THE CREATION OF NARRATIVE SPACE

THE DIRECTIONAL SYSTEM OF UPPER TANANA

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Special Case Master of Arts
in
Interdisciplinary
University of Regina

By
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Regina, Saskatchewan
July 2015

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Caleb Donald Brucks, candidate for the degree of Special Case Master of Arts Interdisciplinary, has presented a thesis titled, *The Creation of Narrative Space: The Directional System of Upper Tanana*, in an oral examination held on July 8, 2015. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This thesis shows how one portion of Upper Tanana Athabascan spatial language, the directionals, is used by storytellers to create detailed maps and descriptions of story settings. Additionally, this thesis also shows how the storytellers of Northway and Tetlin are able to use their intimate knowledge of the landscape to pick frames-of-reference and uses of directionals which are best suited to describe a narrative episode. That is, directionals may be used to both describe the immediate environment of a story—or the motion or orientation of objects in the surroundings—or to inform the audience of characters headings or locations throughout the whole valley.

A subset of the Upper Tanana directional system is a lexical class of directionals adverbs anchored to rivers which create an absolute system of direction described as an ‘intermediate absolute landmark’ system (Levinson 2003:91). These Athabascan ‘riverine directionals’ are commonly reported to be abstracted from a major river, the Tanana River in this instance, in a series of non-overlapping regions. Via an analysis of spatial forms in Northway and Tetlin narratives, however, this thesis shows that Upper Tanana riverine directionals are abstracted from more than one river in the valley and thus the system can be divided into a set of smaller zones—which I term a ‘secondary riverine layer’—enclosed within the larger regional one. This adds another level of precision to storytellers already robust repertoire of spatially descriptive constructions used to describe narrative spaces.

While substantial research on Athabascan directionals, and their role in narrative, has already been accomplished, descriptions of the Upper Tanana directional system are sorely lacking. Thus, this thesis looks at the linguistic form and function of the system in the language and examines how they are used in spontaneous discourse. I determined
that the directionals of Upper Tanana, which are linked to Northway and Tetlin people’s way of life and the landscape they inhabit, should be examined in their broader cultural and environmental context. Thus, in addition to analyzing the corpus of recorded Upper Tanana narratives I visited and lived in the villages of Northway and Tetlin to conduct elicitation and interview sessions with Upper Tanana speakers and to pursue ethnographic research. These broad research methodologies allowed me a fuller and more contextualized understanding of how the system functions and I present here the results of my research.

This thesis adds to the literature on the use of Athabascan directionals in narrative and provides the first in-depth description of the system and its narrative uses in the Upper Tanana language. The directional system is an important resource in Upper Tanana storytellers’ creation of text-worlds which can be scaled to fit the descriptive needs of a narrative episode. In turn, this illustrates the comprehensive knowledge the Northway and Tetlin people have of their landscape and how they are able to create narrative events which can be followed both “like a map” and “just like being there”.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Susanne Kuehling and Dr. Olga Lovick for advising me on this thesis and for providing constructive feedback and direction throughout the researching and writing process. I would like to additionally thank Dr. Lovick for her support in the field, her invitations to assist with linguistic data collection trips to the Upper Tanana area, assistance with linguistic data analysis, and for being a great collaborator. Thanks to my other committee member, Dr. Jan van Eijk, for his support.

I would also like to thank Dr. James Kari and Chris Cannon for inviting me to join in on their interviews with Northway and Tetlin elders and for sharing their recordings and transcripts with me. A special thanks to Dr. Siri Tuttle for being both a great collaborator and host. Thanks to Polly Hyslop for allowing my partner and me to live in her house in Northway.

I would also like to thank the funders who have made this thesis possible: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Endangered Languages Fund, the Phillips Fund from the American Philosophical Society, and the University of Regina’s Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

Most of all I wish to thank the people of Northway and Tetlin for allowing me in to their homes and speaking with me in their language. I would especially like to thank the following people for their overwhelming support and hospitality: Roy and Cora David, Sherry Demit-Barnes, Dale and Rosa Brewer, Eddie Demit, Bernice Joe, Ida Joe, and Roy and Avis Sam.
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List of Abbreviations

• ABL - ablative
• AD - adverbial/derivational prefix
• ADJ - adjacent, next one over
• ALL - allative
• AREA - areal
• Conj - conjugation
• CT - contrastive topic
• CUST - customary
• Dist - distributive
• DIST - distal
• DO - direct object
• Fut - future
• Gen - gender
• Inc - Incorporate
• Ipfv - imperfective
• It - iterative
• LIN - linear
• MED - medial
• Mo - mode
• Neg - negative
• NEU - neuter
• Nom - nominal
• Opt - optative
• PA - Proto-Athabascan
• Pfv - perfective
• PL - plural
• PO - postpositional object
• PP - postposition
• Pron - pronominal prefixes
• PROX - proximate
• PUNC - punctual
• Qual - qualifier
• Sbj - subject
• Term - terminative
• VV - voice/valence prefix
Chapter 1

Introduction

In this thesis I show how a class of deictic adverbs, directionals, is used by Upper Tanana storytellers to add a wide range of spatial descriptions to their narratives. Some of these directionals are anchored to major landmarks in the immediate environment—rivers most notably. By taking advantage of the ways that directionals encode information on the ground and anchor of directionals, storytellers from the Alaskan Upper Tanana villages of Northway and Tetlin are able to add a vast amount of direction-bearing and space-describing information to their narratives. This thesis explores the ‘narrative spaces’—the geographic and social settings of stories—created through the use of directionals, how they match the landscape, and how they are encoded in the language. Thus, this thesis is concerned with both the linguistic description of space in directional forms as well as the para-linguistic function of the space they create and how it reflects on the peoples’ interaction with their landscape.
1.1 Organization of this Thesis

The discussion of Upper Tanana spatial description in narratives is reliant on a substantial amount of background information. Thus, the first three chapters provide general context. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with definitions, such as language names, used throughout the following chapters as well as methodological explanations. A history of the Upper Tanana region and some ethnographic background is found in chapter 2. Chapter 3 is devoted to a description of the Upper Tanana language with emphasis on aspects of the language which are directly related to spatial construction.

An introduction to frames-of-reference and direction systems and a description of the Upper Tanana riverine directional system is provided in chapter 4. A review of literature on narratives, genre classification, and directionals and spatial elements in Athabascan narratives is in chapter 5. The following two chapters provide examples of Upper Tanana directional use and spatial construction in the personal narratives and histories of storytellers from Northway and Tetlin with discussions of results at the end of each chapter. The final chapter sums up the conclusions of the thesis and provides suggestions for further research.

Maps and illustrations for many of the examples are found in Appendix A following the bibliography.

1.2 A Note on the Names of the People and Language

Determining which names to use for the Upper Tanana language, language family, and people group is a complicated issue. Many of the terms in regular usage are exonyms applied to the language or people group by white colonists or other native groups. For example, the name Athabascan, used as a name for both the language family and people group,
comes from a Woods Cree place name,\(^1\) attributed to a lake in northern Saskatchewan and Alberta (Lake Athabasca), which Albert Gallatin, by his own admission, ‘arbitrarily’ assigned to the family of languages which lived around its shores in 1836 (Krauss 1988:105-106). The name has persisted since then but has recently begun falling out of use, especially in Canada, in favour of *Dene* which is an approximation of the word for ‘people’ in many Athabascan languages (for example, the word is *dineh* in Upper Tanana). The choice of names is complicated by the fact that in Northway, Tetlin, and many of the other Alaskan native villages, ‘Athabascan’ is the recognized English term for both the language family and the ethnic group. Thus, while the name is not ideal, I have chosen to use the name that the people I work with use. When discussing groups which have indicated a preference for *Dene* I use that name. ‘Athabascan’ has numerous alternate spellings: Athabaskan, Athapascan, Athapaskan. I am using ‘Athabascan’ as it is the currently accepted spelling in Alaska.\(^2\)

Turning then to the term ‘Upper Tanana’ which is the name of the language spoken by the people of Tetlin and Northway: this name was also assigned to the group based on the region they inhabit in the upper stretches of the Tanana River. The origin of the name ‘Tanana’ itself is uncertain but may come from the Koyukon *tene no’, tenene* ‘trail river’ (Bright 2004:478; Kari 1999:104).\(^3\) McKennan notes that when he visited the area in 1929 the inhabitants of the upper Tanana “content themselves with the name *Dené*, or “People,” reserving any more descriptive term for more distant neighbours” (1959:15). It is ironic, then, that McKennan chooses to adopt the term ‘Upper Tanana’—an anglicized word possibly derived from a Koyukon name—for the language, people, and area

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\(^1\)The Woods Cree word was *athapaska\textsuperscript{\textregistered}w* with the meaning ‘where there are plants one after another’ according to Goddard (1981:168).

\(^2\)Athabascan is the term, and spelling, recognized by the Tanana Chiefs Conference (1997) and the Alaska Native Language Center (2011).

\(^3\)The Upper Tanana term for the Tanana River is *Tth ‘itu’ Niign* ‘straight water’ (Kari 1997).
to avoid using the descriptive terms of the neighbouring groups. When Upper Tanana people are speaking in the Upper Tanana language speakers use Dineh ‘People’ to refer to themselves and Nee’aaneegn ‘Our language’ for their language but they have tentatively adopted the term “Upper Tanana” while speaking in English. Thus, due to a lack of alternatives, I again follow their lead in using ‘Upper Tanana’ as both the ethnonym and language name.

A much more common classification of both language and people groups in the area is along village lines. Upper Tanana people are much more likely to say “She speaks Tetlin (language)”, “That is Copper (Center) dialect”, or “I am from Northway” than use language or people group terms like Ahtna, Upper Tanana, or Koyukon. As Haynes and Simeone note, people identify much more with their community (and individual community ties) than broader groupings:

Modern villagers have developed a strong sense of identity with their community and the surrounding landscape. A village and the surrounding landscape are not simply a backdrop or stage for some activity, or a place of residence, but a home in the sense of a place of belonging so that when a person says, “I am from Northway” she or he is asserting an identity associated with a specific place and group of people (Haynes and Simeone 2007:55)

Thus, whenever possible I refer to the people and language of individuals in village terms. That is, I use ‘Tetlin/Northway dialect’ and ‘Tetlin/Northway people’ rather than the overarching ‘Upper Tanana people’ or ‘Upper Tanana language’ terms whenever the more exact terms are applicable.

1.3 A Note on the use of Personal Names

The personal names of speakers are used throughout the discussion of narratives in chapters 6 and 7 and elsewhere where quotes are pulled from narrative recordings. This topic
was discussed with Elders from Northway and Tetlin at the beginning of the study when the speakers reviewed and signed the consent forms outlining the research. That it was important to the speakers for their knowledge and language abilities to be recognized by name is reflected in the fact that they all chose to have their personal names used in any publications of the research and to have their names attached to the recordings deposited at the Alaska Native Languages Archive. The use of personal names is common practice in academic publications discussing the oral narratives of Athabascan languages.\(^4\)

The examples pulled from Mrs. Cora David’s narratives are already published in (David 2011) while the Northway stories are currently being prepared for publication. Thus, the personal names of story tellers are used when discussing their narratives in order to give them the proper credit for their oratories and work they put into developing the transcripts. The speakers from Tetlin who are identified by name in the text are Roy and Cora David and the speakers from Northway are Sherry Demit-Barnes,\(^5\) Darlene Northway, and Avis Sam. Names are omitted from sections of the thesis which are not related to narratives to protect the identity of consultants when sensitive or possibly misinterpreted information is involved.

### 1.4 Fieldwork and Methodology

From 2013 through 2015 I visited the Tetlin and Northway area several times for linguistic and anthropological research. Most of these trips lasted a couple of weeks. Linguistics-focused trips were in May and November of 2013, November of 2014, and February and May of 2015. I also went on an extended fieldwork trip of three and a half months

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\(^5\)Sherry Demit-Barnes requests that her father’s name (Demit) is included so people can identify her heritage. Mrs. Barnes is used through the remainder of the text with her permission.
in the summer of 2014 in which I lived in the community and did the majority of my ethnographic research (while still working on transcription and translation of narratives, grammar, etc.). A description of the research methods used during these trips is below.

### 1.4.1 A Note on Working Interdisciplinarily

Anthropology and linguistics are fields that pair well; both are concerned with understanding something from another’s point of view. While linguists aim to understand the language (and the semantic webs, etc., which pertain in a linguistic group), the cultural anthropologist strives to peek into the broader world—including the beliefs, ways of acting, and realities—of the group of study. Margaret Field expresses the need to complement linguistic research with anthropology noting that “ethnography is an important component of the process, as culture permeates lexicons, and cultural traditions are sometimes inseparable from linguistic form” (Field 2009:300). Julie Cruikshank echoes this statement as she argues for the importance of contextualizing linguistic research: “As anthropologists began to look at the social and cultural settings from which words and things were being gathered, notions of context became increasingly important” (Cruikshank 1992:7). The calls for collaboration between the fields are due to the different strengths and methodologies the disciplines are concerned with. Linguistics has a relatively constrained and easily observed field of study and is able to look at language with a much more qualitative or ‘scientific’ stance than is available to anthropologists. Linguists can measure vowel qualities and determine syntactic structures with a considerable degree of scientific acumen. Most anthropologists, on the other hand, consciously try to

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6 *Ethnography* may be used both to the process and product of anthropological research (Sanjek 1996:295). As a process, ethnography aims to research a topic in its broader context, through the the “viewpoints and concepts of the people” being studied, while comparing these to other groups (Sanjek 1996:299). As a product, ethnography (or ethnographic description) is the resulting broad description from the group’s own perspective grounded in anthropological theory. (Sanjek 1996:296).
engage as a subjective participant-observer into the untidy business of ethnographic re-
search (see DeVita 2000). The goal of ethnography is to be immersed as much as possible
in the culture of study. Davies argues that it is this aspect of anthropological research—
the long-term immersion into another way of seeing the world—which accounts for the
high validity of ethnographic findings (2008:45, 98). That is, while the conclusions of
ethnographic studies are not as likely to be repeatable or generalizable claims (like laws
or universal rules) the researcher is still able to make ‘true’ claims—that is, claims that
match the research setting—because the research methods employed are wide-ranging
and hypotheses are tested in a number of ways (2008:96). Anthropological methods are
thus well suited to testing semantic and pragmatic claims advanced, or stumbled upon, in
linguistic studies. Determining how widespread or restricted, and homogeneous or het-
erogeneous, linguistic phenomena with all their cultural implications are, is a task well
suited to the diverse research methods of employed during ethnographic research.

Linguistic descriptions of places are inextricably linked to many aspects with which
anthropology is concerned. The use of spatial elements in narratives creates places, which
are felt, or “sensed” as much as understood. This is especially clear in studies of some
Athabascan groups. For example, Jett writes that Navajo place names “are intersec-
tions of place, landscape, thought, language, perception, value, belief, history, economy,
and society, and thus provide avenues of understanding toward all of these physical-
environmental, cognitive, linguistic, and cultural phenomena” (2011:328). Similarly,
Basso (1996) shows that a strong connection exists between places and mythical accounts
for the Western Apache. The moral lessons found in traditional stories are inscribed on
the landscape. As the Western Apache move through the landscape they are taught moral
lessons encoded in the narratives that happened at the places they pass (1996:68). The
lessons of these stories may be evoked later simply by referencing the names of the places
These places are inhabited by the narratives. They are sensed and experienced as locales which “animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them” (1996:55). Basso describes places as locations where the wisdom of traditional stories ‘sits’ (1996:67). Examining the construction of narrative space and place is closely tied to living in, or inhabiting them. Thus, a study of the narrative construction of spaces, such as this one, is well suited to an interdisciplinary approach which combines the strengths of cultural and linguistic study.

1.4.2 Introduction to the Methodology

The goal of this thesis is to explore the role of spatial elements in Upper Tanana narratives in creating narrative space. Thus, this thesis has a linguistic emphasis—or at least a topic which is normally left to linguists. However, even a cursory review of Upper Tanana directional spatial elements makes it clear that they are not restricted solely to the domain of language, nor should they be solely described in linguistic terms. The riverine directional system is involved in linguistic features such as the maintenance of information flow (Busch 2000:2, 16; Moore 2002), the creation of a “narrative geography” (Busch 2000:2) and perspective (Moore 2002:Ch. 2). They also perform an indexing—or mapping—function as shown clearly in the route-describing travel narratives common in some Athabascan communities (see Kari 1986; 2011, Berez 2011). However, these linguistic operations are informed by people’s perceptions of the environment and thus enter the anthropologist’s purview. For some, the ways spatial description is realized in different languages is seen as an “insight into the possible cultural variability of spatial thinking” (Levinson and Wilkins 2006:1). Put more anthropologically, a place is “locked within the mental horizons of those who give it life” but issue “in a stream of symbol-
ically drawn particulars” (Basso 1996:86). Models of space are revealed through both linguistic and cultural practices.

I argue that anthropological methods are applicable to a study of the Upper Tanana spatial elements as they are linked to the ways that people interact with a real world. The spaces and places of stories are created of the same stuff as experienced, real locations. As Basso says of the Western Apache, the places where stories took place enter in to the shared culture of a group and become locations where wisdom ‘sits’, where stories are geographically indexed, where the landscape proves the truth of the tale (1996).

The narrative, or verbal art, aspect of this thesis is primarily linguistic but is informed by anthropological methods. As Richard Bauman puts it, the verbal art of myth narration and other oral performance is brought “together in culture-specific and variable ways” (2001:165). My focus is on the function of directional elements in narrative but this focus is involved in culture specific ways of speaking. A study of oral narrative swims in the broader sea of culture. Thus, though the topic of this thesis is relatively narrow, the methodological swathe must be wide. To focus solely on linguistic methodologies runs the risk of obfuscating the full range of meaning contained in Upper Tanana spatial elements.

1.4.3 Linguistic Methods

The main research materials of this thesis are recorded and transcribed Upper Tanana narratives told by Elders from the Alaskan villages of Northway and Tetlin. As narratives are the focus of the research I see them as the fulcrum around which the rest of the research turns—the central point I must keep in mind while selecting research methodologies. The majority of texts are selected from a corpus of narratives recorded by linguists. I have added to the collection while working on this thesis and other Upper Tanana language
While narratives were recorded in a number of social contexts, efforts were made to allow speech to be as natural and connected as possible in a recording environment. Each of these social settings has both drawbacks and strengths. For example, recording narratives told by groups of language speakers is well suited to getting natural speech and often results in interesting discussions and clarifications from the audience; however, they are noisy and technically difficult to record. Meanwhile individual sessions usually allow recordings of much higher clarity but—as Bowern warns—they may result in simpler constructions as the speaker attempts to accommodate the lower language competence of the linguist (see Bowern 2008:117-118). These story-telling sessions are all only subtly directed—the choice of narrative is largely left up to the speaker though they are encouraged to speak in the Upper Tanana language (Bowern describes this as the ‘collaborative’ approach to linguistic fieldwork (2008:5)). All the speakers I worked with are elders as most members of the younger generations are not fluent speakers of Upper Tanana. Most often the narrative recordings and interviews take place in the speakers’ homes as this is where they are most comfortable and results in more fluid discourse. The narrative sessions are audio and video recorded. Following the recording of storytelling sessions the digital files are backed up to computer and local hard-drive and eventually archived at the Alaska Native Languages Archive in Fairbanks, Alaska.

A large corpus of recorded narratives has been collected from Upper Tanana speakers. Many of these have been transcribed and translated for inclusion in other projects (such as collections of stories; see David (2011) and Tyone (1996) for examples). A small number of stories has been selected from this corpus for inclusion in the study. These stories were transcribed and translated with the help of speakers and written in to ELAN which allows written transcripts to be aligned with audio and video recordings (Sloetjes
and Wittenburg 2008). After the initial transcription and translation of texts I conducted interviews with speakers as we checked and edited the texts. As spatial elements came up I asked questions about their use and to explain the ‘narrative geography’ that they create. I often asked the narrators to produce a hand-drawn map of the story or to point out story locations on large printed maps. The directed questioning and elicitation sessions included discussions of place-names and their etymology as well as the prefixes, suffixes, stems, and semantics of the directional system and other spatial elements such as postpositions. I also performed more structured interviews on the use of directional elements to ascertain the reference and structure of the directional system and to confirm or deny observations. Research progressed in a recursive fashion: as I worked through narrative transcripts new questions would arise which could be answered with directed questions or elicitation. The answers from these sessions would subsequently inform further clarifications of the narratives.

1.4.4 Anthropological Theory and its Methodological Implications

Before I discuss my anthropological methods a note on the nature of ethnographic knowledge is required. Anthropological theory is especially concerned with matters of representation and epistemology. That is, anthropologists spend a great deal of time determining what is possible for a researcher to know about another group (or whether it is really possible to know anything at all). Thus, it is also concerned with how or whether anthropological writing can provide an accurate representation of another culture. Thus, I will briefly outline my approach to these questions before presenting my ethnographic methods.

My approach to the goal of anthropological fieldwork fits broadly in to the approaches termed “radical empiricism” (Jackson 1996:23-29), or “critical realism” (Davies 2008:18-
Put simply, I aim to avoid the positivistic pitfalls of early anthropological approaches by acknowledging subjectivity, individuality, and the impacts of my authorial voice (as well as chaos, contradiction, and change) while avoiding the morass of post-modern critique where subjectivity is deemed an unavoidable pit and removes the possibility of any real ethnographic knowledge. For Davies, the best way to avoid these problems is through conscious reflexivity. In her view the reality of experience is not questioned since “both human actors and social structure are accorded ontological reality” (2008:22). Thus, claims about them can be more or less accurate. The solution to the problems inherent in a researcher’s subjective stance lies in identifying and curtailing one’s misunderstandings by a continual process of “turning back on oneself” (Davies 2008:4)—a recurring examination of one’s position and assumptions. Put another way, critical realism “allows us to know and study something as an object so long as we are sensitive to and take account of our own implication in and effects on that object” (2008:22).

This does not mean that my methodological aim was to design a study which presents a totality of Upper Tanana life nor even the complete nature of spatial construction in narratives; I share Jackson’s opinion that it is not “possible to have the last word on the meaning of human existence” (Jackson 1996:4). The world is never complete—nor can it be fully described. I do aim, however, to say something that is ontologically ‘true’. I understand ethnographic fieldwork to explore knowledge as an “intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground” (Jackson 1996:8). That is, I see ethnography as primarily a practice of description and translation (in this way the goal of ethnography is similar to linguistic description). Thus, theoretical models are “refuse[d] foundational status” (Jackson 1996:7) and valued only for how they contribute to the understanding of descriptive realities. Davies shows a similar attitude when she says that the conclusions of ethnographic analysis are
solely “generalizable in the context of a particular theoretical debate” (Davies 2008:103). Generalizable theories find their value in their descriptive potential. In sum, the analysis of the construction of space in Upper Tanana narratives is meant to be much more than an impressionistic feeling yet the conclusions I come to are not to be viewed as ‘foundational’. That is, in exploring the role of directionals in narrative I aim for nothing less than “a form of disclosure which does [them] justice” (Jackson 1996:4).

1.4.5 Anthropological Methods

As noted in section 1.4.1, my topic of research is well suited to ethnographic methodologies in addition to linguistic ones. Descriptions of the narrative geography are set in the broader topography of the speakers’ cultural environment. Thus, questioning consultants on the use of directionals, for instance, has ethnographic implications.

As Davies points out, the type of interviewing often pursued by ethnographic researchers — where participant observation is the main research method — is basically unstructured. That is, interviewing happens in a way which is close to “naturally occurring language” (2008:105) or conversation. Ethnographic interviews are simply conversations directed towards topics the researcher would like to explore. While this type of interviewing was part of my fieldwork (for instance, I encouraged and attempted to use Upper Tanana spatial descriptions whenever I was driving or walking around with a speaker) I also conducted a number of semi-structured interviews. These were organized around the discussion of a narrative’s storyline while working through a text. As such these interviews were often of a hybrid ethnographic/linguistic nature: ethnographic questions or comments were interspersed in discussions of grammatical forms or sentence structure. Anthropological questions were also directed through the mapping of narrative space and the concurrent discussion of the directional system, the landscape, and history of the
area. This semi-structured format allowed a wide array of topics to be discussed around a central theme. As I worked through a transcript with a speaker, questions of linguistic or ethnographic detail could be dealt with as they came up. Generalizations and trends noticed in these sessions were then pursued in more topically focused (but less structured) interviews, as they came up in conversation, or in subsequent narrative-focused sessions. This gradual accumulation of knowledge and recursive pattern of interviewing allowed for a continual process of turning back on myself to correct earlier mistakes or misinterpretations.

Participant observation—though a methodologically amorphous research tool—was also an important part of my study for the context it provided to my research focus. Participant observation is usually taken as the “archetypal form of research employed by ethnographers” (Davies 2008:77) but Davies notes that it cannot be described as a specific methodology. Rather, participant observation is best described as a strategy employed in research which involves living among a group of people for an extended period of time and participating in their everyday life (2008:77). During my longest stay (three and a half months in the summer of 2014) I lived in a rented cabin in Northway with my partner. The stay was too short to really become part of the community but I endeavoured to attend as many events as possible over the summer (these included a week-long stay at ‘culture camp’ where the traditional lifestyle and subsistence practices are taught to the Northway kids and attending a number of potlatches) and just generally ‘being’ in the community. I travelled extensively to Tetlin during this time for linguistic work which occasionally spawned interesting ethnographic experiences (helping with fish netting, cutting, drying, etc.).
1.5 Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis I have introduced my methodology and the benefits I see to examining linguistic forms in their cultural context. Working with two sets of research methods encourages a broader perspective on the linguistic forms being examined. Specifically, my research on the use of spatial descriptions in narratives was only made possible by combining linguistic methods with a careful eye on the ethnographic and geographic environment. The function of directionals, which are tightly linked to the landscape and people’s understandings of it, is best explained concurrently with a description of the people. Thus, this is where the next chapter leads—to a description of both the Northway and Tetlin people, and the landscape they inhabit.
Chapter 2

People, Landscape, and Fieldwork

The goal of this paper is to provide a description of the use of the Upper Tanana directional system in narrative contexts. However, it is difficult to portray the full importance of the directional system and story-telling without placing them both in context. Thus, this chapter will introduce elements of both the culture of the people of Northway and Tetlin and the environment they inhabit. As a full ethnographic description is outside the scope of this paper special emphasis is placed on aspects of the culture which help contextualize the language’s spatial system while providing. However I also provide some broader historical and cultural information which will help the reader to follow the stories presented in later chapters.

I begin with an account of the history of the upper Tanana valley in which I focus on the impacts of contact with white people around the turn of the 20th century. I then turn to a description of the geography as a preparation for an overview of the seasonal subsistence round. The importance of the directional system (discussed in the following chapter), and knowing the landscape, is evident when looking at the extent Upper Tanana
people travelled throughout the valley and surrounding hills to hunt, fish, and collect berries and roots. I also trace some of the major changes and continuities in the Northway and Tetlin lifestyle and provide some general demographic background.¹

2.1 Changes in the Upper Tanana Region

The period of contact between white traders and explorers and the Upper Tanana began around the beginning of the 20th century and triggered a rapid change in the lifestyle of the people.² The earliest European trade goods had likely already reached the area as far back as the late 17th century through native intermediaries (Simeone 1995:19) while the first direct trade may have been as early as the 1840s but certainly occurred by the 1880s (Simeone 1995:21, 22; Haynes and Simeone 2007:41). The Fortymile (1886) and Chisana (1913) gold rushes brought thousands of gold miners as well as more accessible trading posts to the area which eventually led an Episcopal Archdeacon to complain in 1917 that “the men grow shiftless and casual picking up odd jobs around town and disdaining the hunting and fishing by which they used to live” (Stuck 1917:57). The semi-nomadic seasonal round was quickly supplemented and eventually replaced with fur trapping, wage work on the massive WWII era Alaska highway and airport projects, and jobs hauling trade goods up the Tanana in barges. The elders living today grew up in this period of rapid change and frequently recount their memories of the time.³ However, this rapid change was spearheaded by trappers, missionaries, gold miners, traders and

¹More detailed descriptions of Upper Tanana life can be found in Guédon (1974, 2005) Pitts (1972), McKennan (1959), Haynes and Simeone (2007), McKennan et al. (2006), De Laguna and Guedon (1968) and ethnographies of neighbouring groups include Nadasdy (2003), Mishler and Simeone (2004), and Simeone (1995).
²Earlier expeditions, like Lieutenant Allen’s trip in 1885 (1887), provide some limited documentation of the area prior to 1900. Sustained contact with Westerners did not really begin until the turn of the century.
³For example, Sherry Demit-Barnes talks about how her father worked on a river boat for John Hajdukovich in section 6.1.1.
their ilk so written accounts of life in the Upper Tanana valley are sparse until McKen-
nan arrives in late 1929 for his ethnographic fieldwork. By this time the changes wrought
on the area by the influx of white people were already well under way (see Haynes and
Simeone 2007:107). Thus, accounts of pre-contact lifestyle and history rely on the oral
history and traditions held by the elders.\textsuperscript{4}

An example of the use of oral history which is still carried on today is found McKen-
nan’s writings when he counts the population of the valley as 152 but notes that his inform-
mants “stoutly maintained” that an epidemic reduced their population from much larger
numbers (McKennan 1959:19). This was commonly told to the early ‘explorers’ on the
Yukon and McKennan posits that it might refer to a scarlet fever epidemic of 1851 which
began on the Upper Yukon and spread downriver (McKennan 1959:19). This account
of a much larger population is still reflected in elders’ histories today.\textsuperscript{5} For example, a
Northway elder and I often discussed the history of a war between the Upper Tanana peo-
ple and ‘people in Yukon’ in which an important chief was able to rouse an army of 400
warriors for a retaliatory raid. McKennan provides two accounts of this war and while
neither have the numbers of the raiding party one account states that the group killed 273
Kluane men (McKennan 1959:171-172). This illustrates the importance of oral narrative
in describing the history of the Upper Tanana region.

\textbf{2.2 Landscape, Environment, and the Seasonal Round}

As this thesis is concerned with the linguistic description of directionals, and directionals
are anchored to geographic features, an introduction to the Upper Tanana environment is

\textsuperscript{4}An example of using Athabascan historical narrative to reconstruct historical events can be found in

\textsuperscript{5}In the 1960s, Guédon notes that the people of Tetlin also described an earlier mass depopulation of
the area and suggests a scarlet fever epidemic of 1868 (Guédon 1974:10).
in order. The largest waterway in the Upper Tanana area, and the anchoring river for the directional system, is the Tanana River (*Tth’itu’ Niign*) which begins at the confluence of the Chisana (*Theetsaan’ Niign* ‘copper river’⁶) and Nabesna (*Naambia Niign* ‘rippling water river’). Both the Chisana and the Nabesna flow north from their glacial source in the Wrangell mountains through the flat Tanana valley until meeting near Northway Junction at the base of the ‘Ladue Hills’ (or Yukon-Tanana uplands) to form the Tanana. As the Tanana flows west, several minor waterways, including the Tetlin river (*Teelay Niign* ‘Water flows’), empty into the Tanana until it joins the Yukon several hundred miles downriver.

The landscape of the Upper Tanana area can be divided into two distinct areas: the valley floor and the surrounding hills. The valley floor is a wide and flat glacier carved basin crisscrossed with rivers and creeks and dotted with innumerable lakes in a mixed forest of spruce trees interspersed with stands of poplar and white birch. Treeless muskegs (locally termed ‘flats’ or *chinh*) are quite wet, as the discontinuous permafrost impedes drainage, and dominated with coarse grasses surrounded by black spruce. The alder and willow underbrush is thick enough to seriously hamper quick foot travel and visibility in many of the wooded areas. A reflex of this is the much larger quantity of *xay tay* ‘winter trails’ in comparison to summer trails as land travel is significantly easier when the brushless marshy flats, rivers, and lakes are frozen over. Thus, travelling by boat through the connected streams, lakes, and rivers of the valley floor was a desirable alternative during the summer. In general travel routes “took the path of least resistance, following naturally cleared corridors, such as rivers, exposed ridges, and low mountain passes” (Haynes and Simeone 2007:19; emphasis added).

The Nutzotin⁷ and Mentasta ranges (sub-divisions of the Alaska range) are visible to

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⁶The literal translation is ‘shitty rock river’.
⁷The northern edge of the Nutzotin range is often referred to as the Black Hills by Northway and Tetlin
the south from much of the Upper Tanana area. To the north the rolling Ladue hills start shortly after crossing over the Tanana river. Between Tetlin village and the Ladue Hills are the Tetlin hills (Teelag ddhal’ ‘current flows mountains’ (Kari 1997)) which circle from the Mentasta range to the south around the west side of Manh Choh ‘Big Lake’ to run east and west to the north of Tetlin. The hills surrounding the basin are dry and largely wooded with a mixed deciduous and coniferous forest giving way to stands of solid spruce at higher elevations.

The area has a decidedly continental climate with average lows reaching under -30 Celsius (with regular dips below -50) in the winter and temperate summers with highs commonly in the low 20s that generally do not exceed 30 degrees (Haynes and Simeone 2007:6). About 30-40 inches of snow normally accumulate from November through March when the temperatures rarely rise above freezing. Given the northern latitude, summer days are long (peaking at around 20.5 hours of sunlight on the solstice) and winter days are short (4.5 hours of sunlight on the winter solstice).

2.2.1 Seasonal Round

Historically, a seasonal round of subsistence hunting, gathering, and fishing dominated the year. This necessitated travelling over large portions of the valley and surrounding hills. Early spring involved hunting muskrats and the northbound caribou herds until the ice broke up. As summer approached bands would move from their winter hunting camps to various fishing sites to catch fish with a weir and dip net system (Haynes and Simeone 2007:36). The catch was predominately whitefish which was immediately cut, smoked, and dried (Case 1986:26). While fish was the staple food of the spring and residents. See sections 7.1.2 and 7.2.2.

8A more detailed account of a seasonal subsistence round is described for the Koyukon groups to the north by Nelson (1983:9-13, Ch11) and for the Han to the east by Mishler and Simeone (2004:55-74)
summer it was supplemented by waterfowl, muskrats, eggs, berries, and roots from in and around the numerous small lakes dotting the valley (Haynes and Simeone 2007:37).

In the late summer and early fall, fishing continued until freeze-up (though on a lesser scale) and men went on extended moose hunting expeditions. Some groups travelled into the Nutzotin mountains to hunt sheep or into the Ladue hills to wait for the caribou which usually arrived around the end of November (Haynes and Simeone 2007:38). The caribou were driven into large V-shaped fences set with snares. Using this method a successful hunt might provide a band with enough food to sustain them through the winter. The winter diet was supplemented with grouse, ptarmigan, and rabbits and food cached in the summer. December was a time of storytelling, games, and relative relaxation as the Upper Tanana gathered in the hunting camps to enjoy each others company before spending the later winter months trapping for fur-bearers and waiting for the arrival of spring (Haynes and Simeone 2007:38).

### 2.2.2 Transition to a Mixed Economy

This seasonal round was dominated by near-continuous movement between camps, caches, and various hunting and gathering sites which quickly began to change in the years around 1900. Chief Sam’s account of the seasonal round emphasizes the travelling lifestyle of the Upper Tanana people:

In the old days the people seldom stayed in the village. Always they were on the trail, hunting and camping. In July whitefish were dried and cached at the Fish Camp. Then the people went moose hunting, caching the meat. In the winter they visited the caches and then when the caribou came they killed caribou. After the moose season the people went up to the head of the Nabiesna to secure sheepskins for winter. Then they would return to the village; make their clothes; and then take the winter hunting trails to Ladue Creek, the Chisana basin, and the White river. In the spring when the leaves were coming out they returned to the village. They would take birch bark
and sew it together to make new tents and then wait for the caribou to come back again.

(McKennan 1959:46)

While McKennan goes on to say that “Old Sam’s picture of a nomadic existence sums up the life of an Upper Tanana native” (1959:47) he also notes during his stay that “there is a growing tendency towards localization quite at variance with the earlier fluidity” (1959:47). This change was largely driven by the establishment of a market for furs which caused families to establish more permanent settlements near the trading posts from which they could travel out to trap for much of the winter (McKennan 1959:47). The gradual settling of the population was a part of a larger transition from a subsistence lifestyle to one mixed with wage labor and trading which began around 1900 (Haynes and Simeone 2007:46). The trend accelerated through the gold rushes and bountiful wage labor brought about by World War II (described in Section 2.1) to such a degree that Pitts argues that the Upper Tanana had “completely abandoned the remnants they had retained of the old seasonal hunting patterns and adopted a complete cash and welfare economy” (1972:197) by 1953. While there were most definitely rapid changes to the economy during this period I agree with Haynes and Simeone (2007:49) in finding this claim to be an exaggeration as “remnants” of the “old seasonal patterns” are still apparent in Tetlin and Northway to this day.

The most obvious continuation of the subsistence patterns is the reliance by a large portion of the population on the spring whitefish runs and moose hunting for food. For example, it is still common for many in Tetlin to travel to Last Tetlin (Nahk’ade ‘fish trap’) for a few days or weeks to net whitefish. Though not as pervasive in Northway, many people travel to Ten-Mile (Leet’ot Niign ‘mud creek’ (Kari 1997)) for fishing and the annual ‘culture camp’ to teach the children about traditional subsistence practices. Many Northway residents also set nets in the rivers or creeks closer to Northway. The
Tetlin River which runs through the village is a popular netting site in Tetlin as well. In both communities smokehouses for drying fish and moose meat are still ubiquitous.

Hunting for large game, like moose and caribou, is an important food source though it has been substantially impacted by government controls which limit the season and bag limits. Moose hunting is largely accomplished by boating up and down the rivers to spot the moose as they come down to the water to eat. Many residents also travel to their ‘moose camps’ on high positions to spot for moose on the flats below. In addition to the regular moose season the Upper Tanana are granted special moose permits for culturally important events (potlatches prominently). Caribou does not hold the important status as a food source that it did in earlier times though many still hunt them during the fall migration. McKennan says that during his stay in the area in 1929 that the “the economic life of the Upper Tanana centers around the caribou” (1959:47) but the desirability of caribou has seriously fallen since then as people much prefer the richer meat of moose over the much leaner caribou. Moose were very sought after in the 1920s and 1930s as well but did not factor as prominently in the subsistence economy as they were much harder to kill (McKennan 1959:49).

Hunting muskrat for food and fur is still relatively common as is the hunting of ducks and other small animals though none are desired as much as moose. In general, traditional foods are still held in great esteem. I was often told how much healthier traditional foods are than ‘white man’s food’ (and occasionally reproached for cooking traditional foods like a white person). Regardless of the importance of subsistence foods, store-bought groceries figure heavily into the diet of Northway and Tetlin residents—though some members of the older generation still refuse most store-bought foods and many more claim a strong preference for moose, whitefish, wild berries, and roots over anything purchased from the store.
In sum, rather than agreeing with Pitts that the Upper Tanana have “completely abandoned” a subsistence economy (Pitts 1972:197), I argue that subsistence activities figure very strongly in the everyday life of Northway and Tetlin residents. ‘Remnants’ of the nomadic lifestyle persist in the common use of hunting and fishing camps. Traditional subsistence activities are still very important and frequent though much simplified by the outboard motors, ATVs, and snowmobiles which allow travel over long distances in short times and largely remove the need to set up camps near a seasonal food source. Many, though not all, of the shifts in the subsistence economy, I argue, point to technological changes rather than cultural ones. The subsistence economy has undoubtedly shifted (and continues to do so) but has not yet moved to a marginal position. Rather, the people of Northway and Tetlin seek to hold on to many of their cultural ideals—with varying levels of success. Their connection to the land around them, and the life it harbours, is far from broken.

2.3 Descent: Moieties, Clans, and Kin Groups

Traditional Upper Tanana society was divided into two moieties (or ‘sides’): Raven (or Crow) and Wolf (or Sea Gull). These two moieties were further divided into a number of clans. Clan membership followed the matriline; all a woman’s children were in her clan and moiety and on the opposite side of her husband. The clan system extended to neighbouring groups (e.g. the Tanacross and Ahtna speaking groups to the west and south) with whom the Upper Tanana intermarried. Kinship terminology was divided along moiety lines with differing terms for relatives depending on whether they belonged to the same side or not. For example, a maternal uncle (who belongs to the same side) is
In general, matrilineal relationships were considered closer and thus much more important. For example, matrilineal uncles were responsible for teaching their sister’s children clan specific knowledge and stories (Haynes and Simeone 2007:55).

Prolonged contact with traders and government officials, introduced patrilineal family names which confused the complicated rules of the matrilineal clan system and inducing changes in the ways people identify themselves. As Haynes and Simeone state “some members of the younger generation have knowledge of the clan system, but more often young people derive their identity from their family name and village rather than clan.” 2007:56. This has had broad reaching effects. For example, the most common way of describing both groups of people and language groups is by village. Thus, ‘Northway language’ and ‘Northway people’ are the defining characteristics that separate people from others in the surrounding communities (i.e. as ‘Tetlin people’ or ‘Tanacross language’ as described in Section 1.2).

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an introduction to the culture, landscape, and people of the upper Tanana valley. I have focused on the traditional ways the Upper Tanana people interacted with their environment and the ways that this lifestyle has been changed by their contact with white people and ways that they have resisted changes and brought much of their culture with them and adapt them to new technologies. As this thesis focuses on

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9This terminology system extends to all men of the fathers generation. Thus, ‘my maternal uncle’ is a rather loose definition which would more accurately be described as “man of parents generation in my clan”. This is also true in kin terms of the same generation where shaadeh ‘my older sister’ and shdia ‘my younger sister’ extends to all girls of the same generation and moiety (see Haynes and Simeone 2007:57). Put differently, parallel cousins are classed as siblings while cross-cousins are classed as possible marriage, hunting, and trading partners (often termed shl’q ‘friend, partner, (cross) cousin’).
the ways the people of Northway and Tetlin are able to create elaborate narrative spaces in their native language it is important to note that this chapter shows why knowing the landscape—and having precise ways of describing it—was vital. Their semi-nomadic lifestyle provides an explanation for why such complex space describing elements are available in the language. Thus, a description of the landscape and the ways people use it is an important step in presenting the spatial systems themselves. The next step is to examine the linguistic form of these spatial elements themselves.
Chapter 3

Upper Tanana Language

This chapter will provide an introductory linguistic description of the native language of the people of Northway and Tetlin. A complete discussion of the language is well outside the scope of this paper so throughout the chapter I focus on aspects of the language which are most salient to spatial description. A much more complete description of the language is under development by Olga Lovick who graciously allowed me access to early drafts.¹

I begin with a brief description of the Athabascan (or Dene) language family (section 3.1). This is followed by presentation of the phoneme inventory (sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3) and orthography (section 3.2.1) of Upper Tanana. The portion of the chapter devoted to the Upper Tanana verb focuses on the spatial adverbial-derivational prefixes but gives an introductory look at the verb complex and verb structure. An overview of the templatic morphology of the verb is described followed by an explanation of stem variations (section 3.3.2) and verb construction (in section 3.3.3). I briefly discuss subject and ob-

¹Linguistic descriptions of parts of Upper Tanana are found in (Minoura 1994, Milanowski and John 1979, Lovick 2011, Tuttle et al. 2011, Lovick and Tuttle 2011, Bessie and Tlen 1997). A description of the closely related Tanacross is found in (Holton 2000).
ject marking before taking a closer look at the adverbial-derivational prefixes. The final sections provide an overview of the postpositions, nouns, and minor word classes which contribute to spatial description (sections 3.5 and 3.4).

3.1 Upper Tanana and the Athabascan Languages

Upper Tanana is a Northern Athabascan language spoken by roughly 55 people (Krauss 2007:408) in an area straddling the Yukon-Alaska border, though the majority of the speakers live in interior Alaska (Tuttle et al. 2011:133). Most of the speakers are in their 60s or older. Minoura breaks Upper Tanana into five dialects with Beaver Creek in the Yukon, and Scottie Creek, Nabesna, Northway, and Tetlin in Alaska (Minoura 1994:160). I worked exclusively with Northway and Tetlin dialect speakers and thus the description of the language is restricted to these dialects. However, where available I have included information on the other dialects of Upper Tanana.

The Athabascan languages are part of the Na-dene phylum which also includes Eyak and Tlingit spoken in the Pacific Northwest (Kari 2007:240). The Athabascan language family is further divided into three regions: the Pacific coast (Oregon and California), the American Southwest (composed of the Navajo and Apache languages), and the subarctic or Northern languages which spans much of interior Alaska and northern Canada (Kari 2007:240). Upper Tanana is a member of the latter grouping. Athabascan languages are relatively homogeneous structurally with a templatic verbal morphology which does not differ significantly throughout the family. The Northern Athabascan languages are located on a dialect continuum, with gradual changes accruing as one moves from one language to the next. Thus, Upper Tanana is more similar to its neighbouring Athabascan languages, such as Tanacross, Tutchone, and Ahtna, than languages further away, like Dena’ina in western Alaska or Dene Súfliné in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories.
3.2 Upper Tanana Phonetics and Phonology

3.2.1 A Note on the Orthography

The orthography used in this paper is phonemic aside from not marking lexical low tone. It is identical to that used by James Kari in (Tyone 1996). The tables in the following two sections show the phoneme inventory of the language in the orthography following Athabaskanist tradition. I also note details of the sound system which warrant greater explanation. The interested reader is encouraged to look at the phonetic descriptions in (Minoura 1994, Tuttle et al. 2011) and the pronunciation guides in (David 2011) and (Kari 1996).²

3.2.2 Consonant Inventory

Upper Tanana has a large consonant inventory (see Table 3.1). The oral stops and affricates in each place of articulation are divided into aspirated, unaspirated, and ejective phonemes. The unaspirated phonemes in these sets are represented as voiced in the orthography though they are phonetically voiceless. An earlier description of the sound system (Minoura 1994:167) describes the unaspirated consonants as voiced but Tuttle et al. (2011:285) note that the stop portion of the phonemes are voiceless (while the fricative portion of affricates are partially or fully voiced).

The phonemes m and n sometimes appear as prenasalized voiced stops. This alternation is reflected in the orthography (i.e. as mb and nd). This effect is much stronger in Tetlin than in Northway but occurs in both communities. For example, ‘man, person’ is

²Descriptions of the development of the Athabaskan sound systems can be found in (Leer 1979; 2005, Krauss 1964; 2005).
**Table 3.1: Consonants of Upper Tanana**

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<tr>
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<th>Labial</th>
<th>Interdental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
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<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<td>Oral Stop</td>
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<td>t d t'</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>k g k'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasal Stop</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td>nh n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>tth ddh tth'</td>
<td>ts dz ts'</td>
<td>ch j ch'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>th dh</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>sh shy</td>
<td>yh</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>l l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tl dl tl'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following (Tuttle et al. 2011:286)

often pronounced /tiⁿteh/ in the Tetlin dialect and written as *dindeh* while the Northway dialect pronounces it with a plain nasal stop and thus it is written as *dineh*.

### 3.2.3 Vowel Inventory

Upper Tanana has six vowels divided both by length and nasality. Vowel inventories are found in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. The unmarked vowel ä has merged with a in Tetlin. Many of the nasal vowels (ęę, ę, ųų, ų) are quite rare and ą̈ is only found in the (very common) word *nts’ą́̈* ‘and, to’. In addition to the vowels shown in the tables there are two diphthongs *io* and *ia* with nasal counterparts.

---

3. The interested reader is encouraged to look to Tuttle et al. (2011) for a more thorough phonetic description of the vowels and vowel space.

4. In the Tetlin dialect this is *nts ’ą́̈*.
Table 3.2: Oral Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ii</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>uu</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>üü</td>
<td>ü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| aa | a |

Table 3.3: Nasal Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ų</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>ů̀</th>
<th>ů́</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ñ</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ǜ</td>
<td>ǘ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ô</td>
<td>ñ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from (Tuttle et al. 2011, Minoura 1994, Kari 1996)

3.2.4 Tone

Upper Tanana has lexical low tone on some stems and phonemic tone on some prefixes (Minoura 1994:186). Upper Tanana also has a distinctive high tone on negative stems which comes from a suffix which is now tightly fused to the stem. The suffix is now only visible via the high tone and other morphophonological effects such as voicing of coda consonants or lengthening of stem vowels on the verb stem (Tuttle and Brucks 2014, Lovick in prep.).

3.3 Upper Tanana Verbal Morphology

Like all Athabascan languages, Upper Tanana’s verbal morphology is complex. Not only is there a large set of prefixes with great derivational potential but the various levels of verbal morphology often involve discontinuous prefix strings which may all coalesce via complex morphophonemic rules. Thus, I will only discuss the verb prefixes which have a role in the creation of space. I begin with a basic description of the verb template and

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5 Tone in Athabascan languages arose from vowels constricted by a coda glottal or glottalized obstruent in the Proto-Athabascan-Eyak stage. These constricted vowels became associated with a high tone in some languages such as Tanacross while others, such as Upper Tanana, developed low tone. Some Athabascan languages subsequently lost their lexical tone and are now toneless. See (Holton 2000; Krauss 2005:77-78). Also Krauss (2005) gives a detailed description of the development of tone in noun stems from constricted vowels.
Table 3.4: Upper Tanana Verb Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>It</td>
<td>Inc</td>
<td>Dist</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Pron</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Conj</td>
<td>Mo</td>
<td>Sbj</td>
<td>VV</td>
<td>Stem</td>
<td>Neg</td>
<td>Nom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following (Lovick in prep.)

an overview of verb construction and person inflections before spending some time on space related disjunct prefixes and postpositions.

3.3.1 The Upper Tanana Verb

The Athabascan verb is often represented with a template like the one given in Table 3.4. Like all Athabascan languages Upper Tanana is predominately prefixing. The only two suffixes, which can be represented as /-V/ ‘negative’ and /-V/ ‘nominal’, combine with the stem and are only visible through their morphophonemic effects such as voicing of the coda consonant, vowel lengthening, or high tone (in the case of the negative suffix). Thus, the stem is always the final syllable.

The # sign designates the boundary between the conjunct prefixes near the stem and the disjunct prefixes to the left. The division between the prefixes has both a phonological and semantic basis. For instance, conjunct prefixes are restricted to a simple CV or VV shape (or simpler) while disjunct prefixes may be more complex (CVC or CVV for example) (Lovick in prep.). Additionally, the disjunct prefixes do not undergo the complex morphophonemics of the conjunct prefixes which may result in multiple prefixes (especially positions 4 through 1) coalescing into one portmanteau syllable. Finally, the disjunct prefixes usually have a clear meaning while many of the conjunct prefixes (excluding the inflectional ones) are semantically opaque (Lovick in prep.).

Tenenbaum posits that the different treatments of the disjunct and conjunct prefixes might be explained by independent words being “drawn into the stem” as disjunct prefixes and thus “intensifying the morphological ‘squish’ of the prefixes nearest the stem” (Tenenbaum 1978:193).
3.3.2 Verb Stem

The verb stem is historically made up of a root and suffix or ablaut combination. Synchronically, however, the root must be considered a linguistic abstraction as it is not productive or transparent to speakers. Once the verb roots are inflected with aspeccular suffixes specified for mode (perfective, imperfective, optative, future) they are described as members of a stem set. Some examples of stem sets are found in 3.5.7

Table 3.5: Stem Sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Ipfv</th>
<th>Pfv</th>
<th>Fut</th>
<th>Opt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘see’</td>
<td>ḫh</td>
<td>īi</td>
<td>īi</td>
<td>īi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘pS go’</td>
<td>deel</td>
<td>dēèl</td>
<td>dāl</td>
<td>deel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘talk’</td>
<td>heeyh</td>
<td>ha’</td>
<td>heel</td>
<td>heel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3 Verb Themes and Construction

Verb themes are the basic lexical units of verbs composed of the stem and a discontinuous set of prefixes. A simple theme such as ‘cry’ has the form $\emptyset+tsūh$ and is made up solely of the voice/valence prefix $\emptyset$ and the stem $tsūh$. More complex themes, however, may call for prefixes from other positions such as a specific prefix from positions 5 (qualifier), 9 (iterative), and 10 (adverbial/derivational) or simply designate that the verb must be marked for object (position 6). Some examples of themes are found in (1).

(1) Verb Themes.
   a. na#ho+L+nek ‘tell story’
   It#Areal+VV+stem

7For more information on stem sets and verb construction see (Kari 1979) and (Axelrod 1993) for discussions of the verb complex in related Athabascan languages as well as to the forthcoming grammar of Upper Tanana (Lovick in prep.).
All themes must also be marked with prefixes from a number of positions before becoming the final verb form: All verbs must be marked with a voice/valence prefix (position 1), a mode prefix (position 3), and a conjugation prefix (position 4). Verbs must also be marked for subject (position 2 or 6) and transitive verbs must be marked for object (position 6). Thus, a simple verb form constructed from the transitive verb theme $O+G+\theta+dlah$ ‘handle plural objects’ is exemplified in (2). Additional forms may be constructed from verb themes through the addition of derivational prefixes or prefix strings. Example (3) shows how the addition of the prefix string $ni+k’i#hu+d$ ‘figure out’ to the intransitive verb theme $G+\theta+dlah$ ‘classify plural objects’ is used to construct the new verb form $nik’uudnįįdlah$ ‘he figured it all out’.

(2) Construction of $yįįdlah$ ‘he put them’.

Verb form: $y-$ $O-$ $O-$ $j-$ $O-$ $dlah$

Obligatory:

- Subj-
- Conj- 
- Mode-
- VV-
- stem

Theme:

- $O+$
- $G+$
- $dlah$

(3) Construction of $nik’uudnįįdlah$ ‘he figured it all out’.

Verb Form:

- $ni-$
- $k’i#$
- $O-$
- $hu-$
- $d-$
- $n-$
- $j-$
- $O-$
- $dlah$

Prefix String:

- $ni+$
- $k’i#$
- $hu+$
- $d+$

Obligatory:

- Subj-
- Conj-
- Mode-
- VV-
- stem

Theme:

- $G+$
- $dlah$

---

*Kari provides a flow chart model of verb formation for Ahtna in (Kari 1990:39) for further reference.*
3.3.4 Inflection for Person

Three of the person inflections, termed the ‘inner subject’ prefixes, occur in position 2 and have the forms *ih* - ‘first person singular subject’, *įį* - ‘second person singular subject’, and *ah* - ‘second person plural subject’. However, the inner subject forms only appear in their underlying form when the verb has a Ø- voice/valence prefix. The other three voice/valence (or classifier) prefixes in Upper Tanana (L, D, and H) trigger morphophonemic changes.\(^9\) Thus, I provide a table of the classifier/inner subject combinations in table 3.6. Note that this is often not the final form of the syllable as these morphemes may also coalesce with the other conjunct prefixes. The remaining (‘outer’) subject prefixes and the direct object prefixes are in position 6 and presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.6: Inner Subject and Voice/Valence Prefixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ø</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sS</td>
<td>ih</td>
<td>ish</td>
<td>ak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sS</td>
<td>її</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>їh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pS</td>
<td>ah</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>ah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following (Lovick in prep.)

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\(^9\)‘Classifier’ was a common term in Athabascan linguistics for the voice/valence prefix (see (Kibrik 1996:262-265) for a history of the term) but voice/valence is a more apt denotation.
Table 3.7: Outer Subjects and Objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Object</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sh-</td>
<td>Ø-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-</td>
<td>h-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nee-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuh-</td>
<td>ch’-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-</td>
<td>hu-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu-</td>
<td>hiiy-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y-</td>
<td>id-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiyi-</td>
<td>ihd-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nil-, li-</td>
<td>nil-, li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch’-</td>
<td>nil-, li-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu-</td>
<td>nil-, li-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following (Lovick in prep.)

3.3.5 Adverbial-Derivational Prefixes

A great number of the adverbial-derivational prefixes of position 10 carry spatial content. As such, they contribute to the creation of the ‘text world’ by adding detailed description to the motions (and states) of actors and their surroundings. A sample of the adverbial-derivational prefixes relevant to spatial description are provided below (4). Many of these prefixes are part of aspectual prefix strings (discontinuous sets of prefixes which must occur together).

(4) Adverbial-Derivational prefixes.

- tiki# ‘turn off (trail)’
- da# ‘into dwelling’
- da# ‘up’
- ke# ‘up, climbing’
- na# ‘down’
- t’a# ‘under’
- dzi# ‘over edge’
- sta# ‘away’
• *ha*# ‘out’
• *ski*# ‘across’
• *naki*# ‘around and back’
• *ti*# ‘underwater’
• *ta*# ‘into water’
• *tthi*# ‘into fire, into the open’
• *k’ii*# ‘into hole’

The adverbial-directional prefixes often provide information that help describe space. For example, in (5a) *tiki*# ‘turn off’ is used to describe where a bear, which had been running down the trail, turned off into the brush. Similarly, in (5b) the storyteller is using *da*# to describe her motion into a house. In both these examples, the adverbial directional prefixes help to fill out the narrative space by providing information on the path of motion (‘off the trail’ or ‘into house’). *Ski*# ‘across’ is used in a similar way to describe a group’s motion across a creek in (5c) while (5d) shows that the same prefix may be used to describe the placement of grass as ‘across (the trail)’. This is only a small sample of the space related adverbial derivational prefixes but illustrates how they can be put to great descriptive use.

(5) Examples of adverbial-derivational prefixes.

a. Tädn nee’eh hultsįį nts’ā’ duugn *tiki’atdät* ts’ā’
   Night with.us it.became and around.there animal.turned.off.running and t’eey.
   really
   ‘It got really dark on us where he went off the trail.’
   UTOLVDN13May2004-106

b. Ay ishyiit ch’ale’ huxa *danihshyah*.
   and in.there also for.them I.went.in.
   ‘And I went in there to them.’
   UTCBAF15May0402-008
c. Tak’at naan’ chih skihel’ok tl’aan noo’ keey clear.water across.ALL also they.swim.across and ahead.ALL village tah t’eey nich’ihne’il’iign.
among really they.sneak

‘They swim across clearwater creek and then they sneak up to the village.’

UTOLVDN13May2803-057

d. Those Che’ t’iin iin huts’uuxąą xa tl’oh skihdeh’ah.
tailed people’ to.kill.them for grass they.put.across

‘The Che’ t’iin put the tall grass across [the trail] so they can kill them.’

UTOLVDN13May2803-009

3.4 Postpositions

Postpositions exist both inside (positions 11 and 12) and outside of the verbal complex.
When they are part of the verb complex they often add information on the spatial relationship between the subject and the postpositional object. The postpositions listed below are mostly concerned with the spatial relationships between different objects. They can be overtly inflected for object (they share inflection with the direct object prefixes of position 6 shown in the left column of Table 3.7) or uninflected when they follow nouns or noun phrases they modify (i.e. itüh ‘over it’ or mänh tüh ‘over/across the lake’).

(6) Postpositions

- -k’it ‘on’
- -tah ‘among’
- -k’üü ‘beside’
- -tüh ‘across, over’
- -k’eh ‘behind, in tracks’
- -t’aat ‘under’
- -ttheh ‘in front of’
- -shyiit ‘inside’
- -ts’ä ‘to’
- -xa ‘for’
- -t’aat ‘under’
- -ts’änh ‘from’
- -ch’á ‘(away) from’

10 As well as verbs/verb phrases (see 7e).
As noted above, postpositions can occur both as part of the verb complex or outside of it. For example, in (7a) the postposition -k’eh ‘behind’ is part of the verb complex and an alternative translation is “if he swims across, he will follow/chase you”. In (7b), however, the postposition is outside the verb complex and has a general “behind” or “behind objects” sense which positions actors rather than modifying the verb. Similarly, tttheh ‘in front of’ is outside the verb complex in (7c) and locates the position of Carl in relation to the speaker (Mrs. Barnes) and her other siblings. In (7d) it is part of the verb and modifies it to mean ‘move in front of you’. While postpositions are commonly used to express spatial relationships they also can be used to indicate temporal progressions as in (7e). Here tttheh has the meaning ‘ahead of/before’ and locates the preceding verb phrase in time. The temporal use is possible with some of the other postpositions as well (like tah ‘at the time’). Examples (7f) and (7g) are further illustrations of the spatial use of postpositions outside the verb complex. Both show uninflected postpositions headed by a noun phrase.

(7) Examples of postposition use.

a. “Jah du’ skinįįjįh de’ nk’eh ha’altthal de’.”
   Here CT he.swim.across if’ behind.you he.will.run.out if’
   “If he swims across, he will run out after you.” UTOLVDN14Nov2301-363

b. Naan’ unak’-įh, noo’ ihhaal tl’aan ch’ik’eh
   Across.ALL I.look.for.him, ahead I.am.walking and INDEF.behind
   noo’ tah dhihdah, hahnoo’. ahead.ALL among I.stay, NEU.ahead.ALL
   ‘I look across, I’m walking out, and I am staying behind [to watch them], ahead.’ UTOLVDN13May2004-015

c. Carl shǫǫnüü noo’, shttheh tah, neettheh tah
   Carl my.older.brother ahead, in.front.of.me among, in.front.of.us among
   aahaał.
   he.is.walking
   ‘My older brother Carl, he is walking ahead of me, ahead of us.’ UTOLVDN13May2004-017
3.5 Nouns and Minor Word Classes

Nouns are generally monosyllabic or bisyllabic (aside from nouns created through nominalization or compounding). They can be divided into categories based on whether they are obligatorily possessed or not. Body parts and kin terms must be inflected for possessor (the possessive inflections are morphologically identical to the object markers; for example, -*gaan* ‘arm’ must take a possessive prefix resulting in a form like *shgaan* ‘my arm’) while most other nouns can, but do not have to, take possessive inflection. Nominalized verbs (created via addition of the nominalizing suffix of position -2) are treated as a noun.

In addition to nouns there are a number of other small word classes some of which will
be briefly described here. The class of adjectives is quite small (includes: gaay ‘small’, choh ‘big’, tayh ‘strong’) as much of the description of nouns is accomplished via stative verbs. Adjectives follow the noun they modify. There are a number of conjunctions some of which serve a subordinating function (e.g. xa ‘in order to’, de’ ‘if’, and tah ‘when’) and others which coordinate noun phrases (eh ‘with, and’) or verb phrases (nts’ä ‘and’, tl’aan ‘then’). There are also subordinators which are relevant spatially: dänh ‘at the place where’ is used following verbs to indicate locations (8a) and niign ‘the way that’ indicates paths in either a spatial way (8b) or as a description of manner (‘this is the way we do this’).

(8) Dänh and Niign.

a. Ay tl’aan, “that tthee dalmo dah shyiig nts’ä unjh’jh,”
and then rock it.rolled place down.ALL to look
yehnih.

‘And then, “look down where that rock rolled from,” she said to her.’

b. Huugn nduugn nahtetdak niign t’eey, di’aat
there wherever they.went.CUST the.way.that really his.own.wife
natehteeek.

‘Wherever they went, he brought his wife.’

Finally, the set of demonstrative deictics should be discussed as they occur pervasively in spatial constructions. Two of these have a restricted ‘this thing, person, point’ sense: jin/jah ‘here; this thing, person’ and shyiit ‘that point’ (which is derived from the punctual form of the ‘downward’ directional). The other two refer to broad areas: duugn ‘the area nearby’ and huugn ‘a distant area’. Additionally, there is the demonstrative ay ‘that’ which carries no spatial or deictic content but is used extensively in referencing objects which have been introduced earlier in discourse.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the Upper Tanana language and Athabascan language family which will be useful for the review of earlier research on directional forms in chapter 5. As space is limited I have emphasized word classes and verb prefixes which are involved in spatial description and will not be directly discussed later in the thesis. This summary of postpositions, spatial verb prefixes, and spatial constructions situates the directional forms in the broader spatial language of Upper Tanana.

This chapter has also described non-spatial aspects of the language like the sound system and orthography of Upper Tanana to allow the reader to follow the narrative examples provided in the thesis. While the discussion of the verb is limited and designed to allow a description of spatial adverbial-derivational prefixes I have given a basic description of the verb complex and verb structure. This introductory description of the language serves as background to the in-depth discussion of directional adverbs in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

Direction Systems and the Riverine Directional System

The major class of spatial elements in Athabaskan languages is the riverine directionals which is composed of nine roots expressing direction which are suffixed with one of four morphemes expressing direction (allative ‘towards’, ablative ‘from’) or location (punctual ‘at a point’, areal ‘in general area’), and prefixed with indicators of distance. Thus, a large portion of the following discussion will be dedicated to their description and classification. First, I will discuss the basic morphology and function of directionals in Upper Tanana with special attention paid to the broader Athabaskan language family. This will be followed in section 4.1 by a discussion of strategies for classifying and describing spatial systems. This section will also include an explanation of terms commonly used in describing spatial relationships. The Upper Tanana directional stems will be examined in greater detail in section 4.2.2 to apply a more nuanced view of the ways directionals are used.


4.1 Frames of Reference

Before proceeding to an in-depth discussion of the Upper Tanana directional system it will be useful to review some of the literature on and terminology of cross-linguistic studies of spatial language. The major differences between how languages handle space is in their ‘frames-of-reference’. Specifically, Levinson argues that the differences between languages’ frames-of-reference are “essentially distinctions between underlying coordinate system” (Levinson 2003:24). Frames-of-reference are a set of relationships between points which are systematically applied to describe space. These sets of relationships are divided into three types: ‘relative’ (as in ‘left of the house’), ‘intrinsic’ (as in ‘in front of the house’), and ‘absolute’ (as in ‘north of the house’). These will be described in some detail below but the points they are composed of must be introduced.

Thus, following one of Levinson’s “first principles” of describing spatial systems and frames-of-reference I will “pay attention to the location of a referent in relation to some given origo or reference point” (Levinson 1992:11; emphasis in original). The reference point is commonly termed the ground while the referent is alternatively termed the figure (Levinson 1992:11). For example in (9) the figure (the thing being picked out) is the dog and the tree (the point from which the angle “right” originates) is the ground.

(9) The dog is right of the tree.

A third location, that of the viewer or observer, is the point from which the relationship between the ground and figure is viewed (i.e. the point from which the dog appears to be right of the tree (Levinson 2003:37)). Finally, the anchor is the location used to fix coordinates pointing in various directions (Levinson 2003:39). This may be the position of the viewer, the ground, or the figure. In (9) the anchor point is the viewer as it is his
from his right that the coordinate system extends.¹

Now we may turn to the three types of frames-of-reference. First off, the ‘intrinsic’ system operates by extending an angle from some attributed facet of the ground object toward the figure as exemplified in (10) and Figure 4.2. Here the house is the ground and the its orientation determines the angle to follow to arrive at the dog (the figure). The intrinsic system differs from the other two systems because it is a binary system; the location of objects other than the figure and ground are unimportant as the anchor is within the ground and the location of the viewer does not alter the description (Levinson 2003:42-43).

(10) The dog is in front of the house.

Relative systems add a third relevant point to the equation: the observer. In relative systems it is the observer’s perspective that determines the angle-of-direction projected off the ground. The English left/right system (as in (9)) is a canonical example of a

¹The points involved in spatial descriptions will be labeled as follows through this chapter: figure as (F), ground as (G), location of observer or viewer as (V), anchor point as (A), and slope or arc as (S) following Levinson (Levinson 2003:37).
relative system as the angles ‘right’, and ‘left’ radiate from aspects of the speaker (or viewer). Thus, for the angle ‘right’ of the tree (G) to point at the dog (F) the observer (V, A) must be at a certain location (and in a specific orientation). The figure must appear to be right of the ground. As the origin (or anchor) of the coordinate system is within the viewer there is no fixed angle ‘right’ which will always point to the dog’s location if the viewer moves around the array. For example, if the viewer was on the opposite side of the tree the dog would appear be to ‘left’ of the tree. The description changes as the viewer rotates on the spot as well. If the observer turns around and looks over his shoulder the dog in (9) will appear to be to the left of the tree. This contrasts with intrinsic systems. For example, regardless whether the observer (V) in (10) was to walk around the house (G), or rotate on the spot, the dog (F) would always be at the houses ‘front’. If the house (G, A) is rotated however, the dog will then be to the ‘back’ of the house. This illustrates that the location of the anchor point (i.e. in the figure, ground, or viewer) serves to divide the coordinate systems. See figure 4.2 for an illustration.

![Figure 4.2: Examples of Intrinsic System](image)

The dog is in front of the house. The dog is to the back of the house.

In an ‘absolute’ frame-of-reference (the cardinal directions of English are an exam-
ple) the dog (F) will be in the same direction—say ‘east’ of the house (G)—regardless of how much the observer (V) moves or rotates. This is similar, so far, to intrinsic systems: both absolute and intrinsic systems are binary so the viewer is unimportant in determining the angle of direction. However, absolute systems differ from intrinsic ones because the orientation of the ground is unimportant as well. The house (G) may rotate without affecting description of direction. This is because absolute frames are not anchored to a point like the figure or ground but to an “abstract void” (Levinson 2003:26). Thus, in distinguishing ‘absolute’ and ‘relative/intrinsic’ systems it should be made clear that the latter systems rely on a relationship between objects (as in ‘F is in front of G, A’ and ‘F is to the left of G (from V, A)’) to determine direction while absolute systems are of a fundamentally different type (Levinson 1997:98). A type where these points do not figure in to the determination of direction. That is, the directions or coordinates ‘front’ (intrinsic) and ‘left’ (relative) are “anchored to the places occupied by physical objects and their relations to one another” (Levinson 2003:27). Meanwhile absolute systems operate on abstractions; ‘north’ and ‘east’ are not situation dependent nor anchored to objects (and so can be easily related to compass bearings (Levinson 2003:48)). It is due to this abstract anchoring that ‘go north’ or ‘the figure is the east of the ground’ are able to maintain constant angles of reference (Levinson 1992:12; Levinson 1997:100). Put simply, absolute coordinates are a series of “slopes”—abstract and unchanging lines which are dropped on to the landscape. These slopes do not change regardless of the orientation of the ground or viewer.

There is a subclass of absolute frames-of-reference which are less removed from their environment. These are anchored to a major landmark (i.e. objects) from which the conceptual slopes of the system are abstracted. The differences are largely superficial in many languages, however. For example, the Tzeltal language of Mexico has an absolute
ThedogistotheNorth.

The dog is north of the house.

Figure 4.3: Examples of Absolute System

frame-of-reference abstracted from the generally falling slope of the region from south to north. Thus, Tzeltal speakers describe directions along three slopes: ‘uphill’ (=south), ‘downhill’ (=north), and ‘traverse’ (=east and west; (Brown 2006, Brown and Levinson 1993)). While these appear to be context-dependent the directions are fully abstracted from the landscape and maintain their axis outside of the region—i.e. ‘uphill’ remains ‘south’ wherever people go. Going south is always the direction ‘uphill’ even when it is geographically ‘downhill’. In this situation, the landmark based system does not differ categorically or functionally from the more obviously abstract systems\(^2\) (i.e. those without reference to landscape features).

This discussion of spatial systems has relied on the relation between points (the figure, ground, and viewer) and their relation to the abstract ‘slopes’ placed on the landscape or angles projecting from an object. Though this is an accurate depiction of the relationships in spatial expressions a further distinction will facilitate discussion in later portions of this

\(^2\)Tzeltal uses the same direction terms to map directly on to landscape topology in a descriptive way but this differs from its cardinal direction usage. See Brown and Levinson (1993) and Brown (2006) for detailed descriptions.
thesis. This division is between deictic and non-deictic expressions. Hanks (1990) describes deictics as “linguistic elements which specify the identity or placement in space or time of individuated objects relative to the participants in a verbal interaction” (1990:5). That is, deictic expressions point to locations from the place of speech (i.e. location of speaker or addressee) while non-deictics, defined negatively, include all the direction expressing utterances where the speech location is not the ground. For example, the deictic sentence in (11) points to the dog from the speech site while (12) uses a third point (the house) to locate the dog. Spatial deictics are the linguistic equivalent of pointing a finger.

(11) “The dog (F) is to the north (S) [of me/speech location (G)]”

(12) “The dog (F) is north (S) of the house (G)”

Having established this necessary background we will now turn to a description of the most important spatial elements in Upper Tanana: the directionals.

4.2 Directionals: Introduction

The directional system of Upper Tanana is common in the Northern Athabascan language grouping.³ In fact, all eleven Alaskan Athabascan languages have directional systems constructed from nine directional roots expressing orientation (generally in reference to the major river of the area), with three to six prefixes denoting distance and four suffixes which describe the direction of motion or a static location (Kari 1985:472). A chart of the Upper Tanana directional stem-suffix combination is seen in Table 4.1 in comparison to the Proto-Athabascan (PA) stems reconstructed by Leer (1989).

³Remnants of the system are found in the other branches of the Athabascan languages though the system are not as complicated. For example, the Hupa language of California has riverine based directionals (Golla 1996) and Navajo has retained some of the non-riverine forms (Jett 1997:485).
Table 4.1: Directional Stems in Proto-Athabascan and Upper Tanana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>ABL</th>
<th>PUNC</th>
<th>AREAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘upward’</td>
<td>*deG</td>
<td>degn’</td>
<td>dǫǫ or doo</td>
<td>daa</td>
<td>dogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘downward’</td>
<td>*yeG, yex</td>
<td>shyign’</td>
<td>shyqq</td>
<td>shyiit</td>
<td>shyuugn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘upstream’</td>
<td>*niʔ</td>
<td>ne’</td>
<td>nqq or noo</td>
<td>niit</td>
<td>nuugn or noogn*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘downstream’</td>
<td>*daʔ</td>
<td>da’</td>
<td>dǫǫ or doo</td>
<td>daat</td>
<td>duugn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘upland’</td>
<td>*neG</td>
<td>negn’</td>
<td>nqq or noo</td>
<td>noot</td>
<td>noogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘downland’</td>
<td>*cenʔ</td>
<td>tthän’</td>
<td>tthqq</td>
<td>tthiit</td>
<td>tthuugn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ahead’</td>
<td>*nəsd</td>
<td>noo’ or noo</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>noogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘across’</td>
<td>*ŋaˑnʔ</td>
<td>naan’</td>
<td>nqq</td>
<td>naat</td>
<td>nuugn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘away’</td>
<td>*ʔαnʔ</td>
<td>‘än’</td>
<td>‘qq’</td>
<td>‘aat</td>
<td>’ogn or ’oogn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tetlin dialect.

As Leer (1989) notes, the term ‘directional’ refers to a lexical (or semantic) class of words found in the entire Na-Dene phylum—meaning that they are grouped together because they specify “direction with respect to a frame of reference” (Leer 1989:576) rather than by syntactic position. In addition, directionals take (or are fused with) a set of suffixes and prefixes which are distinct to the class. The frame-of-reference that Athabascan directionals are anchored to is prototypically the major waterway (river) of the region. In the Northway and Tetlin area this is the Tanana River which flows from the confluence of the Nabesna and Chisana rivers (which both flow north) to a little north of west. Thus, west-by-northwest is da’ ‘downriver’, east-by-southeast is ne’ ‘upriver’ and so on.

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4 The Athabascan language family is one branch of the Na-Dene language family which also includes Eyak and Tlingit of the Pacific Northwest (see Leer (1989)).

5 Note, as described in Section 3.2.2, that Tetlin dialect speakers often produce /n/ as a prenasalized stop. Thus, ne’ ‘upriver’ often appears as nde’ in examples from Tetlin.
4.2.1 Athabascan Directionals: Classification

We may now apply the classifications of frames-of-reference to the Athabascan directional system. The frame-of-reference of the riverine directionals easily fits the class of absolute systems using Levinson’s three main classifications. More accurately it fits into the class of landmark based absolute systems. However, while directions are fixed to (and abstracted from) a major landmark in each major drainage so that the direction ‘upland’ may be used when following the course of a tributary which flow perpendicular to the main flow (illustrating their abstraction from the landscape) as a person moves from one drainage to another the directions change to match the major landmark of the new area. For example, moving from the Copper River basin (which runs roughly from north to south) to the Tanana River basin (which flows a little north of west) the direction ‘upstream’ shifts over 90 degrees. Thus—as Kari (2010:129) and Levinson (2003:90-91) point out—the yet more accurate classification of the system is as an “intermediate absolute landmark” system. This attempts to capture the solely regional extent of the directionals ‘absolute’ usage. The Athabascan system, then, is unlike both the English absolute cardinal system or Tzeltal absolute landmark system.

Upper Tanana—and Athabascan—directionals are also deictic (see (Leer 1989:576; Moore 2002:51-52)). As pointing a finger indexes objects in a direct line from the person (thus establishing them as the point-of-view from which to locate the object) direction-

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7 See Berez (2011) for a discussion on how this is changing for some Ahtna speakers. She describes how certain directionals are becoming associated with cardinal directions. This is, facilitated by the north to south flow of the main waterway (Copper River) which allows an easy transfer of meaning.

8 This is according to ‘True North’. Magnetic North is 30 degrees west of True North in the Upper Tanana area. Thus, a compass reading of the flow of the Tanana would be nearly exactly east-west.

9 The ‘absolute’ status of the Athabascan riverine directional system is complicated by the ability to travel over the river (i.e. the anchor point). The direction of the ‘slopes’ do not change but the labels attached to them switch so that ‘downland’ becomes ‘upland’. This shows that, though the directionals are abstract, the speakers must still be aware of their location in relation to the anchor landmark.
als establish the speaker as the point-of-view from which locations of other objects are described. This point-of-view may be lent to focal characters in narratives which allows, as Moore (2002) describes, the story audience to view the story through their eyes.

### 4.2.2 Upper Tanana Directional Stem Sets

The Proto-Athabascan directional roots are historically reconstructed as opposing pairs with three of the sets making up the ‘riverine’ directional sets: upstream vs. downstream, upland (away from the river) vs. downland (toward the river), and across (which is its own opposite) (Leer 1989:576). These riverine directionals are anchored to the main waterway of the region (and thus their directional use changes to match the flow of the regional rivers). Most of the remaining directionals are also set up in opposing pairs though they are not anchored to the regional waterway. The directional ‘up (vertically)’ is opposed to ‘down’, and ‘ahead’ is opposed to ‘behind/back’ (Leer 1989:576). The ‘away (off to the side)’ directional has no opposite. Upper Tanana has retained the complete set of directional roots from Proto-Athabascan.

The Upper Tanana directional roots are crosscut by four suffixes which describe direction of movement or location from the point-of-view of the speaker or focal character. In many Athabascan languages the directional suffixes (historically a postposition or adverbalizing suffix (Leer 1989:590)) have eroded to the point that it is more accurate to view the root and suffix combination as a series of unanalyzable stems (Leer 1989:591). This is the case in Upper Tanana where the directional root and suffix combinations are best analyzed as “semantically complex stems” due to the fusing of the root and suffix and other phonological developments (Lovick 2012:10). Thus, there is an allative ‘towards’, ablative ‘from’, punctual ‘at a point’, and areal ‘in general area’ stem for each of

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10 This is the same as the upstream form (see Leer 1989:616).
the nine directional roots (as exemplified in Table 4.1). Examples of their use are below.

(13) Allative.

\[
\text{Ahda’ du’ Elijah, <stsay> Elijah Demit, ushyah hǭölįį ishyiit.}
\]

\[
\text{NEU.downriver.ALL CT Elijah my.grandpa Elijah Demit his.house}
\]

area.exists there

‘Grandpa Elijah Demit’s house is downstream there.’

UTCBVDN13Nov0804-007

(14) Ablative.

\[
\text{Ha’ahdǭŋ neeshyah nts’ä’ dǭ.}
\]

\[
\text{ADJ.NEU.downriver.ABL our.house to downriver.ABL}
\]

‘The next one from downriver towards our house.’

UTCBVDN13Nov0804-015

(15) Areal.

\[
\text{Ishyiit ts’äänh tah haduugn Herman Kessler dii ay telshyeegn ishyiit ts’äänh.}
\]

\[
\text{there from among NEU.downriver.AREA Herman Kessler what that he.carries there from}
\]

‘From the area downstream, Herman Kessler would bring things from there.’

UTCBVDN13Nov0805-007

(16) Punctual.

\[
\text{Daat nihatdeel ch.}
\]

\[
\text{downriver.PUNC they.arrived and}
\]

‘They arrived downstream.’

UTOLVDN14Apr2601-001

Allative forms are the most commonly used directional forms and are used to describe motion towards places, looking at objects, and giving directions. The allative forms indicate that motion proceeds from the speaking location (ground) toward the figure. Ablative forms reverse this direction of movement and are most often used to describe
the motion of others (the figure) toward the ground. Areal forms describe broad locations and contrast with the punctual forms which pick out discrete points or objects.

4.2.3 Upper Tanana Directional Prefixes

A number of prefixes may be attached to the directional stem. Athabascan directional prefixes often provide information on the relative distance of objects. For example, Upper Tanana’s close neighbour Tanacross has a four-way distance distinction in the prefixes (da- ‘near’, na- ‘intermediate’, ya- ‘distant’, and ya’a- ‘more distant’) as well as an unmarked or neutral form (Holton 2000:294). Though this is the most common function of directional prefixes they also pull from a much larger range of meanings. Some of these add more precise information on the location of places/objects. For example, an ‘adjacent’ prefix is fairly common across Alaskan Athabascan languages with the form ka- in Ahtna (Kari 1985:472) and qe-/he-/qu- in Denaina (Kari 2007:336). Information on the type of movement is also a possibility. Southern Tutchone has a number of prefixes which describe how people are moving: ghǎ-/yǎ- ‘meandering’, ghà-/yè- ‘directly’, and tth’a- ‘straight toward’ (Moore and Tlen 2006:281). Another Athabascan language, Kaska, even codes what knowledge actors in a speech event have of a location in a three-way division of the distant prefix: kúh- ‘distant; location known by speaker and addressee’, de- ‘distant; known to speaker but not addressee’, and ah- ‘distant, unknown to both speaker and addressee’ (Moore 2002:59).

Upper Tanana directionals prefixes, like those of its close neighbour Tanacross, are predominately concerned with distance distinctions. It is uncertain if the ‘more distant’ prefix is productive in Upper Tanana11 but the remaining three distance prefixes are identical in form to those of Tanacross: da- ‘near, proximate (PROX)’, na- ‘intermediate,

11There is some evidence for the ya’a ‘more distant’ prefix but it is only attested once in the Scottie Creek dialect (Tyone 1996:23).
medial (MED), and *ya-* ‘distant, distal (DIST)’. The most common prefix is the neuter prefix which can have the form *a-* or *ha-* ‘neutral (NEU)’. Unprefixed forms are also very common and are semantically identical to the neuter forms.\(^{12}\) An areal prefix *u-* or *o-* occupies a position to the right of the distance prefixes—immediately before the stem—and replaces the vowel of the distance prefixes.\(^{13}\) For example, the *da-* ‘PROX’ prefix and the *u-* ‘AREA’ prefix is combined in the form *dune* ‘the nearby upriver area’ which is used to refer to the ‘Upper Tanana area’ in Avis Sam’s narrative of a large fire (see (38)). This prefix may be combined with any of the distance prefixes to create a directional form without point-of-view content. Both the ground and the anchor are on the river and thus the directional serves as a purely abstract slope generally referring to large regions. Compare the English constructions the ‘the train steamed north’ the ‘the train is north of me’. In the first example the location of the observer is unimportant but the accuracy of the second depends on his location (his point-of-view). Similarly, directionals not prefixed by an areal have a point-of-view as in forms like *ahnuugn* (NEU.Upriver.AREA) ‘the area upriver of me (the ground)’ while forms prefixed with the areal like *dune* (PROX-AREA-Upriver.ALL) are translated as ‘in the (to) upriver area’ or ‘the upper reaches of’ as they omit the perspective of the observer. The prefix *tth’i-* ‘straight toward’ is rare but has been noted in a few instances: *tth’inoor* ‘straight ahead’ is used when describing a character placing arrows under the snow pointing straight ahead (17) and *tth’idogn* ‘straight up’ used when describing the motion of people going to heaven (18). The ‘adjacent (ADJ)’ prefix with the meaning ‘next one over’ is *ha-* . This prefix is used extensively by Mrs. Barnes to describe the location of neighbouring houses in section 7.1.1.

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\(^{12}\) Kari suggests that the plain (without prefix or suffix) directionals refer to a “broad direction or area” in Ahtna (Kari 2010:137). Upper Tanana directionals do not occur without suffixes (i.e. as bare roots) but I have found nothing to distinguish unprefixed stems from those prefixed with a neuter.

\(^{13}\) The areal prefix is also evident in Gwich’in (Busch 2000:9) and Ahtna (Kari 1990:693).
(17) Mr. David: Directional prefix *tth’ii*-.

Ch’aaluu ts’an h t’ee y <dichinh k’a shyüh t’aat> niijit-tthaay <tth’iinoo’
tobaggon from really arrow snow under he.put.them LIN.ahead.ALL
nts’ą’ hukah ninah’įįk> naa::n uudih.
to for.them he.hid.them across all.the.way

‘From the tobaggon he is putting the arrows under the snow, he hides them pointing straight ahead, all the way across he does this.’ UTOLVDN13May2801-145

(18) Mrs. David: The top of *Ts’iiit Tl’oo*.

hii’aa’an ch’uutnel’ii::k tah ha guuy nts’ą’ hooniign t’ee y ditth’iik
around.it they.try.to.sneak among little.bit and that.way really he.hears
hatth’iidegn’ ddhal tthiit’aagn nts’ą’.
ADJ.LIN.upwards.ALL mountain top from

‘When they try to sneak by, he hears every little noise they make, from on top of that hill.’ UTOLAF09Jun2404-002

The prefix combination *Hano/-hanu*- is common with the ‘downwards’ stems (i.e. *hanoshiyign*, *hanoshyuugn*). It can only be used in outdoor settings (unlike the regular prefixes: *da*-,-*na*-, etc.) and is used most commonly when referring to areas ‘down over an edge’ such as the area below a creek bank or on the edge of a lake. Using this directional in houses or when referring to points directly around the speaker is not acceptable. *Hano*- is the areal form of the *(h)ana*- prefix which most often appears with the ‘upwards’ stems *hanadegn*, *hanadogn* but is also occasionally used with riverine directionals. When used with the ‘upwards’ stems the prefixes generally refer to areas on hills—seemingly ‘up over an edge’.

The above prefix combinations are interpreted as set in a templatic structure similar to verbs. Thus, *hana*- is ha- ‘ADJ’ + na- ‘MED’, *hano*- is ha- ‘ADJ’ + na- ‘MED’ + o/u-
‘AREA’, and **ha’a*- is ha- ‘ADJ’ + a- ‘NEU’. This interpretation allows for the ‘over an edge’ readings of *hanadegn* and *hanoshyuugn* with the combined prefixes creating the meanings ‘the next one (a ways off) up above’ and ‘the next area (a ways off) down below’ respectively. Similarly, *hatth’iidegn* in (18) has the prefix structure ha- ‘ADJ’
Table 4.2: Upper Tanana Directional Prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ha- ‘ADJ’</th>
<th>da- ‘PROX’</th>
<th>u- or o- ‘AREA’</th>
<th>Stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>na- ‘MED’</td>
<td>ya- ‘DIST’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha- or a- ‘NEUT’</td>
<td>tth’i- ‘LIN’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADJ = ‘adjacent, next one over’
PROX = ‘proximate, nearby’
MED = ‘medial, medium distance’
DIST = ‘distal, at a distance’
NEUT = ‘neuter, neutral’
AREA = ‘areal, in the area of’
LIN = ‘linear, straight toward’

Note: An /h/ may immediately proceed the stem. It has no bearing on the semantics but is there to maintain syllable weight.

+ tth’i- ‘LIN’ with a ‘next place directly on top’ meaning. The precision of spatial description encoded in the combination of these few morphemes is amazing and difficult to replicate in translation.

4.3 Uses of Directionals

As noted in section 4.2, Upper Tanana directionals are semantically quite close to the Proto-Athabascan reconstructions found in Leer (1989). The most iconic stems—the ‘upstream’ vs. ‘downstream’, and ‘upland’ vs. ‘downland’ stems—normally reference the Upper Tanana River which flows in a meandering fashion a little north of west. Thus, to put the directions into English cardinal terms ne’ ‘upstream’ is just south of east, da’ ‘downstream’ is north of west, tthän’ ‘downland’ and negn’ ‘upland’ are both either west of south or east of north depending on which side of the river you are on. The naan’
‘across’ directional points the same direction as the upland and downland stems. See figure 4.4 for an illustration.

![Figure 4.4: Upper Tanana Riverine Directionals](image)

Examples of the use of these directionals are given in (19). These examples come from a narrative about the old Northway village site and the move across the Nabenasa River to the current site which is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

(19) Mrs. Barnes: Upper Tanana riverine directionals.

a. Nts‘ă’ ahnegn’ chih Naambia Niign hanegn’ chih. and NEU.upland.ALL too Northway NEU.upland.ALL also

‘And upland to Naambia Niign, upland there [they went] too.’

b. Hatthän’ ’eel iidlaak naxach’ihdelshyeek. NEU.downland.ALL trap he.set they.went.hunting

‘They would go hunting with traps down there.’
c. **Hahda’** *Beaver Lake* **uda’** *du’ shta’*
   NEU.downriver.ALL AREA.downriver.ALL CT my.father
   iin nohts’ay mānh deedlay
   PL other.side lake PL are.there

   ‘Downstream, downstream to that Beaver Lake my father and the others [went] to the other side of the lakes down there.’

   UTCBVDN13Nov0804-029

d. **Ay tl’aan chih** Herman Kessler **moosi’ chih hanaat**
   and then also Herman Kessler he.is.called also NEU.across.PUNC
   **ahne’** neeshyah ts’ānh **ahne’**.
   NEU.upriver.ALL our.house from NEU.upriver.ALL

   ‘And then Herman Kessler also [moved] across upriver there, upriver from our [old] house.’

   UTCBVDN13Nov0804-054

These directionals normally reference the Tanana River but there are times where this ‘riverine’ set of directionals is not anchored to any river. For example, the stem *naan’* ‘across’ may be used to point across a diverse range of environments such as ‘across the room’ or ‘across the clearing’ as in (20). In (20) Sherry Barnes uses *naan’* as she talks about looking for a bear while walking *noo’* ‘ahead, out into open area’ out on to a flat. In (21) Roy David uses the punctual form of *naan’* when a character jumps to the other side of the tent.

(20) Mrs. Barnes: Non-riverine ‘across’ the flat.

   **Naan’** unak’įh **noo’** ihhał.
   across.ALL I.look.around ahead.ALL I.go
   ‘I look across, I’m walking out (ahead).’

   UTOLVDN13May2004-015

(21) Mr. David: Non-riverine ‘across’ the room.

   **Ahnaat** tah ninįhshyaal
   NEU.across.PUNC among he.jumped
   ‘He jumped away to the other side (of the tent).’

   UTCBAF13Nov0501-109

The classification of the riverine set of Athabascan directionals (‘upriver/downriver’, ‘upland/downland) above has introduced five of the stem sets of the directional system
but the remaining four directionals are not anchored to the river. The pair ‘up’ and ‘down’
is easily assigned to the universally common absolute directions assumed to be stem-
ming from the impositions of gravity (Levinson 2003:32) while the ‘away’, ‘ahead’, and
‘across’ stems are more problematic to classify. The *degn* ‘upwards’ and *shyign* ‘down-
wards’ stems operate in much the same manner as English ‘up’ and ‘down’ denoting a
range from directly vertical to angled slopes like ‘uphill’ or ‘downhill’. The punctual
*shyiit* ‘downwards’ stem is also used as a spatially vague deictic (‘there’; described in
section 3.5) as well as to express the location of contained objects (22). This latter use,
‘inside’, is clear if understood as ‘at a point down (in) there.’

(22) Mrs. David: *ushyiit* ‘inside it’.

Ay t’oot’eey chih “*Ushyiit jihaayh,“ <shehnih>. and but also inside.it you.go he.said.to.me

‘But “You go in it,” he told me.’ UTOLAF09Jun2902-008

The punctual form is also used with the post-position *ts’änh* ‘from’ which can be
either spatial (seen in (15)) or temporal (23). When used temporally *shyiit ts’änh* has the
meaning ‘from that point (in time) on’. This indicates a temporal progression from the
preceding utterance(s) to the following ones.

(23) Mrs. Barnes: Temporal *ishyiit ts’änh* ‘from that point on’.

*Ishyiit ts’änh* ch’aah Northway hoqdiįįthådn
there from away Northway it.became

‘From there [from then on], it became Northway.’ UTCBVDN13Nov0804-033

The *noo* ‘ahead’ stems are the only directional stems with a frame-of-reference ap-
proaching relative status. Generally, these stems are used to refer to the space ahead of the
speaker (or ground) but are often used when moving out into clearings or open spaces (as

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14 It is a common tendency for Athabascan languages to equate down with inside or aboard (see Leer 1989:576).
in (20)) which is reminiscent of, and which may be an extension of, the pan-Athabascan “ahead, out on the open water” (Leer 1989:616). It seems the stem still carries connotations of this ‘out into the open’ meaning but is also used when moving down relatively enclosed spaces like trails. Ne’ ‘back, (upriver)’ is the opposing pair of noo’ (24). The examples below are taken from the same story and refer to motion in opposite directions. First, Mrs. David is moving noo’ ‘ahead’ down the trail (24a) and then ne’ ‘back’ in the opposite direction down the trail (24b). Note that in (24b) the second ‘upriver/back’ directional is a punctual form niit referring to her position ‘at a point behind (her mother)’.

(24) Mrs. David: Spatial noo’ ‘ahead’ vs. ne’ ‘back’.

a. Chinh, chinh maagn noo’ nats’atdal el t’eey shta’ flat flat edge ahead.ALL we.were.walking and really my.father
   iin ttheh na’ihdaal. PL in.front.of I.was.walking
   ‘At the edge of the flats we were walking back out [ahead] and I was walking
   way ahead [in front] of my parents.’
   UTOLAF09Jun2201-003

b. Hu’altthat nts’a’ hu’altthat nts’a’ t’eey nahne’ tanatidhatththat
   It.fell and it.fell and really MED.upriver.ALL I.ran.away
   niit tah shnåą naht’aag tana’ihtth that
   upriver.PUNC among my.mother behind I.stood
   ‘It fell, it fell, and I ran way back and stood behind my mother.’
   UTOLAF09Jun2201-015

Noo’ is also used temporally as ‘ahead in time’ as in Mrs. David’s narrative (25a).

In this temporal usage, noo’ ‘ahead (in time)’ is again paired against ne’ ‘back (in time)’

(25) Temporal noo’ ‘ahead’ vs. ne’ ‘back’.

a. “Jah ts’anh noo’ huhnay noo’ t’eey k’a hǫǫ
   here from ahead.ALL they.said ahead.ALL really NEG thus
   natindiil,” iiyehnih.
   you.will.do.this.NEG he.said.to.them
   ‘ ‘From now on, from now on and here on you will not say this again,’” he said
   to him.’
   Mrs. David: UTOLAF09Jun2404-014

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b. Ne’ dą’ shyįį daktayh.  
upriver.ALL PAST only I.was.strong

‘Way back I used to be strong.’  Mrs. Barnes: UTOLAF15May1207

Finally, when noo’ is used indoors it has the meaning ‘towards the fire’ (26). 15 In the
‘towards the fire’ meaning noo’ is opposed to ‘än ‘away, off to the side, outside’ (27).

(26) Mr. David: Noo’ ‘toward the fire’.

Ha’ gaay hayįįshyiįł tl’aan ahhnoo tay’ t’eey kon’ dihk’ąą
little.bit he.pulled.it.out then NEU.ahead.ALL again really fire he.lit.it
tl’aan.
then

‘Slowly he pulled it out and towards the fire he started the fire again.’  
UTCBAF13Nov0501-101

The vaguest of the directional stem sets is ‘än ‘away, off to the side’. The uses of
this stem suggest that it carries a high level of uncertainty about the location. Leer’s
reconstruction suggests the historical meaning of “off to the side, away” (Leer 1989:616)
which is synchronically true in both Ahtna (Kari 2010) and Kaska (Moore 2002). The
Upper Tanana stem seems to be more often associated with the latter ‘away’ meaning.
For example, the areal stem ’ogn may often be translated as a ‘outside (outdoors)’ or as
‘area away from/out of here’ while the allative ‘än is usually of the sense ‘he/she went
away’. The use of ‘än as ‘outside (the dwelling)’ which opposes noo’ ‘into the fire’
is shown in (27). The extended usage of the directional stem as ‘over the mountains,
outside the region’ noted by Kari (2010:136) is also possible in Upper Tanana (Author’s
fieldnotes).

15See (Fortescue 2011) for a discussion of the ‘out into open/water, towards fire’ conflation of directional
elements in languages of the pacific rim including Athabascan; see also (Kari 2010:136).
4.4 Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, the directional system of Upper Tanana is complex. The directionals occur as one of four stems which describe movement (‘towards’ or ‘from’) or location (‘at a point’ or ‘in area’) which may then be prefixed with morphemes denoting distance. These distance prefixes may combine with other prefixes, in a templatic structure, for precise and complex meanings. The complexity of the system extends beyond their morphology. It also extends to the different ways that the forms describe space.

The directionals are divided between those anchored to a major landmark—the riverine directionals—and those which are anchored to the ground or minor landscape features. These differences in frames-of-reference create subclasses of directionals, that is, those with an absolute frame-of-reference and those with relative frames-of-reference. The directionals also have different semantics when used in different settings (such as in a house rather than in a boat or on a lake). In some of these settings, the ‘riverine’ directionals have completely different senses. The directionals are also semantically extended to include temporal descriptions.

In sum, directional forms are both morphologically complex and semantically flexible. They can be put to a number of spatially (and temporally) descriptive purposes. This chapter introduces the form and uses of directionals which will be explored further in the following chapters.
Evidenced by the large body of published collections of traditional stories,\(^1\) Alaskan Athabascan people have a strong and important oral tradition. Upper Tanana is no exception. For this reason it is no surprise that McKennan states that storytelling is the “most common recreation” of the Upper Tanana (McKennan 1959:170). Given the large importance Upper Tanana people put on oral literature it is expected, and the reality, that prominent storytellers maintain a large repertoire of narratives received from their parents and grandparents and pulled from personal experience.

The importance of narrative in Athabascan tradition cannot be overstated (Nelson notes that it is common to underrate its importance (1983:16) however, the importance of spatial description and landscape is almost equally important—and no less so in narratives. As shown in the proceeding chapters, spatial elements like directionals are complex and precise forms for describing spatial relations. These characteristics allow spatial elements (most notably the directional adverbs) often found in Athabascan narratives to

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perform a diverse range of narrative functions (as shown in 5.2). Additionally, spatial elements are often used as diagnostics of narrative genre due to their ability to place stories on the landscape (as is expected in histories) or to resign them to the distant time and place of “myth.” Thus, the next section examines the genre classification of Athabascan narratives and is followed by a review of previous research on directional’s role in these narratives.

5.1 Athabascan Genre Classification

One of the more debated aspects of Athabascan oral literature centres on how to divide the different types. The main uncertainty lies in where to draw the line between ‘historical’ accounts and ‘myths’ (or ‘distant-time’ stories (Nelson 1983:16-19)). It is often noted that Athabascan language speakers make these divisions themselves—though groups may categorize similar stories differently and use different criteria in their classifications (Lovick 2012). A majority of the debate on genre diagnostics has revolved around aspects of the spatial and temporal settings of stories (though other diagnostics have been suggested) and this is also how Boas marks the major distinction in all Native American folklore: he argues that it is the “distance in space or time that gives [myth] its distinctive tone” (Boas 1914:379).

Linguists and anthropologists working with Athabascan groups across Northern Canada and Alaska have posited various diagnostics to divide narratives. Lovick (2012) has reviewed these and examined the way they apply to the genre distinctions Cora David makes in her collection of Tetlin stories (David 2011). Lovick restricts her discussion

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2 Boas notes in the early twentieth century that “the psychological distinction between the two classes [mythical tales, historical tales] is perfectly clear in the mind of the Indian” (1914:378). This was also noted in the Upper Tanana area in McKenann’s write-up of his 1929 fieldwork where he states “[s]ince the Indians clearly make this distinction I have separated their historical tales from their myths” (1959:170).
of the narrative diagnostics used by other researchers to four of the main suggestions she finds in the literature. Of these four (evidential, ethnic/linguistic, temporal, and spatial framing) Lovick finds that only the latter two are applicable in Mrs. David’s Upper Tanana stories (2012:23). That is, neither ‘special voice,’ prosody, and grammatical evidentials, nor information on the language and ethnicity of story characters is useful in genre distinctions. The temporal and spatial framing of stories, however, have a limited correlation.

The temporal framing of narratives is one of the common divisions between genres in Alaskan Athabascan languages and divides narratives as follows: histories are set in Linear Time while ‘myths’ take place in Floating Time (Helm and Gillespie 1981:9) which Fall defines as “remote or distant time” (1990:5). The division is simple in this model: myths take place in remote, distant time without a clear temporal progression while everything that takes place outside this ‘Floating Time’ is historical. Helm and Gillespie have a slightly different take on the issue, however. They argue that not all historical narratives of ‘long ago’ seem to be “consciously conceived as falling into temporal succession” and thus take place in the Floating Time normally reserved for myths while other narratives take place in a “world much as it is today” (Helm and Gillespie 1981:9). For them Linear Time begins at the point of ‘Proto-Contact’ where hints of European contact or the appearance of Western trade goods enter Dogrib narrative accounts.

The depth of linear time reckoning by this method (reference to contact era events) is rather shallow in the Upper Tanana area with the Allen expedition of 1885 serving as the earliest anchoring event (followed by the Chisana and Klondike gold rushes) identified by McKennan in 1929 (1959:111). Some histories predate these anchoring events, however. One example is the war between the Kluane and the Upper Tanana, accounts of which can be found in McKennan (1959:171-172) but which predate ‘Proto-Contact.’ McKennan
finds that time reckoning was commonly tied to events in the personal lives of people or their ancestors (such as marriages) rather than to the passing of seasons which were “loose and indefinite” (1959:111). Thus, it is possible that these histories, which predate American arrival, are anchored by references to people’s ancestors (McKennan 1959:111) and anchor the events to a Linear timeline via genealogy. However a more apt division between Linear Time (where events are linked to dates or other major events/genealogy references) and Floating Time (where events are not temporally ordered) is found in the qualitative differences, rather than the quantitative differences, between the periods. In Floating Time the “quality of action” possible (Fall 1990:5) is different so that the “realities are not those of today” (de Laguna 1995:76). As Lovick puts it, the difference between Linear Time and Floating Time is “not just temporal but rather spiritual” (Lovick 2012:16). That is, rather than it being simply a division between quantified, ordered time and quantified, unordered time the division is between periods which are so qualitatively different that the entire range of possibilities (such as whether animals may change into human form or not) is completely different. As Lovick is quick to point out, however, beliefs on what is possible in the current period are not always the same in Athabascan culture and mainstream American culture (Lovick 2012:16). Historical narratives may describe events that do not fit in to the Western range of possibility; they are, however, considered possible for the Athabascan storytellers.

For Kari (2010:x), the diagnostic for separating Ahtna myths from histories is a distinct lack of named places or mention of specific locations in mythical accounts and this statement is echoed by Andrews, Zoe, and Herter for Dogrib (1998:311). This is not a consistent across all Athabascan languages, however. Place names occur in both histor-

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3See Cruikshank (1990) for an argument positing that “for Athapaskan elders in the southern Yukon, landscape is more than just an included theme: they seem to be using space in the form of place names and travel accounts to talk about and possibly to think about time” (1990:64).
ical and mythical genres in Kaska (Moore 2002)\(^4\) and some southern Yukon Athabascan languages (Cruikshank 1990:63),\(^5\) for instance, and are very common in Navajo myths (Basso 1990).

Upper Tanana speakers generally ground their narratives to specific locations either through the use of place names or specific (riverine) directionals and to specific times via the age and genealogy of characters or the year of an event (Lovick 2012:23). In contrast, ‘myths’ are only vaguely located on the temporal and spatial landscape—if at all—with vague directionals such as \textit{hah’ogn} ‘out there’ and temporal adverbials like \textit{ishyiit da’} ‘from then’ or \textit{neenaattheh da’} ‘long before us’ (Lovick 2012:23). Using only these diagnostics, however, results in blurry genre boundaries when compared against Mrs. David’s own story classifications—there is an area of temporal and spatial overlap between the genres. For example, one of Mrs. David’s myths was grounded with a specific directional while many of the histories were temporally grounded only vaguely with \textit{neenaattheh da’}. Thus, Lovick proposes a grey area between the “good examples of histories” which are clearly anchored in Linear time and to specific locations and the “good examples of myths” which are firmly in Floating time and lack a spatial anchor (Lovick 2012:24). Lovick notes, as I have also found, that there is a certain amount of variability in Northway and Tetlin speakers’ intuitions on the historicity (and ‘truth’) of certain stories and thus their classification of the narratives.\(^6\) She finds that the most

\(^4\) Moore argues that a clear distinction between myths and histories is not possible in Kaska narratives but says the best diagnostic is based on explicit mention of a group’s language or ethnicity: if it is mentioned it is a history, if not it is a myth (Moore 2002:41, 45).

\(^5\) Julie Cruikshank’s paper discusses narratives from four different languages of the southern Yukon: Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Upper Tanana but does not specify if place names are found in the myths of all four languages or only a subset (Cruikshank 1990:53).

\(^6\) McKen was further divides myths into three categories saying “[t]his division is a natural one and is recognized by the natives themselves” (1959:175). The categories—(1) traveller stories, (2) Raven stories, and (3) ‘miscellaneous’ (McKen 1959:175) are certainly ‘natural’ in that Raven and the traveller—Yaamaagn Teeshyaay—are the two characters which are featured in a large number of stories but modern day speakers seem to find little to no classificatory distinction between them. For example, some Northway residents refer to stories from all three of McKen’s sub-classes as “Yaamaagn Teeshyaay stories”.

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important characteristic Upper Tanana storytellers use to determine a story’s genre is their intuition on the truth of a story and the ‘value’ of the lessons it contains (Lovick 2012:25).\textsuperscript{7} Though even here the classificatory characteristics of genres may only be partially shared between speakers and as such should never be applied indiscriminately (Lovick 2012:25).

In sum, the difference between historical and mythical genres rests on a slightly broader divide than that suggested by Boas; myths are not only distant in space or time but also in tone or veracity. While spatial differences between genres are not the most reliable tool for categorizing genres they form a set of genre characteristics which do often match speakers’ genre classifications. Representations of space, independent of the role of place names or specific locations, are salient features of Athabascan storytelling. As Busch states “Gwich’in speakers stress that when listening to stories in their native language they are able to form very clear images of the location of actions and the direction of movement being described” (Busch 2000:1) while Cruikshank notes that southern Yukon Athabascan speakers comment that they follow the narrative “like a map” (Cruikshank 1990:62). Similarly, Kaska speakers note that they experience narrative scenes “just like being there” (Moore 2002:58). Thus, regardless of genre, spatial descriptions are an important facet of Athabascan storytelling and thus a review of their role in narrative is found below.

\section{Directionals in Athabascan Narratives}

Earlier work on the use of directionals in Athabascan narratives has shown that directionals are involved in more aspects of narrative structure than simply relating spatial

\textsuperscript{7}Note that this is different in Koyukon where “distant-time” stories are “certainly not considered fictional” (Nelson 1983:16).
descriptions or directions. In combination with place names directionals are also involved in organizing social groups, creating point of view (Moore 2002), maintaining information flow (Busch 2000), and commenting on the current social situations of the group (Moore and Tlen 2006).8

One of the most clear-cut examples of the role of directionals in narrative is found in Kari’s (2010) collection of Ahtna travel narratives. The narratives here are a series of virtual “walking tours” through the Ahtna landscape with directionals often projecting off named places to create precise directions on how to travel an area (Kari 2010.ix, xiii). These “elite travel narratives” (Kari 2010:xi) are particularly well suited for complex uses of directionals including compounding of directionals for more specificity (Kari 2010:137). Kari describes how the uses of directionals and place names in these narratives serve to ‘triangulate’ with remarkable precision the direction of travel or location of sites along the journey. These travel narratives provide exceptional examples of the use of the directional system for wayfinding and illustrates why they are so proficient at creating narrative landscapes that an audience may follow through the narrative.

Busch (2000) describes the ways that Gwich’in storytellers use directionals to maintain “narrative coherence” by creating a geography, or “text world” (Werth 1994:90) for story events to take place in. Directionals are specifically “world-building” in that they provide “scene setting details” Werth (1994:90). That is, they create a stage—or ‘set the scene’—for narrative events. As spatial description of landscapes and spatial relationships is the ‘main’ function of directionals it is perhaps unsurprising that they also function to create “worlds”. Interestingly Gwich’in directionals direct the audience attention to changes of scene or character position. For instance, new information (on character movements or locations) is introduced with specific directionals and established infor-

8The interested reader is also encouraged to look to Basso (1984; 1988; 1996) for his discussions of the use of Navajo place names to point to moral teachings contained in narratives.
mation is “treated in more general terms using postpositions, demonstratives, and place references” (Busch 2000:2). That is, people are directed to locations using the riverine directionals and place names thus mapping the route in the process. Once the text-world has been created the settings may be referenced later without any (world-creating) directional accompaniment or refreshed with another directional reference. This allows directionals (and directional/place name combinations) to serve as signals of new or topical information—information that the audience should pay attention to (Busch 2000:37).

Directionals are also used to maintain information flow in Kaska. The second chapter of Moore’s (2002) dissertation on point-of-view in Kaska focuses on the ways directionals provide information on narrative characters through the maintenance of perspective in the story. For example, focal characters (the main protagonists of a story) are the locus of directionals’ indexing function (they are the ground). Thus, their point-of-view is the one the audience views the story from. This provides a wide range of strategies for maintaining information structure and relaying contextual information to Kaska audiences. First, as the point-of-view remains constant throughout an episode the directionals help maintain information flow by continually ‘tracking’ the focal characters (Moore 2002:56). Secondly, this tracking function allows the directionals to serve as indicators of social setting. Members of the main group are almost exclusively indexed with allative forms (as it is from their point-of-view) while the actions or locations of ‘out-group’ actors are described with ablative and punctual forms (also from the ‘in-groups’ perspective) thus differentiating the groups and providing information on social dynamics. Information on social context is assisted via the use of directional prefixes which not only denote distance but also whether the direction is determined by (or the location is known by) members of the in-group—in which case the story teller uses the prefixes de- ‘distant, known to speaker/focal character but not addressee/group’ or küh- ‘distant, known to speaker/focal
character and addressee/group’—or unknown to the in-group where the prefix *ah-* ‘distant, unknown location’ is used (Moore 2002:59). Thirdly, directionals can be used to organize story episodes through use of the *'àn* ‘aside’ directional stem (or other stems prefixed with *ah-* ‘distant, unknown location’) to preface events that take place away from the main storyline thus organizing the narrative by differentiating ‘asides’ from the ‘main storyline’ (Moore 2002:77).

As Moore and Tlen (2006) describe, directionals can also be used to serve purposes which reach beyond the narrative itself. Their paper shows how the use of directionals in a myth set in the Southern Tutchone territory serves to show the connection they have to their traditional lands and strengthen their claims to the area in the ongoing land claims negotiations with the government. Throughout his telling of the story of *Tlukshu* for radio broadcast, Solomon Charlie uses “directionals [to] reference cultural understandings about the landscape, human travel routes, and the movement of game animals” (Moore and Tlen 2006:273). Through this display of cultural and geographic knowledge the speaker affirms the Southern Tutchone’s connection to the land or, as Moore and Tlen put it, fashions “an emblem of Southern Tutchone identity” (2006:282). This ‘emblem’ is then put to work in the ongoing land claims process with the Canadian government.

Finally, Brucks and Lovick (Forthc.) show that the even the *lack* of directionals may be used to serve a narrative function. In a comparative look at four Upper Tanana tellings of ‘The Butterfly Story’ they show that the descriptions of narrative space are fairly consistent across the different tellings. However, the most striking similarity between the stories is the lack of specific (i.e. riverine) directionals in episodes centred around the protagonists’ (two young girls) encounter with *Ts’ant’ay* ‘Devil’. These episodes are also characterized by *Ts’ant’ay’s* lack of traditional Upper Tanana moral values and his attempts to lead the girls astray. The lack of directionals, and *Ts’ant’ay’s* concurrent re-
fusal to give direction to the two girls, creates a feeling of spatial disorientation for the audience and adds a sensory level of ‘being lost’ which emphasizes the Devils morally disorienting force on the girls (Brucks and Lovick Forthc.).

5.3 Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that the classification of genres in Athabascan languages is a complicated task—in the Upper Tanana area it is one best left to the storytellers themselves. Commonly, however, the use of directionals and place names serves as an adequate rough guide for genre distinctions. Directionals themselves, are important in almost all narratives—regardless of their genre.

The actual uses that directionals may serve in a narrative are broad. They may serve a range of spatial goals from the verbal mapping of traditional travel routes through the creation of imagined ones while also organizing narrative structures and maintaining information flow or indicating social relationships. They may be used to indicate a deep connection to the landscape which can be used in the broader social and political contexts. They are so ubiquitous in stories that their very absence is a narrative tool. As this chapter has shown, examining the roles of directionals in narrative is a productive avenue of research and one which will be pursued in the following chapters.
Chapter 6

Directionals Referencing the Tanana

This chapter will look at narratives from Northway and Tetlin that use the Tanana as the anchoring river in their riverine directionals. In the two major sections (sections 6.1 and 6.2) stories from each community will be examined in detail followed by some supplementary examples. The stories in this chapter exhibit the ‘universal’ or abstracted usage of riverine directionals where the Tanana is referenced even when travelling along other rivers. Additionally, two of the stories show uses of the directionals on local or micro scales which are used to create fine grained narrative stages for story events to take place in. The narratives are also interesting for the ways the orators use directionals to relay their personal perspective rather than that of the story characters.

6.1 Directionals in Northway

The community of Northway sits on the banks of the Nubesna River which flows north to where it joins with the Chisana to form the Tanana (see Figure 2 in the appendix). Most often, directionals match the flow of the west flowing Tanana. This is generally the case
in the following stories.

6.1.1 Travelling the Tanana

In this narrative Mrs. Barnes, a Northway elder and storyteller, describes how hard the Northway people used to work. The beginning of the narrative is concerned with how her father worked for traders plying the Tanana River and its tributaries hauling upriver supplies on a barge. The barge was owned by Herman Kessler and hauled supplies from Delta Junction (well over 160 miles downriver) to his stores in the villages along the Tanana and its tributaries. She then moves on to discuss the other work that people did. A paraphrase of the story is below.

When our village was on the other side my father and some of his friends worked on a barge. They worked on Herman Kessler barge hauling groceries from Delta Junction. They bought groceries from Herman Kessler in Delta and then travelled back up the river. They stopped in Tanacross and dropped off groceries there then travelled to Tetlin up the Tetlin river. They would drop off groceries there too before they returned to Northway. All the people that worked for Herman Kessler would help take the stuff off the barge. All summer they did that until it got too cold and the river started to freeze up. Then everyone would go set traps and haul wood. They would go out to Scottie Creek and catch whitefish and bring that back. They always did that. They never relaxed, they were always trapping, hunting, hauling wood, collecting berries and roots. Putting all that away for the winter. They never relaxed. Nowadays we just put our feet up.

She sets the initial spatial staging of the narrative by referring across the Nabesna River to where the village was at the time the story took place.
(28) Setting the stage.

Hanaat nohtsay tah neekeey hqole’, dihnh.
NEU.across.PUNC far.side among our.village area.was I.am.saying
‘Our village used to be across on the other side, I am saying.’

The directional usage above also serves to provide a temporal framing of the story events by pointing to a time when Northway existed across the river. That is, it establishes the time of the story as prior to the early 1940s when the old village was abandoned after it was severely flooded (Haynes and Simeone 2007:136). Thus, it establishes both a spatial framing and a temporal framing as expected in Upper Tanana histories (Lovick 2012). Following this initial establishment of setting, Mrs. Barnes changes her directional anchor to the Tanana river.

(29) Mrs. Barnes: Travelling the Tanana by barge.

a. Hada’ Delta, Delta naheltayh.
NEU.downriver.ALL Delta Junction they.made.trips
‘They made trips downstream to Delta.’

b. Ishyiit ts’anh tah haduugn Herman Kessler dii there from among NEU.downriver.AREA Herman Kessler whatever
ay telshyeegn <noodlee iin hiyeldeel> ishyiit that he.brought.CUST.REL white.person PL they.eat.it.NOM inside.it
nts’aq tah hiyuukeet nts’aq’ ishyiit tah ts’ayh choh shyiit and among they.buy.it and inside.it among boat large there
hadqq ji’eh natetkeek.
NEU.downriver.ABL with.it they.returned.by.boat.CUST
‘From there whatever Herman Kessler brought out, groceries (lit. white man’s food), they bought it and they put it in the barge and returned from downriver.’

All of the directionals above are used in reference to the Tanana river. It should also be noted that Mrs. Barnes maintains a single perspective in this example. Rather than using

1 The use of spatial description to set temporal events is much more involved in the story in Section 7.1.1 where directionals are used throughout the narrative to not only create a mental map of the community but also a timeline of when people moved to the new village site.
the allative stem *ne’* ‘to upriver’ for the return from Delta in (29b) she uses the ablative form *hadǫǫ* ‘from downriver’. Thus, rather than following the barges point-of-view as it journeys up and down the river she views it from her own childhood perspective—living in Northway.

Mrs. Barnes maintains Tanana reference when describing travel up the Tetlin river with *hanegn’* ‘upland’ (30a, 30b) and on the shorter return trip from Tetlin to Northway with *duhdǫǫ* ‘from downriver’ (30d).

(30) Taking the barge back up to Tetlin.

a. Tanacross nihetdek ishyiit ishyiit chih hach’ihileek
   Tanacross they.arrive.CUST there there also they.bring.stuff.out.CUST
   ay t’laan *hanegn’* Tetlin nts’ā’.
   and then NEU.upland.ALL Tetlin to
   ‘They would make a stop in Tanacross there and would take [the groceries] out and then go upland to Tetlin.’

b. Tananna river ishyiit ts’ānh *hanegn’* <Teedlay niign>
   Tanana river there from NEU.upland.ALL Tetlin river
   hiiyehniik.
   they.say.it.CUST
   ‘From the Tanana river, up what they always call Tetlin Creek.’

c. 2 lines omitted.

d. Ay t’laan <Teedlay> ts’ānh jah *duhdǫǫ* Northway
   and then Tetlin from here PROX AREA downriver.ABL Northway
   nahetdek.
   they.return.CUST
   ‘And then from there from downriver they would return to Northway.’

Mrs. Barnes does not switch her point-of-view in the whole narrativeootnote{Arguably, the *hanegn’* ‘to upland’ forms in (30a) and (30b) could be said to be from her father’s perspective; these forms largely collapse with those from the Northway perspective if being true to the direction of movement, however.} . Often, narrators trace journeys from the perspective of a major character in the story, thus viewing
the journey through the protagonist’s eyes (as in (48)). The ablative forms in (29b) and (30d) show that the reference point remains synonymous with the speaking location. This, however, would have been Mrs. Barnes perspective growing up as she waited for her father to return ‘from downriver’.

6.1.2 Further Examples from Northway

This type of directional use, which follows the perspective of the narrator, is also evident in the personal narratives of other Northway speakers. One of Mrs. Avis Sam’s stories will be illustrated briefly here to show how the directional’s ground may follow the main characters as they move around the landscape. The story the following examples are taken from is set in Avis’s childhood when she was frightened by a marmot while travelling between Mansfield Lake and Mansfield village and is summarized in paraphrase below:

I was in Mansfield with my family staying with my parents in the village and I went across the creek to where my aunties were staying. They were packing up to go camping at Mansfield lake and told me to come with them. So we went up there and made a house out of willows and we were going to make a fire and cook some food. But, “Oh, we forgot the tea,’ they said and told me to go back and get the tea. I started back up there through the tall fireweed and all of a sudden something came by me really fast. It stopped and looked at me and I looked at it. I didn’t know what it was. I started yelling and yelling and my aunts ran after me. “Oh, its just a marmot,” they said, “stop yelling, it won’t hurt you”. When we got back to the house their father was upset that they let me go back by myself. “She is only a baby,” he said. We got the tea and went back up there and played all day.
Unlike the previous narrative by Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Sam does not initially stage the story with a directional. Instead, she places it with a (well-known) place name: \textit{Dihthaad} ‘Mansfield’ (31).

(31) Mrs. Sam: Locating Mansfield.

a. \textbf{Dihthaad} ddhäl, ddhäl k’it ch’a hushyah hőoliįį. \\
Mansfield mountain mountain on from their.house area.exists

‘At Mansfield in the mountains they had a house there.’

After establishing the location of the narrative Mrs. Sam goes on to describe where her aunts’ house is across the creek from the village. In (32a) she begins from the village side of the creek and describes the route she travelled to get to her aunts house. She uses the areal prefix on \textit{duhtthän} ‘the nearby area of waterwards’ to describe the location of the cemetery down towards the creek. This is a local usage of the directional as it is anchored to the flow of the creek. She reiterates the location of the creek with \textit{nohshyign} saying that the cemetery is down below the village.

Examples (32b) and (32c) were recorded at a later date to replace English portions of the narrative. She again locates the cemetery in (32b) before beginning to locate the creek with \textit{anohshyign} ‘the adjacent area a ways down below’. She pauses and moves her point of reference from the village to the base of the cemetery and then locates the creek with \textit{duanaan} ‘the nearby area of across’, which points across the flat open space of the cemetery.
(32) Mrs Sam: Describing the village.

a. Ay tl’aan ay tl’aan ishyiit t’eey keey ch’a hu’ąq tl’aan
   And then and then there really village away from it was and
   **duhtthän** du’ *cemetery nohshyign*!

   PROX.AREA.downland.ALL CT MED.AREA.downward.ALL

   ‘And then, away from the village there, down towards the water, is the ceme-
   tery, down there!’

   UTOLAF09Aug1202-003

b. Ay tl’aan **nohshyign** nts’ą’ du’ dindeey iin eh
   and then MED.AREA.downward.ALL to CT people PL and
   ilaa dänh yitsah ay tl’aan **anohshyign**.
   ancestors place he.buries.him and then ADJ.MED.AREA.downward.ALL.

   ‘And right down there is the cemetery [lit. the place of people and ancestors]and right down below there.’

   UTCBAF15May0402-003

c. Dą’ hǫǫ nt’eh, **nohshyign** ts’idek tl’aan jah
   PAST thus it.is MED.AREA.downward.ALL we.go.CUST then here
   **dunaan** xaniign njilay.
   PROX.AREA.across.ALL creek it.flows

   ‘That’s how it was, and we would go down there and across here the creek
   flows.’

   UTCBAF15May0402-004

Mrs. Sam then proceeds to locate her aunts’ house in two different ways. In (33a) she
uses the **nohts’ąy** ‘far side’ to roughly place the house from the fish trap on the village
side of the creek. In the next utterance she gives a more precise location with **hahadegn’**
‘the next place upwards’ which locates the house as the next house up from the fish trap
(33b).
(33) Mrs Sam: Locating her Aunts’ house.

a. Ishyiit .luugn hahįįłeek dänh ay nohts’ąy, hushyah, shaak’ay iin there fish they.pull.out place and other.side their.house my.aunt PL hushyah jah.
their.house here

‘That’s the place they pull out fish and on the other side, their house, my aunts’ house is there.’

UTCBAF15May0402-006

b. Ishyiit k’üüdn ts’änh hahadegn’ t’eey shaak’ay iin there fish.trap from ADJ.NEU.upwards.ALL really my.aunt PL hushyah hǫǫłįį.
their.house it.is

‘Just up from the fish trap is my aunts’ house.’

UTCBAF15May0402-007

Mrs. Sam goes across the creek from the village to her aunts’ house and finds them packing stuff to go up to Mansfield. In (34) they tell her that they are going to go to the lake anegn’ ‘upland’ which takes a Tanana anchor (Mansfield lake is almost directly upland of Mansfield village). The same directional is accompanied by the place name Dihthaadn mänh ‘Mansfield lake’ in (34b).

(34) Mrs. Sam: Travelling up to Mansfield.

a. “Anegn’ mänh nts’ą’ tseedeeł ishyiit kon’ tsiil NEU.upland.ALL lake to we.are.going there camp tsihul’įį.”
we.will.pretend

“We are going to the lake up there, we will pretend to camp there.”

UTOLAF09Aug1202-011

b. 2 lines omitted.

c. Anegn’ Dihthaadn mänh nts’ą’ tseedeeł one or two mile ‘NEU.upland.ALL Mansfield lake to we.are.going hǫǫłįį.
area.exists’

‘Up to Mansfield Lake we went there. It was about one or two miles.’

UTOLAF09Aug1202-014
However, when they arrive at the lake and discover they have forgotten their tea Mrs. Sam heads back to Mansfield to get it (35a). Mrs. Sam repeats negn’ ‘upland’ for this return journey. This directional takes a local anchor and means ‘upland from the lake’. Mrs. Sam returns to the Tanana as the anchor point in (35c) when the girls make the return trek to Mansfield Lake. This reference is repeated a few more times in the following utterances.

(35) Avis Sam: Travelling between Mansfield Lake and Mansfield village.

a. “Nän! Negn’ shyah nts’ä’ na’įįdaał tl’aan tseey kah Ĭja’,”
   You upland.ALL house to you.go.back and tea for you.go shihinih.
   they.said.to.me

   ‘“You! Go back up to house and get the tea”, They said to me.’
   UTOLAF09Aug1202-020

b. 18 lines omitted.

c. Tseey ts’uuniign tl’aan hanegn’ dzelxoh dänh nts’a’
   tea we.grabbed.it and NEU.upland.ALL we.play place to
   natsetdeel.
   we.returned

   ‘We got tea and we went back to where we had been playing.’
   UTOLAF09Aug1202-039

The proceeding examples from Mrs. Sam alternate between local references on the lakes and streams around Mansfield and a regional frame of reference anchored on the Tanana. Most of the locally anchored examples, with the exception of (35a) are restricted to the immediate environment. That is, they are grounded to positions near the local anchor and can thus index locations and movements on a finer scale than if they were all anchored to the regional Tanana waterway. The exception to this is the movement from Mansfield Lake back towards the village in (35a). However, this longer journey was mapped earlier with a regional anchor (34) so it is possible that a local anchor was allowed as the destination was already known. Another possibility is that the area it refer-
ences really is local as Mrs. Sam did not proceed far from the lake before she encountered the marmot. No directionals are used between meeting the marmot and returning to the village. In addition to these local uses Mrs. Sam uses a series of directionals and spatial postpositions on a truly microscopic level of reference when describing the marmot encounter (36).

(36) Mrs. Sam: A marmot runs out.

\begin{verbatim}
Noo shttheh na’ọq ts’änh jah dii le’ sheh
ahead in.front.of.me MED.away.ABL from here what I.don’t.know with.me
ha’atdän.
animal.ran.out

‘Ahead of me out there, I don’t know what, it came so fast by me.’
\end{verbatim}

Here she uses the relative directional noo ‘ahead’ and the inflected postposition shttheh ‘in front of me’ to index the location of the marmot (from her point-of-view) and then describes its motion towards her with na’ọq ‘from a medium distance away’. This further illustrates the abilities of the Upper Tanana spatial elements to create vivid spatial descriptions on a number of different levels.

However, when Mrs. Sam discusses longer distances she usually uses the Tanana River as the anchor point—even when travelling near major tributaries like the Chisana. In the following example she is referring from the place of speaking (in Northway) to the direction upriver (east) where she was paddling around in skin canoes with her brothers. Thus, the directional traverses the large distance between the ground (at the place of speaking) and the area indexed by the directional (the figure) and operates in the same way as the directionals in section 6.1.1. That is, it is anchored to the Tanana and grounded to the speech location. Here yaane’ ‘way upriver’ serves to refresh the area and locate story events.
Mrs. Sam: Pointing ‘way upriver’.

Noo:::, Chisana river yaane::’ uk’üü, mänh hqoolij ay ahead.ALL DIST.upriver.ALL beside.it, lake area.exists those tah natsetdek.

‘Way up ahead, by the Chisana river, there are lakes; we went around among them.’

Mrs. Sam also provides an example of a riverine directional which does not have an overt ground. This utterance stages a narrative about a large fire that burned throughout the upper Tanana valley and the directional dune’ ‘the area of to upriver’ refers to the whole valley (38). Through the use of the areal prefix du- ‘the nearby area of’ Mrs. Sam seems to place the ground with the anchor on the Tanana River (thus removing its deictic ability) so that it becomes akin to a place name like ‘Upper Tanana valley’.

Mrs. Sam: Fire burning upriver on Tanana.

Shta’ ntsuul dą’ jah dune’ nän’ nts’ä’ My.father he.was.small PAST there PROX.AREA.upriver.ALL ground to ch’a nts’ä’ noodítk’aą. also to it.was.burning

‘When my father was small, all the land up there [Upper Tanana area] was burning.’

### 6.2 Directionals in Tetlin

This section looks at the directionals in one of the late Mrs. Cora David’s published narratives. Mrs. David was an illustrious storyteller and used directionals in her stories with precision. The riverine directionals in this narrative use a regional anchor (i.e. are

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3The examples from this section, as elsewhere, are taken from the ELAN transcripts of the story prepared by Olga Lovick rather than from the book.
anchored to the Tanana). However, in this story Mrs. David rarely uses the directionals to put audience members in the point-of-view of the story characters. Instead, like Mrs. Barnes’ story and unlike Mrs. Sams’, she maintains a single, speech-location ground from which the comings and goings of characters are indexed for much of the story.

6.2.1 Cora David: ‘I Talk About ‘Porcupine Grass Mountain’

This narrative is an account of how Mrs. David’s great-grandfather dispelled an evil being atop of *Ts’iit Tl’oo* ‘Porcupine Grass [Mountain]’ which froze people as they went by. The narrative is a well known and geographically grounded history. As such the narrative is located with a place name at the beginning of the story. A short summary follows:

Porcupine Grass Mountain. Whenever people were coming from down by Midway Lake he would hear them try to sneak by. He would make a whistling sound from the top of the hill and the North Wind would blow and he would try to freeze people. Whenever they are coming back or going down there, he would always do that. He would whistle and make the wind blow and cause a snow storm. One day my great-grandfather was coming back from down there and that mountain whistled. My great-grandfather stood up to him and said, “You are not to freeze people from now on.” He made medicine and he stopped whistling and has never whistled since then.

Mrs. David uses both of the strategies for establishing the setting of the narrative exhibited in the earlier stories. First, she establishes the site with the place name *Ts’iit Tl’oo* then follows it up with a directional *atthuugn* ‘area downland’ and another place name: *Toochinh* ‘sticks in the water’ (Midway lake). She uses the Tanana River as the
anchoring river for the staging directional (39b). The following examples are illustrated in Figure 3.

(39) Mrs. David: Setting the story of Ts’iiit Tl’oo.
   a. **Ts’iiit Tl’oo.**

   Porcupine grass

   ‘Porcupine grass [mountain].’

   UTOLAF09Jun2404-001

   b. Ay chih ch’ale ahtthuugn, ahtthuugn nts’a’
   and also also NEU.downland.AREA NEU.downland.AREA from
   Toochinh nts’a’ nahatdał nts’a’
   ‘sticks in the water’ from they.come.back from

   ‘As for that, too, coming from the water, where they’re coming back from
   ’sticks in water’ (Midway Lake),’

   UTOLAF09Jun2404-002

Both Toochinh and Ts’iiit Tl’oo are almost directly ‘downriver’ along the Tetlin river but Mrs. David continues to use the ‘downland’ directional—in keeping with a Tanana anchor—to set the location of the story. She also repeatedly uses ablative forms in (40) showing that she is viewing the narrative from the speech location (in Tetlin) rather than choosing story characters as grounds from which to follow the story.

(40) Mrs. David: Coming and going past Ts’iiit Tl’oo.
   a. Hǫǫ diik nts’a’ huthhǫo nahtetdak
   thus he.does.it.CUST and NEU.AREA.downland.ABL they.go.CUST
   tah or jah ts’an’h nahtthan’ nahtetdak ch’a
   when here from MED.downland.ALL they.go.CUST away.from
   du hǫǫ diik.
   CT thus he.does.it.CUST

   ‘He does that when they come from down there and when they go down [from Tetlin] he does that.’

   UTOLAF09Jun2404-005

   b. 5 lines omitted.
‘My grandfather, the father of my grandmother Martha Luke; they were coming back from down there, they were walking back from down there.’

Mrs. David does not switch perspective in the story. When the motion is away from Tetlin (and thus moving tthan ‘downland’) she uses allative forms; when the motion is towards Tetlin she uses ablative ones. Thus, rather than leading listeners along the journey Mrs. David provides them a single perspective from which to view the back and forth motion of the characters. This is the same strategy employed by Mrs. Barnes as she describes the motion of her father towards and away from Northway in section 6.1.1.

In both these narratives the storytellers are maintaining a personal perspective from which to view the events. In Mrs. Barnes narrative she experienced the time as a child living in Northway and tells it from this point-of-view. Mrs. David was not yet born when her great-grandfather dispelled the being on Ts’it Tl’oo but she uses her own perspective (as storyteller) for the majority of the story. This parallels Mrs. Sam’s narrative where she uses her childhood perspective as the ground while telling the story. She describes locations and movements as she had done them or experienced them during the time of the story. This begins to suggest a hierarchy of preferred perspectives in Upper Tanana narratives where experienced points-of-view are more desirable than ones that must be imagined.

Mrs. David’s choice of perspective is only challenged when the geographical scale of the narrative stage is greatly reduced. For example, she takes the perspective of her great-grandfather when he speaks to the being on top of the hill (41).
Mrs. David’s grandfather speaks to the top of the hill.

a. **Nadeg’** nts’q’ ch’u de shyaa. MED.upwards.ALL to he.whistled

‘He whistled up there.’

b. **Stsay hudegn’** nts’q’ na’ethat nts’q’: “Jah my.grandfather NEU.upwards.ALL to he.stood.up and here ts’anh noo’ huhnay noo’ t’eey k’a hqo from ahead.ALL they.said ahead.ALL really NEG thus natdindiil,” iiyehnih. you.will.do.this.again.NEG he.said.to.him

‘My grandfather up there stood up to him and: “From now on, from now on and here on you will not say this again,” he said to him.’

This is the climax of the story and her grandfather is the hero. For this brief section of the narrative Mrs. David removes the audience from her stolid perspective and takes that of her grandfather as he speaks to the top of the hill. The directional usage is a strictly local—she refers to the height of the hill and of her grandfather speaking to it’s peak—but this allows a small (and dramatic) scene to play out in the mind of the listener. The comings and goings of the other minor actors did not seem to warrant a shift in point-of-view, but when the main character of the story enters he becomes the center of the action and the perspective from which to view the story. While, I believe, that the motivation for the switch in ground may be partly for narrative effect, it is almost certainly out of necessity. For this episode to be told from the perspective of Mrs David would be nigh impossible to do in the smaller stage of (41). Describing the more intimate setting requires a local ground from which to provide a fine-grained spatial description that can create a sense of ‘being there.’ Thus, the geographic scale of this episode is unlike the earlier episodes where the wide-ranging comings and goings of travellers past *Ts’iit Tl’oo* can easily be described from Tetlin. Thus, while there seems to be a strong preference for storytellers to use their own experiences as the point-of-view in narratives,
the importance of creating finely grained narrative landscapes tailored to the geographic scale of story episodes trumps this preference.

6.3 Conclusion and some Observations

This chapter has shown some of the uses of directionals in both Northway and Tetlin. When describing movements over long distances the storytellers have anchored the directionals to the main landmark of the area (the Tanana) and thus they function as direction-bearing elements void of connection to the immediate landscape. However, as the narrative stage gets smaller the choice of anchor may shift to a local waterway as illustrated by Mrs. Sam’s story. While, a shift in the anchoring river is only expected when moving from one major waterway to another (such as a move to the Copper River drainage to the south) the local uses of the riverine directionals exemplified in this chapter are not surprising. These examples, are purely of a descriptive vein and do not have the over-arching direction-bearing ability of the ‘abstracted’ regional system.

A secondary point brought up in this chapter is that the perspective created by the directionals tends to be the orator’s rather than the central story character’s. In Moore’s work on Kaska historical narratives he notes that directionals tend to follow the perspective of the main character of the story (Moore 2002). Of course, in Mrs. Sam’s story she was both the orator and the central character but in the other two stories presented in this chapter the narrators relate events from their own perspective even though they are not the central character. Granted, Mrs. Barnes experienced the events of her narrative—but not from the main character’s perspective. Mrs. David’s story is a history, however, and she did not have any personal experience with the story’s events. She still maps the comings and goings of the story characters from her own perspective until a reduction in the scale of the text-world triggers a switch to the point-of-view of her great-grandfather. A proper
spatial description could not be accomplished from her perspective so she switched to a
more local ground (her great-grandfather). These tendencies will be added to and dis-
cussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 7

A Second Layer of Riverine Directionals

Athabascan riverine directionals are classed as ‘intermediate absolute landmark’ systems (Levinson 2003:90-91) because the ‘slopes’ or ‘angles’ projecting off the river are abstracted from a landmark but are limited by their regional extant. This allows Athabascan speakers to use a directional (such as ne’ ‘upriver’) in the same way English speakers use ‘north’ or ‘south’ but only in a limited area. As they move from one major waterway to another, the directionals shift to match the region’s new landmark. However, this chapter will show how this is not the complete picture in the Upper Tanana region. In addition to the regional directionals, anchored to the Tanana river, a second pattern of abstracted directional use seems to be used. This additional layer anchors riverine directionals to tributaries of the Tanana River (the Tetlin River for Tetlin speakers and the Nabesna River for Northway speakers) and I term these ‘secondary riverine directionals.’ This unexpected second set of riverine directionals are the main topic of this chapter.

The existence of this second layer of the directional system was uncovered through my fieldwork. More accurately, it is supported, in part, by the confusion I felt while try-
ing to elicit directionals and figure out their usage. When asking Upper Tanana speakers queries like ‘Which way is tthān’ (downland)?’ I would receive replies like ‘that can be anyplace’ or get an angle of direction 120 degrees wide pointed out to me. Alternatively, the speaker would flatly refuse to discuss the topic. I was expecting a relatively straightforward answer as I thought my topic was very unobtrusive. ‘If the system is abstracted from the landscape,’ I thought, ‘the answer should be as simple as pointing north.’ I rarely received these types of certainties, however—at least in the early stages. Rather, the answers were always couched, seemingly contradictory, or they would refuse to talk about it. Understanding direction-bearing directionals as part of a system more fluid and adaptable to the environment makes room for these problems by noting that tthān’ ‘to downland’ really can be ‘anyplace’ and da’ ‘to downriver’ can point the 120 degrees from north (along the Nábesna) to west (along the Tanana). The sheer absurdity of trying to explain this to me for the fifth time easily explains why anyone would refuse to talk about it.

This proposed secondary pattern differs from the ‘local’ uses of directionals illustrated in the previous chapter as it has a much greater reach. While reading through the corpus of transcribed Upper Tanana stories I noticed that directionals were often anchored to secondary rivers in directions over longer distances thus differentiating them from the descriptive uses of local directionals. It was only then that I was able to understand people’s responses and pursue more intelligent questions. Thus, this chapter, in a sense, traces my own path by moving through narrative examples in an effort to draw out the uses of the secondary directionals which are anchored, not to the Tanana, but to some of its major tributaries.
7.1  Regional River Directional use in Northway

This section will show how Northway storytellers make use of the Nabesna River as an anchor for the directional system. The evidence for a secondary directional pattern is large in the corpus of narratives from Northway. This allows me to oppose the patterns of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ riverine uses and examine where each layer is appropriate.

7.1.1  The Founding of Naambia Niign

The first narrative I discuss is told by Sherry Demit-Barnes and describes the founding of the ‘old village’ of Naambia Niign ‘rippling water’ which was directly across the Nabesna River from the modern village of Northway. Following a flooding of the old village site and the establishment of a road and U.S. air base on the east side of the river the community moved to its current location. I summarize the story below but omit the discussions of house placement which is discussed below and illustrated in Figures in the appendix.

We travelled around out by Beaver Lake and trapped muskrats with my mother and father and then we returned to the village at Naambia Niign. Other people stayed in the old village too. We would go down toward the Tanana and down to Beaver Lake to trap, hunt, and fish for whatever we could get and then come back to the village. People lived in a bunch of places around here. Later, my dad moved over on to this side and paid for some land to be cleared, right here where I am telling this story. Other people started to come too. Eventually all the people moved across the river. And that is how Northway started.
Mrs. Barnes begins the narrative with her family’s return to the old village from their camp at Beaver Lake. We will take up the narrative as she begins organizing a lengthy explanation of the spatial layout of the village. She locates this portion of the story by pointing across the river to where her parent’s house used to be in Naambia Niign with *ahnaat* ‘point across’ (42). This directional is grounded at the speech location and is anchored to the Nabesna river.

(42) Mrs. Barnes: Locating her father’s house.

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Ishyiit tah ahnaat shnąą iin shta’ neeshyah there among NEU.across.PUNC my.mother PL my.father our.house hǫölįį ishyiit. area.exists there

‘At that time my mother’s and father’s and our house was across there.’
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Mrs. Barnes continues to use a Nabesna anchor for descriptions of how Naambia Niign was organized. However, she moves the location of the ground to her father’s house, established in the previous utterance, to locate the other houses. In (43a) she uses the vague ‘downwards’ stem but becomes more precise in (43b) with the use of the *da’* ‘downstream’ stem. Comparisons against Mrs. Barnes drawings of the area (redrawn as Figure 5) confirm that she is using the Nabesna (rather than the Tanana) as the anchor.

(43) Mrs. Barnes: Frank Sam and Elijah Demit’s houses.

a. **Ashyign’** t’eey Frank Sam ushyah hǫölįį. NEU.down.ALL really Frank Sam his.house area.exists

‘Down there was Frank Sam’s house.’

b. **Ahda’** little bit ahda’ du’ Elijah, NEU.downstream.ALL NEU.downstream.ALL CT Elijah

<stsay> Elijah Demit, ushyah hǫölįį ishyiit. my.grandpa Elijah Demit his.house area.exists there

‘A little ways downstream is Grandpa Elijah Demit’s house.’
She continues to use the Nakesna as her anchor and her father’s house as the ground in the following utterances when John Hajdukovich and Pete Charlie’s family move to the community. These next sets of examples are illustrated in Figure 5.

Mrs. Barnes precisely locates Mr. Hajdukovich’s store in (44a) through a combination of the inflected postposition *hudaategn* ‘between them’ and the directional *ha’ahshyuugn* ‘the next one down’. This construction does not specify a specific direction anchored to the river but uses the combination of postposition and directional to precisely locate the store between two previously established positions (*ahda* ‘downriver’ of Mrs. Barnes’ father’s house) as ‘the next one down (from Frank Sam) between them’.

(44) Mrs. Barnes: John Hajdukovich’s store.
   a. Ay tl’aan hudaategn ha’ahshyuugn store hiihuhtsjj.
      And then between them ADJ.NEU.down.AREA they built.
      ‘And in between them (Frank Sam and Elijah Demit) down there he built a store.’
      UTCBVDN13Nov0804-008
   b. John Hajdukovich mǫǫsi’.
      John Hajdukovich he.is.called
      ‘His name was John Hajdukovich.’
      UTCBVDN13Nov0804-009

She then switches directions and locates Pete Charlie and his relatives’ houses upriver. Again she uses the *ha’ah*- ‘adjacent’ prefix to indicate that they are the next houses (upriver). The three houses sat in a line and are indexed together with *ha’ahne* ‘the next one(s) upriver’ (45a) followed by an indication that they lived on the edge of the slough *ahne* ‘upriver’ (45b).
(45) Mrs. Barnes: Pete Charlie and his relatives.
   a. **Ha’ahne’** Pete Charlie, di’aat Mary, Mary maadeh ADJ.NEU.upstream.ALL Pete Charlie his.wife Mary Mary her.older.sister Helen unq Bessie, uchil iin Andrew eh Silas. Helen her.mother Bessie her.little.brother PL Andrew and Silas ‘The next one upriver was Pete Charlie and his wife Mary, Mary and her older sister Helen (were next to them), their mother Bessie (Sam), their younger brothers Andrew and Silas.’

b. **Ahne’** slough maagn tah hihdelth’ih. NEU.upriver.ALL edge among they.stayed ‘They were staying upstream around the slough.’

Since Mrs. Barnes established the location of her father’s house (42) she has used its location as the ground. From this perspective she indexes the other locations with directionals. When Mrs. Barnes describes the location of her grandmother Anna Northway’s house, however, she does not locate it from her father’s house (46).

(46) Mrs. Barnes: Anna Northway’s house.
   a. **Ay tl’aan stsq gaay Anna Northway hishyah hihuhtsij.** And then my.grandmother small Anna Northway her.house they.built. ‘And then they built my little grandmother Anna Northway’s house.’

b. **Ha’ahtthän** tuuniign nts’ä`, tuuniign hooliji Nabesna, ADJ.NEU.downland.ALL river to river area.is.there Nabesna Naambia Niign. Nabesna River ‘It is right next to the river, the Nabesna, the Nabesna River.’

In contrast with earlier utterances Mrs. Barnes describes the building of her grandmother’s house in (46a) before using a directional to establish its location. Additionally, when she locates her grandmother’s house she appears to switch the ground to that location and uses the directional **ha’ahtthän** ‘next one downland’ to point from Anna Northway’s house towards the river to create the meaning ‘the next thing downland is the river’
In the next utterances she returns the ground to her father’s house (47a) and precisely locates Stephen Northway’s on an angle ‘downriver and upland’ with the combination of *hada* ‘downriver’ and *negn* ‘upland’ (47a). This location is selected with the contrastive topic marker *du*’ and used as a reference point in the next utterance where Mrs. Barnes uses ablative forms to place Bill Northway’s house next door to Stephen Northway coming from downriver (47b). She does this a number of ways in the utterance. First, she uses the phrase *ha’ahdq̌ neeshyah nts’į* ‘the next one coming from downriver to our house’, follows it up with *dq̌ ha’ahshyign shee’eh Stephen eeday* ‘from downriver, the next one down, from where my uncle Stephen stays’, and finally selects that location with *hashyign* ‘down’ and says that ‘Bill Northway’s house is there’. She then finishes describing the area by noting that Stephen Northway’s house is a little bit away from the other houses with *ha’ah’aat* ‘the next point away’ (47c). The following set of examples is illustrated in Figure 6.

(47) Mrs. Barnes: The Northway houses.

a. Ay *hada*’ *negn*’ *du*’ shee’eh Steven Northway and NEU.downstream.ALL upland.ALL CT my.uncle Steven Northway dits’iikeey iin di’aat Edna eh hushyah həo̱lįį tl’aan. his.children PL his.wife Edna with their.house area.is.there and

‘A little downstream and away from the river is my uncle Stephen Northway, his kids, and his wife Edna’s house.’

b. **Ha’ahdq̌** neeshyah nts’į *dq̌*, ADJ.NEU.downstream.ABL our.house to downstream.ABL

*ha’ashyign* shee’eh Stephen eeday *hashyign* t’eey NEU.down.ALL my.uncle he.stay NEU.down.ALL really shee’eh Bill Northway shyah huhtsįį. my.uncle house he.made

‘The next one from downriver towards our house, next door to where my uncle Stephen was staying, my uncle Bill Northway built a house down there.’
Mrs. Barnes’ narrative then moves on to describe how people would travel around the country outside of Naambia Niign to hunt, trap, and fish. For these longer trips, Mrs. Barnes alternates anchors between the Tanana and Nabesna. The switch from the Nabesna to the Tanana seems to be triggered by the distance indexed. As I showed in the preceding chapter, the choice of anchor is reliant on the area of space being described. That is, the choice of anchor scales up and down to match the narrative space being described. Local anchors, and local grounds, are chosen when the spatial description must be fine grained and regional anchors (like the Tanana) are used when space is large and the geography need only be roughly sketched.

Mrs. Barnes gives no overt linguistic signal that she is switching anchor rivers. However, she indicates the direction by pointing as she uses the directional thus signalling to people that hahtthän’ ‘to downland’ is now being used in reference to the Tanana (48a). The ground may be either the speech location or her father’s (old) house as at these longer distances these finer spatial distinctions collapse.

First, Mrs. Barnes describes how people would go down to to the area of ‘fish camp’ to fish and trap with hahtthän ‘downland’ (48a, 48b). This example has a Tanana anchor as the direction is ‘downland’ towards the Tanana (and thus ‘downriver’ according to the Nabesna). However, the very next utterance returns to a Nabesna anchor to refer to travelling out to the area of Beaver Lake (48c, 48d). This movement seems to be on the cusp of being able to take a Nabesna anchor as she uses ahnegn’ ‘upland (from the Nabesna)’ first (48c) before switching back to the Tanana with anahda’ ‘medium distance downriver’ for the same direction. These examples are illustrated in Figure 7.
Mrs. Barnes: Travelling around Northway area.

a. **Hahtthän’** eel hidlaak naxach’ihdelshyeek.  
NEU.downland.ALL trap they.set.CUST they.hunted.CUST  
‘Downland, they’d set traps and go hunting.’

b. Dzänh de’ kah or dits’än de’ t’eey dindiign, udzih muskrat if for ducks if for if really moose, caribou  
i’eh tah.  
with.them among  
‘For muskrat and ducks and moose and caribou, whatever there is.’

c. Nts’ą ahnegn’ chih Naambia Niign hanegn’ chih, and  
NEU.upland.ALL also Naambia Niign NEU.upland.ALL also  
hunegn’ chih.  
NEU.AREA.upland.ALL also  
‘And upland too, upland from the Nabesna, upland too.’

d. **Anahda::’** Beaver Lake huda’ du’  
MED.downriver.ALL Beaver Lake NEU.AREA.downriver.ALL CT  
shta’ in nohts’ay mänh deedlay  
my.father PL other.side lake PL.lay.there  
‘Downstream, downstream to Beaver Lake, my father [would go] on the other side where there are lakes.’

Mrs. Barnes returns to a Nabesna anchor again when she describes how the community moved from *Naambia Niign* to present-day Northway. When Herman Kessler builds a store in *Naambia Niign* she first locates it from the speech location with *hanaat ahne*¹ ‘at a point across and upriver’(49a) and then again from her father’s house on that side of the river with *neeshyah ts’änh ahne* ‘upriver from our house’. This move of ground across the river allows Mrs. Barnes to fine-tune her geographic description. Similar to her description of the location of Mr. Charlie’s house in (45) Mrs. Barnes also locates Mr. Kessler’s place in relation to the slough on the edge of the village by saying that the creek is *hanohshyuugg da’* ‘the next area down below to downstream’ (49b). This pre-

¹Kari notes for Ahtna, the ‘across’ directional always precedes a second directional when they occur together.
ciscely locates Mr. Kessler’s store on the other side of the slough from where Pete Charlie and his family live (45). The last two sets of examples in this section are illustrated in Figure 8.

(49) Mrs. Barnes: Return to a Nabesna anchor.
   a. Ay tl’aan chih Herman Kessler mo’osi’ chih hanaat
      And then also Herman Kessler he.is.called also NEU.across.PUNC
      ahne’, neeshyah ts’ähn ahne’.
      NEU.upriver.ALL our.house from NEU.upriver.ALL
      ‘And Herman Kessler(‘s house is there) too, across and upriver there, upriver from our house [in the old village].’
   b. Hanoshshyuugn da’ tuugaay njilay
      ADJ.MED.AREA.downward.AREA downriver.ALL slough water.flows
      ashyign.
      NEU.downward.ALL
      ‘Right down beside him downstream a slough flows down [into the Nabesna].’

Mrs. Barnes then begins describing how the community moved across the river and continues to use a Nabesna anchor while doing so. She also returns her point-of-view to the speech location. This allows accurate depictions of where people moved to and parallels the strategies seen in the earlier examples. When Mrs. Barnes describes the local setting she moves to the nearest available ground. In the following examples she describes John Hajdukovich’s move across the river with the ablative form nǫǫ ‘from across’ (50a) and later references the location Frank Sam moved to with attiiit ‘point downland’ (50c).

(50) Mrs. Barnes: Naambia Niign starts moving across the Nabesna.
      John Hajdukovich across.ABL he.moved
      ‘John Hajdukovich moved from across.’

   b. 3 lines omitted.
7.1.2 Additional Examples from Northway

Mrs. Sam also uses both the Tanana and the Nabesna as anchors. As shown in chapter 6 she uses the Tanana when away from the Nabesna River (see (34) and (37)). However, when she is describing locations closer to Northway she often uses the Nabesna. For example, she describes the location of Northway village from her house using *tthän’* ‘downland’ which agrees with a Nabesna anchor rather than a Tanana anchor. Interestingly, she also uses a Nabesna anchor over much greater distances. For example, in (51c) she locates her aunt’s house (northeast of her own) with *adaat* ‘a point downriver’. The location is not directly downriver of the speech location according to either anchoring river but is on an angle upriver and downland of the Tanana and downriver and upland on the Nabesna thus showing that she is using a Nabesna anchor.

(51) Mrs. Sam: Nabesna anchored directionals.

a. Nanihshyay eh *tthän’* ts’eeenah eh
I.returned and downland.ALL we.moved and
‘I came back and we moved down there.’ UTOLVDN14Apr2602-087

b. 6 lines omitted.

c. Ay tl’aan *adaat* mänh aannah ushyah hǫǫlįį
And then NEU.downriver.PUNC lake around his.house area.is.there
dänh ishyiiit nts’į́j bicycle eh ts’itdeek.
place there and with we.went.there.CUST
‘And then at the place downriver, next to the lake where her house was, we went there with bicycles.’ UTOLVDN14Apr2602-093
Thus far, I have only shown examples of Nabesna anchored directionals where the distances indexed are a relatively short ways from the river. However, Mrs. Sam uses both primary and secondary anchors to refer to the same area in the Black Hills (up the Nabesna). In (52a) she uses the Nabesna as anchor with the anane’ ‘a ways upriver’ directional form. This serves as the staging directional for the next 18 utterances which she only refreshes with the non-riverine directional adegn’ ‘up there’ (52c). Much later in the narrative, however, she indexes the same hills with with the Tanana anchored negn’ ‘upland’ stem (52e). It is likely that the switch in directional has to do with where the people were in the Black Hills. In (52a) the group sets out towards the Black Hills along the Nabesna while in (52e) they are moving around up there well away from the river. Both of these examples are grounded in the speech location. They inform the audience where the story characters are rather than what their surroundings look like. The following examples are illustrated in Figure 9.

(52) Mrs. Sam: Primary and Secondary riverine directionals for same area.

a. **Anane’** Black Hill henih dânh hunahetdiil.  
   MED.Upriver.ALL Black Hill they.say place they.went.there
   ‘Upriver, what they call the Black Hills, [the family] went there.’  
   UTOLVDN14Apr2601-012

b. 2 lines omitted.

c. Hq̱q̱ t’eeey hutay’ huneiet-’ay **adegn’** Black Hill ts’ai’ ay thus really their.trail it.shows NEU.upward.ALL Black Hill to that k’it shyij’ nahtetdek.  
   on only they.went.CUST
   ‘Their trail was visible up there toward the Black Hills and it was the only thing they walked on.’  
   UTOLVDN14Apr2601-015

d. 15 lines omitted.

e. Ay ch’ale **ahnegn’** t’eeey shta’ thidalth’at.  
   and also NEU.upland.ALL really my.father he.fell.down
   ‘And upland there, my father fell in the fire.’  
   UTOLVDN14Apr2601-031
Mrs. Darlene Northway provides a similar example of staging directionals anchored to the Nakesna and referring to a location past the Black Hills to the south. She first places *Ch’atxąą Männ’* ‘moldy lake; killing lake’ (translation from (Kari 1997)) with the punctual form *niit* ‘point upriver’ and then describes how people would travel up there to hunt for moose with the allative form *hahne* ‘to upriver’. *Ch’atxąą männ* is to the south of the Black Hills along the Nakesna river. I again suggest that Mrs. Northway is able to use a Nakesna anchor in this utterance because of its proximity to that river and distance from the Tanana.

(53) Mrs. Northway: Up the Nakesna.

Shk’ay’ shch’a ehtji dą’ *niit* ch’atxąą männ’
my.husband from.me he.died PAST upriver.PUNC ‘killing lake’

*hahne*’  Ch’atxąą Männ’ k’it ishyiit ch’ah diniign kah dineey
NEU.upriver.ALL ‘killing lake’ on there also moose for men
iin dineey iin ishyiit ch’ah niihetdeek nts’ą’.
PL men PL there also they.went.there.CUST and

‘When my husband died, up there by “killing lake”, up there by “killing lake”, the men would always go there for moose.’ UTOLAF12Jul1203-131

The *niit* ‘point upriver’ directional anchored to the Nakesna (which points south) contrasts with another of Mrs. Northway’s examples where she uses the same stem with a Tanana anchor to point in the direction of Scottie Creek (east). In (54) she uses the form *ha’ahniit* ‘the next point upriver’ to indicate that she thinks that *Ts’oo Godn Gaay* ‘little spruce knee (Little Scottie Creek)’ is the next place upriver past Scottie Creek. This shows that the Nakesna anchor is only used when travelling around the Nakesna; when moving out into areas away from the Nakesna the major landmark river, the Tanana, is used.
Mrs. Northway: Up the Tanana.

Ts’oo Godn Gaay ha’ahniit Scottie Creek nihthän.
‘little spruce knee’ ADJ.NEU.upriver.PUNC Scottie Creek I.think
‘“Little spruce knee” is the next one upriver [past] Scottie Creek, I think.’

Mrs. Barnes also uses a Nabesna anchor in a direction-bearing sense when she describes her and her brother’s motion towards their family’s hunting camp when traveling from Naambia Niign (55a). The ablative directional ahtthǫǫ ‘from downland’ uses a Nabesna anchor and is grounded to her aunt’s position. At this point in the narrative Mrs. Barnes and her brothers had just been through an arduous encounter with a bear and were late arriving in camp. The use of the ablative stem—which puts the audience in the point-of-view of the Mrs. Barnes’ aunt Maggie—emphasizes Maggie’s relief at their arrival which is explicitly referenced in the next utterance (55b). The switch in perspective, thus, is for narrative effect. The other directional, daa ‘point above’, immediately returns the perspective to Mrs. Barnes and her brothers and describes the location of their aunt from that point-of-view (55a).

Mrs. Barnes: Coming into camp.

a. Ahtthǫǫ hats’atdeel, daa xa tah shaak’ay NEU.downland.ABL we.came.out above.PUNC for among my.aunt na’ithät shaak’ay.
she.was.standing my.aunt

‘From downland we came out (to camp), my aunt was standing up there.’

b. Tsüh eh t’eey neeneh’įh shaak’ay Maggie
tears with really she.looked.at.us my.aunt Maggie

‘With tears in her eyes, auntie Maggie looked at us.’

While the previous chapter showed that the directional system can be anchored to local rivers and lakes to allow fine-grained descriptions of the local landscape this section
has begun to show that the Tanana’s more prominent tributaries can also be used in a broader ‘wayfinding’ sense. That is, Nabesna anchored directionals can be used in the same way as Tanana based ones: slopes project off the river as semi-abstracted directions. These two riverine patterns seem to be in a complementary but overlapping areas around the Nabesna favouring the ‘secondary’ pattern and travels and locations outside this area taking a Tanana reference.

### 7.2 Regional River Directional use in Tetlin

The Tetlin area is largely cut off from the Tanana River basin by the Tetlin hills to the north and north-east. It is also circled by mountains on the west and south which effectively creates the sense that it is its own drainage. This lends to the belief that a similar situation of secondary river directional usage (similar to that found in Northway) is apparent there. The evidence for a secondary layer in the Tetlin area is not as strong though. The possible explanations for this are varied: a large proportion of the Tetlin corpus is composed of ‘distant-time’ stories which are not set in known locations, many of the historical narratives and personal accounts take place outside the Tetlin valley (as in the story of Ts’i’it Tl’oo in section 6.2.1), and the Tetlin river runs nearly parallel to the Tanana but in the opposite direction. The fact that the Tetlin and Tanana do not run perpendicular to each other (like the Nabesna and Tanana do) makes it impossible to be sure whether the ‘upland’ and ‘downland’ directionals are anchored to the Tetlin or the Tanana when used within the Tetlin valley. Only when the the ‘upriver’ and ‘downriver’ directionals are used is the anchor clear. Thus, I could only find one indisputable example containing directionals anchored to the Tetlin river in the corpus. It is given in the following section. However, it could very well be that a parallel secondary directional pattern does not occur in the Tetlin valley. The Tanana River only begins in Northway but is a prominent feature
in the Tetlin area. Thus, it may be prominent enough in the area to supplant any additional direction-bearing layers.

### 7.2.1 Cora David: ‘I Talk About How the Boat Capsized With Us’

This section discusses Mrs. David’s story about travelling around by canoe in the area of *Nahk’ade* ‘fish trap (Last Tetlin)’. This story provides the clearest example of a secondary riverine pattern anchored to the Tetlin river that parallels that found in Northway. The story begins in *Nahk’ade* ‘fish trap (Last Tetlin)’ and describes how Mrs. David and her family crossed *Sh’aat Niign* ‘my wife creek’ and move through a series of lakes on the other side.

After providing a temporal setting with *niithaad* ‘long ago’ and the English phrase ‘in the 1970s somewhere’ (56a), Mrs. David spatially frames the story with *neg* ‘to upland’ which indexes Last Tetlin from the speaking location in Tetlin (56b). It is unclear at this point of the narrative whether the directional is anchored to the Tanana or the Tetlin but Mrs. David’s directional use later in the narrative suggests that *neg* is anchored to the Tetlin in this instance (see (58)).

(56) Mrs. David: Locating *Nahk’ade*.
   
   a. Niithaad  *I think it’s in 1970s somewhere neg*  Nahk’ade long.time.ago upland.ALL  ‘Fish Trap’
      
      nts’q’ neekeey nts’q’ natsetnaa.
      
      to our.village to we.moved.back
      
      ‘A long time ago, I think in the 1970s up at ‘fish trap’ (Last Tetlin) we moved back to our camp.’

   b. Negn’  Nahk’ade dą’ haatage dą’ niits’indeel el.
      
      upland.ALL ‘Fish Trap’ PAST crossing PAST we.went.to and
      
      ‘Up there at Last Tetlin we tried to cross the river.’
They begin their travels from Nahk’ade by crossing the (Sh’aat Niign ‘my wife’s creek’ (Kari 1997)). As Mrs. David and Gary try to cross the river their canoe fills up with water and Danny and his father laugh at them up on the bank (57c). In the following examples Mrs. David uses naan’ ‘across’ and nah’aanug ‘area upland’ as locally descriptive directionals (57a, 57c). Like the examples of local directionals use in chapter 6 these directionals are used to construct narrative space.

(57) Mrs. David: Crossing the river.

a. Gary, “Jan shyiit t’eey naan’ skits’udeel,”
   Gary “Here downward.PUNC really across.ALL we.will.cross,”
   shehnih.
   he.told.me.
   “‘This is how we’re going to go across,” Gary said to me.’

b. 5 lines omitted.

c. Danny 市教育局 dita’ 语 hide:he nah’aanug, 草地 tl’oh
   Danny and his.father and they.laughed MED.NEU.upland.AREA grass
   shyiit t’eey nahtetduuk nts’a’ hidlo: they.were.crawling
   downwards.PUNC really they.were.crawling and they.were.laughing
   ‘And Danny and his father were laughing up on the land, they were crawling
   around in the grass and they were laughing.’

This episode is followed by a description of where they travelled once they had all made it across. Thus, the directional use in the following example is not stage-describing (like the previous examples) but direction-bearing. Mrs. David uses hahnde’ ‘to upriver’ repeatedly as she describes their travel through the lakes in a westerly direction (58). The only river that these directionals may be anchored to is the Tetlin river. Note that Mrs. David is using her story perspective as the ground in this example (see Figure 11).

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2I do not fully understand the prefix order in this directional form. It is not found elsewhere.
Mrs. David describes the trip to Northway with ‘upriver’ stems taking a Tanana anchor with a speech-location ground. Mrs. David uses unprefixed *nde’ ‘upriver’ stems to indicate the direction of motion (59a) and also uses forms prefixed with the areal *hune’ ‘the area of to upriver’ to index the area (59a, 59b). These examples are illustrated in Figure 12.
Mrs. David: Travelling to Northway from Tetlin area.

a. **Ndė’ tah lahtthag nts’ą’ hijidlah nts’ą’ thihteeedel, upriver.ALL among all when all when they.ran.away
ne’ Naambia Niign nts’ą’ **hunde’** tah. upriver.ALL ‘rippling water’ to NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL when

‘They all ran up toward the South, they ran toward ‘rippling creek’ (Northway).’

b. Hihdiįįtsįį ęl hihteeedel hutah dineey iin hu’ich’eh’aal they.were.hungry and they.ran among.them people PL they.fed.them
xa **hune’** hihteeedel hu.
for NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL they.ran EMPH

‘They were hungry and they kept running, so the Northway people fed them, that’s why they ran there.’

These directionals prefixed with the areal prefix are similar to the usage Mrs. Sam illustrates in (38) where the directional does not have a ground but refers to the ‘upper reaches of the Tanana’ with both the anchor and ground placed on the Tanana itself. The semantics of this is clearly illustrated in the following example where, again, **hune’** ‘area of to upriver’ is used to refer to the whole upper Tanana valley and the people living in it (60).

(60) Mrs. David: **Hune’** as ‘Upper Tanana valley’.

Noodlee hugn jineetl’adn huhninįį’ąą nts’ą’ “Jah dugn nuhkeey white.person there book he.brought and here around here your.village
<lahtthag> **hune’** ahdląą nts’ą’ nuhtah all NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL you.guys.are when among.you.guys hōŋ hōdąy t’eey k’a hōŋ dahnay,” ne’echnih.
thus do.it really NEG thus you.guys.say.NEG he.said.to.us

‘A white man brought that book and “All you people around here and you never said anything about it,” he said to us.’

This non-grounded use of directionals, which views the landscape on a large scale, is important when we look at the next utterances. After the Tetlin people make it to Northway everyone has to continue retreating up the Nabsna to the Black Hills. Again,
Mrs. David uses ‘upriver’ forms to describe this journey. In (61a) Mrs. David uses the areal prefixed form *hune* ‘the area of to upriver’ to describe the movement up towards the Black Hills. As above, the ground and anchor are in the same location in this example. However, it is grounded and anchored to the Nabesna rather than the Tanana and thus has the meaning ‘upper reaches of the Nabesna.’

The following example uses the ‘upriver’ stem in two very different ways. First, Mrs. David indexes the Northway people with *hanuugn t’iin iin* ‘the upriver area people’ which has a neuter prefix and takes her location as the ground and, secondly, with two more occurrences of *hune* ‘upper reaches’ which are grounded to the Nabesna (61b). The *ha-* ‘neuter’ prefix signals Mrs. David’s use of her own point-of-view (and a Tanana anchor) while the *hu-* ‘area of’ prefix signals a perspective-less ‘upper reaches’ sense (and a Nabesna anchor). In this way Mrs. David is able to accurately depict the direction of travel without giving up her own perspective and differentiates directionals anchored to different rivers.

(61) Mrs. David: Travelling to the Black Hills from Northway.

a. **Hune’** tah hiídlah nts’a’ thihteeedel el. NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL among all when they.ran.away and “They all ran up that way.” UTOLAF09Jun2402-018

b. **Hanuugn** t’iin iin hune’ Black Hills NEU.upriver.AREA people PL NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL Black Hills henih niik nts’a’ thihteeedel da’ ay iin k’e t’eey they.call way when they.ran.away PAST that PL after really thihteeedel **hunde’**.

they.ran.away NEU.AREA.upriver.ALL

“The upriver people all went to what they call ‘Black Hills’ and they followed them up there.” UTOLAF09Jun2402-019
7.3 Conclusion: Abstracted Directions vs. Described Places

Through the last two chapters I have shown the various ways that Upper Tanana storytellers achieve changes in the anchor and ground of directionals resulting in different levels of direction-bearing and stage-creating spatial expressions. In chapter 6 I focused on the differences between direction-bearing and stage-creating (or location describing) directionals. While Upper Tanana storytellers exhibit a preference for grounding directionals to the storytelling site or their location during the story period (that is, to their own experienced point-of-view) when the story calls for a description of the text-world the storytellers give up their perspective to accomplish this. Secondly, this chapter introduces how storytellers tend to use more prominent anchors while providing direction-bearing information and more local anchors when describing locations.

This chapter built on the preceding one by introducing a second level to the direction-bearing aspect of the directional system. The different levels of direction-bearing constructions parallel the differences between direction-bearing and stage-creating descriptions in that storytellers switch anchors to allow more precise spatial descriptions. That is, in both cases the changes in anchor scale up and down with the descriptive needs of the situation. When travels and locations are near a secondary river more precise descriptions of the angle of travel can be accomplished by anchoring to the local river; when the travel is over a large distance or away from a secondary river the anchor encompassing a larger territory is selected.

This use of riverine directionals in primary vs. secondary environments can be represented as a further extension of the ‘intermediate absolute landmark’ (Levinson 2003:90-91) system as it is extensively described in Athabascan languages (see section 4.2). Most often the system is described as a static set of ‘slopes’ in the valleys of major waterways.
and shifts in the direction of these abstract slopes only occur when people move from one major waterway to another. Secondary rivers—the Nabesna in Northway and the Tetlin river in Tetlin—serve as ‘landmarks’ for sub-regional riverine layers to the system which more closely match the landscape. We can view the different anchors as a series of zones with smaller, more descriptive ones enclosed in larger landscape-spanning ones as exemplified in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: The ‘Zones’ of Upper Tanana Directionals

In addition, I have noted how an additional level of description can be accomplished by using the areal prefix to place the ground within the anchoring landmark that creates a
view of the landscape from a birds-eye, or large map-like, view. This strategy works with both the primary and secondary rivers in direction-bearing constructions as well as with local stage-creating constructions (32). In sum, it adds yet another level of geographic description to the Upper Tanana storyteller’s repertoire.

These examples allow a hierarchy, of sorts, to be constructed of the anchors and grounds based on the levels of descriptive precision needed in descending order from the largest scale to the smallest. Depending on a narrative episode’s spatial description needs the storytellers can select different anchors, grounds, and (point-of-view altering) prefixes to fit the situation. The directional system may be set to the combination which most closely matches the landscape.

Table 7.1: Hierarchy of Anchor and Ground

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<th>anchor</th>
<th>Point-of-view</th>
<th>ground</th>
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<td>Tanana</td>
<td>Areal</td>
<td>Tanana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nabesna or Tetlin</td>
<td>Areal</td>
<td>Nabesna or Tetlin</td>
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<td>Speech location</td>
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*Note that the Local Landmark may also be the Tanana, Tetlin, or Nabesna.

In conclusion, a complex set of options for describing the landscape is available to Upper Tanana speakers through the use of the directional system. Local or micro anchored directionals interact closely with the abstracted or semi-abstracted primary and secondary riverine patterns and allow speakers nuanced ways of describing story settings.
The storytellers of Northway and Tetlin have made full use of these abilities so that the audience can not only follow the story “like a map” but can experience it “just like being there.”
In this thesis I have shown how the directional system of Upper Tanana is used to create layers of narrative space ranging from the establishment of broad locations to the description of minute details of a story character’s environment. Directionals are used to perform much more diverse descriptions of space than their name suggests—they not only denote directions—they also build narrative worlds. Additionally, Upper Tanana storytellers scale the size of these text-worlds to match their narrative goals. One of the ways they accomplish this is by switching the frames-of-reference of directionals from distant and abstract anchor points to ever more local ones. Thus, even when providing information on headings or distant locations storytellers are able to pick a frame-of-reference which most closely matches the landscape. In sum, the uses of Upper Tanana directionals may be divided into three basic types which can be further divided by their level of geographic scale: (1) two levels of the abstracted ‘intermediate absolute landmark’ system, (2) stage-creating descriptive constructions, and (3) context-specific spatial (such as the description of space within a tent or canoe) and temporal forms.
The uses of directionals are linked to the importance of knowing the landscape for, as I have shown in chapter 2, the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Upper Tanana people prior to contact made comprehensive knowledge of the spatial environment of the utmost importance. The directional forms are able to precisely index directions and locations—and describe places—throughout the geographically diverse landscapes they inhabit. The importance of knowing the landscape, which is perhaps not as necessary as it once was, is still an important cultural trait as the people of Northway and Tetlin adapt their traditional subsistence economy to their changing technological environment.

In the next chapter, amidst an introduction to the Upper Tanana language, I showed that in addition to the diversity of directional forms there are also a number of other forms of spatial description. The Upper Tanana language makes use of forms from other word classes, postpositions and the set of adverbial-derivational prefixes, which provide information on the path of movement and spatial organization of objects. Thus, the spatial descriptions made available via directionals are only a part of the spatial language of Upper Tanana.

The directionals themselves are a complex and diverse class of words. As chapter 4 illustrates, the directionals can be made to create a range of meanings through the combination of stems (which encode whether movement is coming or going or whether location is at a point or in an area from a certain perspective, in addition to indexing the angle of direction) and prefixes organized in a templatic structure (which denote distance, areal perspective, linear angle of direction, and adjacency). As well, the directionals can be applied to a range of different contexts in which their meaning shifts. For example, the riverine ne’ ‘upriver’ may be used to mean ‘behind, back’ and noo’ may variously mean ‘ahead, out into the open, front, or towards the fire’ depending on when it is used. Thus, this chapter provides an introduction to directional uses which could not be discussed
in-depth in the later chapters.

Due to the preciseness of directionals and their ubiquitous occurrences in Athabascan narratives they have also been used to organize genre divisions and structure non-spatial narrative events. In chapter 5 I reviewed earlier research on the non-spatial roles of directionals in Upper Tanana and other Athabascan languages. Directionals are implicated in the classification of genres and serve many specialized roles in the narratives of Athabascan storytellers. Athabascan directionals may be used to organize story episodes, create point-of-view and comment on social context, signal a connection and strengthen claims to the land, or emphasize moral themes in a narrative.

Chapter 6 begins to add to all these documented roles of directionals by noting the ways that Upper Tanana storytellers manipulate the ground and anchor of directionals so they may use them to index locations and denote directions—a broad ‘map-making’ role—or provide descriptive scene-setting details depending on the narrative’s needs. This argument is continued in the following chapter by noting that the ‘map-making’ or direction-bearing functions of these directionals may be further divided to account for the use of the tributaries of the Tanana as anchoring rivers. These alternate anchors for the direction-bearing uses of directionals allows speakers to choose an anchoring river—and thus an ‘abstracted’ directional system—which most closely matches the landscape. That is, Upper Tanana adds a second level to the ‘intermediate absolute landmark’ system which is enclosed in the first.

Though the discussion of Upper Tanana directionals in this thesis has been limited to their role in the construction of space, the complexity of their form and function in this restricted avenue of research illustrates why they are so ubiquitous in the language. In sum, I have shown how the directionals of Upper Tanana can simultaneously create ‘map-like’ spatial descriptions as well as flesh out the immediate story setting so that the audience
feels like it is ‘just like being there’. This thesis also provides a stepping stone for further research into the description of narrative space in Upper Tanana. One promising avenue of research is to look at how directionals combine with the other spatial elements of the language described in chapter 3. Other interesting extensions of the topic could include a further discussion of the ‘imagined landscapes’ found in myth and the different strategies storytellers use in their description. Following the research of others on Athabascan directionals a review of the use of directionals in organizing and structuring Upper Tanana discourse would be another route of further productive research.


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Appendix A: Maps and Illustrations

Figure 1: Alaskan Athabascan Languages
Figure 2: The Upper Tanana Area: Places Mentioned in Stories
Figure 3: Mrs. David: Travelling Past Ts’iiit Tl’oo

- a. *ahtthuugn* ‘area downland’; example (39b).
- b. *hutthoọ* ‘from the area of downland’; examples (40a, 40c).
- c. *nahtthan* ‘towards downland’; example (40a).
Figure 4: Mrs. Barnes: Locating Her Father’s House

Legend: (1) Sherry Barnes’s house, speech location; (2) Joe Demit’s house, Mrs. Barnes’s father.

- a. *ahnaat* ‘point across’; from Mrs. Barnes’s (1) house to Joe Demit’s house (2); (example 42).
Figure 5: Mrs. Barnes: Describing *Naambia Niign*

Legend: (1) Joe Demit’s house; (2) Frank Sam’s house; (3) Elijah Demit’s house; (4) John Hajdukovich’s store; (5) Pete Charlie and his relatives; (6) Anna Northway’s house.

- a. *ashyign* ‘down’; from Joe Demit’s (1) to Frank Sam’s (2); example (43a).
- b. *ahda* ‘to downriver’; from Joe Demit’s (1) to Elijah Demit’s (3); example (43b).
- c. *hudaategn ha’ahshyuugn* ‘the next one down between them’; from Joe Demit’s (1) to John Hajdukovich’s store (4); example (44a).
- d. *ha’ahne* ‘the next one upriver’ and *ahne* ‘to upriver’; from Joe Demit’s (1) to Pete Charlie and Family (5); examples (45a, 45b).
- e. *ha’ahtthän* ‘next one downland’; from Anna Northway’s (6) to Nabesna river; example (46b).
Figure 6: Mrs. Barnes: Describing more of *Naambia Niign*

Legend: (1) Joe Demit’s house; (2) Frank Sam’s house; (3) Elijah Demit’s house; (4) John Hajdukovich’s store; (5) Pete Charlie and his relatives; (6) Anna Northway’s house; (7) Stephen Northway’s house; (8) Bill Northway’s house.

- a. *hada’ negn* ‘downriver and upland’; from Joe Demit’s house (1) to Stephen Northway’s house (7); (example 47a).

- b. *ha’ahdooq* ‘next one coming from downriver’ and *dog ha’ashyign* ‘from downriver the next one down’; from Stephen Northway’s (7) to Bill Northway’s (8) from point-of-view of Stephen Northway’s (1); example (47b).

- c. *ha’ah’aat* ‘the next one away’; from village to Stephen Northway’s house; example (47c)

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• a. *Hahthân’* ‘to downland’; from Northway area towards the Chisana (Tanana anchor); example (48a).

• b. *ahnegn’* ‘to upland’ and *hunegn’* ‘the area of upland’; from Northway area towards Beaver Lake; example (48c).

• c. *anahda’* ‘a ways downriver’ and *huda’* ‘the area of downriver’; from Northway area to Beaver Lake; example (48c).
Figure 8: Mrs. Barnes: Moving from Naambia Niign

Legend: (1) Sherry Barnes’s house, speech location; (2) Joe Demit’s house; (3) Herman Kessler’s house; (4) John Hajdukovich’s store; (5) Frank Sam’s new house.

- a. *hanaat ahne* ‘a point across and upriver’; from speech location (1) to Herman Kessler’s house (3); example (49a).

- b. *ahne* ‘upriver’; from Joe Demit’s house (2) to Herman Kessler’s house (3); example (49a).

- c. *hanohsyuugn da* ‘the next area down below to downriver’; from Herman Kessler’s (3) to slough; example (49b).

- d. *nqo* ‘from across’; John Hajdukovich moves from (4) to Northway as seen from speech location point-of-view (1); example (50a).

- e. *atthiit* ‘point downland’; from speech location (1) to Frank Sam’s new house (5); example (50c).
Figure 9: To the Black Hills and Scottie Creek

- a. *anane* ‘to upriver’, Nabesna anchor; *adegn* ‘to upwards’; *ahnegn* ‘to upland’, Tanana anchor; example (52).

- b. *niit* ‘point upriver’ and *hahne* ‘to upriver’, Nabesna anchor; example (53).

- c. *ha’ahniit* ‘next point upriver’, Tanana anchor; example (54).

- d. *ahtthoq* ‘from downland’ from point-of-view of Mrs. Barnes’ aunt, Nabesna anchor; example (55).
Figure 10: Mrs. David: Locating Nahk’ade

- a. *negn* ‘to upland’; uncertain anchor from Tetlin to Last Tetlin; example (56).
Figure 11: Mrs. David: Tetlin River Anchor

- *hahnde’* ‘to upriver’; Mrs. David talks about traveling upriver through a series of lakes; Tetlin River anchor; example (58).
Figure 12: Mrs. David: To Naambia Niign and on to the Black Hills

- a. *hune* ‘area to upriver’ and *ne* ‘to upriver’; Tanana anchor from Tetlin area to Northway; example (59).

- b. *hune* ‘area to upriver’; Nabesna Anchor from Northway to Black Hills; example (61).