

**CELEBRATIONS: HOOP RATTLE GR: 6-12 (2LESSONS)**

**Elder Quote/Belief:**



“Hoop rattles were used by dancers and shamans during ceremonial celebrations. The hoop rattles were traditionally made with many puffin beaks and dancers would shake them to the drum beat like a tambourine.”  
–Darrel Olsen, Cordova

**Grade Level: 6-12**

**Overview:** Dancers and shamans of southern Alaska performed to the accompaniment of hoop rattles hung with hooves, claws, shells, and puffin beaks. This Alaska Peninsula rattle consists of thirty-six bear claws tied with sinew strings to a red-painted circular frame.<sup>i</sup>

The Eyak would use “rattles made of a semicircular slab of wood, with a hole cut out for the hand near the straight edge. Around the curved edge were pieces of agate. The Eyak did not use rattles of deer hoofs, or dance mittens ornamented with rattling puffin beaks like the Eskimo of Bering Strait. However, the actors or dancers in the performances witnessed by Abercrombie wore bracelets of tanned skin to which attached claws and whelk shells. The latter had small pebbles or other rattling objects inside.”<sup>iii</sup>

**Standards:**

<i>AK Cultural:</i>	<i>AK Content Science:</i>	<i>CRCC:</i>
<b>B2:</b> 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.	<b>F1:</b> Develop an understanding of the interrelationships among individuals, cultures, societies, science, and technology.	<b>CE1:</b> Students should have knowledge of traditional and contemporary Sugpiaq/Alutiiq song, dance and performance

**Lesson Goal:** To understand the significance of the hoop rattles, how they were made and who they were used by during traditional celebrations.

**Lesson Objective(s):** Students will:

- Be able to explain what materials were used and how the hoop rattle was traditionally made.
- Create a hoop rattle.
- Learn the Sugt’stun/Eyak vocabulary words.

**Vocabulary Words:** Sugt’stun Dialects

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<a href="#">Eyak:</a>
Hoop Rattle		Uulegsuuteq	

Sticks			dAkinh
Beak			Beak (its~) <a href="#">(u)niik'</a>

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

- Elder or Recognized Expert to share story about traditional dancing, especially regarding the use of the rattle
- Embroidery Hoops in two or three different sizes (or branches formed into hoops)
- Sticks (or branches) to make crosspieces for handle
- Artificial Sinew (or string)
- Deer hooves (or shells)
- Drill press to make holes in hoops and noise makers
- Scissors
- If desired: red acrylic paint and paint brushes

**Books:**

- Birket-Smith, Kaj. [The Chugach Eskimo](#), Pg. 109
- Crowell, Aron L. *First Peoples of Alaska: Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage*, Pg. 173
- Crowell, Aron L. *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People*, Pp. 188-190
- Korsun, S.A. *The Alutiit/Sugpiat: A Catalog of the Collections of the Kunstakamera*, Pp. 294-303
- Varjola, Pirjo. *The Etholen Collection*, Pp.238, 242

**Teacher Preparation:**

- Invite an Elder/Recognized expert who can share their knowledge of the traditional hoop rattles used for celebration dances.
- Review with students the proper ways to show respect for the guest speaker.
- Review the activities plan and step-by-step instructions.
- Locate and gather all supplies needed.
- Drill holes in the hooves, shells and hoops prior to class.
- Review the books and display in classroom for students as reference.

**Opening:** (Read the above Overview out loud to the students) Drums and rattles were the sole musical instruments except, perhaps, for a whistle of which a single specimen of bone was found during our excavations. -There were two different types of rattles. One consisted of one or more concentric wooden rings to which puffin beaks or- if we may believe Cook- barnacle shells were attached, fastened to a cross grip of thin sticks. The other kind of rattle was of the ordinary Northwest Coast type, viz. a sub-spherical or bird-shaped container with a few pebbles inside and a short handle. During the dances the rattles were used in pairs.<sup>iii</sup>

Today, we will be creating traditional hoop rattles but instead of puffin beaks, we will use hooves or shells.

**Optional:** Can also make the Eyak rattle as described in *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska* on page 174.

## **Activities:**

### **Class I:**

1. If available, introduce the Elder or Recognized Expert that is wearing their traditional hoop rattles and share their TEK regarding how the hoop rattle was made and who used them.
2. Ask the students to research for any information and pictures on traditional hoop rattles used in the Chugach Region as a reference to create hoop rattles.
3. Hand out the *Step-By-Step Hoop Rattle Instructions* to each student.
4. If holes were drilled ahead of time, pass out supplies needed to each student.
5. Have students choose their materials needed according to the instructions. (Hooves or shells, sticks or branches)
6. If desired, students could choose to paint/decorate their handles and hoops red, prior to stringing on the noise makers. Allow to dry completely.

### **Class II:**

1. Allow time for students to create their hoop rattles.
2. Ask the students to display their hoop rattles with the information they have found regarding traditional hoop rattles in the Chugach Region.
3. Students can use their hoop rattles in the dance at the end of the unit celebration potluck.

### **Assessment:**

- Students researched traditional hoop rattles and incorporated information compiled in relation to the rattle they created.
- Students successfully made and designed their own hoop rattle.
- Students are able to repeat and understand the Sugt'stun/ Eyak vocabulary words.



Traditional hoop rattle made with puffin beaks photo provided by Dr. Aron Crowell, Smithsonian Arctic Studies



Hoop Rattle photo provided by Dr. Aron Crowell, Smithsonian Arctic Studies

## STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS TO MAKE A HOOP RATTLE

**Step 1:** Gather materials/supplies needed.

- Embroidery Hoops in two or three different sizes (or branches formed into hoops)
- Sticks (or branches) to make crosspieces for handle
- Artificial Sinew (or string)
- Deer hooves (or shells)
- Drill press
- Scissors
- Red acrylic paint and paint brushes

### FOR HOOPS:



Embroidery hoops in various sizes, use the inner hoop or cut off the metal fastener



**-OR-** Branches formed into various sized hoops

### FOR HANDLES:



Flat sticks purchased, cut to length needed.



**-OR-** Tree branches cut, peeled and cut to length of hoops and peeled.

**FOR NOISEMAKERS (will not be using puffin beaks):**



Deer hooves can be ordered...

**-OR-** Shells collected from beach.

**FAKE SINEW (or string):**



**Step 2:** Drill holes all around the embroidery hoops (if desired, can tie all around hoop instead)...



**Step 3:** Drill holes into the hooves/shells



**Step 4:** Tie noise makers onto hoop. A couple of options:

A. Tie the hooves or shells onto the hoops, you can choose to tie around the hoop.



B. **OR** if drilled holes into hoop, then tie hooves/shells into the holes.



**NOTE:** Found that stringing two noise objects together and then tying onto hoop made a better sound and looked better.



**Step 5: Making the handle**

- Tie on the two sticks onto the hoops with sinew. Can also notch out on stick so that they lay flat if desired as shown in photo below. Tie the sticks together in the middle cross.



**OR-** if using peeled branches also tie the cross pieces onto the hoops with sinew, make sure to tie sinew between the hoops to ensure separation.





**Finished Hoop Rattle!**

**Important to note the traditional bird rattles**

As shown below, bird rattles were another type of rattle used in dances during ceremonies. If desired, teachers can have students research and try their hand at carving a bird rattle.

*“The other kind of rattle was of the ordinary Northwest Coast type, viz. a sub-spherical or bird-shaped container with a few pebbles inside and a short handle. During the dances the rattles were used in pairs.” –The Chugach Eskimo, p 109*



Bird Rattle made by Andrew Abyo for the Celebrations Heritage Kit



Alaska Native Collections – Rattle <https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=232>



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<sup>i</sup> Crowell, Aron. *First Peoples of Alaska: Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage*. Pp. 173.

<sup>ii</sup> Birket-Smith, Kaj and Laguna, Frederica. *The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska*. Reprint Levin & Munksgaard, Kobenhavn, 1976. Pp. 174-175.

<sup>iii</sup> Birket-Smith, Kaj. *The Chugach Eskimo*. Inter Documentation Co., 1983. pp.108-109.