



Today we'll be talking about Native Cultures of Alaska.

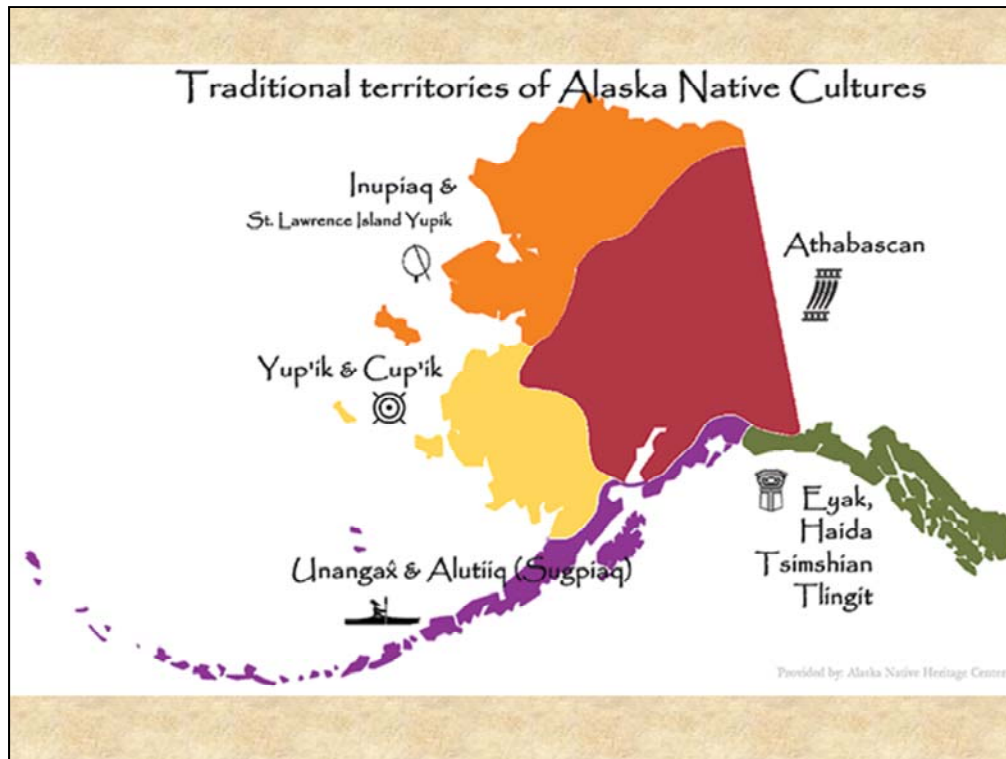
- What does Native mean? *The first people of a certain place*
- What is Culture? *A group's way of living that is passed on from one generation to the next (art, beliefs, behaviors, etc)*

**11** Alaska Native cultural groups that vary by location, language, and customs.

- *Athabascan*
- *Yup'ik*
- *Cup'ik*
- *Unangax*
- *Alutiiq*
- *Eyak*
- *Tlingit*
- *Haida*
- *Tsimshian*
- *Inupiaq*
- *St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik*

At least **20** different Native languages in Alaska!

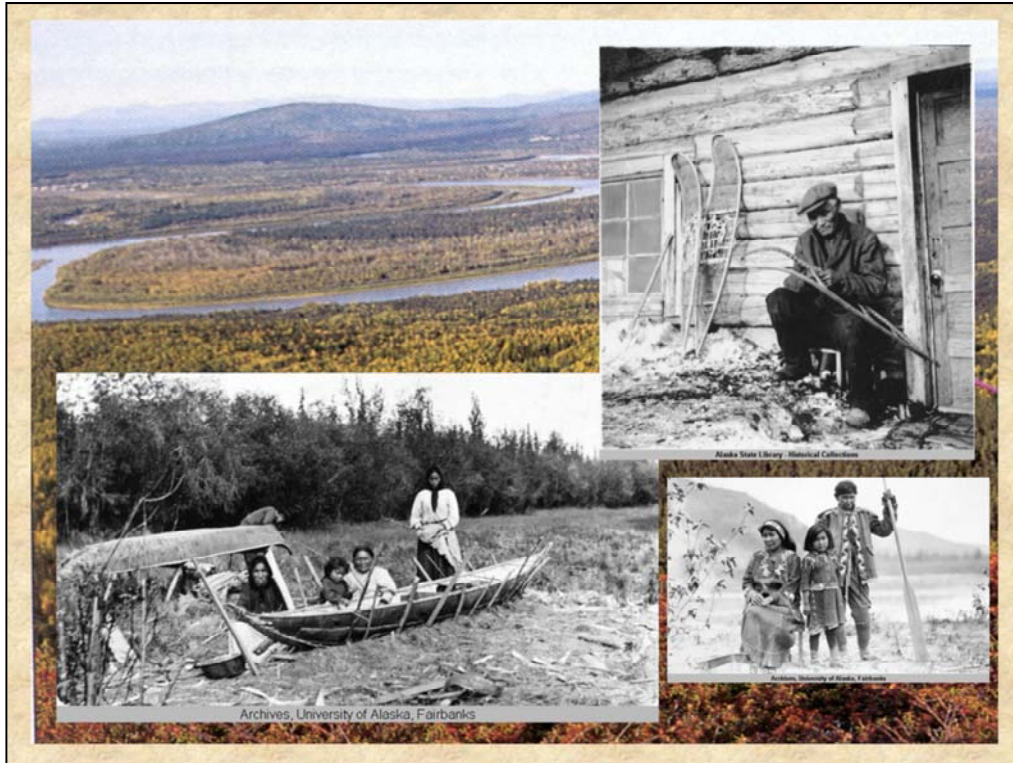
Different Native Alaskan groups are found throughout the state. These groups are distinct from each other and have their own traditions and languages.



Cultural groupings can be made based on location or cultural similarities.

The Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik are the people of the north. Yup'ik & Cup'ik people live along the western coast. Unangax and Alutiiq live in the Aleutians and south central Alaska. In southeast are the Eyak, Haida, Tsimshian & Tlingit. We live in the Interior of Alaska. The people of this region are the Athabascans.

These groupings are similar to the regions of the Gallery of Alaska (Western & Arctic Coast, Southwest, South Central, Southeast, Interior).



Athabascans were traditionally dependent upon the resources found in this region to meet their needs. Traditional foods and clothing came from local sources. So, much of the cultural traditions are tied to natural resources. This is also true for other Alaska Native cultures.

Athabascan cultural activities are tied to rivers and in the past people lived along major riverways. Rivers serve as “highways” and provide food. Summer and winter travel use the open path of rivers.

Where did the materials come from to make these canoes and snowshoes?  
The forest!

(The traditional materials for canoes are birch bark, wood (bent) and spruce gum (sap) to tighten holes.)

Today, Athabascans live throughout Alaska and the Lower 48, returning to their home territories to harvest traditional resources. The most important part of Athabascan subsistence living is sharing.

*Building birch bark canoe in Stevens Village. (circa 1910) (UAF-1994-70-*

112)

*Man making snowshoes in Stevens Village. (1939) (ASL-P306-0671)*





One important subsistence food that gets shared amongst families and communities is fish.

There are many ways to catch fish.

*Man and fish trap. (UAF-1991-46-592)*

*Woman making fish net. (UAF-1991-46-637)*

*Weir/dip-netting platform, near Tanacross (Photo: William Simeone)*



Perhaps the most preferred method is the fish wheel.

Discuss how the fish wheel works while the animation runs (1 minute 30 sec).

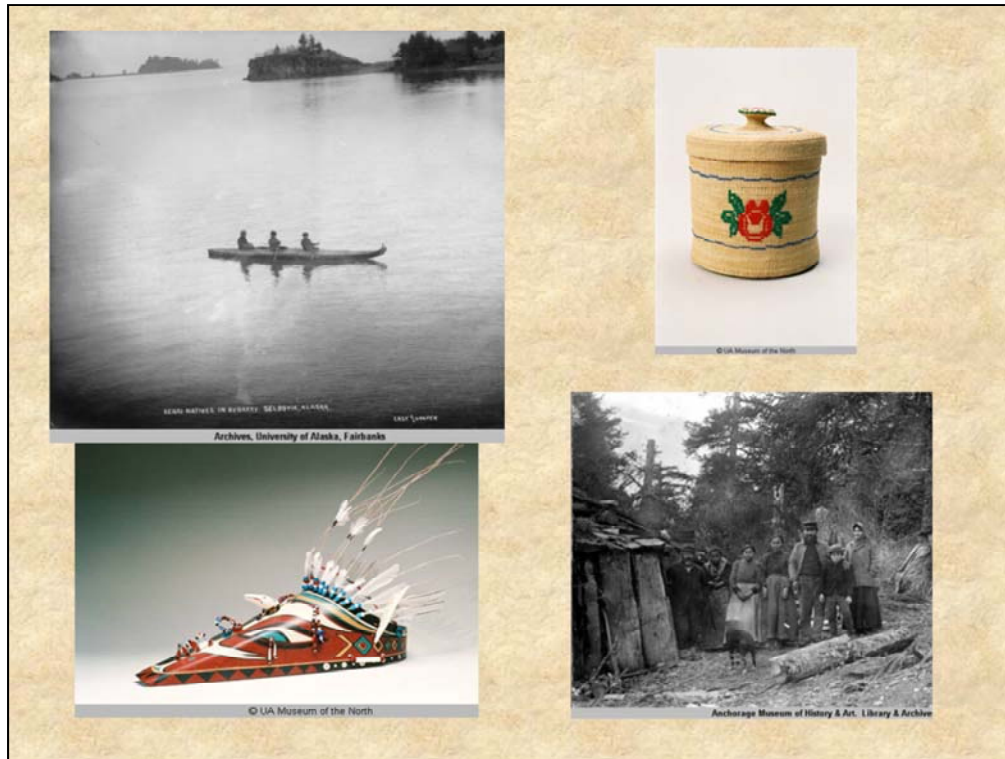


In other parts of the state, the sea plays an important role in food and resource gathering.

The Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik are from the north and northwest part of Alaska. (Western & Arctic Coast). Their lives continue to evolve around the whale, walrus, seal, polar bear, caribou and fish.

Yup'ik & Cup'ik people also live along the coast but farther south.





The people of the Aleutian islands and south central Alaska are the Unangax and Alutiiq. Their lives are also tied to the water.



In southeast are the Eyak, Haida, Tsimshian & Tlingit. In this region, food can be gathered from land or the sea. People lived in more permanent settlements



**Culture** refers to the arts, customs and institutions of a people or group. Athabascan culture is tied to the environment of Interior Alaska.

Cultures change over time. In the past, survival depended upon knowing how to obtain food, find shelter, and make clothing from local resources. Traditions developed and were passed down. Today, the same materials are being used in new ways to create works of art.

