

The Early People of the Corridor: Connecting to the Past

For use with Trails Across Time Chapter 2; page 21-29



Description:

This lesson is a power point presentation that describes collaborative archaeological strategies used by Dr. Aron Crowell to better interpret excavation sites. This lesson sets the tone for the rest of the curriculum— that students have the opportunity and responsibility to work with community elders and primary resources in order to better understand the history of their region.

The goal is for students to compose a writing describing their personal relationship with an object, event, or person thus simulating the process of an elder sharing their connection with that topic.

Materials:

- **Power Point Presentation: *Connecting With the Past***

Optional Resources:

- Looking Both Ways, Crowell, Aron, 2001

Alaska Content Standards:

History

- A-5:** Students will understand that history is a narrative told in many voices with various perspectives of historical experience.
- B-5:** Students will evaluate the influence of context upon historical understanding.
- D-1:** Students will understand that they are important in history and that they have an important role in the recording of historical knowledge.

Inquiry-Based Thinking Strategies Utilized

Classifying Data: Students will classifying information as being academic and fact oriented versus information that is contextual and personal in nature.

Interpreting Personal Data: Students will define and explain the personal meaning of an object, person, or event.



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Background Information:

This lesson focuses upon the Alutiiq culture of the North Gulf Coast. It provides the students further insights to the people that lived amongst the wind and rain and ice. But the purpose of this lesson goes much beyond this. This lesson focuses upon the collaborative strategies of anthropologist/archaeologist Dr. Aron Crowell, and the lessons that we might apply for the duration of this curriculum.

The field of archaeology has evolved from the early days of “pot hunting.” Early archaeology was a combination of information gathering and artifact gathering for museums and private collections. Village and grave sites were excavated with little or no interest of respect or dignity for the living descendants. In recent years there has been a strong backlash towards this practice as indigenous groups have demanded repatriation of items taken from their land.

Dr. Crowell practices an approach to archaeology that collaborates directly with living descendants. He taps into the memories of the living... memories of stories, values and skills that have been passed down from generations before.

The lesson asserts that there is two types of knowledge: academic (that would be the school learned—textbook type) and then there is the traditional way of knowing (being orally passed down). Both are equally valid; both are necessary to understand the complete story. One provides the facts, one supplies the context—the personal relationship.

This forms the theme and urgency of this curriculum. Through this lesson and this curriculum, the students will realize that they have an important job to help record the history of their communities and regions. Through this lesson and this curriculum, it is hoped that the students will develop the skills and the desire to work through those primary resources to better understand the community which they live.

Procedure:

1) Give a Scenario:

Set up a quick write. Students will simulate the role of an archaeologist. They have recorded several features/items while excavating a site that was dated to be several hundred years old. In a chart form, record the information that one might be able to determine from these artifacts. Then, more importantly, decide what questions still exist that we are unable to

answer by simply examining the features. The chart below is an example of what students might write concerning five artifacts: a Russian coin, a spear head point, a hearth of fire cracked rock, bears claws that have drilled holes, and human remains at a burial site. Encourage students to determine unique unanswerable questions for each artifact.

<i>Excavated Item</i>	<i>Answerable Questions</i>	<i>Unanswerable Questions</i>
Russian coin	Material composition Evidence of contact with Russian Date of manufacture	What value did it have? Was it a gift or payment? Who gave/who received coin? Was this lost or thrown away?
A notched spear head	Technique for creating (flaking/vs grinding) Possible prey design Attached to shaft with notch	How was this attached to shaft? How was this propelled? How often would strikes with spear result in success? When used, how often did these break or become lost and need replacement?
A pile of fire cracked rock with ash and bone fragments	Type of rock Analyze bones for type of food. Carbon dating remains for age	How was the prey initially hunted? Were spices/herbs used for flavor? Were people often hungry?
Three bear claws each with a hole drilled in each	Type/age of bear Purpose (adornment vs utilitarian)	What kind of tool was used to kill and dress animal? Did these claws signify a special event or kill for a person? Were people often hurt or killed while hunting bear?
Human remains buried with remnants of a parka, weapons, and other adornments	Age and gender of deceased. Possibly how person died. The type and quantity of adornments might suggest high status. Life health issues/broken bones.	Who was this person? What was his/her name? Did this person have children? What was their favorite food? What was their favorite childhood recollection?

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2) Set the Stage:

Discuss what students have written. Push them— make them think about those questions that the artifacts are unable to answer.

3) Set the Hook:

Bridging Question: *OK, bottom line, artifacts can only go so far to tell us what life was like long ago— if anything was possible what would be the very best way of knowing what life was like 150 years ago?* (Students may say. . . go time traveling. . . or ask someone that's 170 years old.)

4) Focus the Problem:

This is the dilemma that faces every archaeologist. They want to learn about life long ago but have not perfected time travel, nor have they run across anyone who has located the Fountain of Youth.

5) Present the Power Point: Connecting to the Past (Approximately 15 minutes)

See script at end of lesson. Script is optional; objectives are not. Each slide's objective helps lead into the next objective. The point of the program is that every student will understand that they have a role in this kind of research (working with living descendants and primary resources).

FOLLOWING POWER POINT PRESENTATION

6) Your Turn: Writing Assignment

You are now the "elder." Your job is to choose an object or person or event that is personally close to you. You are first to describe your chosen focus in "academic terms." If this is an object (let's say a stuffed animal) you could describe the material, the animal represented, what the generally known purpose would be. If the focus is a person (perhaps a grandparent) you might include birthdates, occupation, appearance, residence. For an event (let's say 9-11) you could list the basic facts behind the tragedy.

Now, consider how this focus directly relates to you. These would be things that no one would know unless you told them **AND** is important in understanding the significance of this focus. Information must be compelling! Information not only allows the researcher to know about the object, but also about you. For example: In regards to that stuffed animal, you might

talk about how you got it at your 5th birthday. It was one of your cherished possessions (perhaps it still sits on a shelf overlooking your room!). In regards to that grandparent you might talk how he worked together with you to build a gun rack for that .243 that you bought. In regards to 9-11 or other national event, you might talk about where you were, what you were doing, what you thought. These are the things only you would know.

Example:

Object: Small brown paper bag

Academic knowledge: It's made of paper, about 7 inches by 10 inches. Often used to carry lunch. Breaks down fairly easily. Can be folded flat. Etc etc.

Poor Example of Personal Relationship

Personal Connection: I would use paper bags for lunches. Usually I'd have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and sometimes an apple. Etc,etc . . . (It shows personal connection but story is not compelling. Certainly we don't learn much about the writer nor the significance of the bag.

Better Example of Personal Relationship

Personal Connection: I used to pack my lunches in a brown paper bag even when I was in primary school. I had to make my own lunches since Mom had to go to work early in the morning and didn't have time to fix me anything. She said to just get a school lunch but those were pretty gross. I'd rather make myself a lunch.

We didn't have a lot of money during that time. Everyone else had the fancy lunch boxes with super heroes like Spider Man on it, but I had to use a paper bag that I'd use over and over again until the bottom would blow out. It's funny though, even when things got better in middle school I still ended up using those brown paper bags even though I didn't need to.

Note: *The writing shows a deeper and more compelling relationship that provides contextual information about the chosen focus (and yourself).*

Need more ideas of objects? Stuffed animal, fishing pole, photo of grandparent, a sports medal, a photo of a family outing, a pirate outfit you wore at Halloween, a ticket to a music festival, a dried up corsage.

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Assessment Rubric

Student's Writing will show that they understand the difference between academic knowledge and knowledge based upon personal perspective.	Student's academic analysis of "artifact" is multifaceted.	5	4	3	2	1
		"Academic knowledge" includes physical, usage, and convention understanding		Student provides "academic" knowledge but this may be shallow and focused only upon physical attributes.		Academic understanding is brief and shows lack of understanding or effort.
	Student describes information that provides a cultural and personal relationship to artifact.	5	4	3	2	1
		Writing provides personal connection with artifact. In addition, writing places objects in a broader cultural context .		Writing provides personal information about artifact. Reader gains a sense of the personal significant of the object to the writer. Broader cultural attributes may not be evident.		Writing seems detached from artifact. Reader little or no new information about object.

The Early People of the Corridor: Connecting to the Past: Script



Script for connecting to the Past

Purpose : The overall objective of this film is two fold:

- To learn about current archaeological practices to invoke the memories of elders to help interpret sites and artifacts
- To encourage students to work with the elders of their community to hear their stories so that we gain a better understanding of history (the reoccurring theme in this curriculum)

SLIDE 1: TITLE PAGE: CONNECTING WITH THE PAST; ALUTIIQ ARCHAEOLOGY IN KENAI FJORDS NP

Slide Objective: Set the Stage for Power Point

This program is entitled "Connecting with the Past; Alutiiq Archaeology in Kenai Fjords National Park. The Slide show has been created to demonstrate what research has been done along the coast of KFNPN, how this research has been completed using living traditional knowledge, and the importance that you, as a student and a member of your community, continue this type of research.

SLIDE 2: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Slide Objective: Provide proper acknowledgement to the organizations and people that helped create this program

There are many people and organizations whom have been instrumental in creating this program. Many thanks to the Pratt Museum in Homer who has provided video footage, the people of the villages of Nanwalek and Port Graham: notably James Kvasnikoff, Nancy Yeaton, and Rhoda Moonin who have shared their time and thoughts. Thanks also to Dr. Aron Crowell who was the lead archaeologist in this project and to the NPS Ocean Alaska Science Learning Center in Seward who developed this program.

SLIDE 3: DR. ARON CROWELL

Slide Objective: Define the job of an archaeologist

Meet Dr. Aron Crowell. Dr. Crowell is an archaeologist. So, that said, what is an archaeologist? *Solicit answers.* The main points that you are trying to make is a) an archaeologist studies past cultures; b) they do this by examining artifacts; c) often these artifacts are objects or features found at cultural dig sites.

SLIDE 4: Map showing location of Alutiiq culture

Slide Objective: A) Connect Dr. Crowell to Alutiiq studies/culture B) Differentiate the term Alutiiq from other terms.

Dr. Crowell is the director of the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage. If you have visited the Anchorage Museum's Arctic Studies floor then you've had a chance to view some of his work.

Dr. Crowell is an expert on the Alutiiq culture. The Alutiiq culture is coastal based and stretches from the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak, down the north Gulf Coast and into Prince William Sound region.

We call this the Alutiiq culture, but the reality is, the Alutiiq have been known by several names (which will become apparent as you continue to study this region through time).

Pacific Eskimo: This name has fallen out of favor. The generic term "eskimo" is not often used among any of the northern ethnic groups.



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(Slide 4 continued)

Chugach Eskimo: Used by Russians; referred to those people living in the Prince William Sound region.

Chugachmiut: The Native word for the people of Prince William Sound.

Unegkurmiut: Less common; is sometimes used to describe the people of the outer Kenai Peninsula Coast.

Koniag: This refers to the group of “Alutiiq” living on Kodiak Island and is the name of their Native corporation.

Aleut: This name (a misnomer) was originally used by early Russian traders for the Alutiiq people. They first encountered Aleuts on the Aleutian Islands then generically applied the name to the Alutiiq as well. To complicate things, the Russians also displaced and mixed villages with both the Aleuts with Alutiiq. In fact, up until the early 1990’s many Alutiiq considered Aleut to be their traditional heritage.

Sugpiaq: This name is gaining recognition and popularity with the Alutiiq peoples. It means “The Real People.”

SLIDE 5: Close up of North Gulf Coast/Kenai Fjords Region

Slide Objective: Define environment of the Alutiiq culture.



The Alutiiq culture is the indigenous people that lived within the current Kenai Fjords National Park boundaries. *(Perhaps solicit who has been out on the coast).* If you’ve been on a boat along the Gulf Coast you know how rugged the coastline is.

CLICK MOUSE

Insert of rugged coastline

The fjords are deep, mountain sides rise directly up from the water and storms lash in from the open Gulf of Alaska. It is difficult to image that people, modern or prehistoric, could possibly live here.

CLICK MOUSE

Insert of protected bay

However, the Alutiiq people did populate this rugged coastline, establishing transient and more permanent village sites in sheltered areas tucked in sheltered bays.

Like the other indigenous people of Alaska and North America, they crossed over the Beringia (the land bridge) when sea levels were lower, exposing a grassy steppe connecting Asia and North America. Unlike other people that established themselves inland or followed food sources toward the south, the Alutiiq remained in this land of rain, fog, glaciers, and raging seas. And the reason is clear; it was about the food. The sea provided a bounty of fish and marine mammals, the tidal lands provided daily sources of shellfish and intertidal munchies, the uplands provided berries and roots. Despite the tough conditions, food was close at hand and in plentiful amounts.

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SLIDE 6: Drawing representing traditional village site

Slide Objective: Establish differences in traditional summer and winter villages.



This slide shows a representation of what a traditional summer village site might have looked like. (*Solicit what do they notice about this photo? Point out baidarka, canoe, drying fish hanging from rack.*) You also might notice the homes. Consider the homes for a moment—they appear to be made of lumber. You might notice that most of the people are facing one direction (towards sea). (*Solicit why?*) If you will, consider this their “internet,” their source of information. The sea told them the weather forecast. Looking to the sea, they could see the hunters when they returned—hopefully with fresh food. From the sea they could see adversaries that might come to harm them. The sea was their source of information.

Summer village sites were usually smaller, transient family units that would be located in areas that might be more exposed yet closer to abundant food sources.

CLICK MOUSE



Insert of indoor dancing

In the wintertime, they would relocate into larger more communal housing. One can imagine, much more time was spent in dwellings sheltered from the winter storms, dancing, sharing stories, and subsisting on foods gathered and processed for the dark months of the year.

Slide 7: Samples of implements used by the Alutiiq culture

Slide Objective: Establish that available materials create parameters for development of culture.

Here are some examples of items that were created and used by the traditional Alutiiq culture.

We have a parka made from squirrel pelts, two masks made from wood, a bent wood hat which would shield the hunter’s face from sun and rain, and a rattle made from ____ ? (*Solicit answers.*) Puffin beaks.



(*Solicit what all these items have in common.*) They are all made from materials that are available. It sounds simple enough, however different people living in different places have different environments which provide different materials which, in turn, shape the culture of the peoples.

Not many of the artifacts that are shown in this slide probably would not be found by archaeologists. (*Solicit why?*) Made of materials that would not withstand long exposure in the moist climate of the North Gulf Coast region.

Slide 8: First artifact: Ulu

Slides Objective (for next 3 slides): Gain understanding to the type of durable tools that would have been traditional used.

However, implements made of rock can be found when conducting an archaeological excavation. This is an example of an implement that was found at a research site along the North Gulf Coast.

Solicit: What is the object and how would it be used?

CLICK MOUSE

MOVIE SHOULD PLAY OF DR. CROWELL DISCUSSING THE ULU.



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Slide 9: Second artifact: Stone Lamp



Here's a second implement. *(Solicit thoughts about its identity and use.) If students get the answer right (stone lamp) pique their interest with the following comment.* OK, this is a stone lamp and it was filled with oil rendered from marine mammal blubber. It was used for heat and light. However, when archaeologists excavate these within former house pits, there is something unique in their placement within the former home. *(Solicit ideas and reasons why.)*

CLICK MOUSE

MOVIE SHOULD PLAY OF DR. CROWELL DISCUSSING STONE LAMP

(Solicit from students why stone lamp would be turned over. Things to consider: These sites were not usually "abandoned" but rather they were "left". This meant they left the site with the intent of at least possibly returning again. Would there have been any reasons not to turn lamp over? (Answers are all speculative—we can only guess at the reasons).)

Slide 10: Third artifact: Stone adz



(Again, solicit implement and use.)

CLICK

Drawing using an adz

This implement is an adz. As shown in the drawing, this is the implement from which they could work with full logs. The adz would have been critical in the creation of wood canoes, the construction of homes, and in the harvesting of wood for fires or any other purpose.

Slide 11: Partners in Project

NOTE: THIS SLIDE AND INFORMATION IS CRUCIAL FOR ESTABLISHING NOT ONLY THE THEME OF THIS POWER POINT BUT ALSO IN ESTABLISHING THE THEME FOR THIS CURRICULUM.

Slide Objective: To show how current archaeological practices involve living descendants in the interpretation of excavation sites.

It is important to understand that Dr. Crowell's research is very collaborative involving several agencies but most importantly involving the living descendants of the Alutiiq culture.

At one point archaeology meant coming onto traditional lands, excavating sites – including grave sites – and leaving with boxes of artifacts to be displayed in museums or private collections in distant lands. As one might expect, archaeology has not always been viewed kindly in rural Alaska. In fact, recently, Native villages have had collections and human remains repatriated (returned) to the region from where they were taken.

However, Dr. Crowell practices a style of archaeology that isn't just collaborative, but rather involves living descendants as a vital part of interpreting artifacts.

The key thing for us to remember: Alaska is unique in that the past is not so far away. Whether one is talking about Alutiiq Natives or gold miners on the Kenai, there are living descendants who still have some of the knowledge and some of the stories that have been passed down. To paraphrase, one elder said, "My grandmother was born when baidarkas were being used. Before she died she had ridden in a 747." The past is very close; and this is what Dr. Crowell tries to tap into.



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Slide 12: Map showing village sites



Slide Objective: a) To remind students that Alutiiq culture is alive and well and b) to continue to define how Dr. Crowell uses the memories from living descendants.

The Alutiiq people and Alutiiq culture is still here. There are many villages scattered across this region. This map shows current, and some traditional but now abandoned villages, along the North Gulf Coast. You'll make note of the villages Nanwalek and Port Graham on the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula. The Alutiiq people and the Alutiiq culture is alive and well throughout this region.

CLICK MOUSE

Insert of village and mother with child

To illustrate Dr. Crowell's research methodology, note the photo of the village. This is the village of Tatitlek (population roughly 100 people) located in eastern Prince William Sound. What you SEE in the photo is this: conventional homes not unlike what would be found in towns throughout the road system, the Russian Orthodox Church illustrating the ties to the first Russian visitors, the boats which reflect a continued importance upon the ocean. BUT WHAT IS NOT SEEN is what Dr. Crowell tries to tap into—the stories and knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is this traditional knowledge that helps Dr. Crowell interpret the discoveries unearthed at excavation sites.

Slide 13: Goals of the Archaeology Project

Slide Objective: To further define collaborative strategy and to validate traditional knowledge of living descendants

To further illustrate Dr. Crowell's collaborative strategy, traditional archaeology investigates past culture by digging in former village sites.

CLICK MOUSE

Dr. Crowell connects present culture by involving the descendants still living in the interpretation of what is discovered.

CLICK MOUSE

One is knowledge through academic training.

CLICK MOUSE

But the other one, and just as valid, is the knowledge through stories and traditions.

Slide 14: Photos of excavation site



Slide Objective: Give the students a perspective of this approach would look like.

If you were to visit a dig site, what would this collaborative archaeology look like? Well, it would look pretty much like a regular archaeological excavation. There would be pit slowly unearthed, people would be taking notes, artifacts would be carefully cataloged and bagged. But you would quickly note that many of the personnel excavating would be Alutiiq Natives. And many of these might be high school students working as interns.

One of the students in the photo is Katrina. At the time Katrina was a 16 year old whose mother encouraged her to be part of the excavation—definitely not something that Katrina wanted to do for her summer vacation. Sitting in the rain, swatting bugs, and digging in the dirt did not seem to be her idea of a summer break. That is until she unearthed a solid gold Russian coin. After that point she was hooked.

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Slide 15: Photo of Dr. Crowell with elders



Slide Objective: Connecting with the elders knowledge

Then village leaders and elders are brought onto the scene. They are shown the house pits and the artifacts that have been unearthed. Then they are asked, "What do you remember from the stories that were told to you? What can you remember?"

Slide 16: Movie: James Kvasnikoff (it will show as a black screen until clicked with mouse)

Slide Objective: To understand how this was viewed to the participants

It is a powerful process, not only for Dr. Crowell and his project, but also for the participants. This video is of James Kvasnikoff, resident of Nanwalek, on his impressions of the excavation.

CLICK MOUSE ON BLACK SCREEN

What are your thoughts. Why did this solicit such a strong reaction from Mr. Kvasnikoff?

Slide 17: Movie of Nancy Yeaton providing her interpretation of feature

Slide Objective: Understanding the contextual knowledge that elders bring to the interpretation of features.

As they continued their excavation, the archaeologists and interns unearthed a pile of rocks with charcoal within the rocks. Although this was understood to be type of a hearth (a manner of cooking food and socializing) called a "ciqulluaq," but with Nancy Yeaton's help, and the memory of others, a fuller story began to emerge.

CLICK MOUSE ON BLACK SCREEN

Slide 18: Blue Screen

Objective (Next 3 Slides): This "traditional knowledge" exists in ALL cultures... including our own.

The benefit to knowledge that is passed down is that it provides a much broader "contextual" view of what life was like long ago. Now understand, this "cultural knowledge" is not just limited to indigenous cultures but to all cultures.

As an example, take a look at this artifact:

Slide 19: Pop Pull Tab

(Solicit... what is this object. Likely they will say it is a can pull tab.)

(Solicit... what is it made of? Likely answers... metal or aluminum.)

Slide 20: Can and pop pull tab

What you've described is the ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE. You were able to define this object (whether you have ever seen or used it before) using your own experiential base.

However, there are things that you probably don't know. These pull tabs were in use until the mid 1970's. For those that lived prior, they have a differ-



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ent recollection of these. They will remember beaches being littered with pull tabs taken off of beverage drinks. They'll remember making long chains attaching these together (it was very common to create strings of these laced across the ceilings of dormitory rooms. They also might remember wearing them like rings. For those who lived prior to the 1960's (and the widespread development of pull tabs to open beverages) they'll remember opening cans using a "church key" and buying most soda (that would be pop for many of you) in bottles. This is the type of "contextual" knowledge that Dr. Crowell tries to tap into.

Slide 20: Movie Rhoda Moonin



Slide Objective: In order for this to occur, stories must be shared and received.

But in order for this contextual knowledge to be transferred from generation to generation two things have to happen: The stories must be shared and the stories must be listened to.

CLICK MOUSE ON BLACK SCREEN

The lesson is simple. To grandparents and parents... share your memories. To the students... it is your opportunity... it is your responsibility.... to listen.

Slide 21: Movie: Village participants blessing site.



Slide Objective: Closure to program.

As the elders were there at the site, it seemed only fitting that the site and the people from long ago would be offered a blessing.

CLICK MOUSE ON BLACK SCREEN

"Maybe with this prayer, no one will be disturbed, no one will be bothered, they'll probably forgive us."