

TLINGIT TRADE GAME

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## TLINGIT TRADE GAME

### Materials Provided:

- 1 Teacher's Guide
- 1 Game board (downloadable in two files)
- 1 set of game cards (designed to print double-sided on Avery 5371 or other 2x3.5 inch, ten-per-sheet business cards) consisting of
  - 30 BLUE Tlingit Island Commodity cards
  - 29 GREEN Tlingit Mainland Commodity cards
  - 7 BROWN Copper River Commodity cards
  - 7 LIGHT BLUE Southern Tribes Commodity cards
  - 12 LIGHT GREEN Interior Tribes Commodity cards
  - 12 ORANGE Town cards
  - 9 RED Hazard cards
  - 9 RED Boon cards

### You will need to provide:

- 1 pair dice
- 1 set of token pieces (we suggest you use buttons)

### COMMODITY CARDS

Each Tlingit Trade Game should have the following numbers of commodity cards:

#### GREEN: Mainland Tlingit

- 5 spruce root baskets
- 5 rabbit or marmot skin blankets
- 5 sheep or goat horn spoons
- 5 Chilkat blankets
- 5 cranberries in oil
- 2 eulachon oil
- 2 moosehides

#### BLUE: Island Tlingit

- 2 greenstone for tools
- 2 dried deer meat
- 2 yew wood
- 4 sea otter pelts
- 5 dried halibut
- 5 seal oil
- 5 clams, mussels, & sea urchins
- 5 cedar bark or wood

#### LIGHT BLUE Southern Tribes

- 2 eulachon oil
- 2 dentalium shell
- 1 iron

1 cedar canoe  
1 abalone shell

LIGHT GREEN: Interior

2 moosehides  
2 decorated moccasins  
3 caribou hides  
2 birchwood bow w/porcupine gut string  
3 wolf moss for dye

BROWN: Copper River

4 deer meat  
1 wolf moss for dye  
1 copper  
1 caribou hide

TLINGIT TRADE GAME:  
Teacher's Guide

Purpose

The Tlingit Trade Game is a simulation board game which is designed to acquaint 4th graders and up with the pre-contact trade system in which the Tlingits played the important role of middlemen. The game accurately depicts the commodities traded and the people with whom they were traded, the trade routes used, and the relative scarcity or surplus of the goods involved. The game itself should thus serve to illustrate some specific aspects of pre-contact trade in Alaska, but it should also serve as a stimulus to discussion and in-depth student research of the concepts pertaining to the trade system and trading in general.

Behavioral objectives

After a preparatory introduction to Tlingit culture, playing the game twice, and a discussion and activity session following play, students should be able to:

1. Spell "Tlingit" correctly.
2. Name three Tlingit settlements.
3. Name the groups with whom the Tlingits traded.
4. Explain why water routes were used for trading purposes.
5. Name two Mainland, two Island Tlingit, two Interior or Copper River, and two Southern Tribes commodities that were important in the pre-contact trade system.
6. Name at least one way in which the Tlingit matrilineal kinship system affected this trading.

Preparation Before the Game

Although the game was designed to be fun, its educational purpose is the more important aspect in its design. Students will learn most from the game if they first have a fairly thorough unit on Tlingit culture before playing it. This unit should include information on the environment, the yearly cycle of subsistence activities, the social system, the belief system, and the importance of territorial ownership. This will allow students to appreciate the importance of the commodities to pre-contact Tlingits, and why those commodities were considered worth trading. For instance, students should learn that dentalium shells were a symbol of wealth for both the Tlingits and Athabascans in the interior of Alaska. They were thus sought after by both groups and commanded a high price in trade. Similarly, they should know that copper was a commodity which was important as the material for making knives and spear

points, but it was also important as the source for 'coppers,' the large shields which were the ultimate symbol of a Tlingit chief's wealth.

Even if you decide not to involve your class in a full unit on Tlingit culture, you should point out specific aspects of Tlingit life before you introduce the game. First, a brief map study of Southeastern Alaska and its terrain and resources is important. Second, students must have an elementary understanding of the matrilineal clan system, and its relationship with the ownership of property and land.

For instance, some of the Boon and Hazard cards refer to gifts being obtained from and given to relatives. Students should understand which relatives were given gifts and why. Also, certain trade routes were owned by certain clans; hence some clans had monopolies on trade routes which prevented clans from different areas from using those routes and also kept any members of other Indian groups out of Tlingit territory. The Tlingit groups which were located along the borders of the Tlingit area, particularly along large river systems, were thus in the best situations for trading. The Tlingit Trade Game itself does not reflect the ownership of trade routes, but your class should be aware of it and might, after playing the game in the prescribed manner, alter the rules to include provisions for ownership of routes.

Information on traditional trade practices can be obtained from Oberg's The Social Economy of the Tlingit Indians (University of Washington Press, 1973). Information on traditional Tlingit culture and ideas for presenting that information can be found in the Alaska Native Education Board's Social Studies Unit, available from the IEA office. In addition, a general bibliography of books on Tlingit culture has been included in this guide for your information. The Sealaska Heritage Foundation's website (<http://www.sealaskaheritage.org/>) has many resources as well.

#### Background Information: The Commodities

##### ISLAND TLINGIT COMMODITIES

The six island towns (Hanya, Sitka, Hoonah, Angoon, Kake and Kuiu) have been provided with commodities which reflect the sea orientation of those towns as well as the slightly more moderate climate of the islands. Thus, the sea otter pelts, dried halibut, seal oil, and clams, mussels and sea urchins were eagerly sought by mainland Tlingit villagers and were readily available to the islanders. In addition to these maritime

resources, the islands had an easily accessible source of greenstone (used in fashioning tools), and the milder climate of the islands allowed for the growth of more and larger cedar and yew trees than in the mainland river valleys. Dried deer meat was made available by virtue of the many Sitka black-tailed deer on the islands, which was one of the few land animals actively hunted by the island Tlingits.

The importance of most of the above-mentioned commodities is apparent; however, some were considered especially valuable. Seal oil, for instance, was in demand by mainland villagers, for it was a commonly used condiment eaten with most dried foods. Cedar bark and wood were also valuable for use in carving, weaving baskets and mats, and entwined with goats' wool to make the beautiful ceremonial Chilkat blankets produced by mainlanders. Finally, yew wood was used in making bows, boxes, and dance batons.

#### MAINLAND TLINGIT COMMODITIES

Most of the mainland Tlingit villages were located in the slightly colder micro-environments along river valleys. Fur-bearing animals were thus more readily available to mainlanders, as were river products such as the highly prized eulachon (hooligan) oil. The land orientation of these villages is apparent in the spruce root baskets (used for a large number of household tasks), cranberries in oil, sheep or goat horn spoons, rabbit or marmot skin blankets, moosehide, and ceremonial Chilkat blankets (which were woven from mountain goat wool and cedar bark). Of these commodities, three deserve additional mention: the eulachon oil, Chilkat blankets, and sheep or goat horn spoons. All were extremely valuable because of their rarity and importance in ceremonies (potlatches).

#### COPPER RIVER COMMODITIES

Located along a major trade route (the Copper River), and having access to two very important commodities, the Copper River Athabascans (Ahtnas) and Eyaks were in a good position to trade with the Tlingits. Raw copper was traded for use as daggers, mask decorations, and the prestigious "coppers" or "tinnehs" which were the foremost symbol of wealth to a Tlingit clan. Wolf moss (actually a lichen) was also valuable as the dyestuff used in producing yellows in Chilkat blankets.

#### SOUTHERN TRIBES COMMODITIES

Like the mainland Tlingits, Southern tribes had access to the valuable eulachon oil rendered from river-run eulachon. The Tsimshians, occupying the river valleys, were especially wealthy in their eulachon oil supplies. In addition, it was in the south

that huge cedar trees grew, and the Haidas in particular traded trees large enough to make cedar canoes and totem poles to the Tlingits. Dentalium shells were obtained from the west coast of Vancouver Island by the Nootka, and were traded far up the coast. They were important as decoration on the ceremonial garb of the Tlingits, and were perhaps even more important as symbols of wealth (though not as actual currency) among the Athabascans in the interior of Alaska. Abalone shells were also used in decorating carvings and ceremonial garb. Finally, iron was available from the southern tribes, and came originally from the European settlers far to the south.

#### INTERIOR TRIBES COMMODITIES

The Interior tribes, or Athabascans, desired many of the commodities available in the more temperate Tlingit environment, but they also had certain valuable commodities to trade. Both moosehide and caribou hides were welcomed by Tlingits: moosehide was used in making moccasins and was also thick enough to serve as a protective shirt in combat; while caribou hides made the warmest garments and sleeping robes. Wolf moss, as mentioned above, was used in making the yellow dye for Chilkat blankets. And two types of handiwork, decorated moccasins and birchwood bows, were highly prized by Tlingits for their workmanship and usefulness.

#### PLAYING THE GAME

##### Time:

You should allow an hour to play the game, and each child should play the game at least two times on two separate days.

##### Number of players:

Despite the notation on the game board itself the game can be played with from 3 to 6 players, with 6 being the optimum number. This means you may need more than one game per classroom.

##### Setting up the game:

If possible, laminate the board before playing. Then set it on a table large enough so that it won't be easily bumped out of place by passing students.

##### Game rules:

Field tests have suggested changes in the rules since the board was printed. Therefore, please refer to the rules which follow rather than those printed on the board.

Game Rules: 3-6 players

1. The object of the game is to trade with different groups so that you have, in the end,

INTERIOR TRIBES CARD

ONE SOUTHERN TRIBES CARD or ONE COPPER RIVER CARD

TWO MAINLAND TLINGIT CARDS

TWO ISLAND TLINGIT CARDS

For a total of six cards.

2. Each player starts with 10 cards, which are either all Island Tlingit cards or Mainland Tlingit cards. To determine which type of cards a player starts out with, divide the town cards into two groups, the island towns and the mainland towns, as follows:

Mainland towns:

Chilkat

Yakutat

Tongass

Auke

Chilkoot

Stikine

Island towns:

Hoonah

Henrya

Angoon

Sitka

Kake

Kuiu

Shuffle the two piles separately and place each pile face down on the table. Half the players draw one card each from the island town pile; the other half draw one card each from the mainland town pile. This also determines which type of Commodity Card they begin with: those towns which are located on the mainland will receive Mainland cards, and those towns which are on islands will receive Island cards.

3. Distribute the Mainland or Island commodity cards as follows: Shuffle each pile of Commodity cards separately. Then pass out, face down, 10 Mainland Commodity cards to players based in Mainland towns, and 10 Island Commodity cards to players based in Island towns. The remainder of the Tlingit commodity cards should be shuffled together and placed in a pile on the game board to be drawn from at various times during play when a Boon card instructs "Take One Card". Similarly, cards should be placed at the bottom of this pile when a Hazard card instructs "Lose One Card"

4. Place Boon, Hazard, Copper River Commodity, Southern Tribes Commodity, and Interior Tribes Commodity cards in the designated places on the Game Board.

5. Players move on the squares at the roll of the dice. To determine which player goes first, roll dice once. High score is first, and play proceeds in a clockwise direction from that person.

6. Players move vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. They move one square for each number on the dice. They may only move on water, either ocean or rivers. A square which is partially covered by water may be used as a travel route. Players must move in a single direction within a move. Changes in direction can not occur within that move.

7. If a player lands on a HAZARD square or a BOON square by exact roll of the dice, he must take the appropriate card from the pile and follow directions on the card. If the player is instructed to lose one card by a HAZARD card, he must place a card on the bottom of the Tlingit commodity card pile (see item 3). If the player is instructed to take one card by a BOON card, he takes a card from the top of the Tlingit commodity card pile.

8. To obtain the six cards necessary to win, players may do either of the following:

- Trade with another player by going to that player's home town, or
- Travel to a trading area (Interior Copper River, Southern Tribes)

9. To trade with another player, a player must first proceed to that player's home town in the normal way, by roll of the dice. He must roll either the exact number or more to land in the town. When he reaches the town, he trades one of his cards for one of the cards belonging to the player whose home town it is (that player does not need to return to his home town).

10. To obtain a card from one of the non-Tlingit areas, a player must move according to the throw of the dice to the end of the appropriate trade route. He needs either the exact roll of the dice or more to land at the trading area. When he reaches the specially marked square at the end of the route, he may trade as many cards as he wishes in exchange for the desired cards, on a one-for-one basis.

To obtain an INTERIOR CARD or a COPPER RIVER CARD, players must give one or more of the following cards in trade:

- Iron
- Dentalium
- Abalone
- Cedar Bark
- Eulachon Oil

Interior tribes will not accept any other commodities. The player must have one of these cards for each Interior or Copper River card they wish to obtain. Thus, if a player has only an Iron card of those on the list, he leaves that Iron card on the

square, and can take only one card from the pile of Interior commodity cards. If, however, he has two Iron and one Abalone cards, he may leave all three and pick up three of the desired cards.

To obtain a SOUTHERN TRIBES CARD, players must give one or more of the following cards in trade:

- Moosehides
- Green stone for tool making
- Wolf Moss
- Deer Meat
- Copper
- Sheep and Goat Horn Spoons

Southern Tribes will not accept any other commodities.

The same rules apply for SOUTHERN TRIBES CARDS as do for INTERIOR or COPPER RIVER CARDS: trading one-for-one.

11. There are a limited number of Interior, Copper River, and Southern Tribes cards. Once all cards in a single pile have been picked up by players, that area may not be visited again. Thus, if all the Copper River cards have already been picked up, no one may visit that trading area again during the game. Players may only pick up cards which originate in the non-Tlingit area they are visiting; thus only Interior cards can be obtained from Interior areas; only Southern Tribes cards may be picked up in the Southern Tribes area; and only Copper River cards may be picked up in the Copper River area. The other cards which have been left in trade may not be picked up; they are out of play.

12. Play ends when one player has the necessary six commodity cards.

#### After the Game: Discussion and Further Investigation

It is important that the game be discussed or further investigations be made after students have had a chance to play the game. The class as a whole might discuss, or you might assign group projects for purposes of investigating the following topics:

1. The commodities that were traded and where those commodities came from.
2. The difference between Mainland Tlingit and Island Tlingit commodities.
3. The common principle of all the trade routes depicted (water). In actuality, trade routes often crossed passes to reach water routes (the Chilkoot Pass is the best known example), but most travel did occur by water. Discuss reasons for this.
4. Why restrictions were placed on some trade items (for

instance the Athabascans did not accept moosehides tanned by Mainland Tlingits. The reason is quite simple: Athabascans did not need them. They hunted for and tanned an ample supply of moosehides on their own.)

5. How the Tlingit custom of ownership of trade routes affected the Gold Rush of 1898.

6. How clan membership and the degree of relationship with another person affected the trade system.

7. How realistic the game was to actual conditions as they existed in the eighteenth century.

8. How a game designed from the stand point of Athabascans or southern tribes might differ from this one.

9. How the influx of European middlemen and European goods affected the pre-contact trade system.

10. The concepts of barter systems, the role of middlemen, the differences between a trade economy and a money economy, and comparisons with modern day economics in Southeastern Alaska.