

TEACHER'S CORNER: THE LAND AND PEOPLES OF ALASKA AND SIBERIA

The tragic oil spill in Prince William Sound earlier this year made the nation keenly aware that people's livelihoods and animals' lives depend upon a clean Pacific ocean. Yet the people, cultures, and ecological zones from 48 degrees north to the Arctic Ocean remain a mystery for many. All too often students think that only Eskimos live in what must be solely a frozen wilderness and that they are Indians living in igloos. A new teaching guide corrects such misconceptions and ignorance. History, geography, science, and anthropology teachers in grades 7 through 10 will value and enjoy Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska.

This instructional guide, produced by Carolyn Sadler and Laura Greenberg from the Office of Education, National Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, grew out of the recent exhibition "Crossroads of Continents," but only the last of the seven activities requires a visit to the exhibition. (The exhibition will be at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, November 26-March 25, 1990; Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, Los Angeles, October 21-February 24, 1991; Anchorage Museum of History and Art in Anchorage, April 7-August 11, 1991; and the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, September 22-January 26, 1992. From there it will make several stops in the Soviet Union.)

This curriculum packet is the first complete educational package focusing on the cultures of the North Pacific Rim and provides the only up-to-date information about this region easily accessible in English. The guide comes with a clearly written booklet; a poster map on the traditional dress and housing of the region's people; a 32-minute video on the history and anthropological research of the area and the peoples in the 20th century; a pronunciation guide for names such as Inuit, Chilkat, and atlatl; an excellent set of 57 photographs; a glossary; a filmography; a bibliography; and answers

to study questions. Students read three valuable primary sources: the journal of an 18th century explorer naturalist, a contemporary high school student's account of an archaeological excavation, and the archeological director's description of the dig. (The last two were published in the winter 1988 issue of *Anthro.Notes*.)

Through a set of carefully coordinated and sequential exercises, students can see for themselves the connections between environment and culture. A biogeographical approach emphasizes the geographical distribution of living things. In the first unit, "Geography of the North Pacific Rim," students locate and label on a map the significant places in the far northern rim of the Pacific Ocean such as the Bering Strait, The Aleutians, The Chukchi Sea, The Amur, and Cook Inlet. In the next unit, "Environments of the North Pacific Rim," students first map the location, the climate, and the vegetation of their home area, and



then learn about the four major land environments in the Crossroads area: the tundra, the taiga or boreal forest, the mixed forest, and the temperate rain forest. Using photographs and characteristics of the four environments, students decide which environment is represented in each photograph. Then, with the first map, the poster map, and *Goode's Atlas*, they draw in the different environmental zones using a color code.

In the third unit, "Cultures of the North Pacific Rim," the students map the North Pacific Rim cultures after reading about culture and adaptation. Using a separate color for each group, the students identify each group on the map--The Eskimo cultures (The Siberian Yupik, the Bering Sea Yupik, the Inupiat, and the Pacific Eskimos); the Chukchi and Koryak of Siberia; the Athapaskans and the Even; the Northwest Coast Cultures; and the Amur Cultures. Next, students draw in and label the traditional or subsistence economies on the map.

Finally, the interconnections begin, and biogeography is in action. Looking at their maps, students answer a set of problems in order to see why some cultures have adapted the way they have, why some areas are able to have varied economies, and why housing and dress are made the way they are. Most of the time there is a close link between culture and environment and between culture and subsistence, and with these maps students can intelligently understand why.

The last three units are: "Traveling with Vitus Bering," with a focus on interpreting history; "Unearthing the Past," the Ungaluyat project, emphasizing excavating history; and "Joining the Jesup Expedition," focusing on doing fieldwork, studying a single society (ethnography), and studying a topic cross-culturally (ethnology).

Many of the activities cannot be reproduced easily for *Anthro.Notes* because they involve a video, photographs, or a poster map, but two activities are reproduced below for your use in the classroom. For information on borrowing, free, the entire Crossroads educational package write to: Carolyn Sadler, Office of Education, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560.

1. NATURAL HISTORY FIELDWORK IN YOUR AREA

(This activity, "Environments of the North Pacific Rim," gives students practice observing and documenting.)

Visit a natural area, a natural park, or a section of undeveloped land. Take notes on what you see and make a map. Describe the landscape, vegetation, animals (including insects and other invertebrates), and evidence of humans. Make a collection of leaves and flowers (beware of poison ivy, oak, and sumac). Put each plant sample into an envelope, and on the outside write your name, the date, the location, and the type of habitat (such as broadleaf forest, high plains, marsh, field). This is your "documentation." Also make drawings or take photographs of the area. (Sketches are fine--these do not have to be art works.)

When you get home or to school, use a plant identification book to find out the common and scientific names and other information about the plants such as their geographical distribution. Then find out from this book or ask your teacher about how to "press" your plants to preserve them.

Finally, using a looseleaf notebook, write a report about your field trip. Include your general observations, a map, and drawings. Have a separate page for each dried leaf or flower with a description of it that includes your field notes and the plant's regional and/or world distribution.

2. TRAVELING WITH VITUS BERING

(This exercise gives students an historical perspective and practice in interpreting historical information.)

In July 1741, the Russian expedition led by Vitus Bering made landfall for the first time on the American continent. They had embarked from a port on the Kamchatka peninsula. Among the first to go ashore was Georg Steller, a German naturalist, who had accompanied the expedition. In the following diary entry (translated from the original German), Steller describes his first few hours on land. He encounters no people, but he gets his first impressions of

them nonetheless. The date is July 20, 1741. The place is probably Kayak Island [in the Gulf of Alaska near Prince William Sound], and the people may have been Tlingit Indians. Steller's diary was first published in 1793. The following excerpt is from vol. II of *Bering's Voyages: An Account of the Efforts of the Russians to Determine the Relation of Asia and America* by F.A. Golder, published by the American Geographical Society in 1925. In 1917 Golder discovered Steller's original manuscript in Leningrad (then Petrograd). The writing and language may seem unusual, but students should remember this is a message from another time, another culture, and another place.

[Excerpt Begins]

As soon as I, with only the protection and assistance of my own cossack, had landed on the island and realized how scant and precious was the time at my disposal, I seized every opportunity to accomplish as much as possible with the greatest possible dispatch. I struck out in the direction of the mainland in hopes of finding human beings and habitations. I had not gone more than a verst [about two-thirds of a mile] along the beach before I ran across signs of people and their doings.

Under a tree I found an old piece of log hollowed out in the shape of a trough, in which, a couple of hours before, the savages, for lack of pots and vessels, had cooked their meat by means of red-hot stones, just as the Kamchadals did formerly. The bones, some of them with bits of meat and showing signs of having been roasted at the fire, were scattered about where the eaters had been sitting. I could see plainly that these bones belonged to no sea animal, but to a land animal. . . . There were also strewn about the remains of yukola, or pieces of dried fish, which, as in Kamchatka has to serve the purpose of bread at all meals. There were also great numbers of very large scallops over eight inches across, also blue mussels similar to those found in Kamchatka and, no doubt, eaten raw as the custom there. In various shells, as on dishes, I found sweet grass completely prepared in Kamchadal fashion, on which water seemed to have been poured in order to extract the sweetness. I discovered further (not far

from the fireplace) beside the tree, on which there still were the live coals, a wooden apparatus for making fire, of the same nature as those used in Kamchatka....

After having made a brief investigation of all this, I pushed on farther for about three versts [about 2 miles], where I found a path leading into the very thick and dark forest which skirted the shore....I held a brief consultation with my cossack, who had a loaded gun, besides a knife and commanded him to do nothing what-soever without my orders....After half an hour we came to a spot covered with cut grass. I pushed the grass aside at once, and found underneath a cover consisting of rocks; and when this was also removed we came to some tree bark....All this covered a cellar two fathoms deep in which were the following objects: 1) lukoshkas, or utensils made of bark...filled with smoked fish of a species of Kamchtkan salmon...2) a quantity of sladkayatrava (or sweet grass), from which liquor is distilled; 3) different kinds of plants, whose outer skin had been removed like hemp...and perhaps are used, as in Kamchatka, for making fish nets..."

[Pause In Excerpt]

Here we briefly interrupt Steller's account in the interests of time. After exploring the cellar further and discovering a few arrows, Steller takes some fish and other goods as proof of what he found--and reluctantly, after being summoned by Bering, returns to the ship. In return, following Steller's suggestion, some goods were sent to the cellar. These were described as follows:

[Excerpt Begins Again]

...an iron kettle, a pound of tobacco, a Chinese pipe, and a piece of Chinese silk were sent to the cellar, but in return the latter was plundered to such an extent [by Steller's shipmates] that, if we should come again to these part, the natives would certainly run away even faster or they would show themselves as hostile as they themselves had been treated, especially if it should occur to them to eat or drink the tobacco, the correct use of which probably could be as little known to them as the pipe itself....[it was suggested to leave a] couple

of knives or hatchets, the use of which was quite obvious [and] would have aroused... interest....But to this it was objected that such presents might be regarded as a sign of hostility, as if the intention were to declare war. How much more likely was it, particularly if they attempted to use the tobacco in the wrong way, for them to conclude that we had intended to poison them..."

Interpreting History (group discussion)

1. How did Steller refer to the natives?
2. How did he know what the foods and implements were?
3. Do you think any of the peoples on shore witnessed Steller's activities? How would we know if they had?
4. Let's assume that some Tlingit people watched every move Steller and the Cossack made. If they had no system of writing, how might it have entered their history? How would their history be different than written histories? What kind of information might be accurate and inaccurate in oral history and in written history?

The Other Side of the Story (individual or team writing exercise)

Write about the Steller episode from the Tlingit point of view. Imagine it is 1741, and you observe Steller and the others come ashore. How would you describe the episode to a close friend, also Tlingit, who was not there? What did Steller and his cossack look like? What did you think they were doing? What were your feelings as you watched?

Extra Project--Putting Steller in Chronological Context

The State of the World in 1741. You are an 18th century scholar who is preparing a world almanac for 1741. What are the major countries, who is in power? What are the current events? The latest discoveries and technologies, the major intellectual and artistic figures? Write a 2-5 page report. You can use *The Timetables of History* for the year and its events, and history books for an overall perspective of the times.

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