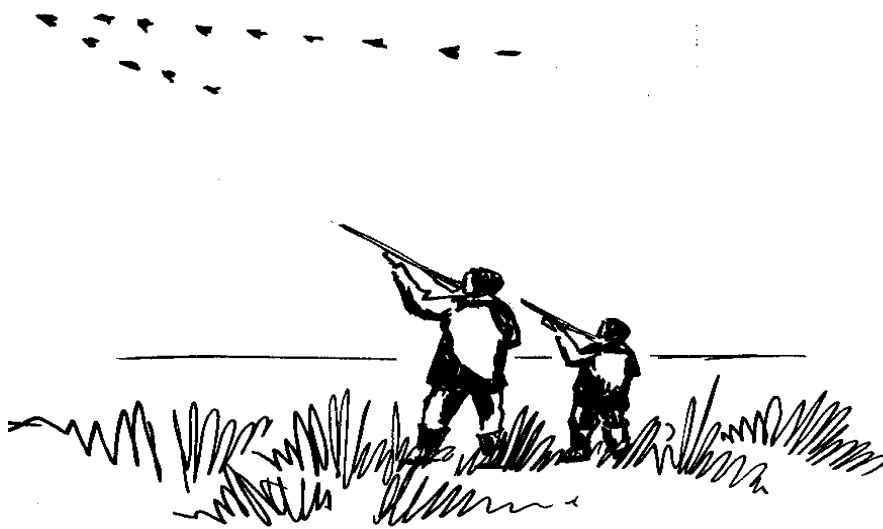


Traditional Lifeways Curriculum: BIRD HUNTING

Upper Kuskokwim Region of Interior Alaska, K-12



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*Notehna dina dolmoya il ch'ihdiltwtl'.
Two men are shooting geese.*

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

Traditional language translations (Dinak'i) by Steven Nikolai Sr.

Curriculum and Supplemental Resources available at www.ukpreservation.com

***TRADITIONAL LIFEWAYS CURRICULUM FOR GRADES K-12
A UNIT STUDY APPROACH***

Also in the series:

FISHING

TRAPPING

GATHERING

BIRD HUNTING

MOOSE HUNTING

***ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES***

Additional Curriculum Coming Soon

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

Traditional language translations (Dinak'i) by Steven Nikolai Sr.

Curriculum and Teaching Resources available at www.ukpreservation.com

These education lessons are dedicated to the next generation to help protect our traditional way of life.



www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/clipart/clipart.html

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

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

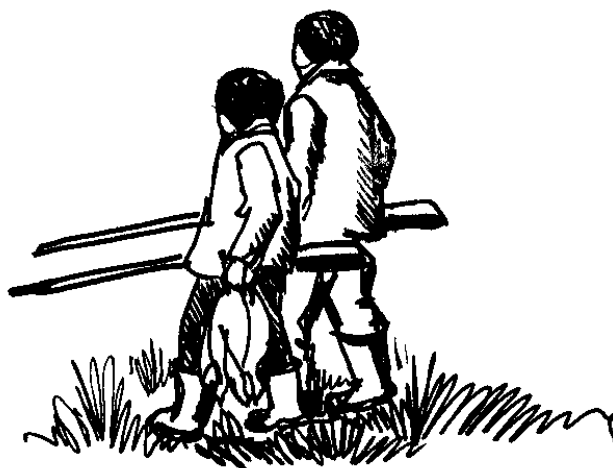
**Traditional Lifeways Curriculum: BIRD HUNTING
Upper Kuskokwim Region of Interior Alaska, K-12**

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Foreword



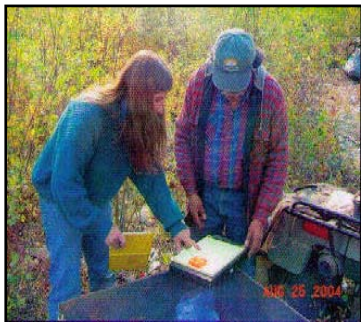
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Telida Village has developed a series of subsistence education lessons that will keep the tribal members healthy and the environment clean for the future generations, fulfilling the Indian General Assistance Program's objective to reduce the risk to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

The "Bird Hunting in the Upper Kuskokwim, Interior Alaska" unit is composed of five educational lessons: Waterfowl Game, Upland Game Birds, When and Where to Hunt Birds, How to Hunt, and Uses of Game Birds. There are a total of 28 activities included. Educational activities include the Elders sharing on waterfowl and game birds, upland bird spotting field trip, planning for the bird hunt, practicing traditional and modern bird hunting methods, and an Elder's and experienced hunter's luncheon.

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.



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1st Chief Steven Nikolai Sr. with his son Tim help keep the environment clean for future generations.
Photo by Greg Christensen

Acknowledgements

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

Telida Village 1st Chief Steven Nikolai Sr. assisted the tribe with the bird hunting lessons. He served as the Alaska Native Knowledge Consultant for the project as well as providing the translations for the illustrations.

Ray and Sandy Jo Collins “Nikolai-Telida Village History Report” provided the historical information for the founding of Telida Village; the people’s pattern of life; and their yearly cycle of subsistence activities.

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

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 in the moose hunting unit.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game technical report “Natural Resource Utilization of Four Communities” by Jeff Stokes, Technical Paper No. 86 provided us with written subsistence information that we needed for the lessons.

The Environmental Protection Agency Indian General Assistance Program funded the project. A special thanks goes to Mahri Lowinger, EPA Project Officer, and Valerie Badon, EPA Grants Specialist for their assistance with the 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.¹ Understanding rural issues such as sanitation, healthy drinking water and responsible solid management are necessary for the health of the environment and the individual. (State of Alaska Website)

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, Ray)

“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. (Collins, Ray. Revised, 2004)

Yearly Cycle of Subsistence Activities

"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. (Collins, Ray. Revised 2004)



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;

Content Standards

English/Language Arts

Source of Information: Alaska State 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, 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;
 - 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:

1. 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;
2. evaluate the validity, objectivity, reliability, and quality of information read, heard, and seen;
3. give credit and cite references as appropriate; and
4. 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

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

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. select and use appropriate systems, units, and tools of measurement, including estimation.
5. 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.

- A. 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.

A. 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.

D. 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.

Science

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

A student who meets the content standard should:

14. understand:

- a. the interdependence between living things and their environments; (Interdependence).
- b. that the living environment consists of individuals, populations, and communities; (Interdependence).
- c. that a small change in a portion of an environment may affect the entire environment (Interdependence).

15. use science to understand and describe the local environment (Local Knowledge).

C. A student should understand the nature and history of science.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- d. understand that society, culture, history, and environment affect the development of scientific knowledge.

D. A student should be able to apply scientific knowledge and skills to make reasoned decisions about the use of science and scientific innovations.

A student who meets the content standard should:

1. apply scientific knowledge and skills to understand issues and everyday events.
2. recommend solutions to everyday problems by applying scientific knowledge and skills.

Geography

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, such as the Statue of Liberty;
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

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 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:

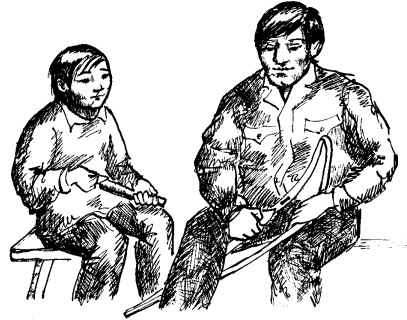
1. understand that the student is important in history;
2. solve problems by using history to identify issues and problems, generate potential solutions, assess the merits of options, act, and evaluate the effectiveness of actions;
3. define a personal position on issues while understanding the historical 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.

Skills and Knowledge – Working with Elders

Source of Information: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
(Stokes: p162-170)

Students will:

1. listen, participate and communicate respectfully with Elders.
2. make journal entries of about Elders' sharing and teaching and all unit topics.
3. identify Athabascan values.



Alaskan Clipart by Alan Dick

Identify Traditional Hunting Places: Locate on regional maps traditional Upper Kuskokwim bird hunting including physical landmarks and identify and learn UK Athabascan names for all traditional boundaries, campsites, trails, rivers, hill and mountains, etc., that are traditional bird hunting areas.

Study Family Clans and Associations: Establish a personal knowledge base of the Upper Kuskokwim people and their traditional way of living and understand hunting dynamics of clans and families.

Hunting Skills

Students will:

1. learn the traditional tools and technology used to hunt birds.
2. learn the current tools and technology used to hunt birds.
3. research historical patterns of bird hunting and current regulated seasons.
4. gain knowledge of how birds were historically chosen for harvest. Understand today's regulations for bird harvest.
5. learn hunting strategies that are dependent on the season, weather, terrain, time of day, etc.
6. learn how to process birds.
7. learn how to care for and preserve the bird meat.

Sharing the Bird Catch: Understand the traditional ways of distributing, sharing, and bartering bird meat and learn any ceremonial uses of birds

Participate in Story Telling: Share bird hunting stories and learn a traditional Native story concerning the Crane.

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.

The Story of the Upper Kuskokwim People and Bird Hunting

Illustrations Translated into Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan (Dinak'i) Language



www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/clipart/clipart.html

Donantok'e dolmoya minh hwdigu' nodit.

Eight geese are flying above the lake.

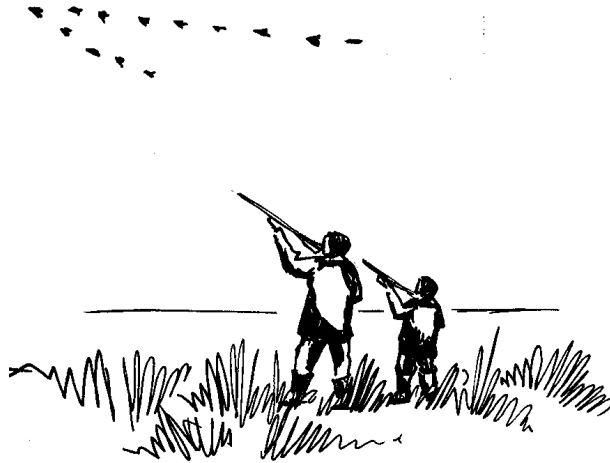
Hunting Birds, Collecting Eggs and Using Feathers

Long ago, the people hunted birds that lived on the water during the springtime, the summer and the fall. The people lacked food in the springtime so they hunted the ducks (*tugaga'*), cranes (*dal*), and geese (*dolmoya*) for fresh meat on the river and brought them back to springtime camps.

The people hunted the water birds with arrows, clubs and nets. They used arrows to shoot birds on the land and flying in the air, made heavy clubs for taking birds and threw nets over the birds. Some people drove molting birds into the nets. One story says, people walked behind the birds and caught them with their hands. The people ate the birds they hunted and dried the meat they didn't eat.

In the springtime, the people picked up eggs from the bird nests and ate them. When the people found a duck or a goose nest, they gathered the eggs for their own use.

People used the bird feathers in ceremonies, the swan (*tomo*) skins to make clothes for the winter and skins from the mallard duck (*tsilhighosh*) heads to make caps for babies.



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Notehna dina dolmoya it ch'ihdittwt'.

Two men are shooting geese.

People Hunt Birds along the River

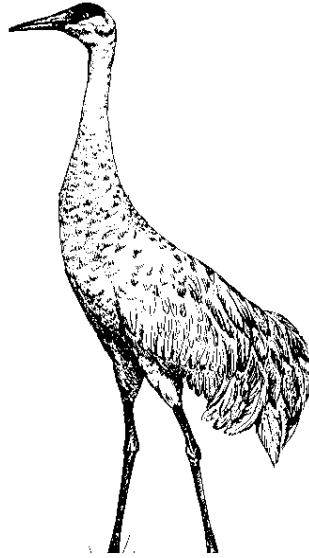
Now, people go down the river in aluminum boats and hunt the water birds that live along the Upper Kuskokwim River. Many families eat the birds during the springtime, the summer and the fall.

The Birds People Hunt

The people hunt ducks, cranes and geese. They take many ducks because there are lots of them and they are not hard to catch. The people like geese the most.

People do not hunt the loon (*dodzine*) and “fish ducks” that dive for food because the meat tastes like fish.

People take the goldeneyes (*tsekonya*) during the springtime but do not eat the buffle heads (*tl'altat*) and mergansers (*tsighwsr*) during the springtime and the summer. They usually do not hunt the swans because they think they mate for life.



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Dat k'o'edosh.

Crane walking around.

When the People Hunt Birds

In the early springtime, people hunt many ducks, cranes, and geese because the ice is melting on the lakes and the rivers. Many birds come to drink at small water holes or to feed in the grass meadows. It is not hard for the people to hunt them.

During the late springtime, the people stop hunting the birds when the eggs get big in the oviduct. They only hunt the birds in the summer when they lack food.

In the late summer and the early fall, the people start to hunt the birds again when the young birds are growing older. They do not catch a lot of birds because it is hard to get near them. Also, many birds are leaving the lakes and the rivers because the winter is coming.



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Notek'a tugaga' minh mogh k'o'edimash.

Two ducks are swimming along the lake shore.

How the People Hunt Birds

In the early springtime, people make blinds from brush, stumps and driftwood so they can catch the water birds. They put the blinds near the lakes, swamps and sandbars that the birds use for food, water and resting.

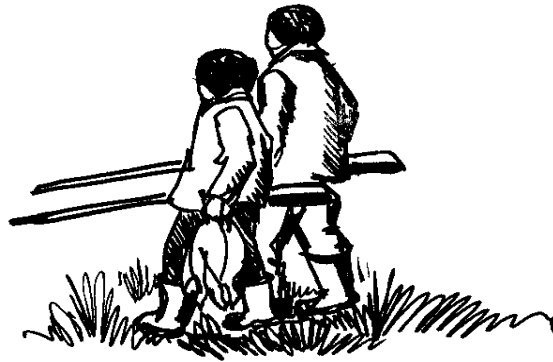
The people use decoys for catching the birds. They make the decoys by cutting bird shapes from cardboard and placing them on sand bars; finding small pieces of driftwood that look like the birds; and propping up the birds they have shot with sticks. People do not buy many decoys.

The people also call the geese so they will come near them. They do this by imitating the geese, blowing through an old shotgun shell with a hole melted in the side, or using a bird caller they buy from the store.

Most people hunt water birds with a 12-gauge shotgun and a number 2 and 4 size shot. They also use 10-, 12-, and 16- gauge shotguns, a .22 caliber rifle for wounded birds and a .30-06 rifle for hunting cranes that fly beyond shotgun range. The people do not take many cranes with a rifle.

The people look for the wounded birds that fall away from where they are hunting. They also try to drive out or wait for injured birds hiding under hanging ice during the late springtime river hunt.

People bring aluminum boats by snowmobile to places along the rivers that open up early. After the ice breaks up, they hunt water birds along the stretches of river with open water.



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Notehna dina sritodihwl'anh.

Two men are hunting.

The People who Hunt Birds

Families and their relatives hunt water birds together. The women go with the men but usually clean the birds, keep the campfire going and cook the food.

There are always two or more people in the boat so no one gets hurt. One person drives the boat and the other people shoot the birds. The people who take the birds give some of the catch to the boat driver. People usually do not use dogs when they go bird hunting.



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Dina kwnets' zido ts'e' yada hwla iko'elnes.

Man sitting by campfire and cooking something.

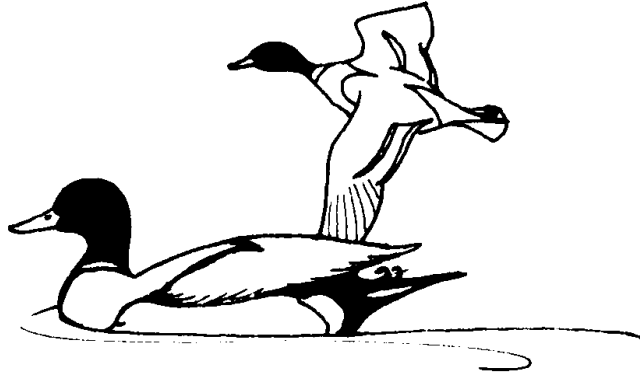
Cleaning the Birds

The person who shoots the bird cleans part of it where they are hunting. They take the bird to the camp where the women clean the bird and cook it.

Most people pluck the large bird feathers. They do this when the bird is warm or pluck part of the feathers while they are hunting more birds. Some people remove the bird skin while others dip the bird in hot wax and remove the feathers after the bird is cool.

Once the large feathers are removed, the people singe the bird over the fire. They take off the pin feathers, use a stick to scrape the skin and clean the skin in the fire. People singe most of the birds in their community.

People use crane and geese wings for hand brooms in the steambath. They spread out the bird wings on wood so they can dry. People hit their bodies with the wings to make more heat for joints that hurt.



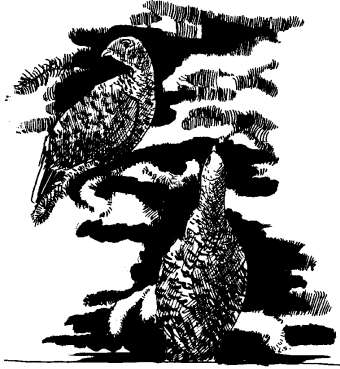
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Notek'a tsilhighosh ts'elk'e k'o'edimash ts'elk'e chu' not'wh.

Two Mallard ducks one swimming and one flying.

Preserving the Bird Meat

When people cannot freeze the meat, they hang the bird to dry. This makes the bird meat dry and only the older people eat meat like this. So, people without a freezer usually only hunt the birds they need for food for the day.



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Dish ts'ima kits' dizdo.

Spruce Chicken is sitting on a spruce tree.

Hunting Grouse and Ptarmigan near the Alaska Range

Long ago, people hunted many grouse and ptarmigan near the Alaska Range in the fall and the winter. They took the birds during the early day.

Now, the people hunt Spruce grouse or “chickens” the most. In the late fall or early winter, people hunt the Spruce grouse during the day on gravel bars and in the woods. They shoot the birds with 22 caliber rifles. People clean the Spruce grouse like the water birds.

During the fall, people also hunt the Willow and the Sharp Tail grouse (*ch'iltwle, trok'wda*), Spruce grouse (*dish*), and the Ptarmigan (*k'ots'ima, dilgima*) along the rivers. Because the cottonwood, alder, or willow plants and trees lack leaves, it is not hard for the people to see the birds. They shoot the ptarmigan and the grouse with .22 caliber rifles.

Young men shoot the Willow grouse, the Sharp tail grouse and the Spruce grouse. Older men and some women also take the Spruce grouse.



Credit: USFWS

Crane

A traditional story told in Deg Hit'an Athabascan by John Paul

“In the spring, the crane comes back.
He brings back the little birds.

He circles above the village.
He makes noise when he circles the village.

He lets the little birds off where he knows they live.

He keeps going with those that are going to another place.
He keeps doing that until he has let off all the birds.

The swan thought, “I should do that, too.”
The little birds went to the swan.

The little birds went to the swan and it started carrying them;
It began to get hungry.
It started to grab for them.
It started to eat them.

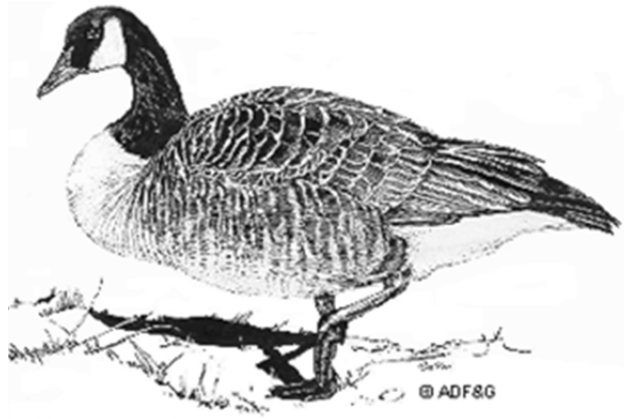
It started letting them off where they were supposed to go.
We'll not fly with him anymore,
because he got hungry and killed some of us.
The crane leaves them alone and stops to eat.
The birds eat, too.

After that they climb on him again and he takes off.
He does that until he has let them all off.
He leaves the birds where they are supposed to go
They are thankful to him and say he was good to them.”

We'll only go back with the crane.
From this day, the little birds only go with the crane.
Even if the crane is hungry, he never bothers them.

Crane, Translated into Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan by Betty Petruska, Excerpt courtesy of Alaska Native Language Center

Geese have been highly valued as protectors and pets -- especially true of white-fronted geese. Geese have been trained to sight game for hunters.



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The following goose account from: Bird Traditions of the Lime Village Area by Priscilla N. Russell and George C. West. (p39)

How Tame Geese Saved the Lives of a Woman and Her Two Daughters

A Traditional Bird Story

By Vonga Bobby

Long ago people raised wild geese at Htsit (Tishimna Lake area). There was no large game in the area at that time because of a forest fire. A mother and her two girls went away from the village to pick berries. They made a fire to have tea. They split whitefish and put the pieces by the fire to roast. The fish oil dripped into the fire and the smoke went towards the Stony River. Two tamed white-fronted geese went with the woman and her daughters went a distance from them and hollered to alert them.

There was a brown bear down there somewhere that scented the burning grease and the whitefish. The bear went toward the smell and came out fairly near the women. The bear started toward the woman and girls and because they did not have any way to defend themselves, they did not know what to do. The bear kept coming towards them and they became frightened. When the bear was quite close to them, the geese took off and started circling the bear. Then the geese landed near the bear. As soon as the bear raised up and tried to catch the geese, they landed a little further from the bear. While the geese were doing this, the daughters and mother went over the ridge where the bear could not see them and then went to the village.

Soon after, the mother and some other people went out and heard the geese really hollering. The geese ran and met the people and encircled them. Then the geese went back to near the brown bear. This was the second time the geese gave assistance. Someone said, "I should kill the bear," and ran toward it. The bear was very smart and ran away. They watched it for a long time while it ran away.

That's why they liked to raise geese because the geese helped them. The geese saved the woman and her daughters' lives.

(This is a figurative translation by Priscilla Russell from the transcribed text with literal translation by Luthur Hobson, Sr. and James Kari.)