

Digital Stories of Tlingit Life Yesterday and Today

Tlingit Educational Significance:

“Out of shared telling and remembering grow identity, connection, and pride, binding people to a place and to one another.”

– Tom Rankin, Folklorist

This unit invites youth to explore their cultural past through the examination of pictures, artifacts, and oral histories, and to make inferences like ethnohistorians. By looking at the lives of Tlingit one hundred years ago in Juneau and comparing life yesterday to life today, it is the intention of this unit for youth to better understand their connections to this place, grow in knowledge of their past, and create a story that binds the past with their present.

Tlingit Elder Role:

Unit participants will interview Tlingit Elders as part of the research of the past. Students working in collaborative groups will devise interview questions for the Elders in preparation for the creation of a digital story, the culminating project of the unit. The interviews with Elders will be video recorded. Appropriate portions of the interviews will be embedded in the digital stories created by the students. Tlingit Elders will also be guests at the final film festival when all the 2-minute/20 image digital stories will be presented.

Family / Home / Community Connections:

• Home Connections

Participants in this unit keep a diary to record their daily activities: what they eat, what they wear, where they go, what they do, and with what family members they communicate. This data will be compared with what research groups infer about the life of a young person living in the Juneau area one hundred years ago. Part of the research for the project is based on the viewing of images of Tlingit people from long ago, on oral history recordings, and on live interviews of elders in the Juneau community,

• Culminating Event

Each research group in this unit creates a two-minute / 20 image digital story comparing Tlingit life today with life yesterday. The culminating event will be a film festival when all groups will present their stories. Tlingit elders will be honored guests.

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Unit Assessment

Pre-Assessment:

Individually, students complete the K-W-L-Q chart, filling in the “K” box and the “W” box: what they know about Tlingit life in Juneau and the surrounding area one hundred years ago and what they want to know. [At the end of the unit, student will complete the “L” box to note what was learned and the “Q” box to note new questions.]

Post Assessment:

Individually, students complete the K-W-L-Q chart, filling in the “L” box, listing what they have learned from the digital story project and the “Q” box, noting what new questions have arisen.

Ethnography: Digital Stories of Tlingit Life Yesterday and Today

Grade Levels: 6-8



Goldbelt Heritage Foundation

Unit Overview

This unit explores the history and culture of daily life of the Tlingit people in Juneau and Southeast Alaska 100 years ago through the analysis of historical photographs, cultural artifacts, oral histories and the interviews of Tlingit elders. Students practice thinking like historians, gathering information from primary sources. Students compare a day in the life of a Tlingit teen one hundred years ago to a typical day today. Working in collaborative small groups, just as actual researchers do, students make connections across texts, draw conclusions, design their own informed opinions and apply new knowledge by creating a digital story that compares life today to life 100 years ago. The final product, a two-minute/twenty-image digital story, includes a unified narrative and thematic sound.

Prior to this unit, students should have practiced the reading skills of skimming and scanning, the writing skills of summarizing and quoting from nonfiction material, the digital storytelling skills of drafting storyboards and the research skill of citing bibliographic sources.

Key elements of this unit are the examination of historic pictures and museum artifacts, listening to oral histories and conducting Tlingit Elder interviews. Another key element of this unit is the use of technology to produce new texts. After coming to some conclusions about life as a teen one hundred years ago in a Tlingit village, students collaborate on a digital story to make comparisons between life today and yesterday. Creating an instructional and entertaining story, students will practice working collaboratively.

The unit requires visits to the Alaska State Museum, the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, the University of Alaska Southeast or other locales or businesses where native Alaskan artifacts and/or historical photographs are available to peruse and/or are on display. This unit of study includes listening to oral histories.

Interviews of Tlingit Elders and family members with links to the culture are part of the research built into this unit.

Total time to teach the unit: ten or more instructional days, with a minimum of two hours a day focused on the work. Digital movie and still cameras are required (which could be the personal iPhones of students) plus access to Mac computers, enough for each team of students to edit stories, is also required.

By exploring history with the specific goal of better understanding a day in the life of a Tlingit youth one-hundred years ago, students will gain a clearer perspective on the lives



they are choosing to live today. Understanding the past helps enrich our understanding of the present.

Lessons Overview

Pre-Assessment

Students are strategically placed in groups of 3-5, based on teacher choice. In groups, student complete the K-W-L-Q chart, filling in the “K” box and the “W” box: what they know about Tlingit life in Juneau and the surrounding area one hundred years ago and what they want to know.

Lesson 1: A Day in the Life of a Teen in Juneau, Alaska

Students keep a diary of their personal lives for ten consecutive days, recording specifics. The diary includes notes about what students wear, what they do, where they go, how they get to and from places, what they eat, who prepares the food, what they read, and what they hear, etc., hour by hour. Students are introduced to the overall unit. Students view models of “A Day in the Life of...” digital projects.

Lesson 2: Think Like Historians to Read Printed Materials

Students view the video clip found at *Historical Thinking Matters*: [<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/>], an interactive presentation that looks at how historians investigate what happened in the past.

Students look at a diary entry from a visitor to Juneau in 1881 and apply the same historical thinking strategies:

Source: Where does the document come from?

Context: In what time and place is the document situated?

Close Reading: Who is telling the story? What is the point of view of the writer/speaker? How does his/her bias affect the information being shared?

Lesson 3: See Like Historians to Read Historical Photographs

Students view at least ten historical photographs* of Tlingit people. Students complete graphic organizers that address Primary Source Image Analysis questions:

Observe: Describe what you see. What people and objects are shown? How are they arranged? What is the physical setting? What, if any, words do you see? What other details can you see?

Reflect: Why do you think this picture was taken? What is happening in the photo? When do you think it was made? Who do you think was the audience for this photo?

Question: What do you wonder about? What more do you want to know?

From this research, student groups formulate questions and make inferences about life 100 years ago for Tlingit people in southeast Alaska.

*Images may be found online, at museums, banks, government buildings, schools, and businesses in Juneau. Trips to places where photographs are hung, stored, or catalogued should be planned.



Lesson 4: See Like Historians to Study Cultural and Historical Artifacts

Students visit the Alaska State Museum, the Juneau Douglas City Museum, the University of Alaska Southeast, and other locales or businesses where native Alaskan artifacts and/or historical photographs are on display**. Students complete graphic organizers that address Primary Source Artifact Analysis questions:

Observe: What do you notice first? What do you notice that you can't explain?

Reflect: Where do you think this came from? Why do you think somebody made this? What do you think was happening when this was made? Who do you think was the audience for this item? What tool(s) was used to create this? Why do you think this item is important? If someone made this today, what would be different? What can you learn from examining this?

Question: What do you wonder about? What more do you want to know?

From this research, student groups formulate questions and make inferences about life 100 years ago for Tlingit people in southeast Alaska.

**Images of artifacts may be found online; actual cultural objects are on display at museums, banks, government buildings, schools, and businesses in Juneau. Trips to places where artifacts are on display, stored, or catalogued should be planned.

Lesson 5: Listen Like Historians to Analyze Oral Histories

Students listen to oral histories of Tlingit people***. Students complete graphic organizers that address Primary Source Oral History Analysis questions:

Observe: Describe what you notice. Are any words unfamiliar to you? Do you notice any accent? Is there background noise? What other details do you notice?

Reflect: What was the purpose of this oral history? What do you think was happening when it was recorded? What can you tell about the person telling the story? What can you learn from this oral history?

Question: What do you wonder? What more do you want to know?

From this research, student groups formulate questions and make inferences about life today and yesterday for Tlingit people in southeast Alaska.

***Collections of oral histories are available to listen to at the University of Alaska-Southeast.

Lesson 6: Listen Like Historians to Interview Tlingit Elders

Based on research conducted so far, having looked at historical photographs and cultural artifacts, and listened to oral histories, students compose a list of questions to ask Tlingit Elders. Possible questions:

Q: What important stories have come down to you?

Q: What are some of your childhood memories?

Q: What family heirlooms or keepsakes do you possess? Why are they valuable to you?

Q: Describe the place where you grew up – what was it like? How has it changed?

At the conclusion of all of the research, students form conclusions about life in Juneau as a youth one hundred years ago. At the end of ten days, students examine their personal diary entries to



compare and contrast life today with yesterday for Tlingit people in southeast Alaska.

Lesson 7: Collaborate to Design Story Boards

Student groups create storyboards of the digital stories, based on conclusions from their research of primary sources about life one hundred years ago. They select historical photographs, digital pictures of artifacts and/or video footage from interviews of Tlingit Elders as evidence to support their conclusions about life one hundred years ago. They select images and plan digital movie sequences to show life today. The final product is a two-minute/20-image digital movie with a narrative and a thematic soundtrack. The storyboard includes the narrative, the specific images, specific audio and video clips, and music suggestions.

Lesson 8: Collaborate to Create Digital Stories

Individuals in student groups work on different parts of their group's digital story. One student may be the sound designer. One or two students may select images and write the historical section of the story, following the storyboard design. One or two students may select or create the images and write the modern day section of the story, following the storyboard design. All group members contribute elements of the final digital story.

Lesson 9: Share Digital Stories with Elders

The unit culminates in a film festival attended by Tlingit Elders. Students show their two-minute digital stories to families, friends, and special guests, Tlingit Elders.

Lesson 10: Reflection

Group members will complete the last box of the K-W-L-Q chart, listing things learned over the course of the unit. Findings will be shared with the whole group.



http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/alaskawcanda&CISOPTR=943&CISOBX=1&REC=13

Crowd holding umbrellas at cornerstone ceremony for Juneau Public School, with American flag hanging on side of building, Juneau, June 5th, 1917.

http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/loc&CISOPTR=1939&CISOBX=1&REC=5

Tlingit women and children cleaning fish on beach, southeastern Alaska, ca.1907

http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/loc&CISOPTR=125&CISOBX=1&REC=4

Tlingit women weaving baskets, Alaska, ca. 1897

http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/alaskawcanda&CISOPTR=2651&CISOBX=1&REC=17

Tlingit villiage along shoreline, Juneau, Alaska, ca. 1894

http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/alaskawcanda&CISOPTR=2096&CISOBX=1&REC=16

Group of Alaskan Native children and teachers in front of school, Juneau, Alaska, ca. 1900