



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

P.O. Box 196650

Anchorage, AK 99519

Tel 907-343-4355

URL www.muni.org/departments/parks

ANCHORAGE



PARKS & RECREATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 13, 2020

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

From: Steve Rafuse, Parks Superintendent

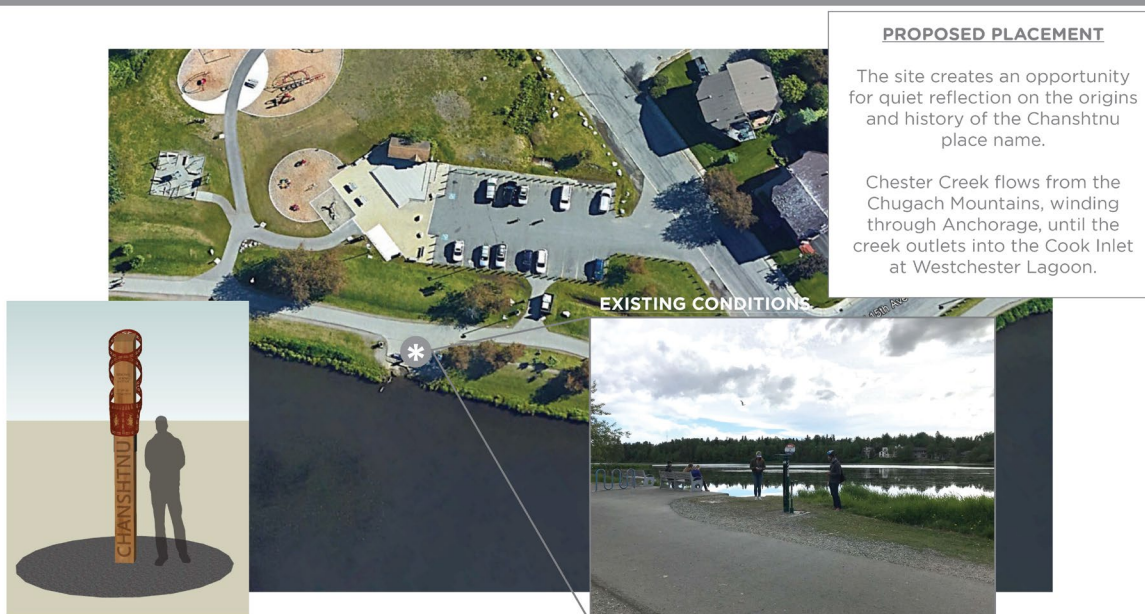
Project: **PRC 20-13:** Indigenous Place Names Project – Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park

INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous Place Names project (IPN) is a collaboration with several organizations to bring awareness to Anchorage's Dena'ina history and place names. Bringing Dena'ina place names into the built environment has been years in the making and has resulted in high profile projects such as the Dena'ina Center, in downtown Anchorage, and the renaming of Chanshtnu Muldoon Park from Muldoon Town Square Park.

The current place naming effort is to install place name signs in Anchorage's parks, trails, and public spaces. This effort is being spearheaded by the Native Heritage Center and the Anchorage Park Foundation.

Indigenous Placemaking Movement **Westchester Lagoon** Proposed Sign Placement



The proposed project seeks to install an Indigenous Place Name sign at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon.

ABOUT THE INDIGENOUS PLACE NAME PROJECT

The IPN project began with the establishment of an Advisory Committee (AC). To establish the group the project team met with community leaders individually to seek their partnership on the project. The group that was established represented leaders from Native Corporations, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Assembly, local non-profits, and artists. The group was chaired by Aaron Leggett, the President of the native village of Eklutna and the Curator of Alaska History and Culture at the Anchorage Museum.

*Aaron Leggett, Anchorage Museum and
Committee Chair*

Amy Coffman, Municipality of Anchorage

Josh Durand, Anchorage Parks and Recreation

Dr. Angela Michaud, Southcentral Foundation

Barbara Donatelli, Cook Inlet Region, Inc.

Beth Nordlund, Anchorage Park Foundation

Carol Gore, Cook Inlet Housing Authority

Diana Rhoades, Anchorage Park Foundation

*Forrest Dunbar, Anchorage Assembly Member
and APF Board Member*

*Francisca Demoski, Bristol Bay Native
Corporation*

*Jaylene Peterson-Nyren, Southcentral
Foundation*

Joe Linden, Southcentral Foundation

*Kelsey Potdevin, Alaska Federation of Natives
and APF Board Member*

*Liz La quen náay Medicine Crow, First Alaskans
Institute*

Dr. Robert Onders, Alaska Pacific University

Roy Agloinga, Rasmuson Foundation

Sarah Barton, Providence Alaska Region Board

Shyanne Beatty, Alaska Native Heritage Center

Tyler Robinson, Cook Inlet Housing Authority

Valarie Clark, Alaska Native Heritage Center

Veri DiSuvero, Municipality of Anchorage

The Advisory Committee worked through a series of meetings where they developed 6 critical success factors that would guide the design of the place name signs.

1. Be branded well
2. Draw people to learn
3. Be authentic
4. Recognize and celebrate that this site is Dena'ina
5. Move beyond the sign
6. Be built to last

Artists then used the input from the Advisory Committee to create a concept that would achieve the success factors. The process resulted in an Indigenous Placemaking Movement Booklet that provides conceptual designs and guidelines for a place name signage system that will bring awareness to Dena'ina place names in Anchorage.

The booklet not only includes design guidelines but a list of significant Dena'ina place names of where the interpretive signage could be placed.

GOALS & FUNDING

Through funding from the Alaska Native Heritage Center with a National Endowment for the Arts grant and funding through the Anchorage Park Foundation with a Rasmuson grant, implementation will begin with the installation of a 'Chanshtnu' place name sign. 'Chanshtnu', meaning Grass Creek is the Dena'ina place name for Chester Creek.

The committee and artists used the recent Parks and Recreation Wayfinding Guidelines to develop the design for these place name signs in a way that is consistent with the aesthetic already established by the city. The signs utilize cedar posts and other design features that are cohesive with existing park wayfinding, while also representing Alaska Native Culture. The signs are cedar posts featuring the place name on the front of the post, interpretive and wayfinding information on panels on the back and sides,

with a metal plate featuring two project phrases and topped with a weathering steel sculptural piece inspired by the dentalium bead pattern and firebag.

The Dena'ina firebag was selected as the project's symbol. Fire bags were used by the Dena'ina people to store and transport fire-making materials such as tinder and embers. The fire bag represents living with the land.

In partnership with Anchorage Park Foundation and Parks & Recreation, the first signs are proposed at sites within the park system to begin telling the story of Dena'ina place names. The initial "Chanshtnu" signs will be located at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park and Westchester Lagoon.

PLACENAME SIGN PROPOSAL

Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon is one of the most popular and well used areas in Anchorage's park and trail system. Because of the popularity of Westchester Lagoon and the variety of existing uses needing to be considered, the project organizers worked closely with the Parks and Recreation Department in the site selection process. Six locations within Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park were evaluated based on project goals, seasonal use patterns, access and circulation, IPN sign visibility, and public safety.

The preferred location is situated between the Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek Trail and Westchester Lagoon on a narrow piece of land directly south of the main parking lot and café. The location offers panoramic views of the Lagoon and Chugach Mountains in the distance and is intended to create an opportunity for quiet reflection.



Figure 1: Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon



Figure 2: View of Proposed Site looking East



Figure 3: View of Proposed Site looking West

Two concepts are proposed for the placement of an Indigenous Place Name sign at Westchester Lagoon. The two concepts reflect two possible funding scenarios for the implementation of the project. The first concept is currently anticipated to be feasible with existing funds. The second concept would require additional funding to implement.

INDIGENOUS PLACE NAMING PROJECT

Westchester Lagoon: Site Plan

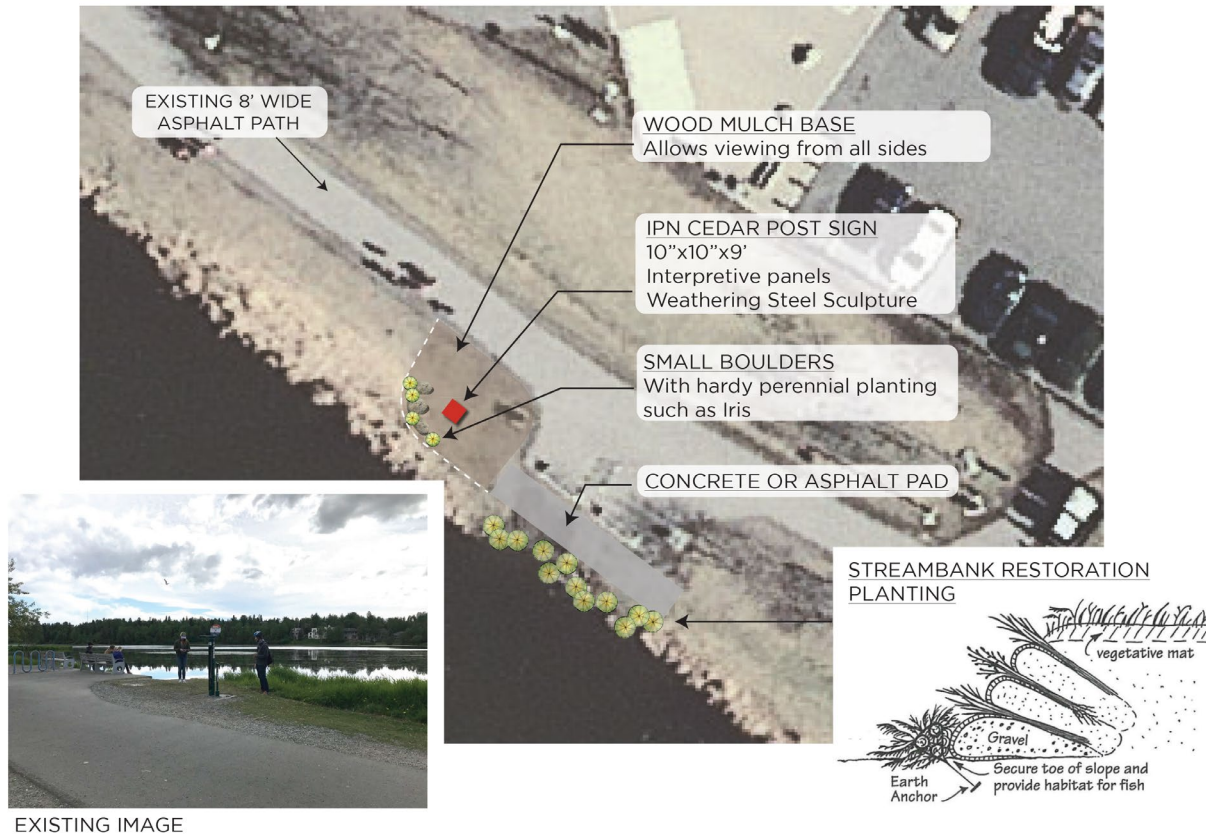


Figure 4: Concept 1 Site Plan

Concept 1: The first concept utilizes the current location of the Bike Fix-it Station, relocating the fix-it station and installing an Indigenous Place Name sign in its place. This concept utilizes wood fiber ADA surfacing and other plant materials and boulders to create a more natural environment around the installation.

INDIGENOUS PLACE NAMING PROJECT

Westchester Lagoon: Site Plan

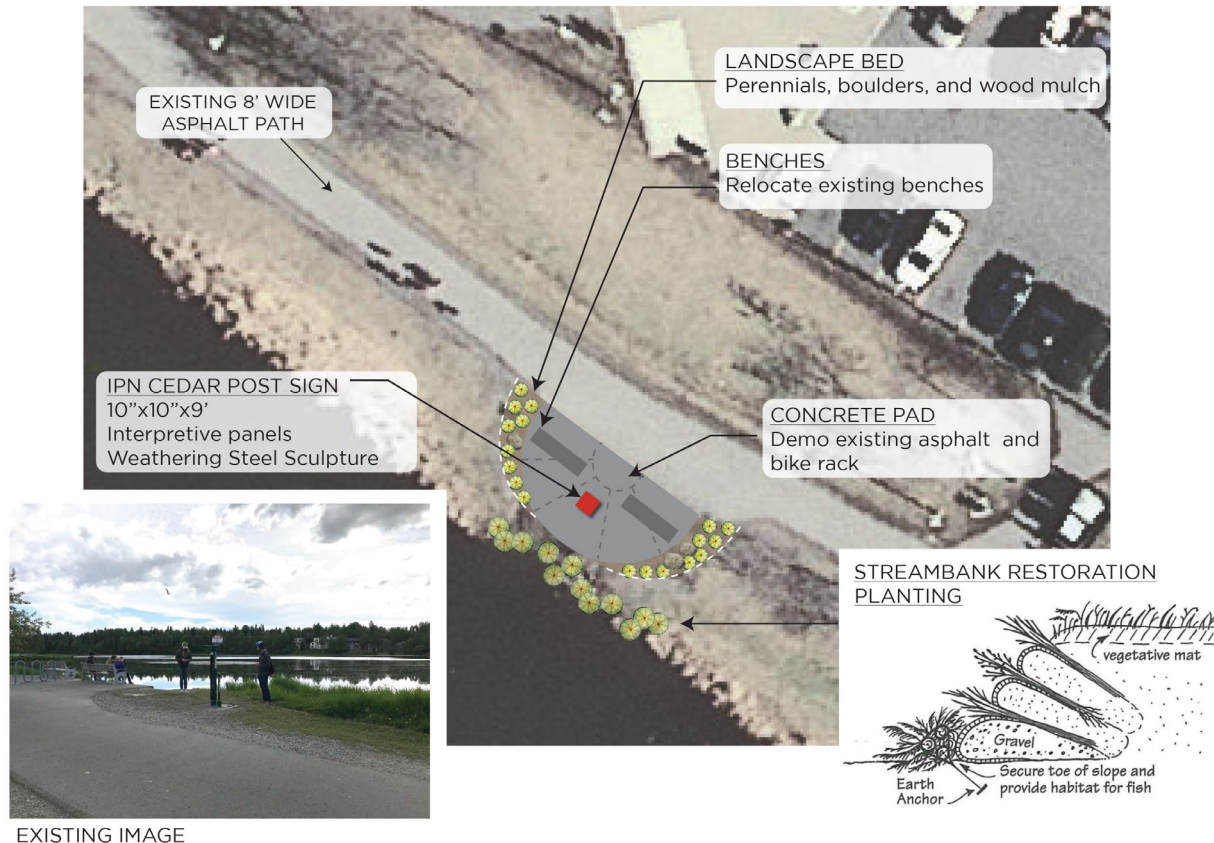


Figure 5: Concept 2 Site Plan

Concept 2: The second concept provides for the redevelopment of the small plaza directly adjacent to the Bike Fix-it Station. This concept utilizes the existing area set aside for benches and nature viewing to develop a small plaza with the Indigenous Place Name sign as its focal point.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed project to install an Indigenous Place Name sign at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon has been reviewed and is supported by the Parks and Recreation Department. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission approve the proposed resolution in support of the project as presented. Prior to beginning construction, the petitioner shall submit construction plans for review by the Department and obtain all relevant permits.



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Commission

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519



PRC RES NO. 2020-11

Indigenous Place Names Project – Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, The Indigenous Place Names project (IPN) is a collaboration with several organizations to bring awareness to Anchorage's Dena'ina history and place names; and

WHEREAS, funding from the Alaska Native Heritage Center with a National Endowment for the Arts grant and funding through the Anchorage Park Foundation with a Rasmuson grant, implementation will begin with the installation of a 'Chanshtnu' place name sign. 'Chanshtnu', meaning Grass Creek is the Dena'ina place name for Chester Creek; and

WHEREAS, the project uses materials that are consistent with current wayfinding standards and will feature the place name on the front of the post, interpretive and wayfinding information on panels on the back and sides, with a metal plate featuring two project phrases and topped with a weathering steel sculptural piece inspired by the dentalium bead pattern and firebag which represents the living off of the land; and

WHEREAS, project organizers have worked closely with the Parks and Recreation Department in the site selection process to choose a suitable location at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park at Westchester Lagoon.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the proposed Indigenous Place Names Project for Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park as proposed and presented.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 13th day of August, 2020.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Josh Durand, Director
Parks & Recreation Department

ANCHORAGE INDIGENOUS PLACEMAKING MOVEMENT

A MOVEMENT TO BRING DENA'INA CULTURE TO OUR
BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE NAME SIGNAGE

A Step Towards Honoring the Dena'ina Landscape of the Anchorage Area



ALASKA
NATIVE
HERITAGE
CENTER



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This project was created on Dena’ina land.

THE DENA’INA INDIGENOUS PLACE NAMES

Indigenous place names encompass our relationship with the land. It is a story of our interaction and understanding of the animals, plants and waters of an environment. For thousands of years, the Dena’ina peoples have and continue to steward and care for this place. The Indigenous Place Names Project is a step towards recognizing and honoring the Dena’ina language, knowledge and innovations in Alaska.

Organizational Project Host	Anchorage Park Foundation
Organizational Contributors	Anchorage Museum Alaska Native Heritage Center
Advisory Committee	Aaron Leggett, Anchorage Museum and Committee Chair Amy Coffman, Municipality of Anchorage Dr. Angela Michaud, Southcentral Foundation Barbara Donatelli, Cook Inlet Region, Inc. Beth Nordlund, Anchorage Park Foundation Carol Gore, Cook Inlet Housing Authority Diana Rhoades, Anchorage Park Foundation Forrest Dunbar, Anchorage Assembly Member and APF Board Member Francisca Demoski, Bristol Bay Native Corporation Jaylene Peterson-Nyren, Southcentral Foundation Joe Linden, Southcentral Foundation Josh Durand, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Kelsey Potdevin, Alaska Federation of Natives and APF Board Member Liz La quen náay Medicine Crow, First Alaskans Institute Dr. Robert Onders, Alaska Pacific University Roy Agloinga, Rasmuson Foundation Sarah Barton, Providence Alaska Region Board Shyanne Beatty, Alaska Native Heritage Center Tyler Robinson, Cook Inlet Housing Authority Valarie Clark, Alaska Native Heritage Center Veri DiSuvero, Municipality of Anchorage
Project Team	Joel Isaak – Project Artist, Independent Artist Melissa Shaginoff – Project Artist, Independent Artist Michael Fredericks – Facilitator, SALT Holly Spoth-Torres- Project Management, Huddle AK Bri Keifer – Project Designer, Huddle AK

THE BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT

In 2018, the Anchorage Park Foundation received a grant from the Rasmuson Foundation to begin work on a parks and trails indigenous place names project. The project aims to creatively, accurately, and beautifully highlight the culture and history of Anchorage and our indigenous people.

Soon after the project began, it became clear that parks and trails signage is a contributor and catalyst to a larger movement of Indigenous Place Naming. Being a part of Anchorage's Indigenous Place Naming Movement means that you invest in changing the paradigm. Signage is one physical representation of this shift, but there is also a shift in processes, recording, mapping, experiencing, and celebrating.

From this project, we've learned that to change the paradigm and create a city that honors the Indigenous Place, there must be three components:

1. **The leadership of a local culture bearer;**
2. **Advisory oversight from a broad base of stakeholders; and**
3. **Involvement of an Indigenous artist if it is appropriate to the project.**

It is the combination of these three elements that allow a project to become part of a Movement and live beyond initial contributors to the next generation of our community.





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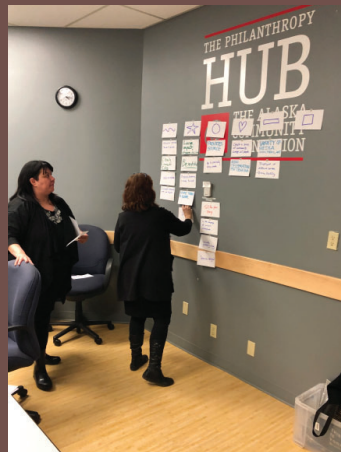
Building on the three components of the Movement, the project team reached out to local Dena’ina culture bearer Aaron Leggett, Curator of Alaska History and Culture at the Anchorage Museum. Aaron has been invested in revitalizing Dena’ina Place names since 2005 with the naming of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council Natu Building and the Dena’ina Convention Center.

To develop interpretive signage with broad stakeholder input and guidance, the project team assembled an Advisory Committee. The Committee, led by Aaron, represents strong connections to the Alaska Native community, partner organizations and strategic thinkers. Each committee member contributed invaluable knowledge to the project. One partner organization, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, provided NEA funding to include an Alaska Native Artist on the team. The project team enjoyed working with both Joel Isaak and Melissa Shaginoff, artists who brought the project an increased level of depth and meaning.

The committee met four times to establish the project’s Critical Success Factors, verify the place name locations, and review the design progression. The final design reflects the committee’s input, guidance, and voice. Most importantly, the process for the Indigenous Place Names project is meant to be leveraged for additional projects that honor this Dena’ina place.

PROJECT PROCESS

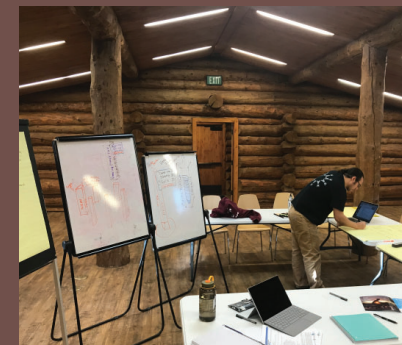
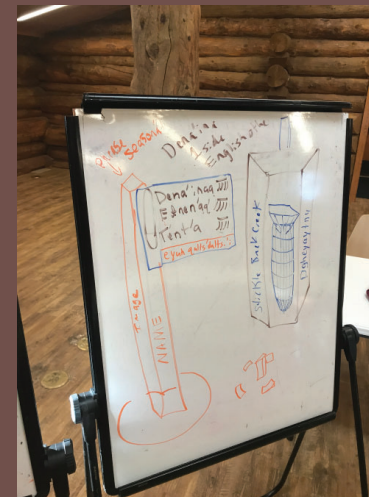
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
MEETINGS



DEVELOP
CRITICAL
SUCCESS
FACTORS

- 1 BE BRANDED WELL
- 2 DRAW PEOPLE TO LEARN
- 3 BE AUTHENTIC
- 4 RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE THAT THIS SITE IS DENA'INA
- 5 MOVE BEYOND THE SIGN
- 6 BE BUILT TO LAST

WORK WITH
DENA'INA
ARTIST TO
CREATE
CONCEPT



COMPLETE
MASTER PLAN
AND TOOLKIT

IMPLEMENT FIRST SIGNS

MOVE BEYOND THE SIGNS:
PLACE NAMING IN ANCHORAGE
ONLINE RESOURCES
WALKING TOURS
SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

PROJECT BRAND

To measure the project’s success and set the project brand, the Advisory Committee established Critical Success Factors for the signage. Working together, the committee defined success as an Indigenous Place Names project that:

- Is well branded;
- Draws people to learn;
- Is authentic;
- Recognizes and celebrates that the site is Dena’ina;
- Moves beyond signage; and
- Is built to last.

With this clear definition of success, Joel Isaak, a Dena’ina artist, worked with the project team to create two foundational phrases for the project.

DENA’INAQ EŁNENA CH’TİYUX

“You are walking on Dena’ina land”

The first phase is used to recognize and honor the importance that this is Dena’ina land.

YE’UH QA TS’DALTS’IYI

“Living with the outdoors”

The second phase expands on the first. To say this is Dena’ina is complex in that land represents more than a place; land represents a way of being. The phrase is meant to evoke the complexity of place and being on the land as it relates to seasonality, resources, travel, technology, life, and spirit.

The Dena’ina fire bag was selected as the project’s symbol. Fire bags were used by the Dena’ina people to store and transport fire-making materials such as tinder and embers. The fire bag represents living with the outdoors and sharing of fire and knowledge.

To further define the project brand, the team became inspired by dentalium bead patterns. Dentalium beaded designs are used both traditionally and in contemporary clothing, materials, and artwork. For this project, dentalium bead patterns are used to represent Dena’ina fine art. The final bag and beadwork designs were created with the artistic oversight of Melissa Shaginoff, an artist familiar with the Dena’ina culture and funded through the Alaska Native Heritage Center’s NEA grant.



Dena’ina Fire Bag with Dentalium Beading, Image Source:
Catalogue No. E73048, Department of Anthropology; Smithsonian

SIGNAGE DESIGN

Based on the Critical Success Factors and the project brand, the project team developed two types of signs for different implementation opportunities.

LEVEL 1 & 2 - DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN

The Dena'ina Place Name Sign is for places that have a Dena'ina name as shown in the Level 1 and Level 2 location maps that follow. The Place Name Signs are meant to celebrate and educate the residents and visitors of Anchorage about the significant Dena'ina Places that exist throughout the Anchorage area and beyond.

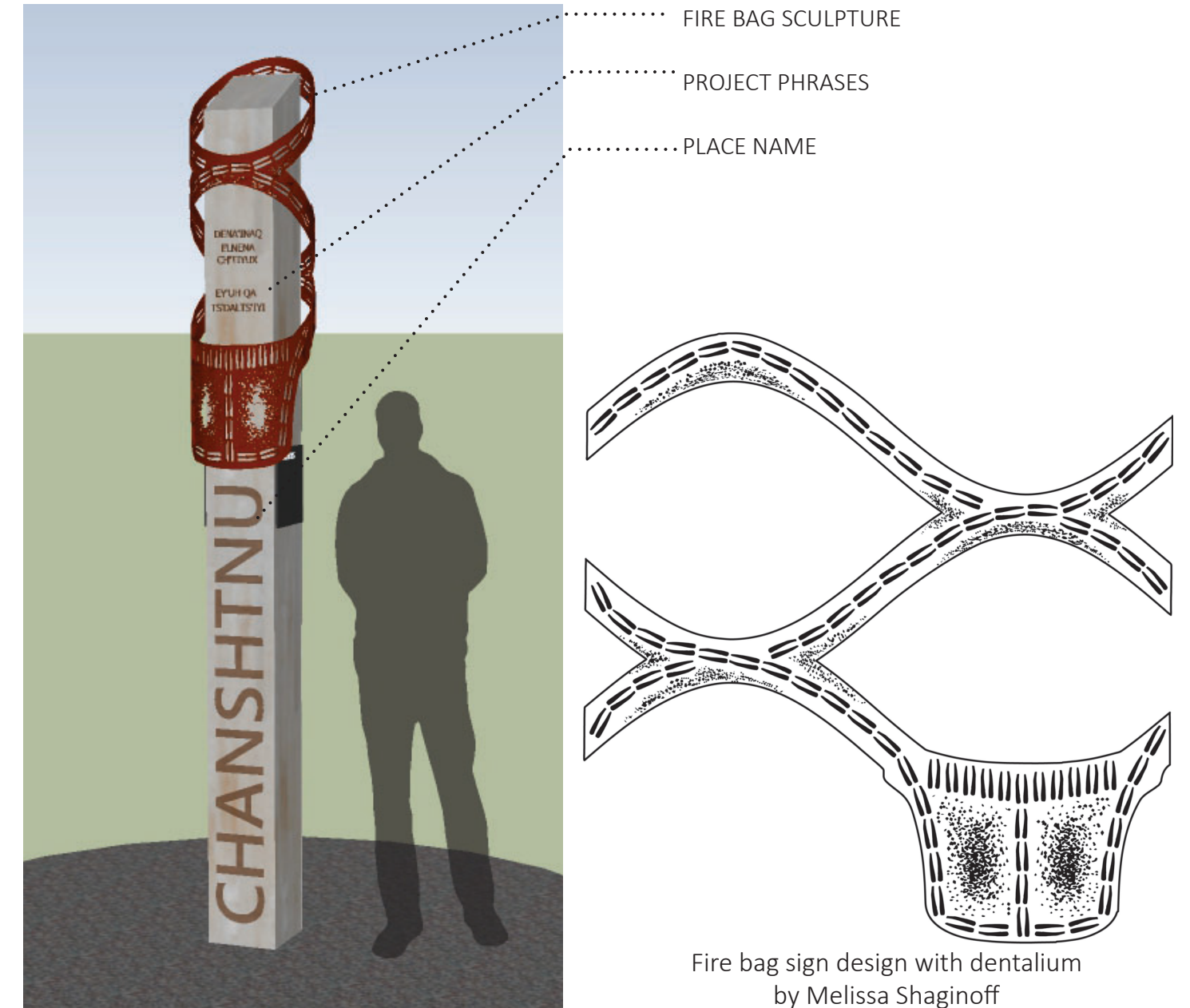
LEVEL 1 & 2 - DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN WITH PLAZA

The design team recommends that 2 to 4 of Dena'ina Place Name signs be installed with a plaza space surrounding the sign. These should be located in popular locations where a lot of visitors and locals are expected, for example Westchester Lagoon.

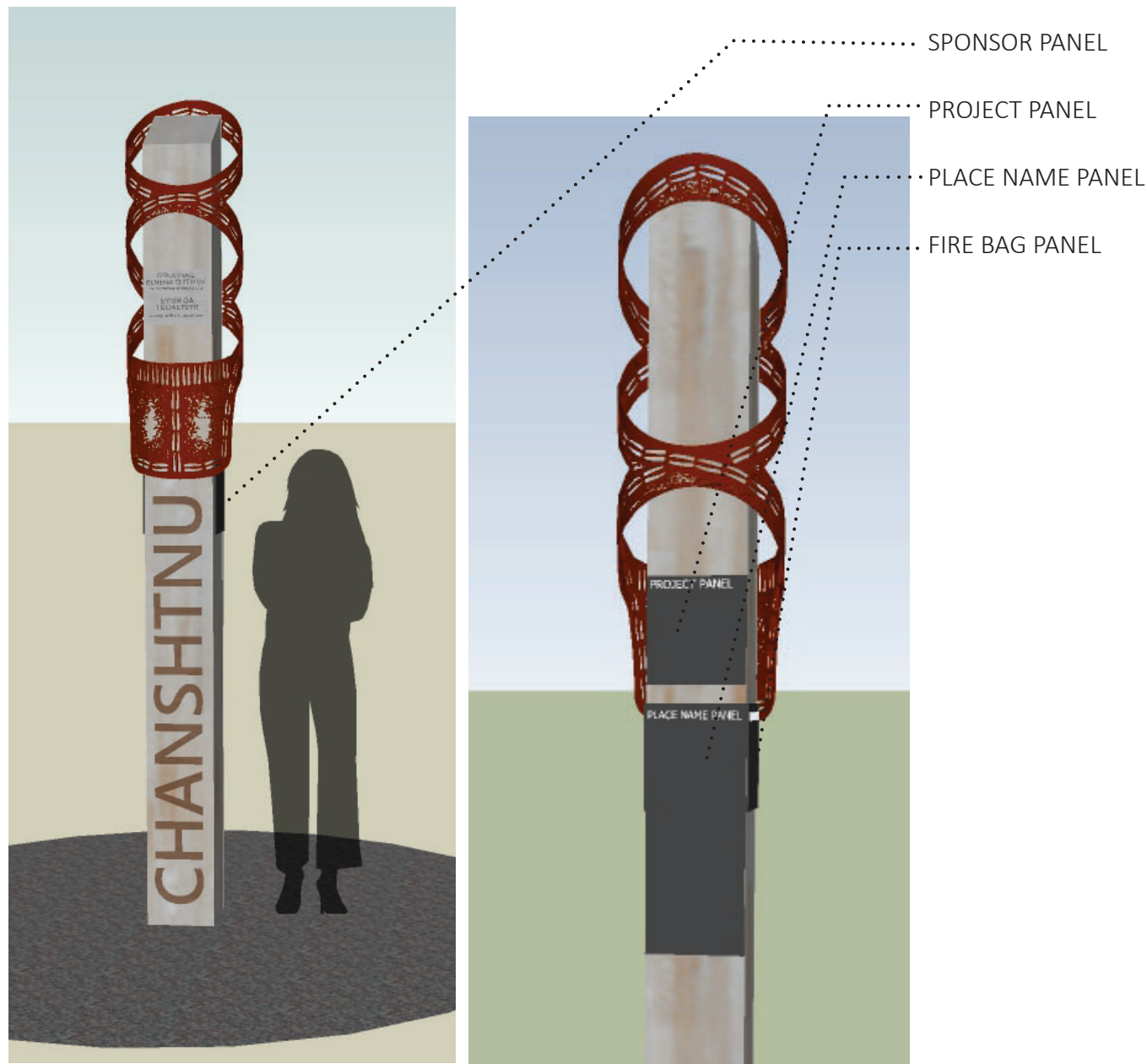
LEVEL 3 - INTERPRETIVE OR WAYFINDING SIGN

The Dena'ina Interpretive Sign is meant to highlight cultural, scientific, or historic information not necessarily associated with a place name. For example, a sign that describes flora and fauna of the area, or a sign that tells a modern story. These signs are considered Level 3 locations. These signs are not only meant to be used as single signs for interpretive content they can also be used in an organization's wayfinding system.

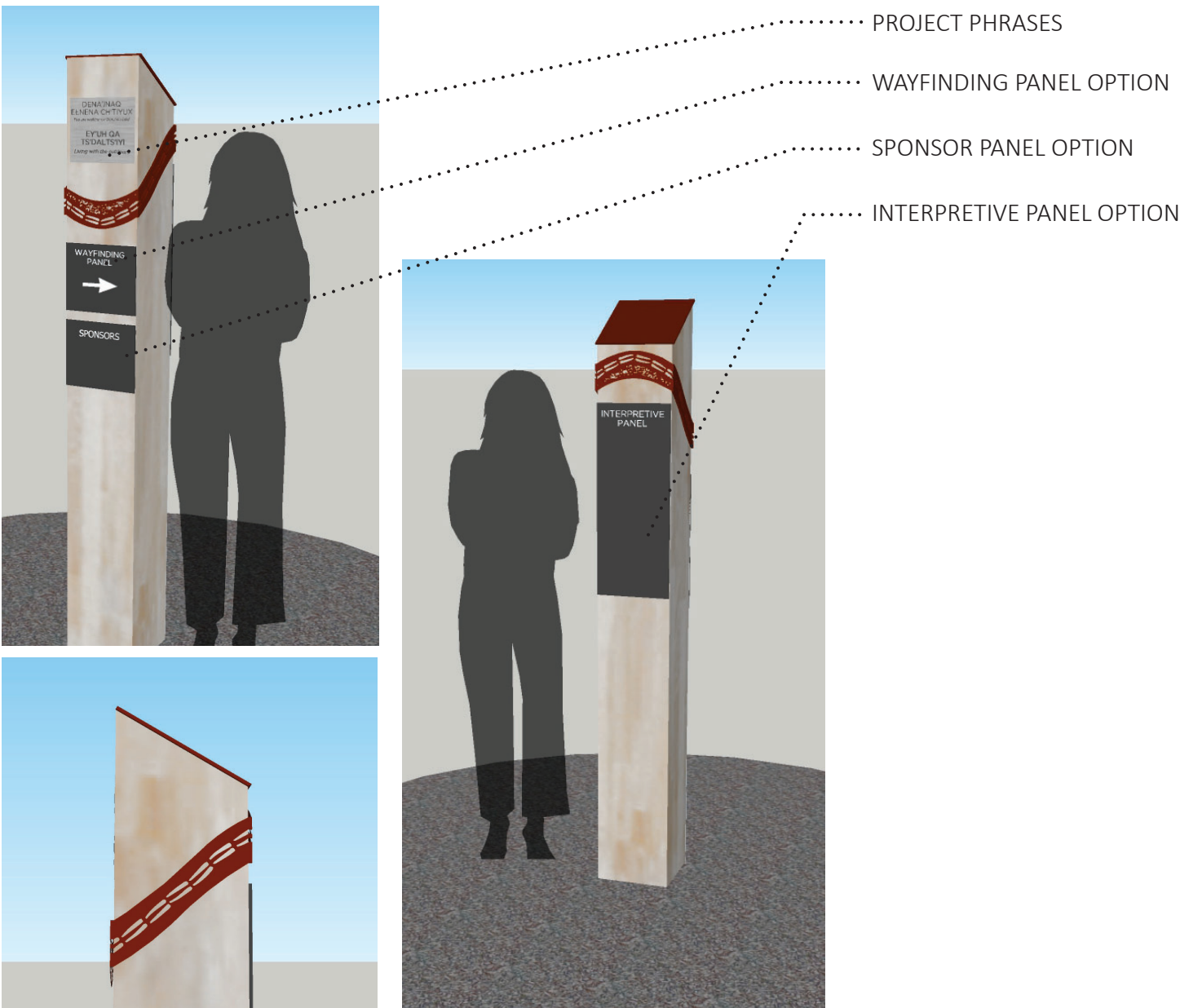
LEVEL 1 & 2 DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN



LEVEL 1 & 2 DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN



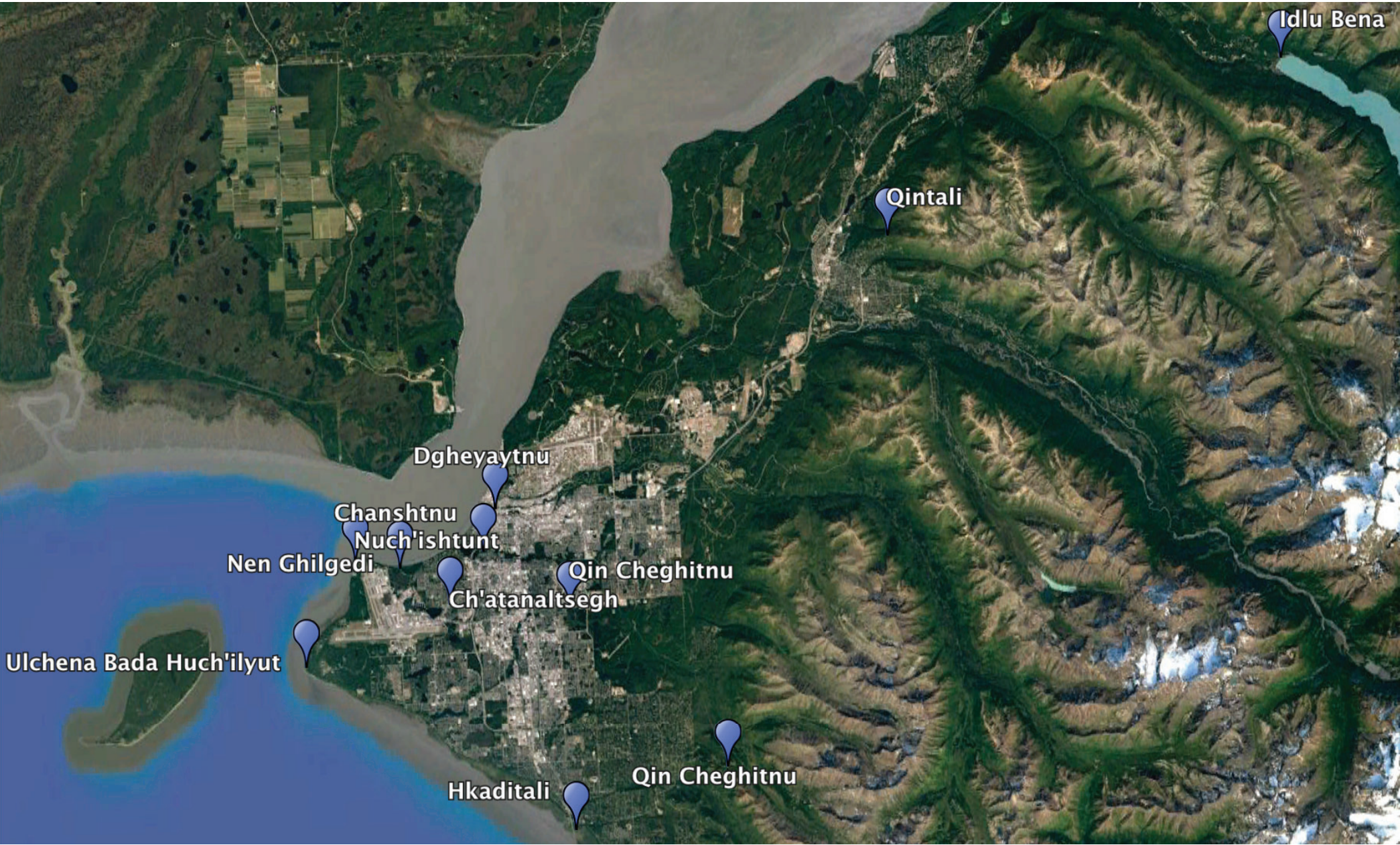
LEVEL 3 INTERPRETIVE OR WAYFINDING SIGN



LEVEL 1 & 2 DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN WITH PLAZA



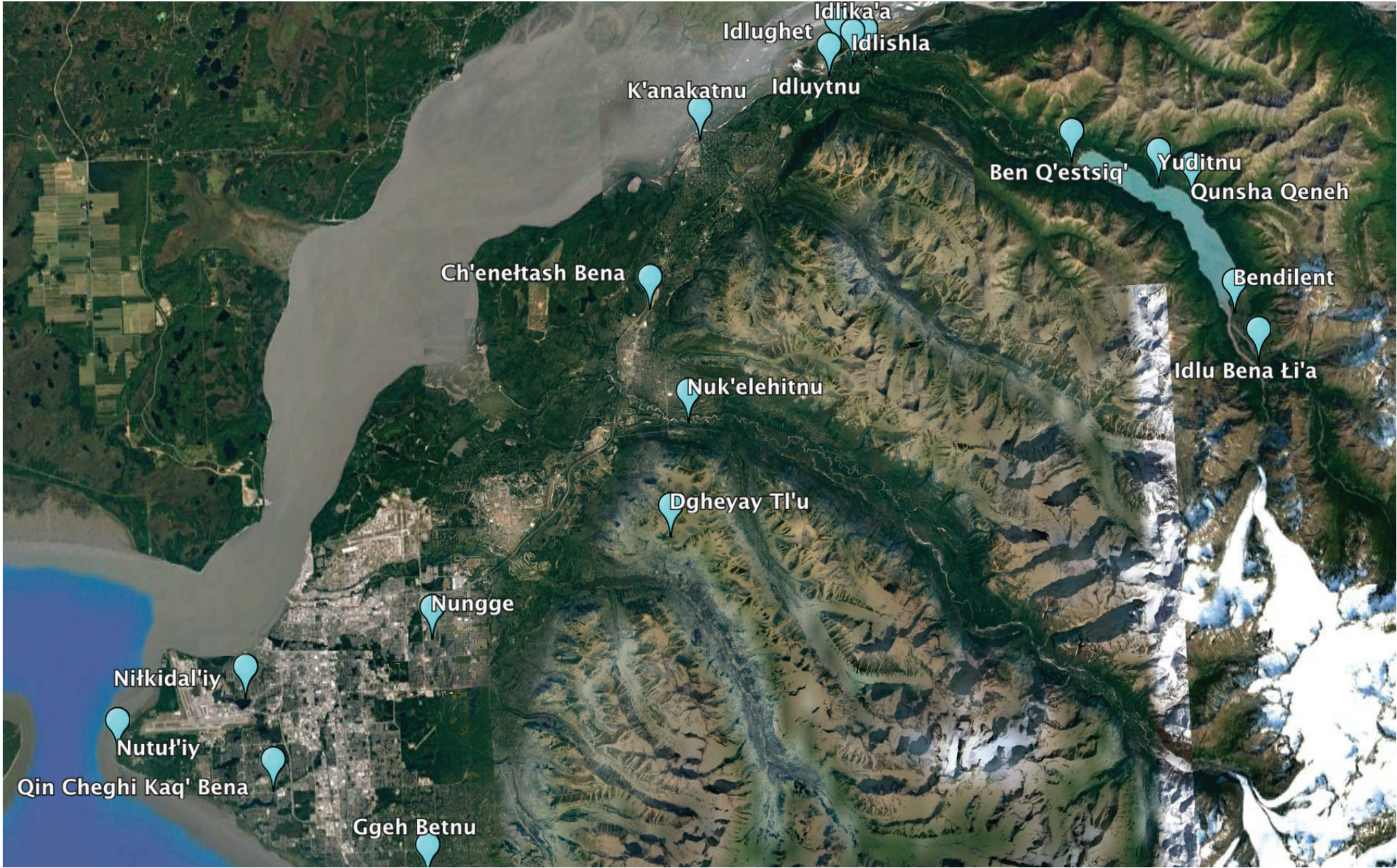
LOCATION MAP



LEVEL ONE PLACE NAMES
DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN

<i>Denai'na Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>Dgheyaytnu</i>	Ship Creek	Stickleback Creek - little fish used to make soup if you didn't have food.
<i>Chanshtnu</i>	Chester Creek	Grass creek
<i>Ch'atanaltsegh</i>	Fish Creek	Yellow water comes out
<i>Nen Ghilgedi</i>	Earthquake Park	Rotten Land
<i>Nuch'ishtunt</i>	Point Woronzof	Place protected from the wind
<i>Ulchena Bada Huch'ilyut</i>	Point Campbell	Where we pulled up the Aleutic's boat - battleground
<i>Qin Cheghitnu</i>	Campbell Creek	Crying Ridge Creek - crying ridge is the mountain name
<i>Hkaditali</i>	Potter's Marsh	Drift lumber - stuff washed up in this area from ship wrecks
<i>Qin Cheghitnu</i>	Flat Top	Crying Ridge Creek - crying ridge is the mountain name
<i>Idlu Bena</i>	Eklutna Lake	By the two hills - two girls, lake monster
<i>Qintali</i>	Mount Baldy	Wide Ridge

LOCATION MAP



LEVEL TWO PLACE NAMES
DENA'INA PLACE NAME SIGN

<i>Dena'ina Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Idlughet	Ekluna Village	Dena'ina name for Eklutna Village
Idlishla	Hill near Eklutna Village	Smaller hill of two hill's near Eklutna Village
Idlika'a	Hill near Eklutna Village	Larger hill of two hill's near Eklutna Village
Idluytnu	Eklutna River	By the two hills or plural objects River
Ben Q'estsiq'	Eklutna Lake	Lake outlet
Yuditnu	Eklutna Lake	Golden eagle creek
Qunsha Qeneh	Eklutna Lake	ground squirrel house
Bendilent	Eklutna Lake	Creek that flows off of Eklutna glacier
Idlu Bena Łi'a	Eklutna Glacier	by the plural objects lake glacier
K'anakatnu	Lower Peters Creek	No translation
Ch'eneltash Bena	Fire Lake	Creek where we sleep
Nuk'elehitnu	Eagle River	Fish run again creek
Dgheyay Tl'u	Arctic Valley	Stickleback headwaters
Nifkidal'iy	Lake Hood and Lake Spenard	The ones, the lakes that are joined together
Nutuł'iy	Fire Island	The object that stands in the water
Qin Cheghi Kaq' Bena	Campbell Lake	The mouth of crying ridge lake
Nungge	Nunacka Valley	Upland area
Ggeh Betnu	Rabbit Creek	Rabbit Creek, literal translation
Q'isqa Betnu	McHugh Creek	Temporary snowshoe
Tutl'uh	Turnigan Arm	Back water

A photograph of a forest path with a text overlay. The path is narrow and covered in brown leaves, winding through a lush green forest. The trees are tall and thin, with light-colored bark. The ground is covered in dense green ferns and small white flowers. The text "BECOME PART OF THE MOVEMENT" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters at the top left of the image. Below it, the text "CATALYZE THE VISION" is written in dark red, bold, uppercase letters, enclosed in a semi-transparent dark red rectangular box.

BECOME PART OF THE MOVEMENT

CATALYZE THE VISION

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The Anchorage Park Foundation is looking for organizations and individuals who want to support both the larger movement and this specific signage project. Here are two ways to get involved:

SPONSORSHIP

Organizations and individuals who want to support the efforts of the movement can become a movement sponsor. Their sponsorship will help support the implementation of Level 1 and 2 signs as well as other projects within the program.

IMPLEMENT LEVEL 3 SIGNS

The level 3 signs were designed to be implemented in other organizations' projects. If you are interested in installing a level 3 sign contact the APF! They will help you through the process of implementation by making sure the right stakeholders are involved from the beginning and helping supply materials and content for construction.

CONTACT THE ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION TO GET INVOLVED!

OPPORTUNITIES TO MOVE BEYOND THE SIGN

Having established a process, created Critical Success Factors and developed a brand, the project has the foundational elements move beyond the place-based signage.

DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through their seat on the Advisory Committee, Bristol Bay Native Corporation provided an excellent example of how this Indigenous Signage Project might become a digital mapping opportunity. Their Bristol Bay Online project is intended to help collect, preserve and increase accessibility to Native place names information for the people of Bristol Bay. The GIS mapping database allows users to view the place name location, learn the name is several languages, and hear an audio guide to their pronunciation.

PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Place-based signage provides the perfect opportunity to create a school curriculum partnership. The team has identified eleven indigenous, place-based locations as the first level of installation effort. Each site is associated with existing parks and trails and would provide the perfect backdrop to Alaska history in schools.

TOUR APPS

In 2015 the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department created a signage and wayfinding plan to improve trails for all users. The Indigenous Place Names project builds off this plan to add similarly, yet distinctly branded signage to the greater network of signage. Once implemented, this network provides a physical platform for a walking tour smartphone application that visitors and residents can use to learn about Dena'ina culture.

OTHER PLACE NAME PROJECTS

There are Indigenous naming initiatives bubbling to the surface all over Anchorage. This project process, the Critical Success Factors, and the efforts to date should be used to define other naming processes. For instance, the downtown community could begin a movement to create indigenous street names or signage, and the Critical Success Factors of this project could be used as a starting point for stakeholder engagement. Whatever the case, this group recommends a strong process that connects the design team or artist to a board base of the Alaska Native community for input, guidance,