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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR

OSCAR NICTUNE, SR. - ALATNA

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SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

OSCAR NICTUNE, SR.-ALATNA

The following are suggested student activities to accompany the Oscar Nictune biography produced by the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. We have included a wide range of activities so teachers and students can choose those most suitable for them.

For those who have used the Moses Henzie biography and student activities, there may be some repeats here. We are not assuming that all teachers have familiarized themselves with the Moses Henzie materials. Therefore, some important activities are again included. At the same time, you may want to look through the Moses materials and see if you'd like to adopt any of the activities not included here.

Hopefully students will find these exercises easy to relate to and relevant to their own lives. A number of the activities invite students to examine and compare aspects of their own village and lives to that of Oscar Nictune's. Perhaps these materials can be used to expand students' awareness of their own environment and to better understand the tremendous changes that have occurred over a relatively short time in the Alaskan Interior.

You will also notice a strong emphasis on using the resources within your village, namely the local experts. Encourage people to come to class and share their view of the village history. Give life to your lessons.

Most of the activities listed here have no "right or wrong" answers. They are designed to draw on students' experiences and interpretation of the world they live in. A primary goal to these exercises is to help students formulate their own answers as to why things are as they are.

Although the activities are divided by chapters and numbered, many of them would be quite appropriate anywhere so feel free to mix and match. We also encourage teachers to design their own activities. If you feel willing to share your creations, please write to us.

All comments from teachers or students about Oscar Nictune and student activities are appreciated. Send them to:

Yvonne Yarber and Curt Madison
Manley Hot Springs, Alaska 99756

BEFORE READING OSCAR NICTUNE, SR.'S STORIES:

1. Look at the front and back cover of Oscar. What can you tell about him? What can you guess? Can the picture tell you anymore than the fact that he is an old man?
2. Where is Alatna? Locate it on your school map of Alaska. Where is it relative to your village? What is the distance between the two by land? by river? Have you been to Alatna? When? Why? What was it like? If you haven't got a large school map use the map on page 10.
3. Look up Alatna in the Dictionary of Alaska Placenames. If you don't have a copy of this book in your school, try to get one. You'll have many opportunities to use it throughout the biography series.
4. What about Alatna? Look through your school's book collection on Alaska. Find anything you can on Alatna. You might also want to find information on Allakaket as well since community services to Alatna are located across the river in Allakaket. If information is scarce, you might want students to work in pairs or groups and use personal experiences as a resource. (suggested books: Alaska Regional Profiles, Volume VI, Yukon Region; A Thousand Miles With A Dogsled by Hudson Stuck; Two in the Far North by Margaret Murie; Arctic Village by Robert Marshall; Alaska Natives and the Land from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402)
5. Family Tree: Turn the front cover page to the Family Tree. Find Oscar Nictune, Sr.'s name in the double lined box. If you don't know how to read a family tree, ask your teacher for help. You should know what the symbols are for man and woman. Which lines indicate who the children of Oscar and Cora Nictune are?

Look at the photograph on the next page. It is of Oscar and some of his relatives. Find the caption for this photo on page 4. Using the caption, photo, and family tree find out which of the

people in the photograph are Oscar's children. Find Susie Sam in the photograph. How is she related to Oscar?

6. English Style: Read the "Note From A Linguist" by Ron Scollon on page 5. Ask your teacher for help with words such as linguist, nuance, succinctness, semantic indirectness, narrative impact, diction and variation. Discuss with your teacher the meaning of the "Note" from Ron. (Note to teacher: You might want to elaborate on the subject of variations in English. Unfortunately students sometimes believe that there is only one kind of English. Variations of English exist for the sake of communication. English is a living language which changes to serve the needs of people in particular situations. For example, "Village English" might be appropriate at a potlatch but too informal for a job interview in Anchorage. Or, "Medical English" might be appropriate at a health aide's training session but not at a birthday party.)

7. Something about the authors: Curt Madison and Yvonne Yarber wrote Oscar Nictune's biography. Curt took most of the photographs including the one on page 8 of Oscar and Yvonne walking to Alatna for another interview session. Yvonne is carrying a photo-copy stand which Curt used to make copies of Oscar's old pictures appearing on pages 51, 52, 55, 62, 67 and 74. It is Curt's policy to make copies on site and never borrow or remove photographs from a person's home. Can you guess why? (Note to teachers: You might want to discuss the value of old photographs historically. If a photo is lost or destroyed, it can't be replaced.) After reading this book, students may want to know more about how it came to be. They can write to Curt or Yvonne at Manley Hot Springs, Alaska 99756 with their questions.

8. Glossary: Look over the glossary list on pages 12 and 13. These are words that appear in the book. Are there any words you know? Which ones? (Note to teacher: You may want to put a list of the glossary words on the board and ask students what they mean

prior to looking at the definitions in the book. Also, point out the word Inupiaq. Students should understand that Oscar is Inupiaq, which is the name for Northern or Arctic Eskimos and their language. Also point out the difference between Athabaskan Indian and Inupiaq Eskimo.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The move to Alatna: Locate Kobuk on the map on page 10. Oscar's grandparents were among the first Eskimos to move to Alatna from Kobuk. Why did they move? How did they travel? What about the place you live? Did people ever move there, or away from there, because of better fishing or hunting? Ask old people in your village in order to find out. What about now? Where does your food come from? Do you buy it from a store? Have you or anyone you know ever moved from one place to another? Was it for food? Or what was the reason? Was it difficult in the new place? Why? Do you think things are different for you than they were for Oscar's parents?

2. Bears: Are there any books in your school library about bears? Find out as much as you can about bears. For instance, when do they thrive? When do they die off? How often do they have cubs? How many? What kinds of bears live in your country? You may collect stories about bears from people in your village and see if you can learn something about how they live. For more research you may want to write to government agencies and ask them about bears. Perhaps invite one of their staff to come to your village and talk about bears and other animals. Ask them to bring photographs and written material with them. The Federal Fish and Wildlife or the State Fish and Game are two to try.

3. Other animals: Make a class list of all the animals in your area. Also list how they are used by people in the village if at all. If you want to know more about any of the animals you might do some of the exercises listed in the "Bear" activity above.

4. Spruce pitch: Oscar talks about spruce gum on page 15 and 16. Does anyone use spruce pitch in your village? Find out more about it if they do. You may want to collect some pitch for gum as a class project. What other uses are there for parts of the spruce tree? (Such as: logs, firewood, boat parts, canoe stem from the root, lumber, boughs on the floor of the cabin)

5. Body Ornatmentation: Look through books in your school to find old photos of Eskimos with tatoood chins or ornaments below their lips. Oscar talks about it on page 15 and 16. What is the significance of this type of ornatmentation? Are there any things that you wear or decorate yourself with to tell people something about yourself? For instance, marten trappers' hats, something special received at potlatch, or a T-shirt that says something special on it. Are there any ornaments or decorations other people in your village wear to tell about themselves? What?

6. Travel: Locate Diomede and Kotzebue on a map. How did people get there from Alatna? (See chapter one) How would they travel now? What would it cost now to travel there and how would one go? What do you suppose it cost then? Do a class activity on the cost of travel. Cover aspects such as transportation, food, lodging, and entertainment. (Note to teacher: If students do a lot of traveling, try to increase their awareness of how much it costs. Perhaps choose a place they often travel to and look up plane fares or fuel costs, if it's by boat, and so on. If students conclude that travel was cheaper long ago, be sure they are aware of the time it took to get somewhere. Also point out the hard work that was involved. Examples of this come up throughout Oscar's book.)


7. Speaking of travel: Where have you lived and traveled to? Draw your own map and make up a legend to show where you have traveled and how you got there. For instance, use a circled red **X** to show where you live now. You may use another circled red **X** if you have a

summer home like a fish camp. Use a squared red \boxtimes to show where you go to school now. Use a plain red \times to show other places you have lived. Use a pencil \times to show places you have traveled to. Use the following symbols to show how you got there:

airplane 

sno-go 

foot 

snowshoes 

boat 

car 

Make up any additional symbols you need like skis, train, etc.

Discuss what you did in those places. Why did you travel?

What did you enjoy most? Least? What did you learn? What was similar to home? Different? Look at your map again. Are there places near your village you have never been to? Why? What would it take to be able to go there? (Note to teachers: You may want to use this activity in Chapter Two and Three in conjunction with an activity mapping Oscar's travel and places lived. Students could then compare how much Oscar traveled around his part of the country.)

8. Prospectors: Discuss the lifestyles of prospectors that may have differed from that of Native people in the early 1900's; discuss those which may have been similar. Use older people in your village and Oscar's book as resources. You can use books written by prospectors like Sourdough Sagas by Herbert Heller as well. Discuss how life changed for Native people with the coming of prospectors and miners. For example, the economy changed drastically with money and goods to be bought and sold. There are many illustrations of this in the book so you may want to do it as an activity later on.

9. Fire: What are the different ways of starting a fire that Oscar talks about? Why was fire important to him? (Like for cooking and heat). Is it important for you to be able to start a fire?

Why? How do you start a fire? Are there other ways you know of? Is there anyone in your village who knows special ways of starting fires that he or she could show the class?

10. Meejee Jonee: Bertha Moses tells her grandmother's story of the first White man to go up the Kobuk River. His name was Mr. Stoney, also known as Lt. Stoney in some historical accounts. Are there any people in your village with stories of what it was like when the first White people came to your area? Invite the story tellers to class or retell the story yourself.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Names: How did Oscar get his name? Why did Violet Stokes change his name? What would you think if a teacher changed your name? Find out if any of the old people in your village had their names changed long ago. Was it from a Native name to a Christian one? Does anyone your age have a Native name? Do they know what it means? Who gave them that name?

2. Main language: When Oscar began school very few people in his village spoke English. Now almost everyone in Alatna and Allakaket speak English. What is the main language spoken in your village? See if you can find out how long it has been the main language. What was the main language before? Is there any way to find out for how long? Discuss the reasons for a language changing, particularly in your village. Figure out how many people are in your village. Find out how many speak English. How many speak Athabascan, Eskimo, or other Native Alaskan language? How many just know some words or phrases but can't understand everything? Does it seem that more or fewer people are learning a Native language in your village now? Why?

Make the following list:

Your name:

father:

grandmother:

grandfather

great grandmother:

great grandfather

mother:

grandmother:

grandfather:

great grandmother:

great grandfather:

After each relative on the list write their name if you know it. Then write the main language of each person. You may need the help of your parents. If you were adopted or for any other reason have more parents and grandparents, add those names to your list.

3. School history: What is the history of your school? When was the first one built? What was taught there? What did it look like? Is there anyone in your village who went to the first school? Ask them to talk about what it was like. Find out how it was different from your school now.

4. Timeline: Begin a timeline of Oscar's life to be posted in class and added to while reading the rest of his book. Include all the events Oscar mentions. If there is enough space on your timeline, some events could be illustrated. If you have never done a timeline of your own life, do so on a large piece of paper. Include the events that were important to you from birth to present. When you finish reading Oscar's book and have completed his timeline, compare it with yours. See what was happening in Oscar's life the year you were born. Compare other years that are on both of your timelines. What kind of differences or similarities can you find between your life and Oscar's from reading the timelines? What about with the lives of your classmates?

CHAPTER THREE

1. Mapping travels: See if the class can map Oscar's travels in Chapter Three. Then try to estimate the number of miles traveled. List the different methods of transportation he used that one spring and summer.

2. Dogs: Oscar says dogs are different today than before. Why? How? (Note to teacher: See Moses Henzie activities for more dog ideas.)

3. Rafting: Find out how various people in your village make rafts and for what purposes. Collect rafting stories from people. As a class project you may want to make a booklet on how to make and use a raft.

4. Boats: Find out what you can about steamboats in the Interior. How did they run? How are they different from boats on the rivers today? Why aren't they used today? Is there anyone in your village who used to work on the steamboats? Ask them what it was like. Margaret Murie's book, Two in the Far North, has descriptions of steamboats on the Koyukuk River and Yukon. Oscar is also mentioned in her book as "Oscar the cabin boy". Her title for him could be misleading, since Oscar was a deck hand which meant a lot of hard work loading and unloading freight as well as tending to business on deck while underway.

5. Oscar in training: 1912 was an important year for Oscar and his father. That was the year Oscar was being trained. (see page 46) What was Oscar's father trying to teach him in Chapter Three? Have any of you been taught the same kinds of things? What and by whom? Would you guess that Oscar learned the lessons his father was trying to teach? His detailed memory of that summer would suggest that he had.

6. Foods: List all the kinds of meat, fish and fowl you have ever eaten. List all the ones Oscar mentions eating. Note the differences and similarities. Why? Are different foods available? Not available? Different tastes? Different lifestyles? Out of your list of foods eaten, identify which ones Oscar would refer to as "White man food". What kinds are "Native". What are a combination of the two? (Note to teachers: Explain that "Native" foods are those things eaten before Outsiders brought things like sugar, salt, flour, and coffee.)

7. Hunting sense: There is more to hunting than carrying a gun. It takes attentiveness and an awareness of your surroundings. What are the senses used when hunting? First define senses and name them. How is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or sense of touch used for hunting? Invite a few of the hunters in your village to class and ask them about animals you are interested in. Ask them what to watch for, listen to, smell, taste, or touch when hunting for various animals. You might make a list of the information for each animal.

8. Taking care of game: You may want to go another step further with the above exercise and learn about taking care of game once it is caught. Talk about cleaning, skinning, storing and cooking different kinds of meats. You could have a cooking class or make a class recipe book with the information you collect.

9. School: How old was Oscar in 1916 when he quit school? Why did he quit? Do young people that same age have to make their own living now in your village? What are they doing? Who encourages, supports or pressures them into those activities? Why?

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Relatives: Oscar mentions Old Tobuk on page 51. What is his relation to Oscar? See the family tree. Old Tobuk is the father of another person in this biography series named Frank Tobuk. Using the index in both Frank and Oscar's book, see what they have to say about each other. Note that Frank is Cora Nictune's brother. Is it common that people in your village are related to people in nearby villages? Is there any difference in going to a village where you have relatives and going to one where you do not? What kind of differences? For instance, if you had relatives, you might have a place to stay and people to play with, people to show you things, or maybe, people keeping an eye on you and scolding you if you did something they did not like. Try to imagine what it would be like for a new person your age to come into your village and not have any relatives or know anyone. (Note to teacher: You might want to do some role playing to stress this point. Set a particular scene in the village with some students who were born and raised there. Choose one person to be the new person in town who doesn't know a soul.)

2. Health: Oscar talks about Cora and her death. Transportation was the main problem in getting her to a hospital. List all the transportation problems that October: plane, dogs, boat. Did any of those transportation problems ever exist in your village? What has been done to remedy them? For instance, health aid programs, better runways, etc. Do any of those problems still exist? Familiarize yourself with emergency transportation alternatives or emergency health care procedures. Ask your village health aid to come and talk about different kinds of emergencies that could arise. Find out what you can do in the case of different emergencies.

3. Raise a family alone: Oscar and his daughters talk about growing up after Cora Nictune died. What are some of the difficulties they mention? How do they resolve them? (For instance, oldest daughter at home acting as mother; kids working together sewing, cooking, fishing, trapping; kids having fun together; kids staying with relatives like their Aunty Dora and Aunty Bessie in the summer; Oscar coming home whenever he could but out working for wages; Wallace helping out) How do families that you know with single parents work out living together? (Note to teachers: Try to be clear that you are not suggesting single parent families are missing out or worse off than a two-parent family. There are advantages and disadvantages to any situation. Perhaps you could talk about this. The extended family system is also a strong influence in many families.)

4. What do you think is the most important thing that Kitty had to say? Bertha? Ann?

5. Draw a picture or write a poem about the things in Chapter Four that makes you feel good or happy. Bad or sad.

6. Draw a picture of Bertha's grandparents igloo at Steamboat. Draw a picture of Bertha's family cabin described on page 63. Draw a picture of your own home. What are the differences and similarities?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Oscar talks about making a living. What does he mean by that phrase? (It is more than just making wages. It covers trapping, hunting and various jobs that produce income. Making a living could be expanded to subsistence activities as well. Look up living and livelihood in the dictionary.) What kinds of things did Oscar do to make wages? What other things did he do to make a living? How do most people in your village make a living? Do they have to go away part of the year to make money?

2. How does Oscar spend his time now? Figure out Oscar's age now. What are people in your village that age doing with most of their time? Ask one of them to your class to share stories. You might ask about some of the same topics Oscar talks about.

3. As a class, dramatize your favorite chapter. Or, if there are enough students, divide up by chapters and have each group dramatize a chapter.

4. Divide your class by chapters and have each group do a mural of one chapter. Then as a group write a few paragraphs about your mural.

5. Choose some photos from the book to discuss. Identify familiar and unfamiliar objects and activities. If you are especially interested in some of the photographs you might write to the photographer, Curt Madison, and let him know. He might send you one.

6. Do any of you know Oscar Nictune, Sr.? If so, did you learn any new or surprising things about him from this book? What?

7. There are some other books printed in this Yukon-Koyukuk School District Biography Series. Use their indexes to see if Oscar is mentioned in any of the other books. You can also use the index to find out what different people have to say about the same topic. For example, look up bear, fishing, or schools in each of the books and compare what they have to say. All the parts will add up to a larger picture.

8. Choose your favorite story told by Oscar and write or draw about it.

9. If you really liked something about Oscar or his book, you may want to write to him and say so. If you do write, keep in mind that he may be too busy to write back but he would probably appreciate your letter anyway.