

Winter Traditions and Celebrations: Past and Present

There are many traditions and celebrations that occur during our long winter months here in Alaska. This information provides a great opportunity to introduce Alaska Native cultures into your classroom in one way or another.

Remembering Russian Orthodox Christmas By Geneva Penetac

On Christmas Eve (January 6) we'd hitch up our dog teams to begin slavick (starring). It was so much fun mushing across the frozen lake to the houses nestled along its sparkling shore. We'd jump off one sled and jump onto another! The sky was clear, the moon shone big and BRIGHT and the stars twinkled so low that I felt I could touch them! It was beautiful! The snowflakes caught the moon's rays and bounced off light beams from their six edges making the night sparkle like diamonds.

As we entered each house one by one, the star-holder would stand under the icon area while we faced him singing in Yupik. After singing the host and hostess would invite us to eat the foods we set out. The men would eat first, then the women and children. It was understood that the host and hostess with their children would join the slavickers onto the next house, if they wanted to. At the first house I received a present of maple syrup! Was I happy!! By the last house there would be lots of dog teams! We'd be so full and tired and ready for bed. What a wonderful, wonderful, night.