# The Kwadacha Tsek'ene Nuts'oodalh stories

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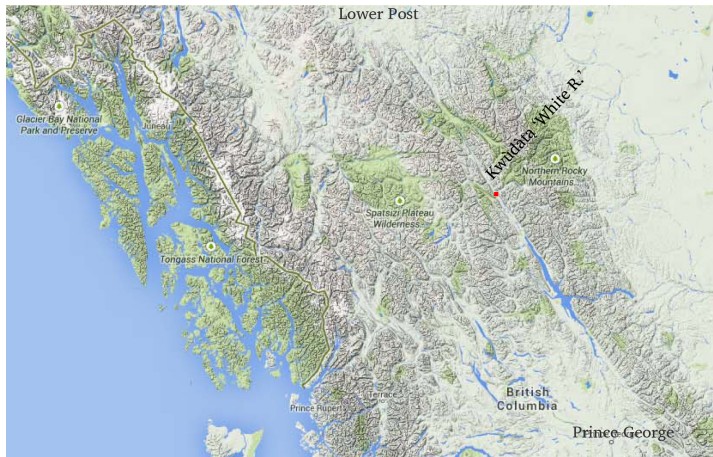
Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas,
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# Overview

# Kwadacha Tsek'ene

- Kwadacha, "most remote community in B.C."

# Kwadacha Tsek'ene

- a "mixed" language. Inputs: Tsek'ene, Kaska and Tahltan(?)

Jenness, Diamond. 1937. The Sekani Indians of British Columbia. Ottawa: Department of Mines and Resources.

Morice, Adrien-Gabriel. 1892-1893. 'Notes Archaeological, Industrial and Sociological on the Western Dns With an Ethnographical Sketch of the Same.' Transactions of the Royal Canadian Institute 4:1-222.

Thomason, Sally Grey, and Terrence Kaufman. 1988. Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics. Berkeley: University of California Press.

# Kwadacha Tsek'ene speakers

The story-teller, the late Mike Abou



The translators:

the late Mary Charlie | Edna McCook | Eileen McCook

# Protagonist types

- Travellers
    - K'etetaalkkaanee (Koyukon), "a traveler, strong in medicine power, who traverses the North...who paddled all summer and walked all winter"
    - Yamaagn Teeshyaay/Tsa' Ushyąą (Upper Tanana), "traveled around the country killing...bad animals"
- Tricksters
    - "in the western part of [North America], a character called Coyote is especially important...a trickster figure"
    - Yixgitsiy/Yuxgitsiy (Deg Xinag) (Raven/Crow)

Attla, Catherine, and Eliza Jones. 1990. K'etetaalkkaanee, the one who paddled among the people and animals: The story of an ancient traveler. Fairbanks: Yukon Koyukuk School District and ANLC.

Bright, William, ed. 1993. A Coyote Reader. Berkeley: University of California Press.

David, Cora, and Olga Lovick, ed. 2011. Teedląy t'iin naholndak niign: Stories by the Tetlin people. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.

McKennan, Robert A. 1959. The Upper Tanana Indians. New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University.

# Who was Nuts'oodalh?

- Traveller and trickster
- **Nuts'oodalh** etymology?
    - **nu**-**D**- iterative
    - **ts'**- impersonal subject, "4th person"?
    - **oo**- = ?
    - **ya** 'sg. goes'
    - -**lh** progressive
    - 'so-and-so is returning'(?)

- partial key to orthography: ⟨u⟩ = [ɐ], ⟨a⟩ = [ɑ], ⟨oo⟩ = [u], ⟨i⟩ = [ɪ], ⟨ii⟩ = [i], ⟨lh⟩ = [ɬ]

# The Nuts'oodalh cycle

- 9 episodes recorded
  - 8 in Kwadacha
    - **Digii Nuts'oodalh 'èh nunììdetl.** 'Swans flew off with Nuts'oodalh.'
    - **Nuts'oodalh 'uts'idòòhts'e too 'eyzèhkhę.** 'Nuts'oodalh drowned a giant.'
    - **Nuts'oodalh lhoowe dut'èsii kooda'ìį'.** 'Nuts'oodalh learned how to roast fish.'
    - **Dlèzhe 'uzidèhgę̀.** 'A grizzly killed itself.'
    - **Nuts'oodalh khą̀ts 'èh** 'Nuts'oodalh and the stump'
    - **Nuts'oodalh dutsule loodè' nutsuts.** 'Nuts'oodalh eats his anus scab.'
    - **Nuts'oodalh 'ut'a ghighdèhtììyii k'ànehtą.** 'Nuts'oodalh sees a treasured girl.'
    - **Nuts'oodalh dlèzhe lhèkwudut'e wooba joo k'e'iighǫ.** 'Nuts'oodalh killed two grizzlies and their father.'
  - 1 in English: Nuts'oodalh and the two beavers
- 37:01 mostly Kwadacha

# Text production

- 2002 recordings of Mike on a Sony WM-D6C cassette recorder



- Free translations mostly by Mary, Edna, Eileen
- Initially side-by-side English and Tsek'ene, without audio
- Currently for web dissemination, with word glosses and audio

# Text production challenges

- Not "pure" Kwadacha



> Ducks **k'è'òlh.**
> tsits   k'ì-'òlh
>       PER-PL.swim
> 'Ducks were swimming around.'

> Ducks **k'è'òlh.**
> tsits   they're swimming around
> 'Ducks were swimming around.'

# Text production challenges

- Not "pure" Kwadacha (longer example)

| **'Ii** | big rock | | **gwuda,** |
|---|---|---|---|
| that | tse dachow | | there |
| | rock | DIM-PROG-be.big | |

**tsìidìihk'as.**

tsì-y-d-ii-h-k'as

into.fire-3sO-into.fire-CNJ-THM-toss.compact

'He threw a big rock in the fire.'

| **'Ii** | big rock | **gwuda, tsìidìihk'as.** |
|---|---|---|
| that | tse dachow | there | he threw it in fire |

'He threw a big rock in the fire.'[a]

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[a] **tse** 'rock', **dachow** 'it's big'

# Text production challenges

- Sentences added by the translators
  - to help the listener understand the plot
  - to translate longer stretches of English

Then he, you know them alder willow? He carve out
that kind too.

**K'uz kìiht'ats.**

alder  kù-ii-h-t'ats

off-CNJ-THM-cut.shape

'He cut off a piece of alder.'

He carried that kind too.

**'Uyii joo k'ètįịh.**

that   too  k'ì-tįịh

PER-handle.rigid

'He carried that around too.'

# Insubordination

- "the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses"
- reported in Navajo, Tlingit, Tanacross, Tanana, Deg Xinag, Ahtna, Koyukon
  - not Slave, Witsuwit'en, Tsek'ene, Dogrib, Carrier
  - "I should note that the claims stated above are highly tentative. The individuals credited here were offering their best recollections at the time, and should not be held responsible for any errors in this tentative list."

- Deg Xinag insubordination functions: syntactic (exclamations); discourse (backgrounding, change of scene)

Cable, Seth. 2011. Insubordination in Tlingit: An Areal Feature? Northwest Journal of Linguistics, 5.1-38.

Evans, Nicholas. 2007. Insubordination and its uses. Finiteness, ed. by Irina Nikolaeva, 366-431. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hargus, Sharon. 2012. 'Subordination and insubordination in Deg Xinag.' In Working Papers in Athabaskan Languages 2011, ed. by James Crippen. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center. 87-111.

Mithun, Marianne. 2008. The Extension of Dependency Beyond the Sentence. Language, 84.69-119.

# Subordination

- **-ii** relativizer



**Kwuye lhoowe k'è'òlhii        k'ànehtą.**
there    fish      k'ì-'òlh-ii          k'à-n-h-tą
                   PER-PL.swim-REL THM-THM-THM-see
'There he saw fish swimming around.'

- **-ii** subordinator



**'Uyii yutsàhyonàa                              'ootònii**
that    yu-tsàhyon-è-a                            oo-tòn-ii
        3SG.PSR-groundhog.skin.blanket-PSD-DIM THM-hold-SUB
**tl'ǫh yuk'wus k'eh dusuda.**
then    yu-k'wus on      du-su-da
        3SG-neck         high-CNJ-SG.sit
'He took hold of his groundhog blanket and sat up high on his
neck.'

# The beginning of episode 1



You know, **'uyii Nuts'oodalh?**
                 that
'You know, that Nuts'oodalh?'

**Nuts'oodalh, lhàwìì sǫ         k'èdahii.**
                 once     UNCERT k'ì-dah-ii
                                  PER-SG.go-INSUB
'One day Nuts'oodalh was walking around.'

**Dune  ka  nùnutą.**
person for nù-nu-tą
           CONT-THM-look
'He was looking for someone.'

# The beginning of episode 2

**'Ii  sǫ      gwuda k'èdah,  k'èdah.**
then UNCERT there   k'ì-dah
                    PER-SG.go
'He was walking and walking around there.'

**Lhàhde  sǫ      matiiyawììjàhìì.**
one place UNCERT m-atiiyawììjàh-ìì
                  3sP-be.tired-INSUB
'He got tired somewhere.'

**Too, too chow kìilįį      t'ùsuya        de    sǫ**
water    big   kù-ii-lįį    t'ù-su-ya      loc.RC UNCERT
               out-CNJ-flow up.to-CNJ-SG.go

**matiiyawììjàhìì.**
m-atiiyawììjàh-ìì
3sP-be.tired-INSUB
'He came up to a big river and he got tired.'

Oh boy    **dèkusk'eh sǫ      yà'ììsya,"**
'Ooh 'ane' how          UNCERT yà-'ìì-s-ya
                                across-CNJ-1sS-SG.go

**kwudidii,           canyon wudighdzè'.**
k-oo-d-dii                   wu-dighdzè'
3arP-THM-THM-think           ar-above.there
'"Oh boy, I wonder how I might get across," he was thinking above the canyon.'

# The beginning of episode 3



**Gwa wuts'eh ghuyalhii.**

that    wu-ts'eh    ghu-ya-lh-ii

     AR-from    PROG-SG.go-PROG-INSUB

'After that he kept walking.'

**Gwa lhàhde    mun t'ùsuya.**

there one place lake    t'ù-su-ya

               up.to-CNJ-SG.go

'He came to a lake.'

## Middle of episode 6

**Mutsule** scab **'u-w-ìì-jàh.**
mu-tsule lhoot 'u-w-ìì-jàh
3sg-anus thus-ar-cnj-became
'His anus became a scab.'

**'Uyii kwa k'èdahii.**
then finally k'ì-dah-ii
PER-SG.go-INSUB
'Then he was walking around.'



**'Uyii lh— dubùdii 'èh, gwuda,**
that d-bùd-ii since there
THM-be.hungry-SUB

he pull out the scab, he, **'uyii 'utsuts.**
dutsule loodè' kìihdlat that u-tsuts
IMPF-eat

'He was hungry somewhere so he pulled out his scab.'[a]

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[a]dutsule loodè' 'his anus scab', kìihdlat 'he pulled out, off'

# Middle of episode 8



**'Ide sǫ     kwùla, lhèhgʼạ̀h sǫ      wooba**
then UNCERT finally   evening   UNCERT woo-ba
                                        3PL-father

**lhunadalh.**
lhu-nu-a-da-lh
reach-ITER-PROG-SG.go-PROG
'Then finally their father came back in the evening.'

**'Uyii** tent   **yìıh   sukigh— dahdeda** live **ghulę de**
that   ts'ìısa under                  wherever  nùghudèl  LOC.SUB

**sǫ,     kighnètalii.**
UNCERT ki-n-è-tal-ii
        THM-THM-THM-play-INSUB
'Wherever they lived, they played under a tent.'

**'Uyii gah    'ìkighnètal,                'ùkoo.**
that   rabbit ì-ki-gh-n-è-tal                those
              with-THM-3PS-THM-THM-play
'They were playing with the rabbit.'

# Summary

- Nuts'oodalh, the folk hero of Kwadacha Tsek'ene, combines properties of travellers (to the north) and tricksters (to the south).
- Insubordination in the texts is extremely limited, serving discourse functions only (backgrounding, quasi-formulaic story introducer).

# Acknowledgements

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