



DANE-ZAA ZÁÁGÉ? (BEAVER LANGUAGE)

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

© Doig River First Nation, 2006

This guide is based on the *Doig River Dictionary* by Marshall and Jean Holdstock. It is intended as an introduction to pronouncing and writing the sounds used in Dane-zaa Záágé? (the Beaver language).

To write our language, we use the sounds represented by the Latin alphabet (used also for the English and French languages) in combination with additional symbols for the sounds we use that are not part of the Latin alphabet. Please refer to the Symbols chart for the list of phonetic and tonal characters which we use in addition to Latin letters.

To begin learning our language, listen carefully to Billy Attachie pronouncing the sounds found in our alphabet, and then practice them yourself.

BEAVER LETTER	BEAVER WORD	ENGLISH MEANING	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT (OR NEAR EQUIVALENT) OF THE SOUND
a	gat	‘tree’	Sounds like the vowel in the English word <i>cut</i> .
aa	saa	‘sun’	Sounds like the sound at the beginning of the English word <i>ah</i> .
aạ	ahạ́ạ	‘yes’	Sounds like Beaver <i>aa</i> , but pronounced through the nose.
ae	egae	‘spoon’	Sounds like the two vowels <i>a</i> and <i>e</i> pronounced as a single vowel, with the <i>a</i> brief and the <i>e</i> longer.
ai	hak’ai	‘cow’	Sounds like the two vowels <i>a</i> and <i>ii</i> pronounced as a single vowel.
b	bes	‘knife’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>ball</i> .
ch	aché?	‘tail’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>chain</i> .
ch’	ch’q̣nê	‘coyote’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>chain</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound.
d	dane	‘person’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>dog</i> .
dl	dlezhe	‘grizzly’	Sounds like a sequence of <i>d</i> followed by <i>l</i> as in <i>toddler</i> .
dz	adzě?	‘heart’	Sounds like a sequence of <i>d</i> followed by <i>z</i> as in the English word <i>lids</i> .
dẓ	dẓeníi	‘calendar’	Sounds like a sequence of <i>d</i> followed by <i>z</i> as at the English word <i>lids</i> ,

BEAVER LETTER	BEAVER WORD	ENGLISH MEANING	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT (OR NEAR EQUIVALENT) OF THE SOUND
			except with the tongue just behind or between the teeth.
e	se	‘belt’	Sounds like the vowel in <i>face</i> but without the glide to <i>i</i> at the end of the vowel.
ɛ̣	ɛ̣baa	‘weasel’	Sounds like the Beaver vowel <i>e</i> said through the nose.
ea	dabea	‘sheep’	Sounds like the vowel in the English word <i>hat</i> .
ɛ̣a	kulɛ̣a	‘old man’	Sounds like the Beaver vowel <i>ea</i> said through the nose.
g	gaah	‘rabbit’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of the English word <i>goat</i> .
gh	ghaje	‘goose’	This sound is different than any English sound, although in rapid speech many English speakers change the <i>g</i> sound of <i>ragged</i> to a sound that is close to the <i>gh</i> sound of Beaver.
h	aháa	‘yes’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>hen</i> .
h	hadaa	‘moose’	In many words /h/ has a stronger sound at the beginning of syllables
i	shin	‘song’	Sounds like the vowel in <i>stick</i> .
ii	jiih	‘grouse’	Sounds like the vowel in <i>seat</i> .
j	jéyɔ?	‘bull moose’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>job</i> .
k	ke	‘shoes’	Sounds like the sound at the beginning of <i>kite</i> .
k’	k’at	‘willow’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>kite</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound.
l	aláa?	‘boat’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>leaf</i> .
lh	lhuuge	‘fish’	This sound is different than any English sound. It has the sibilant quality of <i>s</i> , but the air comes around the sides of the tongue.
m	mɛ̣lh	‘snare’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>me</i> .
n	nódaa	‘lynx’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>net</i> .
o	gogosh	‘pig’	Sounds like the vowel at the beginning of <i>open</i> .
ɔ̣	at’ɔ̣?	‘leaf’	Sounds like the vowel at the beginning of <i>only</i> .
s	sas	‘bear’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>son</i> .
ṣ	ṣán	‘star’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>son</i> , except with the tongue just behind or between the teeth.
sh	shin	‘song’	Sounds like the sound at the beginning of <i>she</i> .
t	tís	‘crutch’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>tea</i> .
t’	at’ɔ̣?	‘leaf’	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>tea</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound.
tl	tlɛ̣zaa	‘dog’	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by Beaver <i>lh</i> . There is no similar sound in English.

BEAVER LETTER	BEAVER WORD	ENGLISH MEANING	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT (OR NEAR EQUIVALENT) OF THE SOUND
tl'	tl'uulh	'rope'	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by Beaver <i>lh</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound. There is no similar sound in English.
ts	tsááʔ	'beaver'	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by <i>s</i> as at the end of <i>lets</i> .
<u>ts</u>	<u>tse</u>	'pipe'	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by <i>s</i> as at the end of <i>lets</i> , except with the tongue just behind or between the teeth.
ts'	ts'ádéʔ	'blanket'	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by <i>s</i> as at the end of <i>lets</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound.
<u>ts'</u>	<u>ts'iih</u>	'mosquito'	Sounds like a sequence of <i>t</i> followed by <i>s</i> as at the end of <i>lets</i> , except the sound is glottalized so there is a “popping” sound and the tongue is just behind or between the teeth.
u	chush	'down feather'	Sounds like the vowel in <i>book</i> .
uu	chuu	'water'	Sounds like the vowel in <i>food</i> .
w	wáłále	'butterfly'	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>worm</i> .
y	yaş	'snow'	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>yes</i> .
z	mazíʔ	'his/her body'	Sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>zigzag</i> .
zh	dézhaa	'she/he has started to go'	Sounds like the second consonant in <i>measure</i> .

PHONETIC AND TONAL SYMBOLS USED IN WRITING DANE-ZAA ZÁÁGÉ?

Dane-zaa Záágé? (the Beaver language) uses the Latin alphabet (also used by the English and French languages) in combination with the following symbols which indicate sounds that are not found in the Latin alphabet.

SYMBOL	EXAMPLE IN BEAVER WORD	ENGLISH MEANING	EXPLANATION OF SYMBOL & SOUND
ʔ	ma'aahéʔ	'his/her snowshoes'	This symbol (ʔ) indicates a glottal stop; a break in sound between vowels. It sounds like the consonant sound that comes between the two parts of <i>Uh-Oh!</i> This sound is made when the vocal cords are pressed together to stop the flow of air and then released.
ʼ	kʼat	'willow'	The apostrophe associated with a consonant means that the sound is "glottalized;" with glottalization, the consonant has a popping sound. The popping sound is made by combining a glottal stop (made when the vocal cords are pressed together to stop the flow of air and then released) simultaneously with another consonant. This example, kʼat, sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>kite</i> , with an extra "popping" sound.
´	táádézhaa	'he is going up'	The acute accent (high tone) indicates that the vowel has a relatively higher pitch than the unmarked vowels.
-	sán	"star"	The underlined letters indicate dental sounds. Dental sounds are made by saying the sound of a letter with the tip of the tongue placed just behind or between the teeth (not on the ridge behind the teeth). This example, sán, sounds like the consonant at the beginning of <i>son</i> , except with the tongue just behind or between the teeth.
˘	aťóʔ	'leaf'	The hook under a vowel means that it is nasalized, and pronounced through the nose. This example sounds like the vowel at the beginning of <i>only</i> .
ˇ	maděʔ	'his/her eye'	The hachek over a vowel indicates a rising pitch.
ˆ	chʻonê	'coyote'	The circumflex over a vowel indicates a falling pitch.

PREPARED BY: Billy Attachie, Dr. Patrick Moore, Julia Miller, July 2006.

Funded in part by a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation entitled: "Beaver Knowledge Systems: Documentation of a Canadian First Nation Language from a Place Name Perspective."