

This lesson plan was created by a classroom teacher in a See Stories PD course. They have generously agreed to share it with others via our website to help build a library of films and lessons created by and for Alaskan teachers.

Alaska Native Oral Traditions



Students will gather oral stories through various resources (Anchorage Schools District, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Smithsonian Folklife Festival), examine their content and provide feedback as to the intended meaning or moral of the story.

Film: [Dena'ina Story Telling](#)

AUTHOR	SUBJECT(S), GRADE(S)	TIME
Anne Madonia	MAED/ SPE, K-12 Special Education	4 class periods, 60 min each

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Opener

There is a conflict between the Indigenous version of the creation story and the western Christian version. Since many of our students have been exposed to the Christian view it is advantageous to bring their culture, oral stories, and traditions into their awareness to promote a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Main Lesson

Reading for background information on the Tlingit peoples of SE Alaska as referenced in the article "Alaska Native Oral Tradition", by Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer. Smithsonian Folklife Festival. 1984. [Link](#)

Activity - Students will be placed in groups of four and told to examine a group of five traditional Alaska Native stories and determine the meaning of each. Is there a moral to the stories? As a group they will come up with a "review" of the piece and explain in detail what they believe the purpose of the story to be.

1. Never Alone: Foxtales (Kisima Injitchuṇa) ([reading](#))
2. Tlingit Creation Story ([reading](#))
3. The Loon Story - An Alaskan Native Tanaina Tale ([video](#))

4. & 5. Raven Turns Himself Into a Woman and Raven and the Fish Hawk ([2 readings](#))
6. Guest speaker if you have someone available in your school

Closing & Assessment

Options - The review can be in the form of an essay, group oratory, or powerpoint presentation. Our students are presenting during our Inupiaq Culture Week.

Feedback cards filled out and returned to the presenters/ instructor.

SECONDARY SOURCES

TITLE	YEAR	SOURCE	LINK
Lela Oman, Keeper of Ancient Inupiaq Lore	2023	John Tetpon	Lela Oman, Keeper of Ancient Inupiaq Lore by John Tetpon
Alaska Native Oral Tradition	1984	Smithsonian Folklife Festival Nora and Richard Dauenhauer	Alaska Native Oral Tradition by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer
Never Alone: Protecting Cultural Heritage through Interactive Play	2015	The Strong National Museum of Play	Never Alone: Protecting Cultural Heritage through Interactive Play
Documenting the Tlingit Raven Stories	2014	Richard and Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Tlingit culture bearers. Video by Sealaska Heritage Institute	Documenting Tlingit Raven Stories

PRIMARY SOURCES

TITLE	YEAR	SOURCE	LINK
Inupiaq Cultural Liaison/Inupiaq Immersion Instructor		Guest speaker in the classroom	
Never Alone: Foxtales (Kisima Inŋitchuŋa)			Alaska Inupiaq Never Alone: Foxtales (Kisima Inŋitchuŋa)
Tlingit Creation Story	1996	Glen Welker	Tlingit Creation Story

Raven's Greed: Raven Turns Himself Into a Woman & Raven and the Fish Hawk	1909	Alaska Native Knowledge Network, UAF.	RAVEN TURNS HIMSELF INTO A WOMAN
The Loon Story - An Alaskan Native Tanaina Tale	2012	Teresa Lowrey. Video by Anchorage School District.	The Loon Story - An Alaska Native Tanaina Tale

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think these stories with a moral were created?
2. What happened to cause these stories to stop being spread to subsequent generations?
3. Why should we bring these stories back and read/teach them to this generation?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history

Students will acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own

MATERIALS

Printed version of five traditional oral stories (listed above) for students to read and review and/or access to watch video clips.

Access to a Powerpoint program. Laptop.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Context:

A cursory knowledge of the Alaska Native peoples (Tlingit, Haida, Tsmshian, Inupiaq, Dena'ina Athabaskan, and more)

Rationale:

This lesson brings students closer to their culture and history. It promotes a sense of belonging and self-worth. The activities and assessments align with the literature curriculum currently in use in the school. The assessments provide a chance for students to share what they have learned with a bigger audience.

STANDARDS

Alaska State Standards

English/Language Arts

Reading Standards for Literature K5

Grade 5

Key Ideas and Details

1. Locate explicit information in the text to suppose inferences drawn from the text. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Alaska Cultural Standards

- A. Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.
 - 3. acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history
- B. Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life.
 - 1. acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own