

# Tale of an Alaska Whale

Also known as *Naatsilanéi*, *The Origin of the Killer Whale* or  
*Kéet Shagoon*

**Grade Level: K-5**



A series of elementary level thematic units featuring Tlingit language, culture and history were developed in Juneau, Alaska in 2004-6. The project was funded by two grants from the U.S. Department of Education, awarded to the Sealaska Heritage Institute (Boosting Academic Achievement: Tlingit Language Immersion Program, grant #92-0081844) and the Juneau School District (Building on Excellence, grant #S356AD30001).

Lessons and units were written by a team of teachers and specialists led by Nancy Douglas, Elementary Cultural Curriculum Coordinator, Juneau School District. The team included Juneau teachers Kitty Eddy, Shgen George, Kathy Nielson, Hans Chester and Rocky Eddy, and SHI language team members Linda Belarde, Yarrow Vaara, David Katzeek, John Marks, Mary Foletti, Rose Natkong and Jessica Chester. Curriculum consultants Julie Folta and Toni Mallott assisted and Annie Calkins edited the lessons and units.

Lessons were field tested in Juneau classrooms in 2005-6.

All units are available online at [sealaskaheritage.org](http://sealaskaheritage.org).

## Overview

The book, *Tale of an Alaska Whale*, tells a story of the origin of the killer whale and is also known as *Naatsilanéi*. Listening to the story, as read from a book or told by a culture bearer or storyteller, is the basis for the unit. Viewing a video of a storyteller adds another dimension to the experience and provides opportunities for comparison activities. Guided reading (for older students), retelling the story and writing a story extension are also part of the unit.

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| Lesson #1: | Read aloud: <i>Tale of an Alaska Whale</i>                         |
| Lesson #2: | Guided reading (Grade 3 and above): <i>Tale of an Alaska Whale</i> |
| Lesson #3: | VHS (and/or DVD, 2005) of "Kéet Shagoon" by Gary Waid              |
| Lesson #4: | Story retelling: <i>Tale of an Alaska Whale</i>                    |
| Lesson #5: | Writing activities in response to reading and viewing              |

## Tlingit Cultural Significance

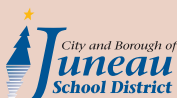
Oral storytelling is the way in which Tlingit stories and life lessons are passed from person to person, from generation to generation. Storytelling is the active link with tradition, with the past, and with Elders.

## Elder/Culture Bearer Role

The role of an Elder or culture bearer relates specifically to the storytelling tradition. If the story, *Tale of an Alaska Whale*, is one that belongs to the Elder, it might be appropriate to tell his/her version of the story. If not, he/she might talk about the clan to whom the story belongs and traditional Tlingit protocols related to storytelling. Since this story has been commercially published both in book and video form, it is in the public domain more than many other traditional Tlingit stories.



Sealaska Heritage Institute





## **Alaska State Standards**

### **Cultural Standards**

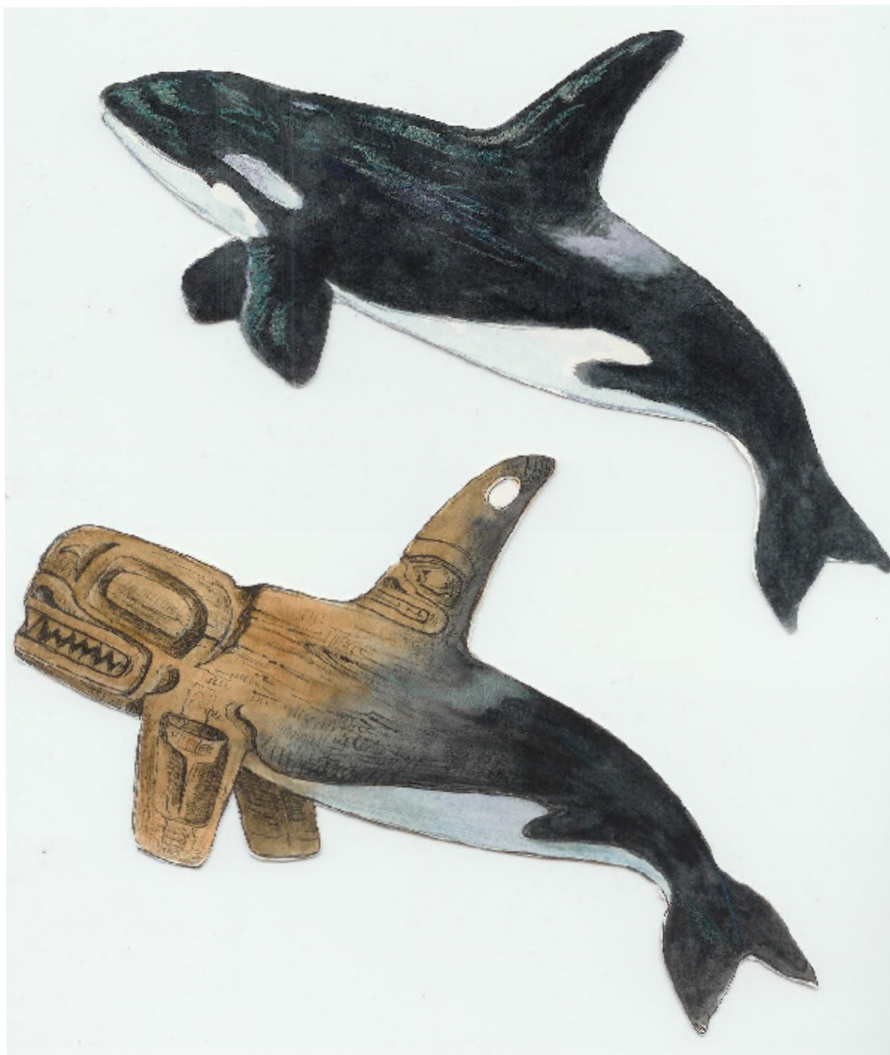
D4) Are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community and are able to acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history.

E4) Demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them; determine how ideas and concepts from one knowledge system relate to those derived from other knowledge systems.

### **Southeast Traditional Tribal Values Emphasis:**

This unit will also help students learn the Southeast traditional tribal values of

- Discipline and obedience to the traditions of our ancestors
- Pride in family, clan and traditions
- Listening well and with respect





## Lesson #1

# Read Aloud *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

### Objectives

Students:

- Listen well and with respect to a book read aloud
- Relate prior knowledge about Naatsilanéi

### Time

30 minutes

### Materials

- Book: *Tale of an Alaska Whale*
- Map of Alaska or Southeast Alaska showing Wrangell

### Activities

#### Activity 1

#### Teacher Read Aloud *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

Teacher preparation:

- Traditionally, Tlingit stories are owned by clans or by individuals. Others do not tell stories that they do not own without permission. This is akin to the contemporary issue of “intellectual property rights”.
- Read the introduction on pages 3 and 4 of *Tale of an Alaska Whale* to help understand why Linn Forrest thought he could write down this traditional story.

#### Activity

Discuss with the class the idea of story ownership and what the concept of “public domain” means in terms of stories, publications and films. Discuss that this story may be more in the public domain since it is published and has been told and retold by many people. Let the students know that this story, as written in the book, originated in Wrangell. Locate Wrangell on a map of Alaska. Students should know that different versions of the story exist and that these come from other areas in Southeast Alaska.

Ascertain students’ prior knowledge about this story. Use this knowledge to encourage student leadership in discussions about the story.

Read aloud the book *Tale of an Alaska Whale*, stopping to discuss concepts and ideas that arise during the reading.

Instead of, or in addition to reading *Tale of an Alaska Whale*, locate a storyteller who will share the story of Naatsilanéi with the group.

### Assessment

Note individual student demeanor during the reading (storytelling). Notice if students are “listening well and with respect”. Note which students are familiar with the story, and which ones contribute ideas and/or opinions during discussions. Anecdotal notes might be taken regarding insights students share.



## Lesson #2

### Guided Reading: *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

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#### Objectives

Students:

- Read silently (or aloud) the story of Naatsilanéi
- Demonstrate fluent reading by reading with rhythm, flow and expression
- Demonstrate 90% or above accuracy when reading orally

#### Time

40 minutes

#### Materials

Multiple copies of *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

#### Activities

##### Activity 1

##### Guided Reading *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

Teacher preparation:

- Read the book *Tale of an Alaska Whale*. While it is not necessary to do Lesson #1, (Read aloud: *Tale of an Alaska Whale*) before this lesson, it might be desirable, particularly if the book may be difficult for students.
- Look through the book to identify concepts or vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to your students. Students reading at a strong third grade level should be able to read this story in a guided reading group, provided they are given sufficient teacher support.
- Notice the spelling of some words Tlinget (Tlingit) and Nah-chee-soo-nay (Naatsilanéi) differs from the currently accepted spelling. Be prepared to discuss this.

Naatsilanéi is the spelling used in Nora and Richard Dauenhauer's book *Haa Shuká*. Many authorities use the Dauenhauer spellings as the standard for Southeast Alaska.

#### Activity

Select students for whom you anticipate the book is at an instructional or independent reading level.

If the book was previously read as a read aloud, help students recall the story. Look through the book with the students and discuss all the pictures and the events associated with them. Point out and discuss at 1-2 concepts or vocabulary that might prove difficult.

Students read the book to themselves as you rotate among students, listen in and help as needed. Alternately, students may read with a partner in a paired reading format.

#### Assessment

On the initial or on a subsequent reading, take a running record of each student's reading. Record reading accuracy, self-corrections, fluency and comprehension.



## Lesson #3

### Viewing video/DVD of “Kéet Shagoon”

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#### Objectives

Students:

- Listen well and with respect to a video
- Relate prior knowledge and make connections to the story about Naatsilanéi
- Compare and contrast different versions of the same story

#### Time

30 minutes–viewing time per video

30 minutes–comparison activity

#### Materials

- VHS video Kéet Shagoon
- DVD video (2005) Kéet Shagoon
- Chart paper for Venn diagram or T-chart

#### Activities

##### Activity #1

##### Viewing video/DVD “Kéet Shagoon”

*Teacher preparation*

There are two videos, both with Gary Waid of Juneau telling the story of Naatsilanéi. View them in advance and decide which version to watch. Alternately, you may want students to watch both versions, comparing and contrasting them, or choose to have students compare a video version with a written version as related in *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

##### Activity

Discuss students’ prior knowledge of this story. They should know that the video shows a Juneau actor and storyteller and that he has permission to tell this story. Students should also know that they will be asked to compare the videos and/or compare the video to the written version of this story.

View the video(s) as a class.

Using a venn diagram or a T-chart, have students work as a group to compare the two video versions and/or to compare/contrast a video version with the book, *Tale of an Alaska Whale*. Discuss why similarities and differences might have occurred.

##### Assessment

Keep anecdotal notes or use a checklist regarding student attentiveness and participation in the compare/contrast activity.

Ask students to create their own Venn diagram or T-chart comparing and contrasting the different versions of this story or of another story. Assess the diagram/chart for accuracy, number of comparison points, completion and neatness.



## Lesson #4

# Story Retelling of *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

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### Objectives

Students:

- Listen well and with respect to a book read aloud
- Relate prior knowledge about the story of Naatsilanéi
- Orally (or in writing) retell the story of Naatsilanéi in correct sequence, using a background storyboard and character figures or, using scenes, identify the correctly sequence of story events

### Time

30-40 minutes

### Materials

- Book: *Tale of an Alaska Whale*
- Storyboard background: *Tale of an Alaska Whale*
- Character figures: Self-adhesive figures for *Tale of an Alaska Whale* or paper character figures
- Picture story cards: Set of four scene cards illustrating the beginning, middle and end of *Tale of an Alaska Whale*; Single page version of 4 scenes illustrating the beginning, middle and end of *Tale of an Alaska Whale*
- Two versions of sentences for sequencing and retelling: Sentences from *Tale of an Alaska Whale* in random order

### Activities

#### Activity 1

#### Retelling *Tale of an Alaska Whale*

*Teacher preparation:*

- You and your students should have previously read and reread the book *Tale of an Alaska Whale*. It is important that students have heard and/or read the book several times before attempting a retelling.
- Practice retelling the story, using the background and character figures in order to anticipate any problems students may have.

#### Activity

- Ask students to retell the story of *Tale of an Alaska Whale* using a storyboard background and character figures.
- If students have had previous experience retelling stories and using figures to do so, have them attempt this activity independently or with a partner. If students have not had this experience, model the process, as students watch and/or assist.

#### Activity 2

#### Alternate Activities

- Using 4 small picture story cards illustrating the beginning, middle and end of *Tale of an Alaska Whale*, students order the cards and retell the story in orally or in writing. Materials in the Resources include a primary version and an intermediate version of this activity.



- Given sentences in random order, students reorder the sentences so they tell the story in a logical progression. Two versions of this activity, with varying levels of difficulty, are provided in the Resources.

### Assessment

- Students correctly retell the story *Tale of an Alaska Whale* to a peer, teacher or parent, using appropriate expression and movement for the character figures.
- For alternate activities: Students correctly sequence sentences. Students correctly sequence pictures and use them to orally (or in writing) tell the story.

## Lesson #5

### Writing About Stories Heard

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#### Objectives

Students:

- Write for a specific purpose and audience using an appropriate form
- Use steps of the writing process to improve the quality of their writing

#### Time

30-45 minutes, with more time later as needed.

#### Materials

Paper, pencil

#### Activities

##### Activity #1

Teacher preparation:

- Prior to beginning this writing activity, students should have heard and/or independently read *Tale of an Alaska Whale* several times.
- Prepare one or more writing prompt options for students. Depending on student ages, prompts might include:
  - On the last page of *Tale of an Alaska Whale* it states that Naatsilanéi became powerful and “ruled over his tribe for many, many years.” Write about something Naatsilanéi may have done during this time that shows he gained wisdom from his orca adventure.
  - Evaluate Naatsilanéi’s actions. Was what he did fair? Would his actions be considered legal today? What else could Naatsilanéi have done “to get revenge” instead of creating whales that killed his opponents?
  - Write a prequel or a sequel to the story *Tale of an Alaska Whale*.
  - Create a readers’ theatre script, a poem or song lyrics based on *Tale of an Alaska Whale*.
  - Find a person who belongs to the Killer Whale clan. Interview him/her about this story and write about their responses.
  - Write about the killer whale attack from the perspective of the orca, the people attacked or the remaining members of the community.
  - Write about Naatsilanéi’s thoughts during and right after the orcas’ attack.



- Write a memoir, journal or a series of notes about Naatsilanéi's orca adventure.
- Research orca (killer) whales. Write a non-fiction report about them.

### Activity

Using a prompt or their own imagination, have students follow the writing process to complete a final piece of writing drawn from *Tale of an Alaska Whale*.

### Assessment

Use a 6 trait scoring guide for writing as a peer or teacher assessment of the final piece of writing.

## Lesson #6

### Optional Enrichment Activities

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- **Calendar icons (orca and man)**

Use the calendar icons in the Resources throughout the month when the *Tale of an Alaska Whale* activities are conducted.

- **Lingít vocabulary wall cards**

To include Lingít language in this unit, use the vocabulary wall cards for *kéet*, *káa*, *shaawát*, *hít* (orca, man, woman, house).

- **Kéet art activity**

To include an art activity using traditional Tlingit art forms, consider the age and prior knowledge of students. Use the kéet pieces as a puzzle, asking students to assemble a killer whale from the puzzle pieces.

Students might study the blackline kéet drawing, research where the traditional colors red and black are used and color the drawing appropriately.

Students might research the terms Ovoid, U-form, S-form and Primary line and locate these forms on either the blackline drawing or black colored drawing.