

**CLOTHING: SEAL GUT PARKA GR: PREK-2 (LESSON 8)**

**Elder Quote/Belief:**

*“Blow, just like a balloon, that bear gut...let sun dry it, like clothes outside...Cut it about so wide...Then sew it together for a rain jacket.”*

-Nida Chya, Kodiak Island Elder, 1986 (Aron Crowell, 2001)

**Grade Level: PreK - 2**

**Overview:**

Intestines of bears, seals, sea lions, and whales were used to make waterproof jackets and bags. To prepare intestines for sewing, they were cleaned, inflated, and hung out 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 understand that intestines from seals, sea lions, bears and whales were used by Chugach and Eyak people for making waterproof clothing. To learn how creative Chugach and Eyak people were with the development of their clothing out of these products.

**Lesson Objective(s):**

Students will:

- Learn that intestine was harvested to make waterproof clothing.
- Learn about the design of the various gut parkas.
- Learn two Sugt’stun/Eyak words

Sugt’stun Dialects

**Vocabulary Words:**

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<u>Eyak:</u>
Waterproof/ rain coat			k’uleh <u>kAnaa’d</u> rain coat
Gut parka	qitersun	qitersun	

### **Materials/Resources Needed:**

- White or light tan tissue paper/construction paper (one sheet for each student 9” x 12”)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Fine tip markers (red, black, brown, blue)
- Construction paper (one sheet for each student)
- Templates of the gut parka
- Seal intestine sample in case
- Seal intestine stitch sample
- Cecil puppet from kit
- Laminated Chugach Gut Parka description for display
- Imitation seal gut piece (rip stop fabric) for the students to learn and practice the waterproof stitch.

### Reference Books:

- *Sharing Alaska Native Cultures: A Hands-On Activities Book*
- *Looking Both Ways*
- *Crossroads of the Continent*

### **Teacher Preparation:**

- Invite an Elder/ Recognized Expert who can share their knowledge of traditional materials used for clothing.
- Review with the students the proper ways to show respect for the guest speaker.
- Review directions on how to make this project with the students- A gut parka.
- Familiarize yourself with the materials and resources in kit.

### **Opening:**

Explain to the students that gut parkas- waterproof, wind-proof, light weight hooded outer coats- were made from intestines of seal, sea lion, whale, and bear. Gut skin strips were sewn together horizontally, starting at the bottom and continuing upward into a spiral. If the fragile gut skin were torn, it was repaired by inserting small, flat wooden discs with a groove around the edge, because sewing would tear the gut. The lower edge of the body and the hand opening are bordered with cotton, and the hood and hand openings are provided with draw strings ending in blue tassels. Today we are going to make a gut parka out of paper and glue onto construction paper. Students will have an opportunity to get creative with their beach scene on the construction paper.

### **Activities:**

1. Look at designs and construction of gut parkas and clothing made by the Chugach and the Eyak people of the Chugach region. Display Cecil-the Chugach boy puppet and talk about his gut parka.
2. Pass around the gut sample from kit. Let them feel it and talk about how fragile it is.

3. Display the gut parka in the shadow box and talk with the students about the strips and the design.
4. Display the imitation seal gut piece (rip stop fabric) and show students how to sew with the waterproof stitch. Now pass “seal gut” piece of fabric around to each student and let each student practice sewing this traditional waterproof stitch.
5. Now students can cut tissue paper or construction paper into thin strips (about 1 inch wide).
6. Glue all strip together by overlapping.
7. Choose the parka design you wish to create and cut it out of tissue or construction paper. You may choose one of the traditional designs or make up a new parka design of your own.
8. Choose a large sheet of construction paper. Cut and glue a picture of a rocky beach environment with mountains all around and the ocean.
9. Glue your gut parka figure onto the construction paper where you have created a beach environment.
10. Complete the person wearing the gut parka with markers, cut paper, and crayons. Add any more details to the picture, sun, rain, anything you like.
11. You may also use found objects, such as real grass, pebbles, moss, etc. on your background.
12. Complete the parka with designs, yarn, feathers, and decorative stitches by using a fine tip marker.
13. Teacher can display these creations for all the children to see. Teacher can also display the real gut parka in the shadow box, with the laminated sheet describing traditional gut parkas from the Chugach region, and the imitation “seal gut” waterproof stitch learning tool for other students to practice on and learn the waterproof stitch.

**Assessment:**

- Students will know that intestine was harvested to make waterproof clothing.
- Students will know the different designs of the gut parka.
- Students can correctly say and point to the different Sugt’stun/Eyak words for rain coat and gut parka.



*Aleut Gut Parka*

**Gut parka located at the Anchorage Museum  
in the Alaska section**



# Ceremonial Gut Parka



## Traditional Gut Parka



**Dolls wearing gut skin parkas**





## 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.

