

A scenic landscape photograph of a mountain range with snow-capped peaks and a river valley below. The mountains are dark with patches of white snow, and the sky is a pale blue with soft, white clouds. The foreground shows a lush green valley with a winding river.

# Documenting for revitalization: Kwadacha Tsek'ene, a case study

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Dene Languages Conference  
June 19, 2014

# Kwadacha (Fort Ware), B.C.

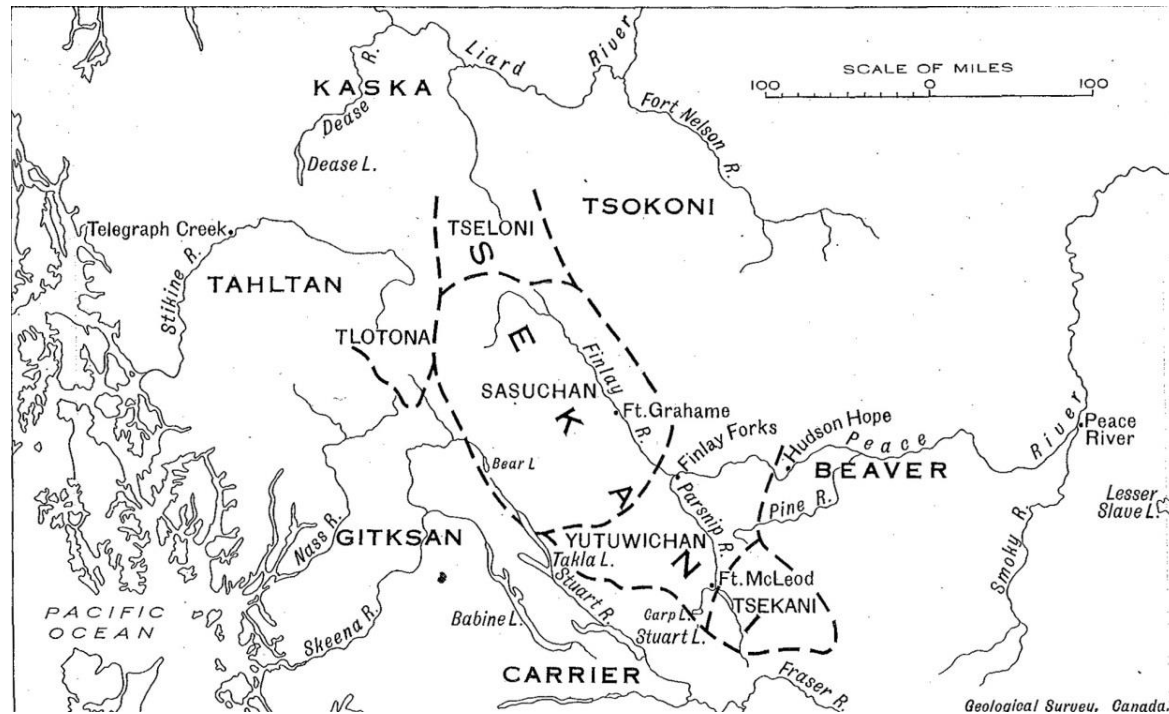


# Tsek'ene language

- Tsek'ene > *Sekani*, *Siccany*, *Sékanais*, etc.
- Other dialects
  - Fort Grahame > Ingenika, Tsay Keh [tse k'eh]
  - McLeod Lake
- Closely related to Dane zaa (Beaver), especially Halfway, Moberly Lake

# Linguistic origins of Kwadacha

- 4 Tsek'ene groups “in the early days of the nineteenth century” (Morice 1892-1893)
  - *Tseloni* (Tselone)
  - *Sasuchan* (Sasutoot'a)
  - *Yutuwichan* (Yitsoot'a)
  - *Tsekani* (Tsek'ene)



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

# History of Kwadacha

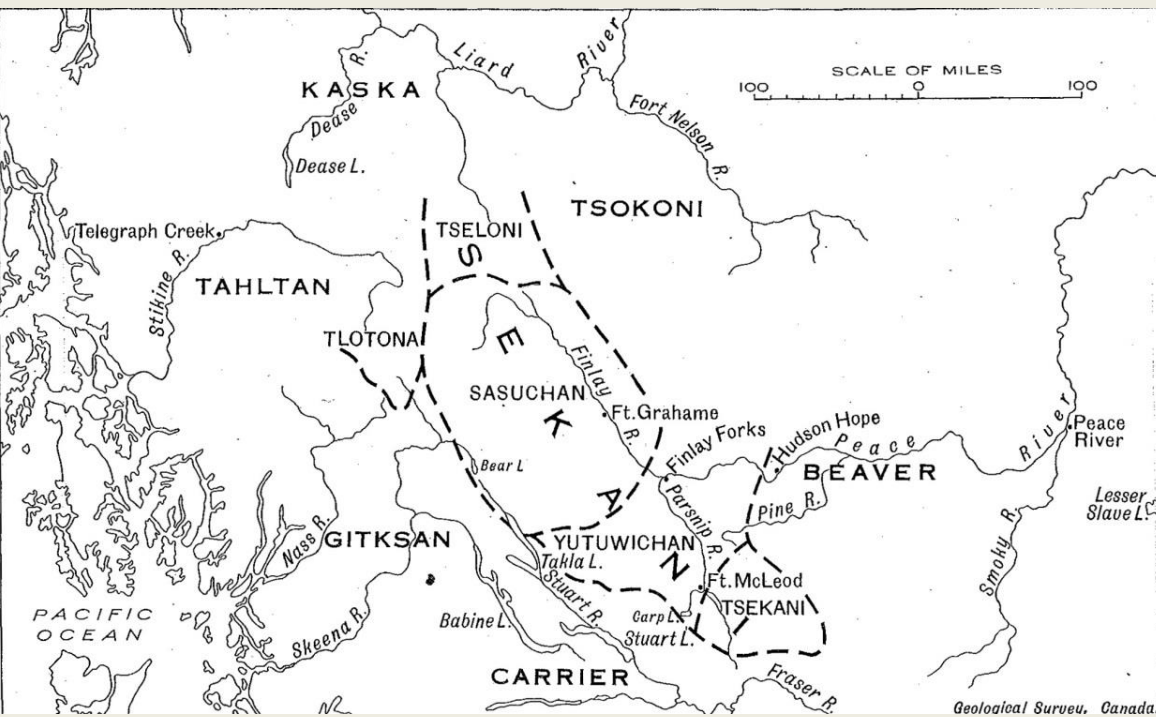
- 1924 interviews by anthropologist Diamond Jenness in McLeod Lake and Fort Grahame

- 4 groups “in the early days of the nineteenth century”

- *Tseloni* (Tselone)
- *Sasuchan* (Sasutoot’ą)
- *Yutuwichan* (Yitsoot’ą)
- *Tsekani* (Tsek’ene)

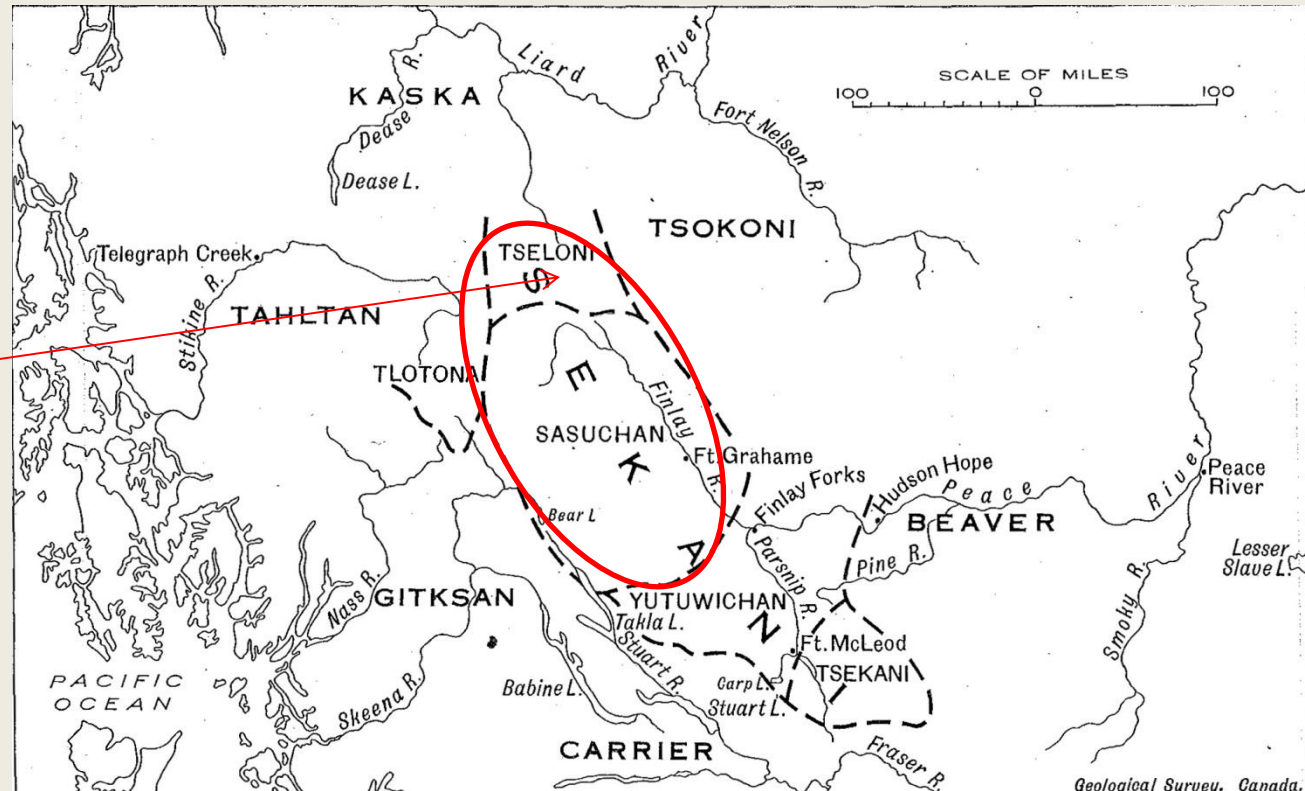
Jenness, Diamond. 1937. *The Sekani Indians of British Columbia*. Ottawa: Department of Mines and Resources.

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



# History of Kwadacha, cont.

- Fort Grahame established “about 1890”
- *Otzane* [’Odziinè’]
- Unlike Tsek’ene and most Dane zaa
  - no d t t’ > j
  - ch ch’
  - too vs. choo ‘water’



# 'Àtse Davie and some relatives



Munro  
Massetoe  
son-in-law

Harry  
Davie

stepson to Mac

Mac  
McCook  
son-in-law

Frank  
Abou

son-in-law to Munro

'Àtse  
Davie

# Language documentation

- Dave and Kay Wilkinson, Summer Institute of Linguistics (1965-68?)
  - developed writing system
  - literacy manual
  - translations of Bible stories

Wilkinson, Dave, and Kay Wilkinson. 1969. *Sekani Bible Story Book*. Ware, B.C.: Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. bible stories

Wilkinson, Dave, and Kay Wilkinson. 1969. *Sekani Reading Book*. Ware, B.C.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc.



# Language documentation, cont.

- Sharon Hargus (1985-86, 1999-present)
  - revised writing system slightly
  - topical dictionary
  - texts, mostly from Mike Abou
  - grammar in preparation
  - dictionary in preparation

# Mike Abou



a son of Frank and Louise Abou, great-grandson of 'Àtse Davie

# Edna McCook



a granddaughter of Mac McCook, and great-granddaughter of 'Àtse Davie

# Eileen McCook



Edna's older sister

# Lena McCook



originally from Tsay Keh

# The late Mary Charlie

- Long time language teacher
- Retired 2010



cousin to Eileen and Edna

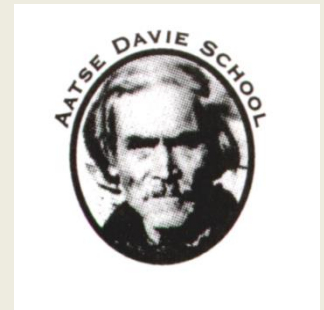
# The late Louie Tomah



originally from Fort Grahame

# Current language teaching

- Aatse Davie School, Kwadacha





# Current language teachers

- Faye Seymour, originally from Halfway



# Current language teachers, cont.

- Angela Hocken

(testing Rhianna McCook)



# Current language teaching situation

- Teachers are learning the language as they teach it
- Using materials developed by
  - previous teachers (mostly)
  - linguist (me) + speakers (some)

# Documenting for revitalization

- Revitalization is happening *right now*
- Documentation needs to be useful to language teachers and learners
  - Pedagogical grammar has immediate value
  - Grammar written solely for other linguists has limited value
- Purely written materials are of limited use
  - Writing system may be hard to learn
  - Writing system may not fully reflect pronunciation

# Limits of written materials

- Kwadacha Tsek'ene is a tone language
  - 'iize 'slush' vs. 'iize 'I hear'
  - 'ehda 'golden eagle' vs. 'èhda 'he/she is hunting while sitting'
  - lhàwì 'once' vs. lhawì 'stop it'

# Limits of written materials, cont.

- But there is also stress
- Writing system does not show stress.  
(Dictionary does.)

– **didii**  'this'

vs. **digii**  'swan'

– **dune**  'person'

vs. **dude**  'groundhog'

– 'indiinii 'kinnikinnik'

vs. 'utadii 'horsefly'



# Sample dictionary entries

accompanying sound  
file of Mike Abou

- **'utadii** *n* (*pr* **'utadii'**) ☉<sup>ma</sup> horsefly, warble fly.
- **'indiinii** *n* (*pr* **'indii'nii**) ☉<sup>ma</sup> kinnikinnik, bearberry, “chicken berries”. (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) [PA \**dənəx*<sup>y</sup> “arctostaphylos, bearberry” (KL)]  
**'Indiinii** *gàh pn*. Ingenika R.
- **'ine**  
**ti#h-'ine** *v*. be poor, pitiful, wretched. —**Tits'eh'ine**.  
Poor us. (*lit.* “We’re pitiful.”) (*impf 1s* **tes'ine**, *2s* **tin-**, *3s* **teh-**, *1p* **tits'eh-**, *2p* **tah-**, *3p* **tigheh-**) ☉<sup>ma</sup>

# Recordings

- Recording is important, but recording alone will not revitalize the language.
- Sample video recording of Mike Abou and Louie Tomah (talking about **Tsìgazii**)



# Beginning of Louie's story

**Gwuda muma kwùne ghidubùt.**

there his family they're hungry

'His family was hungry there.'

**Dò'awwòlành.**

they were starving

'They were starving.'

**'Ii sọ chighdudùlh 'ighdudìichèh.**

then they pull out of camp they're trying to subsist

'Then they pulled out of their camp to try to subsist.'

**Muma chets--- chighdugeh.**

his mother they're packing him as they pull out

'They were packing him (Tsìgazii) as they pull out.'

# Final thoughts

- Future teachers (if not current ones) will be language learners too.
- Written materials alone are not enough.
- Recordings alone are not enough.
- Cool technology alone is not enough.
- Language documentation should be approached with humility.

# Musii chow

