

CLOTHING: SALMON AND SEALS GR: PREK-2 (LESSONS 6 AND 7)

Elder Quote/Belief: “They chew on sealskin seams for the baidarka and there was some sort of chemical reaction between your saliva, the sealskin, and the porpoise sinew that created a waterproof stitch.” Bill Hjort statement in Chenega Diaries

Grade Level: Pre K - 2

Overview:

The Chugach and Eyak people were able to create beautiful outdoor clothing using salmon skin and seal intestine. The people sewed the fish skin and/or the seal intestine together with a waterproof stitch.

Standards:

<i>AK Cultural:</i>	<i>AK Content Science:</i>	<i>CRCC:</i>
A3: Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.	F1: 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.	CE2: Students should have knowledge of traditional and contemporary sewing and clothing using skins and furs.

Lesson Goal:

To understand that salmon and seals were used by Chugach and Eyak people for making clothing. To learn how creative Chugach and Eyak people were with the development of their clothing out of these products. To understand how the Chugach and Eyak people learned to transform salmon and seal intestine into making useful clothing for the different weather here in the Chugach region.

Lesson Objective(s):

Students will:

- Learn that the salmon and seals were harvested to make clothing.
- Learn what kind of clothing was made with salmon skin.
- Learn what kind of clothing was made from seal intestine.
- Learn three Sugt’stun/Eyak words

Vocabulary Words:

Sugt’stun Dialects

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<u>Eyak:</u>
Red salmon	nikliq	nikliq	<u>cha’ch’</u>
Seal (harbor)	qaigyaq	qaigyaq	<u>geeLtaag, keeLtaag</u>

Seal skin	ammia gaigyam	ammia gaigyam	geeLtaag tah
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Materials/Resources Needed:

- Seal intestine parka in shadowbox.
- Seal intestine sample in case.
- Seal intestine stitch sample.
- Stuffed seal (make up a seal for this Clothing kit).
- Stuffed salmon (make up a salmon for the Clothing kit).
- Fish skin sample.
- Fish skin doll.
- Laminated seal intestine and salmon skin tanning information sheet.
- Imitation seal intestine piece made out of rip stop fabric for the students to practice the waterproof stitch on.

Teacher Preparation:

- Invite an Elder/ Recognized Expert who has led a subsistence lifestyle in your region. Ask him or her to share subsistence values, experiences, and stories. Ask the Elder to share their knowledge of traditional materials used for clothing.
- Review with the students the proper ways to show respect for the guest speaker.
- Review the information sheet on Chugach clothing for the outdoors-waterproof clothing made from seal intestine and fish skins.
- Familiarize yourself with the materials and resources in kit.

Opening:

Talk with the children about how the Chugach and Eyak people used every part of the animal. The Chugach people did not believe in wasting anything. The Chugach and Eyak people didn't have stores available to buy boots, mittens, hats, or rain gear. Did you know that the Chugach and Eyak people used every part of the seal and salmon? Did you know that the Chugach and Eyak used seal intestine for waterproof jackets, like you use your rain gear to keep you dry in the wet weather. Did you know that the Chugach and Eyak people used salmon skin for their waterproof boots, like you use rubber rain boots to keep your feet dry?

Activities:

Class Day 1: All about Seals. Hold up the stuffed seal from kit. The seal fur was used for clothing, hats, boots, parkas, mittens. The seal fat was used for food. The fat was rendered down and Chugach and Eyak dipped their fish in the seal fat to give them energy. The seal fat was like their vitamin every morning to keep them healthy. Seal meat was used as a food source. The meat around the ribs was also a food source, and cleaned seal ribs were used as a scraper tool. The inside of the seal (*Note: teacher displays stuffed seal and pretends to cut open the belly-

seal stomach and lungs were blown up and dried to be used for a baking bag or a holding bag for food. As a baking bag, stomach or lungs were stuffed with seal meat, baked and eaten. As a holding bag, the stomach and lungs were blown up and dried and this was used as a storage container for dried fish or berries, even used to carry water. The intestines were blown up (show how they blew up the intestine like a huge balloon) dried out and then cut into strips, making waterproof parkas and waterproof bags. Pass around the seal intestine. Let the kids touch and talk about how it feels. Discuss the waterproof stitch and how it helped keep water out. Discussion on how important it is to stay dry in this wet climate of the Chugach region. Explain to the students that the Chugach region is considered a rainforest. It was very important for the Chugach and the Eyak people to find a material that would keep them dry in this wet and cold climate. Pass around samples of the seal intestine so they can feel how strong these materials are. Isn't it amazing how this inner membrane became an outer skin, tough and protective, despite its fragile appearance? (Blumenstein) Talk with the students on how the Chugach processed the intestine so that they would be able to sew with it and use a waterproof stitch to keep them dry when out in the weather. Tell how they used this material for rain gear. Show the students seal intestine parka in the shadow box. Let the students come around and look at it very closely. Students can practice waterproof stitch with the imitation seal intestine fabric made out of rip stop fabric. Finish the lesson with a picture of the Chugach man in a waterproof seal intestine parka and show the students the Chugach puppet in the imitation seal intestine parka.

Class Day 2: All about salmon skin. Teacher holds up the stuffed salmon. Ask the students what they know about salmon and what it is used. Following is a description of salmon skin and its traditional uses:

“In respect for the fish and the seal, you use every bit of it-the head, the insides, the bones, and the skin of the fish. And then whatever we don't eat goes to the dogs. The bones go back to the river or the lake, wherever you caught it from. If they're from the ocean, you take them there. That will ensure more fish in the next years. If it's a seal, same way. The bladder goes back to sea. The seals will come back. You bury the bones near the sea so you won't find them floating all over the beach. I appreciate very much the respect for things when I was growing up. So you use every bit of it-the insides for clothing, eat the kidneys and liver and the meat. Use the seal oil also. The stomach is used for storing the seal oil and for when you gather salmon berries. The skin you use for parkas, mittens or mukluks. The bones you use for scrapers, runners for sleds and for tanning. The whiskers are used for toothpicks, and the faces are used for ornaments. The bladder goes back to the sea.

Fish skins were used for mukluks, mittens, and raincoats. They skinned the fish, opened the stomach all the way down to the tail, skinned it out, and cut off the fin in the back. They patched it the same way with the esophagus. The fish skin mittens are trimmed with the esophagus of the seal, and the palms are made of harbor seal flippers.” (Blumenstein)

The skin, the bones, the brain, the meat? Talk to them about how the Chugach people let nothing go to waste with the salmon. Help them understand how the Chugach people used salmon skin for rain clothing and boots. Show the students the Chugach puppet and the fish skin mittens.

Today invite a traditional expert to come into the classroom and show how salmon skin is tanned. Ask the expert if they can bring the tanned salmon in at different stages of the tanning process to show the students how the skin turns from its raw form to a tanned skin for sewing boots, bags, and clothing.

Assessment:

- Students can explain how every part of the salmon and seal caught were used by the Chugach people and that nothing was wasted.
- Students can explain how the salmon skin and seal intestines were harvested to make clothing.
- Students can correctly say and point to the different Sugt'stun/Eyak vocabulary words

Salmon Skin Tanning by Raven Madison

Your Non- Traditional Tanning Kit

- Salmon Skins
- Water
- Two large metal or glass bowls
- Quart mason jar with a lid
- 99% rubbing alcohol
- Metal spoon
- Latex gloves
- Dish soap
- Clean plywood
- Staples or thumbtacks

Preparing the skins-

Cut the salmon skin off of the fresh salmon. Try to cut as close to the skin as possible without cutting through the skin. If you are not using the skins right away freeze in a freezer bag. Next take a metal spoon and scrape the flesh off the skin.

Tanning process-

Rinse salmon skins in cold water. After let soak in soapy water for the whole day. Take a quart mason jar and fill ¼ liquid vegetable glycerin and 1/4 -99% rubbing alcohol. Then put fish skins in this solution (make sure that all skin are covered) for at least 48 hours.

Drying the skins-

Rinse with cold water, wring the salmon skin out. Put dime size amount of soap on flesh side and stretch out, hold with staples or tacks, leave for one day. Flip skin over and dry completely.

Raven would like to give credit to June (Simeonoff) Pardue, a Kodiak Alutiiq artist. She was born in Old Harbor, Kodiak Island. She has been practicing traditional Alaska Native art since an early age. It took her 5 years to develop a tanning solution before she could design and hand sew salmon skin bags, slippers and a jacket trimmed in sea otter. This jacket can be viewed at the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, Alaska. June has taught a variety of Alutiiq crafts in over 20 locations in Alaska and has been carrying on the teaching of traditional Alutiiq beadwork, skin sewing, and grass weaving since 1964.

Seal intestine

Chugach people mastered the art of Alaskan coastal living. With houses insulated with earth, flexible skin covered boats, ingenious tools for ocean harvesting, and warm, waterproof clothing, the Chugach thrived in one of the world's stormiest regions for over 7,000 years. Clothing was perhaps their most critical tool. Long, robe-like parkas of animal and bird skins provided warmth and a canvas for spiritual connection with a volatile natural world. Jackets stitched from the translucent intestines of sea mammals and bears provided lightweight, flexible protection from the rain. This clothing impressed the merciless Russian traders that colonized Alaska. Commanders commissioned Native seamstresses to produce Russian-style garments, capes and captain hats, with waterproof stitching techniques and materials.

Due to the wet maritime climate, it was crucial to have waterproof clothing. Therefore, the garments made of fish skin and seal or bear gut were sewn with incredible precision making them very effective against the wet weather. Clothing was decorated with colorful natural dyes, feathers and puffin beaks, and in some cases elaborately carved ivory, bone or wooden figurines. Chugach people also fashioned special clothing for hunting and traveling. Every kayaker wore a gut skin jacket cut to his unique proportions and designed to fit snugly over his boat hatch. Also known by the Russian term *kalmia*, these garments were so valued by western colonists that they commissioned Native people to produce them in European styles like cloaks. Gut rain jackets were popular gifts and souvenirs in the historic era.

Chugach sewed these garments from the intestines of bears or sea mammals. Strips of gut skin were sewn together with sinew and special waterproof stitches. Chugach skin sewers rolled a piece of dried beach grass into every seam, and then made careful stitches through the grass. When water seeped into the needle holes, it was absorbed by the underlying grass, which swelled and prohibited more water from entering. This ingenious stitching kept the hunter dry and protected him from hypothermia. The typical garment was knee length, although longer jackets were created for kayakers. This outdoor clothing is essential in the Chugach region, where cold wet weather or sea spray can easily cause hypothermia. These garments were tied around the boat's cockpit to keep rain and sea spray out.

