

Eklutna River

Łiq'a nagh qinqtudet

The Eklutna River runs over 36 miles from the Eklutna Glacier to the Knik Arm of the Cook Inlet. This river was once thriving with salmon, feeding Dena'ina that lived in the area. Eklutna elders tell stories of salmon and plentiful harvest coming from Eklutna River. This has changed. In the early 20th century, two dams were constructed on the Eklutna River. One at the edge of the natural moraine dam on the end of Eklutna Lake, and the other about four miles upriver from the inlet. Water for the river was retained by these two structures to be diverted for power production, and smaller amounts for drinking water, in the Anchorage area. Without the historical flows of the Eklutna River, the salmon populations dwindled. In 2018 the lower dam was removed, allowing for unimpeded access for salmon below the Eklutna Lake Dam. All water, however, is still being diverted. The river channel below the Eklutna Lake Dam is dry in some areas and low trickles in others. The water in this part of the river is from runoff and ground water springs. Gradually the flow increases, occasionally halted by beaver dams, until it merges with water from Thunderbird Creek. All 5 species of salmon can still be found in the river, but now only make it to the Thunderbird Creek confluence and the numbers are low. The habitat is no longer adequate for large population numbers. Studies being completed on the river will help us understand what should be done to help the salmon to return to the whole river. Many organizations are working together for this cause. Łiq'a nagh qinqtudet, we are hopeful the salmon will return to us.

Eklutna River
Idlughetnu



Traditional Dena'ina Fishing Tools



Anchorage Museum of History and Art



NVE Fish Spear Class, 2019



Anchorage Museum of History and Art

Dena'ina used many methods of fishing. Some of the tools that Dena'ina used for fishing were fish traps and weirs, moose bone harpoon headed fish spears, pole noose snares, and spruce root nets.

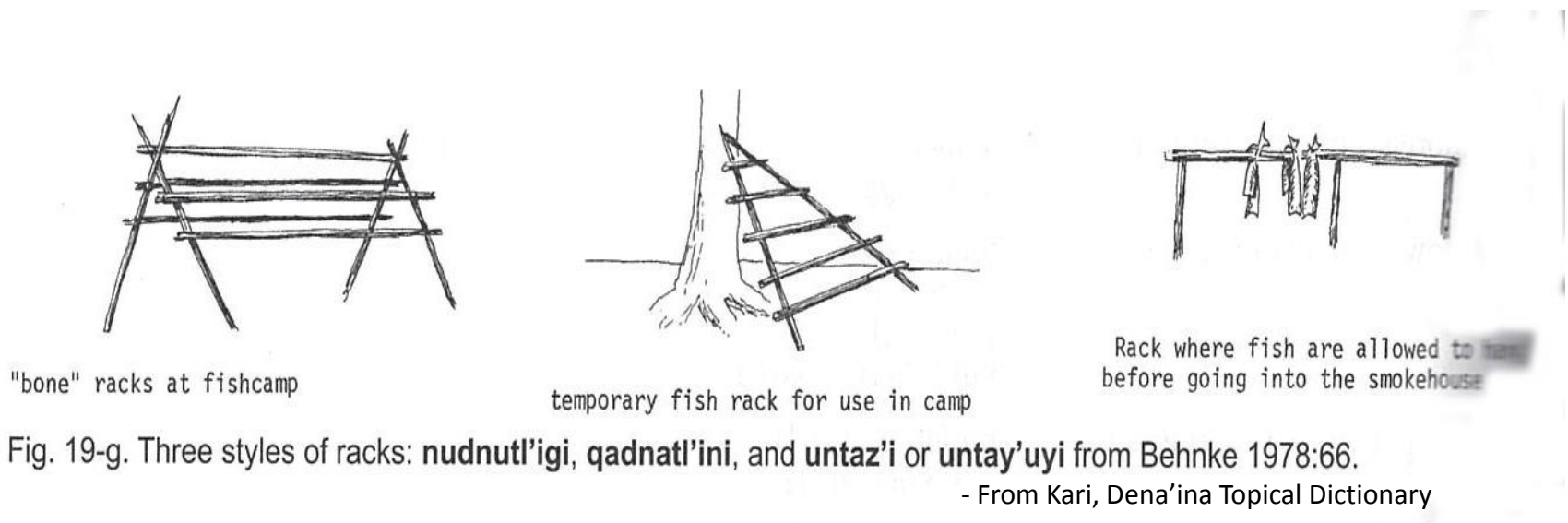


Fig. 19-g. Three styles of racks: nudnutł'igi, qadnatł'ini, and untaz'i or untay'uyi from Behnke 1978:66.

- From Kari, Dena'ina Topical Dictionary