

**Elder Quote/Belief:**



*“The bottom line was twenty five years ago, in the Chugach region, our culture was a hidden culture. We were afraid to bring it out, we had no confidence. When Lydia Robart was recruited to teach traditional songs and dances, she opened up what we had been hiding about our culture. It became a resurgence of the Chugach culture through songs, dancing, sewing with furs, beading, carving, and language. We have definitely pushed it, pushed it hard!”*

*-Patience Andersen-Faulkner*

**Grade Level: 6-12**

**Overview:**

Traditionally, Chugach and Eyak people would own clothing that was sewn of bird skins, salmon skin and animal pelts including sea otter, seal, land otter, lynx, fox, marten, bear, ground squirrels, marmot, and depilated caribou skin.

The Sugpiaq clothing consisted of a long, loose-fitting, pullover frock and inner shirts were made of the pelts of sea otter and seal. The Eyak clothing consisted of a shirt, trousers and boots. The shirt was a pullover frock made of seal pelts; the fur was placed on the inside of frock for warmth. Their outer shirt was of eagle or swan skins with the feathers plucked, leaving the down for warmth. Both groups of people traditionally wore a waterproof rain parka made from the intestines of bear or sea mammal, socks woven from beach grass, and a pair of knee length sea lion skin, seal skin or fish skin boots, the boots were insulated with grass, moss, or the loose sole of mountain goat or bear fur <sup>1</sup>and perhaps some bear skin, muskrat, or beaver fur mittens. Chiefs had coats of sea otter or ground squirrel.

The clothing of the Chugach and Eyak were exquisite. Can you imagine this craftsmanship of clothing created under the light of an oil lamp? It’s hard to grasp the idea of the quality of their fine design of clothing created under such little light. Beautiful craftsmanship by Alutiiq seamstresses expressed respect for animals; whose skins enveloped the clothed person and whose spirit in the wild were ever alert to human attitudes, actions, and appearance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chugach Eskimo

<sup>2</sup> Looking Both Ways- Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People

**Standards:**

<i>AK Cultural:</i>	<i>AK Content Science:</i>	<i>CRCC:</i>
<b>A3:</b> Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.	<b>F1:</b> Develop an understanding that culture, local knowledge, history and interaction with the environment contribute to the development of scientific knowledge, and local applications provide opportunity for understanding scientific concepts and global issues.	<b>CE2:</b> Students should have knowledge of traditional and contemporary sewing and clothing using skins and furs.

**Lesson Goal:**

To become aware of the different types of furs available to the Chugach and Eyak people for making clothing. Learn to sew with furs made for traditional clothing.

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

- Learn to identify the different types of furs used in the construction of traditional clothing for the Chugach and the Eyak.
- Learn how to place a pattern on fur and cut the fur with the proper tools.
- Learn how to tie knots and stitch their fur piece together using a Glover needle.
- Learn how to make a pattern for mittens and a parka.

**Vocabulary Words:**

Sugt'stun Dialects

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<a href="#">Eyak:</a>
coat	atquq	atkuk	<a href="#">kAanaa'd</a>
Neck scarf	nacahpaguaq	yaquhsun	

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

- Access to internet for research
- Computer with projector

In Kit: optional items

- Fur and leather swatches
- Fur baby booties
- Seal skin parka
- Seal skin
- Sea otter skin
- Chugach and Eyak puppets with their full regalia

**List of materials for making a fur scarf/headband:**

- Fur- Sea otter, beaver, land otter, fox, or coyote. At least a strip that measures 26" x 3". Of course, you can always purchase faux fur from a fabric store instead of real fur (if not available).
- Cotton or flannel fabric (lining for scarf/headband)

- Seam ripper
- Butcher paper
- File folder or poster board to use for making a pattern
- Blue tape
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- Glover needles, size 8 (Suggest: Fire Mountain Item Number: **H20-1022BS \$17.39** Needle, John James, nickel-plated steel, #8, 1-5/16 inches. Sold per pkg of 25)
- Razor- (Amazon- Single Edge Industrial Razor Blades By REXBETI, Box of 100 \$10.99)
- Thread- (Amazon- [1500Yards / 130g / 30 Colors Available] UV Resistant High Strength Polyester Thread #69 T70 Size 210D/3 for Upholstery, Outdoor Market, Drapery, Beading, Purses, Leather –suggest Black, by [Selric](#) \$6.19)

If making neck scarf:

- Fasteners -Coat hook and eye, if making a neck scarf (Amazon-4 x Black Large Covered Hooks & Eye Sewing Closure for Fur Coat Jacket Cape Stole Bracelet Jewelry Books Crafts and More by [Secret for Longevity](#) \$11.99)

If making a headband:

- 2” x 4” piece of Velcro

### **Books & Documents:**

In Kit:

- *Secrets of Eskimo Skin Sewing* by Edna Wilder
- *Alaska Eskimo Footwear* by Jill Oakes and Rich Riewe
- *Women’s Work Women’s Art* by Judy Thompson

Websites:

- Nuta’at Mingqusqat –New Alutiiq Skin Sewers <https://vimeo.com/114603220>
- The following patterns can be purchased from:
  - <https://alaskanpatterns.com/> this site has available for purchase: Alaska Mitten Pattern by Lois, Alaskan Mukluk Patterns by Lois, Alaskan Summer Parkas by Lois, Alaskan Winter Parka Patterns by Lois, and How to make a Trapper Cap.
  - <http://cespubs.uaf.edu/publications/?cat=10> this site has available for purchase: Alaska Mittens: A collection of patterns for all ages, How to make a trapper cap, along with a PDF of the Cloth Parka pattern.
  - Or search Pinterest for free mitten patterns

### **Teacher Preparation:**

- Invite an Elder/ Recognized Expert who has led a traditional lifestyle in your community. Ask to share subsistence values, experiences, and stories pertaining to sewing with fur. Ask the Elder to share their knowledge of traditional materials used for skin sewing.
- Review with students the proper ways to show respect for guest speaker.
- Review the tutorial video included with this lesson (located on the webpage), “How to sew together a fur scarf or headband”

- Review the list of materials for making a fur headband and gather all the supplies for each student. If using real fur, you may have to collect a fee from each student to purchase the supplies.
- Suggest making either a headband or scarf before the class to use as an example for students.
- Review the book “Secrets of Eskimo Skin Sewing” by Edna Wilder (in kit). You may want to copy pages 3, 4, 26-30 for each student.

### **Opening:**

The Chugach and Eyak people were able to create beautiful clothing from bird skins, salmon skin and animal furs including sea otter, seal, land otter, lynx, fox, marten, bear, ground squirrels, marmot, and depilated caribou skin. They made the clothing as comfortable as possible while making sure it was warm in cold weather and cool in warm temperatures. For the Chugach and Eyak people warm and waterproof clothing was a must in the temperate rain forest of the Chugach region. Since seal, sea lion and sea otter fur was considered the warmest, it was used as an inner wear for our ancestors. The outer wear, the rain proof parka, was made from bear or sea mammal intestines. It is curious that gut, an inner membrane, has become an outer skin, tough and protective, despite its fragile appearance.<sup>3</sup>

Sea lion seal, and fish skin was used to make waterproof boots, and bear skin, muskrat, or beaver fur was used to make mittens.

On display are swatches of various fur and natural products used in the development of our ancestor’s clothing and their outer wear. As I point to these different swatches of natural material, what do you think it is and how do you think the Chugach and Eyak used these different materials? How does the material that makes up your mittens, scarf, parka, or rain jacket compare with these swatches on display?

Let’s discuss the changes of clothing over the last 100 years and the types of traditional outerwear that continue to be worn today and why. (Allow time for discussion.)

Gathering materials was only the first step in making clothing. The clothing often contained a variety of hides harvested over many hunts. Not only did the Chugach and Eyak work hard in harvesting, their next step would be tanning these skins. The traditional tanning method used urine. The urine would break down the fat on the hide. Leaving the hide in a warm place for several days would help with the follicles open up, so they were able to scrape the hair off. Just to get the hides ready for sewing took so much time!

After Russian contact, people started wearing parkas made of bird skins, because the furs they traditionally used were now a valuable trade item. “The typical puffin parka – an everyday garment – had about 60 skins, and a cormorant parka for special events had as many as 150 throat skins. Other garments combined the pelts of several animals. Alaska Peninsula Alutiiq wore parkas fashioned from squirrel, caribou, and mink, otter, and ermine pelts.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Innerskins Outerskins Gut and Fishskin

<sup>4</sup> Kodiak Alutiiq Museum

The tanning of bird skins was with fish eggs. “After scraping the skins to remove fat and tissue, Alutiiq covered them with fish roe and left them to sit. After several days, they scraped the hides clean and kneaded them until they were soft and dry.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to processing hides and bird skins, seamstresses also made their own thread, out of strings of animal tendon, and needles out of bird bones. So much work!

This overview gives you an idea of the tremendous amount of work that was put into making a traditional garment. Our ancestors were respectful of their natural resources and extremely innovative.

### **Activities:**

#### **Class I: Making a fur collar/headband- Photos of steps are attached**

1. Introduce an Elder or Recognized Expert to share their knowledge on fur sewing and techniques they have used to make traditional clothing.
2. Pass around the variety of fur swatches and ask the students to carefully examine, feel and become familiar with the different pelts so they can easily identify the animal it came from.
3. Discuss the project that they are going to make and the materials that they will use for the project.
4. Each student will be required to read the information out of the book *Secrets of Eskimo Skin Sewing* by Edna Wilder, pages 3, 4, 26-30, before they begin this project.
5. Each student will also be required to watch the video located on the Clothing webpage “How to Make a Fur Headband/Scarf” and be required to take notes on the steps to making this headband.
6. Students now will begin the process of cutting their fur and gathering their sewing supplies for this project.
7. To cut out pattern pieces: On the skin side of fur, draw out the pattern with a pen. To make a fur headband, the measurements will be 20-24” x 3”. Measure the student’s forehead to get an accurate size. This headband can also be worn as a neck scarf.
8. Using a razor, carefully following the line pushing lightly enough so you are only cutting the skin, not the fur.
9. Carefully pull apart the pieces, to separate the fur.
10. Cut out the liner ½ “larger on each side and 3” longer in the length. This liner can be of cotton, flannel, or fleece.
11. Fold in edges of liner, ¼ inch around on 3 sides. Leave one short side
12. Cut out a piece of Velcro-4 “ x 2”
13. Sew the hard side of the Velcro to the right side of the liner-A sewing machine works best for this step.
14. Sew the soft side of Velcro as a separate tab-A sewing machine works great for this step.
15. Sew the tab, right sides together, to the headband.

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<sup>5</sup> Kodiak Alutiiq Museum website

16. Now tack the liner to the fur (\*NOTE: place the Velcro that is sewn on the liner at the opposite side of the tab☺) Can use a binder clip to keep the pieces together as you sew or tack in several places with thread and needle. Knot.
17. Once you finish tacking the headband together in several places, then you are ready to sew all three sides together. Sew using the whipstitch. Keep the tab side open.
18. Now you are ready to turn this headband inside out. Use a ruler or something long that will make it easier to turn.
19. Almost finished!!! Last step is to close the tab shut with a hidden stitch. Great job!
20. Students can embellish their headband/scarf as desired. This project may take 4 – 6 weeks to complete, depending on class size and amount of time that you meet.

## Step by step photographs for making a fur headband:



### To cut out pattern pieces:

- On the skin side of fur, draw out the pattern with a pen.
- To make a fur headband, the typical measurements will be 20-24" x 3".
- Using a razor, carefully follow the line pushing lightly enough so you are only cutting the skin, not the fur.
- Carefully pull apart the pieces, to separate the fur.
- Cut out the liner 1/2 "larger on each side and 3" longer in the length.
- This liner can be of cotton, flannel, or fleece.
- Fold in edges of liner, 1/4 inch around on 3 sides.



### To make Velcro fastener:

- Cut out a piece of Velcro- 4 "x 2"
- Sew the hard side of the Velcro to the right side of the **liner**.
- Cut a piece of fabric
- Sew the soft side of Velcro as a separate tab (with fabric)
- Sew the tab, right sides together, to the headband. Be sure it will be able to attach to other Velcro side. **Note:** It is easier to sew these down with a machine if available.

**\*\*FYI-**The fur side is just there, don't let it confuse you! You are not sewing with it at this point.



- Notice the Velcro is sewn down on the right side of lining.
- Now place the fur side down on right side of liner.



Prepping to sew together:

- Put the two pieces together- fur side and right side of liner together.
- Using a needle push all the fur in, so only have the skin side and the liner on each side is only showing.
- Sew with the whipstitch.





Tacking fur to liner:

- After you have placed the two pieces together
- Now tack the liner to the fur
- Important to note: place the Velcro that is sewn on the liner at the opposite side of the tab 😊
- You can also use a binder clip to keep the pieces together as you sew or tack in several places with thread and needle.
- Knot.



To sew for tacking and around headband:

- Again, important to sew with the whip stitch.
- You will need to continually push the fur in between the fur and liner as you sew.



Tacking and sewing:

- Finish tacking the headband together in several places
- Next, sew all three sides together.
- Keep the tab side open.
- See photo below



Turn inside out:

- After all three sides are sewn together.
- Now you are ready to turn this headband inside out.
- Using a ruler or something long to help pushing the sewn side down through the open side.
- The fur and liner should now be on outside.



Sew the last seam:

- Last step is to close the tab shut with a hidden stitch.
- Make sure to keep the Velcro tab out, pin the liner with  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch folded under and pin closed.
- See close-up.
- Stitch closed. Best to use hidden stitch at this point.

NOTE: This is the opposite end of the Velcro tab.

Make sure you have made the Velcro tab able to attach to each other. 😊

- Students can now embellish their headband or scarf if desired.



**HEAD BAND**



**NECK SCARF**

## Optional Activities

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### Class II: Making mittens

1. Order mitten patterns from Cooperative Extension program-  
<http://cespubs.uaf.edu/publications/?cat=10>

-OR-

Check on Pinterest for free patterns to make mittens.

2. Using butcher paper, copy the patterns from the original.
3. Make sure to provide all the information on the copied pattern from the original pattern.
4. Cut the pattern out of butcher paper.
5. Now copy this pattern onto a file folder, poster paper or pattern plastic for strength and stability and place pattern sizes into separate gallon size plastic bags.

**Side note:** My friend, whom was raised in a village in Western Alaska, Kipnuk, told me that she made her patterns from cereal boxes. They didn't always have file folders available to them. She knew exactly what pattern to pick from the cereal box design. I love this idea-reuse and recycle! ☺

6. Review pages 47-57 in “*Secrets of Eskimo Skin Sewing*” by Edna Wilder for making mitten pattern.
7. Follow directions to make the mittens.

### Quarter project: Class project-Making full regalia for a Chugach/Eyak doll/puppet.

1. In the kit, you can request the Chugach and Eyak puppets for ideas on the construction of regalia.
2. Students can make regalia for a puppet or make a doll with full regalia for a class project. FYI- I found the following books on Amazon for the construction of a doll-
  - a. Designing the Doll by Susanna Oroyan ISBN 1-57120-060-6
  - b. Anatomy of a Doll by Susanna Oroyan ISBN 1-57120-024-X
  - c. Finishing the Figure by Susanna Oroyan ISBN 1-57120-121-1

### Semester projects: Class project-Making a traditional fur parka.

1. Watch the video <https://vimeo.com/114603220> Nuta’at Mingqusqat –New Alutiiq Skin Sewers
2. This was an awesome project in Kodiak Alaska. I think it would be a great group project to recreate a parka or a seal gut parka from the region, and then display at the local City Museum or Cultural Center. It could be a part of a Cultural Celebration with traditional foods and dancing!
3. Patterns for making a parka can be purchased from: <https://alaskanpatterns.com/> or review pages 93-110 in *Secrets for Eskimo Skin Sewing* by Edna Wilder. On page 100, a picture shows how to take measurements for making a parka. It is a very good description.
4. In the Clothing kit, there is a reference book called, *Women’s Work, Women’s Art*. This is a great reference book for creating garments. There are many drawings on how to create a garment. Also in the kit, you can request to borrow, *The Alutiit/Sugpiat*. This reference book shows the different parkas and styles from the region.

**Assessment:**

- Students can identify natural materials used in the construction of traditional clothing for the Chugach and the Eyak.
- Students can demonstrate how to place a pattern on fur and cut the fur with the proper tools.
- Students successfully created a fur headband or scarf.
- Student can correctly say and point the Sugt'stun/Eyak words for coat and neck scarf.