# Haa Shuká Tundatáani: Koo.éex'

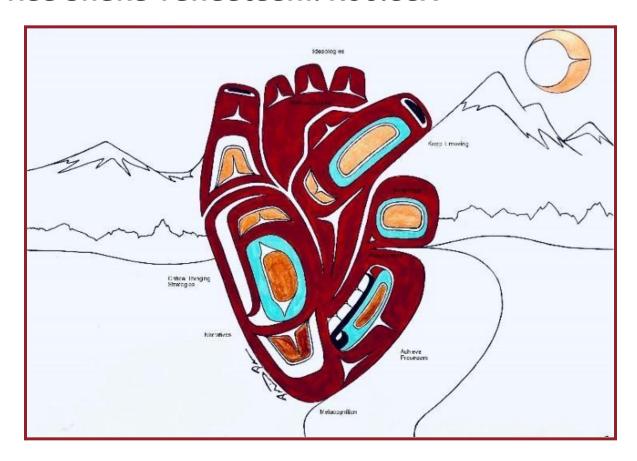


Figure 1: Design Attributions - Yanÿeidí, Design by Delfine Decker, Goldbelt Heritage Foundation

# **An Indigenous Framework for Learning**

Haa Shuká Tundatáani represents a way of learning and understanding that connects us as people with the histories that have formed us, the knowledge we share today, and the world delivered by our future selves for future generations. This Indigenous framework seeks to heal.

This framework is designed around the heart at the center of existence, pumping what has existed before into what will exist in the future through the practice of listening, learning, and creation. This cycle of learning and belonging is in each of us and calls to be acknowledged and fostered by our surroundings and histories. Gunalchéesh, thank you to the Yanyeidi whose story guides the visual representation and philosophy behind the heart of our learning framework and its existence rooted in landscapes.



#### **UNIT PLAN**

#### Ideologies

#### Haa Shuká Tundatáani:

This literacy unit is based on a story centered in the experience of a koo.éex'.

## **Unit Name & Level of Integration Required:**

• L2 - this unit requires pre-planning such as gathering relevant materials, collaborating with GHF Indigenous educators, cultural bearers, and/or language speakers.

#### **Unit Author & Contact:**

Author: Dinah M Hobson Edited by: Jessica Isturis

## **Grade Range & Subject:**

**Time and Timing:** 

Mixed elementary-aged students

1-2 weeks

#### **Materials:**

- Koo.éex': Teacher Edition
- Koo.éex': Student Edition

#### **Essential Questions:**

• Why is the Koo.éex' important to Nei Kee Tlaa and her family?

#### Student Skill Sets & Understandings to Be Developed:

- Describe the main character and her personal experience of a koo.éex'
- Use details and evidence from the text to summarize main ideas
- Make connections between the and Tlingit ways of life

## **Standards / Established Goals:**

RL.5.2 Determine a theme or author's message or purpose of a story, drama, or poem using details and evidence from the text as support, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize main ideas or events, in correct sequence.

RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Reading - Informational Text

RI.5.2 Determine the main idea and subtopics of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; paraphrase or summarize key ideas, events, or procedures including correct sequence when

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appropriate.

## Methodologies

# Methodologies

Direct Instruction

## **Cultural Engagement:**

Until recently, many aspects of the Tlingit culture, including the language, the practice of koo.éex', Tlingit oratory, and the teaching of Elders were ignored by the education system and remained hidden from the non-Native community. But times have changed. Today, the Tlingit culture is openly celebrated. The Tlingit language, koo.éex' celebrations, and the teachings of the Elders are available to enrich the life experience of all young people who live in Southeast Alaska.

#### **Elder / Culture Bearer Role:**

Having a knowledge bearer as a guest to speak to their experiences and knowledge of a koo.éex' is highly recommended.

## **Critical Thinking Strategies**

### **Unit Progression & Lesson Descriptions**

1. Lesson One: Overview

2. Lesson Two: Nei Kee Tlaa's Story

3. Lesson Three: Literacy Strategies (5 activities)

4. Lesson Four: Text Evidence (5 activities)

5. Lesson Five: Literature Circle (5 activities)

6. Lesson Six: Strategies, Skills, & Vocabulary (3 activities)

7. Lesson Seven: Notes to Teacher

#### **Developing Critical Thinkers:**

Student-led discussions

## **Tlingit Phrases:**

Kaa wudujeeyí ka kaa x'éix dus.aaxí ch'áagu haa shagóonx'ich kusteeyí: Discipline and
Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors (Discipline and obedience to the traditions of
our ancestors)

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Pinnacle	Vocabu	ılary:
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- aaa
- xo'ots
- gandaadagoogu
- kanat'a
- k'unts
- gunalcheesh
- koo.éex'
- xaay
- haa dlaa!

# **Check for Understanding**

# **Culminating Community Building Activity Project:**

Students can conclude their learnings in a literature circle.

# Reflections

## **Educator Notes & Reflections:**

Notes to teacher.

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<sup>\*\*</sup>scroll down for lesson template (copy and paste to duplicate the template for additional lessons).



Lesson Number & Title: Lesson One - Overview

#### **Lesson Progression:**

This is a story related through the eyes of a ten-year-old Tlingit girl, Nei Kee Tlaa, who participates in her grandmother's memorial koo.eex'. The setting is Southeast, Alaska, at the present time. The story includes numerous references to the natural world of Southeast, including berries, beach asparagus, seaweed, skunk cabbage, salmon fish, and deer meat. Animals are part of the story: the brown bear, eagles, ravens, and woodpecker. Nei Kee Tlaa does not live in a nuclear family but rather in an extended family which includes her grandmother, who is an Elder. Tlingit Elders are the masters of their clan history, culture, art, science, and language. As children grow up and throughout their lives, lessons are passed along from clan Elders and grandparents through ceremony and Tlingit oratory. When Nei Kee Tlaa's grandmother passes away, she participates in the planning and managing of her grandmother's memorial koo.éex'. As a part of the Shark clan koo.éex', Nei Kee Tlaa learns that every Tlingit clan member has a role to play at a koo.éex'. Nei Kee Tlaa mourns her grandmother's passing and continues to learn important life lessons through the koo.eex' memorial celebration.

The two moieties of the Tlingit, the Raven and Eagle, are devoted to each other as illustrated in this story. The Raven and Eagle support each other and cooperate on cultural matters. The burial of Daax Daa Hoon and the koo.éex' party illustrate how the clans support and comfort each other during a time of need. The koo.éex' in this story lasts for 78 hours. Due to the work schedules and restrictions on free time, most koo.éex' held in Southeast Alaska today tend to last for a day to a day and a half.

This lesson is a realistic illustration of Tlingit ways of knowing which are practiced today. Clan songs, at.óow, property, and names are extremely important to the Tlingit clans. The characters presented in the story are intelligent, respectful, caring, kind, cooperative, creative, loving, humble, observant, unselfish, and demonstrate leadership qualities. Tlingit language, the key to Tlingit culture, is used throughout the lesson. Inclusion of the Tlingit language is part of the on-going effort to revitalize the language, develop more fluent speakers, and help the language finds its way back home.

Until recently, many aspects of the Tlingit culture, including the language, the practice of koo.eex, Tlingit oratory, and the teaching of Elders were ignored by the education system and remained hidden from the non-Native community. But times have changed. Today, the Tlingit culture is openly celebrated. The Tlingit language, koo.eex celebrations, and the teachings of the Elders are available to enrich the life experience of all young people who live in Southeast Alaska.

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• Koo.éex' - Overview

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**Lesson Number & Title:** Lesson Two - Nei Kee Tlaa's Story

## Time & Timing:

~15-30 minutes

#### **Lesson Progression:**

#### Nei Kee Tlaa Introduces Herself

Nei Kee Tlaa Introduces Herself My name is Nei Kee Tlaa. I am a ten year old Tlingit girl from the Woosh-Keet-Taan clan. I attend school in Juneau, Alaska and live with my extended family that includes my mother, father and grandmother. My grandmother's name is Daax Daa Hoon. She teaches me everything I need to know about my Tlingit culture. I am getting ready for my clan's koo.éex'. After reading my story, think of several questions you may have about my Tlingit ways of knowing.

## Family Berry Picking Day

On a warm sunny Saturday morning, I tiptoe from my house onto the beach (neech) and past the woodpecker (gandaadagóogu), which is tapping on the yellow cedar tree (xáay) by me. I quietly walk along the beach line. I see my grandmother Daax Daa Hoon Koo.éex' is already on the beach gathering beach asparagus (suktéitl'). "Haa dláa! (good grief!) What are doing outside alone?" Daax Daa Hoon gently scolds me, "Grandpa xóots (brown bear) could be near by." "Yes, (Aaa) grandmother, I will not go outdoors alone again." "Anyway, it's time to pick berries," grandmother proclaims. "Yes, it is a good day to pick berries," I answer. My father, mother and grandmother gather all their gear for the day; then, we ride in our skiff to our traditional berry picking grounds. My father navigates the boat. Once we beach the boat, it's traditional to talk to grandpa xóots about why we are in the forest and how we mean no harm. My grandmother teases me in a nice way to listen to her Tlingit words. She calls out to grandpa xóots and thanks the forest for its berries.

"Xa dul kans'.

Guk yík dagéix'.

Ch'a aadé yéi haa na.oo

Haa xóots yee dax yaay.á.

Woo haan tsú haa át xaayi yís áyá yéi ku too wanook."

(Notes taken from the Marie Drake School Tlingit Saturday Nest Class 2015, Marsha Hotch, Fred White, Florence Sheakley, Lyle James).

After talking to grandpa xóots, together with my grandmother we swoop up some skunk cabbage leaves to line our buckets. Grandmother attaches a rope through my bucket so I can tie the bucket

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around my waist, freeing up my hands for picking berries. The types of berries we pick during the summer are: strawberries (shákw), blueberries (kanat'á), soapberries (xákwl'ee), gray currants (shaax), salmon berries (was'x'aan tléigu), and thimbleberries (ch'eex'). We separate a little. All the while we call out to each other. We whistle too, letting grandpa xóots know we are still in the forest. I stay near grandmother and think how delightful it is to pick berries with my family on our traditional Tlingit lands.

We bring the berries home, and I help my grandmother. Mother and father prepare the berries for the long winter and for up-coming doings. Grandmother is my best and number one teacher. Today she said, "Soak the berries in salt water to have all the worms float to the top of the bucket." After soaking the berries, we place them in clean jars with light sugar water. A pressure cooker is used to seal the jars. Together we make jars of jellies, jam and whole berries. We freeze some berries too.

#### Nei Kee Tlaa Learns A Woosh-Keet-Taan Love Song

Besides teaching me how to pick berries, grandmother lovingly instructs me about my Woosh-Keet-Taan (Shark Clan) songs. Grandmother coaxes, "Grandchild (dachxánk') you need to hold the drum (gaaw) this way." "Gunalchéesh (thank you)," I tell her. "Grandchild, this is how you sing our Woosh-Keet-Taan Love Song:"

"A hei you aaya x7 I think of you and A hei yaaw, ayaw aní aaya miss you, child of Ldakát yagiyee toox' Woosh Keet Taan Xat taa u.ásch já Please show me Ee daa yóo tootánk sympathy.

Woosh-Keet-Taani yátx'i Xat yaa naygaax x'wán

Ax aan káawu yáx

I pray to my God for
Ee yaa x'axwda gáx' ja

You, child of the
Kaagwaantaani yátx'i

Kaagwaantaan, every
Ch'a tlákw yagíyee tóox'

day. I carry you close.

Ch'a yaat inkashaatch –aa"

(Written shark song words provided by Jessica Chester, Specialist in the Tlingit Culture Language Literacy (TCLL) Program at Juneau, Alaska Juneau School District 2015. Interpretation of love song by Victoria Johnson 3/21/2016.)

## Nei Kee Tlaa Learns How to Make Boiled Fish

Practicing Tlingit music with grandmother is fun, but so is cooking our Tlingit food with her. "Nei Kee Tlaa, it's time to cook boiled fish (útlxi), she giggles." We go into our kitchen. I turn the lights on.

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Grandmother runs water into a large pot (k'watl) then places it on the stove. She turns the stove on high heat so the water can boil quickly. I help her gather fish soup ingredients. I pull out one onion, seal grease (tsaa eexí), salt (eil'), and some potatoes (k'únts). I help grandmother chop the vegetables. She shows me how to cut the salmon (xáat). She even adds the skin and bones to the soup. É! (Wow!). In my opinion, grandmother makes the bestboiled fish ever!

#### Weaving Chilkat Robes

Many times after we eat boiled fish during the cold winter, Grandmother shows me how to weave Chilkat Robes. "Nei Kee Tlaa, it's time for you to learn how to set up the warps for your robe," she explains. "I will hire a Raven artist to develop a Shark design for you to weave on your robe", grandmother beams. I asked Grandmother to teach me how the weft yarns are dyed. "Nei Kee Tlaa, "An infant's urine is used to set the dyes, and the yellow color comes from lichen called wolf moss." In Tlingit the yellow color is called tl'aatl yáx yatee. Dark brown is derived from hemlock bark called s'agwáat yáx yatee. The green-blue color is collected from oxidized copper called s'oow yáx yatee, grandmother tells me.

## Grandmother Falls Asleep

"Grandmother, you are so smart! You know everything about Tlingit culture," I say to her. "Gunalchéesh, let's eat some dried fish, potatoes, herring eggs and seal grease, so I can go to bed. I'm feeling real sleepy tonight," replied grandmother. Together we eat dinner. Grandmother looks lovingly into my brown eyes and kisses me good night. This is the last time I remember talking and eating with her. The next day was a blistering, rainy day. My father calls me from my bedroom. Nei Kee Tlaa! "Your grandmother passed away in her sleep last night," murmured father. I cried so much hearing this news of my grandmother's walking into the forest. "Father, I will always have fond memories of my grandmother's teachings about how to pick berries, how to sing shark songs, how to make boiled fish, and how to prepare and weave Chilkat Robes," I chokingly tell father. Mother softly chimes in the conversation, "Nei Kee Tlaa, I need to make an appointment to talk to your teacher about how you need attend your grandmother's burial and her koo.éex." Mother talks to my teacher at my school about going on family leave. My teacher understands my need to attend my grandmother's tribal events. She asks mother if I can keep a written journal of the events I experience, so I can report to my classmates about my Tlingit culture.

#### The Graveyard at the Point

With my school absence taken care of, Daax Daa Hoon is buried along the village point by the opposite clan, the Deishseetaan. My mind wonders through the liturgy of carefully spoken words about my grandmother's life. I had never been to our family graveyard before. I couldn't help but notice a young boy's grave to my left side. Light shadows of fir tree branches fluttered gently across the boy's gravestone. His gravestone is old and falling to one side. Pieces of

his headstone are crumbling to the ground. His name is slowly deteriorating. I wonder as the years

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went by if anyone would remember him. What clan songs did he sing? Who did he play games with? What Tlingit foods did he enjoy?

#### Daax Daa Hoon

I bring myself back from wondering about the little boy's gravestone back to the burial of my grandmother. It seems to me as if the eagles flying over us are there to comfort and ease the grief we were feeling. We hear an echo of birdcalls. First the eagles cry out. Then the ravens across on an island sing Kaa, Kaa, Kaa. To me, these birdcalls signify the balance of the two moieties, Eagle and Raven, speaking to each other in response to the burial of a tribal member. I sense that my grandmother's Woosh-Keet-Taan relatives are present in spirit.

In my mind, I see grandmother with all of her loved ones. She is standing at a podium speaking fluent Tlingit. Hundreds of Tlingit fill the forest. All the Tlingit are wearing their at.oow. Grandmother says her formal Tlingit introduction, starting with, "Lingít X'eináx Daax Daa Hoon Yóo Xat Duwasáakw." Our Tlingit names are timeless. Daax Daa Hoon ..... will always be remembered as a living human being among the Tlingit.

After grandmother's burial, my Shark clan and family make plans to hold our koo.éex' to thank the opposite moiety for their support during our time of sorrow. In my house I sit still, listening to the Elders talk about what they want to see at my grandmother's koo.éex'. The Elders make a list of what needs to be done for the program. They decide what songs to sing. Raven people, members of the opposite moiety, also help with part of the koo.éex'. Mother comes by me and says, "We need to save our money, buy gifts, and put up berries to give out during your grandmother's party.

#### Dad Helps Nei Kee Tlaa Make Gift Labels

There are so many complex parts to holding a koo.éex', so I concentrate on putting gift labels on berry jars and bowls. Father makes gift labels on his computer. He lets me place them on my jars and gift bowls. Tribal members enjoy receiving items with labels on them. This shows them the family is thinking of them. My labels say the following:

In loving memory of Daax Da Hoon, Sky ich Tin, Yan Nul Dulth, Nei Kee Tlaa, Noow Hít (Fort House) descendants of Annie Nook Bacon.

#### The Koo.éex' Ends and Nei Kee Tlaa Returns to School

My grandmother's koo.éex' lasted for 78 hours. I stayed awake as long as I could, but my eyelids became heavy. I fell asleep several times and mother covered me with a warm quilt. Despite how tired I feel, I know who I am. I am a Woosh-Keet-Taan Tlingit Indian with a rich tribal clan history. I am a Shark clan member with at.óow, songs, dances, Shark names, land rights, with a large family

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lineage going back thousands of years.

With all of Tlingit culture I have learned, I proudly give my class report to my classmates from the written journal I kept during Grandmother's koo.éex'. The students are eager to listen to my report. The students have many questions to ask me. One of the students asks, "What is your favorite berry?" "What are the Tlingit names for all of your berries?" roars a second student "Can you sing us one of your Shark songs?" inquires another student. I have my Shark drum, so I sing to the students a Shark love song my grandmother, Daax Daa Hoon, taught me when I was a little girl at her loving feet.

#### **Materials Needed:**

• Koo.éex' - Nei Kee Tlaa's Story

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**Lesson Number & Title:** Lesson Three - Literacy Strategies (5 Activities)

## **Lesson Progression:**

#### Focus on Genre - Realistic Fiction

Realistic fiction tells a story which could take place. The characters are made up, but their experiences are similar to the life experiences of real people. Realistic fiction describes real life experiences using made up characters. By reading realistic fiction, we learn about the lives and experiences of families in Southeast Alaska.

#### Read and Find

Koo.éex' is based on real events that take place here in Juneau. The characters in the story are made up, but the experiences of the Nei Kee Tlaa and her family are similar to the experiences of many Alaska Native families. Go back through the story and make a list of the activities that Nei Kee Tlaa and her family did to prepare for the koo.éex''.

The characters in this story (Jennifer, her grandmother, and her parents) are made up, but the description of the koo.éex' ceremony is based on fact. The koo.éex' described in the story is held in memory of Jennifer's grandmother. Read about koo.éex' ceremonies in the Expository Text and in other sources you have in your classroom. Describe several other types of koo.éex' ceremonies.

#### **Expository Text**

It can take from one to seven years to plan a koo.éex'. The family and clan can take all the time they want to hold a koo.éex'. There are no rules about how long to develop a pay-off party. In addition, koo.éex' can be held for one or more clan members. Naa Káanis role is to invite honored guests to the koo.éex', make phone calls, or text them. Naa Káanis role also includes greeting the guests at the door and taking their at.óow to the right display table, sitting honored guests at their chairs, collecting money, handing out money, and killing the money (means calling out the deceased clan names, houses and at.oow. Adoptions are done at this time). Helpers and clan members also hand out gifts.

Some Tlingit people hold koo.éex'; other Tlingit don't hold koo.éex'. The Tlingit are an adaptable people now. Whatever decision a Tlingit clan member makes about how to say good-bye to their loved one needs to be respected. Nevertheless, there is a lot of information about how to hold a koo.éex'. There are variations from community to community about how a koo.éex' is held. One needs to listen and follow the direction of the Tlingit people from their own town.

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The cultural practice of koo.éex' is an integral part of indigenous life in Southeast Alaska. The Tlingit koo.éex' is adapting to the realities of the 21st century. Planning for a koo.éex' must now include the ferry schedule, how much annual leave a person has, and the cost of such an elaborate party. Modern communications and internet has increased the ability to plan and communicate about koo.eex' celebrations. The cultural practice of koo.eex' shows every indication of continuing on and being an important part of Southeast Alaska cultural experience in the 21st century.

#### **Compare Texts**

Read the Tlingit koo.éex' Ceremonies in the Expository Text. Describe what additional information you have learned from the Expository Text. How is expository text different from Realistic Fiction?

#### Your Turn

Alaska Native people have a strong cultural tradition of holding celebrations for a variety of reasons, including honoring a relative who has passed away, giving a person a name, and celebrating a special event. Choose an event in your family that you could write a story about. Write the story as realistic fiction. You can make up the characters and add fictional details to story. Read parts of your story to classmates as you are writing in order to get feedback. When you have completed the story, share it with the class and with your family.

#### **Materials Needed:**

• Koo.éex' - Literacy Strategies

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**Lesson Number & Title:** Lesson Four - Text Evidence (5 Activities)

## **Lesson Progression:**

#### Genre

How is this story an example of realistic fiction?

#### Theme

Explain why the Koo.éex' is important to Nei Kee Tlaa and her family.

#### Connotation and Denotation

What does "blistering" on page 8 mean? What other word could the author have used instead of "blistering"?

#### Write About It

What do the students in Jennifer's class learn from her presentation? Use details from the story in your answer.

## **Essential Question**

Write what you know about Tlingit ways of knowing. What is your favorite part of the story?

#### **Materials Needed:**

• Koo.éex' - Text Evidence

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Lesson Number & Title: Lesson Five - Literature Circle (5 Activities)

## **Lesson Progression:**

#### Characters

Who are the characters in the story? Who is the main character and what is the person's Tlingit name? How old are the characters? What languages do they speak? What do the characters look like? How do the characters' act towards each other?

#### Setting

Describe the geographical setting of where the story takes place. When does the story take place?

#### Conclusions

Was the story interesting, educational, exciting and why? Why did you enjoy, or not enjoy the story? Would you recommend this story to other children? Why or why not?

## Author's Purpose

How does the author inform the reader about Tlingit ways of knowing? Explain why the author wrote the story. The story is about Tlingit Indians. What are some of the Indian practices? After reading the text, how do you feel?

### **Make Connections**

How did Daax Daa Hoon help Nei Kee Tlaa learn her Tlingit culture?

#### **Materials Needed:**

• Koo.éex' - Literature Circle

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**Lesson Number & Title:** Lesson Six - Strategies, Skill, & Vocabulary (3 Activities)

## **Lesson Progression:**

## Comprehension

Strategy: Reread

# Use the most important facts from Koo.éex' to summarize the story.

Fact #1

Fact #2

Fact #3

Fact #4

Fact #5

## Vocabulary

aaa yes

Xo'ots brown bear gandaadagoogu woodpecker kanat'a blueberries k'unts potatoes gunalcheesh thank you Koo.éex' celebration Xaay yellow cedar tree haa dlaa! good grief!

## **English Vocabulary**

ingredients navigate weft murmur culture opposite clan

#### **Materials Needed:**

Koo.éex' - Strategies, Skills, & Vocabulary

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Lesson Number & Title: Lesson Seven - Notes to Teacher

#### **Lesson Progression:**

## A Koo.éex' is a Tlingit Indian Death Ceremony - Tlingit Indian Koo.éex' History

Originally, the Tlingit people lived along Southeast (SE) Alaska panhandle and settled Alaska lands (Haa Aaní) first. Today Tlingit people live all over the World. No matter where the Tlingit live, clan property and lands are important to them. The Tlingit have a rich and complex culture. One aspect of their culture is their koo.éex' party given in honor of a clan member who has died.

The Tlingit koo.éex' includes clan songs, gifts, stories, food, poetic speeches, money, name giving, old at.oow, new regalia, fire dishes, payments to opposite clan for services, pictures of deceased members, blankets, plays, and jokes.People can see old tribal houses along the shoreline of SE Alaska villages where traditional tribal parties took place. Tribal houses were large, holding up to 300 people. Today's koo.éex' are held at large halls like the Alaska Native Brotherhood Building, or in a school gym. Tlingit children learn about koo.éex' as little children from their uncles, aunties or grandparents and family clan members. The tribal clan and the whole Tlingit community participate with a koo.éex'.

## Developing a Koo.éex'

Planning a large <u>k</u>oo.éex' is a huge undertaking for a Tlingit clan. First, the tribal clan meets many times to discuss all aspects of their party. They talk about how many meals they will cook, serve, and how many days they will hold the party. The average <u>k</u>oo.éex' lasts three days and runs straight for 78 hours! This is a short <u>k</u>oo.éex' compared to the traditional old parties where guests sat on the bay days before being asked to enter the village. It took another 9 days to discuss a tribal member's Tlingit name. Guests were separated from the host and housed far away from the village.

The host clan decides what songs will be sung and who will sing them; they practice their songs long before the party is held. Someone rents a hall. Naa Káanis, singers, drummers, blanket holders, and dancers are carefully selected based upon bloodline connections to the clan holding the party. For example, if there is a Shark clan party being held, the clan selects Shark clan descendants from the Raven side like a grandchild of Woosh-Keet-Taan. Performers are trained far in advance about the role they will play at a koo.éex'.

#### **Materials Needed:**

• Koo.éex' - Notes to Teacher

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