

HONORING EYAK: EYAK HELLOS GR: PREK-2 (LESSON 1)

Elder Quote: “The Eyak came from far upriver, in boats made of something like cottonwood. They came down the Copper River...When they felt like it they would go to the mouth of the river, to the breakers, to get seals. Over where they had come down the river there are no seals. Nor are there many salmon that swim up that far. When they came down they found out about all these things. They saw seals, ripe salmon, cockles, eggs, birds, geese, mallards.”

- Anna Nelson Harry¹

Grade Level: PreK-2

Overview: Approximately 3,000 years ago, the ancestors of the Eyak people separated from the early Athabaskan people. They traveled south to the Copper River Delta from Alaska’s interior and discovered the rich marine resources of the delta land with salmon and seals in great abundance. Isolated by numerous glaciers and the rugged Chugach Mountains, the Eyak people developed a distinctive culture and unique language.

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 origins of the Eyak people and the development of their unique language, reflective of their unique culture.

Lesson Objectives: Students will:

- Locate Eyak territory on the map of Alaska
- Discuss the time and isolation required to develop a new language and culture.
- Create individualized Eyak masks.
- Learn the Eyak vocabulary listed below.

Vocabulary Words:

English:	<u>Eyak:</u>
Hello! (Lit: Is it you? <i>Talking to one person</i>)	<u>iishuh</u>
Yes, it’s me.	aan, xuu q'A’Al (<i>See ‘Hello’ Video below</i>)
Hello! (Lit: Is it you all? <i>Talking to a group</i>)_	<u>lAXiishuh</u>
Yes, it’s us.	aan, GayaG q'A'Al (<i>See ‘Hello’ video below</i>)

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Geographic Map of Alaska
- Linguistic Map of Alaska
- Eyak Mask handouts

Kit Library:

- 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.

Web Resources:**Eyak Language**

- <http://eyakpeople.com/dictionary>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGA1JD7IF7I> (46 sec) 'Hello' (Is that you?) in Eyak with Dr. Krauss and Marie Smith Jones
- <http://eyakpeople.com/wow/week-30-i-am-called> Pronunciation of 'I am called' in Eyak

Google Earth

- <https://www.google.com/earth/> Download program and zoom in on Copper River. (*Also located on the Traditional Place Names webpage.*)

Teacher Preparation:

- Review Activity Plan and practice Eyak vocabulary.
- Download *Google Earth* and practice searching for Eyak traditional territory village.

Opening: With the aid of Google Earth, or a globe and map of Alaska, explain that over 10,000 years ago people traveled from Siberia to Alaska across the Bering Strait land bridge searching for new places to settle. They spread out across Alaska and Canada and further south. These ancient people were the ancestors of all Native peoples of the Americas. What came to be known as the Athabaskan people settled in the Interior of Alaska. But some 3,000 years ago, a group decided to look for a new place to settle. They travelled south from the Interior to the Copper River Delta where they found an abundance of seals and salmon. They stayed and developed a distinct coastal way of living and their own unique language. These people are the Eyak.

Share Anna Nelson's quote from above:

"The Eyak came from far upriver, in boats made of something like cottonwood. They came down the Copper River...When they felt like it they would go to the mouth of the river, to the breakers, to get seals. Over where they had come down the river there are no seals. Nor are there many salmon that swim up that far. When they came down they found out about all these things. They saw seals, ripe salmon, cockles, eggs, birds, geese, mallards."

Help students locate the traditional territory of the Eyak extending along the coast approximately from present day Yakutat to near present day Cordova. The Eyak were a small but resourceful group. Hemmed in by the rugged Chugach Mountains and numerous glaciers to the north and the larger tribes of the Tlingit to the southeast and the Sugpiat to the west, the Eyak nevertheless maintained their independence for thousands of years, often serving as middlemen for trade between their larger neighbors.

Activities:

1. Show the linguistic map of Alaska. Note how the Eyak is a designated language group despite its small population. It takes thousands of years to develop separate languages. When people who study languages examined Eyak language, they found that it had similarities to the ancient language of Alaska's Interior (a thousand years before the development of 'Proto-Athabaskan') and Navajo and Apache in far off New Mexico. [Note: *Linguists theorize that it takes from two to three thousand years for a distinct language to develop to the point where it cannot be understood by outsiders. The relative isolation of the Eyak territory allowed their distinctive language to evolve.*]
2. Watch 'Hello' video. Let students know that Marie Smith Jones was the last fluent Native speaker of Eyak. Before she died in 2008 she worked with linguist, Dr. Michael Krauss, to record and documented the Eyak language. Discuss how to say hello in Eyak. Have students practice the two versions of hello. Does it matter in English how many people there are when we say hello? Does it matter in Eyak?
3. What are we actually saying when we greet someone with 'iishuh!' [Is it you?]
What about greet with 'IAXiishuh!' [Is it you all?] Practice the two greetings again.
What are we actually saying when we say "aan,xuu q'A'Al'?" [Yes (aan), it's me.]
What about when we say "aan, GayAG q'A'Al'?" [Yes (aan), it's us.]
Have students practice several times for the following:
 - the singular pair 'iishuh!' [Is it you?] & "aan,xuu q'A'Al'?" [Yes (aan), it's me.]
 - the plural pair 'IAXiishuh!' [Is it you all?] & "aan, GayaG q'A'Al'?" [Yes (aan), it's us.]

Note that every language reflects its culture. Foreign languages are not precisely like English so you cannot always translate word for word from one language to the other. The same ideas can be expressed but often with different words or different sorts of emphasis, i.e., the Eyak language is interested in recognizing how many people you are talking to.

4. Distribute the mask templates for students to select, color and cut out.
5. Once students have completed their masks have them practice greeting one another.
6. Invite student pairs to don their masks and demonstrate their Eyak greeting skills.

Optional: Make a game of challenging students to say hello to the correct number of people as one or more student respondents are indicated by the teacher.

Assessment:

- Students located the traditional territory of the Eyak on a map of Alaska.
- Students discussed how language reflects culture.
- Students modeled an Eyak greeting exchange.
- 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. Pp.152,153



Mike Webber Eyak Mask sketch, *Coloring Cordova, A Science and Memory Project*

HONORING EYAK: THE EYAK EYE GR: PREK-2 (LESSON 2)

Elder Quote: “The [storage] boxes were decorated with paintings on the covers and on the sides. Abercrombie does not remember what these patterns were, except that on the front of the box was the same eye that was painted on doors and canoe paddles (Figure 7). According to Galushia, [Nelson] boxes were usually plain but some were painted, and some (?) carved. He believes there was red paint and blue paint made from blueberry juice. Abercrombie [Captain of the 1898 US Army Expedition to the Copper River] thinks the reddish-brown stain was made by boiling skunk cabbage leaves (more probably hemlock bark?). Neither the red nor the black paint was affected by water.”

- Kaj Birket-Smith and Frederica De Lagunaⁱ

Grade Level: PreK-2

Overview: Colonel W. R. Abercrombie observed the distinctive Eyak eye design on their doors, paddles, and storage boxes on his 1884 exploratory expedition to the Copper River Delta. Applied with a combination of red and dark blue or black stains or carved into wood the eye signaled that a place or object was Eyak and belonged to no other Native group.

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 how to create the traditional dyes used to paint the unique Eyak eye design.

Lesson Objectives: Students will:

- Discuss and observe the making of traditional dyes.
- Use traditional dyes to paint the Eyak eye design.
- Learn the Eyak vocabulary listed below.

Vocabulary Words:

English:	<u>Eyak:</u>
Eyak people	<u>DaXunhyuu</u> (lit.: The People)
blueberry	<u>cha'tl'</u>
dark blue	<u>cha'tl'ga'iit'eh</u> (lit: it is like blueberries)
dark red	<u>guunLdisLga'iit'eh</u> (lit: it is like clotted blood)
(my) eyes	<u>silaaX</u>

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Access to a video screen.
- Dye materials (1 cup blueberries - fresh or frozen; 1 cup cranberries – fresh or frozen)
Optional: 2 quarts hemlock bark
- Processing Set-up: Tabletop burner, 2 small pots for dyeing, potato masher or large spoon, small sieve or cheese cloth, access to water, small bowls for dye distribution
- Eyak Eye Paddle Pattern – one per student
- Watercolor brushes – one per student

Web Resources:

Eyak Language

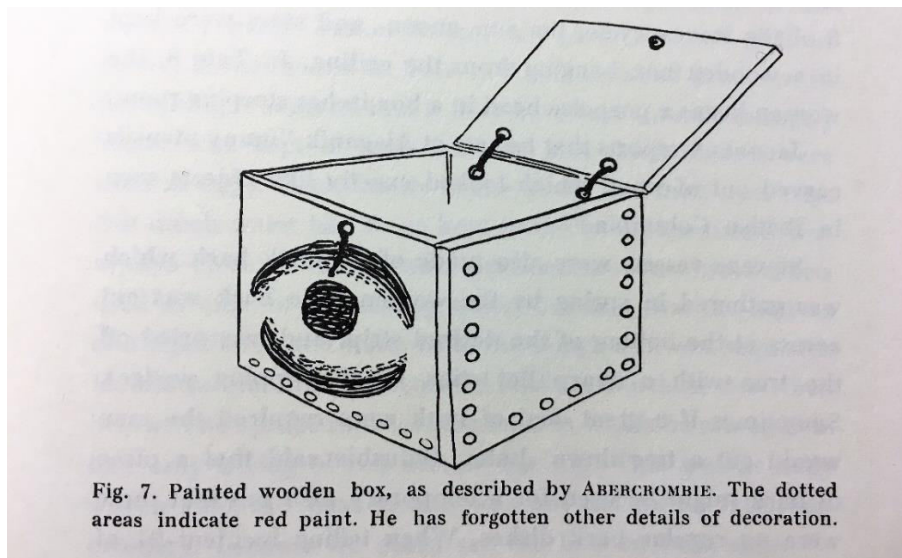
- <http://eyakpeople.com/dictionary>
- https://books.google.com/books?id=NVZIsfj6D6EC&pg=PA226&lpg=PA226&dq=how+long+to+boil+hemlock+bark+for+dye&source=bl&ots=S7ZwOSLZCe&sig=OzL_GpSNmj_r-Sug8k2KG3OdWnw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiJje26-rdAhXZJ

Teacher Preparation:

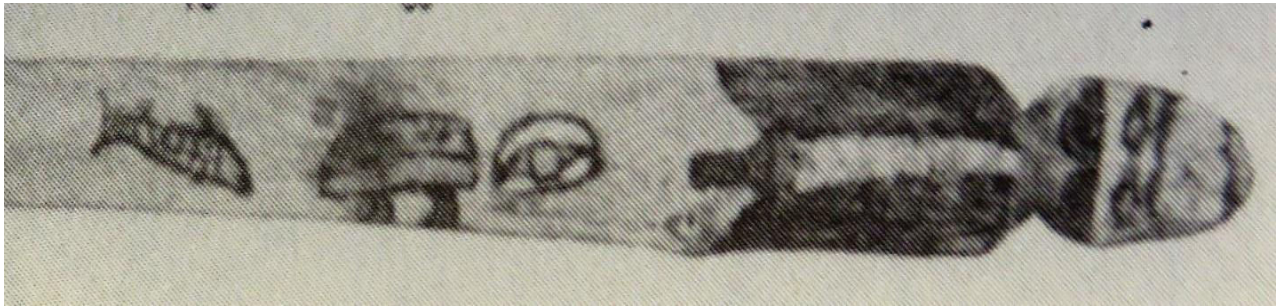
- Review Activity Plan and practice Eyak vocabulary.
- Assemble dye materials (blueberries, cranberries, hemlock bark (*Optional*) and dyeing equipment
- Copy paddle design on white paper.

Opening: Does your house have your family name on it? How about a street number? Why? *[Accept all answers but steer students towards importance of identification and recognition of your ownership or presence.]* How do you mark something that's important to you and tells people that it's yours? Do you put your name on it? Or maybe draw a special symbol on it? The Eyak people marked many things that were important to them with a wide open eye looking straight out.

Share attached Eyak eye examples from traditional storage box and paddle designs.



Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska, p.79



Traditional paddle design close-up, Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska, Plate 15
(Note the eye to the left of the eagle's tail feathers.)



Photo courtesy of Guillaume LeDucy of Eyak Ceremonial Paddle located at the Berlin Museum

Modern interpretations of the Eyak eye:



Eyak Paddle (based on [Eyak Indians](#) photo) by Mike Webber, Ilanka Cultural Center
(Note the eye next to the eagle's tail feathers.)



Eyak Eye paddle by Mike Webber, Ilanka Cultural Center, Cordova

Activities:

1. Photos of traditional Eyak paddles and descriptions from U.S. Army Captain W.R. Abercrombie's 1898 expedition to the Copper River Delta tell us about where the Eyak eye appeared but how would this design have been painted? (*Accept all answers but steer students toward how to create colors from natural materials.*) Share quotation from above.
2. Abercrombie described the Eyak eye as having two colors: the top and bottom crescents and center circle were a black or deep blue and the inner crescents arcs were a reddish brown. Creating decorative colors is a challenge. Without store-bought paints or markers what would you use to make these colors?
[Note: *Captain Abercrombie's described the Eyak eye reddish colors as the result of a skunk cabbage dye while Birkett-Smith and De Laguna suggested it was hemlock bark.*]

The following dyes were tested with the results seen below;

- 1 cup of blueberries – Smashed and simmered for 5 minutes
- 1 cup of cranberries – Smashed and simmered for 5 minutes
- 2 quarts of hemlock outer bark – Crumbled and simmered for 1 hour, strained and further reduced by half through 15 minutes boiling
- 8 large skunk cabbage leaves – Chopped and simmered for 2.5 hours



3. In some cases, it's easy to figure out what would make good dye sources. Blueberries are blue and should make a blue dye and cranberries should make a red dye and they do.
4. Demonstrate blueberry (and cranberry) dye making: Place one cup of blueberries (cranberries) – fresh or frozen - in pot and just barely cover with water. Smash berries with potato masher or back of spoon. Simmer for five minutes. Pour mixture into a bowl using a sieve or cheese cloth to strain out the berries.
5. *Optional:* In other cases, it's not so apparent what should be used. See what you can make with hemlock bark.

Demonstrate hemlock bark dye making.

- Gather a half gallon of hemlock bark.
- Break or smash pieces into smaller bits to increase their surface area to improve the transfer of color to the dye water. Add enough water to cover the hemlock bark. Bring to a boil and turn down to simmer for an hour or so. The color becomes darker as you boil off the water.
- Periodically test dye strength by dipping in a paper towel corner. When color becomes noticeably brown strain mixture through a sieve or cheese cloth into a bowl. Discard bark and return strained solution to pot. Further boil mixture to reduce by half – approximately 15 minutes. Note: Color may be darkened with addition of soot or bits of rotted tree trunk.]

6. Distribute small bowls of dye for students to use along with water color brushes and paddle outlines. Have students paint the Eyak eyes and sign their picture with their own symbol made with dye.
7. Invite students to share their paddle designs and personal symbols and review how this eye design was unique to the Eyak people.

Assessment:

- Students observed and can explain the traditional dye making process.
- Students painted a paddle pattern with the Eyak eye using traditional dyes.
- Students correctly pronounced the Eyak vocabulary words.

ⁱ Birket-Smith, Kaj, and Frederica de Laguna. *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska*. AMS Pr, 1976. p.79

HONORING EYAK: POTLATCH PERFORMANCE GR: PRE-K-2 (LESSONS 3-4)

Elder Quote: “When Galushia was eight years old he attended a potlatch given by the Yakutat Tlingit on Kayak Island. It is of the same type as that given by the Eyak. The potlatch was given to all the Eagle people.

“We all started together from Alaganik, and Old Town [Cordova], and Eyak [village where Lake Eyak drains into the Eyak River]. It took us three days to get to Katalla. We stayed there a week. Then they sent a one-mast sloop to take us over to that island. We stayed on the island a couple of days before they gave the potlatch. The first day there was a big feed. The second day they gave us the blankets and the calico [cloth]. The potlatch began early in the morning and lasted until late at night. The house was so crowded that we kids were outside looking in through the windows.”

- Galushia Nelson, Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaskaⁱ

Grade Level: PreK-2

Overview: The Eyak adopted the custom of potlatches, great ceremonial feasts of food and gifts given to the guests, to celebrate important occasions. These week-long events required not only preparing enough food but acquiring enough gifts to give to the guests. Formal clothing, hats and face paints demonstrated people’s pride in participating in these traditional get-togethers.



Brooke Johnson introduces the Kindergarten, First & Second Graders at Mt. Eccles Elementary School Culture Week Assembly – 2018

Standards:

AK Cultural:	AK Content:	CRCC:
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 Eyak potlatch ceremonies and traditional weaving skills.

Lesson Objectives: Students will:

- Learn about Eyak potlatch traditions and weaving skills.
- Observe Tlingit influences on Eyak regalia.
- Create potlatch hats and Chilkat-style robes.
- Learn the Eyak vocabulary listed below.

Vocabulary Words:

English:	<u>Eyak:</u>
mountain goat	dlaaq'Aya'
chief	<u>k'ulAXiit'inhin</u>
blanket	<u>Gu'L</u>
feast	k'uwah

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Access to a video screen.
- Paper plates (white Chinet dinner plates are ideal) - one per student
- Paper bowls (white Chinet 6 ½ inch soup bowls are ideal) - one per student
- 12 oz. wide cups – 1-3 per student
- Die (with only numbered sides 1, 2, 3 visible; numbers 4,5,6 taped over & renumbered 1,2,3)
- *Optional:* Brown paint (to imitate spruce root color) and paint brushes (or colors to copy the designs examples)
- Hole Puncher, Stapler, Glue, Scissors (one pair per student), crayons or markers
- Tapestry needles
- Yarn for chin straps and cape ties
- Chilkat Robe Design (See below) Enlarge and print one robe per student
- White poster board – one per student
- Construction paper – black or yellow for robe background, black, yellow, and light blue for 'potlatch' ring bands.
- *Optional:* Bits of white roving (unspun yarn); white yarn for fringe

Web Resources:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YraJBuYfRgk> (4:57) Lily Hope Chilkat Weaver – How Chilkat robes are woven (0-1:42); Traditional urine-based dyes (1:42-2:56)
- <http://www.sheldonmuseum.org/vignettes/chilkat-blanket> Origins of Chilkat blanket weaving and uses

Teacher Preparation:

- Review Activity Plan and practice Eyak vocabulary.
- There are two regalia items to complete: potlatch hats and Chilkat robes. Review origins of the Chilkat blanket weaving on Sheldon Jackson Museum website listed above.
- Potlatch Hats: Assemble and prepare potlatch hat materials as necessary for age group (Cut 4" dia. circle from plate centers; Pre-punch holes in plates' rims, 180° apart for chin straps; Poke holes in cup centers through which potlatch 'rings' will be attached; Poke holes in cup ('potlatch ring') centers; Pre-thread tapestry needles with 2-3' of yarn)
- Prepare dice - or a single die - with renumbered sides (tape over 4,5, and 6 and renumber as 1,2, and 3).
- Chilkat Robes: Assemble and prepare Chilkat Robes materials as necessary for age group (Enlarge and print Chilkat Robe design on 11" by 17" paper; Trim poster board to approximately 24" by 22-24"; Trim bottom corners (divide cardboard into thirds and cut off lower right and left thirds diagonally; Indicate 'fringe line' approximately 6" from bottom edge. (See photo below.)

Opening:

Using a map of Alaska, point out where traditional Eyak lands are located and note the neighboring peoples' lands, the Sugpiat to the west and the Tlingit to the east. Remind students that both of these tribes were much larger than the Eyak. The Eyak people often acted as middlemen between the Sugpiat and the Tlingit tribes, meaning that the Eyak people helped their neighbors trade with each other and able to avoid meeting each other directly. This also meant that the Eyak often met with their neighbors and were influenced by their hospitality customs and how they traditionally hosted visiting guests. The Eyak, especially those living in the Yakutat area, were especially influenced by the Tlingit.

There are no potlatches described in traditional Eyak legends or stories but over time as the Eyak interacted and intermarried with their Tlingit neighbors to the east they adopted and adapted some Tlingit customs. Among these adopted customs was hosting of ceremonial potlatches – great feasts of food, dancing, and giving. These special occasions demanded special clothing from hats to cloaks to face painting. (*Read first Elder quotation from Galushia Nelson above.*)

Potlatches were given to dedicate a new potlatch house; to mourn for those killed in battle; to remember a dead relative, and to honor visitors.ⁱⁱ Potlatches demonstrated a tribe's wealth and importance. If you could provide much food to your guests and give them a lot of gifts it proved you were powerful indeed.

Let us look at some photographs that show the regalia used during these potlatches.

- Show Potlatch Dancers photos pointing out Chilkat robes and potlatch ring hats.
 - <http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cdmg21/id/24> Potlatchers in dancing costumes, Sitka Alaska 1898; ASL-P39-0123; Note Chilkat Robe top center.
 - <http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cdmg21/id/54> Yakutat Natives in potlatch dancing costumes, Sitka Alaska, Dec. 9, 1904; ASL-P39-0786; Note Chilkat robes and potlatch hats with single 'potlatch rings' front row, left and right.

Listen as I read an excerpt from the book *Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta* out loud about what Galushia Nelson remembers about a potlatch. “When Galushia was a child, the Eyak at Alaganik gave a potlatch to which the Tlingit from Kayak Island were invited. The Tlingits fired shots before landing, and waited in the river, singing for some time. After they landed they sang again. They did not have to sing much that first day because they were tired. They were painted and dressed in Chilkat blankets.”

- Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaskaⁱⁱⁱ

Let’s look at some photos of potlatch hats. Show Potlatch Hat Power Point (See below).



Potlatch Hats.pptx

Note: These are Tlingit hats which often served to inspire Eyak variations. (Very few Eyak artifacts have survived and we have to rely on photographs of similar items as we do here.) Typically, the hats’ designs indicated a person’s clan or moiety, Eagle or Raven. Each ‘ring’ on top of these spruce root hats indicates the number of potlatches the wearer has hosted – signs of great prestige and importance.

Activities:

Class 1:

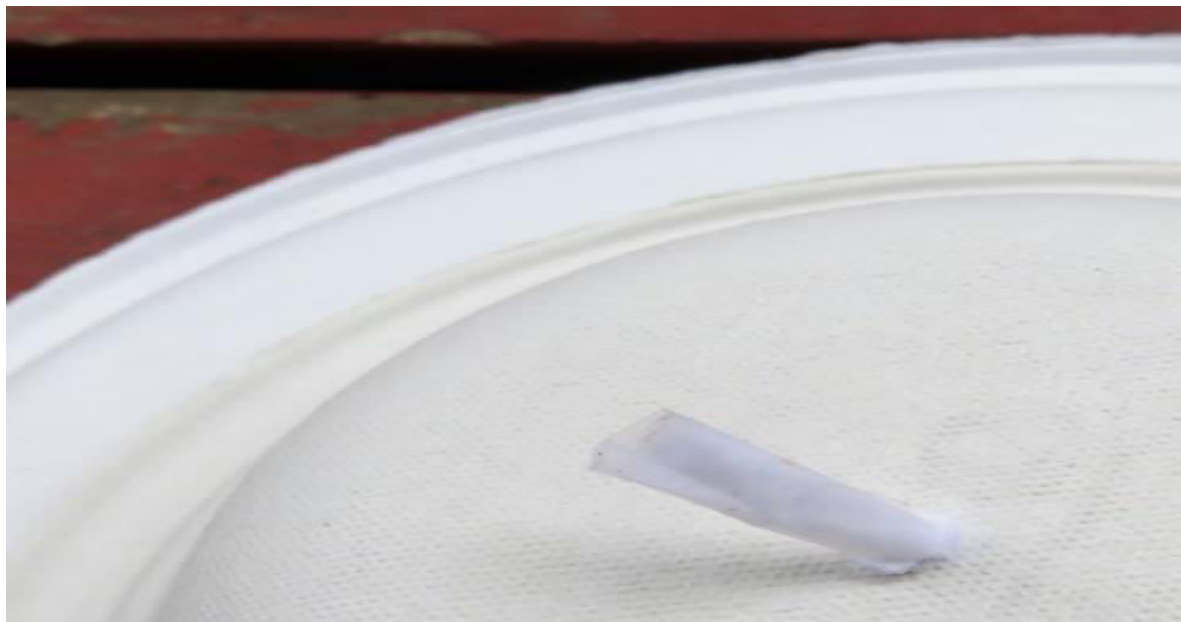
1. Announce that students will each make a potlatch hat and the number of potlatch rings each student attached will be based on a roll of the die. Remind students that potlatches required such a large amount of resources they were not common affairs. So the die has the numbers 1, 2, and 3.
2. Have each student roll the die. Distribute the corresponding number of ‘potlatch ring’ cups.
3. Hand out plate, bowl and ask the students to color the hat with traditional designs they saw in pictures shown in PowerPoint.
4. Demonstrate order of hat assembly and distribute remainder of hat making materials.



- Glue open bowl to center of plate bottom.
- If not already prepared, thread 2-3' of yarn onto needle and tie knot in yarn's end. From underside pull yarn through hole and continue through designated number of 'potlatch ring' bowls.



- Tape off end of yarn to prevent yarn from slipping back out.



- With the yarn steadying the stacked bowls glue or staple 'potlatch ring' cups on top and tie off tightly to hold them in place.



- Thread yarn through plate rims to serve as chin straps.
- *Optional:* Paint hat 'spruce root brown' color and allow to completely dry for designing later.
- *Optional:* Have students make animal based designs on hat brim and/or wrap the 'potlatch rings' with bands of black, yellow, or light blue paper using a stapler to attach them. (Note: Glue does not adhere well to waxed cups). (See photo above.)





Students listen as Bob Ladd shares a Chugach legend, Mt. Eccles Culture Week Assembly 2018

Activities – Chilkat Robes:

Class II:

1. Show Power Point for Chilkat robes (See below.) Note: Mountain Goat hair was often collected from bushes where hairs were rubbed off from passing goats.

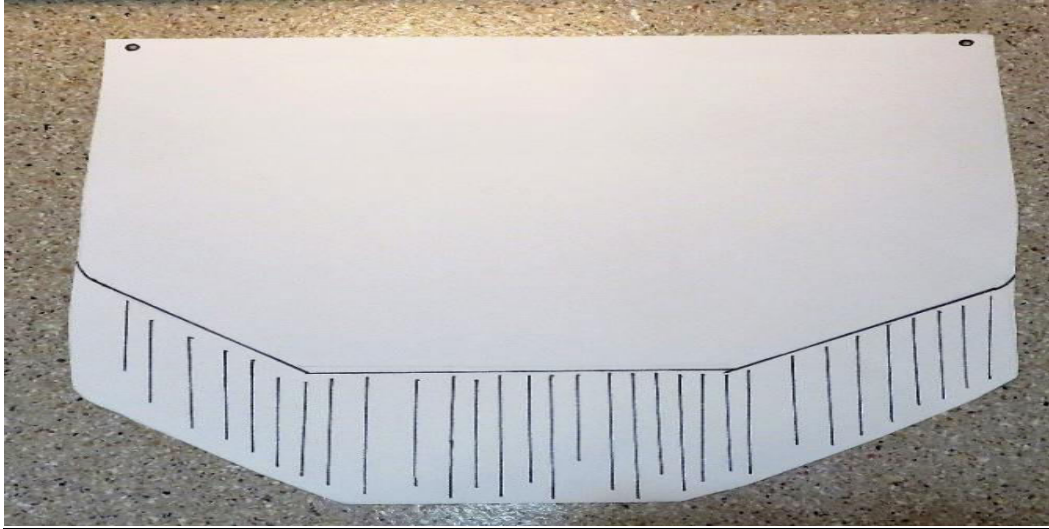


Chilkat
Weaving-Kindergart

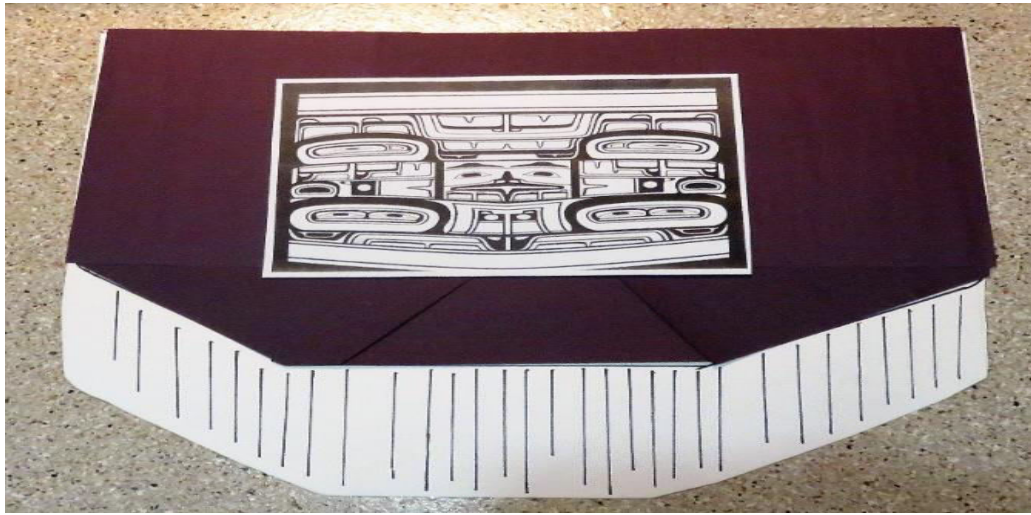
2. Show 'Lily Hope Chilkat Weaver' (0-1:42; See website above) Note: Like their Tlingit neighbors to the east the Eyak wove cloaks made with thigh spun mountain goat hair and cedar strips. The Sugpiat, to the west of the Eyak lands did not spin or weave yarns.

Optional: Distribute bits of roving for students to try thigh-spinning into yarn. Discuss talent required to spin the wool and then combine it with the thin strips of cedar.

3. Show photos of students wearing potlatch hats and Chilkat robes. (See above.)
4. Distribute robe materials (poster board, robe design, background paper, glue, scissors, markers).
5. Describe and demonstrate Chilkat robe assembly.
 - Orient poster board vertically and punch holes in upper right and left corners. Trim lower right and left corner thirds and draw fringe line approximately six inches above trimmed bottom edge as shown below.



- Glue black or yellow construction paper sheets onto poster board above fringe line. Color in Chilkat design (traditional colors: white, black, yellow, blue, green) and glue to center of robe.



- Cut fringes along bottom six inches of robe and punch holes in upper left and right corners. Thread yarn through corner holes for cape ties.
6. Have students don outfits and explain when this regalia would have been worn.
 7. *Optional:* Arrange for students to parade around the school in their outfits. With a Native drum (or recording of a drum beat) have the students form a procession and greet other classes with an Eyak hello: [lAXiishuh](#) (lit.: Is that you all?).

Assessment:

- Students can describe mountain goat hair thigh spinning.
- Students created facsimiles of potlatch hats and Chilkat robes.
- Students explain the Eyak potlatch tradition.
- Students correctly pronounced the Eyak vocabulary words.

ⁱ Birket-Smith, Kaj, and Frederica de Laguna. *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska*. AMS Pr, 1976.
p.181

ⁱⁱ Birket-Smith, p.167

ⁱⁱⁱ Birket-Smith, p.183



Chilkat Robe Design