

**TRADITIONAL TRANSPORTATION: WATER SAFETY GR: PREK-2 (LESSON 5)**

**Elder Quote/Belief:**



*“Flotation you would think because they used them for bagging up their seagull eggs in seal oil, and then they might of used that as flotation too, that stomach of the sea lion or seal.”*  
 -Wally Kvasnikoff, Nanwalek, Alaska<sup>1</sup>

**Grade Level:** PreK-2

**Overview:** The people of the Chugach Region traveled safely by observing the weather, tides and winds. Water safety is an important skill for all who travel, fish and hunt by boat or recreate near our rivers, lakes, streams and ocean.

**Standards:**

<i>AK Cultural:</i>	<i>AK Content Science:</i>	<i>CRCC:</i>
<b>E4:</b> Culturally-knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of the interaction of all elements in the world around them.	<b>F1:</b> A students should understand the dynamic relationships between scientific, cultural, social and personal perspectives.	<b>S1:</b> Students should know the importance of outdoor/seasonal survival skills and the potential risks that are involved.

**Lesson Goal:** Children love to swim and play near the water. In this lesson we will talk about how the Sugpiaq/Eyak people traditionally stayed safe in and around the water.

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

- Learn about traditional safety measures by observing weather and tides.
- Learn about Personal Flotation Devices (PFD), how to correctly put them on.
- Learn safety rules from *Kids Don't Float* program.

**Vocabulary Words:** Sugt'stun Dialects

English:	Prince William Sound:	Lower Cook Inlet:	<a href="#">Eyak:</a>
Weather		Ila	
Tide		Kenlluni- Tide Goes out Tung'irluni- Tide come in	

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

- Invite an Elder or Recognized Expert to share their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and expertise on the subject.
- Sea Lion Stomach Float (photo or actual)
- Personal Floatation Devices from your community to use for demonstrations.
- Chugachmiut Video: [Preschoolers Using Personal Safety : Water Safety](#) (English and Sugt'stun)
- Tide Book or online (Free and available every calendar year) <http://www.tides.net/alaska/>

### **Teacher Preparation:**

- Invite an Elder or Recognized Expert that could share their TEK expertise on water safety.
- Before the Elder or Recognized Expert arrives, please review with all of the students, ways to show respect for the Elder during their visit.
- If needed, make a permission slip to have students receive parent permission to participate on a field trip.
- Review and mark the videos and/or websites to quickly show the students.
- Collect a variety (kid/youth sizes and adult size) of Personal Floatation Devices from your community to use for demonstrations.
- Visit the Kid Don't Float website for contest rules, dates, directions, and paper sizes.
  - <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/boating/kdf/poster/kdfpostercontest.htm>

### **Opening:**

The Chugach Region is surrounded by water and it is very important to stay safe near and in the water. Traditionally, the Sugpiaq and Eyak traveled extensively through the ocean to seasonal villages and subsistence hunting grounds. The Sugpiaq and Eyak traveled in groups for hunting purposes and safety. Each qayaq and dugout canoe was outfitted with tools, extra paddles and hunting equipment which included floats made from seal or sea lion stomach or bladder. It is possible these floats could also be used in an emergency as a floatation device.

An important aspect of staying safe was to know the weather before traveling on the water. Without television and radios, our ancestors relied on the traditional ecological knowledge of a traditional weatherman who would watch for upcoming storms, tidal currents and navigation via the stars. Only one person was chosen to have the title and many relied on him. "The weatherman was considered one of the most important members of the community and the lives of many men could depend on him."<sup>i</sup> Traditionally, the weatherman (as described in [Chugach Navigation](#)), would lie on his back to observe the different types and layers of clouds. The weatherman would also look at the wave swells (both size and frequency) and direction of the winds. To stay safe, our ancestors knew the terrain, safe landing spots, and dangerous places to avoid in bad weather. They also instinctively knew when they needed to land on shore and wait out the bad weather.

Today, we are going to explore more about traditional weather observation and personal water safety.

## Activities:

### **Class I: Weather, Wind and Tides**

1. Prior to this class if going on field trip, have the students obtain permission.
2. Inform students that today, we will observe our weather, tides, and winds so we will go out to a location at school, or in the community, to observe the weather, winds and tides.
3. Ask the students to lie, sit or stand quietly and look up at the sky. After a minute, ask each student to describe what they see, feel and hear.
4. Ask the students to decide (yes or no) if it is a good day to paddle a qayaq or dugout canoe in the ocean. (This activity can be repeated for several days to observe different conditions.)
5. Upon return to the classroom, ask the students to draw what they saw, felt, heard of their environment and determine if it was a good day to go out on the ocean.
6. Questions to reflect with students:
  - o How do we determine if it is a good day for boating today?
  - o To stay safe, what types of tools do your parents and/or grandparents use to determine the weather, tides and winds?

### **Class II: Personal Flotation Devices**

1. Ask students how many have a lifejacket? Let us look at a couple of lifejackets and discuss water safety in your community.
2. If possible bring an Elder to share a story about being safe on or in the water. What did they do to prepare before traveling on the water. What do they do to be safe while they are traveling on the water? What types of lifejackets did they grow up with?
  - a. Show photos or actual blown up seal stomach that was traditionally used for flotation.
3. Watch the Chugachmiut Video: [Preschoolers Using Personal Safety : Water Safety](#) (English and Sugt'stun)
4. Ask the students if know how to put on the life jackets? Bring out your lifejacket examples. Ask for volunteers to try them on. Correct them if they are putting on the jacket wrong.
5. Do you know how to make sure your lifejacket fits correctly?
  - a. If it is too big, you could swim out of your lifejacket.
  - b. A lifejacket should be snug and not ride up over your head.
6. Let's review water safety rules (Taken from the *Kids Don't Float Program*):
  - a. **Buddy System:** When you are near the ocean, streams, creeks, it is very important to always have an adult with you. Always follow the rules made by the adult. Such as:
    - i. Always walk on the docks
    - ii. Stay seated when the boat is moving.
    - iii. Swim with an adult and a lifejacket
    - iv. Always let an adult know where you are going.
  - b. **Wear Shoes:** Rocks, sticks and other items may hurt your feet if you are trying to get out of the water or rescue yourself. Rain boots can weigh a child down if they fall in, wear water shoes or old sneakers.
  - c. **Bad Weather:** If there are waves or winds; stay off or out of the water.
  - d. **Be Prepared:** Carry extra warm clothes, first aid kit and a phone or radio to call for help.
  - e. **Skill Practice:** always practice swimming with an adult who can swim.

**\*Optional**

**Class III for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Poster Contest**

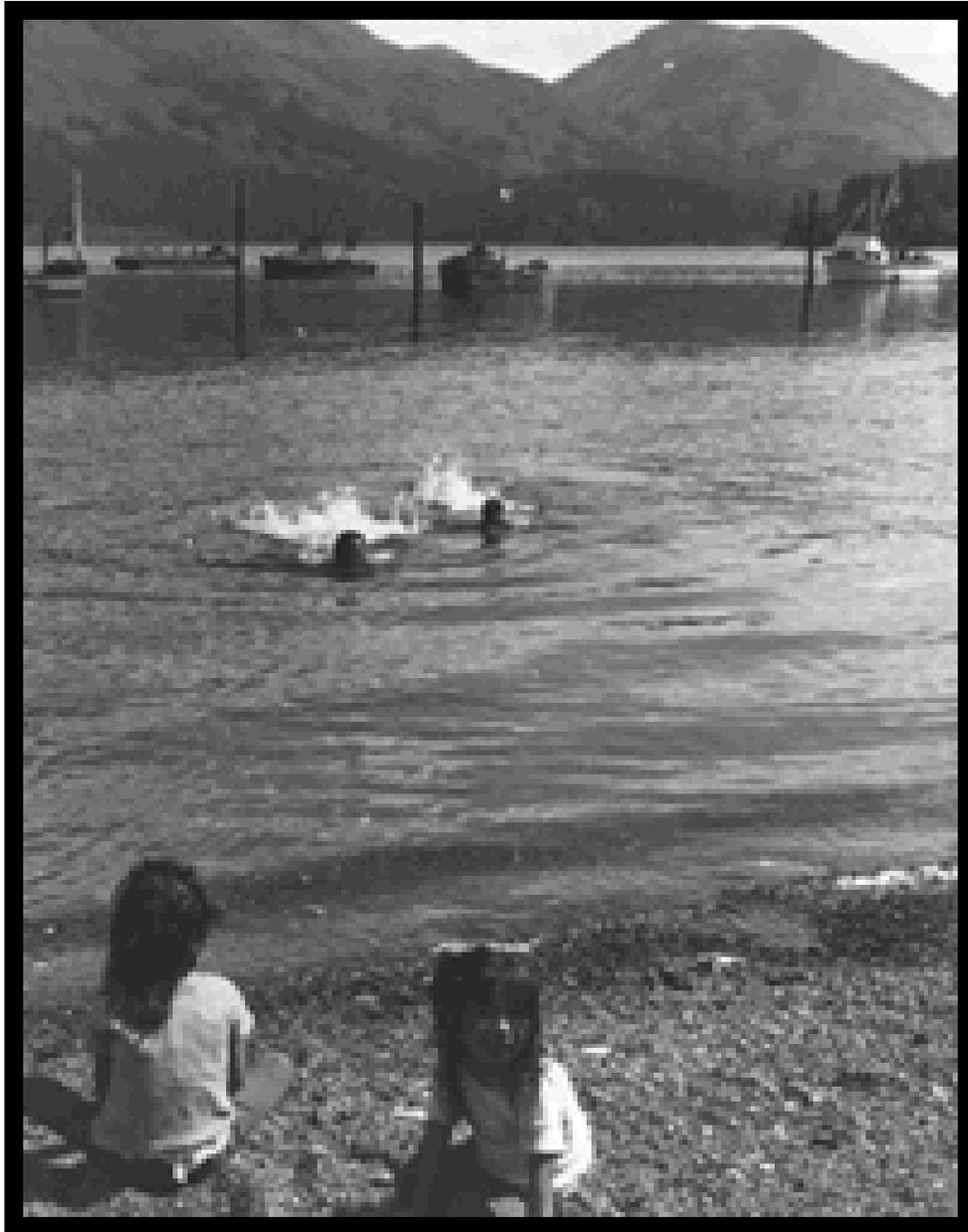
1. Review the rules for the poster if interested in submitting for contest.
  - a. Poster Contest with the Alaska Boating Safety Program- Web link for contest rules, forms and dates: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/boating/kdf/poster/kdfpostercontest.htm>
  - b. Eligibility and Guidelines
    - Open to all Alaska elementary school students (kindergarten through sixth grade).
    - Poster entries should support the *Kids Don't Float* objectives of educating Alaskans about the importance of always wearing a life jacket when boating and the dangers of Alaska's cold water.
    - Entrants are encouraged to use information from the Office of Boating Safety's website and publications.
    - Poster submissions become the property of the Alaska Office of Boating Safety.
    - Students may use any materials to construct their poster. Entries must be between 8 ½" x 11" and 16" x 20".

**Assessment:**

- Students can explain what they have observed about the weather they saw, felt and heard and whether it was safe to travel on the ocean.
- Students can successfully put on a lifejacket.
- Students can describe two important water safety rules.



Sea Lion Stomach Float<sup>ii</sup>



**Children swimming in Port Graham, ca. 1960, with boats moored on pilings in background. Ella Moonin, Larry Moonin, unknown, Luba Anahonak**  
Photo Courtesy of Luba Meganack

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<sup>i</sup> Chugach Navigator; W.W. Mitchell, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

<sup>ii</sup> Photo Credit: <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/sealion-stomach-eskimo-harpoon-float-from>