

# ALASKA'S WEST COAST

## *THRIVING ON THE TUNDRA*

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*Editor*

# ALASKA'S WEST COAST: THRIVING ON THE TUNDRA

This book is one title in a six-book series - a collaborative project of the UAS MAT 2016 -17 cohort.

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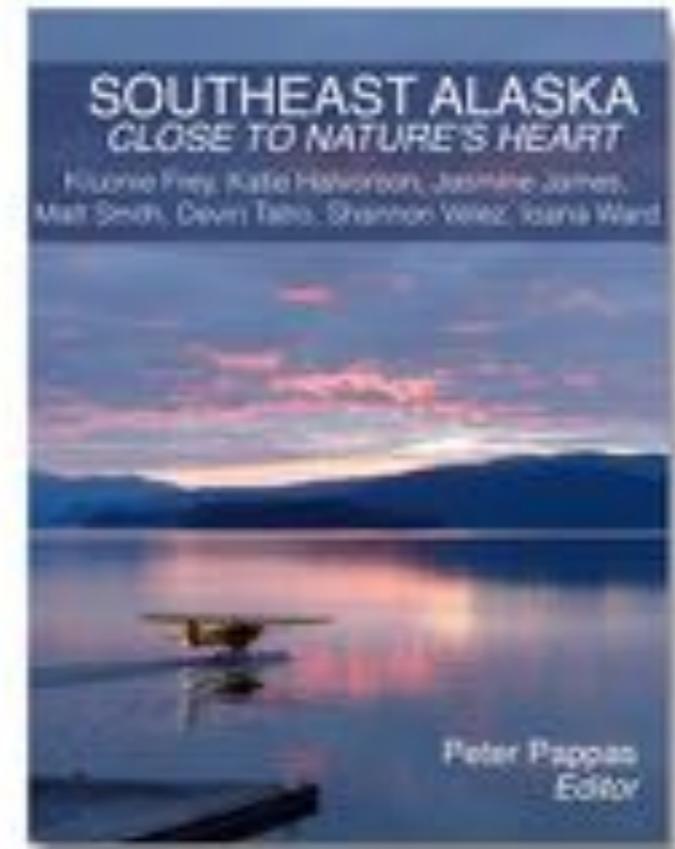
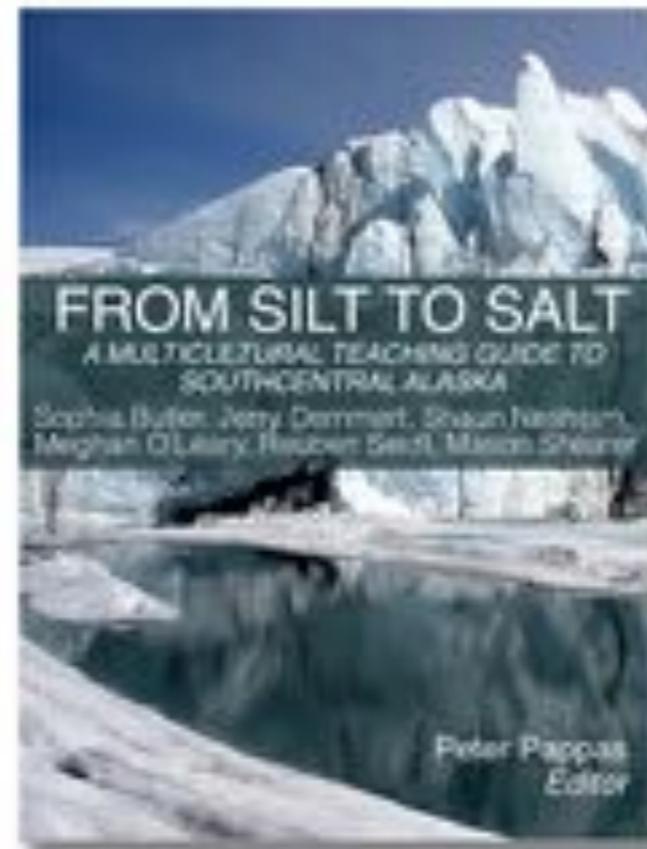
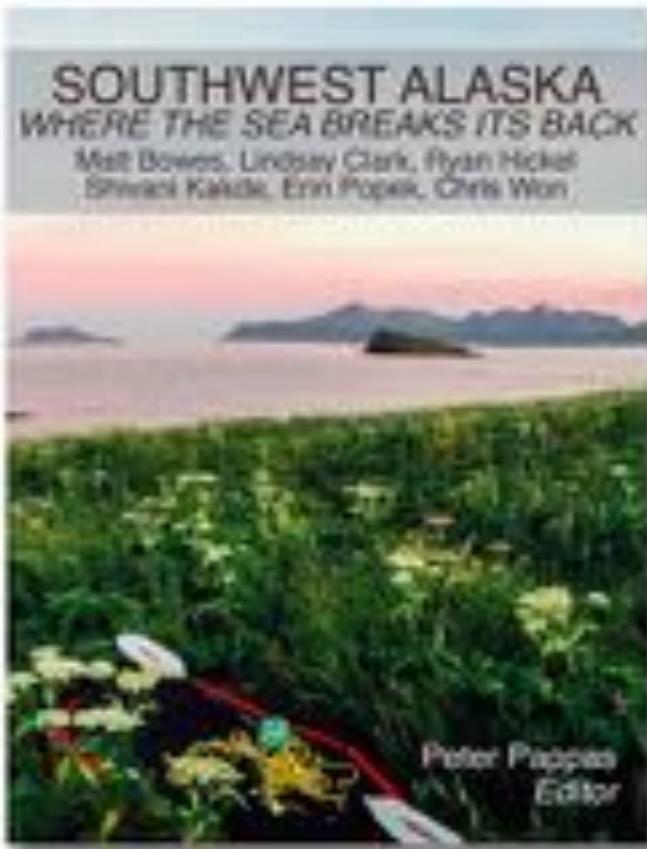
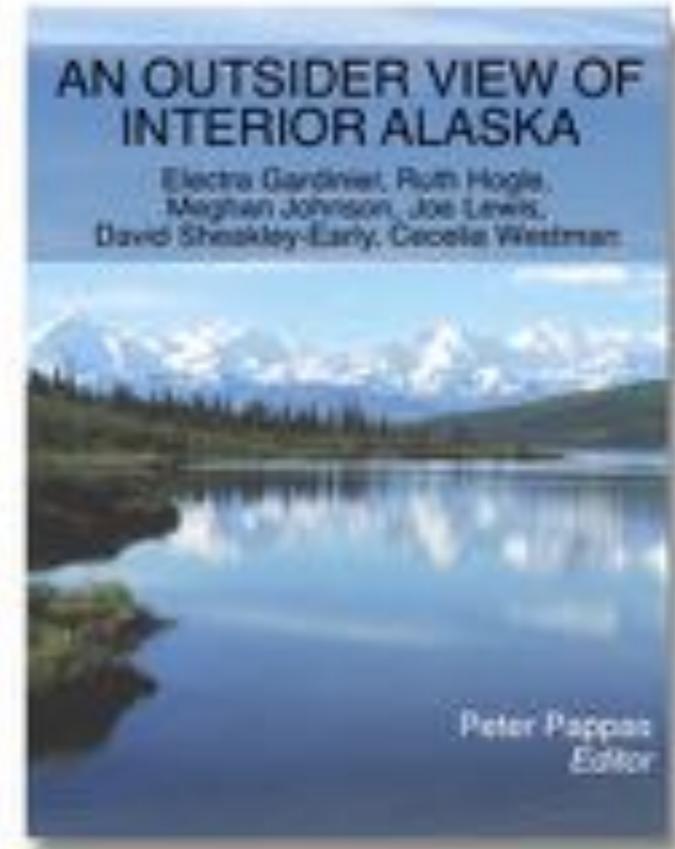
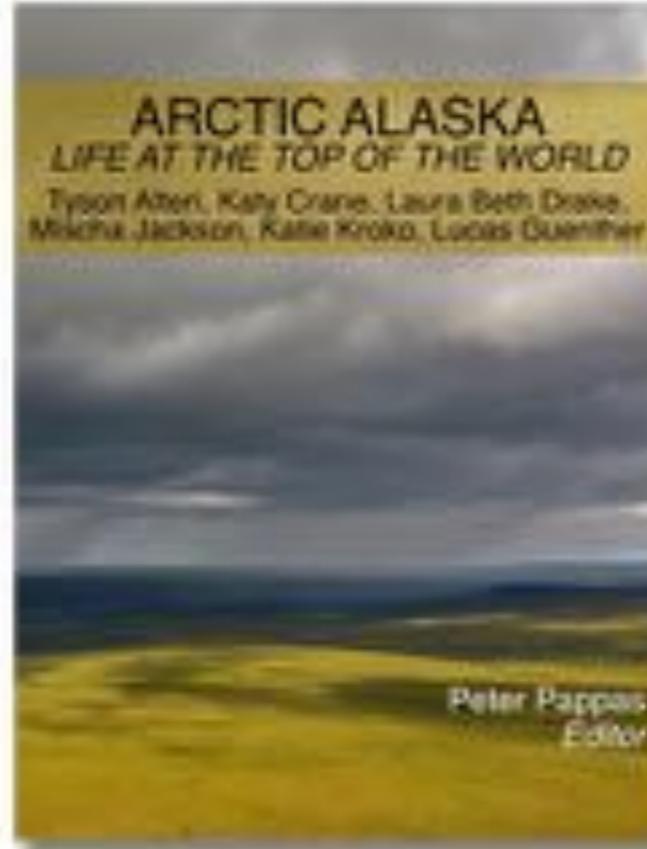
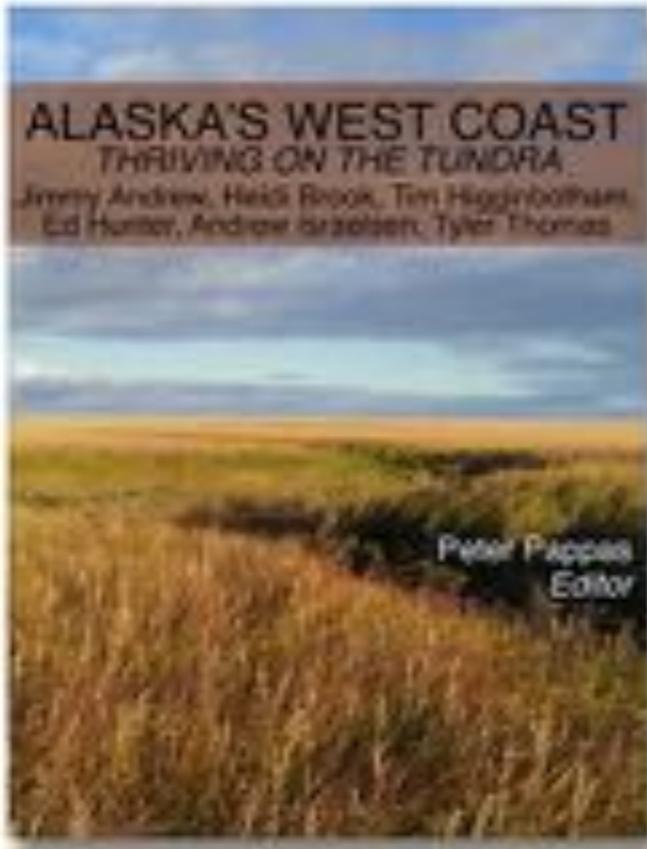
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Tim Higginbotham, Ed Hunter, Andrew Israelsen, Tyler Thomas  
~ 2016

Cover image: Near Kwigillingok, Alaska by Jesse J. Igkurak  
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# MULTICULTURAL ALASKA SERIES / UAS MAT 2016 COHORT



This book was compiled in 2016 by students in a University of Alaska Southeast Masters of Arts in Teaching program. It features a basic introduction to the region of Western Alaska - its geography, peoples, culture, and history - and contains six detailed lesson plans intended to serve as models of culturally responsive teaching.

~ Jimmy Andrew, Heidi Brook, Tim Higginbotham, Ed Hunter,  
Andrew Israelsen, Tyler Thomas ~ 2016



The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) secondary Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program convened a new cohort of 37 students from many different corners of the world and from all walks of life in June 2016. The students share many characteristics, not the least of which, is the desire to be the best possible middle or high school teachers for Alaska's students. The first two courses in the UAS MAT program are Perspectives in Multicultural Education and Alaska Studies, both mandated by the state of Alaska for all teachers in the state. The decision was made to integrate these two courses in a project-based approach culminating in the publication of this book

Through a variety of activities students learned about different regions of Alaska and, in teams of six or seven, wrote an introduction to the region suitable for a new teacher to gain background knowledge about the tremendous diversity in the geography, history, cultures and languages across the state. Students learned about the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) by closely examining the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and listening to master teachers share their best CRT lessons and strategies. Students were then asked to create a CRT lesson plan based in the Alaskan region they studied. The books are organized into six volumes for each of Alaskan six regions - one chapter devoted to regional history and one chapter featuring the six or seven CRT lesson plans related to that region.

~ Angie Lunda, Adjunct Instructor, Perspectives in Multicultural Education and Peter Pappas Adjunct Instructor, Alaska Studies University of Alaska Southeast

Alaskans live in a land of extremes. A land mass of 586,412 square miles, makes Alaska equal in size to one-third of the rest of the United States. With only 731,449 people, we have one of the lowest population densities in the world. Exacerbating the issue; many communities are accessible only by air, water or technology, making technology a vital link to education in rural and remote communities.

For thousands of years, Alaska has been home to indigenous people of multiple unique cultures and languages. Native villages throughout the state depend on a subsistence economy based on traditional uses of the land and its resources for their livelihood. These traditional ways of living, passed down through the generations, define the culture and describe what it takes to live and thrive in what can be a harsh environment. Alaska Native people want to ensure that the education of their children continues to provide the learning they need to maintain their culture and language and to support healthy Native communities.

The University of Alaska Southeast takes our commitment to providing culturally relevant, place based education for Native as well rural and remote students in Alaska. Our MAT Secondary teacher candidates and their faculty have worked hard to share research from original sources documents and the wisdom of our Native Elders in a format easily accessible in all classrooms. We hope that you enjoy their work and are able to use it in your own classroom. Gunalchéesh for your time and commitment.

~ Deborah E. Lo, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Education and Graduate Studies  
University of Alaska Southeast



# 1 WEST COAST ALASKA

The West Coast of Alaska has a wealth of unique cultures, languages, animals, and landscapes. Stretching from south of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to north of the Seward Peninsula and into the Arctic Circle, there are thousands of years of culture to explore.



**Click icons on maps and pictures to delve deeper!**

# FOREWORD

Through this text we will explore the West Coast of Alaska. We will learn about its Native people - the Yup'ik, Iñupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yupik. When translated to English, these names have a meaning similar to 'the Real People.' The concept of being human while respecting the world is central to these groups.

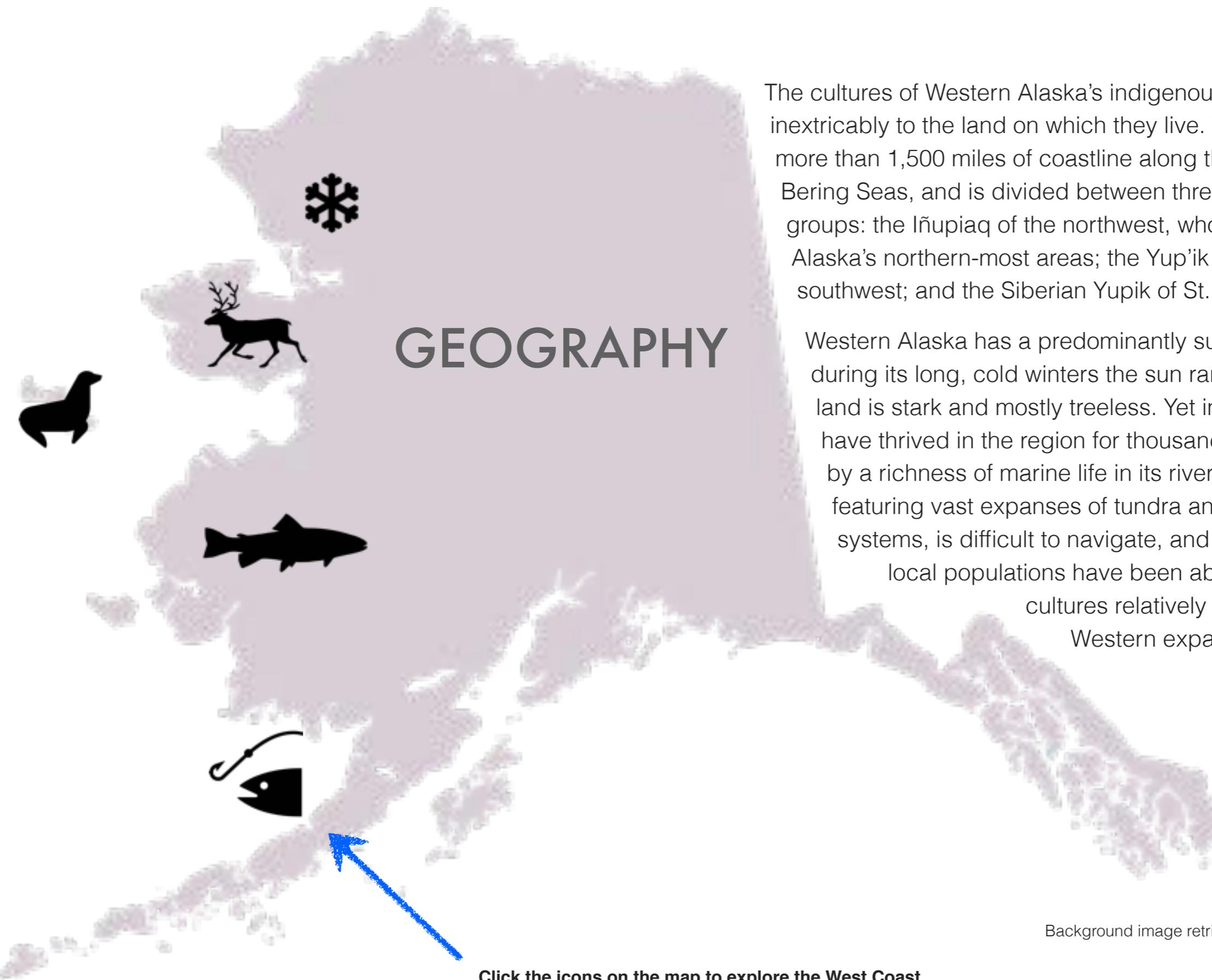
The Yup'ik, Iñupiat and St. Lawrence Island Yupik have thousands of years of knowledge passed on through oral inheritance; it is diverse, rich, and deeply spiritual. Much of that tradition has been lost over centuries of contact and Westernization, first by the Russians, and more recently the Americans. However, it is important to remember that these cultures have evolved through thousands of years and are continuing to do so to this day.

Our work primarily focuses on the Yup'ik - a people with a love of community, all beings and the world which surrounds them. For more on Iñupiaq culture, see the companion book covering the Arctic region.

This book and its associated lessons were designed, written, and conceived by: Jimmy Andrew, Heidi Brook, Timothy Higginbotham, Edward Hunter, Andrew Israelsen, Tyler Thomas.

We had a great time writing and designing this book, and hope you enjoy it. This represents research, writing, and group work which took place during the University of Alaska Southeast Master of Arts in Teaching Program in Juneau. Go Whales!

Thanks to Peter Pappas and Angela Lunda for guiding us through this undertaking.



# GEOGRAPHY

The cultures of Western Alaska's indigenous people are linked inextricably to the land on which they live. The region stretches more than 1,500 miles of coastline along the Chukchi and Bering Seas, and is divided between three primary cultural groups: the Iñupiaq of the northwest, who also occupy Alaska's northern-most areas; the Yup'ik and Cup'ik of the southwest; and the Siberian Yupik of St. Lawrence Island.

Western Alaska has a predominantly subarctic climate, and during its long, cold winters the sun rarely shines. [1] Its land is stark and mostly treeless. Yet indigenous cultures have thrived in the region for thousands of years, sustained by a richness of marine life in its rivers and seas. The land, featuring vast expanses of tundra and complex river systems, is difficult to navigate, and because of this its local populations have been able to keep their cultures relatively intact in the face of Western expansion. [2]

Background image retrieved from [wikimedia commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/)

**Click the icons on the map to explore the West Coast**

## TECHNOLOGY

Click bold words to visit the  
Glossary!



The technology developed by the **Yup'ik**, **St. Lawrence Yupik**, **Cup'ik**, and **Iñupiaq** peoples has been vital for survival in what many consider a harsh and bleak landscape. With unyielding nights during cold winters, short summers, and little plant life, the people of the West Coast have thrived for thousands of years.

Trees do not grow on the Alaskan **tundra**, so locals have had to be resourceful to build ships and houses. From what sources could they establish themselves? All along the western coast and throughout the area's remote islands, independent groups of the Real People found a way to thrive.



It is easy to experience the influence of the Real People throughout the world, especially if you are an outdoor enthusiast. They invented many varieties of *Qayaq* (Kayaks) optimized to their local geography and the animals they hunted. Yup'ik hunters and fishermen brave the *Imarpik* (Bering Sea) to provide their communities with life-sustaining energy from sea mammals and salmon. They respectfully utilize every aspect of the animals they hunt, which are transformed into clothing such as the Parka, tools, fuel, floats, nets, needles, cases, baskets, harpoons, fishing hooks, toys, story sticks and much more. [8]

### Respect for Nature

“**Wangkuta Yup'igni una alerquun arcaqanrat uungulria takaquciyaraq** (the most important teaching for us Yup'ik people is having respect).”

-Elder Denis Sheldon, Alakanuk [9]

It is important to understand that within everything exists a spirit known as **yua**, which is derived from **ellam yua**, a universal cosmic presence or creator. An animal's spirit is recycled. If respect is not shown, the animals might no longer give themselves to the hunter. To be humble and respectful in all things is an essential virtue for the Yup'ik and Iñupiat. These principles are very much a part of their technology.

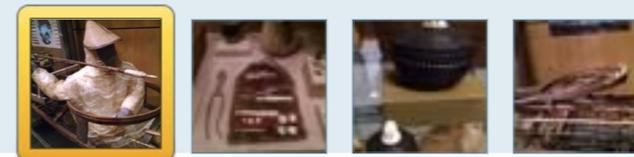
Without the technology created from the very animals they hunted to survive, the *Yup'ik* could not live on the **Nunapik** (the Real Land) along the **Imarpik** (the Bering Sea). [10]

### GALLERY 1.1 West Coast Technology



Model of a man in a Kayak with a seal gut parka, harpoon, and a hat. Most of these tools were made from animals.

Images in this gallery courtesy [Alaska State Museum - Juneau](#)



## INTERACTIVE 1.1 The Crafting of a Yupik Ceremonial Seal Gut Parka



[Video](#) by Smithsonian Institute

### Education in the Community

The **Qasgi** (communal men's hut) was traditionally the hub of Yup'ik daily life. Women had their own smaller sod houses known as **Ena**, where they resided with their children and began their education through stories and instruction. As the boys grew older, they would move to the *Qasgi* for further training and knowledge from the older men, who were libraries unto themselves. The *Qasgi* is essentially an education center that also happens to be where the men slept, ate, worked, took fire baths, entertained, and were shielded from the elements.

The men would pass down the knowledge they learned as boys to the next generation, which might include crucial life lessons in the form of story, song or hands-on experience. The *Qasgi* were built with driftwood and sealed with grass and mud. Their design included a gradually shortening roof to create a dome. During the winter people would keep mostly indoors to protect against the harsh winter weather. [10]

## GALLERY 1.2 Traditional Yup'ik Homes



Trees are rare where the Yup'ik and Iñupiat live. This wood would have been acquired by trade or salvaged as drift wood.

Image by Frank Andrew



## Transportation

Yup'iks used **Qamiguan** or **Kamiguurtut** (sleds) to pull their **qayaq** over the snow in winter months in search of seal holes in the ice. When dogs arrived from contact with the outside world, they were quickly adopted to help sniff out the seal holes and to haul the sleds. The dogs were well-maintained, cared for and treated with great respect.

Snow machines eventually came into play and continue to act as a key mode of transportation over the frozen tundra and sea ice while hunting. [8]

### Embracing Modern Technology

Technology continues to evolve and be adapted into the Yup'ik and Iñupiaq lifestyles. Despite the many benefits these new technologies bring, the Real People maintain their respect for the danger of their environment. For this reason, the mind has to be sharp, and hunters must know the land and sea like the backs of their hands.

In the last 50 years or so, the oral traditions have begun to be written down and documented by outsiders as well as locals. The Elders are using new means to pass along their knowledge to future generations in the form of books and computers. People in the region have embraced technology as a way preserving their cultural knowledge base in an ever-changing world. [8]

#### INTERACTIVE 1.2 Elder Mike's 'Mouse and Gram' Story



Produced in the town of Igiugig, the local school district designed a contest for students to learn how to speak like Elder Mike. [11]

### GALLERY 1.3 Modernizing with Technology



#### A modern Kayak.

Photo by Tyler Thomas, used with permission.



## COMMUNITY AND LANGUAGE

Elders tell stories of a traditional way of life, one that connects spirituality to dancing, masks, music, the people, and their world.

**Yup'ik** and **Iñupiaq** languages are part of the **Inuktitut** Language group. The Inuit, or Eastern Eskimo, language continuum is spoken in northern Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and in Eastern Siberia. [12]



There are several languages of the Inuktitut language group found on the west coast of Alaska:

- Yup'ik on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Seward Peninsula
- Cup'ik on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta
- Iñupiaq on the North Coast and Seward Peninsula
- Siberian and St Lawrence Island Yupik on St. Lawrence Island and the Chukchi Peninsula (Russia)



Image from [Alaska Native Collections by the Smithsonian Institute](#)

## Coming Together through Music, Dancing, and Masks

“Soon his wounds healed, and he was well again. Then he began to compose a song. In those days they composed songs called *agayut*. They composed dance songs and said they were making *agayu*. We call them *yurarcuutet* today. Just as Willie Kamkoff said, people did not do things frivolously in those days. When a person learned a dance song, they made sure the person understood the origin and the purpose of the composition.”

- Elder Johnny Thompson [13]

At the end of fall, the Yup'ik would return to the villages with the last of the food they had gathered for winter. [14] The Yup'ik did not have ways to travel quickly, and sometimes resided in different villages during winter. The Yup'ik showed respect for all lives, including those far from home. [13]

Winter was traditionally a time to build communities and raise families. It was known as *Cauyarvik* - the time for drumming. Every night, people would sing and perform *yuraq*. This continued through the long nights of winter until the first of February. [13]

### INTERACTIVE 1.3 Cauyaliluten



[Click here to learn how \*cauyaqs\* are made.](#)

This was an important time - winter ceremonies showed respect to the animals the Yup'ik and Iñupiat hunted. The ceremonies served to make animals bountiful and willing to be hunted. It was vital for animals to be plentiful, as nearly everything the Yup'ik and Iñupiat utilized came from animals. [15] The winter was also an ideal time

to make clothes, tools, and teach the children. [14]

In fall, one village would often invite another to join together for *Kesvgiq* (Messenger Feast). Villages would take turns each winter hosting one another at the end of the season. They would share the bounty of the previous year's harvest in a celebration that lasted three days. Gifts of all kinds – including those hard to obtain – would be given between villages. During this time, there would be many performances of dances and songs. [15]

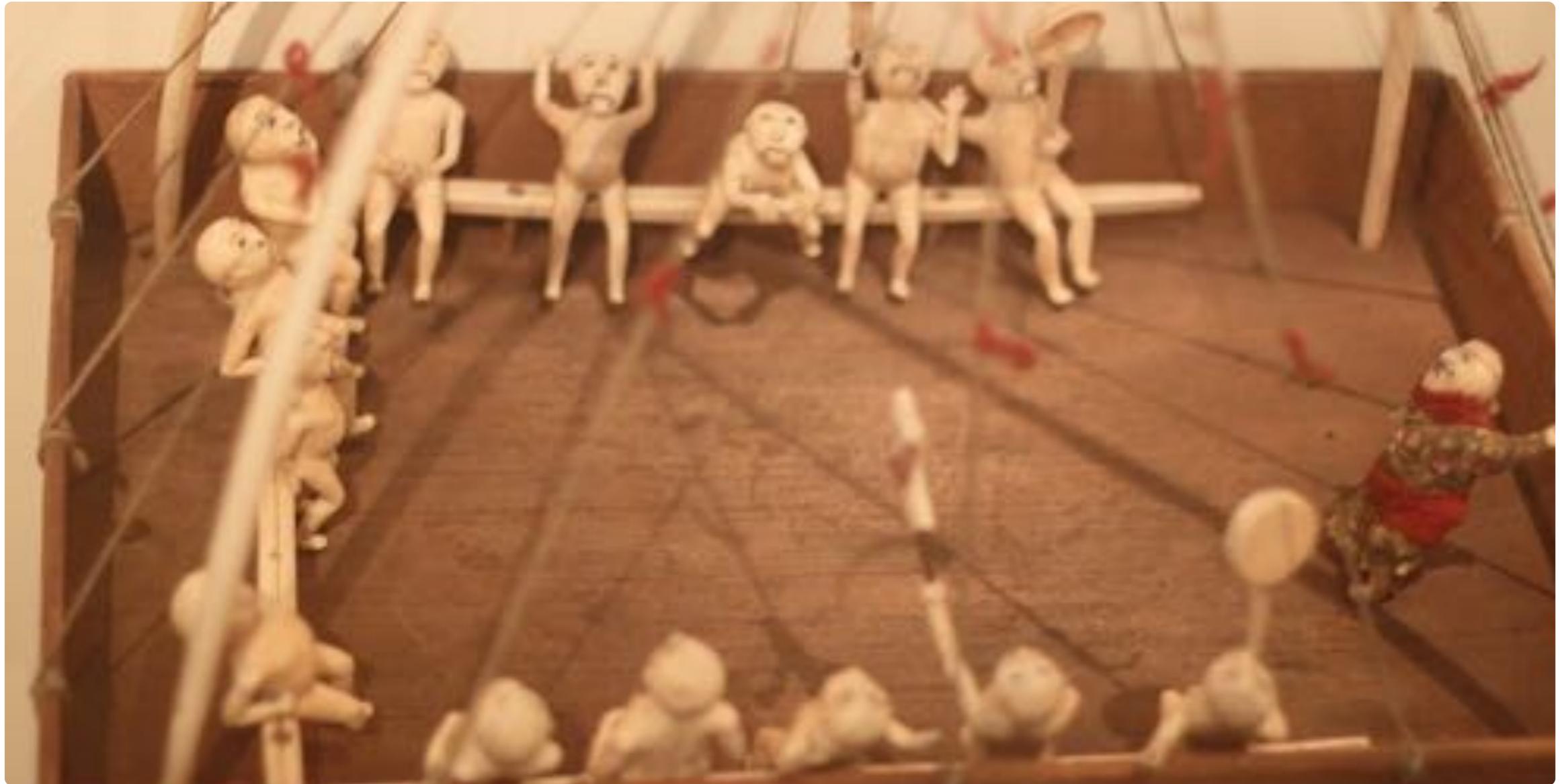
### Traditional drumming

The Yup'ik men traditionally gathered in the *qasgiq* during winter. The drummers typically sit in the back, singing and playing *cauyaq* drums. The St. Lawrence Island Yupik play similar drums called *saguyak*. [15]

The Iñupiaq women would often drum, dance, and sing songs while the Iñupiaq men would hunt. [8]

*Cauyaq* and *saguyak* are large drums made from stretched walrus' bladder or stomach and attached to a bentwood frame. The wooden hoop would be

## GALLERY 1.4 Pictures of Drummers and Drums



This is a miniature model of a Yup'ik qasgiq. It is carved from walrus ivory. The men played drums and sang - and would have sat in the back of the qasgiq. Dancers would have performed in the front.

Images in this gallery courtesy of [Alaska State Museum - Juneau](#)



## Masks and Spirituality

In a traditional setting, masks are carved, decorated and painted. Theatrical masks are created and hung from the roof and beautiful clothing sewn, all as part of a complex spiritual life which honors the beings that make life possible in the Western Alaskan environment. [15]

The **Kegginaquq**, which directly translates to 'thing that is like a face,' is a central element in Yup'ik dancing. Created to represent animals or spirits, they are used to bring dance stories to life.

These masks are believed to connect the real world – the world of the Real People – to the unseen world. Masks can have various purposes in ceremonies, with each embodying different stories. These stories are given to the masks by those who crafted them, making each mask personal.

Masks were traditionally made starting in February, after the previous masks had been burned or discarded. Masks would be presented in pairs during ceremonies; however, similar-looking masks might have different meanings. Pairs of masks could represent many things, such as the spirits of a specific animal the Yup'ik hunted. They also could represent opposites, like land and sea, night and day, and male and female. [17]

Masks are not be worn casually. Each mask has a purpose and is worn with respect and honor. Songs, dances and lyrics are traditionally conceived for each new mask. If another village visited during the winter ceremonies, they would not wear masks. [13]

### GALLERY 1.5 A Gallery of Yup'ik Masks



A complex ceremonial mask combining human face, animals, feathers, and more

Images in this gallery courtesy of [Alaska State Museum - Juneau](#)



## CONTACT AND COLONIALISM

Russian contact with Western Alaska can be traced back at least to 1732, when a Russian vessel landed at Cape Prince of Wales. It is likely, however, that Yup'ik and Iñupiaq traders first made contact with the Russians in eastern Siberia. In the early 1800s, an extensive trading system developed along the coast and up the major waterways, with the Russians trading manufactured goods for various furs and pelts. [20]



## Russian Orthodoxy

In the late 1820s and 1830s, Russian Orthodoxy was brought to the Kuskokwim region by missionaries from the Aleutian chain who had mixed Russian-Alutiiq and Russian-Unangan heritage. Its initial impact is difficult to trace numerically, but it is clear that, by the time of the Alaska Purchase in 1867, it was quite influential in the Delta.

Yup'ik Orthodoxy today incorporates a number of unique and distinctive practices, which differ somewhat from those common to the religion. [21]

## The Alaska Purchase, Missions, and Forced Westernization

In 1867, Alaska was purchased from Russia by the United States, and the country immediately exerted its influence on the territory. In 1885, Dr. Sheldon Jackson was appointed to be the General Agent of Education in Alaska, serving under the U.S. Commissioner of Education. He reached out to Protestant churches to aid the government in opening schools throughout Alaska. Rather than competing for location, he asked the denominations to divide up the territory. This agreement reached between the various groups is known as the Jackson Polity Agreement.

Church-run schools then set out with the intention of spreading the use of English and contemporary Western values, all at the expense of indigenous ways of living. The US Government aided the churches financially and legally. These moves were met with resistance by many and underground efforts were taken to keep local traditions alive.

Moravian and Congregationalist missionaries, along with Roman Catholics, Quakers, and other Christian denominations, made numerous converts in Western Alaska; their influence, along with that of Russian Orthodoxy, is still prevalent in the region. [22]



Image courtesy of [Alaska State Museum - Juneau](https://www.alaskastatemuseum.org/)

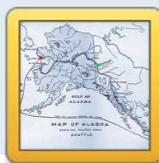
Despite the aims of schools and missionaries, the Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Iñupiaq languages have survived to an extent that various other indigenous Alaskan dialects did not. This is partly due to the region's lack of developable resources, which has kept the presence of outsiders to a minimum. [10][23]

### GALLERY 1.6 Alaska through Time: Gold Rush and Great Society



#### A Gold Rush-era map of Alaska.

Image by [Seattle Chamber of Commerce](#), 1901 - University Library of Washington, Public Domain



## Epidemic, Assimilation, and Language Loss

*“Our communities are still beautiful communities in many ways because of the people, but many are beginning to lose their traditional character and spirit because of the pressures to change and assimilate to a more modern way of life” [26].*

*-Nelson Island leader Paul John*

Diseases that accompanied contact with Russians and Euro-Americans were decimating, in some case wiping out entire villages. By June 1838, 66% of the Yup'ik population in Bristol Bay and along the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta was dead. Epidemics of smallpox, influenza and other communicable diseases continued throughout the 19th century. During the 20th century, tuberculosis became the most damaging disease in across Alaska. A 1940 survey showed that three-quarters of children in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta had contracted the disease [27].

Children were educated in Western languages, and much of an entire generation did not learn to speak their native language. In many communities today, school-aged children can no longer speak Yup'ik. [28]

## Boarding Schools

Like most Alaska Native villages and other indigenous communities throughout the continental United States, a U.S. policy forcibly removed children far from their homes and placed them in Government sponsored Boarding Schools. The prime objective of the boarding school era was to westernize a generation of children. Speaking their language(s) was a punishable offense in these

schools. Many were made to wear uniforms, to cut their hair in a certain fashion against their will, and to learn a history of another culture that had little to no bearing on the tundra. This assimilation went beyond the boarding schools. Drumming and dancing was also banned during this era forcing some of these activities to go underground.

This was a very painful period where parents and grandparents grieved for their children and a potential loss of their culture. As mentioned earlier in this section, Elders passed down their knowledge orally. Without the children in the villages, there was no way to pass down their language which held the truths and knowledge of their culture. This led to an entire generation outside the sphere of their parents and grandparents influence breaking a chain of knowledge that stretched for thousands of years. This left a huge void in many lives. There has been and remains a struggle to repair the damages left by the boarding schools. Elders and Cultural Bearers are passing down what they know to future generations. Despite the bitterness, there remains hope and resilience in the people. Like so many times before, the Real People of Western Alaska have continued to adapt, yet retain the essence of humility that enables their survival on the Real Land (Nunapik) that stretches the coast of Imapik.

### **The Nome Gold Rush**

The discovery of gold near Nome in 1898 caused the town's population to swell to over 20,000 people over the next few years. Less than a decade later, that number was down to 2,600. The major effect of this event on the region, however, was that it initiated large-scale American commercial activity in the area. [24]

### **U.S. Statehood and the Great Society**

Alaska was admitted to statehood in 1959. Soon after, President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" initiative caused significant social change in the region. The initiative was intended to boost all Americans out of poverty and set a baseline living standard for people across the country. As a result, agents of the federal government came to Western Alaska, constructed western-style housing units out of non-indigenous materials, and built power grids. This caused a shift from seasonal housing to permanent residency in towns and villages. [21]

### **Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act**

Alaska Natives have traditionally used and occupied the land of Alaska for thousands of years; however, the United States' occupation of the territory stripped its locals of ownership.

After a hard-fought legal battle, Congress finally passed the "Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act" (ANCSA). The ANCSA lands - which include only 11% of land in the state - were divided between 12 groups in Alaska, which became the basis for the regional Native corporations. [25] In Western Alaska, the three regional corporations that were created were the Bering Straits Corporation on the Seward Peninsula, the Calista Corporation for the Central Yup'ik Lands, and the Bristol Bay Corporation for the south. [21]

## Map of ANCSA Corporations



Image retrieved from [Wikimedia Commons](#)

**IMAGE 1.1** Land Distribution: Alaska Natives receive 11% of land in the state (click on image to enlarge).

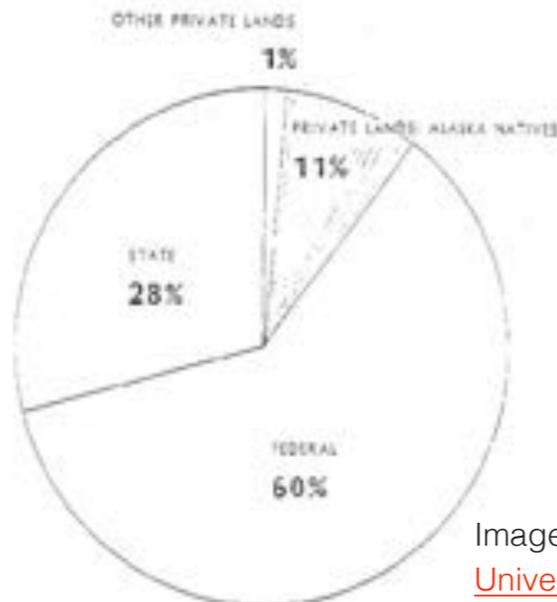


Image retrieved from the [University of Alaska Fairbanks](#) [25]

## Molly Hootch and the Founding of Village Schools

The Federal “Molly Hootch” law, passed in 1980, also sparked major changes in village life throughout the region. This law required that any rural community with more than 10 potential students was required to build a public school. Because Western Alaskan villages are not connected to one another by roadways and transportation remains difficult, this meant that village schools were founded in small communities (sometimes with less than 50 residents). [21]



Nome, Alaska

Photo retrieved from [Wikimedia Commons](#)



## PRESENT DAY

The last two centuries have dramatically changed Western Alaska. As a result of colonization, many died of foreign diseases and local practices were suppressed. Like all Alaska Natives, people in the region have faced widespread discrimination under the United States government, and the struggle for justice is ongoing. Yet despite the influence of outsiders, Yup'ik, Iñupiaq and Siberian Yupik cultures have survived and continue to thrive. Many of their traditional practices continue on with modern technology. Subsistence hunting and fishing, for example, remains a vital way of life, only now it is practiced with the aid of motorboats and snow machines.

### INTERACTIVE 1.4 I am Yup'ik

Click below to watch Byron Nicholai lead Toksook Bay through a regional basketball tournament.



The region today reflects the struggle of its indigenous people as they have attempted to protect their cultures and lifestyles in the U.S. milieu. Yet thanks to hard-fought political and social battles, cultural practices are no longer suppressed or denied. Immersion programs are currently revitalizing local languages, and through these, young people are receiving a cultural education that was denied to prior generations. There are obstacles ahead, but with the emboldenment of the youth and with modern connectivity giving voice to the region, the years to are full of opportunity.

### INTERACTIVE 1.5 Pamyua - Ocean Prayer



Pamyua is a popular Yup'ik music group. Listen to "Ocean Prayer" by clicking above

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2

# WEST COAST ALASKA: LESSON PLANS

The Northwest Alaskan village of Kivalina is built on a receding sandbar. Its first residents, who originally lived on the nearby mainland, moved to the sandbar after the Bureau of Indian Affairs chose it as the location for a school.



Photo by Flickr user [ShoreZone](#)

## CLIMATE REFUGEES

By Timothy Higginbotham

As temperatures continue to warm and sea levels continue to rise, coastal communities worldwide face a mounting threat. In fact, for many communities the threat has already arrived: melting icepacks and eroding shorelines have forced towns and villages around the world to plan for the possibility of relocating to safer ground.

When land becomes uninhabitable due to rising seas, extreme weather, drought, or other climate-related factors, its residents become climate refugees. Western Alaska has become the United States' climate refugee ground zero, with villages like Kivalina, Shishmaref and Newtok urgently discussing plans for relocation. Elsewhere in the US, Louisiana's Isle de Jean Charles is set to become the first American community to be resettled due to climate change via a \$48 million federal grant.

The problem is a global one. Greenland's indigenous people are rapidly losing land and ways of life to melting ice, while in the Pacific Islands, rising seas have already forced a Fijian village further inland and the Solomon Islands are looking for international funding to relocate the town of Choiseul.

The problem is also a growing one. [Millions of people](#) are facing the possibility of becoming climate refugees this century, with cities as large as Miami forecasted to face permanent flooding in a worst-case scenario.

No single community is responsible for environmental changes. The causes are global; environmental damage is collaborative. Yet its impact is not equal, with certain communities affected far more severely than most. The question, then, is this: who is responsible for finding a solution?

## INTERACTIVE 2.1 Kivalina



Click the above image to access Chris Mooney's Washington Post article about Kivalina, Alaska (photo by Flickr user [Inna](#))

## INTERACTIVE 2.2 Shishmaref



Click above to view

# IMPORTANT TERMS

**Climate change**

**Refugees**

**Climate refugees**

**Community**

# THE PLAN

After reading Chris Mooney's Kivalina article (Interactive 1.1) and viewing "Global Warming Threatens Shishmaref" (Interactive 1.2), break into groups to investigate the impact of climate change on communities around the world and the various steps taken to find a solution.

- **Group 1:** Read Alana Semuels' [article in The Atlantic](#) about the town of Newtok, Alaska, where plans for relocation are already underway.
- **Group 2:** Read Tim Folgers' [story in National Geographic](#) about the climate threats faced by Greenland's indigenous hunters.
- **Group 3:** Read Coral Davenport's and Campbell Robertson's [New York Times story](#) about Louisiana's Isle de Jean Charles, which is set to become the first community relocated by the federal government for climate-related reasons.
- **Group 4:** Read Brooke Meakens' [Alternet story](#) about the Fijian village of Vunidogoloa and Megan Rowling's [report in Reuters](#) about Choiseul in the Solomon Islands.

**After you read, imagine that you are in charge of deciding when and how to move a community similar to the one in your article(s). Answer the following questions:**

- Who is responsible for funding?
- What happens if there isn't community-wide support for moving?
- How can you make sure to keep the community intact through a move?
- What happens to the people of the community if a move can't be organized?
- Where would the refugees then go?

**As a class, organize your chairs into a circle. Compare the communities you studied in groups and discuss the following:**

- Whose responsibility is it to protect communities from climate change?
- Is it a local problem or a global one?
- Is relocation the way forward?
- If so, whose responsibility is it to organize and fund it, and what might be lost of local culture in the move?
- What would your community lose if it were moved from its home?

## WRITE A LETTER

Consider what you've discussed and write a letter to an appropriate government official about the topic of climate refugees. Attempt to persuade the recipient into taking action, or simply explain what is happening in Western Alaska and around the world.. The person you write may not be as informed about this topic as you are, so provide plenty of information and be specific about what you think should be done. Cite the articles provided in this lesson and whatever other sources you would like to use.

For advice on effective letter writing, [read these tips](#).

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## FOR TEACHERS

To access a detailed version of this lesson plan featuring cultural standards addressed, [click here](#).



This is a satellite view of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. From [USGS EROS Data Center Satellite Systems Branch](#)

## FINDING FOLKLORE

By Andrew Israelsen

We are all historians and makers of culture, but most of us don't know it yet. In your pocket or on your table at home you might have a smart phone, a tablet, or a computer. These technologies have shaped our culture faster than most of us can keep up with. These technologies are awesome tools. We can use our smart devices to make videos, take pictures, record audio, and learn practically anything if we try hard enough. These devices simultaneously reveal the world to us, and connect us to the world.

We're going to take a journey where we become historians. We're going to collect audio recordings of oral history by conducting interviews with people in our community. These recordings will be shared online, becoming a valuable part of our World's folklore.

Our first task is to understand the value of oral history. We'll focus on the plight of the Yup'ik people of the Lower Kuskokwim Delta and their endangered language to help us understand the need, desire, and motivations to create and preserve the stories of our community.

## A Case for Preservation

The Yup'ik people of the Lower Kuskokwim Delta thrived in a subsistence lifestyle for thousands of years. When Russians made contact, and later Americans, the swift and merciless degradation of their culture began. Religion and discrimination pushed away and destroyed Yup'ik traditions. Diseases killed 80% of the population. In a little over 100 years time, many of their traditional ways were lost. Very few of the youngest generation speak Yup'ik at home. What remnants of their rich oral tradition have been passed down is what remains of the story of the Yup'ik.

Let's join Yup'ik Elders in Bethel and learn more about the fragile state of the Central Yup'ik language - an ancient dialect taught for thousands of years before its use was severely discouraged by Russian Missions and forbidden American schools.

### INTERACTIVE 2.3 Our Yup'ik Language



The Lower Kuskowkim School District hosted a film academy in 2013 in Bethel, Alaska. They travelled from around West Alaska to attend the film camp, and interacted with the local community as they produced many documentaries. (1)  
Video from (2)

## Statistics

Let's look at some numbers from the 2007 study of Eskimo-Aleut languages done by Ethnologue, a group dedicated to understanding and researching the many diverse peoples of Earth.

Although these numbers are several years old, they show a dangerous condition of the Yupik and Inupiaq languages. The *Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* (EGIDS), is a metric designed to understand the current state of a language.

Threatened implies all generations use the language in conversation, but the number of fluent speakers is decreasing. If that trend continues, a language is classified as Shifting - children are no longer learning the language at home. After this, a language becomes Moribund - only the oldest generations speak it, and it is dangerously close to becoming an extinct language. (5)

In 2007 17 out of 68 villages had children who were learning and could speak Central Yup'ik. (3)

In the 1960s, Irene Reed and others at the University of Alaska Fairbanks made a modern orthography of Central Yup'ik. The first bilingual schools were established in the early 1970s. (6)

The Siberian (St Lawrence Island) Yupik language had an orthography developed in the 1960s, too. It is still learned as a primary language by children of the island, and more resources are becoming available to local schools. (9)

In 2014, the state of Alaska recognized Yup'ik as one of its state languages, among many other indigenous languages. More bilingual immersion programs are developing, slowly increasing the number of Yup'ik speakers. Summer youth heritage camps and

increased community involvement serve and grow this threatened language. (4)

**Table 1: Estimated Population and Number of Speakers of Inuktitut Languages in 2007**

Language Name	Population Estimate (in 2007)	# of Speakers (in 2007)	EGIDS Rating
Central Yup'ik	25,000	10,400	6b - Threatened
St Lawrence Island Yupik	1,400	1,000	4 - Educational
Siberian Yupik	900	300	N/A
Inupiaq - Alaska	15,700	2,144	6b - Threatened
Inupiaq - Canada	30,500	24,500	N/A
Inupiaq - Greenland	47,000	47,000	N/A

These values are estimates, and do not represent key groups of the Alaskan Yup'ik including those who live in the Pacific Gulf area. Chart adapted from (3)

The right column implies the state of the language - higher numbers are negative indicators, ranging from 0 - 10. See this link to get a more detailed understanding of the EGIDS rating. (5)

## Technology for Preservation

The Yup'ik have also adopted modern technologies to preserve their heritage and culture.

John Active is a Yup'ik storyteller who has been broadcasting the Yup'ik language via AM radio since the 1970s. He was one of the first Yup'ik language radio broadcast hosts. He and his broadcast team started by translating English news stories and content into Yup'ik. They continue to broadcast like this, and according to John the skill to translate English to Yup'ik is a skill maybe 20 people have. (10)

John's broadcasts have brought Yup'ik to local Alaskan ears for decades, and now many of the broadcasts on KYUK AM 640 are available on the internet. This includes programs like [Yuk to Yuk](#), a call-in radio show on current events and issues. You can learn more about John's work at KYUK in his [KTVA Interview](#).

John Active has used the internet in other ways; On Youtube you can watch him tell a ghost story [his grandmother told him](#) when he was young.

Elder Mike from the Yup'ik community of Igiugig recorded his story 'Mouse and Gram', with the express purpose for it to be used as a way for students to learn the rhythm, dialect, and inflection of the Yup'ik language. Mike's story is readily available on [Soundcloud](#), a popular music and audio sharing community. This story was provided online as a learning tool for the students of Igiugig. They were challenged to listen to Mike and to imitate his words and accent. Elder Mike even suggests babbling along like a baby as a way to learn the rhythm of the language. (7)

A text transcription of Mike's story in Yup'ik and English is provided with the recording, and comes paired with another recording of the same story spoken by a woman named Evelyn. She speaks slower helping students learn the pronunciation.

John Active, KYUK, and Elder Mike all embracing the traditional Yup'ik way of teaching and sharing knowledge through oral communication, and enhance their ability to teach with technology.

### INTERACTIVE 1.2 Elder Mike's 'Mouse and Gram' Story



Elder Mike of Igiugig shares his 'Mouse and Gram' story, with an aim to teach students the dialect and rhythm of Yup'ik. (7)

How many listens does it take you to start following along with Mike's verbal rhythm?

### INTERACTIVE 2.4 Evelyn's version of Elder Mike's 'Mouse and Gram' Story



Evelyn pronounces Elder Mike's story a little slower - helping students understand the pronunciation of each syllable. (8)

## We Can Preserve

This is a chance to ask ourselves a big question - How does technology like the internet empower communication? How does recorded audio shape culture? How does recorded audio reflect upon culture?

### Oral History Through Interviews

To gain hands-on understanding of the value of collecting and curating oral history, we are going to conduct interviews. We're going to pick people in the community who we want to ask questions so we can learn their personal history and stories.

#### Getting Started

Brainstorm some people you would like to interview. Make a list of potential interviewees, and answer some of the questions about each person. Here are some good things to consider when deciding who to interview:

1. Do they live in your community? Do you already know them?
2. What is your relationship to this person?
3. Do they tell interesting stories?
4. Do you want to know more about them?
5. Do you think they would be comfortable being interviewed?
6. Why do you want to interview them?

We'll write down our answers to these questions. Our brainstorming will be discussed in pairs or groups during class time.

## Permission and Questions

Once you have your list of interviewees, its time to ask them if they are interested in being part of our project. Make sure you know which project you are completing - wether its a written oral history or a digital oral history. It is crucial to share this information with your interviewee!

When someone agrees to an interview, set a date! Write it down on your calendar. Pick a location that is quiet and comfortable.

Next, you need to generate some good interview questions. These [StoryCorps Interview Question Ideas](#) are a great resource to start generating questions.

Write down your questions in a notebook, and make sure they apply to the person you are interviewing. Leave lots of space after each question so you can take notes, or bring some extra blank paper. This is important even if you are recording the interview with a microphone. Taking notes shows you are interested, and that helps make your interviewee more comfortable.

Ask several warm up questions to start the interview because it can take your interviewee several minutes to be comfortable during the interview. Warm up questions are easy to answer - Ask questions like what is their name, where they were born, and where they live. What are some other warm up questions?

As the interview progresses, start asking them open ended questions. These questions do not have a yes or no answer, instead they ask the interviewee to tell stories. People like telling stories! Since you know the person you are interviewing, it might help to chat

with them a few days before the interview so you have more ideas for open ended questions.

Make sure you always listen, and be polite by waiting to ask your next question. Be ready to ask follow up questions because you do not know what your interviewee will say.

When your interview is finished, thank your interviewee!

We'll brainstorm warm up questions and open ended questions in small groups during class time.

### Keep a Checklist

As we work on our interview project, fill out this checklist to keep track of your progress.

### The Interview

Now its time to get started. Bring your notebook with your questions. Bring your recording device (if its a pen or pencil, make sure it works!) Read over the [Good Interview Tips](#) at StoryCorps to help you get ready for the interview.

Remember to have warm up questions, to ask open-ended questions, and to ask follow up questions. Listen and take notes!

### INTERACTIVE 2.5 Interview Checklist



Make sure you complete your check list in order - it will help you through your project!

Image is public domain from [Pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com)

## Potential Projects

There are two potential projects.

### **Project 1:** Written Oral History (No Tech Approach)

Invite someone in your community to be interviewed. Schedule and conduct a 30 minute interview and take notes during the interview.

The same day of the interview, you should write down as much of the interview as you can remember! It is incredibly important that you write down the interview the same day, or you will forget.

These handwritten interviews should be shared with the interviewee, and with their permission can be posted online on a blog platform like [Wordpress](#). This allows us to share our brand new oral history with the whole world!

### **Project 2:** Digital Oral History (Tech Approach)

Invite someone in your community to be interviewed. Make sure they know you will be recording the interview and posting it online!!! Schedule and conduct a 30 minute interview and take notes during the interview.

The same day of the interview, you should write down as much of the interview as you can remember! This will help you edit your interview and your description of the interview for your post online.

We will use an app [StoryCorps](#) or [Soundcloud](#), or an equivalent tool to record interviews. These applications provide free recording and editing tools for your smart phone, tablet, or computer. You can also host your digital interview on either site with images and a description of the interview.

When you perform an interview recording device, remember that being recorded usually makes people anxious!

When you are done recording your interview, the interview should be posted online - and be sure to include content tags and a description to help people find your interview. We'll discuss this part of the project in class.

**IMAGE 2.1** A Tascam 16 Reel to Reel tape Recorder



You probably won't have to use one of these.

By Iainf 05:35, 18 June 2006 (UTC) - Public Domain, retrieved from [Wikipedia Commons](#)

For additional resources including detailed lesson plan, worksheets, and reflections on this project, visit <http://uasmatt.org/student-posts/israelsen-lesson-plan/>

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St. James Russian Orthodox Church in Napaskiak, AK  
All photos by author unless otherwise stated.

# YUP'IK ORTHODOXY

## **A Culturally Responsive Lesson Strategy for a Rural Alaskan Village Setting**

**BY EDWARD HUNTER**

This lesson introduces the history and legacy of Russian missionary activity in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta through the initial medium of an extensive discussion of the unique, local character of Yup'ik Orthodoxy in the present. It also introduces the critical distinction that religions can be

very different across cultures and regions while still being expressions of the same fundamental belief system.

The lesson addresses itself primarily to Alaska state educational standard AH. ICGP 2, which states that students should understand how the arrival of the Russians and the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska impacted Alaskan history and culture. It also addresses the state's Cultural Standards for Curriculum, particularly elements A, C, and E, because it begins with the local knowledge base of the students, helps them to understand their local community and culture better, and helps them to move out from there to the critical insight that members of any world religion can be quite distinct and diverse when understood in terms of different cultural or community groups. It also provides a local,



contextual logic for the relevance of understanding the activities of the early Russian missionaries in the region, the Russian American Company trading posts, and the activities of Russian agents in the Aleutians and throughout Alaska.

**On completing this lesson, it is hoped that students will understand that:**

- 1) The Orthodox Church in Yup'ik lands is highly unique and characterized by forms of worship, modes of dress, rites, customs, and even beliefs that are somewhat different from those of other Orthodox Christians.
- 2) Religious groups are not utterly monolithic; there is always local variance.
- 3) The Yup'ik practice of Orthodoxy has been deeply influenced by indigenous thought patterns and systems of belief, especially the critical cultural categories of thankfulness, reverence, and respect.



**Photos: Top, altar table in Napaskiak. Bottom left, icon of Christ from St. Sophia's Church in Bethel. Bottom left, the grave of St. Olga Nicholai in Kwethluk.**

**And the following misconceptions will be dispelled:**

- 1) That every religious group is completely the same everywhere it is found.
- 2) That religions that migrate between cultures do not take on characteristics of each culture.
- 3) That Yup'ik Orthodoxy is merely something foreign that came in from outside, rather than being a dynamic synthesis of local and foreign elements.

**As a result of this unit, students are expected to gather a basic understanding of some of the ways that Yup'ik Orthodoxy differs from other cultural expressions of Orthodox Christianity, including (but not limited to) the following:**

- 1) its virtually unique basic service;
- 2) being mostly lay led – the special role of lay elders called “readers;”
- 3) unique greetings;
- 4) unique beliefs about animals, hunting, and divine providence;

Photo: Worship in a private home in Napaskiak as a part of the Slaaviq (extended Yup'ik Christmas) celebrations, January 2016.





Photos: Left, Fr. Vasily Fisher celebrating the Divine Liturgy at a private home in Napakiak, AK in January 2016. Likeness used with permission. Bottom, a hand-carved icon of St. Herman, a Russian missionary to Kodiak who is recognized by Orthodox Christians at the patron saint of North America. Top Right, icon of an angel with inscription in Yup'ik from Napaskiak.



5) unique ways of dressing in church for both men and women;

6) unique ways of celebrating major Church holidays (e.g. Christmas, Palm Sunday);

7) unique customs related to worship posture;



**They will also be expected to understand:**

1) the role of traders and laity in the spread of Orthodoxy in the region;

2) the roles of Fr. Yakov Netsvetov and Bishop Innocent Veniaminov in the same;

3) the ethnic backgrounds of the missionaries and traders;

4) Yakov Netsvetov's educational network and his invention of a system for writing Yup'ik;

5) the theory that the spread of Orthodoxy was the cause of the end of inter-Yup'ik warfare and the (complimentary? opposing?) theory that disease epidemics led to the end of inter-Yup'ik warfare.



Photo: Old St. Nicholas Church and cemetery in Kwethluk. A locally venerated saint named Olga Nicholai was the wife of one of the rectors who served in this building. It is still used occasionally for worship and is open year round for private devotion.

**After this lesson, students should be able to:**

- 1) Differentiate certain ways in which local Orthodoxy may differ from other cultural incarnations of Orthodoxy.
- 2) Begin to assess whether or not they think these differences are significant or insignificant.
- 3) Understand that religious groups (and other large social groups) differ across regions and cultures.
- 4) Apply this understanding to how they interpret other local groups (e.g. Moravians, Roman Catholics).
- 5) Apply this understanding in a basic way to national political discourses on religious groups (e.g. Sunni Islam).
- 6) Better understand the religious background and history of their local community.



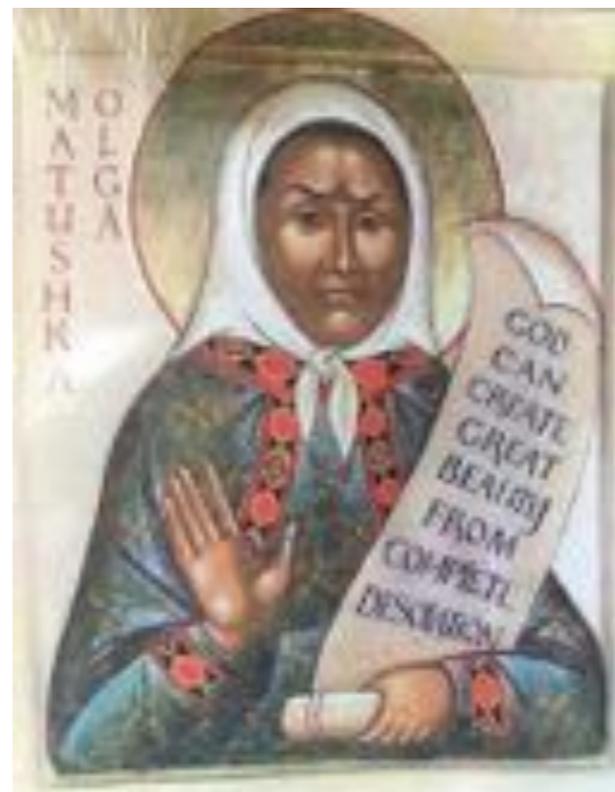
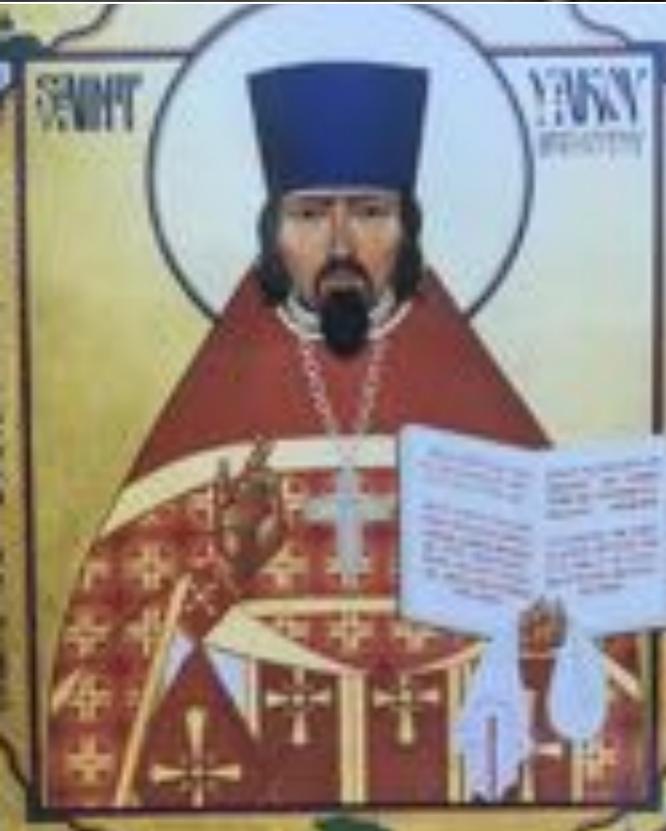
### Essential Questions to be Addressed

Do religious individuals, families, and communities belonging to a particular group all share exactly the same rituals, beliefs, and values? In what ways might they differ?

How is religion related to culture?

### Culturally Responsive Instruction Strategy

Using embedded videos, pictures, and music from the student section of this book presentation, students will have access to various expressions of Orthodoxy in different cultural settings. They will then be divided into small groups (2-3 students per group) and asked to identify ways that various elements from the materials differ from what they may have experienced locally. Virtually any observation should be considered appropriate. They will then be asked to surmise why these differences might exist. What might the differences say about the culture surrounding Orthodoxy in that other context? How significant is each difference? After about 20 minutes of this, the class will be called back together to compare observations and try to build whole-class conclusions.



**Photos: Top, the final stop of Slaaviq. After the hymns have been sung in every house in the village, villagers go to the cemetery to sing for their ancestors. Bottom Left, St. Yakov Netsvetov, the primary missionary to the Yup'ik. Bottom Right, St. Olga of Kwethluk. All photos from Napaskiak.**

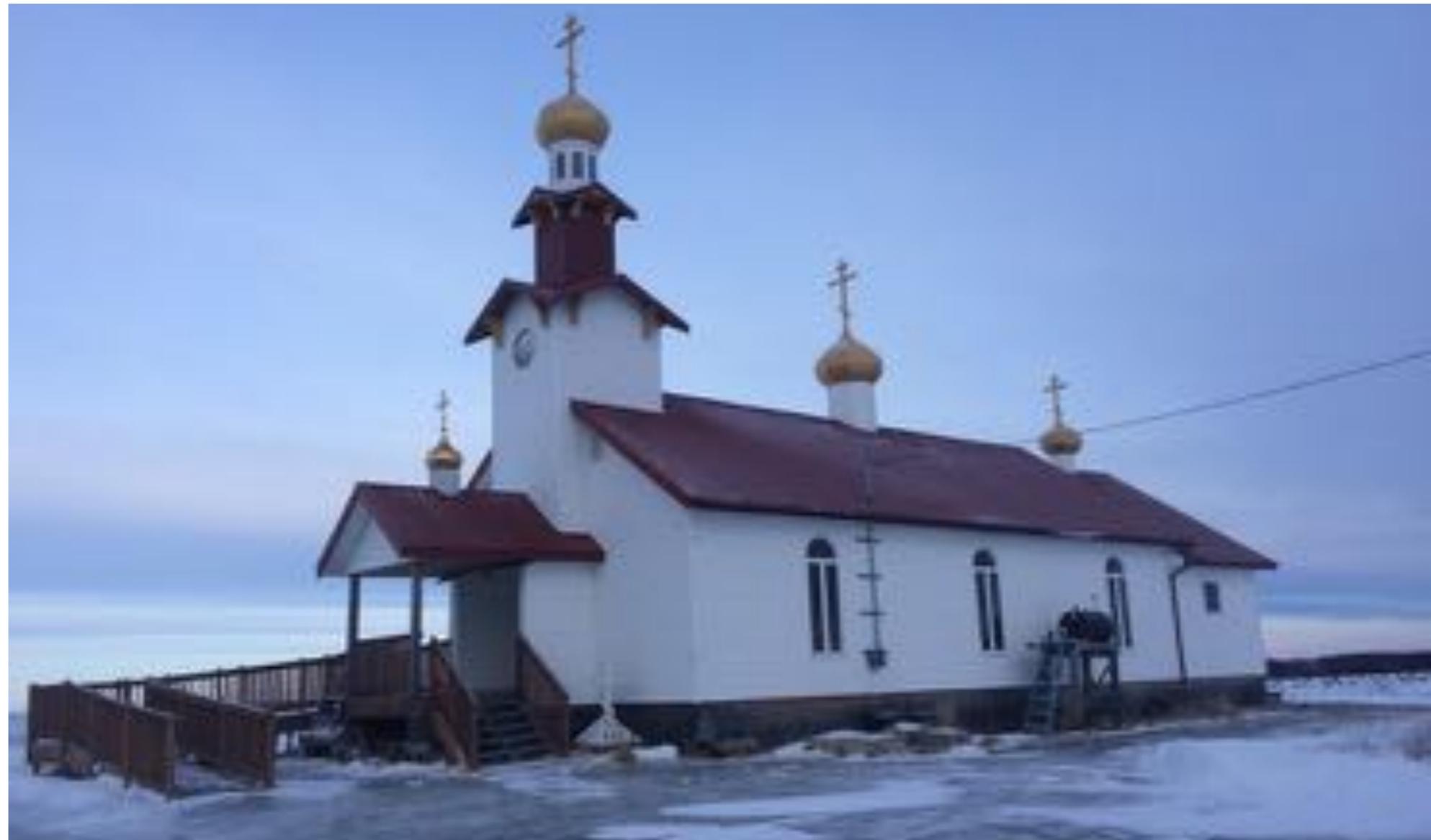
### **Student Evaluation Strategy**

This lesson could be used to generate some fairly open-ended short-answer questions on part of a larger quiz or test, such as “list 5 ways Yup’ik Orthodoxy differs from some (or all) other expressions of global Orthodoxy.” Answers like “greetings” or “where men stand in church” would be good enough for full credit. It could also be used to generate quiz or test questions about Fr. Yakov, lay missions, the first written Yup’ik, etc.

### **Student Reflection Opportunities**

As homework, students will be asked to write blog posts on a class Wordpress website reflecting on the class and what they learned. Grading for this will be on a “did they complete a post,” credit/no credit basis, not really on content, although completely unrelated posts will receive a grade of “no credit.”

Photo: St. Sophia Orthodox Church in Bethel, AK.



## Basic Lesson Outline

- 1) Icebreaker/Focus Question (5 min)
- 2) Group Discussion (20 min)
- 3) Whole Class Discussion (15 min)
- 4) History Lecture (15 min)
- 5) Final Questions/ Discussion (5 min)

**Photo: Icon of St. Innocent, the Bishop who first sent St. Yakov to the Yukon-Kuskokwim, asking his forbearer St. Herman to pray for him. Icon held by St. James Church, Napaskiak.**



## Prefatory Considerations for Instructors

The material for this lesson, like all lessons in this book, was created for a specific class in the University of Alaska Southeast's Masters of Arts in Teaching program. It was also created with a very specific understanding of the student body it would be used with. The student body for which this lesson has been prepared is highly unique in the American education system, in that it is a part of a sociologically "monoreligious," Yup'ik speaking village in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta whose religion is Orthodox Christianity. There are many such villages in the region, and it would be suitable for use in them as well. It would not be suitable, however, for general use in the American (or even Alaskan) context, since its highly culturally responsive methodology would make it both ineffective and incomprehensible. It might be suitable for use in a mixed Orthodox/Moravian village from the region, but in such a context the instructor would need to determine if it would seem exclusionary or offensive to students when considering using it. This lesson could also be used as a template for similar curriculum items with similar essential questions and general objectives in other remote, monoreligious Alaskan villages of different faith backgrounds (although such lessons would have to be situated in other areas of the Alaskan history curriculum standards).

This lesson, as set forth, is envisioned as a segment of a two-session mini-unit on the general effects of Russian contact on the Yup'ik people which would also deal with issues related to changes in trade patterns, technology, disease, and education in Bristol Bay and the Kuskokwim region during the period. In general, this approach reflects an educational strategy in social studies that gives significant weight to local history and culture.

The remainder of this section will provide instructions, resources, and general background information for potential instructors and as well as various media items for use by students as a part of the discussion portions of the class.

## INTERACTIVE 2.6 The Cherubic Hymn in Yup'ik



Cherubim Hymn Yupik, uploaded by kwt99621 on Aug 7, 2013.  
<https://youtu.be/iPEe0oOTXN8>. St. Sophia's Church, Bethel.

### Lesson Aid 1: A Potential Focus Question

A very good way to begin this lesson would be to ask the students if the fact that they commonly call themselves “Russian Orthodox” means that everything they do in church is identical to what Russians do. If they say “no,” quite firmly, then the instructor can move on quickly to questions of “how might they do things differently” or “is there anything they might believe differently?” This would move quite naturally into the planned group work of section 2.

If they answer, “yes” or are unsure, then perhaps using a YouTube video showing a scene from the Russian Orthodox Church that has something pretty different from what they’re used to seeing might be helpful as a preface to the group discussions. One example of something one might use is the video linked on this page, which shows a Slavic “blessing of pussy willows for Palm Sunday.” Since Slavs traditionally tended to live in places too cold for palm trees, they improvised by using something they could get locally: pussy willows. Yup’ik people traditionally did not have access to either, and so they traditionally substitute hand-made artificial flowers for palms.

Once this basic point is established, groups can be selected and set to work looking for differences in those images and videos attached to the following outline aid.

### INTERACTIVE 2.7 “Russian Orthodox” (Ukrainian) Blessing of the Pussy Willows on Palm Sunday



Orthodox Christians Celebrate Palm Sunday: Priests in Kyiv bless pussy willow branches, uploaded by Ukraine Today on April 5, 2015. <https://youtu.be/IO2-GyHw-mc>

## Lesson Outline Aid 2.1: Background Information

There are many ways in which common Yup'ik Orthodox practice differs from that of Orthodox Christians in other parts of the world, and it behooves the instructor to have some basic sense of what possible answers he or she might encounter in the group discussion section or what it might be possible to elicit. Orthodox doctrinal teaching is, for the most part, very consistent across regions, cultures, and even time periods. However, there are also some local beliefs in the Yup'ik lands that are appended to a more universal presentation, and the instructor should be aware of them as far as is possible.

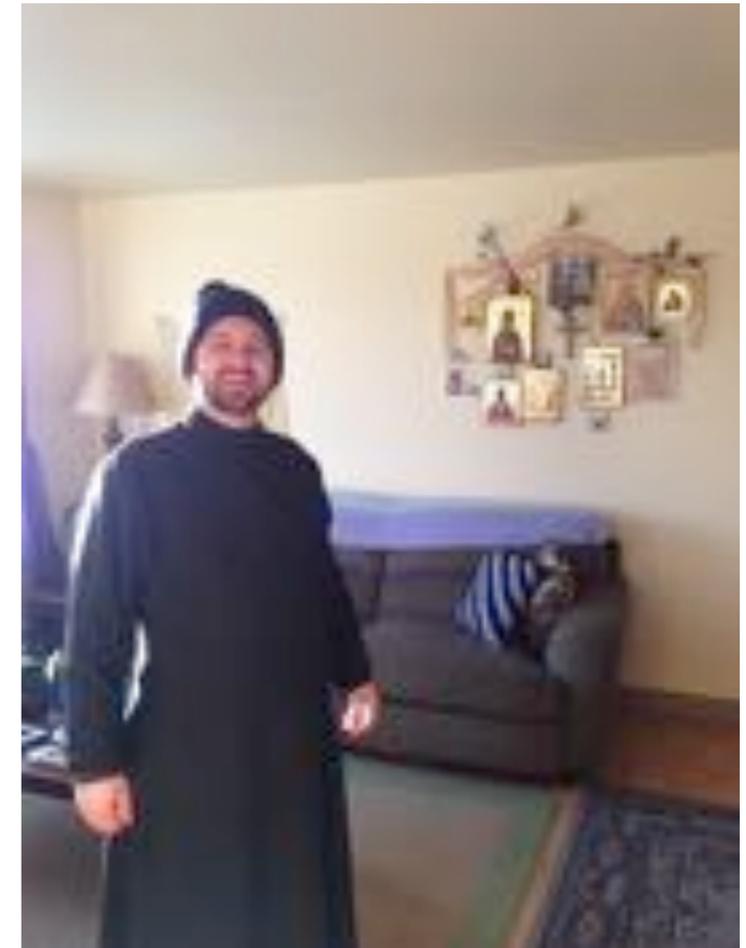
On a very basic level, Yup'ik Orthodoxy differs from most of world Orthodoxy in that local communities are lay led rather than clergy led. Historically, this is due to the drastic shortage of clergy that the region has suffered since its earliest days. The basic service of a typical Orthodox parish is the Divine Liturgy, which involves the celebration of what is called the "Eucharist" (a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving"), which is also called "the Lord's Supper," "the Mystical Supper," and "Holy Communion." This rite, along with certain other rites in the Church, such as marriage or ordination, can only be performed by an ordained clergyman. Since there are few ordained clergy in the region, and some churches only see priests around twice a year, this means that the basic, usual service of many Yup'ik communities has to be a lay led service.

In the Yup'ik lands (as well as in the rest of Alaska), this lay service takes a unique form called the "obednitsa," which mirrors much of the music of the Divine Liturgy but lacks those things which particularly relate to the presence of a priest or to the celebration of the Eucharist. It also has other prayers and songs drawn from other sources. Although this service has its roots originally in Russia, it is now only celebrated in Alaska, predominantly in native churches. The presence of the obednitsa helps to explain the spread of Orthodoxy across the Yup'ik region in spite of the lack of clergy.

Naturally, there are other lay led communities in the Orthodox world. However, other communities use variants of a completely different service called "matins" instead of the obednitsa.

Long-term lay leadership in Alaskan parishes has led to the establishment of the charismatic position of the "reader" or "lay pastor." In more formal settings, "reader" is actually an ordained position in the Orthodox Church. It is an order of what is called the "minor clergy." Historically, being ordained a reader meant two things: the candidate was literate and the candidate was qualified to speak for the Church on doctrinal matters (and, therefore, to preach). While in much of Western society, the literacy of virtually all adults is taken for granted, in most Yup'ik villages literate (especially fully literate) persons make up a fairly small minority of the population. Thus, to be called a "reader" in the Church in Alaska is a big deal relative to what such a designation (and even formal ordination) would mean in most other parts of the world.

Alaskan readers are sometimes ordained, but they are often unordained. Uniquely in all the world, some villages are actually functionally pastored by a female reader. This is very interesting indeed, seeing as Yup'ik tend to have very strict social distinctions based on gender roles.



**Photo: An ordained reader from Pennsylvania visiting Yup'ik Alaska.**

And speaking of gender roles, another way that Yup'ik Orthodoxy is somewhat distinct from Orthodoxy as practiced in some other cultures can be found in how societal gender norms play out in basic Church life. Men and women are expected to dress differently, especially in Church. With the exception of small girls and visitors who are not Orthodox, women are expected to have their heads covered at all times with an outer covering called a "pelatuuq."

While women must cover their heads, lay men are absolutely forbidden to. Priests, in contrast, are expected to wear hats of various sorts both inside and outside of worship services. In fact, in the Yup'ik lands, it is

### GALLERY 2.1 Religious Head Coverings of Various Types



A typical pelatuuq.



hats that identify men as priests (more so than black robes or pectoral crosses).

One practice of particular note related to gender roles in Yup'ik churches is the tradition that women's head coverings come off during Holy Communion. In all Orthodox Churches, clergy remove any hat they may be wearing before communion, but in Yup'ik Churches alone, women also remove their head coverings at communion. Thus, in a sense, symbolically both sexes arrive at a certain type of equality in that moment which Orthodoxy teaches is the believer's most intimate and direct encounter with Christ. In other Orthodox Churches that mandate head coverings, such as the Russian Church, there is no such tradition.

The order of receiving communion, though, is men first and women second. This parallels the general cultural pattern of men eating first and then women eating second at social functions. It is also worth noting that men and women stand on different sides of the church building, with men on the southern side and women on the northern. This is a pattern that is practiced in some non-Yup'ik Orthodox communities, but the idea of families standing together, as happens in many other cultures, would likely seem surprising to Yup'ik Orthodox students.

Finally, it should be noted that posture in Church is very rigid in Yup'ik Orthodox communities. With very, very few exceptions, a worshipper is expected to face the altar area and stand rigidly still. Through this practice, the worshipper is also practicing absolute silence (apart from any singing he or she may choose to participate in). This silence and stillness before God can probably be seen as reflective of the pre-Christian Yup'ik emphasis on silence during the hunt. God, like the hunted animal, must be respected, and respect is conveyed through silence. (This idea is also conveyed between persons in general interactions; the more one Yup'ik person wants to show respect for another, the more softly he will speak to her.)



Having now mentioned hunting, it is important to note that there is a strong relationship between the Church and hunting in typical Yup'ik thought. Just as Christ, the God of all, willingly sacrifices himself and gives himself as food to the faithful in Eucharist, so also the animals, Christ's creations, are still commonly thought to choose the hunter among the Yup'ik Orthodox. The animals have a level of superhuman awareness, and they do God's will. Success in the hunt is due to divine providence, which plays itself out through the animals. Thus, the animals, as agents of God, absolutely must be respected. No part of their bodies can be wasted, because to waste is to disrespect their sacrifice and (ultimately) to disrespect God's providence.

Because of this, the character of the hunter matters. The animals will not respect an unrighteous man and might not come to feed him. Righteousness is understood both in terms of traditional Christian categories and in terms of doing certain societal duties and not breaking taboos. An example of a taboo common among the Orthodox, for instance, would be how younger men are not permitted to look at a priest's face. A boy or youth will never look a priest in the eyes unless commanded to, for to do so would be to express haughtiness in the face of a divine messenger, thus bringing about rejection by the animals during the hunt.

Another cultural distinction related to hunting that can be noted here is that, uniquely among Orthodox all around the world, Alaskan native priests are permitted to hunt and to kill animals. In other jurisdictions,

**Photo: the tabernacle on the altar at St. James Church, Napaskiak.**

priests are strictly forbidden from ever killing anything, man or beast. In Alaska, however, the early missionary bishops were quite aware of the role hunting played culturally and permitted their priests to hunt. This tradition continues down to this day.

There are any number of other distinct cultural customs that could be discussed at this juncture, including the unique Yup'ik tonal singing system, which represents an transformation of older "Kievan style" Orthodox worship music. However, in the interest of brevity, only one more item of major import needs to be discussed: Christmas ("Slaaviq" in Yup'ik).

Along with over half the world's Orthodox population, Orthodox believers in the Yup'ik lands celebrate all of their feasts, including Christmas, on the Julian calendar. This means that, in civil terms, Christmas starts on January 7.

The rites associated with the liturgical celebration of Christmas itself in the Yup'ik churches are fairly standard, but what happens afterward is utterly unique in all the world. In imitation of the movement of the biblical "star of Bethlehem," one or more ceremonial stars is brought forth from the altar. The star or stars then journey throughout every house in the village, and at every house there is a special worship service which lasts from 15 to 45 minutes. After the service, a priest or prominent layman will preach in about half of the houses. Then, the owners of the house are expected to give gifts to all their guests, which can often easily number over 100 people. Socially, a family displays its wealth through its generosity.

In about half of the houses there is a sit-down feast as well, at the host's expense. When everyone has eaten, the star departs and goes to the next house. Life stops for Slaaviq for as long as a week, and it is only after the star has come to the final house that the event draws to its conclusion. After the final house, all the people gather in one of the larger

houses in town and there is a longer service, followed by preaching. After this service, the community then proceeds to the graveyard, to sing the same hymns for their dead (but listening) forbearers. It is a fairly remarkable thing, and it is quite unique in the Orthodox world. The potential instructor should bear in mind that the students of this lesson really may not know that Yup'ik Christmas practices are not universal among Orthodox Christians.

## GALLERY 2.2 Images from Yup'ik Christmas Celebrations



One of the stars from Kwethluk, January 2016.



## Lesson Aid 2.2: Student Section

The materials in this section should be divided up between the prospective groups. Each group should be tasked with making observation-level questions about what they are seeing or hearing and then drawing inferences about what they have seen. Groups should focus on answering the following questions:

Is anything different?

What is different?

Why?

What do the differences mean?

What might they say about the culture and values of the people?

### INTERACTIVE 2.8 Group 1: Veneration of the Holy Cross in Westfield, NJ



Veneration of the Holy Cross: Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Westfield NJ  
March 18, 2012, uploaded by Ted Vagelos,  
<https://youtu.be/la4BW3B4BT8>.

### GALLERY 2.3 Group 1: Images from Liturgical Calendars



Image from Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America's website,  
[http://www.goarch.org/chapel/dateceleb\\_view?  
m=12&d=25&y=2016](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/dateceleb_view?m=12&d=25&y=2016)



INTERACTIVE 2.9 Group 2: Greek Style Singing



Your Bridal Chamber (English/Greek), uploaded by Orthodox Christian Chants, <https://youtu.be/Q1MCNV0W3wQ>

INTERACTIVE 2.10 Group 2: Communion in Kenya



Orthodox Communion - Sidion, Vihiga, Kenya, uploaded by David M.A. Murphy, <https://youtu.be/Z5UYfew2Yf4>

INTERACTIVE 2.11 Group 3: Russian Orthodox Theophany Customs



Russians celebrate Orthodox custom, uploaded by AP on July 21, 2015, <https://youtu.be/DyO4Hv-S4YM>

INTERACTIVE 2.12 Group 3: Paschal Singing in Ghana



[www.nyxthimeron.com](http://www.nyxthimeron.com) Χριστός Ανέστη στην Accra / Ghana, uploaded by Kyklodioktos on April 11, 2016, <https://youtu.be/lGqUn5KQ9kE>

INTERACTIVE 2.13 Group 4: A Second Look at Russian Orthodox Theophany Customs



Zhirinovsky braves icy waters for Epiphany, uploaded by AP on July 21, 2015, [https://youtu.be/co8K398zr\\_Y](https://youtu.be/co8K398zr_Y)

INTERACTIVE 2.14 Group 4: Georgian Orthodox Chant



Georgian Orthodox chant in ARAMAIC language, uploaded by TheMistAncorite on October 8, 2014, <https://youtu.be/U6tV679wXIU>

## Lesson Aid 2.3: Outlining Some Possible Perceived Differences

### For Group 1

This video from a Greek Church in New Jersey displays an Orthodox community that is highly Westernized and Americanized in its culture. Examples of the sorts of things that will likely be obvious to students as differences from this video include:

- 1) the use of instrumentation to accompany church singing (not traditionally practiced in Orthodox countries - the Yup'ik in particular have a strong negative reaction to the idea of instrumental music in church due to its use by Moravian missionaries - fiddle music is actually socially banned in most Orthodox villages on the Delta to this day)
- 2) the presence of pews in the worship space (something not practiced in traditional Orthodoxy and not practiced in Yup'ik Orthodox Churches - they get in the way of traditional worship movements like prostrations)
- 3) the mixing of men and women freely in the worship space
- 4) the fact that the women are not wearing head coverings (which would indicate in Yup'ik Orthodox churches that they were not Orthodox, but means nothing in most East Coast American Orthodox congregations)
- 5) the fact that the senior priests are not wearing hats for this rite
- 6) the presence of stained glass windows in the building's structure (not a part of Orthodox architecture in traditional countries and not a part of Yup'ik Orthodox church architecture)
- 7) the use of the censor by a subdeacon during the procession (a traditional Greek practice that is not a part of Yup'ik tradition)

- 8) the general posture of worshipers, which is free and shifting
- 9) the fact that the priest explicitly permits kneeling instead of full prostration (as is done by most Orthodox during this rite)
- 10) the use of the Greek language in the service
- 11) the generally different (non-Russian-influenced) character of the music
- 12) the pillar-style altar table (a Greek style not built in Western Alaska)
- 13) the fact that one priest who can clearly grow a beard is cleanshaven and another has only a mustache (culturally, Yup'ik priests tend to grow as much facial hair as they can, following an older Russian practice)
- 14) the fact that the priests don't prostrate before the cross, but rather only bow (in a Yup'ik context, both the priests and the congregation would have made full prostrations)

The differences from the calendar are much less subtle:

- 1) Christmas is December 25, not January 7 (the students will definitely be aware that other people celebrate Christmas on December 25 - they may not be aware that other Orthodox people do, however - most non-Slavic Orthodox peoples celebrate on December 25)
- 2) Dormition (the feast celebrating the repose of the Virgin Mary is on August 15, not August 28 - Yup'ik folks tend to go to church on feasts vis-a-vis Sundays, whereas most American Orthodox go to church on Sundays rather than feasts - the differing date of the feast would be noticeable and possibly surprising)

It is important that the instructor treat differences brought up here with a great deal of sensitivity. It is desirable at this point to ask questions like

“what do you think this says about gender roles in this Greek Church from New Jersey? How might they be different from roles in your own culture? Is it possible that gender roles vary within other religious communities across cultures? Etc.” However, one must be careful, since some of the Greek practices might strike students as potentially blasphemous or irreverent.

## Group 2

The Greek chant style in “Your Bridal Chamber” would unquestionably strike a Yup’ik Orthodox student as foreign, and is mostly an exercise in “Orthodox music doesn’t have to sound like Russian or Yup’ik music.”

In the video from Kenya, there are a lot of things that would strike a potential student as different, as well. In some ways, though, the Kenyan context would seem less foreign, for instance:

- 1) the gender-segregated congregation
- 2) the women having head-coverings on
- 3) the presence of removable chairs in the worship space (which are present in some Yup’ik congregations)

However, in other ways, there is a deep foreignness:

- 1) the movement of the congregants (Kenyans typically have an opposite approach to demonstrating reverence to Yup’iks - for Kenyans, stillness can even be perceived as irreverent)
- 2) clapping
- 3) instrumentation
- 4) the character of the singing itself

## Group 3

Cultural differences from the Theophany video that might be obvious include:

- 1) the fact that one of the priests is wearing a mitre (crown) like a bishop even though the cross on his chest designates that he is a priest
- 2) the intermixing of men and women in the congregation
- 3) the fact that people are entering a giant pool of water in January (entering water like that in the winter might be seen as asking to die in Yup’ik culture - sometimes Yup’iks don’t even use full-body immersion for the baptism of children because of concerns about temperature)

In the video from Ghana, differences include:

- 1) the fact that some of the priests are wearing red during the season of Pascha (i.e., Easter - in many African countries, white is seen as the color of death, and therefore red, a color more culturally reminiscent of life, is worn - this might strike a Yup’ik as quite odd, however, since for the Yup’ik, white is worn on Pascha)
- 2) the use of drums in church (or any instrumentation)
- 3) general posture (more fluid than that of Yup’ik churches)
- 4) the majority of the women are not wearing head coverings
- 5) there do not appear to be male and female sides of the church
- 6) the Greek-style distribution of blessed bread at the end of the service (just not a Yup’ik practice - Yup’iks would expect to come forward and kiss a hand cross at this point in the service)

## Group 4

Issues for the fourth group have all basically been covered in synopses of the material for the first three.

### **Lesson Aid 3: Sources for General Discussion Questions and Lecture**

After arriving at individual group conclusions and whole-class conclusions and discussing the differences students noticed between various local practices of Orthodoxy and ones from other parts of the world, the instructor must move from this to larger issues, trying to address the essential questions and goals of the lesson as fully as is possible. The following lecture should attempt to tie individual observations made in the discussion to history as much as is possible.

Helpful background reading can be found especially in the following, particularly Carl, Black (1984b), and Oleksa:

Black, L. (1980). *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha years, 1828-1844*. Kingston, Ontario, Canada: Limestone Press.

Black, L. (1984a). *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov, the Yukon years, 1845-1863*. Kingston, Ontario, Canada: Limestone Press.

Black, L. (1984b). The Yup'ik of Western Alaska and Russian impact. *Etudes Inuit Studies*, 8 (Supplementary issue), 21-43.

Carl, E. (2015). *Yup'ik Orthodox Christianity: An Ethnographic Grounded Theory Description*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Copy provided directly by author.

Fienup-Riordan, A. (1991). *The Real People and the Children of Thunder: The Yup'ik Eskimo encounter with Moravian missionaries John and Edith Kilbuck*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Fienup-Riordan, A., Tyson, W., John, P., Meade, M., & Active, J. (2000). *Hunting tradition in a changing world: Yup'ik lives in Alaska today*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Oleksa, M. (1992). *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

#### **A Note on the Citation of Sources**

The content materials in this lesson plan have depended somewhat on Carl, Black, and Oleksa as references. However, the majority of the information presented has been dependent on numerous unrecorded conversations with Dr. Erica Carl, Fr. Vasily Fisher, and Fr. Ishmael Andrew, as well as on personal observation of Yup'ik liturgical practices in the villages of Napaskiak, Kwethluk, Oscarville, and Napakiak, as well as the town of Bethel. It is also dependent on the author's broad background in Orthodox liturgical practices, largely attributable to his studies at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

## INTERACTIVE 2.15 Ghost Story

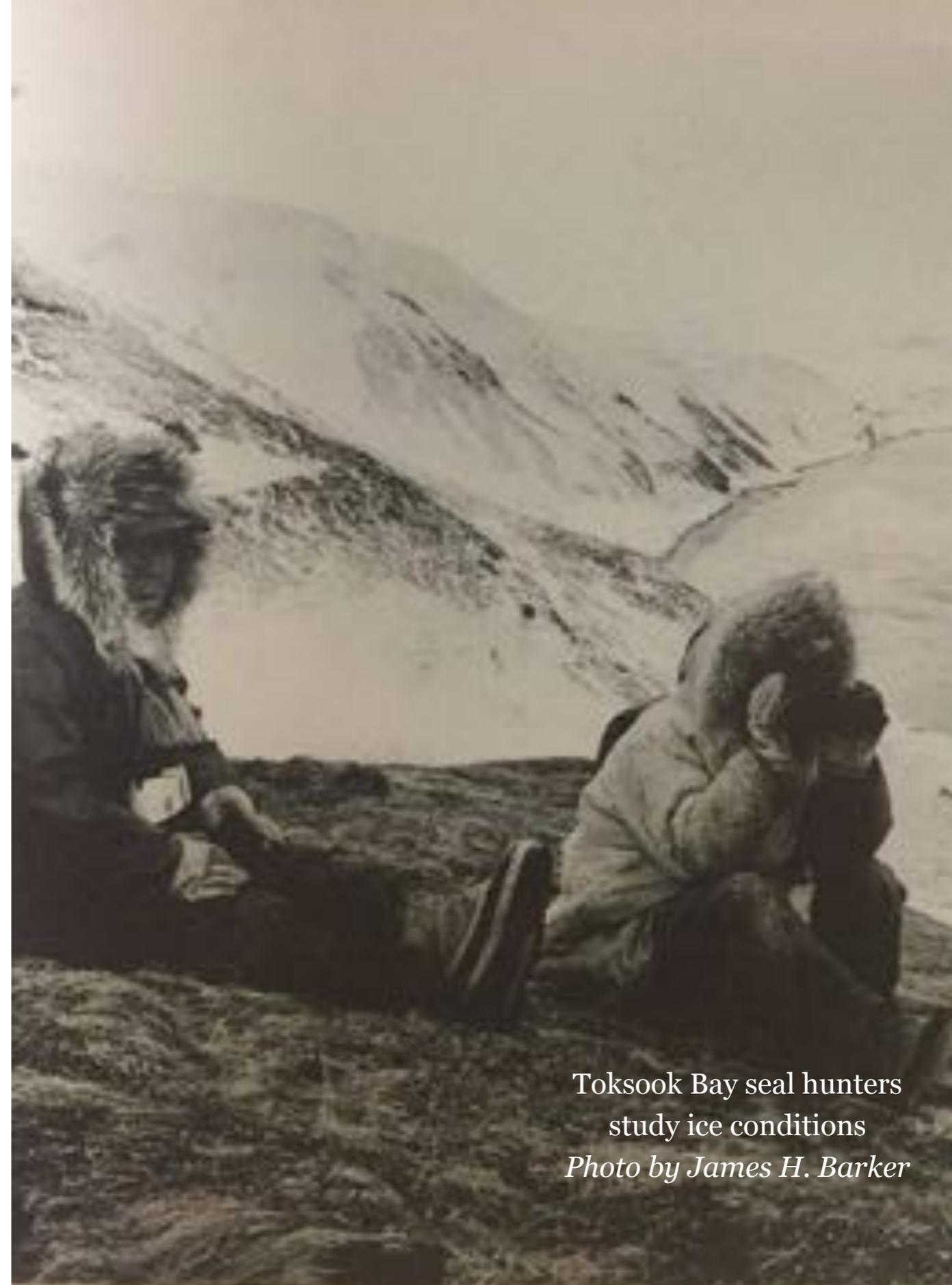


John Active shares a ghost story

## YUP'IK ORAL TRADITION

By Jimmy Andrew

The purpose of education today is to “ensure that each new generation is capable of surviving and contributing to society” (Roderick, 77). The current western school system generally focuses on encouraging students to become productive citizens in a global market economy. Before the arrival of Russians and Americans, Yup'ik people in Western Alaska were more dedicated to learning about skills, attitudes, values, and information on how to survive through the seasons. Instead of going to school to make more money in the future, Yup'ik children were educated to bring home the fish, wildlife, and plants that sustain them (Roderick, 77). These skills were not learned through the school system, but were orally passed down from generation to generation.



Toksook Bay seal hunters  
study ice conditions  
*Photo by James H. Barker*



*A woman prepares grass mats to cover a building frame for Ena. Martin Family Collection.*

In the Yup'ik region, smaller boys and girls lived in a one-room ena (sod house). Ena was a place where mothers, stepmothers, or aunts taught boys life lessons. When the boys got a little older, they were taken to the qasgi (communal men's house), where their education continued (Andrew).



*Qasgi construction, showing clearly how grass mats were laid over the wooden frame. Martin Family Collection.*

Qasgi was very respected, since men and elders who held authority lived there. It was very shameful to act improperly inside the qasgi, and the only noise you might hear was the pounding of wood when work was being done. Then, as soon as an elder began to speak, everyone would stop working to listen to the speaker's voice. Everyone had to sit very still and listen to huge men who looked very imposing and respectable (Andrew).

## Yup'ik Elder Testimony



*Frank examining a spear point from  
Canineq area, 2003  
by Ann Fienup-Riordan*

Frank Andrew, who was among the last generation to live in the qasgi until adulthood, viewed the Yup'ik traditional education and oral instruction as the moral foundation of a properly lived life (Andrew, xxv). He mourned its loss, and noted that the people are “no longer taught how to work. We no longer learned about our way of life. We live today following our own minds.”



*Qasgi tunnel from the entrance  
leading to the big room inside  
Marin Family Collection A22*

Frank stated that when he was young, men ate their meals and slept on woven pads in their designated spots in the qasgi. When they slept, they had parkas over them to keep them warm. But the moment the elders took the parkas off early in the morning, it was time to wake up even though it was cold. They'd be instructed to go outside even during the winter. The moment they went out into the cold, their sleepiness would vanish.

## Storyknife

### (yaaruin)



Yaaruin, or storyknife, was a unique form of teaching culture to the girls. Yaaruin was practiced by mainland Yup'ik grandmothers with their granddaughters. A small, dull knife was used to draw pictures on a muddy, flat surface such as the bank of a river to entertain children. Knives were usually carved by a young girl's father and given to the daughter. Many stories had helpful information about domestic activities, appropriate behaviors, and about what would happen if they engaged in inappropriate behavior. A common theme was the grandmother telling the young girl what not to do, the young girl doing it, and then something dreadful happening to the grandmother. Through stories, the girls were encouraged to obey and respect. Storyknife still continues today, but as a form of activity (Langdon).

## Citations

Andrew, F., Sr. (2008). *Paitarkiutenka: My Legacy to You*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Edwards, B (Edwards). (2009). *The Yup'ik Way*. (Available from [www.theyupikway.com](http://www.theyupikway.com)).

Langdon, S. J. (2002). *The Native People of Alaska: Traditional Living in a Northern Land*. Anchorage, AK: Greatland Graphics.

Oleksa, Michael. (2005). *Another Culture/Another World*. Juneau, AK: Association of Alaska School Boards.

Roderick, Libby. (2010). *Alaska Native Cultures and Issues: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.

## LESSON PLAN

Not everyone in class might be Yup'ik, but this lesson is going to take place a Yup'ik village. To honor the land and the people of this town, we are going to learn about Yup'ik oral tradition. We'll watch a few clips and observe to see if they still practice the Yup'ik oral tradition today or have exclusively replaced it with the western educational system. Each student will be encouraged to participate to share their experience and the knowledge they have gained from this lesson.

### **Purpose/Objectives/Outcomes:**

Learn in depth the purpose of Yup'ik oral education

Discuss whether the traditional education and oral instruction is continued today

### **The Student will be able to (The Big Picture):**

- Identify the Yup'ik educational methods prior to the arrival of Russians and Americans
- Explain why it was necessary for Yup'ik boys and girls to deeply listen to their elders giving advice to the younger generation
- Differentiate today's educational system from the traditional Yup'ik system

### **What will engagement look like during this lesson?**

1. Since the students in this lesson are already living in Western Alaska, it is assumed that they heard about the oral tradition. But I'll need to find out before getting too ahead of everyone. To get things rolling, I'll start off by doing a trivia based on local community. Some will be fun and some will be serious. (10 minutes) **EXAMPLE SHEET**
2. They will be asked if the elders in the village have lectured them before. I'll make an effort to get the discussion going. (20 minutes)
3. Once the discussion has ended, we'll watch a couple of short clips from YouTube below and "The Yup'ik Way" (20:30-23:30) of how the Yup'ik elders define the Yup'ik oral education. YouTube doesn't quite define oral education, but gives the student a visual idea (15 minutes)

### **INTERACTIVE 2.16** Yup'ik Story



Story about a Yup'ik and non-Yup'ik man traveling to Bethel

4. Before going too deep into the discussion concerning the clip, there will be a short presentation. The students will be asked about their thoughts and understanding. (15 minutes)

5. The class will be divided into groups randomly so students with different interests, abilities, and skill levels will be able to work together.

**ACTIVITY #1-** Each group will make a poster that compares and contrasts the oral tradition with the western Educational system. If they can't find a way to make a poster, I'll simply have them do a Venn diagram unless they have any other ideas. As the groups are working on the poster, I'll go around to make sure that each individual's voice has been heard. I'll spark a question if I see a lack of participation. This will be followed by a very quick presentation. (20 minutes)

**ACTIVITY #2-** This next short activity is called "road to the ocean." In the western culture, moving onto the next stage of life is often determined by age. The purpose of road to the ocean is to learn what skills were needed to move onto the next stage in the Yup'ik culture. There will be three questions. Informational material will be spread out throughout the class. Each student will need to go around the class to fill out all questions. All kinds of information can be spread out throughout the classroom. We just need to be able to include the answers to the three questions somewhere. It's a little mission game. (20 minutes) **ROAD TO THE MAP SHEET**

### **Assessment of student outcomes: (How will you assess student learning?)**

Accurateness, participation, and completion

### **Materials/Resources:**

- Computer for the movie and presentation
- Movie
- PowerPoint presentation
- Posters
- Markers
- Paper copy containing "road to the map" questions
- Books and paper that contains information

### **Technology:**

- There will be a clip from "The Yup'ik Way" filmed by Beth Edwards.
- If there is a short clip of someone telling a story or sharing knowledge of Yup'ik, I'll try to find a time slot for it.
- Computer

## **Instructional Strategies, Accommodations, and Student activities:**

Since the students are living in Western Alaska, it is necessary to know how the Yup'ik people lived prior to the Western culture.

Through fun quizzes, short movie clips, and group project, students will analyze and understand how the Yup'ik ancestors shared their knowledge and wisdom. If there is a lack of participation during class or group project, I will find ways to get each student involved and make their voices heard. Even though this lesson is focused on one culture, students from different backgrounds will be respected.

## **Essential questions**

- Why was it necessary for boys and girls to deeply listen to their elders giving advice?
- How have Native educational methods changed over time?
- Has change in educational system help or hurt the Yup'ik people
- Why?

## **Vocabulary**

- *Ena*- common sod house design where women and young children lived, rectangular, partially dugout structure about 10 by 12 feet.
- *Qasgi*- communal men's house where their traditional education and oral instruction continued

- *Qanruyutet*- words of wisdom, teachings or oral instructions
- *Yuilquq*- tundra
- *Nanvaq*- lake or pond
- *Imarpik*- ocean

# SURVIVE, THRIVE, AND TRADE

A game by Tyler Thomas

## Evolution of an Idea

I batted around making this lesson a map-building exercise where kids would create a poster of how they would get somewhere to acquire a given good. It was suggested that it could be turned into a game with a board, rules and such. I debated whether I should take the leap of developing guidelines, rules, and a board. I mentioned to my mom that I was thinking about creating a board game as a lesson plan. She quickly dug out a rather large envelope with big red print that read: **the ALASKA game** which was created by Capital School back in 1972. It looked like a fun project. I could clearly see the children's



The Alaskan Game created by a Capital School class in 1972



This game provided inspiration and guidance.

input in the action cards. With the Alaska game as a rough blueprint to structure my game, I literally traced the outline of the game board onto my own poster board and began tinkering and playing with my map. I also made a MyMap to help guide me and future players.



**Culturally-knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.**

The traditional values that are at the root of the gameplay are inspired from a traditional Yup'ik tale called "The Eye of the Needle," which can be found in Father Michael Oleksa's book *Another Culture/Another World*. In the story, a *maurluq* (grandmother) sends her *tutgarluq* (grandson) out on his first hunt. She asks him to return as soon as he has his first animal. Like many Yup'ik stories, the boy does not listen to his grandma and problems begin to mount. In the end, *Maurluq* saves the boy, who has been transformed into a grotesque giant.

A central message of the story - **to listen to your elders with respect, share all food no matter how little, and respect the animals that have given themselves to you** - became a key aspect to the gameplay and helped shape the rules and theme to the game itself. Players must make sure they reserve 2/3 of their catch for *Maurluq* and keep 1/3 for trading later in the game. I have slowly started to incorporate the Yup'ik language. In the rulebook, I reference *Maurluq* as grandma once, then continue to refer to her in Yup'ik. Keeping words alive through use on an everyday level is key to building solid Cultural Standards. We should not simplify with translations back to English every time a Yup'ik word is mentioned. I have set the game in pre-contact Alaska to focus on the trade routes that the indigenous people created. After all, English was not spoken anywhere in the world for much of the time period this game takes place.



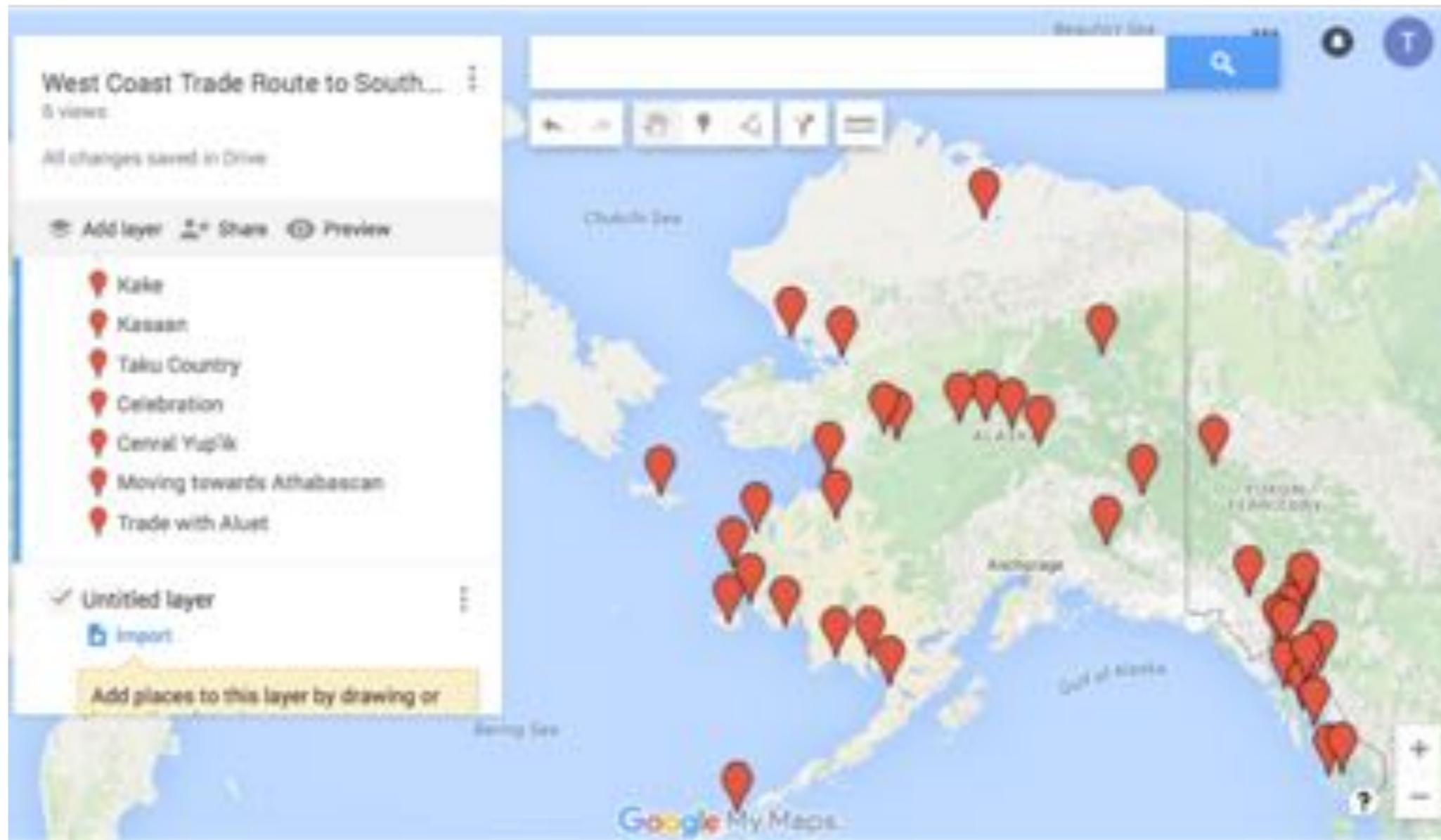
The process of creating this lesson plan has been very exciting. While sharing my lesson plan with a few cohorts, they have made some very interesting suggestions for future versions of this game that could also be linked to different lessons. The possibilities are vast. I also asked a team member to play an early version of the game to see how it would flow.



The work in progress approach helped structure the game after just a few hands. We had a few rounds gathering resources on the hunt and slowly exploring the map. On his last roll, he decided to visit his father's village because he missed him. The game should retain some of this loose structure where players are traversing over the country and exploring waterways of their choosing. And though it does take place potentially thousands of years ago, I did not get bogged down with the details of images I used in MyMaps.

Part of the game, is seeing how it evolves. As a lesson, where can we see our class go with this? What would the group like to add that was missing? What time periods can we incorporate to bring to light an ever-changing cultural landscape? What resources were not included that should be? Who knows, perhaps as a class they could create the next big role-playing board game or online gaming craze? Looking back at the Capital School's big "the Alaska Game", I see that it is more than possible.

## INTERACTIVE 2.17 A MyMaps to guide you along your trade route and interactive game master



Use this MyMaps to follow along with the action and learn more of the areas you visit. Create your own MyMaps to retrace your path and share what you learned. Feel free to click on the map to begin

## West Coast Alaska's Survive, Thrive and Trade Game Setup / Directions / Rules

1. Find your group's starting point by placing your game piece on your cultural group's traditional homeland. Follow along with My Maps to learn more about the area.
2. To start, roll a single dice to determine the success of your hunting/fishing trip. It is important to build your resources early on before going on a trading excursion. A seal is equivalent to the numbers on the die. A player can keep up to a 1/3 of the catch, which can be used later to trade. A single seal must go back to feed an elder, as would a two, given it can't be divided by three. This is vital to keep a community strong as well as please your *Maurluq*.
3. As play advances, another dice will be added to match the maturity and skill level of the player. On a whale hunt, players must roll an "8" or higher, then multiply by "10" to give the amount of resources available to the player that can be divided up amongst the people. For example, if a player rolled a "9" the whale would be worth "90" resources points. The community and *Maurluq* would receive "60" and the player "30," which can be used later to trade.
4. When you are ready to move, roll the dice to see how far you advance. Keep tabs of the resources in your MyMaps. Keep in mind you will need enough resources to pay tolls and trade with other tribes and clans.
5. Make trades along the way to bring back to your *Maurluq*. Learn new skills along the way and go on hunts. Work with your group to decide what to trade for and where you should go. Keep tabs of the

areas you visit by creating your own MyMaps that could be used later to present to the class. Also think of areas you thought were missing that could included next time.

6. When you have acquired all the resources on the board, make your way back to *Maurluq* to bring her something special by rolling your dice. Feel free to hunt/trade/fish on your return.
7. For the final move, travel to an old trading center near the Iñupiaq and Yup'ik on the map marked "finish". As a large group, discuss your findings. Is there anything that can be done as a class to improve the experience? Discuss the possibilities with each other.
8. Congratulations to you for skillfully surviving and thriving, but most importantly be thankful for making your *Maurluq* happy. Hope you enjoy your travels throughout Alaska!

For more information and to view a lesson plan go to the following:

<http://uasmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Final-Lesson-680-Lesson-plan.pdf>

For a PDF of rules visit:

<http://uasmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Survive-Thrive-Trade-RulesGameplay-Final-.pdf>

To view an image of the game board as a PDF click the link below:

[http://uasmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/IMG\\_20160629\\_164915434\\_HDR.jpg](http://uasmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/IMG_20160629_164915434_HDR.jpg)

# YUP'IK SONG, DANCE AND STORY

By Heidi Brook



AUDIO 2.1 Click here to play: *I Sing, You Dance* by I am Yup'ik



Image source: Slagle, 2011

This lesson makes use of Alaska Native ways of teaching and learning, including: listening, closely observing, storytelling, and experiential learning.

## Lesson Contents:

- 1.1 Key Idea
- 1.2 Essential Questions
- 1.3 Background Information
- 1.4 Student Activities
- 1.5 Resources

Download printable teacher version of unit here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9jpku-4-D5XdWpBVDIqUDhXcDQ/view?usp=sharing>

## 1.1 Key Idea

In this lesson, students learn about Yup'ik song, dance and storytelling while creating musical themes for each of the characters in the *quliraq* (Yup'ik legend) the *Hungry Giant of the Tundra*.

## 1.2 Essential Questions

Is there something in your life that would deeply affect your community if taken away?

How can we use music to pass on cultural knowledge?

## 1.3 Background Information

Song and dance are universal human activities that express emotions and tell stories. For the Yup'ik, Iñupiaq, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik people, music and dance are social practices where young and old are brought together.

For centuries, song and dance was a central part of life in western Alaska. Friends and family traveled to villages near and far to participate in dance festivals. Festival hosts and guests showered each other with gifts. Elders led ceremonies and passed on important knowledge, and entire villages would come together to celebrate each child's first dance.

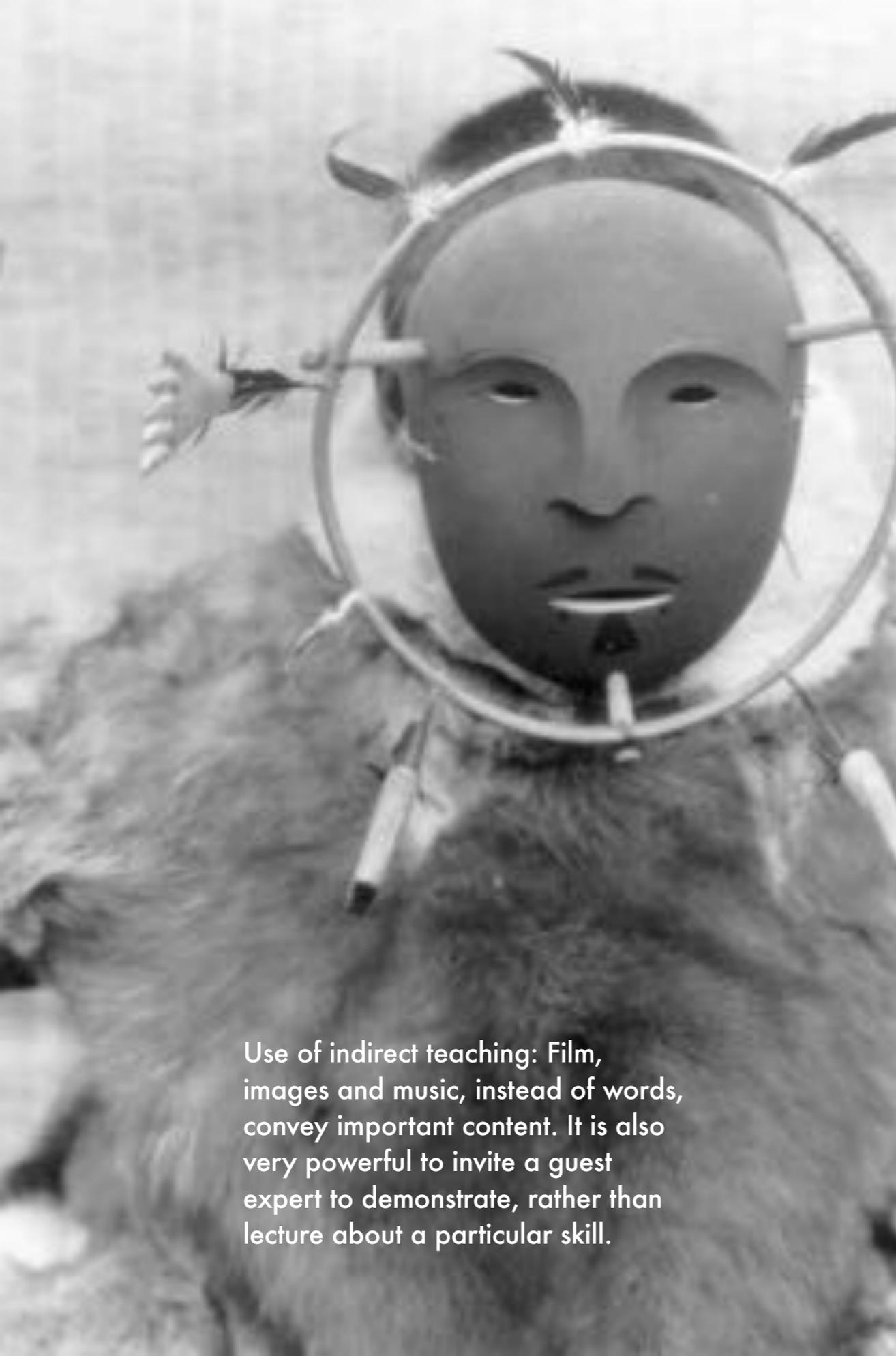
With the missionaries came a ban on important cultural practices, including dancing. Even today some villages are still timid to participate in this part of their heritage. However, with the recollections and help of elders, songs

and dances are reemerging across the west coast of Alaska.

Dancers wear brightly colored garments called *qaspeqs*. The drummers sing while the dancers tell the story with the movements of their arms, bodies and sometimes facial expressions. The women stand dancing behind the men, who dance in a seated position. For more information, read [Yup'ik Yuraryarait: Yup'ik Ways of Dancing](#), or see the video *The Drums of Winter (Uksuum Cauyai)*, below.

**This feature-length documentary explores the traditional dance, music and spiritual world of the Yup'ik people of Emmonak, a remote village at the mouth of the Yukon River on the Bering Sea coast.**





Use of indirect teaching: Film, images and music, instead of words, convey important content. It is also very powerful to invite a guest expert to demonstrate, rather than lecture about a particular skill.

## 1.4 Student Activities

### 1. Set up:

Students will be creating a musical resource to be used in elementary classrooms. All writing prompts are to be written with an elementary student in mind.

### 2. Anticipatory Set:

Listen to the story *Lucy's Dance* by Deb Vanasse. In a Yup'ik-fluent classroom, use the original Yup'ik version, Lugiim Yuraa. Play the album *I Sing You Dance* by I am Yup'ik as the soundtrack to the story.

Record your response to the following prompt on the clipboard. You can send your response to your teacher or the author of this lesson

IS THERE  
SOMETHING IN  
YOUR LIFE THAT  
WOULD DEEPLY  
AFFECT YOUR  
COMMUNITY IF  
TAKEN AWAY?



Click on clipboard to submit your response. Remember all writing should be written in the way that you would explain it to a sibling, relative or friend who is in elementary school!

### 3. Working as a Group:

IMAGE 2.2 Image from Alaska State Library: ASL-P343-626



[Click on photo to enlarge!](#)

- What is going on in the picture?
- Why are they dancing in a warehouse?

Record your group's answer in the clipboard below:



### 4. Indirect Teaching:

Now would be the perfect time for an elder or culture bearer to demonstrate or teach a song or dance to the class. Alternatively, watch the video "Yup'ik Blackfish Dance" below:

IMAGE 2.3 Yup'ik Blackfish Dance



**The Yup'ik dance found on this video is called the Blackfish Dance. Yup'ik dances often tell stories through hand motions.**

- How can song and dance tell a story?
- What story did the dance you watched tell?



## 5. All-senses Experiential Learning:

Read the Yup'ik legend the *Hungry Giant of the Tundra* retold by Teri Sloat and explore the following website:

**IMAGE 2.4** Click to explore Totem Tales!



This is an example of a similar project which was created by Terry Hunt at Mountain Sound Digital Media for a theatrical production by the Methow Valley Elementary School

*Activities on the Totem Tales Website*

*Listen to each of the soundtracks of the frog, beaver, eagle, bear and wolf. What sounds do you hear?*

Divide into the following groups based on the *Angry Giant of the Tundra* characters: the children, the parents, the crane and the giant.

Explore the Garageband resources on this website and begin creating your character's own soundtrack with your group.

A GarageBand Tutorial A Beginners Guide: <https://blog.udemy.com/>

## 6. Use of Storytelling to pass on Cultural Knowledge:

After completion of the soundtrack on Garageband, your group will know their character very well!

- Tell the legend from the perspective of your character.
- What is the moral of the story?

Submit your final response to an elementary school classroom:



Submit response here!

## 7. Accommodations/ Extensions:

For a more technology-based lesson the teacher could lead students through the process of exporting their soundtracks onto SoundCloud and designing a website. For a more music-based lesson the students could spend more time developing musical elements of their soundtracks and the teacher could compile responses, design the website and upload the final songs.



**Image: A Sunset in Unalakleet Alaska**

**Yup'ik music, dance and storytelling is a means of teaching younger generations both survival skills and, about their heritage.**

### **1.5 Resources**

#### **Lesson Materials:**

- Nicholai, Byron. I Sing, You Dance. I Am Yup'ik. Rec. 2015. Byron Nicholai & Yuk Media, CD.
- Sloat, T. (Trans.). (2011). The Angry Giant of the Tundra. Alaska Northwest Books.
- Vanasse, D., & Slagle, N. E. (2011). *Lucy's dance*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.
- Vanasse, D., & Slagle, N. E. (2011). *Luugiim yuraa*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press.

#### **For further Information:**

- Mercurieff, L., & Roderick, L. (2013). *Stop talking: Indigenous ways of teaching and learning and difficult dialogues in higher education*. Anchorage, AK: University of Alaska Anchorage.
- Barker, J. H., Fienup-Riordan, A., & John, T. (2010). *Yupiit yuraryarait = Yup'ik ways of dancing*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.
- Elder, S., & Kamerling, L. (Directors). (1988). Uksuum Cauyai: The Drums of Winter [Video file].

# CUP'IK

Cup'ik is a dialect of Yup'ik spoken in southwest Alaska. Speakers of Cup'ik identify as Cup'ik.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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# ELLAM YUA

Person or owner of the universe.

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# ENA

Traditional Yup'ik homes for women and children.

---

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# IMARPIK

The Bering Sea.

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# INUKTITUT

The family of languages often called the Eskimo languages. This language group is very diverse, and has many spoken forms from Russia, Alaska, to Canada, and all the way to Greenland.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Iñupiaq, Yup'ik

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# IÑUPIAQ

Iñupiaq means the Real People.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Inuktitut, Yup'ik

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# KAMIGUURTUT

Yup'ik sled.

---

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# KEGGINAQUQ

A mask.

---

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**Chapter 1 - Community and Language**

# MONORELIGIOUS

Adhering to a single religion

---

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# NUNAPIK

The land.

---

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# QAMIGUAN

A Yup'ik sled.

---

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# QASGI

The men's house, the *qasgiq*, was the community center for ceremonies and festivals including; singing, dancing, and storytelling. The *qasgiq* was used mainly in the winter months, because during the spring, summer and fall people would travel in family groups following food sources.

---

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# QAYAQ

Yup'ik kayak.

---

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# ST. LAWRENCE YUPIK

Alaska Natives of St. Lawrence Island (Sivuqaq) which is located west of mainland Alaska.

---

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# TUNDRA

The term tundra comes from the Russian тундра (tûndra) meaning, "treeless mountain tract".

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# WANGKUTA YUP'IGNI UNA ALERQUUN ARCAQANRAT UUNGULRIA TAKAQUCIYARAQ

The most important teaching for us Yup'ik people is having respect.

---

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# YUA

Possessive of person, which in Yup'ik is *yuk*.

---

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# YUP'IK

Means the real people in the Yup'ik languages. Depending on the region, Yup'ik can also be spelled Yupik or Yupiq.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Inuktitut, Iñupiaq

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**Chapter 1 - Community and Language**