**“Shifting Sovereignty: How the United States took control of Alaska” Script**

Green text indicates instructions for the presenter/headings

Red text indicates where you should click to play an animation/advance the PowerPoint

Blue text indicates an interactive element

Purple text indicates words to add, based on whether or not the audience/students correctly or incorrectly answer questions

Gray highlights for elements that need to be revisited

**Slide 1: Introduction**

Hello everyone! My name is ­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ here at Sitka National Historical Park in Sitka, Alaska. I’ve been invited here today by your teacher to tell you all about a very important event in the history of the United States and the state of Alaska. In 1867, the United States purchased all of the land in Alaska from the government of another country. Today, Alaska is our largest state. Even though we’re used to seeing it in a little box on the corner of many maps, if you were to put a map of Alaska over a map of the lower 48 states, it would cover almost the ENTIRE Midwest- that’s pretty big! Can anyone tell me what country they bought this land from?

Have the teacher call on a student or two to make guesses or see if they know (maybe they saw a prior program)

Those were good guesses/Yes! Excellent guess! In 1867, the United States bought Alaska from the Russian government- For over 100 years, they ran several colonies here, including one that they founded on the same land where the city of Sitka (where I am) is today! Let’s get started!

**Slide 2: New Archangel, A Russian city in Alaska**

The first thing we need to talk about is one of the words that was in the title of our program here- sovereignty. Can anyone tell me what this word means?

Yes, that’s correct!/Those were good guesses! The best way to describe sovereignty is someone’s right or ability to control an area of land. On this hand-drawn map, you can see all of the land in Alaska outlined in green, with Canada outlined in blue on the right and Russia outlined in red on the left. The Russian government believed that they had sovereignty over all of this land in green because they had established colonies, like Ново Архангельск (Novo Arhangelsk), which was the capital of Russian America. In this drawing, you can see the buildings this Russian colony, built on the shore between the mountains in the background and the water, where several sailing ships are anchored.

Let’s try to pronounce this name together! This first word is pretty easy, repeat after me- “No” (pause), “Vo” (pause)- “Novo”. This second word is a little bit tricker, but I’m sure you can do it! Repeat after me, “Ar” (pause), “Hang” (pause), “El” (pause), “Sk” (pause), “Arhangelsk”. So now, let’s try to put these two words together- “Novo Arhangelsk”. Very good! In English, this colony would be called New Archangel- it’s named after a city in Russia called Archangel!

There were a lot of reasons the Russians wanted to put their colony here in Southeast Alaska, but the biggest reason was for all the natural resources that they found right here. In this picture, which was taken from right here in our Visitor’s Center at Sitka National Historical Park, you can see the beautiful gravel beaches, waterways, and tree covered mountains. There was plenty of trees for building houses and ships, a large area of land to build on (which can be rare in this part of Alaska), and most importantly, plenty of Sea Otters- the main reason the Russians were here in the first place was for their warm and waterproof fur, which was very valuable for trading. In this picture of a sea otter floating on its back, you can see just how warm and soft their fur looks.

However, there were already people who lived here. For thousands of years, a group of Alaskan native people called the Tlingit had lived in this area, and they did not want the Russians to settle near their homes. This photo from 1904 shows a group of Tlingit people gathered together. They are wearing their traditional clothing which includes things like headwear and robes- we call this type of traditional clothing regalia, which are special clothes and accessories worn during gatherings and ceremonies.

The Tlingit knew that the Russians had been not been fair to other Alaskan native people and had treated them very badly, so and did not want them to settle here. In 1802 and 1804, the Russians and Tlingit fought over the land and ultimately, the Tlingit made the decision to move to another part of Southeast Alaska to make sure they could live in peace. In this painting of the Battle of 1804, you can see the Tlingit on the right wearing traditional clothing and armor, defending their home against the Russians and their Alaskan Native allies, who are approaching from the water.

After 1804, the Russians continued to build their colony on the land they had claimed from the Tlingit, while the Tlingit rebuilt their community on other parts of the island. Eventually, nearly 20 years after the Battle of 1804, these two groups made an uneasy peace and the Tlingit were allowed to settle outside the walls of New Archangel- but there would forever exist a mistrust between them.

**Slide 3: Who will run New Archangel?**

So now that we know all about how and why the Russians wanted to build their own colony here in Alaska, the next thing we need to talk about is who was going to run things here? Who was going to make all the important decisions in town, who was going to make sure that things were running smoothly, who was going to make sure that people were healthy, and fed? Well the Russians had a simple answer- the same people they put in charge of finding Sea otters for them. They were building this city to hunt for more sea otters, so it made sense to have the same people run both- and those people were the employees of the Russian-American Company- here you can see a drawing of the flag that represented their company, with the white, blue, and red of the traditional Russian flag, but with the double-headed eagle, the symbol of the Russian royal family, on the flag as well.

The Russian-American company was a special company for two reasons- one, it was started by the Tsar, the ruler of Russia. In this painting we can see a tsar dressed in beautiful clothing and a crown decorated with jewels. This is a painting of Tsar Paul I, who created the Russian American company in 1799. The second is that it had a monopoly on the fur trade- does that word sound familiar to anyone? Raise your hand if you think monopoly is just a fun board game you where you play with paper money and try to buy up different parts of the board!

Well, the point of that board game actually shows what a monopoly is- a monopoly is when a product, like sea otter fur, can only be bought from one company. It would be like if insert analogy here (for example, if the government said that in the United States, Apple was the only company allowed to sell cell phones, and every other company that makes or sells phones had to stop). In this case, the Russian-American company was given a monopoly on trading Sea Otter fur in Alaska by the Tsar, which meant all the trading needed to happen through them.

After New Archangel was founded, important members of the Russian American company took over important roles in running to colony as part of their jobs. For example, the manager of the Russian American company, who was in charge of everyone in Alaska, became the first Governor of Alaska. His name was Alexander Baranov- you can see him in this painting on the left, and on the right is a map of Baranof Island, which is where Sitka (where I am) is located. As you can see, the island where New Archangel was, where Sitka is now, is named after him.

**Slide 4: The rise and fall of New Archangel**

Because we just covered a lot of information very quickly, we’re going to take a minute to review what we’ve learned so far! In order to do that, we’re going to go over our “Five W” questions- can anyone tell me what those five “W” questions are?

That’s correct/Very good/Not quite! The five “W” questions are: Who, What, When, Where, and Why! These questions are SO important to me, as someone who studies and thinks about the past and the history of places like Sitka all day long because it does two big things; it helps me remember what I know or have learned so far, and also helps me figure out exactly what I need to learn next! Let’s take a look at how these questions apply to what we’ve talked about so far!

1. The Who- Can anyone tell me the different groups of people we’ve talked about so far?

Pause and have a student give their guess

1. The What- Can anyone tell me what the Russians did here?

Pause and have a student give their guess

1. The When- Can anyone tell me when the Russians fought the Tlingit and started their colony?

Pause and have a student give their guess

1. The Where- Can anyone tell me the name of the island that New Archangel was on?

Pause and have a student give their guess

1. The Why- Can anyone tell me why the Russians wanted to put a colony here in Southeast Alaska? What resource did they want access to?

Pause and have a student give their guess

Those were all very good answers! Now that we’ve reviewed our “W” questions, and figured out exactly what we know, we can answer the next important question- the How! How did New Archangel help the Russians do what they wanted to here in Southeast Alaska? How did the colony grow over time to help the Russians achieve their goals?

In order to help us think about this and imagine it in our heads, I’d like to take a minute to do a little exercise. I’m going to show you two different historical drawings- both of them are of New Archangel, but they’re from two different years. This one here on the left is of New Archangel, as it looked in 1814. The one on the right here is from nearly the same angle, but it was drawn much later in 1851! In the decades between these two images, the colony saw its most successful years, when they made the most amount of money.

Everyone take a second to close your eyes, and I want you to think about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert local town name here). I’d like you to think of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as a living thing- as your town has gotten older, things have changed. Maybe more houses have been built, maybe new stores have opened up, or old stores have closed down. Just like a living, breathing thing, towns grow and change just like people. Now, everyone open your eyes. I want you to think about this while you look at the differences between these two drawings- how do you think the colony of New Archangel has grown and changed? (This is a section that I’m calling local knowledge- you’ll see in the program outline under “pre-program prep” there’s a line about generating local knowledge. This means get in touch with the teacher before hand and learn if there’s some example that students would know. Maybe there’s a popular new restaurant or grocery store that just opened up, or closed down. Something that kids would be able to visualize and connect with.)

Take a moment to have the teacher call on students to give guesses

Those are very good answers! As the colony grew, the Russians built things like general stores, docks and shipyards to build and repair ships, farms, churches, etc. These are all things that the Russians needed to make New Archangel feel like home. (Try to insert an example of “local knowledge” again here- maybe something like “Imagine if (insert local town name here) didn’t have wide enough streets for your towns Apple Festival! (Or whatever else kind of festival/parade they have every year). And these buildings on the other side of the wall, who do you think would have lived there?

That’s right! Remember how I said that eventually the Tlingit came back to this area and they made an uneasy peace with the Russians? This was part of that- the Tlingit rebuilt on the outside of town, but there was always a wall between the two groups because they often mistrusted one another.

New Archangel continued to grow, up until just after the 1851 drawing was made. In the 1850’s and 1860’s, the amount of money that the Russians could make from Sea Otters fur went way down- in Europe and Asia, it was becoming easier and easier to trade between countries and the need for Russian merchants to trade their furs in China, and then bring goods like tea and porcelain back to Russia was going way down. By the 1860’s, the Russian American company and the Russian government were all losing money by keeping the colony running.

**Slide 5: Domestic policy changes and wartime losses in Russia**

There were a few other reasons that, by the 1860’s, the Russians were no longer very interested in running their colony in Alaska. One of the biggest reasons was a series of changes to Russian society that today, we call the “Great Reforms”. This is a map of Europe that shows all the different countries that existed in the 1850’s. In the 1850’s, the Russian Empire, which is ALL of this land in purple here, had fought a war with Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, which you can see at the ends of these two red arrows, over a part of the world on the Black Sea that we call Crimea. You can see Crimea here inside this small red circle, sticking out into the Black Sea, which kind of looks like a shoe! Not only did the Russians lose this war, but they lost BADLY. Afterwards, many people in Russia, especially in the government, began to realize just how weak Russia was compared to other major nations like Britain or France, both of which you can see in this big red circle on the screen. People like Tsar Alexander II, who was crowned in 1855, realized the country needed to change and modernize, in order to keep up with the rest of the world. You can see Alexander II here in this painting, dressed in a military uniform with his excellent, bushy mustache.

While a lot of these reforms were about the way the government, economy, and military in Russia worked, there were also a few that had a direct effect on New Archangel. One of the biggest reforms was when Tsar Alexander freed of a group of enslaved people called “serfs”.

In the Russian Empire at the time, almost all the land was owned by either the rich and powerful, or the church. Serfs were poor people who owed money to the people in charge- the ones who owed the land. In order to pay back this money, they were forced to work on the land doing things like farming, building, gathering wood, raising animals, etc. Even though the whole country relied on the things they made, they were never treated fairly. In 1861, Alexander II said that all these serfs no longer owed money to the people who owned the land, and from now on they would be free to do what they wanted, and if they wanted to continue their old jobs, they would be paid fairly and treated with respect. The painting you see on the left here shows serfs standing down in the snow, while a military officer stands on some steps reading the Tsar’s order that they are free. After this happened, many people were quick to point out that here in Alaska, Russian fur hunters and traders were treating Alaskan native people in the same way that the serfs were, and if the serfs were being treated with fairly and with respect in Russia, the Alaskan native people across the ocean should be treated the same way.

Another one of the big reasons Russia didn’t want to run New Archangel was their neighbor- and this time I don’t mean the Tlingit on who’s ancestral land they lived. This time, I mean the next country over- here, we can see the same map of Russian America that we saw earlier, with Canada outlined in blue to the right of Alaska, which is in green. Can anyone tell me what country was in charge of Canada? Show me on your fingers if you think its 1. Spain, 2. Britain, 3. France, or 4. Italy.

Give students a moment to answer

If you said #2, you’re correct! Britain was responsible for running Canada- and remember, Russia had just lost in a war to Great Britain. After this loss, they became very afraid of the British and their power in North America. If they wanted to send troops to Alaska to take it, the Russian-American company knew they didn’t have the resources to prevent them from taking it by force.

So, what could the Russians to do? One of the easiest options was simply to sell all the land in Alaska that they believed they had claimed. The hard part involved finding an interested buyer- who do you think that was?

That’s right! The Russian government approached the American government to talk about transferring this land to them- they knew that the Americans were trying to expand their own borders, and would definitely be interested.

**Slide 6: American Reconstruction and Manifest Destiny**

First, we need to look at how and why America was changing and expanding, and the time period is very important here. We’re talking about the 1860’s- during this decade, America fought a war. Can anyone tell me what war America fought between 1861 and 1865? I want you to show me on your fingers if you think America fought in 1. The Revolutionary War, 2. The Spanish-American War, 3. The Vietnam War, 4. The Civil War, or 5. World War I?

Give students a chance to respond and insert a response here based on what kind of answers you’re seeing

If you’re holding up four fingers, then you’re correct! Between 1861 and 1865, America had fought our first and only Civil War between the Union in the North, who you can see on the left in this painting wearing blue uniforms, and the Confederacy in the South, which you can see on the right in their gray uniforms. Although here in America, when we talk about the Civil War we mean our own, a Civil War is actually just any war where the people fighting are from the same country- and they’re usually fighting over some major disagreements. This was certainly true in the American Civil War, with one of the biggest disagreements being slavery in the United States.

Before the Civil War, every time America had added more territory to the country, they had to answer the question: “Will people that live in this new place be allowed to own slaves or not”. On this map from the 1850’s, you can see all the “free states”, or states where slavery was already illegal in dark green, and the “slave states”, where slavery was still allowed, in red. This light green area, which are all states today, were known as territories at the time. While both sides had people that wanted to expand, the Northern states argued that they shouldn’t allow slaves in these new territories, and the Southern States said they should. When President Abraham Lincoln, who was very anti-slavery, was elected, several of these “slave states” said that they were not going to be part of the United States anymore, which triggered the fighting that began the Civil War.

Once the Civil War had ended and President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the document that officially freed all enslaved people in the United States, the government could incorporate new territory, which is a fancy term that basically means that these places would become part of the United States and things like our laws and government would apply there, without having to worry about the question of if that new place would be allowed to have slaves. You can see here one version of the Emancipation Proclamation with the text in the middle and scenes of enslaved people becoming free drawn in the borders.

After the civil war there was a HUGE effort by the United States to expand to the west, especially for people like farmers and ranchers. This also included newly freed slaves who went west to get their own land and to leave behind the places where they had been enslaved. You can see here several photographs of African American cowboys in these territories, riding horses and herding cattle. We call this huge expansion effort after the Civil War Manifest Destiny- Americans belief that it was their destiny, that it was their right, to expand across the entirety of North America and that no other country could have land here.

This painting you see on the screen is actually a very famous painting called “American Progress”. It was made in 1872 by an artist named John Gast in New York. I’d like us all to take a minute to look at this painting, and then tell me some of the things that you see happening here. What are these different groups of people, and what are each of them doing? What are the animals doing? Who is this woman in the middle supposed to be? What does the landscape tell you about what’s happening in this picture?

After a minute or two, have students tell you what they see happening here. Important highlights are things like leaving the cities, mining and farming, animals and Native Americans being pushed away. The woman is supposed to by Lady Columbia, the female personification of America, bringing “civilization” westward in the form of telegraph wires and trains. The book she is holding is a schoolbook.

**Slide 7: Engineering a sale, key figures in the Alaska Purchase**

So, we’ve explored a few very important historical events, and we spent some time talking about what was happening in Russia, with the “Great Reforms”, and their fear of the British- especially in Canada. We also talked about what was happening in America, with the end of Slavery and America’s belief in its right to expand across the entire continent. So just to make sure we’re all on the same page, we’re going to go over our Five “W” questions again- remember, these questions help us remember what we’ve already learned, and where we need to go next!

Go over the five “w” questions with the class and see what kind of answers they come up with- also measures comprehension!

So now that we’ve gone over these questions, we can talk about the “How”! How did this transfer of power between Russia and America actually happen?!

Since their goals were aligned it made sense for the Russians and the Americans to come to an agreement- the Russians would sell all of the land in Alaska to the United States.

Now, there are several people that were important to the sale that we need to talk about- the first person is William Seward. You can see him in this photograph holding a top hat and a cane. In the 1860’s, Seward was the Secretary of State under President Abraham Lincoln, and then under President Johnson- does anyone know what the Secretary of State does? The Secretary of State head of a part of our government that we call the State Department. The State Department is in charge of foreign policy, which is our term for when we talk to or make deals with other countries. The Secretary of State is also a member of the president’s cabinet- the people who advise the president. Since the United States had to negotiate with another country to buy Alaska, Secretary Seward was in charge of these negotiations.

Another major American figure involved in the sale was the man you see here in this photograph, Charles Sumner. He was a senator from Massachusetts that worked closely with Seward. Alone, Seward couldn’t convince people that buying Alaska was worth it. Senator Sumner went around to people in the government, and talked with them about the natural resources of Alaska, and told them they would make Alaska worth buying. With his help, enough people eventually believed that buying Alaska was a good idea, and the sale could keep going.

However, both of these men were working on the American side- and they had to be meeting with someone from the Russian side! Seward was dealing with a man named Edouard de Stoeckl- he was the Foreign Minister of Russia. You can see him sitting in this photograph, with his big mustache and sideburns. Although they had different titles, Foreign Minister and Secretary of State had the same job function- they were both the ones responsible for interacting with other countries. Edouard de Stoeckl served under Tsar Alexander II, who we just talked about a minute ago! Remember, Alexander II wanted to reform his country, and letting go of Alaska was a major step down that road.

**Slide 8: Sale details**

After the negotiations between Seward and de Stoeckl were over, the United States agreed to pay Russia this amount of money for all the land they claimed sovereignty over in Alaska. Who can tell me what this number is?

Have the teacher call on a student tell you

That’s right! Raise your hand if you wish you had $7.2 million! I know I wish I had that much money!

However, when I say $7.2 million, it’s not the same as having $7.2 million today- over time, the actual value of our money has changed through a process called inflation. Inflation just means that prices rise (or inflate) based on the amount of money available. Insert an example of inflation here (see below for example)

For example, say you want to go to the grocery store and buy a candy bar- let’s say it costs $1. Now in this example, let’s say that everyone is given $10. Now the store owner knows you and everyone else has $10, they might decide that they can charge more money for a candy bar- this is inflation.

Usually, inflation doesn’t happen this fast, but if you compare 1867 to today, you’ll definitely see it. Because there was less money overall in 1867, $7.2 million was worth a lot then more than it would be today because it was a much larger percentage of that total amount of money.

To figure out how much money Alaska would have cost the United States today, we’re going to do a little math! So first, we need to take our total amount from 1867, which we know is $7.2 million. Next, we need to figure out how much more things cost, on average, than they do in 1867. I’ll tell you- today’s prices are about 18 times higher than they were in 1867 (and remember, this is just because there’s more money available to more people!). Can anyone tell me what symbol we need to put in here to learn how much this $7.2 million would be worth today?

You’re correct! We’d need to put a multiplication symbol here! So when we put this all together, if you wanted to have an equal amount of money to $7.2 million in 1867, you would need to have just about $129,600,000- just under $130 million! Now raise your hand if you wish you had THAT much money!

**Slide 9: Transfer Ceremony**

After they had agreed on details like the price, the Russians and the Americans decided that they needed to have a formal ceremony- and it only made sense for them to have it right here in New Archangel- you can see here the same drawing from 1851 that we were looking at earlier. The Russians and Americans decided to have their ceremony here, in the area you can see highlighted by this red circle. You can see, it’s much higher up than all the surrounding land- this is because it’s actually the top of a large hill- today we call it *Castle Hill*. This hill is actually incredibly important- it’s one of the reasons the Russians wanted to settle here in this spot, because from the top you can see ships approaching from all directions. You can see in drawing the large building here- this was the headquarters of the Russian American company, and they called this building Baranof Castle. In fact, the Tlingit who lived here before the Russians also had a fort on top of this hill, which they called *Noow Tlien*. In this drawing from the 1790’s, you can see the original Tlingit village that was located here on Baranof Island. This place was called *Shee Atika*, which you can probably hear sounds a lot like *Sitka*!

In October of 1867, American soldiers arrived in New Archangel to take possession of the city. On top of Castle Hill, they had a ceremony where the Russian flag was lowered, and an American flag was raised here in Alaska for the first time. While we don’t have any photograph of this event, this painting can show us how what this event might have looked like. On the left here you can see the American soldiers in their blue uniforms, just like from the Civil War, and on the right you can see the Russian troops in their black and red uniforms, and in the middle you can see the American flag being raised. After the American’s took over New Archangel, they made a few changes, including changing the name of the city from New Archangel to Sitka.

**Slide 10: Effects on Alaskan Native People**

Now everyone, we’ve talked a lot about all the details that went into the how and why of this transfer of power between the Russian government and the United States, but in our whole program there’s still something we haven’t talked about, and it’s very important. That is the ways that this transfer of power affected Alaskan native people, like the Tlingit who lived here.

Earlier, we went over how the Russians believed that because they had established colonies here in Southeast Alaska, they had established sovereignty over this area. They believed that they controlled this entire land and all of its resources, simply because they lived in a very small part of it. When the Russians made the decision to sell Alaska, they included all of this land- which included the traditional homes of many, many different Alaskan native peoples like the Tlingit, Sugpiaq, Aleut, Yupik, and Inupiaq. On this map of Alaska, you can see all the different native lands and languages of Alaskan Native people broken up into different colors. These were their homes, and the Russians had no right to sell them.

One of the biggest issues is how these different peoples viewed the idea of “ownership”, especially of land. The Russians, like many different European settlers and colonists who came to places all across North and South America, believed that any land that native people weren’t living on could be claimed, and any land that they were living on could be taken, if need be. To them, if there were not things like signs, buildings, or something marking the land as “claimed”, then they could take it. When the Russians came to this part of Alaska, they brought with them many of these- land claim plaques. The writing on this says “Землю русского владению” (Zemlyuu Russkovo Vladeniyu), which means “Land of Russian Possession”. From historical documents, we know that the Russians who came here buried these plaques all over Southeast Alaska, but the only one that has ever been found was actually right here, in Sitka- unfortunately, the real one is too fragile to be displayed, but if you come visit our park you’ll be able to see a replica this interesting piece of history in our museum! The Russians believed that even though the Tlingit lived in these places and used the resources found there, because they did not have anything marking the land as theirs, by burying these plaques the Russians could “claim” these places.

The Tlingit viewed this idea quite differently. They did not “claim” land like the Russians did, but they would use all of the resources on the land depending on the season. For example, during one season they might travel to a certain place to gather berries, and during another season they might travel to different rivers and creeks and build temporary camps to fish and hunt.

When the Russians came and “claimed” the land here as theirs, the Tlingit could still access the land and the resources they needed to maintain their way of life. The Russians simply wanted to own the land to stop other European countries from claiming it. After the Russians sold their homes to the American government, problems began to arise.

When Americans began coming to Alaska to look for gold, they began to restrict access to the resources the Tlingit so desperately needed. I’d like to read you a few lines from a quote by Tlingit clan leader named Kah-du-shan. In 1898, so about twenty years after the Americans bought Alaska, he and other Tlingit chiefs from all over Southeast Alaska met with the governor, John Brady, to make their voices heard.

He said: “Long, Long time ago before white people came to this country our people lived here at certain places where they went hunting and fishing. When the Russians were here, they did not have any stores in the interior, by they used to trade with our people here. I was a boy when this country was purchased, and soldiers came here to Wrangel and Sitka. There was a captain by name of Smith who told us that Americans had purchased this country…By and by they began to build canneries and take the creeks away from us, where they make salmon and we told them these creeks belonged to us, they would not pay any attention to us… Here at this place as well as other places they take our property, take away ground, and when we complain to them about it, they employ a lawyer and go to court and win the case…We make this complaint because we are very poor now. The time will come when we will not have anything left. The money and everything else in this country will be the property of the white man, and our people will have nothing.”

At the same gathering, another Tlingit clan leader named Yash-noosh said this: “What Kah-du-shan has said he told you the truth. We have not talked to you for a long time, for many years. We have not said anything to you since the Russians lived in this country. All the people would like to say something to the governor. We are perfectly willing to give this country Alaska to you. We know this is our country. How long we have been living here we do not know, very long time…. The government now sells land. Our people will have simple patches of ground raising vegetables and place where our people go hunting; creeks where they fish, we want you to give them back to us. We are perfectly willing that you should have Alaska. We did not know that the Russians sold this country; of course, we know it now. When the American soldiers came to this country, that was the first time we heard that this country was sold by the Russians.”

What kinds of things do these quotes tell us? By reading these quotes, we can learn things like the Russians did not talk to any Alaskan native people before they sold their homes. When American settlers began moving into Alaska the government sold the creeks and hunting grounds that native people needed to live their lives. When the Tlingit, and other Alaskan native people, tried to win back their rights in court, they would always lose. Alaskan native people weren’t given a fair chance.

The ways that Alaskan native people were treated during this time, and even afterwards when the United States took over Alaska, is an unfortunate effect of history- and it is not unique to Alaska. As the United States expanded, it often overlooked the rights of people native to this land. As sad as it is to learn about these kinds of things, they are very, very important lessons. Understanding how and why these things happened in the past is the best way for all of us to make sure they don’t continue to happen in the future, and to ensure that all of us do our best to make sure everyone is treated fairly and equally.

In fact, it’s because people continued to fight for the rights of Alaskan native people and their ability to use their land that things have continued to get better as we’ve moved through history and closer to today. In 1971, the government passed something that we call the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA. This government act officially recognized claims that different Alaskan native people had to lands in Alaska. This act also organized different groups of Alaskan native people into 13 different corporations- individual Alaskan native people became “shareholders” in these different corporations, and gained a voice in how each one should use their land and its resources. You can see a map of these different Native corporations broken up into either blue, green, or orange- Sitka, is down here in Southeast Alaska, and is part of the Sealaska Corporation which you can see here in orange.

While there have been criticisms of the ANCSA, many people agree that it has given Alaskan native people a stronger voice and allowed them to live on and use their land in the ways they see fit. And even now, people are still working to make the ANCSA work more fairly and better the lives of Alaskan Native people.

At this point, the program is over but write an introduction in your own voice- an example is below

This is the end of our program! Everyone, I hope you can see now that the ways the Alaska has changed hands over the past few hundred years is an excellent way to view and think about our ever-changing world. And, just like the Alaskan native people have been overlooked in these changes, we always have to do our best to make sure that in our own lives, everyone’s voices are heard; especially when their opinion should matter most. When you leave here today, think about how places and people change, but we must ALWAYS be mindful of OUR place in these changes.

With that, our program is over- I’d like to thank your teacher, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, so much for inviting me to speak to you today and a special thank you to all of you for being such good listeners and asking such great questions! We do have time for questions now, so if you have any you’ve been holding on to now’s the time to ask!