

# TREES OF INTERIOR ALASKA

## A Thematic Teaching Unit

Prepared by Donna Miller MacAlpine  
for the Iditarod Area School District

## INTRODUCTION

Trees of Interior Alaska is one of the thematic units originally developed for the Iditarod Area School District under several programs including Title VII and the Bilingual/Bicultural Program. Originally the units consisted of goals and objectives and a set of lesson plans for designated grades, along with a list of Resources and Materials. Some of the units were subsequently developed into learning kits circulated within the school district. These kits contained 1) a Notebook with the original lesson plans and activities, plus many pages of supplementary information, 2) a selection of related books and pamphlets, 3) a collection of natural objects and artifacts to aid the teacher in presenting the lessons. As the units have been updated and revised over the years they have been expanded to encompass a larger range of curriculum subjects related to the central theme.



Willow, cottonwood and spruce along the Kuskokwim River at McGrath.

## Notes to the Teacher

There are only a few different kinds of trees growing naturally in Interior Alaska but they are still of great importance to us, to the animals and birds which live around us, and to our total environment. Through this unit we hope to have students think about and learn about trees, which they may tend to take for granted, and to examine the many products we get from trees. Ask your students, "What would we do without trees or without the things we use everyday which come from trees?"

The study of trees can be used to teach all of the subjects in a school curriculum and this thematic unit includes lessons and activities in science, social studies, language arts, math, art and technology, as well as many activities in other areas. Students are encouraged to develop their powers of observation and notation, and to make meaningful comparisons and deductions while learning about something they see and use every day.

## Goals

### Science

- To use the local environment and common, every day surroundings to teach the school curriculum.
- To develop an awareness of the local environment and its resources.

### Language Arts

- To develop oral and written language skills.

### Math

- To integrate math and science into a central theme.

### Culture

- To incorporate local Native culture into social studies and other classroom subjects.

### Art

- To provide art and craft activities related to the central theme.

### Technology

- To encourage the use of modern technology in research and in documentation of a local resource.

### Social Studies

- To expose students to economic opportunities in the local area.
- To learn traditional and modern uses of local trees.

## LESSONS

### Lesson 1: What is a Tree?

- definition of a tree
- parts of a tree
- importance of trees

### Lesson 2: Identifying Local Trees

### Lesson 3: Traditional Uses of Trees

### Lesson 4: Uses of Trees in the Modern World

### Lesson 5: Trees in Literature

- in local traditional riddles and stories
- in published literature

## APPENDIX

- Resources and Materials List
- Art Activities

