

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

ALASKA IS: WHAT WE VALUE

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## Dipnet

Spruce root, spruce wood, and cotton  
Anchorage Museum collection, 2009.010.002

## UNIT AT A GLANCE

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Learn about what we value. This lesson plan explores the concepts of identity, land, and what we do.

**Language Arts/ELL:** Students will examine three photographs from the Anchorage Museum collection and create a travel brochure of abstracted concepts and stories.

**Art:** Students will view three photographs from the Anchorage Museum collection and create a work incorporating street signs to solve a problem.

## STANDARDS

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### Language Arts Standards:

Text Type and Purposes:

2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

3b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description and elaboration, and concrete and sensory details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings and to develop experiences and events showing the response of characters to situations or problems.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

5. With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

### Art Standards:

VA:PR4a-K	VA:PR4a-1	VA:PR4a-2	VA:PR4a-3	VA:PR6a-3	VA:CN10a-K
VA:CN10a-1	VA:CN10a-2	VA:CN10a-3	VA:CN10a-4	VA:CN10a-5	VA:CN11a-K
VA:CN11a-1	VA:CN11a-2	VA:CN11a-4	VA:CN11a-K5		

## MATERIALS

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### Extension activity

*T'uyedi* (dentalium necklace), Anchorage Museum collection; 1978.035.002

Dip net, Helen Dick, Anchorage Museum collection; 2009.010.002

*Chijel* (Dena'ina neaddress), Anchorage Museum collection; 1978.035.005

String

Tape

Paper

Coloring utensils

Dry erase markers

### Language Arts/ELL

White and colored paper

Coloring utensils

Line paper

Writing utensils

### Art

Construction paper

Scissors

Glue

Acrylic paint

Drawing utensils

Coloring utensils

## KEY TERMS

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<i>etnen</i>	Dena'ina term for land or earth
<i>cayaraq</i>	Central Alaskan Yup'ik term for the way to do something
<i>land sovereignty</i>	the ability to govern the use of land upon which one occupies
<i>wayfinding</i>	methods for navigation
<i>sign</i>	an object or motion with a directed message for its audience
<i>symbol</i>	an agreed upon convention representing an abstract meaning
<i>marker</i>	an object or indentation used to orient location

## CLOSE-LOOKING

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**TIME FRAME** Approximately 40 minutes

**MATERIALS** *T'uyedi* (dentalium necklace), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.002  
Dip Net, Helen Dick, Anchorage Museum collection, 2009.010.002  
*Chijel* (Dena'ina Headress), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.005

**DIRECTIONS** 1. Begin by looking closely at provided photographs. Use the questions below to guide discussion.  
[30 min.]

**CLOSE-LOOKING:** Look closely, quietly at the objects for a few minutes.

**OBSERVE:** Share your observations about each photograph.



***T'uyedi* (dentalium necklace), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.002**

**ASK:** *What do you notice about this object?*  
*Describe the shapes and textures you see in this image.*  
*What materials might this object be made of?*  
*Why might someone use this object?*  
*What does this remind you of?*  
*What more can you find?*



**Dip net, Helen Dick, Anchorage Museum collection, 2009.010.002**

**ASK:** *What do you notice about this object?*  
*Describe this object.*  
*What is familiar about this object, what is new to you?*  
*In what types of places might you use this object?*  
*What else does this object remind you of?*  
*What more can you find?*



**Chijel (Dena'ina headdress), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.005**

**ASK:** *What do you notice about this object?  
What might this object be made of?  
What might this object be used for?  
What words would you use to describe this object?  
What does this remind you of?  
What more can you find?*

**DISCUSS:** Use the [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the photographs.

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## EXTENSION ACTIVITY: ME AS PART OF A COMMUNITY

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	Approximately 60 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<i>T'uyedi</i> (dentalium necklace), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.002 Dip net, Helen Dick, Anchorage Museum collection, 2009.010.002 <i>Chijel</i> (Dena'ina headdress), Anchorage Museum collection, 1978.035.005 String Tape Paper Coloring utensils Dry erase markers
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Return to the images of the <i>t'uyedi</i> (dentalium necklace), dip net, and <i>chijel</i> (Dena'ina headdress). Discuss: <i>What does a community mean to you? How might objects be representative of a community?</i> [10 min.]</li><li>2. Invite students to sketch or cut out five images of objects that they use in communal or team activities. Encourage students to think about objects that they use for specific activities such as sports, harvesting and foraging, hiking, or traveling. [10 min.]</li><li>3. As students sketch and cut out objects, cut out shapes to serve as labels. [10 min.]</li><li>4. Once finished, invite each student to present one object. For each object, invite the student to briefly share what the object is and why they might only use it in certain group events or activities. [5 min.]</li><li>5. After presenting, invite students to tape their object onto one wall or a board and to tape string extending out. On the other end, tape a shape and label it with the activity mentioned. [2 min.]</li><li>6. Invite other students who may have the same object to tape their objects and string in the same areas as the first object and the label. If a student uses the same object for a different activity, tape additional string extending in a different direction and attach a new label. [5 min.]</li><li>7. If no student has the same object, invite a student to present another object and repeat step 6. [15 min.]</li></ol>

8. Once students have affixed all objects and additional labels, discuss: *What do you notice about the objects and activities? What are your thoughts on seeing these connections among your classmates? What does it mean to be in a community? How do these objects represent our connections to one another?*

[10 min.]

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of the activity.

## LANGUAGE ARTS/ELL: MAPPING MYSELF

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**TIME FRAME** Approximately 50 minutes

**MATERIALS** White and colored paper  
Coloring utensils  
Line paper  
Writing utensils

- DIRECTIONS**
1. Invite students to make a list of traits or memories about themselves. Encourage students to write only what they feel comfortable sharing later. If students prefer, they may write about a fictional character's traits or memories. Inform students that they will take these traits and memories and use one or a few of them metaphorically as descriptions of places in the form of a travel brochure.
  2. As students write traits and memories of themselves or a fictional character, discuss: *how might we describe traits or stories as features of a place?* Write answers on the board for student reference. Encourage students to think of vivid imagery and to share and sketch responses that may be useful for others. For example, a story about winning the lottery can be a vending machine in the middle of a city that dispenses cash to every one billionth passerby. Invite students to create backstories and to take notes about these features they create on separate sheets of paper.  
[10 min.]
  3. Once students finish drafting features of a place, pass out new sheets of paper and coloring utensils.  
[5 min.]
  4. Invite students to fold a piece of paper widthwise into thirds and to sketch one or several of these places or features, and to write reasons for people to come and visit. As they sketch, ask students: *why might people want to see this place or feature? What is unique about it? How do they reflect their traits or memories in these places?*  
[20 min.]
  5. Once students finish, invite them to share their brochures with their neighbors and share the following prompts: *what kinds of stories might places have? Are there places similar to the ones they have drawn?* Invite students to share with the class the place they created, and what traits or stories it has attached to it if they are comfortable.  
[15 min.]

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of the activity.

## LEARN MORE

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### A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

The Anchorage Museum refrains from using the terms Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut and instead uses language identified by the Alaska Native language groups. Due to these words' complicated history, the Anchorage Museum does not use these terms. However, it is important to note that Indigenous communities and individuals are at different places of healing and self-identity and may use these terms.

The largest Indigenous language family in North America is the Dene language family, which is commonly identified as 'Athabaskan' – a word that is not native to any of the Indigenous languages to which it refers. Dene is a word for Indigenous peoples belonging to several cultures whose languages belong to the Dene language family with traditional homelands in Interior Alaska and into Western Canada; the word Dene means 'people' in several Dene languages.

### DENE PLACE NAMES

Dene place names are notable in their consistency and systematicity. Many Dene place names follow a generative naming convention. This is comparable to grid systems for cities using numbers and letters to predictably name streets and roads. Instead of numbers and letters however, Dene generative place naming conventions are based off of an associated entity or event with the area, extended with features such as a stream or a lake and preceded by a directional term. This system further extends with features stacking to be more descriptive. For example, the Lower Tanana place name *Troth Yeddha'* (potato ridge) describes the ridge on which the University of Alaska Fairbanks is located. This name extends with features like *no'* (lake) and *dochaget* (river mouth) to give the place names *Troth Yeddha' No'* and *Troth Yeddha' No' Dochaget*. Examples such as these are relatively rare, but demonstrate the extent of Dene place naming generativity.

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Land Acknowledgement is a statement that formally recognizes both the land upon which an event takes place and the continued stewardship by the Indigenous peoples of the place. As the process of colonization is ongoing, Land Acknowledgements are one way in which individuals and institutions practice mindful attention to it.

Land Acknowledgements have been conducted as early as the 1970s. The Australian Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement to Country are examples of ceremonies from which institutions derive their present-day land acknowledgements. In Canada, the use of land acknowledgements rose after the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation report uncovered the abuses of Indigenous children by the Canadian residential school system. Similarly, institutions in the United States are increasingly including land acknowledgements into programs.

Actions such as implementing land acknowledgements are important in beginning honest conversations regarding land sovereignty and rectifying legal injustices committed against Indigenous peoples. As land claims resurface throughout the world, acknowledging Indigenous people's connection to the land is an important first step for meaningful change.

### WATCH:

AlaskaNativeLanguage - [The Name Troth Yeddha'](#)

Anchorage Museum - [DGHEYAY KAQ' \(The Mouth of Ship Creek\)](#)

Anchorage Museum - [EŁNENA](#)

### READ:

A Kari, J., & Fall, J. A. (Eds.). (2016). *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*. University of Alaska Press.

Qenaga.org - [Dena'ina Placenames](#)

Anchorage Museum [Land Acknowledgement](#)

Alaska Wilderness League - [The importance of land acknowledgments](#)

Alaska Public Media - [In Anchorage, land acknowledgments are gaining ground](#)



## ART: GPS - GUIDE TO PROBLEM SOLVING

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**TIME FRAME** Approximately 60 minutes

**MATERIALS** Construction paper  
Scissors  
Glue  
Acrylic paint  
Drawing utensils  
Coloring utensils

- DIRECTIONS**
1. Discuss with students common street sign shapes and designs. Make a list on a board for reference.  
[5 min.]
  2. Discuss with students: *how do we use signs when giving directions? How might we use signs as a means of communicating instructions? How can signs be used to solve problems such as upcoming steep roads or sharp curves?*  
[10 min.]
  3. Invite students to join into groups of up to three and to come up with a task that requires a multi-step resolution. These situations may vary in complexity such as pouring a cup of juice to drilling a hole in a piece of wood. Encourage students to consider how they will use street signs to communicate problem solving.  
[10 min.]
  4. Invite students to write down or memorize a series of steps on how to direct another person using street signs to complete the task. Using these steps as a guide, invite students to sketch street signs that will help communicate how to complete their task.  
[5 min.]
  5. Instruct students that they will build their signs out of construction paper to make either a sculpture, a collage, a flowchart, or any other means by which they can convey information. Encourage students to think about how they will use the final object to direct someone to complete their task as they create signs.  
[15 min.]
  6. After students have finished creating their works, invite groups to present on what individual problems their signs solve. Invite each group to explain the problem they are looking to solve, the signs used to solve it, and how the signs help communicate to someone how they would carry out the necessary steps.  
[15 min.]

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion, presentation, and completion of activity.

## LEARN MORE

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### WAYFINDING

Navigating the land and waters of any area takes coordination. In an urban setting, street signs aid in maintaining the flow of traffic by directing people where to go and how to travel through designated spaces. Alaska Native signage often incorporates, or wholly comprises natural material. In all parts of Alaska, a combination of created markers and naturally occurring landforms aid those traveling the land.

In Dena'ina lands, culturally marked trees serve as waypoints for people traveling through established trails and waterways. Tree markings are sometimes maintained for the next generation, but also require that people maintain the trails on which the marked trees stand. These marked trees help orient those traveling many trails that extend throughout the land.

Additionally, travel narratives and stories often incorporate place names to ensure that the next generation is familiar with the landscape. This combination of visual cues from markers, reinforced by knowledge that elders transmit through stories and personal narratives, allow for wayfinding that minimally alters the land.

**WATCH:**

Business Insider - [How NYC's Stop Signs Are Made | The Making Of](#)

**READ:**

KTOO - [Anchorage recognizes city's first people with new markers acknowledging Dena'ina place names](#)

Deur, D., Evanoff, K., & Hebert, J. (2020). ["Their Markers as they Go": Modified Trees as Waypoints in the Dena'ina Cultural Landscape](#), Alaska. Human Ecology, 48(3), 317-333.

National Park Service - [Wayfinding at Telaquana Corridor](#)

**LEARN:**

Anchorage Museum - [Stewardship](#)

Anchorage Museum - [Alaska Is: How Water is Life](#)

Anchorage Museum - [Perspectives](#)