

# The Culture of Gathering

By Aimee Littlejohn & Chris O'Neil, Noatak

## **Materials**

- Research books
- Internet access
- Contact with Elders
- Gathering supplies

## **Objectives**

- Help students understand the importance of harvesting local plants by interacting with those in the community who are long-time subsistence gatherers.

## **Suggested grade levels**

6-8; adaptable for others

## **Alaska Content Standards**

Science A15

History B1b

## **Alaska Cultural Standards**

Students C1, D1

Educators A3, B1



This project presented by  
Alaska Agriculture in the  
Classroom

through  
funding from the  
Agriculture in the  
Classroom Consortium and  
the USDA. For more infor-

mation, visit  
[www.agclassroom.org/ak](http://www.agclassroom.org/ak)  
[www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)

## **Introduction**

To truly understand subsistence, one must actively engage in local subsistence culture. Various plants harvested locally have been a traditional part of diet. Through interviews with Elders, research on the Internet, and various books, students will explore plants that can be harvested, their uses, scientific names, Inupiaq names, locations, and times of year when each is available for harvest. Students will create a display of all information gathered as well as make a schedule with all the information. Field trips throughout “Harvesting/Gathering Season” will be scheduled. For project completion students will make a handout/pamphlet of all information to distribute to the community.

## **Procedure**

*Choose an area of focus:*

From the Gap Analysis I determine that the following Cultural Standards would be appropriate as a starting point because the environment around us helps us to strongly identify with local culture. Subsistence gathering is a large part of local culture. Living a subsistence lifestyle requires knowledge as well as hard work.

*Identify what goals or outcomes you want to accomplish in this project:*

Through this project I hope to gain knowledge of the local wild plants as well as what has been grown agriculturally. I want to learn about edible plants, medicinal plants, mushrooms, berries, traditional uses for each plant, traditional gathering places, and time of year they are harvested.

*Identify the resources you will need to complete this project:*

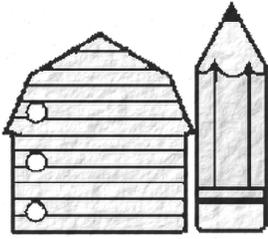
Mushroom Identification books (2 very good books I found in Kotzebue)  
Local wild plant book (Nauriat Niginaqtuat)  
Gathering tools and supplies (bags, labels, buckets, etc.)  
Appropriate honorarium for Elder’s time  
Local Biologist/Grower

*Identify the timeline required for implementation of the project:*

(Feb.-Mar.) Have students begin interviewing Elders  
(March) Have students create graphic organizer of all information available  
(April) Create schedule for harvest times. (Pictures, scientific names, Inupiaq names, locations, time-line for gathering, etc.)  
(May) Plan summer time Field trips with Elders, families, and community  
(Summer) Take gathering field trips (subsist)

## **Additional Activities**

Growing plants indoors  
Pressing/drying plants  
Seed gathering  
Preservation techniques  
Summer garden(s)  
Making of salves or teas with plants  
Transplanting Native plants to garden areas



This project presented by Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom through funding from the Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium and the USDA. For more information, visit [www.agclassroom.org/ak](http://www.agclassroom.org/ak) or [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)

**Discussion Points**

1. How has cultivation of plants changed civilizations? Plants?
2. Medicine plants still play a role in treatments today. What medicinal plants are being used in today’s herbal remedies?
3. How does gathering compare to cultivating in terms of the connection to the land; the seasons?

**Assessment Guide for the Project**

Element	No Evidence	In Progress	Proficient	Exemplary
<u>Cultural Standards</u>				
<u>Students:</u>				
C1	Do not attend field trips	Attend 1 field trip	Attend 2+ field trips	Attend all field trips
D1	Do not complete interview	Interview is poorly done	All required info gathered	Completed a detailed interview
<u>Educators:</u>				
A3	Do not attend field trips	Attend _ field trips	Attend all field trips	Attend all field trips and aid willingly
B1	Don't encourage Sharing with Community	Encourages students to share on own	Provides materials and time	Aids in distribution students and harvest
<u>Content Standards:</u>				
SC A15	Students don't participate in Knowledge sharing	Minimal participation	Participates actively	Students <u>present</u> all info. from "harvests" on display boards distribute all info. to community (Hand-out)

*Aimee Littlejohn is a teacher at Northwest Arctic Borough's Napaaqtugmiut School in Noatak; Chris O'Neil is a biologist.*