

**CLOTHING: SINEW AND STITCHES GR: PREK-2 (LESSON 4- 5)**

**Elder Quote/Belief:** *“She had a little box that had strands of porpoise sinew, and you could peel a piece off there as thin as you wanted it.”* -Bill Hjort, talking about his grandmother

**Grade Level:** Pre K-2

**Overview:**

In the Chugach Region, tendons of large whales, porpoises, and seals were made into sinew thread. Porpoise sinew thread was used for fine sewing. Our ancestors also used goat and bear sinew. The thread was dried, split, and twisted into a three strand thread. The thimble used was a small, semi-circular piece of thick skin, with a slit parallel to the straight edge. Sewing needles were made of copper and bone. An awl was used to punch holes in the thick skin, and afterwards sewn with a bone needle that had an eye. Before they made the holes, they chewed the skin and allowed it to dry.

**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 inventive ways our Chugach Region ancestors used to make their own thread from sinew, traditional stitch used for sewing clothes and the importance of a sewing bag and the tools.

**Lesson Objective(s):**

Students will:

- Learn how the Chugach people used the tendon of the animal for making thread to sew their clothing.
- Learn a new word-SINEW and what it means.
- Learn the steps it takes to process sinew into sewing thread.
- Learn the traditional stitch, the overcasting stitch, which starts from back to front and from left to right.
- Learn why the sewing kit was so important and aware of the tools in a sewing bag, for instance; needle, thimble, awl, and an animal skin scraper.

**Vocabulary Words:** Sugt'stun Dialects

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<a href="#">Eyak:</a>
sinew	(thread) kelugkaq	kelugkaq	
Skin scraper	keligsu'n	keligsu'n	
Sewing kit	kakiwik	kakiwik	

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

- Hole punch
- Paper
- Scissors
- Markers

Provide in kit:

- Ivory needle holder (traditional design)
- Heavy lacing cards with colored shoe laces
- Plastic needles, foam pieces, cord
- Pattern for the sewing kit/kakiwik (Counciller, 2009)
- Laminated sheet on the sinew of a porpoise tail, p. 20
- Chugach Clothing A to Z flash cards
- Book: *Alutiiq Traditions-An Introduction to the Native Culture of the Kodiak Archipelago* by Amy Steffian & April G. Laktonen Counciller, pgs. 32-33

**Teacher Preparation:**

- Invite an Elder/Recognized expert who can share their knowledge of processing sinew and using the sinew to sew into a garment.
- Review with students the proper way to show respect for the guest speaker.
- Review the activity lessons.
- Review and familiarize yourself with the sewing technique in *Alutiiq Traditions*, pgs 32, 33.
- Display the moose sinew, imitation sinew, antique flesher, awl, needles, and thimble on a table.
- Cut out the sewing kit from the pattern included in the kit. Punch out the holes around the outside of the foam pieces.

**Opening:**

Students arrive in classroom and they are able to look at the items on the table. The lesson today is all about SINEW- pronunciation 'sin-u'. The definition of sinew: A tendon which is prepared to use as a cord or thread.

Start discussion with the students opening with: I am wearing this shirt. Teacher tugs on her sleeve. What do you think is holding my shirt together? Oh yes, its string. Explain to the students about how there were no stores to buy thread for sewing, so the Chugach people had to

think about what to use to sew up their clothing, hats, and boots and use what was available from their area. They found that there was a stringy tendon along the bones of different animals, like porpoise, seals, bears, and whales. This would work well for sewing thread. Chugach people wanted to use every part of the animal with no waste. Again, say the word SINEW. Sinew is string or thread.

### **Activities:**

#### **Class1:**

1. Pass around the sinew (moose bone) from the kit.
2. Teacher can show the students the laminated picture of the porpoise tail out of Bobby Stamp's book. Now show the students the sinew out of the kit that has been scraped off into strands. Explain to the students how much work it was to make sinew. This is how they made sinew: They would strip the tendon that was on the tail end of the porpoise and cut the fat and the hide away. Show the students the flesh scraper. Demonstrate how to use the flesh scraper on a cardboard cut into the shape of a porpoise tail. Then they would soak it in sea water for about five days in a cool place. It was then sundried or dried in a smoke house. After all the meat was scraped off it got hard and it was pounded and the strands were twisted into thread that was used to sew skins together, clothing, coats, and boats. So much work, just to make string! Think about it! And now, today, you can go to the store and buy it. The Chugach and Eyak worked so hard in their everyday life, didn't they?
3. Show the students the strands of sinew. Hold the strands in the palm of your hands and rub it together, the warmth of your hands soften the sinew to make thread. Pass this around for all the students to feel it, soften it, and make thread.
4. Now show the students the imitation sinew, and how to separate it into three strands for sewing. Let the children touch the imitation sinew and separate the waxed string.
5. Show the students the tools used in a sewing kit. Demonstrate the flesh scraper. How it was used to scrape all the meat off the hide. An awl was used to make holes in the hide, so it was easier to sew. Show students the thimble. A thimble was used to protect your finger and push the needle through the hide. Now demonstrate the way to use a thimble. A bone needle was very sharp so the thimble was a very important tool. A needle was made from the bones of animals.
6. Show the students the sewing kit. Explain how important this sewing kit was to the women and the men. Women used their kit for sewing everything from clothing to boat covers. Men used their sewing kit to mend their boat covers and clothing while out hunting.
7. Show students the Chugach Clothing A to Z flash cards. Review each picture card and explain to students what it has to do with the Chugach and Eyak clothing that was stitched together with sinew. End with the X-stitch. Demonstrate the stitch on the sewing card included in the kit. Let the students practice this stitch with their own card, plastic needle and cording. This is the stitch they will use on their own sewing kit. Students will make a sewing kit in next class.

## **Class 2: Sewing bag (Kakiwik)**

1. Pass out supplies to each student: a cutout foam sewing bag (pre-punched holes) and cording.
2. Show the students how to use an awl onto a piece of leather to punch the holes. Let each of the children practice with the awl and make a hole in the leather sample. Show the students the holes that are punched in their sewing bags and how it represents the punched hole an awl will make.
3. With markers create designs on your bag, or cut designs out of the foam sheets and paste those designs on your sewing bag. If the students want to add a stencil to their bag, they can cut out a flower shape from a piece of paper. Use the negative as a stencil with your markers to create a repeated pattern of the same flower shape on their sewing bag.
4. Show the students the overcast stitch. From back to front and left to right. The stitch they practiced with their sewing card in the last class.
5. Students will use cording, like a shoe lace, to do the overcast stitch and close up your sewing bag.
6. In the finished bag, include a plastic needle and imitation sinew.
7. Teacher may show the students how to add a bead or a button to close up their sewing bag.

### **Assessment:**

- Students can correctly say the word sinew.
- Students can describe where sinew comes from and how it is made.
- Students correctly identify the overcast stitch used on the traditional sewing bags.
- Students can correctly say and point to the different Sugt'stun/Eyak words for sinew, to twist sinew for sewing and sewing bag.