

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.

Russian Christmas By Lucy Brown

We couldn't wait for the church bells to ring at 12 midnight signaling that Christmas had started! We'd run to the church and enter quietly! During the three hour church service, we'd kneel and stand, trying to be good and stay awake. The men and boys stood on one side and the women and girls stood on the other side. Finally near the end of the service we'd have to kiss Jesus' picture. I was never sure if I should really kiss the picture or just play kiss it - for fear of getting the picture dirty. So I play kissed the picture!

After church we'd go to the first house and sing in Yupik and Russian while the star holder twirled the star. After caroling, we'd eat and go to the next house.

Now there was my friend's house which I feared greatly to enter! I made my friend promise not to leave me behind in it - that she was to wake me up if I fell asleep. (There was someone who had died in the house and I was scared that a ghost would get me!) I fell asleep and my friend left me behind!! (Some friend.) I got up when someone entered and lit the kerosene lamp. I felt scared and my heart was pounding to think that I had slept in the house all alone. But I finally calmed myself down.

Slavick was going to church, eating, singing, sharing, and visiting friends and family.