

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## MUSIC: MUSICAL EXCHANGE IN ALASKA

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### Ting-Ting Yok

Plywood, wood, steel, pigment  
Anchorage Museum;  
1977.042.003

ANCHORAGE  
MUSEUM

## UNIT AT A GLANCE

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Learn more about the transformation of music and culture in Alaska.

**Social Studies:** Students will examine three instruments from the Anchorage Museum Collection and compare the differences and influential implications of each instrument.

**Music:** Students will develop an understanding of musical diffusion through improvisation of rhythm and musical phrases.

## STANDARDS

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### Alaska Arts Standards

- MU: PR4.2-5 Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implication for performance
- MU: PR6-5 Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work
- MU: RE7-5 Recognize and analyze artistic works, including those from diverse cultural traditions
- MU: RE8-5 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
- MU: RE9-5 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work
- MU: CN10-5 Relate, synthesize, and express knowledge and personal experiences to make art
- MU: CN11-5 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding and relevancy

## MATERIALS

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### Close-Looking

- Ting-ting Yok, Anchorage Museum; 1977.042.003
- Violin, Bow & Case, Anchorage Museum; 1970.063.001ao
- Banjo with Case and Accessories, Anchorage Museum; 2006.021.001au

### Music

- Orff instruments
- Writing utensils
- Paper

## KEY TERMS

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<i>genre</i>	a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter
<i>style</i>	a distinctive quality, form, or type within music
<i>cultural diffusion</i>	the spreading out and merging of material, ideological, or ethnographic aspects from different cultures
<i>fiddle</i>	a type of violin, or violin music typically associated with folk music
<i>Athabascan Fiddle</i>	a distinct variety of violin music with influences from Scottish, Irish, and various Dene musical traditions
<i>k'dentdemen</i>	Dena'ina term for musician
<i>yuarun</i>	Central Alaskan Yup'ik term for songs or music

## CLOSE-LOOKING

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**TIME FRAME** Approximately 40 minutes

**MATERIALS** Ting-ting Yok, Anchorage Museum; 1977.042.003  
Violin, Bow & Case, Anchorage Museum; 1970.063.001ao  
Banjo with Case and Accessories, Anchorage Museum; 2006.021.001au

**DIRECTIONS** 1. Invite students to look closely and quietly at some of the instruments on display at the museum. Supplement with videos of different kinds of Alaskan music to demonstrate the wild diversity in the kinds of music that are popular across the state.  
[30 min.]

**CLOSE-LOOKING:** Look closely, quietly at the objects for a few minutes.

**OBSERVE:** Share your observations about each object.

### **Ting-ting Yok, Anchorage Museum collection; 1977.042.003**



**ASK:** *What do you notice about this object?*  
*How might someone use this object?*  
*How might this object sound?*  
*Where might you hear this object?*  
*What might this object be made of?*  
*What does this remind you of?*  
*What more can you find?*

### **Violin, Bow & Case, Anchorage Museum collection; 1970.063.001ao**



**ASK:** *What do you notice about these objects?*  
*How might someone use these objects?*  
*Where might you see these objects?*  
*What do these objects remind you of?*  
*How might these objects feel?*  
*What more can you find?*

### **Banjo with Case and Accessories, Anchorage Museum collection; 2006.021.001au**



**ASK:** *What do you notice about these objects?*  
*How might someone use these objects?*  
*What kinds of sounds do you think you can make with these objects?*  
*What does this remind you of?*  
*What more can you find?*

**DISCUSS:** Use the [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the photographs.

2. As a class, discuss cultural diffusion in Alaska, particularly those surrounding the history of musical instruments and styles. Influences from Euro-American whalers, traders, and miners added stylistic and musical options to Alaska Native musical repertoire. Look at the influx and influence of Euro-American instruments such as fiddles and banjos and discuss their impact on Alaska's musical landscape.

[10 min.]

## MUSIC EXCHANGE

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	Approximately 40 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Orff instruments Writing utensils Paper
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Place students into small groups according to the number of Orff instruments you have available or are using. Provide each group with one type of instrument. [3 min.]</li><li>2. Allow the students in each group to create a four-measure song, consisting of simple beats such as quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes, and rests. Give the student a few minutes to practice their song, with each student writing down a copy of the song at the top of a piece of paper. [5 min.]</li><li>3. Allow each student to perform with one another in their small groups. After sharing their songs, invite students to trade a measure of their music, swapping one of their measures with another student in their group. Record the transaction on a piece of paper and allow each student to practice their new song. [2 min.]</li><li>4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 a few more times, allowing the songs evolve and change fluidly. [20 min.]</li><li>5. After students have met and exchanged musical phrases and instruments several times, give them one last opportunity to practice their song before sharing it with the class. For each group, discuss the journey that they took before arriving at this finished song. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings about changing instruments and patterns with other groups as they reflect on the changes to their songs. [10 min.]</li></ol>

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of Musical Exchange.

## LEARN MORE

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### ATHABASCAN FIDDLE

The earliest fiddle style in Alaska came with the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company in the mid-19th century. Members of the trading company, primarily of Scottish, Irish, French Canadian and Métis descent, exchanged music and dance styles with one another, and later with various Dene communities. This exchange of musical culture brought about the Upriver fiddle-style, consisting of fiddle-guitar duets, mouth, organs, and accordions. A second style emerged during the Klondike Gold Rush: the Downriver fiddle style. This style includes greater influence from western and country music and is used for larger gatherings with accompaniment of vocals and piano. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, both Upriver and Downriver fiddle styles developed in relative isolation until the arrival of radio. Since then, Dene communities in the Alaskan Interior have passed down fiddling to each successive generation. The Athabascan Fiddle Festival and the Young Native Fiddlers are two prominent examples of fiddle culture present today.

In 1983, the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the Institute of Alaska Native Art established the Athabascan Fiddle Festival in which fiddlers and dancers gather in Fairbanks each November to share music with the

community. As an initiative to promote fiddling, various grants continue to support the Young Native Fiddlers, a cohort of students taught to play violin and also guitar.

### **CONTEMPORARY ALASKAN MUSIC: PAMYUA**

The band Pamyua represents a contemporary example of fusing various artistic backgrounds into a new style. The band uses traditional understandings of art from each member's respective Inuit, Black and Native Greenland backgrounds and but combines them together into something new and unique; there are cores of each culture that appear in the melody or visual aspects, but the band blends those aspects together into a novel, experimental experience for their audience.

#### **A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY**

The Anchorage Museum refrains from using the terms Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut and instead uses language identified by the Alaska Native language groups. Due to these words' complicated history, the Anchorage Museum does not use these terms. However, it is important to note that Indigenous communities and individuals are at different places of healing and self-identity and may use these terms.

The largest Indigenous language family in North America is the Dene language family, which is commonly identified as 'Athabaskan' – a word that is not native to any of the Indigenous languages to which it refers. Dene is a word for Indigenous peoples belonging to several cultures whose languages belong to the Dene language family with traditional homelands in Interior Alaska and into Western Canada; the word Dene means 'people' in several Dene languages.

#### **READ:**

Alaska Public Media/PBS - [Pamyua, an Inuit band, makes music that 'moves you from the soul'](#)

Alaska Magazine - [Athabaskan Fiddle Music](#)

Canada Magazine - [Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada: Performing Arts](#)

#### **WATCH:**

Farthest North Films - [Tradition in Tune](#)

Dechinta Centre - [Sound Relations: Native Ways of Doing Music History in Alaska by Jessica Bissett Perea | NAISA North](#)

Voice of Denali - [Athabaskan Fiddle Festival 2015-2017 Documentary](#)