety of “Continental Russian”
- Locations:
 - Ninilchik Russian (NR) and Kenai Peninsula Russian (KPR)
 - Kodiak Russian
 - Pribilof Russian
 -
- NR = variant of AR that has been preserved in the speech of descendants of the Ninilchik village (Kenai peninsula)

Ninilchik Russian



- Less than 10 speakers left (all over 80)
- Lexicon
 - 80% – same as in modern standard Russian
 - 20% – archaic words, dialectal words, 20th century innovations, modified words, borrowings
 - Influence of native Alaskan languages
 - Alutiiq: ~15 items
 - Dena'ina: 4 items
- Grammar
 - basically as in standard Russian
 - some categories are modified (simplified): gender, case, aspect...

Dena'ina dialects (Alan Boraas)



Dena'ina loanwords in NR

- *kazná* 'lynx' < Den. *kazhna* 'lynx', lit. 'black tail'
- *k'inkáshl'a* 'low bush blueberry' < Den. *gegashla* 'low bush blueberry', lit. 'small berry'
- *táyshi* 'dried fish tails' < Den. *dayeshi* 'something wind-dried'
- *chíka/in* 'fermented fish' < Den. *chuqilin* 'fermented fish'

Russian influence upon Dena'ina



- “During most of the 19th century Russian was spoken as throughout Cook Inlet. Kodiak and Kenai were the center of Russian influence with Orthodox churches and stores with trade items. Many Dena'ina learned Russian as a second language or they used many Russian words.” (Kari 2017, p. 254)

Russian loanwords in Dena'ina

- About 750 loanwords (Kari 2019)
- They include words that are mostly borrowed from Russian, but also a few from English (10), Alutiiq or Yup'iq (9), as well as some substrate words (less than 20)
- More Russian loanwords in the Outer Inlet Dialect
- Thematic groups of nouns – see Sheina and Sidorina 2020
- Unusual borrowings in Dena'ina:
 - 23 verbs
 - cigarette papers: *gurit galegga*
 - even suffixes
 - -shki 'small, endearing'
 - tage-shla-shki 'kids', lit. 'dear-small-SUFF'
 - ezhi-shki 'a little cold'
- Two categories of Russian loanwords:
 - general loans
 - "Russian known words" - Fedosia Sacaloff

General loans

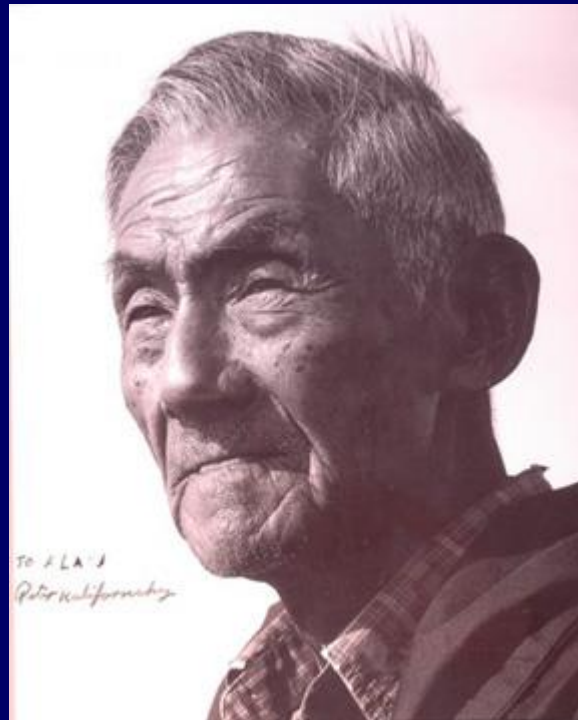
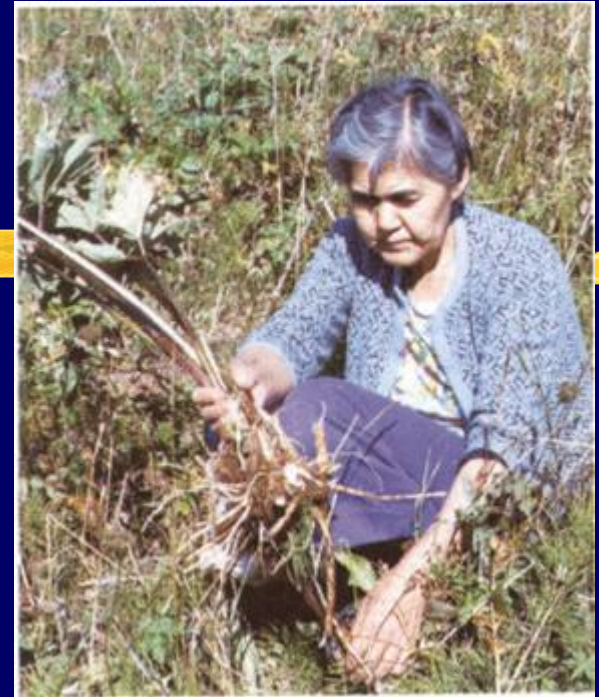
- Kari's assessment of these items as "belonging" to the common Dena'ina lexicon
- General loans might have come to Dena'ina
 - either from Alaskan Russian, spoken by Alaska oldtimers
 - *walis* 'walts'
 - *gwashna* 'kneading trough', cf. NR *kwáshn'a* 'sourdough'
 - *nowi got* 'New Year', cf. NR *nóway got*
 - *waskrisénya* 'Sunday', cf. NR *waskr'isén'a*
 - or from Continental Russian, spoken by Russians in the 19th century
 - *aliva* 'olives'
 - *ivanyeli* 'Gospel', cf. NR *iwáng'il'i*
 - *uluva* 'lead'
 - *bovar* 'bull cook', cf. NR *pówar*
 - *brotvin* 'baking pan', cf. NR *prótwin'*
 - *davaris* 'friend, partner', cf. NR *tawár'ish*
 - NB: the latter are much more numerous!

General loans: our findings

- In 2017 we worked with the 1994 Kari's list containing 697 loanwords
- Out of these, only 25~30% were not in NRD
- Checking them with our consultants, we found a number of new NR words, for example:
 - Den. *chubadan*, NR *chabadán* 'suitcase'
 - Den. *gadilon*, NR *d'ikalón* 'cologne'

Fedosia Sacaloff

- 1921-1989, Kenai town
- Sister of Peter Kalifornsky (1911-1993)



Kari 2017, Nov. 30, p.c.

- I may have mentioned of the time that a woman from Ninilchik, a good R speaker visited Fedosia. I think this was in about 1983. I just found this comment, saying that her name was Maria. She was quite young, about in her 40s.
- .lw dyotga
- src Russian =tyçtka %aunt
- ..n dyotga, deytotga
- dial O
- gl *auntie
- com address term between Fedosia and **Maria from Ninilchik**
- com +FS

Fedosia Sacaloff's words

- 129 items
- 67 were already in the NRD
- The remaining 62 were checked, and 8 new NR items were confirmed and included in NRD
 - Den-FS *nébod*, NR *n'éwat* 'seine net'
 - Den-FS *gamot*, NR *kamót* 'dresser'
 - Den-FS *gusnay*, NR *fkúsnay* 'delicious'
 - Den-FS *gléptsi*, NR *kl'iptsí* 'small trap'

 - Den-FS *wernay* 'palm frond' – but we found NR *wérnay* 'truthful'!
 -
- All FS words clearly come from KPR!
 - Among the 62 tested words, 15 contained a /w/
- The efficiency of search on the basis of the FS list (13%) is higher compared to the search based on general loans
- This may be because FS words all come from KPR (that is, Alaskan Russian), rather than from Continental Russian



Selma (Oskolkoff) Lemman

- Born (1931) and raised in Ninilchik
- Definitely the best consultant among the remaining speakers of Ninilchik Russian
- Inexhaustible source of information
- Puzzles from the domain: “original creolization of NR vs. incomplete language acquisition vs. language attrition”

01/08/2019

Conclusions



- Various statuses of loanwords, including the status of idiolectal loans
- Loanwords may come from close but distinct varieties of the source language
- Interesting dynamics in the study of two moribund languages: documentation of one of them helps to pry out lexical material belonging to the other – a kind of a rebound effect

Acknowledgements



- James Kari
- Marina Raskladkina

Thanks for your attention

NR púch'í
Den. buchgi

Den. Niqnalchint
NR N'in'il'chik

