

## **University of Alaska Museum of the North**

### **Directed Discovery Field Trip**

## **Alaska Native Cultures**

**4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**1½ hours**

### **Introduction, Welcome & Rules (20 minutes)**

**★Main Idea:**

There are many Native cultures in Alaska. Alaska Native cultures have developed in specific environments. Natural resources are utilized for survival.

Gather the class in the Education Center to welcome them to the museum, remove coats, review museum rules, & divide into groups. Introduce yourself and other docents. Tell the class what will happen during the tour.

The program is introduced through a PowerPoint presentation. Begin by using a map and discussing with students what different regions of Alaska are like (environmentally). Point out regions where different culture groups traditionally lived. Explain that there are many groups of Native peoples in Alaska (use language map to illustrate) and that today they will learn about some of the groups.

Be sure to emphasize that although many of the things we will see in the museum and photographs are historic, these are also modern cultures. You could ask the class if anyone is Alaska Native or has Alaska Native relatives.

### **I. Regional Resources (30 minutes)**

**★Main Idea:**

Subsistence and cultural traditions are tied to the historic availability of resources. Alaska Native peoples utilized natural resources to meet their needs.

This half of the class will explore in the Gallery of Alaska. A docent provides direction and guidance. Chaperones should help watch student behavior in the gallery. Students will complete activity sheets focused on comparing items from different regions of the state and different cultures. The emphasis is on subsistence and local resources.

Encourage students to explore and make comparisons. Docents should ask questions that inspire student curiosity. There may also be time for some use of hands-on objects in the gallery. However, the focus should still be on student guided time.

## **II. Trade Game (30 minutes)**

### **★Main Idea:**

Cultural groups traditionally came from distinct environments with different resources. Trading was an important way to acquire resources not available locally. Many trade items served as symbols of prestige.

Half of the class will gather together in the auditorium for the trade game. Set up for the game in advance. Use chairs to divide the space into three areas, with “mountain passes” through the chairs to allow students to move from one region to another.

Introduce the game. Discuss with students:

- Where do you get your food, transportation, and clothing?
- Exchange of money is a form of trade.
- Trading one item for another is a more direct form of trade.
- Trading with other groups brings in new ideas, new items, and new ways of doing things.

Review the areas where Athabascan, Eskimo, and Tlingit groups made their homes.

Explain that certain things were more abundant in some areas than in other areas. For example, copper is plentiful around the Copper River and scarce in other parts of Alaska; or some Athabascan may have had a more successful hunting season than other groups and had more food and skins than they needed.

While involved in all this trading, groups were making use of new ideas to make their own changes in tools, weapons, shelters, and clothing that they already had.

### Trading Game “Rules”

- Athabascans are the middlemen, Tlingits and Eskimos MUST trade through the Athabascan. This is a geographical necessity.
- Because the Athabascans, Tlingits and Eskimos all spoke different languages, students CANNOT talk with students in another cultural group. All trades must be done with sign language! We will assume that the same language is being spoken within a group so that within a group, students can talk together.
- Only one trade may take place at a time. (The number of objects traded can vary, but only one trade can be accomplished at a time.)
- Students have to trade for items listed on their card in the need column.

### Conclusion:

All people have the same basic needs. In subsistence lifestyle, people fill those needs with the materials found in the area they live in or they trade with other groups.

- How do we fill our needs today?
- Is our style of living different from living off the land?
- How has technology changed the way we live off the land today?

## **Wrap-up & Coats (5-10 minutes)**

Review what was learned today and what the students saw in the gallery. Pass out coats. Encourage students to visit the museum again with their families.