



Community Interviews - Changing Technology

Objectives:

Students will understand how technological innovations have changed the economy, ecosystems, and culture of communities in Alaska. They will conduct interviews with local Elders and community leaders to find out how technologies have affected the community.

Concept:

From fisheries to oil development, snacking on pickled kelp to kayaking on the bay, tourist ships to container ships, Alaska's coastal and marine ecosystems are inextricably linked with the wellbeing of our communities. The use of these resources has changed over time as attitudes have shifted and technology has advanced. Understanding the effects of technology on coastal and marine resources and working to promote the sustainability of these resources is important so that these resources can continue to be a cherished part of Alaska's culture and economy in the future, and to maintain and restore the health of ocean ecosystems. Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without limiting the ability of people, other species, and future generations to survive.

Materials:

- ⊙ Science notebooks
- ⊙ Pencils
- ⊙ Small tokens of appreciation (jam, cookies, etc.)
- ⊙ Audio or video recorder (optional)

Preparation:

Contact an elder or member of your community and invite them to visit the class. Roby Littlefield's "Elders in the Classroom" is a great guide as you work to bring Elders and community members into your classroom: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/handbook/littlefield.html>.

Even if you aren't going to invite a guest speaker, these guidelines can be useful as you prepare students to conduct their interviews in the community.

Introduction:

If possible, invite an Elder or someone who has lived in your community for many years to speak about how technology has affected the community. Possible topics include, but are not limited to: fishing technology, transportation technology, communication technology, refrigeration/freezing technology, and oil exploration/extraction technology.

If you cannot arrange for a guest speaker, ask students to think about and list some types of technology they use regularly.

Discuss how these technologies have changed over time, and have in-turn affected the people and communities that use it. Has the technology had any unintended negative consequences? Think about how the technology is made and disposed of, and potential impacts on relationships, health, and the environment.

Activities & Procedures:

Explain to students that they are going to conduct interviews with local Elders and other community members about how technologies have created change in the communities.

First, have students think about the people they know that have lived in the area for a long time and have a lot of knowledge about the local community and ecosystems. Help them with suggestions of Elders, grandparents, community leaders, retired teachers, etc.



Community Interviews *Continued*

Each student should list 3 people they would be interested in interviewing, in case some of the people aren't willing or able to do an interview.

Have each student write a personal note to the first person they want to interview, explaining that they would like to conduct an interview to learn more about their experience living in the community as technology has changed.

If at all possible, students should approach their potential interviewees in person to set up the interview. If they can't arrange in person, they should drop the note off at the person's home or send it via the mail or e-mail as appropriate for the individual. Help students decide the best method.

If a first potential interviewee is unavailable, the student should choose someone else from their list.

Once interviews are scheduled, work with students to develop an initial list of questions for the interview. Some possibilities include:

- What has changed the most in this community since you have lived here? Are any technologies connected to that change?
- Describe a technology that has had positive effects on this community.
- Describe a technology that has had negative effects on this community.
- What types of technology have changed the local economy?
- What types of technology have changed the local ecosystems?

- What types of technology have changed the local traditions?
- What types of technology have changed the way we gather, store, and prepare food?
- Do you think technology is a good thing or a bad thing for our community? Why?

Ask students to develop their own questions around the topic, too.

Before students do their interview, provide an example and time to practice in class.

Ask how they feel about interviewing someone. Discuss if they have ever conducted an interview before or seen someone conduct an interview. What are the skills people need to conduct a good interview? (*Might include: patience, listening, friendliness, not interrupting, curiosity, etc.*)

Model the way an interview might be conducted. Ask a volunteer to come up to the front of the class. Have your volunteer play the role of an interviewee from the community while you model effective interview skills.

Ask the rest of the class to take notes on what you do and say to make the speakers feel comfortable and anything you do or say that they undermines this or makes the interviewee uncomfortable.

Be sure to introduce yourself and get to know the interviewees a bit before you get into the actual questions. Be sure to smile and thank them for their time.

Then ask some of the questions you developed for this topic.





Community Interviews *Continued*

After each major question, be sure to summarize what they said to make sure you understood it correctly, and ask “Did I miss anything important?”

With one of the questions, summarize the answer incompletely. When you ask, “Did I miss anything important?” your interviewee should add the missing information. Be sure to thank them.

At the end of the interview, once again thank the interviewee for their time and let them know how to contact you if they think of anything else or want to change an answer.

Conclude the interview. Then ask the interviewee:

- What did I do to make you feel comfortable?
- Is there anything I did to make you feel uncomfortable?
- What have you learned about interviewing from this experience?

Have other students reflect on the above questions and share their observations with the class.

Divide students into groups of 3. In their group, students should designate an interviewer, interviewee, and observer for the first round.

Have the first interviewer in each group conduct a 5-minute interview. The observers need to take notes on all the positive things the interviewers do to make the interview go well.

After the first round of interviews, have students provide feedback within their groups.

The observers should share their notes with the interviewers and the interviewee should add what the interviewer did to make it a comfortable experience.

Then, have the interviewers ask their groups for suggestions on things they could improve upon.

Have each group conduct 2 more interviews, rotating through the roles so that everyone has a chance to try each one.

At the end, ask students what they’ve learned about interviewing and record their answers on the board.

Finally, have students conduct their interviews outside of class. They should record the answers in their science notebooks or another notebook.

After they finish the interview, they should submit a transcript of the questions and answers.

You may also choose to use audio or video recorders for some of the interviews. If this is the case, guide students on the use of the devices and allow them time to practice in class.

Wrap-Up:

Once everyone has conducted their interview, discuss as a class the most interesting things they learned from the interviews: What types of technology were described as having positive or negative effects on the community? What were they surprised to learn? Were any of their own perspectives and opinions about technology changed through the interviews?

Have students write thank you notes to the people they interviewed, including one thing they learned from the interview.





Community Interviews *Continued*

Work as a class to create small gifts for the interviewees. A great way to do this is to make something from local foods, such as jam, berry muffins, or smoked salmon. If this isn't feasible, students can use pressed flowers, mushroom prints, or pebbles to make bookmarks or cards.

Extensions & Lesson Connections:

To extend this activity, speak with a local museum or historical society to find out if they would be willing to archive or exhibit the interviews done by your students. Work with the museum/historical society to ensure you have proper permission from the interviewees to use their interviews in this way. Visit the museum/historical society as a class to learn more about the work they do and why they feel these interviews are important to record.

Evaluation:

Assess student understanding of the interview process and changing role of technology by reviewing their interview questions, contributions during discussion, and thank you notes. Evaluate their interview transcripts for completeness and accuracy. Note whether students participate meaningfully in group discussions, and observe their use of cooperation and respectful feedback during interview practice.

