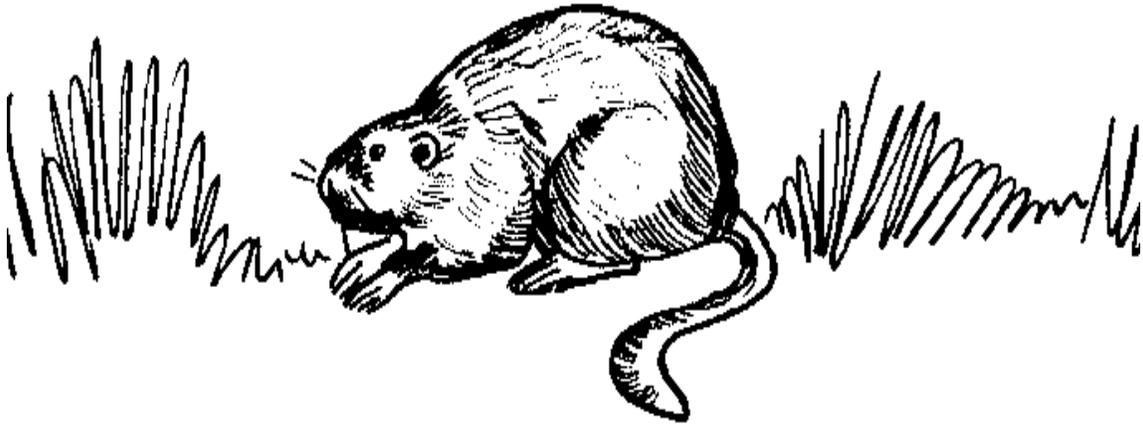


Traditional Lifeways Curriculum: TRAPPING

Upper Kuskokwim Region of Interior Alaska, K-12



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Nitotroda, dzin, mich'inaz^a

Muskrat

A Culturally-based Curriculum created by
Telida Traditional Council's
Indian General Assistance Program
Environmental Protection Agency

Traditional language translations (Dinak'i) by Betty Petruska and Ray Collins

Curriculum and Supplemental Resources available at www.ukpreservation.com

***TRADITIONAL LIFEWAYS CURRICULUM FOR GRADES K-12
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These education lessons are dedicated to the next generation to help protect our traditional way of life.



www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/clipart

*Dina'ena tsaye ghinet tu hidinethwts'
jija huniya deno.*

*People are boiling water for tea
while they are picking berries.*

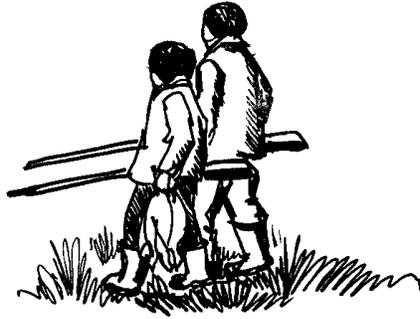
Traditional Lifeways Curriculum: TRAPPING
Upper Kuskokwim of Interior Alaska, K-12

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Foreword



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Telida Village has developed a series of subsistence education lessons that will keep the tribal members healthy and the environment clean for the future generations, fulfilling the Indian General Assistance Program’s objective to reduce the risk to human health and the environment.

The “Trapping in the Upper Kuskokwim, Interior Alaska” education unit is composed of four education lessons with a total of 15 activities. The lessons focus on (1) Trapping in the Upper Kuskokwim Region, (2) The Mammals We Trap, (3) Methods, and (4) Fur and Skin Usage. Educational activities include the Elders sharing traditional stories; talking with the students about the habits of furbearing animals; taking students on a local trapline; showing students how to skin and prepare furs; and working with students to sew a fur blanket.

The education lessons meet the Alaska State Content Standards and Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools. The activities in the lessons are based on “Translating Standards to Practice: A Teacher's Guide to Use and Assessment of the Alaska Science Standards” developed by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and on the Alaska Native Interior Educator’s Association’s K-12 Student’s and Teacher’s Resources books. The project was funded by a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency Indian General Assistance Program.

Curriculum Development Team



Charlene Dubay (Team Leader, Contributor) is the IGAP Environmental Director for Telida Traditional Council overseeing the development of the culturally-based Traditional Lifeways curriculum. Ms. Dubay has a Master's Degree in Cross-Cultural Studies from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Charlene has been integrating subsistence and language issues into preservation and outreach programs for over 20 years. She can be reached at charlenedubay@hotmail.com.



Steven Nikolai Sr. (Native Cultural Specialist) was born and raised in the Upper Kuskokwim region and is a First Speaker of Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan (UKA). Mr. Nikolai has taught bilingual classes at the Nikolai School in the Iditarod Area School District and is an experienced subsistence hunter, trapper and fisherman. Steven Sr. also worked with the Alaska Native Language Center. Steven Nikolai Sr. was Chief of the Telida Tribal Council for many years and has a heart for economic and social development as well as preserving traditional ways of living in the U.K. region. Steven provided UKA translations in the Series.



Teresa Hanson (Researcher, Contributor) holds a Masters Degree in Northern Studies and a Bachelors Degree in History from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She currently consults curriculum development projects, as well as develops grant proposals for Alaskan cultural issues such as language preservation. Teresa homeschooled her four children and other small groups for over 15 years. Her Oral History collection Master's thesis: "Homeschooling in Alaska" interviews are housed in the Oral History collection in the UAF Archives at Rasmuson Library. If you would like contact her about curriculum development or other educational consulting services, she can be reached at teresiconsulting@hotmail.com.



Susan L. Brown (Contributor) holds a Bachelor of Science in Education with endorsements in Special Education and Speech Pathology from the University of Central Arkansas. She also has completed graduate work in Education, Alaskan History, and Cross-Cultural Communication from the University of Alaska, University of Wisconsin and the University of Arkansas. As a former special needs teacher, homeschool educator and tutor, Susan specializes in curriculum development and educational consulting as well as grant writing. Susan has lived in Alaska for 22 years. She can be reached at <mailto:newsongarise@hotmail.com>.



Food and clothing made from beaver has helped to keep people healthy for generations.

Photo Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife DSL Image Library

Acknowledgements

Telida Village would like to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions to this project:

Steven Nikolai Sr. from Telida Village who assisted the tribe with the trapping lessons. He served as the Alaska Native Knowledge Consultant for the project.

Denali National Park Service which gave us permission to use Ray and Sandy Jo Collins “Nikolai-Telida Village History Report.”

Alaska Trapper’s Association, Richard K. Nelson, and others who generously allowed us to use their materials in our education lessons.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative work showed us why “math and science education must reflect—and strengthen—the values and wisdom of traditional Native Alaskan cultures.”(Boyer, 2005:2)

The Alaska Native Interior Educator’s Association’s K-12 Student and Teacher’s Resource’s books formed the basis for the culturally relevant, education lessons.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game allowed us to use written information and images from technical reports and the “Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series.”

The EPA Indian General Assistance Program has provided the funding for the cross-cultural, environmental education project.

Introduction to Traditional Lifeways Curriculum Series



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The wisdom of any culture lies not in the monuments constructed or the books written but rather within the skills it gives to its children for their continued survival.

When a community teaches co-operation, sharing and respect for the natural world it insures that the earth will continue to provide the necessities to nurture both the body and spirit of its people. From their earliest years the children of the Upper Kuskokwim Region are taught respect for land, water and the creatures of the earth.

Young children are encouraged to watch what others are doing. In this way they are learning what to do for themselves. They are being taught to be self-sufficient and when necessary to improvise with what is at hand. This ability to make independent decisions may someday be necessary for their own survival or that of another person.

Within the Upper Kuskokwim Region subsistence is necessary for day-to-day living. Hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering and gardening are crucial activities for the majority of the native population. (State of Alaska Website Community Descriptions)
Understanding rural issues such as sanitation, healthy drinking water and responsible solid management are necessary for the health of the environment and the individual.

The curriculum provided is not intended to replace the training of the elders but rather to provide a method, which supports this training.

Pattern of Life (Collins, revised 2004)

“The people of the Upper Kuskokwim area developed a pattern of life that was determined to a large extent by their environment. There were no permanent, year-round villages in the past. People had to move seasonally to harvest food and would winter in different locations to keep from depleting the resources such as food, fur, and firewood in any given place. As with other Athabaskans who reside near the head of a river system surrounded by mountains, they share a number of environmental constraints.

The climate is that of the Alaskan Interior with cold winters and relatively warm summers. The boreal forest provides a number of micro-environments. Black spruce and moss lie over areas of frozen ground that requires a hot fire to clear and thaw, thus allowing willow and birch to move in. The thawed ground along the rivers is covered with stands of white spruce and birch on the higher cut bank side of the river, with thick stands of willow and alder on the sandbars. Cottonwood are found along the river and aspen on the higher ground. Cross-country travel is difficult in much of the lowland area because of numerous swamps and boggy areas drained by small streams that flow into the major rivers. The rivers are the main highways for travel both in summer and winter.

Food resources vary in type, quantity and habitat. Three species of salmon ascend the Kuskokwim streams: Chinook (King), Chum (Dog), and Coho (Silver). Whereas hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of salmon enter the Kuskokwim River, but by the time they reach the headwaters only a few thousand or even a few hundred are left to spawn in any given stream.

Until the late 1800's and early 1900's moose were absent in most of the area. The large animals most harvested were Dall sheep, caribou, Black bear and Grizzly bear. Dall sheep habitat is limited to the Alaska Range. Caribou also spend much of the year in the mountains, moving down to the lowlands primarily during the winter. Today, moose is widely hunted.

Small game species such as rabbits, grouse and ptarmigan are widely dispersed but their populations are cyclic and in some years they are very scarce.

Ducks and geese pass through the area by the thousands in the spring when the headwaters of the rivers first open, but most move on to nest elsewhere. During the fall migration, when there is plenty of open water, most fly over the area without stopping except for a brief rest.

Yearly Cycle of Subsistence Activities (Collins, Revised 2004)

"A yearly cycle in one of these territories might begin with relocating to a fishing site in the late spring to take advantage of the fish runs that began moving upriver at breakup.

The original method for catching these fish was by constructing a fence and wire in a shallow side stream that was utilized for spawning. They were more difficult to catch in the main Kuskokwim River until the fishwheel was introduced in the 1900's, and large twine and nylon fish nets became available.

Nikolai and Telida were suitable sites for winter villages. Other sites that were used at times included East Fork, Big River and Vinasale. During the winter some families dispersed to trapline cabins. As trade goods and industry such as mining became more available at McGrath, Takotna and Medora, trapping began to play a bigger role in the yearly cycle.



ALASKA STANDARDS

Source of Information: Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools

The following standards are excerpts from the Alaska Cultural and State Content Standards.

Cultural Standards:

A. Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. assume responsibility for their role in relation to the wellbeing of the cultural community and their life-long obligations as a community member;
2. recount their own genealogy and family history;
3. acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history;
4. practice their traditional responsibilities to the surrounding environment;
5. reflect through their own actions the critical role that the local heritage language plays in fostering a sense of who they are and how they understand the world around them;
6. live a life in accordance with the cultural values and traditions of the local community and integrate them into their everyday behavior.

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.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own.
2. make effective use of the knowledge, skills and ways of knowing from

- their own cultural traditions to learn about the larger world in which they live.
3. make appropriate choices regarding the long-term consequences of their actions.
 4. identify appropriate forms of technology and anticipate the consequences of their use for improving the quality of life in the community.

C. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to actively participate in various cultural environments.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. perform subsistence activities in ways that are appropriate to local cultural traditions;
2. make constructive contributions to the governance of their community and the well-being of their family;
3. attain a healthy lifestyle through which they are able to maintain their own social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being;
4. enter into and function effectively in a variety of cultural settings.

D. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with Elders.
2. participate in and make constructive contributions to the learning activities associated with a traditional camp environment.
3. interact with Elders in a loving and respectful way that demonstrates an appreciation of their role as culture-bearers and educators in their community.
4. gather oral and written history information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance.
5. identify and utilize appropriate sources of cultural knowledge to find solutions to everyday problems.
6. engage in a realistic self-assessment to identify strengths and needs and make appropriate decisions to enhance life skills.

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

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. recognize and build upon the inter-relationships that exist among the spiritual, natural and human realms in the world around them, as reflected in their own cultural traditions and beliefs as well as those of others;
2. understand the ecology and geography of the bioregion they inhabit;

Science Standards:

A4 - A student who meets the content standard should understand observable natural events such as tides, weather, seasons, and moon phases in terms of the structure and motion of the Earth (Earth).

A12 - A student who meets the content standard should distinguish the patterns of similarity and differences in the living world in order to understand the diversity of life and understand the theories that describe the importance of diversity for species and ecosystems (Diversity).

A14a - A student who meets the content standard should understand the interdependence between living things and their environments (Interdependence).

A14b - A student who meets the content standard should understand that the living environment consists of individuals, populations, and communities (Interdependence).

A14c - A student who meets the content standard should understand that a small change in a portion of an environment may affect the entire environment (Interdependence).

A15 - A student who meets the content standard should use science to understand and describe the local environment (Local Knowledge).

B1 - A student who meets the content standard should use the processes of science; these processes include observing, classifying, measuring, interpreting data, inferring, communicating, controlling variables, developing models and theories, hypothesizing, predicting, and experimenting.

B3 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that scientific inquiry often involves different ways of thinking, curiosity, and the exploration of multiple paths.

B4 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that personal integrity skepticism, openness to new ideas, creativity, collaborative effort, and logical reasoning are all aspects of scientific inquiry.

B5 - A student who meets the content standard should employ ethical standards including unbiased data collection and factual reporting of results.

C2 - A student who meets the content standard should know how the words fact,” “observation,” “concept,” “principle,” “law,” and “theory” are generally used in the scientific community.

C3 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that society, culture, history, and environment affect the development of scientific knowledge.

C4 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that some personal and societal beliefs accept non-scientific methods for validating knowledge.

C7 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that major scientific breakthroughs may link large amounts of knowledge, build upon the contributions of many scientists, and cross different lines of study.

D2 - A student who meets the content standard should understand that scientific innovations may affect our economy, safety, environment, health, and society and that these effects may be short-term or long-term, positive or negative and expected or unexpected.

D3 - A student who meets the content standard should recommend solutions to everyday problems by applying scientific knowledge and skills.

D4 - A student who meets the content standard should evaluate the scientific and social merits of solutions to everyday problems.

D5 - A student who meets the content standard should participate in reasoned discussions of public policy related to scientific innovation and proposed technological solutions to problems.

D6 - A student who meets the content standard should act upon reasoned decisions and evaluate the effectiveness of the action.

Math Standards:

A. A student should understand mathematical facts, concepts, principles, and theories.

A student who meets the content standard should:

2. select and use appropriate systems, units, and tools of measurement, including estimation;
6. collect, organize, analyze, interpret, represent, and formulate questions about data and make reasonable and useful predictions about the certainty, uncertainty, or impossibility of an event.

B. A student should understand and be able to select and use a variety of problem-solving strategies.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. use computational methods and appropriate technology as problem-solving tools;
3. formulate mathematical problems that arise from everyday situations;
4. develop and apply strategies to solve a variety of problems.

- C. **A student should understand and be able to form and use appropriate methods to define and explain mathematical relationships.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. express and represent mathematical ideas using oral and written presentations, physical materials, pictures, graphs, charts, and algebraic expressions.

- E. **A student should be able to apply mathematical concepts and processes to situation within and outside of school.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

2. use mathematics in daily life; and
3. use mathematics in other curriculum areas.

Geography Standards

- A. **A student should be able to make and use maps, globes, and graphs to gather, analyze, and report spatial (geographic) information.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. use maps and globes to locate places and regions.

- B. **A student should be able to utilize, analyze, and explain information about the human and physical features of places and regions.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. know that places have distinctive geographic characteristics;
2. analyze how places are formed, identified, named, and characterized;
3. relate how people create similarities and differences among places;
4. discuss how and why groups and individuals identify with places;
5. describe and demonstrate how places and regions serve as cultural symbols;
6. make informed decisions about where to live, work, travel, and seek opportunities;
7. understand that a region is a distinct area defined by one or more cultural or physical features; and
8. compare, contrast, and predict how places and regions change with time.

- E. **A student should understand and able to evaluate how humans and physical environments interact.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. understand how resources have been developed and used;
2. recognize and assess local, regional, and global patterns of resource use;
3. understand the varying capacities of physical systems, such as watersheds, to support human activity;
4. determine the influence of human perceptions on resource utilization and the environment;
5. analyze the consequences of human modification of the environment and evaluate the changing landscape; and
6. evaluate the impact of physical hazards on human systems.

F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. analyze and evaluate the impact of physical and human geographical factors on major historical events;
2. compare, contrast, and predict how places and regions change with time;
3. analyze resource management practices to assess their impact on future environmental quality;
4. interpret demographic trends to project future changes and impacts on human environmental systems.

History Standards

A. A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that links the past to the present and the future.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. understand chronological frameworks for organizing historical thought and place significant ideas, institutions, people, and events within time sequences;
2. know that the interpretation of history may change as new evidence is discovered;
3. recognize different theories of history, detect the weakness of broad generalization, and evaluate the debates of historians;
4. understand that history relies on the interpretation of evidence;
5. understand that history is a narrative told in many voices and expresses various perspectives of historical experience;
6. know that cultural elements, including language, literature, the arts, customs, and belief systems, reflect the ideas and attitudes of a specific time and know how the cultural elements influence human interaction;
7. understand that history is dynamic and composed of key turning points;

8. know that history is a bridge to understanding groups of people and an individual's relationship to society; and
9. understand that history is a fundamental connection that unifies all fields of human understanding and endeavor.

B. A student should understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, places, ideas, institutions, cultures, people, and events.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. comprehend the forces of change and continuity that shape human history through the following persistent organizing themes:
 - a. the development of culture, the emergence of civilizations, and the accomplishments and mistakes of social organizations;
 - b. human communities and their relationships with climate, subsistence base, resources, geography, and technology.

C. A student should develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. use appropriate technology to access, retrieve, organize, and present historical information;
2. use historical data from a variety of primary resources...
3. apply thinking skills...
4. use historical perspective to solve problems, make decisions, and understand other traditions.

D. A student should be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to effectively participate as a citizen and as a lifelong learner.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. understand that the student is important in history;
2. solve problems by using history to identify issues and problems, generate potential solutions, assess the merits of options, act, and evaluate the effectiveness of actions;
3. define a personal position on issues while understanding the historical aspects of the positions and roles assumed by others;
4. recognize and demonstrate that various issues may require an understanding of different positions, jobs, and personal roles depending on place, time, and context;
5. base personal citizenship action on reasoned historical judgment with recognition of responsibility for self and others; and

6. create new approaches to issues by incorporating history with other disciplines, including economics, geography, literature, the arts, science, and technology.

English/Language Arts Standards

B. A student should be a competent and thoughtful reader, listener, and viewer of literature, technical materials, and a variety of other information.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. comprehend meaning from written text and oral and visual information by applying a variety of reading, listening and viewing strategies; these strategies include phonic, context, and vocabulary cues in reading, critical viewing, and active listening;
2. reflect on, analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral, written, and visual information and experiences, including discussions, lectures, art, movies, television, technical materials, and literature; and
3. relate what the student views, reads, and hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to other texts and experiences.

C. A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. make choices about a project after examining a range of possibilities;
2. organize a project by
 - a. understanding directions;
 - b. making and keeping deadlines; and
 - c. seeking, selecting, and using relevant resources;
3. select and use appropriate decision-making processes;
4. set high standards for project quality; and
5. when working on a collaborative project,
 - a. take responsibility for individual contributions to the project;
 - b. share ideas and workloads
 - c. incorporate individual talents and perspectives;
 - d. work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience; and
 - e. evaluate the processes and work of self and others.

D. A student should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information.

A student who meets the content standard should:

7. develop a position by
 - a. reflecting on personal experiences; prior knowledge, and new information;
 - b. formulating and refining questions;
 - c. identifying a variety of pertinent sources of information;
 - d. analyzing and synthesizing information; and
 - e. determining an author's purposes;
8. evaluate the validity, objectivity, reliability, and quality of information read, heard, and seen;
9. give credit and cite references as appropriate; and
10. explain and defend a position orally, in writing, and with visual aids as appropriate.

E. A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. use information, both oral and written, and literature of many types and cultures to understand self and others;
2. evaluate content from the speaker's or author's perspective;

Mathematics Standards

A. A student should understand mathematical facts, concepts, principles, and theories.

A student who meets the content standard should:

3. select and use appropriate systems, units, and tools of measurement, including estimation;
11. collect, organize, analyze, interpret, represent, and formulate questions about data and make reasonable and useful predictions about the certainty, uncertainty, or impossibility of an event.

B. A student should understand and be able to select and use a variety of problem-solving strategies.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. use computational methods and appropriate technology as problem-solving tools;
3. formulate mathematical problems that arise from everyday situations;
4. develop and apply strategies to solve a variety of problems.

- C. **A student should understand and be able to form and use appropriate methods to define and explain mathematical relationships.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. express and represent mathematical ideas using oral and written presentations, physical materials, pictures, graphs, charts, and algebraic expressions.

- E. **A student should be able to apply mathematical concepts and processes to situations within and outside of school.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

2. use mathematics in daily life; and
3. use mathematics in other curriculum areas.

(Alaska State Standards taken from the State of Alaska Website)

Lifeways Curriculum: Trapping

Sources of Information Adapted for Trapping

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series
www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/notehome.php

Alaska Trappers Manual (www.alaskatrappers.org), www.rogueturtle.com,
www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/guides/furbearer/TM-preseason.asp

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<http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/notehome.php>

Alaska Trapper's Association
<http://www.alaskatrappers.org/>

Kansas Dept of Wildlife and Parks
<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Furharvesting/Furbearer-Gallery/>

U of Michigan, Animal Diversity web
<http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu>

New Brunswick Trappers Association Canada
<http://www.nbtrappers.ca/furbearers.html>

www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/mammals/furtake.htm

www.primitiveways.com/rabbit_skin_blanket.html

- **Resource Books**

- *Alaska Trappers Manual*, The Alaska Trappers Association
- *Alaska Wolf Trapping Manual*, Alaska Trappers Association
- “*Beaver Trapping*” by Charles A. Wulf
- “*How to Make a Trapper Cap*” UAF Cooperative Extension CCM-00073

- **Stories**

- Chapter III “*Wintertime: Beaver Camp*” and Chapter IV “*Spring and Muskrat Trapping*” from *Tetlin as I Knew It* by Shirley David Jimerson; posted on ANKN, Athabascans of the Interior
- Chapter II “*The Female Beaver*” from “*When People Meet Animals*” Written by Patricia H. Partnow; posted on ANKN, Athabascans of the Interior
“*Tendi Goes Trapping and Fishing*”, by J.A. MacDiarmid, and
“*Tendi Goes Beaver Hunting*” by J.A. MacDiarmid

Animals of the North; by William O. Pruitt, Jr

Beavers; by Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III

Animal Scavengers: Wolverines; by Sandra Markle

Wolves; by Seymour Simon, Harper Collins Pub., 1993

“*Mammals of Denali*” by Adolph Murie

“*Tendi Goes Trapping and Fishing*” by J.A. MacDiarmid

“*Tendi Goes Beaver Hunting*” by J.A. MacDiarmid

“*Benjamin Beaver’s Box*” by Virginia W. Jones

“*Nits ‘ii’*”, Ch. I from *When People Meet Animals* by Patricia H. Partnow

“*The Female Beaver*”, Ch. II from *When People Meet Animals* by Patricia H. Partnow

Upper Kuskokwim Athabaskan dialect series.

Iditarod School District, McGrath, Alaska 1990

Translated into Upper Kuskokwim Athabaskan by Betty Petruska

- “*Dilja - Squirrel*”
- “*Dilja Dimaldu’K’a Ghetrak –Red Squirrel Cried for His Parka*”
- “*K’altsa – Fox*” translated by Betty Petruska
- “*Suje – Marten*”

And,

- “*Mary It Gwh It (Mary and the Rabbit)*” *A story for Children*, by Irene Roberts

Skills and Knowledge:

- Study the remnants of Russian occupation of the Upper Kuskokwim in their village and place names in their area...family names, religion, etc.
- Discern the extent that traditional life changed by the collaboration with the fur trade industry in the Upper Kuskokwim.
- Categorize the animals that are alike (ie. same family) what are their similarities...differences.
- Learn the habitats that will contain certain furbearing animals.
- Read topographic maps.
- Draw maps that covers 1 to 10 miles out from the village and pinpoint where they are likely to find certain furbearing animals.
- Identify the actual furbearing animals found in the same area.
- Study seasonal cycles of the furbearing animals and their interdependence upon one another and with the environment they inhabit.
- Students will interview Elders and other community members to learn traditional practices of furbearing animal management based on generational knowledge. They will compare this knowledge with Alaska Fish and Game scientific studies and regulations.
- Study animal behaviors and why they do what they do, whatever that is for that animal.
- Students will track the weather and the thickness of ice.
- Learn how traps and snares work.
- Collect data on snow depth and discover how that affects trapping.
- Compare steel traps and snares with traditionally made traps and snares.
- Construct traditional traps or snares.
- Learn the specialized tools needed in the trapping business, both traditional and modern.
- Create their own traps and see if their traps caught animals.
- Set traps (Techniques...Steel traps can be really dangerous to set and release).
- Compare traps and their different sizes, and their effectiveness on animals.
- Experiment to see what baits work best for which animal.
- Compare the insulation quality of different furs.
- Collect stories of traditional fur usage.
- Arrange a fashion show or display articles made with fur.
- Recite a traditional story about some sort of trapping event that was created by excessive snow, extreme cold, early or late breakup, etc.
- Express personal beliefs about a phenomenon, compare that with scientific beliefs.
- Participate in Bilingual subsistence activities.

Assessments:

- Charts
- Student Logs
- Class participation
- Graphs
- Tables
- Worksheets
- Written and Oral Stories
- Trapping Participation

Elders in the Classroom

by Roby Littlefield

“All students can benefit from inter-generational contacts. In Alaska Native cultures, grandparents were held in high regard as they contributed to the community by passing on knowledge and skills. Children learned by listening to and watching Elders and often didn't realize they were in training. Bringing grandparents in to share personal knowledge when studying subjects like nutrition, customs, plants, biology, and history can benefit the entire class.

To get started, first look to your class members. Send home a note or survey expressing your desire to include parents, grandparents, and Elders in your lessons. Get referrals for possible speakers from organizations that work with Natives and/or the Elderly.

The way to ask Native American Elders for help is different from Western customs. Initial and subsequent contact should be subtle. Visit with them, allowing time for the conversation to wander. Allow for extended pauses, giving them time to think and decide. If their hearing is poor, sit on the side of their better ear and make sure your lips can be seen. Direct eye contact should be limited. Standing or sitting at an angle can increase an Elder's comfort level. Keep your questions basic and specific.

Begin the request by telling a little story about your class and how the Elder could help. If you are not sure if the Elder is interested, hint strongly that you would like to have their help and ask if she or he knows of someone who might be willing to participate. Custom teaches that it is rude to give someone a frank "no" to a request for help, so you need to recognize that a noncommittal response might mean "no," or it might mean that the request is being considered. If at some point the Elder changes the subject more than once while you are explaining your request, you should be aware that she or he might be trying to say "no." Don't force a response; if it is clearly not a "yes," let it go, or suggest they can contact you after they've thought about it.

It is important to ask before a meeting for permission to make audio or video recordings. Don't show up with the equipment; you may force consent and cause bad feelings. Permission to listen to or tape a story or lecture does not give you any right to rebroadcast or write the story with you as author.

If an Elder has agreed to participate in a classroom, suggest an activity or topic outline so they know what you are expecting. Provide them with optional dates and the logistics. It is helpful to explain the routine, consequences for students' misbehavior, and possible options if problems come up during the lesson. It is your responsibility to ensure discipline is maintained. Be aware, however, that Elders generally do not support strict discipline in a public setting. Discuss how to make a smooth transition to help the Elder leave the class. Agree on some visual signs and ground rules.

When the Elder arrives, properly introduce her or him so the Elder understands your respect for them. The teacher should be alert for visual cues from the Elder during the visit and be prepared to give unspoken signals back. The teacher should stay in the room.

Give the Elder a chance to use traditional discipline. Be prepared to move a child to sit by an adult who can role model how to listen respectfully. If you have problems with students degrading or ignoring an Elder, have a teacher's aide or adult Native quietly intervene.

Most traditional stories are like a round, crocheted pot holder. The story teller goes round and round the subject until it all comes together and finally comes to the lesson or point. Be patient; allow the Elders to share their culture in their own way. Your students are learning how to listen. Students should refrain from interrupting to ask questions. There will be a proper time to ask questions.

As a thank-you, Elders usually appreciate students and teacher letters, pictures, and story booklets, which are treasured and shown to friends and relatives. This may also encourage other Elders to participate in classroom projects.

Sometimes you will find a resource person who is available for a wide variety of subjects and projects. If you use an Elder more than once, the school should provide some type of stipend in appreciation of the energy and knowledge the Elder is contributing. Be careful not to burn out your Elders. Whenever you make a request, be sure the Elder understands she is not obligated.

Keep your lessons flexible in case the Elder can't come at the last minute. Once an Elder has agreed on a time to come into your classroom, avoid changing or postponing the visit.” (Littlefield, Roby, Elders in the Classroom)



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Tso 'kan' eko nihwlyah.

He's looking for a beaver house.^a

The Upper Kuskokwim People and Trapping

Trapping History

We have been trapping furbearing animals long before the arrival of the first Russians into the Upper Kuskokwim region. We used skins for warmth and clothing and ate the meat of muskrat, lynx, and beaver. (Stokes1984:172-173) November is called Minich'i'unadla'e, or trapping month, in Upper Kuskokwim Athabaskan. (Holen et al 2004:76)

Beaver was an important food for us. According to older people in Nikolai, our ancestors trapped beaver almost all year round here. During the 1800s, beaver and caribou were important foods for many Upper Kuskokwim Athabaskan bands. The most common method of taking beaver at the time was to open the beaver house or dam and kill the beaver with spears, arrows, or clubs.

Other furbearing animals such as lynx, fox, wolverine, and wolf were trapped with deadfalls, snared with caribou hide nooses, shot with arrows or pierced by spears. We only took these animals to fill our clothing needs. (Stokes 1984:172-173)

Our people usually trapped all the furbearing animals from the late fall through mid-winter. We also trapped beaver and muskrat from late winter through the early summer. (Holen et al 2004:76)

Until the late 1960s, most of us trapped during the winter. Because our families needed to trap different animals in different places, they ran traplines that were up to 100 miles long. Our dog teams were small, so it could take a person up to a week to check a trapline and then return home. The trappers also hunted for sheep, moose, caribou and at times black and grizzly bears along the long traplines lines that were near Alaska Range foothills.

We often worked together on a trapline. Two brothers, a man and his brother-in law or a widow with the help of hers sons would combine dogs and equipment to work the trapline. However, women do not usually trap. When we were finished trapping, we divided up the catch. Many of the longer traplines had cabins on them because we used to live out on our trap lines over the winter.

Now, we set up canvas wall tents and use the cabins that are still standing. During the first trip of the season, we set up the temporary camps and leave them in place until the last run of the season. Our trapping trails and camps are also used by the other people who sometimes followed us to the hunting areas along the Alaska Range. (Collins 2000:175-176)

Most Nikolai and Telida trappers trap alone or with members of their families. When people form a partnership, it is usually with family members or people in the same household and is mostly for trapping beaver.

Boys get experience trapping marten, hare, and other small game by setting small traplines near the village and then checking their lines after school. Young men gain experience by going on trapping trips with their relatives.

We usually begin trapping in early November. When there is open water or lack of snow on the trail, we have to trap around the village. Once the snow comes, we can travel to areas outside the village. We have set most of our traplines by the first week of December. (Stokes 1984:183-185)



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Gwhchwh at yet izdlan.^b

He caught a lynx in a trap.

The Mammals We Trap

The furbearing mammals we have traditionally trapped are beaver, fox, marten, lynx, mink, muskrat, otter, wolf, and wolverine. Smaller mammals that we have trapped or snared include snowshoe hare, squirrel, grouse and ptarmigan. Many of these mammals experience population cycles. Therefore where we find them, how many we take and how we catch them changes through the seasons. (Stokes 1985:178)

Animals that belong to the weasel family (called Mustelidae) are the ones that attracted trappers, traders, and settlers to Alaska from around the world. Some of the most valuable furbearers belong to this family including marten, wolverine, river (land) otter, sea otter, mink and weasels.

People say that the marten (suje) is probably the most abundant furbearer living in the Upper Kuskokwim. We find martens everywhere and they are easy for us to take. (Stokes 1985:178)

The marten is a furbearing relative of the mink with soft, dense fur which ranges in color from pale yellow to dark brown, shading to black on the feet and legs.

The marten is Alaska's most widely trapped animal. A trapper may take from 100 to 400 marten per season, but most average 20 to 30. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

“Fox (k'altsa), like marten, are found throughout the Upper Kuskokwim. The red fox normally has a red coat, white-tipped tail, and black socks, although it can be other colors like red, cross, silver and black.

The fox is cunning and intelligent. This is because it has well developed senses of sight, smell, and hearing. “These animals are more difficult to catch according to trappers, but can still be taken in fair numbers each season with both steel leg traps and small-bore firearms. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website).

The beaver (tso') has a heavy chestnut brown coat and warm soft underfur that keeps the animal comfortable in all temperatures. In the past, pelts were so important they were used for trade instead of money. Today we still harvest these furs. They are highly prized for cold weather coats and hats. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

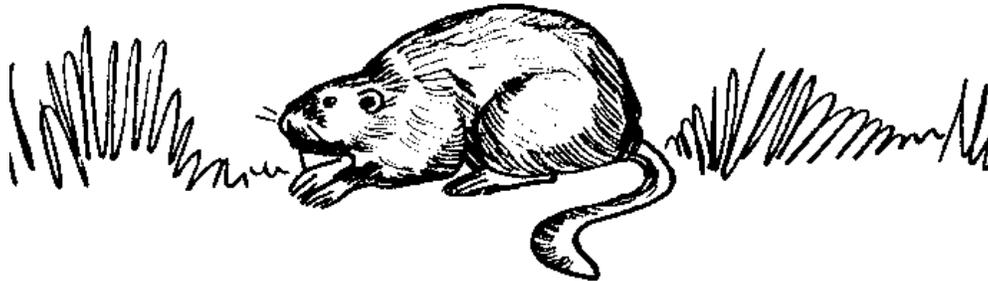
The lynx (gwhchwh) is a large, short-tailed cat that has long legs, furry feet, long tufts of hair on the tip of each ear, and a completely black-tipped tail. The large broad feet act as snowshoes that help the lynx in winter.

Lynx are curious animals and are not difficult to trap using lures made from beaver castor, or other scents. Visual attractors such as bird wings or aluminum foil can be used

to catch the lynx's sharp visual senses. Lynx pelts have historically had a higher value. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

Wolverine (nitresh) is probably the most difficult furbearer to catch for area trappers. They are not found in large numbers. Wolverines can interfere with a trapper's activities for an entire season by eating the furbearers that they have trapped. (Stokes 1985:178)

The long dense fur of the wolverine is generally dark brown to black with a creamy white to gold stripe running from each shoulder along the flanks to the base of the tail. The wolverine has a powerful jaw and large neck muscles allowing it to crush and eat bones and frozen flesh (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website).



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Nitotroda, dzin, mich'inaz

Muskrat

Muskrat (nitogtroda) are found throughout mainland Alaska and the Upper Kuskokwim area. They are one of Alaska's most numerous furbearers; but harsh winters, dry summers, and overpopulation affects their populations.

The muskrat which looks like a beaver is small with a rat-like tail. Their coats have soft, dense under fur and long, coarse, shining guard hairs. The color of their fur ranges from a medium silvery brown to dark brown with a lighter belly. The feet and tail are dark brown or black. Muskrat fur is beautiful and durable and the meat is very tasty and commonly used as human food. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

The River otter (miziya') or land otter is found throughout most of Alaska. The River otter is black-brown, with the belly slightly lighter in color than its back.

River otters have no real predators except man. They are occasionally killed unintentionally when they become entangled in fishnets or trapped in crab pots. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

The mink is a member of the weasel family. A mink's fur is in prime condition when its guard hairs are thickest. Mink are then a chocolate brown with some irregular white patches on the chin, throat, and belly.

The predators that eat mink include wolves, foxes, hawks, owls, lynx, and river otters. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

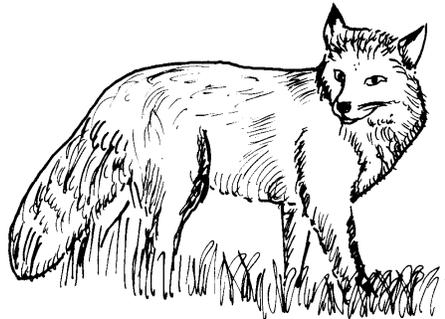
Wolves are members of the dog family. The pelt color of wolves living in Alaska ranges from black to nearly white, with every shade of gray and tan between these extremes.

Wolves are very social animals and mostly live in packs with parents and pups of the same year. In Alaska, the territory of a pack can cover 300 to 1,000 square miles of land with the average being about 600 square miles. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)

There are two kinds of hares (gwh) in Alaska and both of them turn white in the winter. The Snowshoe or Varying hare, is the most common of these. In summer, their coats are yellowish to grayish brown with white under parts, and the tail is brown on top. They shed this coat and the new one is white in winter, but the hairs are shadowy at the base and the under fur is gray. Their ears are dark at the tips. The large hind feet are well furred, adapting these animals for the deep snows of the boreal forests—that’s why they are named “snowshoe”. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website).

The Red Squirrel is well known for its lively habits and noisy chatter. It can be found in spruce forests over most of Alaska. The Red Squirrel is a rusty-olive color on the upper parts of its body with a whitish belly and underparts.

We use Red Squirrel for food and fur. Even though the squirrel may be small but the meat is good to eat. Squirrels may be small but the meat is good to eat. (Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series: Alaska Department of Fish and Game Website)



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Nogitsa yonan noghilttil.

A fox is running across.

Methods

Deadfall devices (dichin-ał - literally "tree trap") were traditionally used by our ancestors for killing furbearer animals. The construction details of these sets can vary, the basic idea of how it works is simple. Depending on the species, bait was attached to a central support so that when moved it caused a large object such as a log to fall on the animal, often killing it instantly. (Stokes 1965:179)

Our traditional snares were made of caribou babiche or hide. They were placed over the trails of furbearers in a way that is similar to today. The steel snares that we use for beaver trapping did not appear until the early 1940s. Before the steel snares were invented, beaver were trapped using steel leg traps attached to poles through the ice. Because they did not work as well as the steel snares we use today, we also hunted beaver into early summer using rifles and traps that we set up along the riverbank slides to get more beaver.

Today we pretty much only use steel leg traps (ał), steel snares (gaguł), and sometimes conibear style traps. The three types of land sets we usually use are: the ground or "cubby" set, snare sets, and the pole or elevated set. We use ground sets for all the fur bearers that live on the land. Snares are primarily employed for wolves, wolverine, and at times, fox and lynx. Pole sets are used for marten. Steel snares and conibear traps are used for trapping beaver beneath the ice. Trapping also requires special tools.

How often a trapper runs his trapline differs between trappers. When the trapper lives out on his line, he usually checks his traps daily. Other lines may be run once a week, usually on weekends when the trapper has a wage-earning job during the week.
(Stokes 1985:180-181)

We used to use dog sleds to run our traplines. Teams of five or six dogs meant you did some walking. Longer teams of seven to ten dogs meant you got to ride. Nowadays we use snowmachines and most of us no longer live out on the traplines. Snowmachines can cover many more miles very quickly, but when they break down it is a long walk home!

Some trappers use aircraft to get to and from their trapping areas. Most of these aerial trappers own their planes, but some charter commercial aircraft to reach their trapping areas.

A sled is usually towed behind the snowmachine to haul supplies and the catch. Sled types include locally built birch basket sleds, commercially manufactured folding metal sleds, or big plastic snowmachine sleds. The birch basket sleds are both lightweight and strong, and used to be the favorite among trappers. (Stokes 1985:181)

Traplines range from just a few miles to about 100 miles in length. Since traplines are often handed down through the family, experience along a trap line often decides where traps are placed, because some locations have always yielded large numbers of certain animals.

Trapping is a fairly expensive undertaking today. It also takes a lot of time. Trapping for some animals is also physically demanding also. In addition to fuel costs, local trails cause wear and tear on snowmachines and sleds. For trappers who depend on trapping, a poor harvest year can be financially painful. Low fur prices and market demand can also cause financial hardship for serious trappers.

We are keep track of the furbearer populations going up and down. We know that overharvesting any animal can cause problems with subsistence and cost money. Because of this, many trappers only catch a certain amount of animals and rest their trapping area for one or more seasons so the animal population can come up in the area again. (Stokes 1985:182)

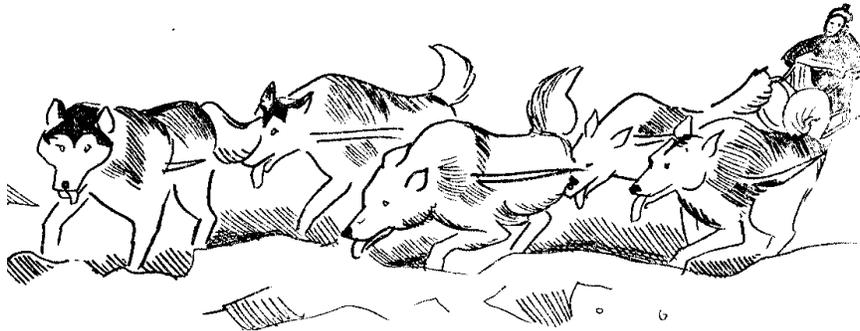
Historically, snowshoe hare (gwh) harvest activities were an important part of seasonal activities. Snowshoe hare were snared, chased, and clubbed, or shot with arrows during the fall, winter, and early spring. Hare provided a major source of food. Their skins were used for winter clothing linings and for bedding. Snowshoe hare or rabbits are usually

found in willow thickets near the rivers. Today, they are usually hunted or snared during the fall and early winter, although they can be caught anytime throughout the year.

(ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/units/rabbits.html)

Squirrels were trapped fairly regularly in the olden days when their fur was used for blankets. They were an emergency food in hard times. A small amount of peanut butter placed on the center of the pole will attract the squirrels to the pole.

(Thompson 1974:44)



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Minich'i'unadla'e

November (trapping time)

Skin and Fur Usage

Long before the arrival of Europeans into Alaska, almost all our clothing was made from skins and fur. Most of our sewn fur items are more reliable for staying warm in our cold climate than the newer clothing. That is why it is important to remember how to use our fur and hides; someday the newer European type clothes may not be available to us anymore. (Steinbright 1985:73)

For most species there are three steps to bring fur from its raw form to a good quality pelt. These are skinning, drying, and stretching. Afterwards the hide is tanned, and can then be used to make clothes. (North Dakota Game and Fish Department)

Beaver is our most important furbearing animal for food and clothing. Beaver fur is used for trim on boots, mittens, gloves, parkas, clothing, and for hats.

Red fox hides can be used for making parkas, clothing trim, hats and children's parka ruffs. The meat was eaten when there was not enough other food. Weasel hide is used for clothing trim. The meat is not eaten.

Mink hide is used for making mittens, hats, clothing trim, and as summer pants in the old days. The meat is eaten occasionally. Its castor is used as bait for mink and weasel trapping.

Otter hide is used for making men's boots, mittens, parka, and boot trim. In the old days it was used for summer pants. Women do not wear river otter hide. Otter meat was used for food, but women don't eat it. Marten hide is used for hats and clothing trim. The meat was eaten in the old days when there was not enough other food.

Muskrat hide is used for making parkas, mitten lining, clothing trim, and in the old days it was used to make summer pants. The meat is very good. The liver, head, feet, and tail are also eaten. The remaining parts are used as dog food. Muskrat castor is used as an ointment to heal sores.

Wolf hide is used for making parkas, mittens, winter boots, and parka ruffs. The meat is not eaten, but was in the old days. Wolverine is used for men's parkas and boot trim, and for trimming and inner ruffs on men's and women's parkas.

Lynx hide is used for making men's parkas, mittens and caps, but not for women and children to wear. The meat is good to eat but not for women. (Nelson 1982:352-354)

Blankets were made from squirrel skins too. (Personnel comm. with Steven Nikolai Sr.)

Notes- for “The Story of the Upper Kuskokwim People and Trapping”:

1. The story was adapted from the references that were listed after each section in the story. The full references are found in the Trapping Bibliography on page 139.
2. Upper Kuskokwim translations for this section were provided by Ray Collins and Betty Petruska in the Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan Junior Dictionary. The reference for the dictionary and the page numbers for the translations that were taken from the dictionary are provided below:

Dictionary Reference- Collins, Ray, and Betty Petruska. 1979. *Dinak’i (Our words)*. Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan Junior Dictionary. Anchorage. NBMDC.

Page numbers- for the translations taken out of the dictionary:

- a. He’s looking for a beaver house, page 6.
- b. He caught a lynx in a trap, page 59.
- c. Muskrat, page 67.
- d. A fox is running across, page 56.
- e. November (trapping time), page 65.