

## Overview:

In this lesson, students read oral traditions of the Aleutians related to tsunamis, volcanoes and earthquakes.

## Targeted Alaska Grade Level Expectations:

### *Science*

[6] SD2.3

The student demonstrates an understanding of the forces that shape Earth by describing how the surface can change rapidly as a result of geological activities (i.e., earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, floods, landslides, avalanches).

[5-6] SF1.1-SF3.1

The student demonstrates an understanding of the dynamic relationships among scientific, cultural, social, and personal perspectives by telling a local or traditional story that explains a natural event (e.g., animal adaptation, weather, rapid changes to Earth's surface) and relating it to a scientific explanation.

### *Reading*

[5-6] 2.4.1

The student restates/summarizes and connects information by restating and summarizing main ideas or events in correct sequence after reading a text (e.g., paraphrasing, constructing a topic outline, using graphic organizers): or generalizations of a text.

[7-8] 3.3.1

The student restates/summarizes and connects information by restating and summarizing main ideas or events, in correct sequence, after reading a text (e.g., paraphrasing, constructing a topic outline, charting or mapping main ideas or events) or identifying accurate restatement and summaries of main ideas or events or generalizations of text.

### *Writing*

[5-6] 2.2.3

The student writes for a variety of purposes and audiences by using expressive language when responding to literature or producing text (e.g., writer's notebook, memoirs, poetry, plays, or lyrics) (L)

[7-8] 3.2.3

The student writes for a variety of purposes and audiences by writing expressively when producing or responding to texts (e.g., poetry, journals, editorials, and/or newsletters) (L)

## Targeted Alaska Cultural Standards:

A3

Culturally knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community. Students who meet this cultural standard are able to acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history.

E3

Culturally knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them. Students who meet this cultural standard are able to understand the ecology and geography of the bioregion they inhabit.

## Objectives:

The student will:

- read or listen to oral traditions originating in the Aleutians;
- tell a traditional story that explains volcanic activity in the Aleutians;
- identify geologic activities associated with the oral traditions; and
- identify the narrative genre of each Alutiiq/Sugpiaq oral tradition.

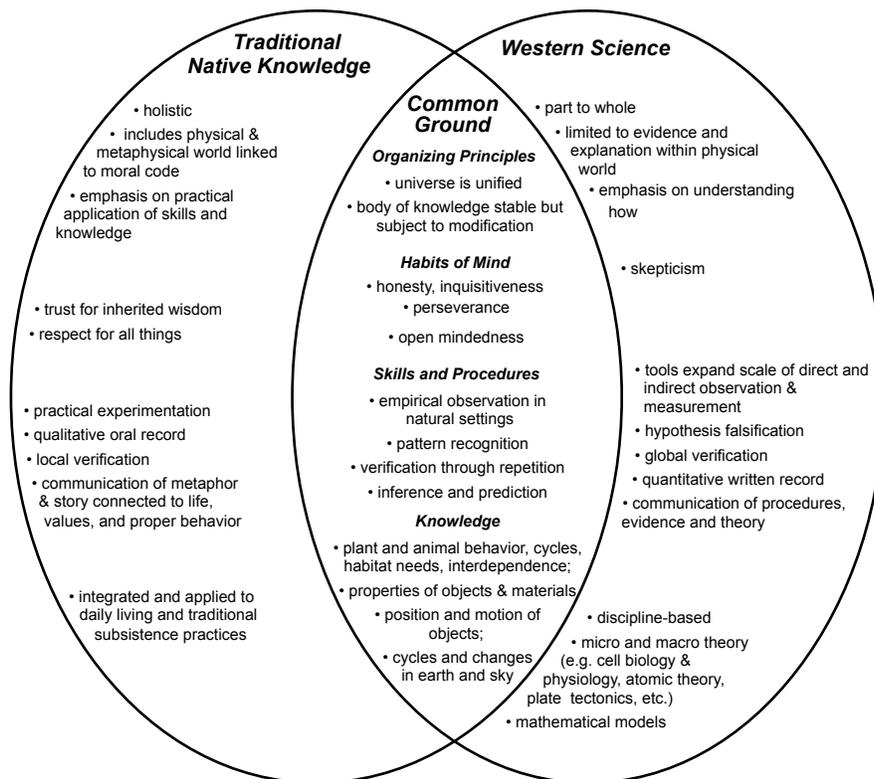
## Materials:

- STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: “Fire-Breathing Mountains”
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Geologic Oral Traditions”
- VIDEO FILE: “Legends” (<https://youtu.be/eZetlHJeO58>)

## Whole Picture:

In traditional Native knowledge, information is recorded through oral traditions. Storytelling serves as a way to transmit knowledge, as well as to entertain. Teaching methods using both traditional Native knowledge and Western science enable students to develop skills and understanding from multiple perspectives. The diagram below illustrates both similarities and differences in the characteristics of traditional Native knowledge and Western science.

In the Aleutian Arc, there are two major indigenous groups. One group is the Unangaꝰ (sometimes referred to as Aleut) of the Aleutian chain. The plural forms of Unangaꝰ vary among the two major dialects. In the Western dialect, the plural form is Unangas, and in the East, the plural form is Unangan. The other major group of the Aleutian Arc are the Alutiiq (Alutiit - plural). The homeland of the Alutiit/Sugpiat includes the Alaskan Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Lower Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound.



Source: Stephens, S. (2000). *Handbook for culturally responsive science curriculum*. Fairbanks, Alaska: Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

## **Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Narrative Genres**

When hearing or reading Alutiiq/Sugpiaq narratives, it is helpful to understand that there are two common genres. The oldest form is an unigkuaq (unigkuat - plural). Unigkuat are stories from a distant time that often involve animals and humans transforming into one another as well as communicating with each other. These stories may also tell of origins, like how volcanoes formed. By today's standards they may seem supernatural, but for many Elders, these stories are very real and nonfictional.

Another narrative genre of the Alutiit/Sugpiaq is the quliyanguaq (quliyanguat - plural). Unlike unigkuat, quliyanguat are often personal stories and can be traced to a specific date. Concerning tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanoes, both unigkuat and quliyanguat teach awareness of potential hazards.

The stories in this lesson are simplified. At the time of the 1964 Alaskan Earthquake and tsunami, the only Alutiiq story told to anthropologist Nancy Yaw Davis was the story of Father Herman and the tsunami. The story of Volcano Woman was the inspiration for artist John Hoover. Sally Swetzof of Atka shared the story of Chiiguyaakaġ, which is told in Atka and surrounding villages. All other stories were gathered from recorded accounts of early Western anthropologists of the Aleutian Arc.

### **Activity Procedure:**

1. Explain that oral traditions are histories and cultural stories that are passed down verbally rather than written. They are an important record of the past for indigenous cultures.
2. Arrange students in groups of 2 to 4 people. Select one student from each group and take them into the hallway. Ask students to listen carefully as you read an Unangaġ legend that describes a geologic event. Tell students they will need to retell the story to someone in their group. Read "The Battle of the Fire-Breathing Mountains," from the STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: "Fire-Breathing Mountains."
3. Return to the classroom and ask students to rejoin their groups. Explain that you told an oral tradition to one student from each group. These students will begin a game of "telephone" within their groups. This game requires that the first student whisper the story (from memory) to a second student, who in turn whispers it to a third, until the story reaches the last student.
4. After all groups have had an opportunity to finish the game, the last student from each group will share the story with the class.
5. Distribute STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: "Fire-Breathing Mountains" for student reference. Discuss the similarities and differences between the final stories of each group and the original.
6. Critical Thinking Method: **Think-Pair-Share Method**. Ask students to consider what skills would be necessary in a society where information is passed down orally rather than in writing (good listening skills and memory rather than reading and writing). Ask students to pair up and talk about the question. Once they have explored the question, ask students to share their ideas with the class.
7. Distribute STUDENT WORKSHEET: "Geologic Oral Traditions." Briefly discuss the information included on the sheet and ask students to complete the worksheet using the VIDEO FILE: "Legends."

### **Extension Idea:**

- Investigate tsunami legends from around the world. Compare and contrast tsunami legends with the Alaskan tsunami legends.

## Answers:

1.

Story	Geological Activities	Culture	Genre
Five Warring Mountains	<i>Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes</i>	<i>Unangaġ</i>	
Invisible Men	<i>Volcanic eruptions</i>	<i>Alutiiq</i>	<i>Unigkuaq</i>
Chiiguyaakaġ and the Tsunami	<i>Tsunami</i>	<i>Unangaġ</i>	
Volcano Woman	<i>Volcanic formation/eruption</i>	<i>Unangaġ</i>	
Father Herman and the Tsunami	<i>Tsunami</i>	<i>Alutiiq</i>	<i>Quliyanguaq</i>

2. b) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are passed down verbally rather than in writing.

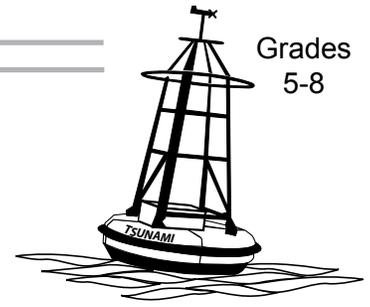
3. Answers will vary, but may include: listening to Elders, telling and sharing the stories, recording the stories through audio, video, or writing, interviewing people.

4. Answers will vary but should include main events from the “Fire-Breathing Mountains.”

# Fire-Breathing Mountains

## Student Information Sheet

Grades  
5-8



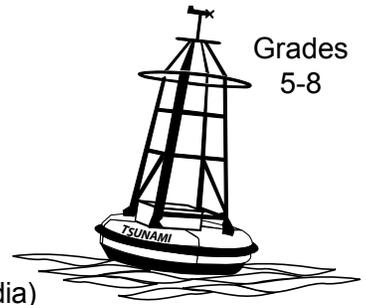
### The Battle of the Fire-Breathing Mountains

At one time, all the fire-breathing mountains of Unalaska and Umnak began to argue among themselves as to who was the strongest. A long quarrel ensued and still no one agreed, so they decided to test the matter. A most frightening encounter of volcanoes bombarding each other with rocks and fire began, and lasted many days. The smaller volcanoes, seeing their weakness, exploded from despair and were extinguished forever. Finally, there remained only two volcanoes – Makushin on Unalaska and Recheshnoi on Umnak. Having defeated all the others, they began a most frightful and destructive duel. They threw such enormous quantities of fire, rocks, and ashes that all living things in the surrounding area were annihilated. Even the air became heavy. As the battle went on, Recheshnoi realized it could not stand against Makushin. Seeing its impending destruction, it gathered all its powers, distended, exploded and extinguished. Victorious Makushin was unharmed. As no other enemies were nearby, it quieted down and rests to this day, smoking a little.

Adapted from a translation of Bishop Veniaminov's notes in Hrdlicka, A. (1945). *The Aleutian and Commander Islands and their inhabitants*. Philadelphia: Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology.

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Grades  
5-8



## Student Worksheet

### Geologic Oral Traditions (page 1 of 2)

Access the MULTIMEDIA FILE: "Legends." (<http://www.aktsunami.org/multimedia>)

These simplified legends from the cultures of the Aleutian Arc describe geologic activities, such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis, that can rapidly change Earth's surface.

#### Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Narrative Genres

In the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq cultures, there are two common types of stories. The oldest form is an unigkuaq (plural, unigkuat). Unigkuat are stories from a distant time that often involve animals and humans transforming into one another as well as communicating with each other. These stories may also tell of origins, like how volcanoes formed. By today's standards they may seem supernatural, but for many elders, these stories are very real and non-fictional.

Another narrative genre of the Alutiit/Sugpiat, is the quliyanguaq (quliyanguat - plural). Unlike unigkuat, quliyanguat are often more recent personal stories and can be traced to a specific date. Both unigkuat and quliyanguat concerning tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanoes teach awareness of potential hazards.

#### Directions:

After viewing the legends in Unit 1 of the ATEP Multimedia Module (which you can find in the YouTube playlist linked in the ATEP curricula description), complete the table below by recording the type of geologic activity described in the story, the culture the story is from, and the genre (unigkuaq or quliyanguaq) for alutiiq stories.

1.

Story	Geological Activities	Culture	Genre
Five Warring Mountains			
Invisible Men			
Chiiguyaakaġ and the Tsunami			
Volcano Woman			
Father Herman and the Tsunami			

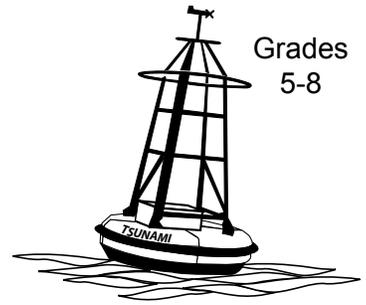
2. What is an oral tradition?

- a) A tradition that involves maintaining good dental hygiene.
- b) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are passed down verbally rather than in writing.
- c) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are preserved in writing.
- d) A tradition which requires all students to pass a verbal exam every year.

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## Student Worksheet

### Geologic Oral Traditions (page 2 of 2)



3. What can young people do to preserve Native oral traditions?

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4. Choose one of the options below to retell the story of "Fire-Breathing Mountains."

A. Rewrite the story in the form of a poem	B. Design a comic strip that retells the story
C. Imagine you are an ocean voyager watching the story unfold from afar. Write a letter or journal entry describing the events.	D. Imagine you are a journalist. Prepare a report on this story for television, radio, or newspaper.