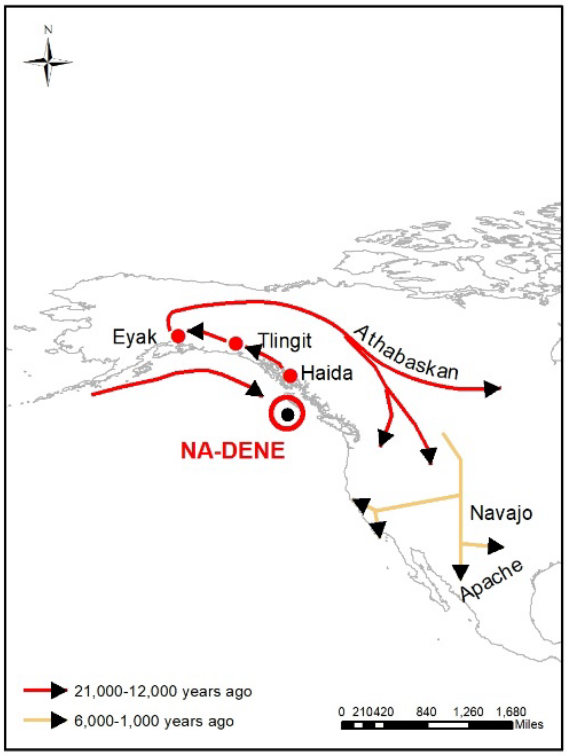
14.Na–Dene

Homeland. Haida Gwaii, an island free of ice before 17,000 years ago, was the basis of settlement by sea of those who became Na–Dene speakers. As the ice sheet melted, settlers from Haida Gwaii spread north along the coast to central Alaska and beyond.



Concise Spreadsheet: top four levels

Na–Dene			
	Haida		
	Continental		
		Tlingit	
		Athabaskan–Eyak	
			Eyak
			Athabaskan

Full Spreadsheet: see "14.Na–Dene," listing Na–Dene languages by groups and subgroups.

Pleistocene Changes.
65,000–45,000 years ago.
45,000–21,000 years ago. Settlers from northeast Asia moved by land to Beringia, land between Siberia and Alaska exposed by the low sea level in the era of the Last Glacial Maximum
21,000–12,000 years ago. Maritime settlers of Haida Gwaii Island arrived roughly 17,000 years ago, then moved northward along the coast to establish Tlingit and Eyak communities and inland to the Yukon Valley. It is unclear whether there were Na–Dene overlays or prior settlements of Beringians in this part of Alaska. Na–Dene speakers migrated throughout Athabaska – where there occurred the Younger Dryas, perhaps related to an extraterrestrial impact.

Holocene Changes.
12,000–6000 years ago.
6000 years ago–1000 CE. Na–Dene-speaking migrants moved further south along the Rocky Mountains, leaving linguistic traces in Utah, and forming small settlements to the west in coastal California and to the south, where the Navajo became the principal Na–Dene-speaking community.

Commentary and Debates. Greenberg reaffirmed, in 1971, Edward Sapir's 1915 classification of the Na–Dene language family. In the 1986 debate over languages of the Americas, opponents to Greenberg accepted Athabaskan languages as a grouping but rejected Eyak, Tlingit, and especially Haida as parts of the grouping.

References.

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