

HONORING EYAK: THE OCTOPUS WHO MARRIED A WOMAN GR: 3-5 (LESSONS 2-7)

Elder Quote: “That woman for her part, she knew him. This in fact, she had gotten used to him already, that octopus. She had octopus-young, some young, her two young octopus young.”
 - Anna Nelson Harryⁱ

Grade Level: 3-5

Overview: There was relatively little contact by the outside world with the Eyak people until 188 and the establishment of four canneries within their territory. This, along with the introduction of novel diseases decimated their already small population. This in turn has meant that very few traditional Eyak stories have been preserved. But through the work of linguist Michael Krauss and Eyak Anna Nelson Harry students can appreciate some treasured examples of Eyak lore and learn how stories change depending on how it’s presented.

Standards:

<i>AK Cultural:</i>	<i>AK Content:</i>	<i>CRCC:</i>
B1: Acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own.	Geography B1: Know that places have distinctive characteristics	L1: Students should understand the value and importance of the Eyak language and be actively involved in its preservation.

Lesson Goal: Students learn about the oral traditions of the Eyak people and present a play based on one of the few stories recorded in the Eyak language: ‘Woman and Octopus.’

Lesson Objectives: Students will:

- Compare recorded and written versions of the same traditional Eyak story.
- Prepare, rehearse and present a play based on a traditional Eyak story.
- Learn the Eyak vocabulary listed below.

Vocabulary Words:

English:	<u>Eyak:</u>
woman	<u>qe'L</u>
man	<u>Lilaa'</u>
octopus	<u>tsaaleeXquh</u> (lit: <i>it stays under a rock</i>)
Hello! (to a group) (lit: <i>Is it you all?</i>)	<u>lAXiishuh</u>

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Materials for three Octopus costumes (See costume ideas below.)
- Butcher paper for scenery drawings and dugout canoe
- Large pieces of cardboard for Whale costume
- Smaller pieces of cardboard for halibut, salmon, sea cucumber; ulu; bark plates
- Large paper bag for gathering basket and clamshells
- ‘Leather’ colored felt for Woman’s and Brothers’ headbands, Small Child’s amulet bag; white felt for linked diamond design
- Leather thongs or shoelaces to tie headbands and amulet bag
- Scissors, markers, paints, glue, stapler
- ‘The Woman Who Married an Octopus’ play – one copy per actor (See below.)

Kit Library:

- Harry, Anna Nelson, and Michael E. Krauss. *In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry*
- Smelcer, John E. *A Cycle of Myths: Native Legends from Southeast Alaska*.

Web Resources:

Eyak Language and Culture

- <https://uafanlc.alaska.edu/Online/EY-DVD/ARCHIVE-2.mp4> (14:47) Channel 2 News pieces on Marie Smith Jones, Eyak History, Language, Revitalization – April 1992 and Potlatch
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqxGB0IR2Gc> (57 sec) Chief Marie Smith Jones prats for the Eyak people in the Eyak language

Octopus Costume Ideas

- <https://www.parents.com/holiday/halloween/costumes/octopus-costume/> Belt with 4 pairs of stuffed mismatched tights with furniture pad adhesive ‘suckers’
- <https://www.hellowonderful.co/post/easy-octopus-cardboard-costume-for-kids/> 7 legged painted cardboard cut-out with hole for child’s arm (8th octopus leg) to show through
- <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/477592735460330725/?lp=true> Over-sized hoodie with legs cut from bottom of hoodie, sewn together and stuffed

Whale Costume Ideas

- <https://www.stocksy.com/2024629/cute-red-haired-boy-in-whale-costume> Painted cardboard humpback whale
- https://www.google.com/search?q=cardboard+whale+costume&sa=X&rlz=1C1GGRV_enUS752US752&biw=1920&bih=969&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=5yAs8Z_Sl3zCfM%253A%252CG28KtTRBm_u_YM%252C_&usg=AI4_-kTyOdygJG5XRU5Tlwr569EdWGtBZQ&ved=2ahUKEwjLp5rQk5PeAhV-wMQHHfQ0AT0Q9QEwBnoECAQQEA#imgcr=3nF3-eU_cNo9bM: Cardboard cut-out whale costume options

Fish and Sea Cucumber Images to Color

- <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/halibut> Halibut drawing to color
- <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/salmon> Salmon drawing to color.
- https://www.google.com/search?q=sea+cucumber+image+to+color&rlz=1C1GGRV_enUS752US752&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjLwPr0ppPeAhWFNn0KHS9-AesQsAR6BAgCEAE&biw=1920&bih=969#imgcr=b0ITbqknPLvosM: Sea cucumber drawing to color

Tree Bark Designs

- https://www.google.com/search?q=tree+bark+coloring+patterns&rlz=1C1GGRV_enUS752US752&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjB1quIl5PeAhWHLnwKHYA5A1gQsAR6BAgAEAE&biw=1920&bih=969 Tree bark coloring patterns overview

Teacher Preparation:

- Review Activity Plan and practice Eyak vocabulary.
- Decide on costume options and assemble materials.
- Review *A Cycle of Myths: Native Legends from Southeast Alaska* 'Introduction to Eyak' which explains the paucity of recorded Eyak legends.

“Although contact has existed between Eyak and European (Russian Americans mostly) since the late 1700s and early 1800s, there was relatively little contact until 1889 when four American canneries were established at Cordova in Eyak territory. This marked the beginning of the ultimate destruction of the native people.

Although Lt. Henry Allen (USA) encountered Eyak along the Copper River while on his reconnaissance mission (in which his findings were later published in *Report of an Expedition to the Copper, Tanana, Koyukon Rivers, in the Territory of Alaska, in the Year 1885*), the first anthropological-linguistic work performed in Eyak territory was in 1933 when Danish anthropologist Kaj Birket-Smith and Frederica de Laguna spent 17 days in Cordova between late April and early May. The oral narratives they collected at the time was published by the Danish Royal Scientific Society in 1938. The collection, entitled *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska* serves even now as a primary source of knowledge of the Eyak people, including their oral narrative myths and legends.

In 1974 Michael Krauss, a linguist from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks who first studied the Eyak in 1961, and author of *In Honor of Eyak* (1982), compiled a demographic study of Alaska Native Peoples and their languages. He revised his data in 1982 after another census, and he found that only two native speakers of Eyak still survived....

Whereas hundreds of Eskimo (both Alaskan and Canadian myths have been documented, primarily due to contemporary public interest, only a handful of narratives in Eyak have ever been recorded.’ⁱⁱⁱ

- *Optional:* Instead of the play adaptation of ‘Woman and Octopus’ any version of the story (*In Honor of Eyak* Anna Nelson Harry’s Eyak telling pp.99-106; Consolidated English language version pp.106-107; or Smelcer’s ‘smoothed out’ English version pp.61-64 may be read aloud while students collectively act out the story line.

Opening: Every people and every culture pass down stories through the generations, keeping alive traditional knowledge and group identity. These stories began before people wrote them down. They were stories to tell around the fire, to tell young children what it meant to be a part of their culture. These stories are often called myths or legends or folklore. They may tell of great deeds, mysterious events, how something came to be, what to stay away from, or strange encounters with other worlds. Do you know of any stories like these? What about all those stories that begin ‘Once upon a time...?’

Native peoples of Alaska share this rich storytelling tradition. Unfortunately, in the modern era of television and computers and Elders often living apart from their grandchildren, many of these stories are in danger of being forgotten. However, many anthropologists, linguists, authors, and Native storytellers have worked to preserve these stories by writing or recording them, and translating them into English. We're going to help pass along an Eyak story by presenting it as a play.

Activities:

Class I:

1. Referring to a map of Alaska point out the relatively small area from Yakutat to Cordova which was the traditional territory of the Eyak. The Eyaks were a small nation squeezed between the much larger Sugpiat of Prince William Sound to the west and the Tlingits to the southeast. Due to pressures from the Tlingits expanding their territory, raiding and intermarrying with the Eyak over the centuries, the devastating diseases brought by the arrival of Europeans in the 1800s, and the destabilizing impact of the canneries established in 1889, by 1900 the Eyak population was reduced to some 60 people in Old Town, Cordova.ⁱⁱⁱ Very few people thought to record the Eyak people's stories, the stories that were in danger of dying out. Fortunately, some anthropologists and linguists worked with Native Eyak speakers to recall and record at least a few of their traditional stories before they were forgotten.
2. *Optional:* Watch Channel 2 News pieces on Eyak History, Language, and Culture (See above.)
3. *Optional:* Watch Chief Marie Smith Jones pray for her people in the Eyak language. (See above) to allow students to hear the language as spoken by its last fluent speaker. Marie Smith Jones died in 2008. Note also the linked white diamonds of the headbands worn by Dune Lankard and his sister Pam Smith. The linked white diamonds signify that 'We are together.'
4. Linguist Michael Krauss recorded Anna Nelson Harry telling this story, 'Woman and Octopus,' in Yakutat in 1963.
(Read aloud the first three pages of 'Woman and Octopus' story to give students a feel for how traditional tales were told. Show pages on class screen to give an idea of written Eyak. See photos below if book pages cannot be directly presented on screen.)
5. Note that every language reflects its culture. So foreign languages are not precisely like English. You cannot always translate word for word from one language to the other. And oral versions of stories, which often change slightly from telling to telling, or from story teller to story teller, are not exactly like written versions. *(Read aloud 'The Octopus Who Married a Woman' from A Cycle of Myths: Native Legends from Southeast Alaska pp.61-63.)* What do students find different in the two versions? Are they the same story?
(Note that even the title of the story is not exactly the same. The woman in the recorded version is picking blueberries when the octopus grabs her leg while the woman in the written version is walking along the beach. The recorded version explains how the Octopus caught a lot of food for his wife and cooked it all by lying on top of it. The written version just says that the wife is happy. Is this because modern readers would think that this method lying on top of food to cook it is too weird? Is the basic story line maintained?)
6. And if we make a play of the story is it still the same? Distribute copies of 'The Woman Who Married an Octopus' script, assign roles and have students read the play out loud.

7. What has or hasn't changed in this dramatic adaption?
8. *Optional*: Discuss the moral of this story.

Classes II and III:

1. Assign students to teams: Scenery; Props; Costumes.
2. Team Scenery:
 - Draw scenery (Rocky Shoreline, Underwater Cave, Village Longhouse on butcher paper to hang on walls of play area (Note that longhouse should not be hung until final scene of Octopus family returning to village.)
 - Draw, cut out, and paint giant cardboard whale. (See website ideas above.)
 - Draw, cut out, and paint dugout canoe silhouette. (See Chugachmiut Heritage website Traditional Transportation lessons for ideas.)
3. Teams Props:
 - Make paper clam gathering basket: Roll down top edge of paper bag to form gathering 'basket' and fill with clamshells.
 - Draw and color two paper versions of each fish to be delivered (See websites above); one remains whole (for 'cooking') and the other 'cut-up' (to be served to Octopus young.
 - Cut out a cardboard ulu (also known as a 'woman's knife') and paint it in a slate like color (this story would be before metal tools)
 - Paint three cardboard dishes with bark design.
4. Team Costumes:
 - Assemble costume props for Woman (felt head band)
 - Small Child (small felt amulet bag)
 - Two Brothers (copper 'bolo type' ties or head band)
 - Octopus/Man (tentacles and removable head – See website ideas above)
 - 2 Octopus Young (small tentacles and removable head - See website ideas)(See also Traditional Clothing kit lessons on Chugachmiut Heritage website.)

Class IV:

1. Rehearse, and record play.
2. *Optional*: Present play to invited family members and Elders
3. *Optional*: Upload play to YouTube to share on the Chugachmiut website.
4. Wrap-up: Have students retell the story based on their play. How has it changed from the original?

Assessment:

- Students discussed the differences between oral, written, and dramatic versions of a story.
- Students prepared and presented a play of 'The Woman Who Married an Octopus'.
- Students correctly pronounced the Eyak vocabulary words.

ⁱ Harry, Anna Nelson, and Michael E. Krauss. *In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry*. Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, 1995. 'Woman and Octopus' p.104

ⁱⁱ Smelcer, John E. *A Cycle of Myths: Native Legends from Southeast Alaska*. Todd Communications, 2005. pp.54-55

ⁱⁱⁱ Harry, p.12

Play: The Woman Who Married an Octopus

Cast:

Woman (Head band, chin tattoo, plain shift dress, barefoot)

Toddler (Small amulet bag, barefoot)

Octopus (Large tentacles and removable head)

2 Octopus Children (Small tentacles and removable head)

2 Brothers (Head band and/or copper 'bolo style' necklace, barefoot)

Narrator

Whale

Woman: I am a young Eyak woman and I am gathering good things to eat along the seashore. Look what tasty treats I've found! (*Shows off basket contents*)

Small Child (Takes basket from mother): I love clams! Yum!

Woman: We'll have some tonight. Then I'll string the rest together and dry them to enjoy this winter.

(*Octopus sneaks up on Woman, grabs her by the ankle.*)

Small Child (*tugs on basket, distracted by clams*): Yum!

Woman: Oh! Oh! What is this? What is grabbing at my ankle?

(*Woman screams and Toddler cries as Octopus drags Woman to ocean. Child shakes with fear.*)

Woman (*Screams as Toddler runs off*): Tell your uncles what has happened to me. Surely I will drown.

Octopus (*Pulls Woman toward cave by ankle*): No, indeed. You won't drown. I can travel between the worlds of air and water. (In cave removes octopus head to partially transform into a man.) I will make you my wife and you shall live in my fine house under the sea.

Woman (*Stands up, takes deep breaths.*): I can breathe! You are a powerful octopus. Indeed, this is a very fine house, with more room than our sleeping cubby in the village longhouse.

Octopus: And I am a fine hunter! I will feed the fine family that we will have together.

(*Octopus leaves cave and retrieves 'fish' from the 'sea' and delivers them, one at a time, to the Woman.*)

Octopus (*with each delivery*): Look at this fine halibut/salmon/sea cucumber. And I will cook it for you, too, Wife! (Takes each fish, bends over at the waist with fish held to the chest for a moment and then presents it to Woman.) Here you go.

(Woman receives 'fish' and cuts it up with ulu and serves pieces to two young Octopuses who appear as the Octopus returns with fish.)

Woman (Serves Young Octopuses): And this is for you and this is for you and this is for you...
Octopuses: Yum!

Woman: Now enjoy your fish while I swim up to enjoy the fresh air and watch the waves hit the shore.

(Woman swims up to rock, sits on it, sighs contentedly, looks at shore. Brothers walk by on shore, examining rocks, looking for octopus.)

Brothers (excitedly): Sister! Sister! Is it truly you? We thought that you drowned in the sea.

Woman: As you see, I didn't drown.

Brother 1: Then you must come home.

Brother 2: Your place is here in the village longhouse.

Brother 1: Come. Come with us.

Brother 2: We will take you home.

Woman: I cannot go with you. My Octopus husband would be angry if I went with you. He would hunt you on the sea and kill you.

Brothers: But we are the octopus hunters!

Woman: Oh no! You must come and visit us in our home under the sea.
(Dives into sea and return to cave.)

Octopuses: Mama, mama! What happened? What happened while you were watching the waves?

Woman: I saw your uncles, my children.
(Octopus has been 'cooking' fish and looks up with interest.)

Octopus: And what did they say, my wife?

Woman: They wanted me to return to the village longhouse. They wanted me to come home with them.

Octopuses: Home? But this is home.

Woman: Husband, I told them that I would not go with them because you would be so terribly angry.

Octopus: So you decided to stay with us. That is indeed good news. I am glad.

Octopuses: But we want to see this home of yours in the world of air. We want to see our uncles. Can we, can we, please go?

Octopus: All right, all right. We shall go as a family to the village in the air.

(Family swims up to the shore. Octopus costume heads are removed.)

Octopuses: ‘IAXiishuh!’ [Is it you all?] ‘IAXiishuh!’ [Is it you all?]

Brothers: Welcome to our village. Welcome home, Sister!

Narrator: The people in the village did not know that this was an octopus family. They all got along very well for many years in the village. Octopus often went out hunting with the Brothers. (Octopus and Brothers get behind butcher paper boat and start out to sea. Woman, Child, and Octopuses watch them leave from the shore.) One day they left the village by dugout canoe looking for fish to catch and they spotted a whale quite close to them. (Whale appears in ocean and begins circling around the canoe.) Now Eyaks did not usually hunt for whale and the Octopus and his brothers-in law wondered what to do. As they wondered the whale leapt onto their boat and killed them all! (Whale leaps onto paper boat and destroys it. Octopus and the Brothers drown. Everyone on shore is very upset.)

Woman: What will I do without such a fine hunter for a husband? I shall die of grief without him. (Woman cries, crumples, and dies.)

Child, Octopuses: Oh no! This is terrible, terrible! (Whale swims away.)

Octopuses: We must avenge the deaths of our father and mother! (Octopusses put back on their octopus heads and jump into the ocean.)

Narrator: And the young Octopuses jumped into the sea and swam out to kill the whale – which they did. (Octopuses kill the whale and continue to swim away from the shore.) And they never returned to the village again.

Child (forlornly): ‘IAXiishuh!’ [Is it you all?] ‘IAXiishuh!’ [Is it you all?]

Narrator (shakes head): That’s all. (Child sighs and turns back to village longhouse.)

Adapted by Barclay Kopchak from
“Woman and Octopus’ by Anna Nelson Harryⁱⁱⁱ and
‘The Octopus Who Married a Woman’ by John Smelcerⁱⁱⁱ

WOMAN AND OCTOPUS*

- ¹ *Łinhqda'x q'aw,
qe't q'a'anh,
uyahsh q'unhaw,
cha'tl'laḡaḡa' sha'a'ch't.
² *Cha'tl' hle'ch'tinu,
uyahshakihtl'.

³ Aw q'unhaw,
da-'wax ḡaḡle'ch't da'x q'unhaw,
yax ḡuḡa'n'xinh*,
aw hle'ch'tinh.
⁴ Aw q'unhaw uḡa' k'usti'yaht.
⁵ Uk'ushdaḡa'
k'usti'yahtinh.
⁶ Uk'ushdaḡa' k'ustiyahḡ da'x
q'unhuw,
"Deh-,
de'dal siḡa' k'usaḡyaht?"
⁷ Awch' isaḡ'anhḡ.
⁸ Tse'le'xquh q'aw u't sadaht.
⁹ Ya' sadaht.
¹⁰ "K'e-duw yileh,"

*One time,
a woman it was,
her child,
went after blueberries.
*They were picking blueberries,
(she) with her child.

Then,
she was still berrypicking and,
standing here and there*,
she was berrypicking.
Something interfered with her.
Something interfered with her lower
leg.
Something interfered with her lower
leg and then,
"Wha-,
what's this interfering with me?"
She looked at it.
It was an octopus sitting there.
It was sitting still.
"What are you doing?"

'Woman and Octopus' – In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry, p.99

- aw q'unh awtl' daleh.
- 11 "Yałtsaq'skł'a-w,"*
aw wəx awtl' dale' da·x q'unhaw,
q'e·dah ulah aw
atsditl'ihł.
- 12 Ulah aw atsditl'ihł da·x q'unh,
q'e·dah tse'x aw
gałxahtł.
- 13 Łaqi'n'inh.
- 14 Du·chi·dunh udaht qu'li·tah?
- 15 Dik' dəxunh udaht u'lata·k'ginh.
- 16 Dlaga'a' q'unh uyahshtl'.
- 17 Anh k'uyahshakih dada'a't',
uma'e'.
- 18 *Aw q'unh wəx anhtl daleh,
"Giyahgalada' anh sitl' 'a·-..."
- 19 *Giyahgalada' anh sałlaht da·x wəx
anhtl' daleh,
"Q'e' ida'.
- 20 Xu'lixaḥ,
q'al tse·le·xquh q'al silah
atsditl'ihł.
- 21 Siga·kḡayu·tl' xu'lixaḥ.
- 22 Gał'ihł ya· sida'u·q q'al datli·."
- 23 Dik' aslitginh,
anh qe'ł.
- 24 Aw tse·le·xquh anh sałlaht,
anh qe'ł sałlaht.
- 25 Ta' anhtl' sha'a'ch'ł da·x q'unh,
dəxunh anhtl' adu'słixa'ł,
anh qe'łtl'.
- 26 Yahtdat'a·x anhtl' li' sha'a'ch'ł,
yahtda'luwdat'a·x.

she said to it.
"Long-fingers,"*
thus she said to it and then,
straightaway it wrapped itself around
her.
It wrapped itself around her and then,
straightaway it started dragging her
down toward the shore.
She cried out.
Who ever would hear her?
No person could hear her.
She was alone with her child.
The child wailed,
for her mother
Then she said thus to her,
*"He's taking me to the water!"
*He abducted her to the water and
she said thus to her,
"Go home!
Tell of me,
this octopus has wrapped itself
around me.
Tell my uncles of me.
This is already my last breath."

Nothing happened to her,
that woman.
The octopus abducted her,
it abducted that woman.
It went into the water with her and,
it turned into a person with her,
with that woman.
It went way into a house with her,
into a big house.

'Woman and Octopus' – *In Honor of Eyak: The Art of Anna Nelson Harry*, p.100

he calling him

27 Tsa·dla·t'a·xtsh* q'aw,
 ulaxade·t q'unhaw yaht aw yiṭeh.
 28 U·dax q'unhaw,
 awxa' wəx i't'inhinh.
 29 Aw tse·le·xquh sa'ehṭinh.
 30 Aw tse·le·xquh q'unhaw sa'ehṭ.
 31 Aw sa'ehṭinh.

32 *Aw q'unhuw dade·yu·duw,
 awxa' yax da·k',
 te'ya'yu',
 dade·yu·duh,
 anh ḥich' xah.
 33 *Al ke·ṭta·kyu',
 awq' q'aw ya·naht te·k'.
 34 Awq' q'aw ya·naht ate·k'.
 35 Wəx q'aw aw ḥmaht.
 36 Aw tse·le·xquh awq' ya·naht
 ate·k'.
 37 Wəx q'aw aw ḥma·tk',
 tse·le·xquh.
 38 Ge·ṭta·kdak,
 aw gasheh da·x,
 awq' ya·naht te·k',
 q'e·dah ma·tk',
 awq' ya·naht gateh da·x,
 aw q'aw a'ma·tk'.
 39 Wəx q'aw aw xah.
 40 ḥmahtk.
 41 Sahxwayu',
 dati'q' al ya·yu',
 da-·wəx aw ḥma·tk',

Probably a chamber under a rock*,
 in her eyes it was a house.
 Then,
 she lived with him.
 That octopus married her.
 The octopus married her.
 It married her.

*Then all kinds of things,
 he kept going around for them,
 fish,
 anything,
 she always eats.
 *These seals,
 he lies down over them.
 He lies down over them.
 That's how he cooks them.
 The octopus lies down on top of
 them.
 Thus he cooks them,
 the octopus.
 Seals too,
 when he kills them,
 he lies down covering them,
 they cook right away,
 when he lies down on top of them,
 then they cook.
 Thus she eats them.
 He cooks them.
 Cockles,
 all these things,
 that same way he cooks them,