Activity 5: Ask an Elder

Time: 1-2 class periods (1 class period = 45 min)

Materials:
- Video or audio-recording device
- Ask an Elder worksheet
- Paper, markers, crayons, pencils, etc. to make cards

Standards Addressed:
- Alaska Cultural Standards: A.3, B.2, D.1, D.3
- Iñupiaq Cultural Values: Love for Children, Respect for Elders
- Alaska Science Content Standards: F.2, F.3

Background Information:
Iñupiaq elders have a wealth of knowledge and experience related to the region where they live. Within the Iñupiaq culture, elders serve as keepers and instructors of traditional, cultural and experiential knowledge. Inviting elders to the classroom or asking students to visit and interview elders in the community is a culturally appropriate way to help students learn. Some schools host lunch for the elders, or have elder visitors in the building frequently. This is a good resource for elder input. If you are new to the community, ask your school secretary, administrator or Iñupiaq language teacher about the areas of expertise among the elders in your community. When inviting an elder to the classroom, provide a chair for the elder and ensure that refreshments such as coffee, tea, water and sometimes a light snack are available. If students are visiting elders outside of school, refreshments are not necessary. Consider the weather when planning for elder interviews. Cold weather can make it more difficult for elders to come to school, and for students to go out into the community. It is important that students prepare a thank you card or small gift to deliver to the elder after their visit.

Assessments:
- Ask an Elder worksheet provides a means of assessing student ability to:
  - acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history;
  - use cultural knowledge of the northern lights to introduce the physical science processes behind them;
  - acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with elders;
  - demonstrate understanding that some individuals, cultures, and societies use other beliefs and methods in addition to scientific methods to describe and understand the world.
- Elder interviews and role playing provide a means of assessing student ability to:
  - communicate respectfully with elders;
  - interact with elders in a loving and respectful way that demonstrates an appreciation of their role as culture-bearers and educators in the community.

Activity Preparation:
1. Determine the best method for interviewing elders in your community at this time of year, and prepare accordingly. Consider in-class interviews, student visits to elder homes, or asking students to discuss the northern lights with the elders and knowledge bearers in their families (without a worksheet) and then compile a consensus via class discussion afterward.
Activity Instructions:

1. Ask students to share their experiences, knowledge and stories related to the northern lights. Explain that elders are an excellent resource for learning more about the northern lights and that students will ask elders about their knowledge of the northern lights in a classroom interview or by visiting elders in the community (If no elders are available, show students the Kiu'uyat: The Northern Lights video provided in the activity kit).

2. Teach students to ask about the northern lights in Iñupiaq:
   
   Quliaqtua'gutiyumiñaqpiña kiu'uyatigun?\textsuperscript{NS} (Can you tell me about the northern lights?)
   
   Sumik kulaiqpiupina kiiqiuqzraqmik?\textsuperscript{NP} (Can you tell me about the northern lights?)

3. Remind students that when interacting with elders, it is very important to be respectful, caring and appreciative. Ask students to work in small groups to role-play respectful, caring and appreciative interactions with elders.

4. Distribute the Ask an Elder worksheet to guide student interviews with elders. Please note: There are two versions of the worksheet. The North Slope Iñupiaq version is indicated by the superscript \textsuperscript{NS} in the worksheet’s title bar. The Northern Seward Peninsula Iñupiaq version is indicated by the superscript \textsuperscript{NP} in the worksheet’s title bar. Use the version that is most appropriate for your community. Ask students to take notes on the worksheet as they are talking to elders about the northern lights. Do they have any stories that were told to them? Did they learn any dances? What colors has the elder seen in the northern lights? Which colors are most common? Which are most unusual?

5. After elder interviews are complete, ask students to share what they learned. Create a concept map about the northern lights as a class, to summarize northern lights information from local elders.

6. Ask students to make and deliver thank you cards to the elders they interviewed. Chalk pastels are available in the northern lights learning kit.

Connections and Extensions:

- Introduce the Data Collection worksheet associated with the Where are the Northern Lights Visible in Your Area? activity. Students can practice recording data using this worksheet. Follow-up with the Where are the Northern Lights Visible in Your Area? activity and combine data.

- Write about it! Encourage students to write journal entries about their experiences interviewing elders. What were some things they didn't understand? What were some questions they still had after the interview?
Visit an elder in your community. Explain you are learning about the northern lights in school. Ask in Inupiaq: Quliaqtuaġutiyumiŋaŋqiŋa kiuŋuyatigun? (Can you tell me about the northern lights?) Take notes about what you learn.

Elder's name: ____________________________  From: ____________________________

Question to ask an elder:
Quliaqtuaġutiyumiŋaŋqiŋa kiuŋuyatigun? (Can you tell me about the northern lights?)

Notes:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Share something interesting that you learned about the northern lights from your elder. It might be a story about a time they remember seeing the northern lights, or a song or dance they shared. It might be an observation of the northern lights when they are visible from your community, or the colors that most frequently appear. What was interesting to you?

I was interested to learn that ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Visit an elder in your community. Explain you are learning about the northern lights in school. Ask in Iñupiaq: Šumik kulaiq̲liupina kiĝiuq̲zaq̲raq̲mik? (Can you tell me about the northern lights?) Take notes about what you learn.

Elder’s name: ___________________________ From: ___________________________

Question to ask an elder:
Šumik kulaiq̲liupina kiĝiuq̲zaq̲raq̲mik? (Can you tell me about the northern lights?)

Notes:
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

Share something interesting that you learned about the northern lights from your elder. It might be a story about a time they remember seeing the northern lights, or a song or dance they shared. It might be an observation of the northern lights when they are visible from your community, or the colors that most frequently appear. What was interesting to you?

I was interested to learn that ____________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________