



## Trails Across Time: A Curriculum for High School Alaska Studies

### Introduction

It must've been some kind of joke. To take the rich resources, the yellow muck called gold, and scatter it throughout the land. Some of it was laced into quartz veins embedded deep within bedrock. Some was ground and dispersed by glaciers or erosion and flung into the gravels and stream beds in placer deposits to entice the prospector. Then, to frustrate the seekers, the gold-enriched land was shoved up into the high latitudes where temperatures were harsh and winters were brutal. During the time when the sun hovered over the horizon, oceans and bays would freeze, defying transport by boat. To further impede travel to the gold fields, the land was crumpled into folded mountains brought on by terranes of land transported by the tectonics of the earth's plates. Then, as if further insult were required, the land froze over, filling the valleys with the glacial remnants of the last ice age. These moving rivers of ice were splintered with crevasses that were eager to swallow anyone attempting to gain access to the gold across these fields of blue ice. It must've been a joke—and a cruel one at that.

However, the same forces that challenged anyone seeking to find their fortune in this land, also created access opportunities within the Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. Glaciers exploited the matrix of sutures between the terranes of land brought forth by the Pacific Plate conveyor belt. It created deep, wide valleys—corridors—that the fortune seeker could take advantage of.

And many came. Thousands came. It started with the indigenous peoples using the corridors to gain access for trade and resources. Then it was the gold seekers. A few found their fortune. Most left the country hungrier than they came. Some perished and were swallowed into the land. And then there were some who stayed and made their life in this land of raw beauty and natural resources that shone brighter than the luster of gold.

The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area was designated in 2009 to celebrate this slice of history. It is a history that started eons ago with the construction of the land and its first indigenous people. It is a history of the prospector and fortune seeker; a history of those who came to fulfill a life that could not be lived elsewhere; a history that continues to evolve to this day.

It is important that students learn the history of the Kenai Mountains-

Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. One way of looking at the instruction of history is, to paraphrase George Santayana, "If we ignore history and don't learn from its lessons then we are doomed to repeat it." However this curriculum takes a different stance, "*If we learn from this history, we can be inspired by it.*"

Indeed, there is much to provoke inspiration. The history of the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm (KMTA) National Heritage Area is here in our own backyard. One hundred years ago this land was raw, open, and wild. An Aluttiq elder not so long ago told the author that his mother was born when bidarkis were in use. Before she died, she had ridden in a 747. The past is so close. Within the communities of the KMTA National Heritage Area live some of the direct descendants and friends of the original western settlers. Their memories, their stories, their letters, and their photos provide unique resources for students to conduct authentic primary resource research.

In one sense, it is a wonderful opportunity. In another sense, it is an awesome responsibility. By providing students with the springboard to research the history that surrounds them, the teacher is opening the window not only for learning—but indeed for inspiration.



Photos courtesy Mona Painter



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This curriculum was created with the following premise: *“History is best learned when actively investigated through primary sources.”*

With this in mind, this curriculum provides a wide variety of primary sources. Within these lessons students will have the opportunity to examine letters exchanged between Baranof and Shelikof, crunch census/demographic statistics of Hope and Sunrise, and investigate grainy photographs and historic maps. (These sources are noted in red and can be accessed from the online curriculum at [kmtacorridor.org](http://kmtacorridor.org)) Each lesson is framed around an inquiry-based strategy; however, there are many approaches to using the sources. Teachers should utilize any format that allows students to actively investigate.

Although the lesson can be used alone, the curriculum is best used in conjunction with the book *Trails Across Time* by Kaylene Johnson. Each lesson in the curriculum corresponds with the theme of each chapter in Johnson’s book. In essence, the book provides the historical background knowledge while the lessons allow students to examine resources to fashion personal understanding. It is hoped that by using the book and this curriculum, students will gain a much more intimate understanding of the history of the Eastern Kenai.

*Some of the following strategies can be utilized:*

- Comparing:** Contemplating similarities and differences in information. Looking for areas of dissonance or agreement.
- Summarizing:** Presenting a condensed form of information without conflict or negating facts.
- Observing:** Purposeful watching and note taking.
- Classifying:** Sorting. Pulling common and divergent ideas together.
- Interpreting:** Explaining the meaning (explicit or implicit) without over generalizing.
- Criticizing:** Not finding fault or differentiating “good” or “bad” but rather making judgments based upon analysis and evaluation.
- Looking for assumptions:** A fact is not a fact. Many facts are substantiated using assumptions. It’s important to recognize when assumptions are being used and, when possible, to corroborate these.

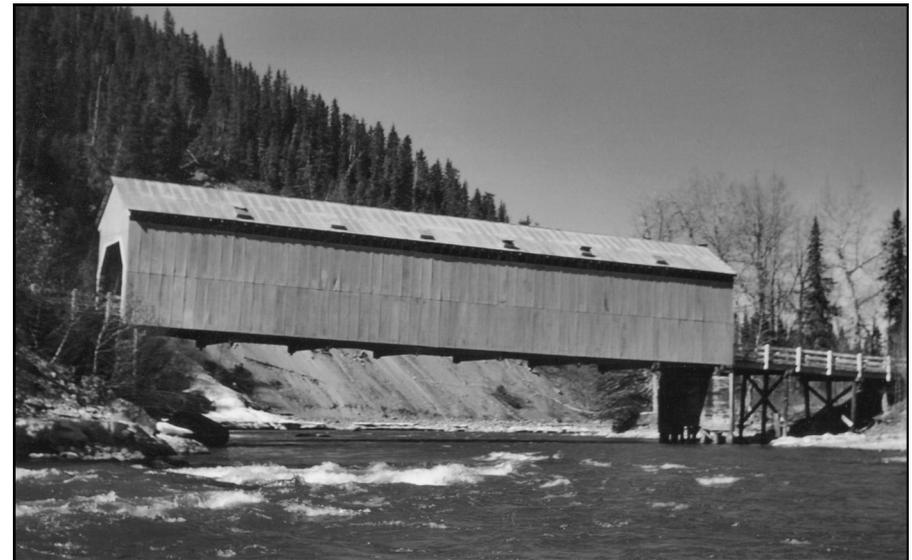
**Imaging:** An attempt to perceive in the mind what is not fully experienced. In regards to the application of history, imaging allows the student to recreate what life was like during an event while still being grounded by facts.

**Following the Questions:** For every answer there are more questions to pursue. Learning how to follow a strategy of questions will provide deeper understanding.

**Applying Facts / Principles to New Situations:** Taking the “known” and applying it to the “unknown.” The ultimate aim of this strategy (and this curriculum) is to utilize the history of the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area to inspire thoughtful consideration toward the future of the region.

For more information regarding these and more strategies for inquiry-based instruction refer to *Teaching For Thinking: Theory, Strategies and Activities for the Classroom* by Louis E. Rath.

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### In Appreciation

A publication of this scale takes an incredible number of resources. My thanks to all these people for sharing their time and expertise to make this curriculum a reality.

First, my gratitude to my wife-unit, **Letty**, whose abundant patience and forever support is always appreciated if not always noted. **Kaylene Johnson**, author of *Trails Across Time* provided the structure and was always a willing and valuable helper.

**Dick Reger**, geologist guru, provided his vast knowledge and curiosity to add incredible depth to the lessons. **Walker**, as in **Dan**, connected KMTA to me and was always quick as a sounding board. My good friends/mentors, **Mark Luttrell** and **Tom Gillespie**, provided the archaeology and hometown perspectives (respectively) to the project. **Mona Painter**... wow... you opened your home, your archived boxes, and the **Cooper Landing Museum** to really add focus to the curriculum. Thank you so much to Mona and the **Cooper Landing Historical Society**. The archaeological Powerpoint was a collaborative effort of **Aron Crowell**, the **Pratt Museum** and the **NPS Ocean Alaska Science Learning Center** and the villages of **Port Graham** and **Nanwalek**. **Jim Pfeifferberger** was a major architect of this fine product. The work is not only an invaluable part of the curriculum but also is an important message of sharing traditional wisdom. The Hope/Sunrise lesson could not have been achieved had it not been for the help of **Diane Olthuis**, **Rolfe Buzzel**, and the **Hope-Sunrise Historical Society**. **Shannon Kovak** of the NPS provided a huge amount of help to overcome technical issues with a historic interview. It was again a pleasure to work with **Doug Capra**, former colleague from so many professions, to define the unit on Alaska Nellie. Your wisdom and passion is contagious. To the **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** and **Amy Carney**... you deserve some kind of medal. Amy and the RBHS were busy packing the museum for the big move into the new building... all while I was asking for resources and photos. Packed boxes would have to be located, unpacked, and opened so that I could get "just one more photo...please." Never once did Amy furnish a disparaging word or evil look—though either would have been well deserved. Thanks also to **Colleen Kelly** of the RBHS who helped edit a unit to keep it on track. Thanks also to **Karl Erickson**, **Loverne Bercee**, and the folks in Girdwood for their assistance as well. My thanks also to **Jessica Garron** of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Satellite Facility who kept the email stream going until we got exactly the photo that we needed. **Caitlin Campbell** was so helpful in the development of the lesson about sailing. Then there was **Kenai Fjords National Park**—particularly **Kristy Sholly** and **Laura Sturtz** who paved the way to arrange a work space and computer to format the curriculum. This is a true testimony of collaborative efforts to achieve

a common goal.

But of course the greatest appreciation is reserved for the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm (KMTA) National Heritage Area itself. The place... the people... the history. It has been a true honor to be able to be a catalyst bringing it into the classrooms. It is hoped that this curriculum is a useful tool for teachers and that students will have the opportunity and desire to dig into the history of this area. Remember, there's gold in them hills.

Photo courtesy Mona Painter





# Trails Across Time: Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER in Trails Across Time</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Curriculum Page</b>	<b>Lesson Strategy / Primary Resource</b>
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2	<b>Early People</b>	10-20	Showcases archaeologist collaborating with <b>living descendants</b> in the interpretation of ancient sites
3	<b>Early People: The Russian River Question</b>	21-25	Investigates the Russian River salmon dilemma critically examining <b>genetic salmon research, topographical maps, and glacier studies.</b>
4	<b>In Search of the NW Passage</b>	26-33	Details an <b>investigative strategy</b> of question-lead research to better understand the life of an 18th century sailor.
5	<b>Russian America</b>	34-39	Confronting current cultural norms while examining <b>letters</b> exchanged between company manager Baranof and owner Shelikof.
6	<b>The Gold Rush: Tale of 2 Cities</b>	40-55	Utilizes <b>newspaper accounts</b> and evaluates <b>census data</b> to understand why the town of Sunrise failed while Hope survived.
7	<b>The Gold Rush: Hope</b>	56-59	<b>Demographic data</b> illustrates how the town of Hope evolved from a Gold Rush camp to the present day town.
8	<b>Alaska Nellie</b>	60-73	<b>Photographs</b> are used to develop historic narratives of Nellie Lawing
9	<b>By Ways</b>	74-86	Hone investigative skills by developing a plausible story line that connects seemingly unrelated <b>artifacts</b> . Lesson ends with an <b>interview</b> that tells 'the rest of the story.'
	<b>Research: It's Your Turn</b>	87-90	Developing a <b>research question</b> and determining <b>available resources.</b>