

REVIEW

SHEM PETE'S ALASKA: THE TERRITORY OF THE UPPER COOK INLET DENA'INA (REVISED SECOND EDITION)

James Kari, James A. Fall, and Shem Pete, 2016. Foreword by William Bright. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks; 432 pages, 27 color plates, 324 halftone figures, 66 maps; ISBN 9781602233065 (paper) \$39.95.

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Building on the foundation of the first (1987) and second (2003) editions, the revised second edition of *Shem Pete's Alaska* (2016) features comprehensive knowledge of the Dena'ina homeland as told by Dena'ina people themselves, as well as the findings and observations of several researchers who have lived, worked, and studied among the Dena'ina. As captured in the title, the book centers on Shem Pete (1896–1989), an elder regarded by his peers as having unparalleled knowledge of the Dena'ina homeland and language. His knowledge spanned the contact and post-contact periods, and the sheer expanse of his understandings and conceptualizations of his people's home—and their connections to it—is wonderfully captured in this volume. Shem Pete spent his life hunting, fishing, and trapping across more than 13,000 square miles (33,000 square km—approximately the size of Maryland) of the Upper Cook Inlet Basin. While practicing these activities, he memorized the names and locations of over 650 Dena'ina places. He also knew the Russian and English names of places. Shem Pete's library of accumulated knowledge of the land, supplemented with the knowledge of other elders, is superbly recorded in this book.

The editors, James Kari and James Fall, draw on their considerable expertise relating to studies of Dena'ina language and culture in the production of this volume. They have done justice to Shem Pete's wealth of knowledge. The book serves as a tribute to his revered place among the Nulchina clan of the Dena'ina in Southcentral Alaska—Susitna Valley and rightly recognizes him as a national treasure. Together with nearly 50 other contributors, in-

cluding contributions by Shem Pete himself, the compendium presents rich information on the Dena'ina homeland in the form of stories, dances, ceremonies, place-name maps, songs, illustrations, and archival and contemporary photographs of people and places. The reader is further informed of the Dena'ina homeland through reference to, and discussion of, oral histories, historical maps, linguistic studies, archaeological investigations, and ethnographic fieldwork.

Capturing the breadth of knowledge associated with any indigenous homeland or any indigenous knowledge-holder is no mean feat, and the editors should be commended for their care and diligence in how the book conveys and represents different forms of knowledge relating to the Dena'ina homeland.

The book's template and structure are largely consistent with earlier editions. The revised edition features a suite of new material, including articles, annotations, terminology, photographs, map references, an expanded bibliography, index, and new and revised place names. Stories and anecdotes are supported by richly produced maps and photographs. Essays on the social, cultural, and historical significance of the area are captivating and informative. Perhaps the most arresting feature of the book is the attention given to place names and the mapping of them. Being informed about the Dena'ina landscape through their language provides the reader with an intimate sense of how every part of their homeland is known and conceptualized. Through Dena'ina place names we learn about favorable fishing and hunting grounds, the suitability or

otherwise of places to camp, historical and contemporary interactions and events, settlement patterns, historical figures, and a picture of the terrain.

The letter-sized format of book, retained from the first edition, provides an appropriate format to showcase the variety of visual elements of the book. The enlarged format provides room for photographs, maps, and illustrations to be shown without their quality being compromised.

Although scholarly in nature, the book does not purport to be an academic volume, and the inclusion of numerous and informative visual materials will likely appeal to a wide readership base, including Dena'ina people themselves. The release of this edition will ensure that generations of Dena'ina people to come will have access to the information that their elders recorded. Much of this information may one day be digitally accessible, and provisions may be made for the Dena'ina to be able to update maps themselves with the names of new places that they make on the land and the stories that accompany them.

Densely packed with information and detailed accounts, the book will be well received by those interested in the Dena'ina homeland and Alaska, as well as those interested in indigenous knowledge systems more broadly around the world. As with the previous editions, the collaborative methods that were employed to generate this book serve as a model for others embarking on projects that attempt to capture the holistic nature of indigenous knowledge.

This professional account of the Dena'ina people and their places deserves wide readership, and given the respectful tone and collaborative nature of its production, the book should be regarded as necessary reading for researchers and graduate students who plan to work with or alongside indigenous people. The book is easy to read, ethically sound, and leaves the reader with a greater sense of the extraordinary knowledge and wisdom held by indigenous people in this part of the world.