

Teacher's Guide

Alaska's Cultures: Regions & Native Peoples of Alaska

Enduring Understandings

Present day Alaska was home to multiple cultural groups who developed sophisticated societies prior to contact with the European people. Reflecting on the stories and literature of a cultural group provides a first person account of how that society viewed the world.

Estimated Time:

Five class periods.

Materials needed:

Course links: Cultures unit narrative

Lesson Plan:

Students will read the essay "Did American Aborigines have Culture?" This essay is written by Bill Jones and will help the students construct a framework from which to study the cultures of Alaska Natives. The essay can be accessed through "Did Athabascans have Culture?" at www.explorenorth.com/library/history/bl-billjones1.htm The essay contains one paragraph of information regarding Mr. Jones' view about how the Christian and Islam faiths traditionally disparaged the spiritual beliefs of others. This paragraph may be controversial and teachers should use their professional

judgment regarding the use of the essay. Focus questions (below) seek to establish the credentials of Mr. Jones and the fact that this essay is an opinion piece.

Class discussion about culture and what is meant by culture.

Focus questions: Who is the author of this article? What is his expertise? What are his credentials for writing this essay? How should you view this article? What argument does Mr. Jones make? What evidence does he present to convince the reader that Athabascans had culture?

If the class has not read the essay by Bill Jones, then the teacher can ask the class, "Did Alaska Natives have Culture prior to contact with the Europeans?" Why do you think so? What evidence do you have? Why do you not think so? What evidence do you have?

Students will select which Alaska Native cultural group they will study. The major groups of Alaska Natives include: Tlingit & Haida, (Southeast); Athabaskan (interior); Inupiaq (far north); Yup'ik (western coast); Aleut & Alutiiq (South and Southwestern Alaska).

Students will be directed to the appropriate web site resources. (see below) Teachers may also want to provide print materials that are typically available in public and school libraries. Remind the students that this is an exploration of traditional native cultures, i.e., pre contact with the Europeans. Students complete the Investigation Sheet with their small groups, after discussing what they have read.

Each group prepares a presentation, sharing with the whole group via a jigsaw activity, i.e., each small group sharing information with the larger group so that all students become familiar with the range of Alaska Native cultures.

As groups present, other students complete a blank Investigation Sheet on the Native groups they have not personally researched.

Alaska Standards:

Culture: A, B, E

History: A, C

AK History: AH PPE 2, AH ICGP 3

Assessment:

Exceeds

Meets

In Progress

Not Started

Content

Investigation Sheet is complete and accurate. Student has read, summarized and categorized information from a variety of sources.

Work is legible, coherent and shows extra attention to detail.

Investigation Sheet is complete and most of the information is accurate. A number of sources have been consulted.

Investigation Sheet is partially complete and partially accurate.

Investigation Sheet has not been attempted.

Presentation of Work

Student takes an active role in group presentation. Presentation conveys accurate and complete information and demonstrates creativity.

Student participates in group presentation. Information is accurate.

Student has minimal involvement in presentation and information isn't complete or accurate.

Student has not participated in a presentation.

*Lesson based on Alaska Studies course materials, Anchorage School District Curriculum