

## THESE ARE MY SEASONS

### Overview:

The United States of America follows the Western/Gregorian calendar but each individual, family, community and culture has its own set events, celebrations and ceremonies that define its seasons. In this lesson, students will discuss seasons as they are recognized in their family and community.

### Objectives:

The student will construct a calendar that depicts a personal, cultural representation of seasons.

### Targeted Alaska Grade Level Expectations:

[7]SF1.1-SF3.1 The student demonstrates an understanding of the dynamic relationships among scientific, cultural, social, and personal perspectives by investigating the basis of local knowledge (e.g., describing and predicting weather) and sharing that information.

### Vocabulary:

**calendar** – a system of organizing the days it takes for Earth to orbit the sun; the simplest calendar system just counts periods of time from a reference date; more complex calendars have cycles such as weeks and months

**Gregorian calendar** – also called the Western calendar; introduced by Pope Gregory XIII by decree on February 24, 1582; the Gregorian calendar was a reformation of the older Julian calendar, which had errors; groups days into years of 365 or 366, divides the year into 12 months and contains a seven-day week

**season** – a division of the year marked by changes in weather, ecology and hours of daylight

### Whole Picture:

The Tanana Chiefs Conference website (<https://www.tananachiefs.org/>) describes traditional seasons as such:

Athabascans led a nomadic lifestyle. They traveled in small family groups or clans, following the seasons in search of food.

In late fall and early winter they hunted the migrating caribou. The caribou were most important for their flesh and hides, which provided food, clothing and shelter.

Winter days and nights were spent surviving the cold and darkness. During this time of confinement, the history of the people was passed from generation to generation through stories and legends.

In early spring the people traveled to spring camps as the winter's supply of food was depleted. They hunted ducks, geese, muskrats and beaver on the lakes. The fresh food was a welcome change of diet. After long winters of separation and hardships the tribes gathered to celebrate and discuss mutual concerns.

Summers were busy in the fish camps along the rivers. Once the salmon runs began, fish were caught, smoked and stored for winter. The rivers were the lifeblood of the Athabascans, providing food and transportation.

Each fall the tribes gathered berries and hunted waterfowl. After the snow had fallen, the men hunted hibernating bears.

As it was with the first Athabascans, the cycle was complete and began again. Such were the old ways and such are the new. From season to season, from camp to camp, life is a never-ending cycle. The integrity of life is in this understanding.

To an Athabaskan, the only things that change are the ways of survival.

The Gregorian calendar, more commonly known as the Western calendar, is an internationally accepted time-keeping tool. It was put in place in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII and follows the rotation of Earth around the sun, which takes approximately 365.25 days. The calendar takes into account that each 365.25-day year (each

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with 24 hours) is actually 11 minutes short, which would skew the calendar after many years if not addressed. To solve this, the Gregorian calendar includes a cycle of leap years to set things back on track. Every year that is exactly divisible by four is a leap year, except for years exactly divisible by 100. The centurial years divisible by 400 are still leap years.

### Language Links:

Alaska Native people have always been careful observers of the seasons. Ask a local Native language speaker to provide the words in the local dialect for the words listed in the chart below. The local dialect for these words may differ from the examples provided. Share the words with students to build fluency in local terms related to weather. Include local words in songs, stories and games when possible.

English	Gwich'in	Denaakk'e	Deg Xinag	Lower Tanana	Your Language
sun	drin oozhrii	so	no'oy	sro	
spring	shreenyaa	early: sonot late: hulookk'ut	xulegg ding'	sronot	
summer	shin	saanh	sanh	sanh	
fall/autumn	khaiints'a	huyts'en'	xiyts'in'	xwyhts'en	
winter	khaii	huyh	xiyh	xwyh	

### Materials:

- Blank paper, such as copy paper (multicolored, four or more sheets per student)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored pencils
- Overhead transparency marker
- Transparency sheets (three)
- VISUAL AID: "Seasons' by Catherine Attla"
- VISUAL AID: "These Are My Seasons"
- STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: "Seasons' by Catherine Attla"
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: "These Are My Seasons"

### Activity Preparation:

1. Copy VISUAL AID: "Seasons' by Catherine Attla" and VISUAL AID: "These Are My Seasons" pages 1-3 to transparencies.
2. Copy extra triangle template sheets from STUDENT WORKSHEET: "These Are My Seasons." Consider using colored copy paper in a variety of colors to give students options.

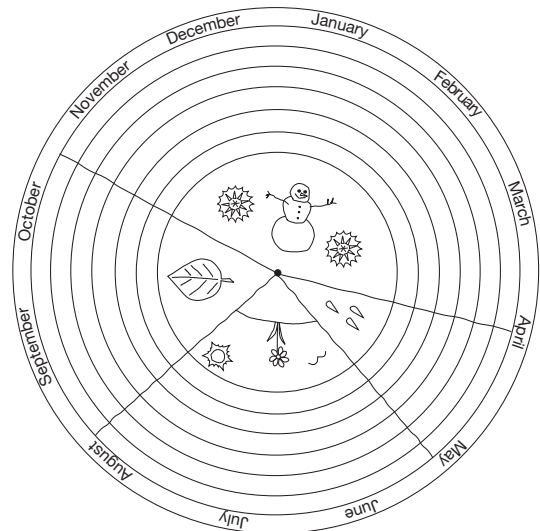
### Activity Procedure:

1. Display VISUAL AID: "Seasons' by Catherine Attla." Hand out STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: "Seasons' by Catherine Attla" so students have their own copy as they discuss.

Explain Attla documented traditional seasons and how they compare to and differ from the Western calendar. Review Attla's calendar and discuss how it differs from the Western calendar (eight divisions instead of 12 months, differing lengths instead of uniform lengths, and names describe what's happening in the environment).

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- Hand out STUDENT WORKSHEET: "These Are My Seasons." Explain students will create their own seasonal calendar based on things that are important to them.
- Display VISUAL AID: "These Are My Seasons," page 1 on an overhead. Remind students the Western calendar places the first day of spring on March 21, the first day of summer on June 21, the first day of fall as September 21 and the first day of winter as December 21, but Alaska tends to follow its own calendar. What months do you think of as spring? Summer? Fall? Winter? Using an overhead marker, demonstrate to students how you might divide your seasons to model how you want them to decide where their spring, summer, winter and fall should be. (See example at right.) What reminds you of each season? Maybe summer is fishing, fall is moose hunting, winter is snow machining and spring is mud! Add a sketch depicting something that reminds you of each season in the space provided.
- On the board, brainstorm ideas for the seasonal calendar. What things are important during the year? Ask students to think about family activities, holidays, hunting, berry picking, seasonal sports (school, professional), vacations, conferences (like Alaska Federation of Natives), etc. Some things happen on one day or just a few days. Some things span weeks to months. The shorter items, like birthdays, Christmas, etc., will be written on the lines. Things that span a longer period of time will be put on the triangles around the outside. For example, basketball, football, hockey and other sports span many months. Hunting seasons usually span a week or two. Gardening season may run June through August. The fair (such as the Tanana Valley Fair or the state fair in Palmer) is just a little over a week, but it may be a highlight!
- Ask students to begin working on STUDENT WORKSHEET: "These Are My Seasons." Once they have completed the first page, display VISUAL AID: "These Are My Seasons," page 2. This is the graphic artist's depiction. Display page 3. This is Elder Robert Charlie's depiction of seasons. Explain students will write holidays and events with a small range on the lines inside the circle. Exceptions are things like the school year which don't display well using a triangle. Students will cut out the circle, then work on the outside "rays" similar to those on Catherine Attla's calendar. Students will depict the seasonal activities that span weeks to months, such as hunting season, sports seasons, etc. using triangles cut from the templates provided or from blank paper. Once the edge of each side/ray shows the correct range, the triangle can be glued to the back of the circle. This may require teacher guidance until students get the hang of it.
- Once students have completed their seasonal calendar, consider having them glue it to a piece of construction paper. Display student calendars so students can look at each other's seasons.




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**NOTE:** Consider leaving the calendars on display and adding new events throughout the year. In addition, tie in other UNITE US lessons by adding information related to alternative energy, such as the appropriate time of year for using solar panels, wind turbines, in-river hydropower, biomass, etc.

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### Extension Ideas:

- Go to the Tanana Chiefs Conference website (<https://www.tananachiefs.org/>) and view the logo, "The Athabascan Circle" by Athabascan artist James Grant. This is another depiction of a seasonal cycle. Discuss this alternative way of viewing the seasons.

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Explore other types of calendars such as the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar, the Iranian calendar, which begins on the vernal equinox, and the Hebrew calendar, which is a luni-solar calendar based on twelve months of 29 or 30 days.

Investigate Leap Year, a year containing one extra day in order to keep the calendar system synchronized with the seasons.

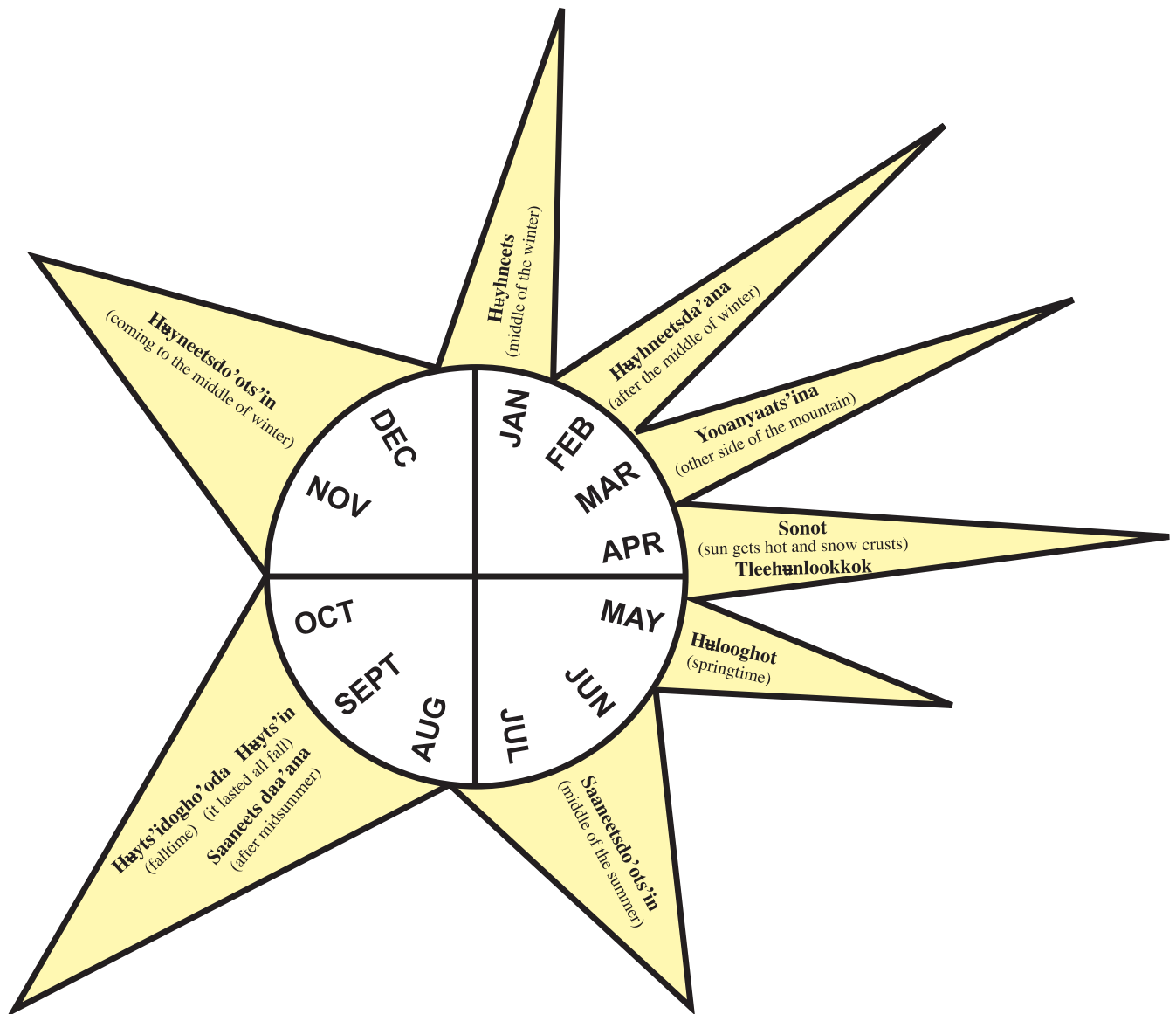
### Answers:

#### STUDENT WORKSHEET: "These Are My Seasons"

Answers will vary.

# Keela Hunaotil Ts'in "Seasons"

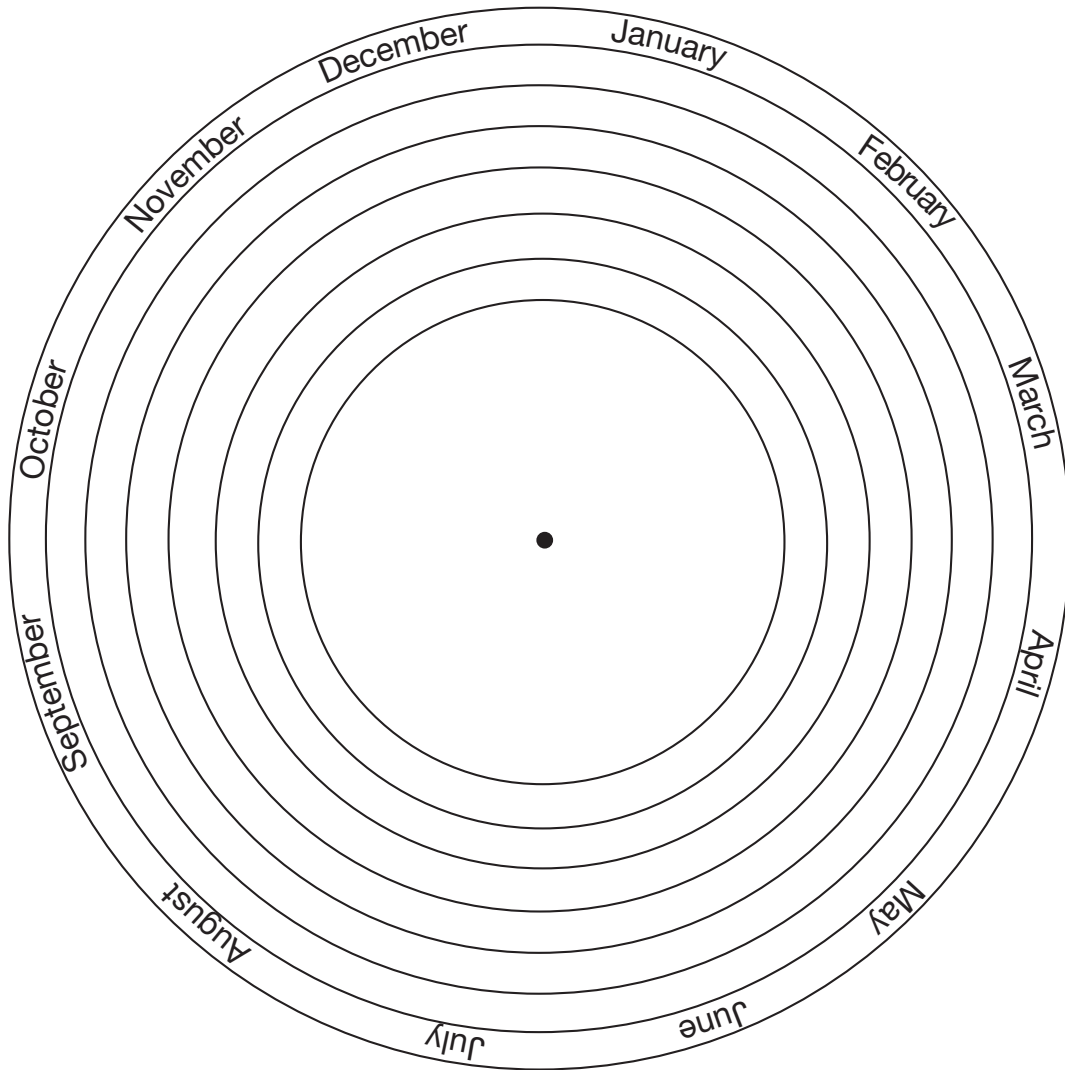
by Catherine Attla



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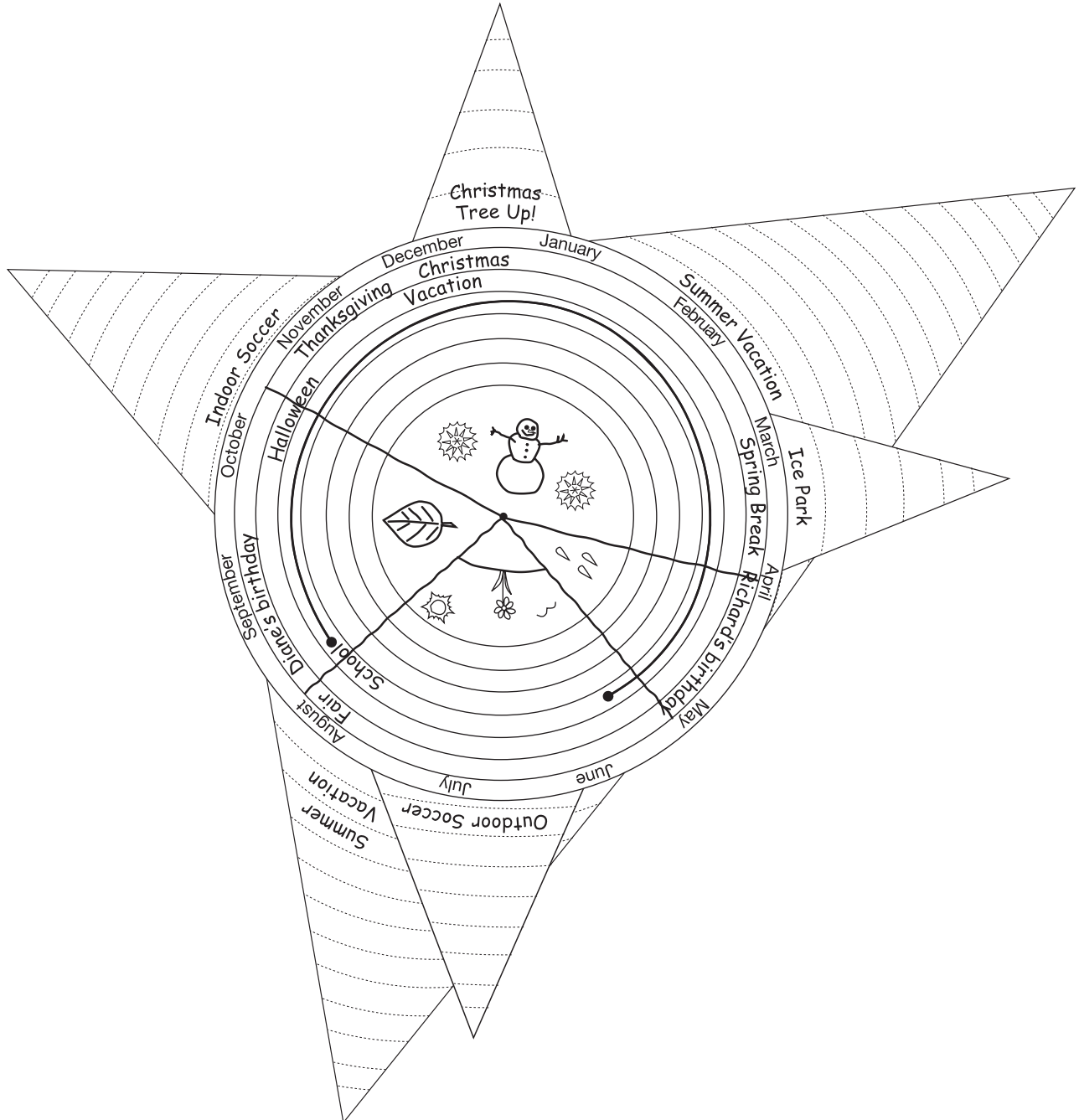
VISUAL AID  
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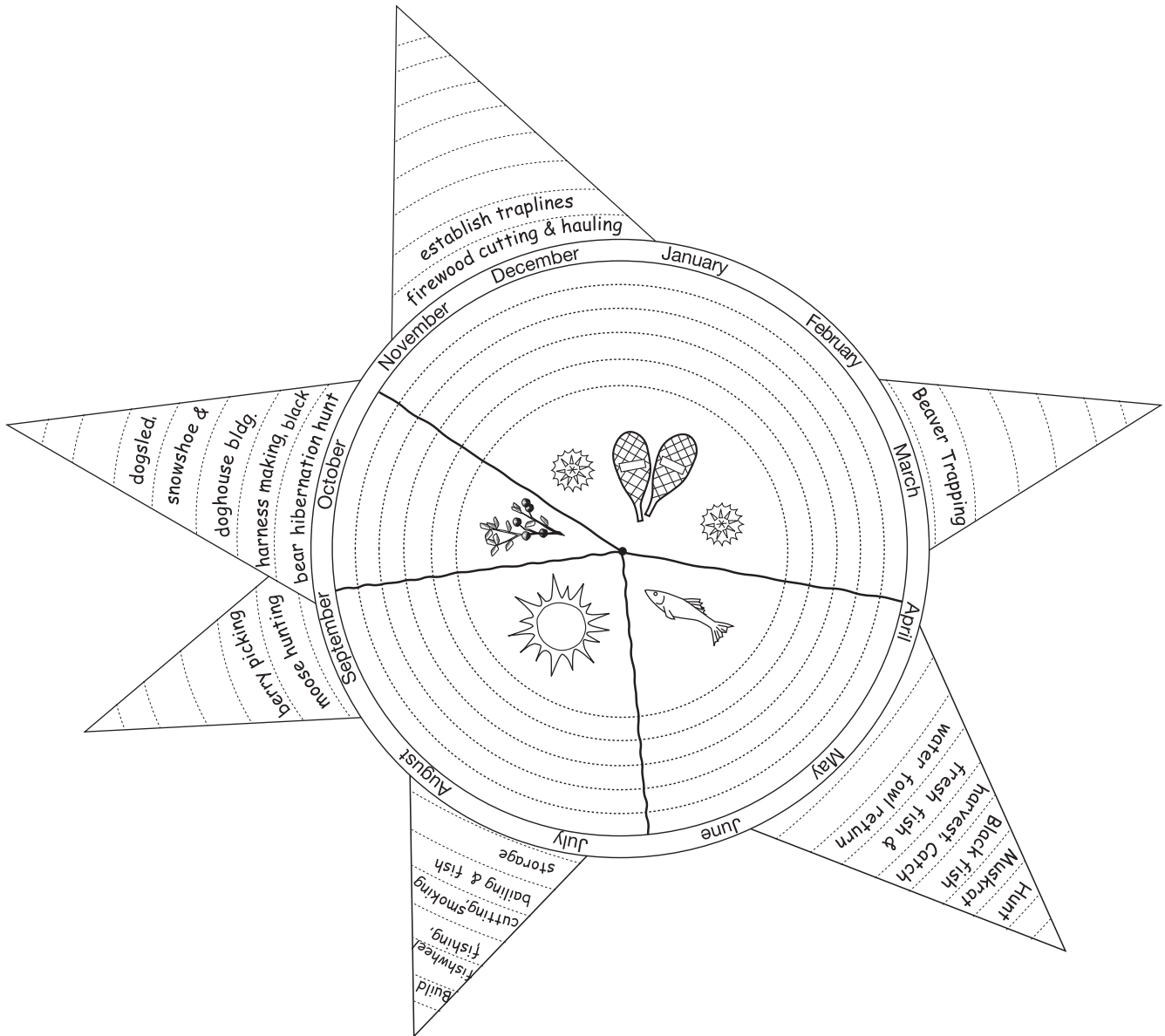


VISUAL AID  
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THESE ARE MY SEASONS

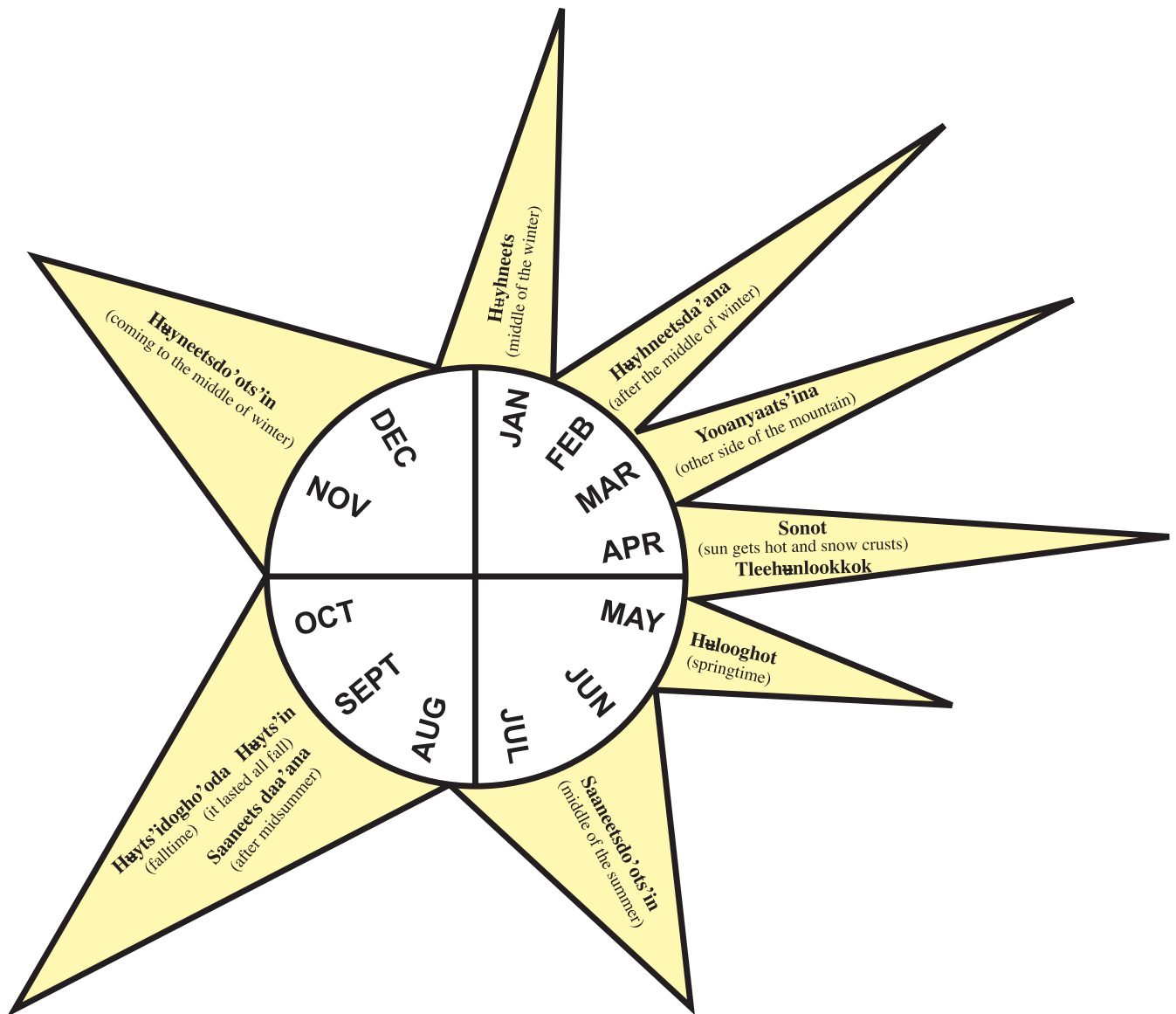
Seasons according to Elder Robert Charlie of Minto





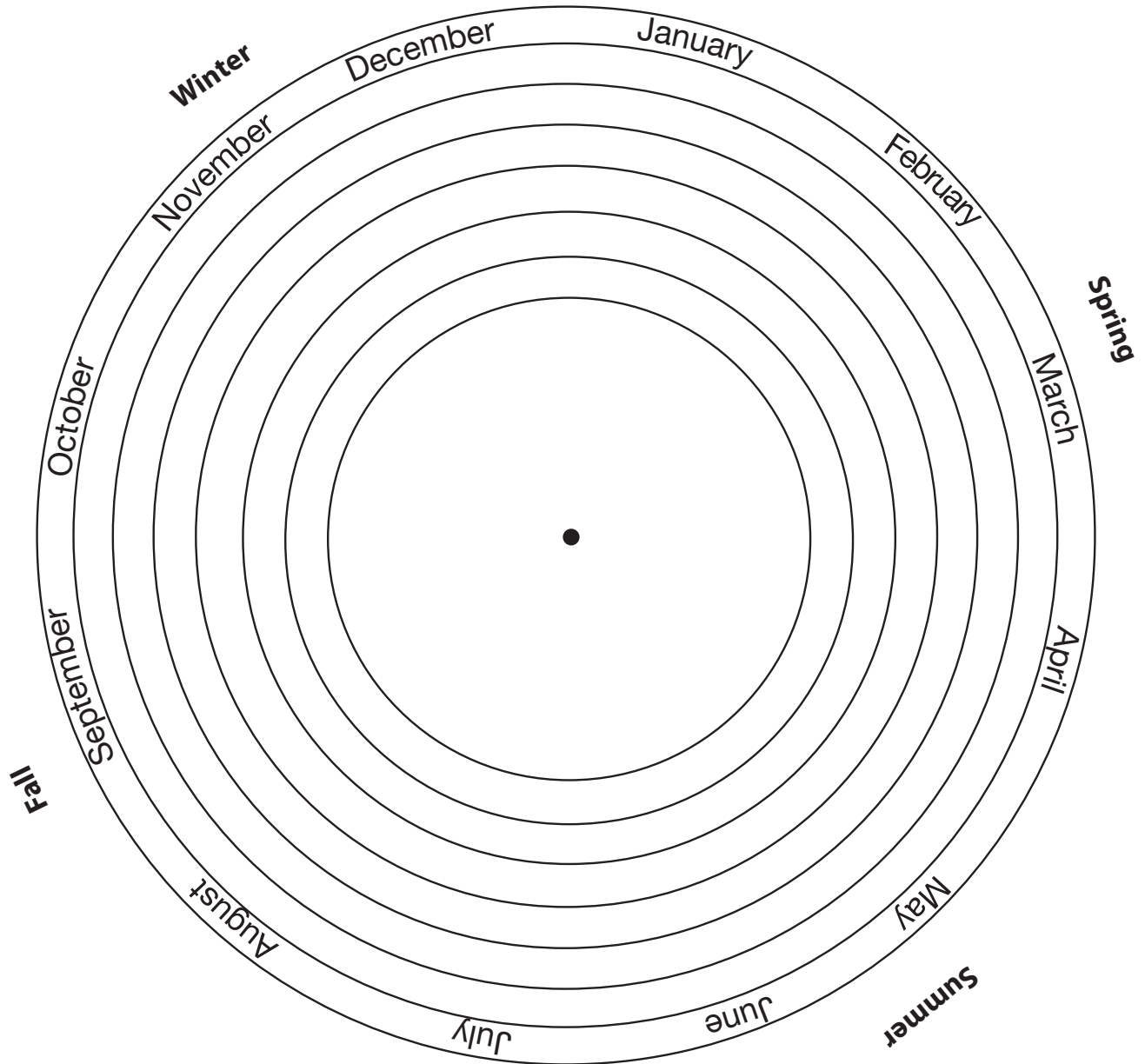
# Keela Hunaotit Ts'in "Seasons"

by Catherine Attla  
(Created 8/96)



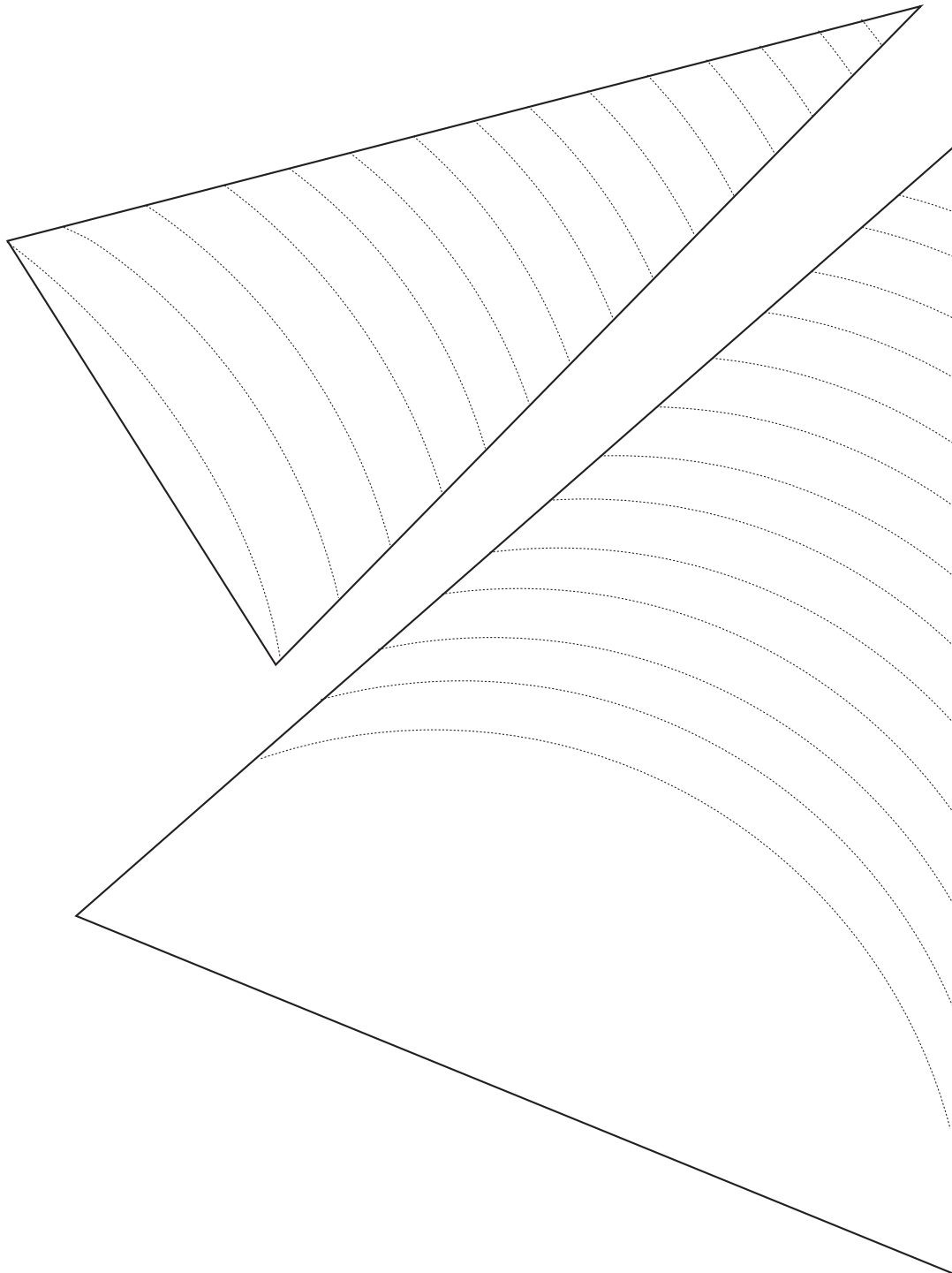
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**THESE ARE MY SEASONS**

**Directions:** Following the lead of Elder Catherine Attla, create your own calendar of seasons. Draw lines to divide the year into four seasons (**spring, summer, winter, fall**) as you experience them. Add a sketch depicting something that reminds you of each season. Add important events. When you are ready, cut out the circle along the outside line.



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
**THESE ARE MY SEASONS**

Use these templates to add seasonal events to your calendar.



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