

Why Are We Here?

Contact Information:

Alaska Native Knowledge Network
University of Alaska Fairbanks
PO Box 756730
Fairbanks AK 99775-6730
Phone (907) 474.1902
Fax (907) 474.2477

Objectives

Students will:

1. Learn about the connection between where Villages are set up and the natural resources nearby.
2. Interact with Elders to gain historical appreciation of their culture.
3. Investigate how their Village came to be located where it is.



Courtesy of Joan Herrmann

Near Batzulnetas, Laura David, Irene Bernsten, Carol Evans and Calvin John discuss trail systems and family histories with Wilson Justin.

Lesson

Grades K-12

Activities:

1. Elders are a great resource on why and how your Village came to be where it is. But before interviewing Elders, students need to make thoughtful preparations. Things to think about and discuss whenever you want to involve Elders include:

- * Should we invite the Elders to visit us, or should students go to them?
- * What's the best way to record our/my conversation with an Elder?
- * How can we show our respect and appreciation for our Elders taking time to talk with us?

Help the students come up with a checklist for the interview:

- * Find out when the Elders will be available.
- * Make an appointment to talk with him/her.
- * Be neat and courteous.
- * Be on time.
- * Be prepared (know your questions).
- * Be thankful of his/her time.
- * Be sure to check out your recording equipment before you go and make sure that you have all the necessary materials.

2. Questions students might want to ask Elders about regarding the location of the Village might include:

- a. What area did you live in, hunt, fish, etc. when you were growing up?
- b. What area did your parents live in when they were growing up?
- c. How did our Village get here?

3. Ask the students to recall from memory the area(s) that the Elders talked about.

4. Have the students draw pictures/maps/diagrams of your Village showing all the features that make the place special. Older students may want to measure and draw to scale.

Discussion Ideas:

1. Why is our community located here? Who decided it should be here? Is this a place where Athabascan people traditionally lived? Why or why not?
2. Are the things that originally drew people to this site still here? What will happen to our Village if the things that attracted people to live here are gone?
3. Why is it important that we are able to know and recall an area by memory? Why was this important to our Elders?

State Standards

History

- A. A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that links the past to the present and the future.
- B. A student should understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, place, ideas, institutions, cultures, people, and events.
- C. A student should develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry.
- D. A student should be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to effectively participate as a citizen and as a lifelong learner.

Geography

- C. A student should understand and be able to interpret spatial (geographic) characteristics of human systems, including migration, movement, and interactions of cultures, economic activities, settlement patterns, and political units in the state, nation, and world.
- E. A student should understand and be able to evaluate how human and physical environments interact.
- F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

Cultural Standards

- A. Culturally knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.
- B. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to actively participate in various cultural environments.
- C. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.