

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

DRUMS OF ALASKA
GRADES K-6



JENNIFER TS'ANAK BRADY-MORALES

TLINGIT DRUM, 1992

Cedar, rawhide, pigment
1992.099.001ab

JOHN KOKULUK

IÑUPIAQ DRUM, c.1960

Wood, antler, seal or walrus stomach, cotton twine,
brass plate
1971.109.001

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

In this activity, students will learn more about the drums made and used by Alaska Native people. Students will compare and contrast Tlingit and Iñupiaq drums and learn more about each drum. Students will then listen to similar drums being played by Tlingit and Iñupiaq dance groups and describe the sounds that they hear. Students will investigate rhythms and sounds created by gently tapping on nearby materials to find similar sounds in their home or classroom. Optional extension activities are included for learning more about Alaska Native drums.



TLINGIT DRUM

Begin by looking closely at the Tlingit drum made by Jennifer *Ts'anak* Brady-Morales.

If you are investigating the drum with another person, use the questions below to guide your discussions. If you are working alone, consider recording your thoughts on paper:

CLOSE-LOOKING

Look closely, quietly at the drum for a few minutes.

OBSERVE

Share your observations about the drum or record your initial thoughts

ASK

- *What do I notice about the drum?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What sounds might the drum create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS

USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the drum.

LEARN MORE

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer *Ts'anak* Brady-Morales was a Tlingit and Tsimshian artist who made drums as well as working with silver, wood, ivory, and paints. She was raised in Sitka, Alaska. She began carving, painting, and designing in 1981, and learned from many Northwest coast artists, such as Nathan Jackson, Steven Brown, Darryl Norman, Dorthea Romero Norman, and Norman Jackson. She first was exposed to art by her father, Gunaanasti, who was a carver.

TLINGIT DRUMS

Tlingit style hand drums are generally made by steam bending a wooden frame into a circular shape and then stretching hide across the frame to create the drum head. The drumhead is held tight with lashings stretching across the reverse side of the drum, often wrapped in a special way to create a handle.

LISTEN:

[Senior Mount Saint Elias Dancers at Celebration 2018, Sealaska Heritage](#)

[Sheet'k'a Kwaan Dancers \(People of Sitka\) at Celebration 2018, Sealaska Heritage](#)





IÑUPIAQ DRUM

Look closely at the Iñupiaq drum made by John Kokuluk.

If you are investigating the drum with another person, use the questions below to guide your discussions. If you are working alone, consider recording your thoughts on paper:

CLOSE-LOOKING

Look closely, quietly at the drum for a few minutes.

OBSERVE

Share your observations about the drum or record your initial thoughts

ASK

- *What do I notice about the drum?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What sounds might the drum create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS

USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the drum.

LEARN MORE

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

John Kokuluk Sr. was a King Island Iñupiaq artist. Originally from King Island, Kokuluk and his family moved to Nome in 1952 in order to have better access to healthcare. Year-round settlement on King Island was abandoned in the 1960s due to dangerous erosion resulting from climate change. However, many former residents and their decedents continue to travel to the island for hunting and connection to their homeland. Several of Kokuluk's sons and grandsons are known as skilled Iñupiaq carvers, including: Jerome Saclamana, John Kokuluk Jr., Charles Kokuluk, Robert Kokuluk, and Hubert Kokuluk.

IÑUPIAQ DRUMS

Iñupiaq-style frame drums have been made in the same manner for thousands of years. Because the wood frames and sea-mammal membrane drum heads decompose over time, finding preserved evidence of rame drums is challegring. This makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly how long the design has been in use. However, fragments of drum frame have been found in the permafrost on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Strait dating to about 2,000 years ago. These frame drums are found throughout the circumpolar region from Siberia to Greenland, with the oldest preserved evidence of frame drums found in the Disko Bay area of Greenland dating to around 4,500 years old.

Frames are made of wood. Often several pieces of driftwood are bent into a circular or oval shape. Frame drums vary greatly in size and shape, with some being nearly perfectly circular, and others having more of an oval shape. In Iñupiaq culture, frame drums are played by tapping the drumstick across the frame on the backside of the drum. Other Alaskan Native cultures also make and play frame drums, though their frame drums are played by tapping the drumstick across the front drumhead side of the drum.

LISTEN:

[Qikiqtagruq Northern Lights Dancers from Kotzebue at the Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2014](#)



COMPARING AND CONTRASTING DRUMS

MATERIALS Pencil
Paper

DIRECTIONS

1. Return to the Tlingit drum. Using what you have learned about Jennifer *Ts'anak* Brady-Morales and Tlingit drums, make new observations about the drum. Ask: *how would I describe the sound of the drum?*
2. Repeat this process with the Iñupiaq drum using what you know about artist John Kokuluk Sr. and Iñupiaq drums.
3. Compare your thoughts about the two drums. If working with another person, discuss and compare your thoughts. Ask yourselves: *how do the sounds of the two drums compare? How would I describe the sounds of each drum to someone who had not heard them?*

COMPARING SOUNDS K-2

MATERIALS Household materials such as:
Table
Chair
Cardboard
Water bottle

DIRECTIONS

1. Gather household materials.
2. Using one or two fingers, gently tap each material. Listen carefully to the sound it creates. Ask yourself: *how would I describe this sound?*
3. Compare the sounds made by different materials. Ask: *which material sounds like the Tlingit drum? Which material sounds like the Iñupiaq drum?*

INVESTIGATING RHYTHM 3-6

MATERIALS Household materials such as:
Table
Chair
Cardboard
Water bottle

DIRECTIONS

1. Gather household materials.
2. Using one or two fingers, gently tap each material. Listen carefully to the sound it creates. Ask yourself: *which material sounds like the Tlingit drum? Which material sounds like the Iñupiaq drum?*
3. Choose two or more sounds made by tapping on different objects. Investigate different rhythms you can create by combining 2 or more sounds. Create rhythms using different lengths of notes and add interest by using different pitches of sound made by tapping on different materials.



LEARN MORE ABOUT ALASKA NATIVE DRUMS AND MUSIC

WATCH:

[Making Athabascan style hand drums](#)

[Making Yup'ik style frame drums](#)

FROM THE SMITHSONIAN ARCTIC STUDIES CENTER AT THE ANCHORAGE MUSEUM:

[Carving Alaska Native instruments](#)

[Learn more about Alaska Native cultures](#)

LEARN AND LISTEN:

Yup'ik Drums: [in a performance, from Elders](#)

Iñupiaq Drums: [in the collection, in a performance, from Elders](#)

Athabascan Drums: [in a performance](#)

Tlingit Drums: [box drum, hand drum; in a performance](#)

Unangan Drums: [in the collection, in a performance](#)

Sugpiaq Drums: [in the collection, in a performance](#)

Tsimshian Drums: [in the collection, in a performance](#)

Haida Drums: [in a performance](#)

KEY TERMS

<i>Box drum</i>	a box shaped drum made from wood; box drums were often suspended from the ceiling and played on the interior and exterior sides using the drummers knuckles to control the tone
<i>Drum head</i>	the material stretched over the frame which vibrates to make sound; traditional materials include seal or walrus bladder and stomach, caribou hide, mountain goat, and moose hide
<i>Drum stick</i>	the beater used to drum on the hide or frame to make sound
<i>Frame drum</i>	a drum made by stretching the drum head over a wooden hoop with an attached handle; the drum head is usually marine mammal membrane and is secured by wrapping string cinched tightly and nestled in a notch carved around the middle of the frame
<i>Hand drum</i>	a drum made by stretching the drum head over a wooden hoop; the drum head is usually animal hide and is secured tightly in the back with the use of string stretching across the diameter of the frame to hold the skin tight
<i>Pitch</i>	the quality of sound that listeners perceive as higher or lower on the musical scale
<i>Rhythm</i>	the placement of sounds in time, consisting of longer and shorter notes played on different parts of the beat

