**Sitka National Historical Park**

**DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM OUTLINE**

**Created by Austin McCourt on April 9th, 2021**

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

**Overview:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration | 40-50 Minute program |
| Location | Presented to students via remote meeting software |
| Audience | Elementary and Middle School Students |
| Topic | The transfer of Alaska from Russians to the Americans in 1867 |
| Learning Standards | **See the “Learning Standards” table** |

**Goal:** The goal of this educational program is to provide students of various backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, and statuses with a factual, curriculum-based educational program surrounding the history of the Alaska Purchase of 1867. Students will learn how Russian Alaska grew between the beginning of the 19th and when the sale took place before learning about the most influential figures of the Alaska Purchase both on the American and Russian sides. Students will also learn about the political, social, and economic situation in both countries that inspired the sale. Students will also come to understand this transfer of power from the viewpoint of Alaskan native peoples, who’s nations and traditional homes were “sold” without their permission or consent.

**Objectives:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Objective | Students will learn about founding of the Russian colony of New Archangel |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to explain how the colony was built on Tlingit lands seized by the Russians after the Battle of 1804 |
| 2 | Objective | Students will be able to explain who ran the colony of New Archangel, and why |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to speak about the Russian American company and why they ran the colony |
| 3 | Objective | Students will understand how New Archangel grew and developed, and what kinds of buildings/services the Russians constructed in the colony |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to analyze drawings of New Archangel from different times and discuss what buildings and structures they see develop over time |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4 | Objective | Students will understand the changing world in Russia regarding the societal, military, and economic reforms of the 1850’s, as well as the declining fur trade |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to describe the changes as the “Great Reforms”, as well as why the Pacific Maritime Fur trade was declining |
| 5 | Objective | Students will understand the cause and effects of the Civil War, and understand the concept of Manifest Destiny |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to describe America’s spread westward following the Civil War, and their belief in their right to do so |
| 6 | Objective | Students will be able to name important Russian and American figures who advocated for the sale/purchase of Alaska |
| Measuring Tool | Students will know who figures like Edouard de Stoeckl, William Seward, and Tsar Alexander II are, and how they functioned as state-level negotiators |
| 7 | Objective | Students will understand the particulars of the sale including details like the price, the transfer ceremony, etc. |
| Measuring Tool | Students will be able to pick out details in important historical documents like the Alaska Purchase check, and identify scenes and locations from historically accurate reproduction paintings and photos taken of Castle Hill |
| 8 | Objective | Students will understand how Alaskan native peoples view the Alaska Purchase, and how their rights were infringed upon |
| Measuring Tool | Students will study historical quotes from Tlingit clan leaders and understand their perspective on this issue |

**Theme:** The transfer of Alaska from the hands of Imperial Russia to the United States represents a major turning point in the history of Alaska, the United States, and Russia. Given that the transfer ceremony took place in Sitka, in what was then the Russian city of New Archangel, our park is uniquely suited to educate students about the growth and change of Russian America and the myriad of social, economic, and military changes that occurred in both the United States and Russia through the study of historical figures and documents, fortified through robust, place-based learning examples.

**Essential Questions:** Why did the Russians chose to settle on Baranof Island? Why did the Russian American company run New Archangel? How did the Crimean War and the Great Reforms of the 1860’s effect Russia’s ability to operate an overseas colony? How did the Civil War and the end of slavery encourage manifest destiny? Why was Russia interested in selling Alaska, and why was America interested in buying it? How and where did the sale take place, and what kind of ceremony was involved? How did the Alaska Purchase effect the people already living here?

**Tangible-Intangible Links**:

Studying historical quotes from William Seward will help students understand the concept of American Expansion and Manifest Destiny.

Learning about the history of the “Great Reforms” in Russia will help students understand how and why countries go through economic and social changes, which is particularly applicable today.

Having students study historical maps and drawings of New Archangel will help students understand how cities grow, change, and develop over time and will encourage students to think about place-based learning.

Studying the details of the actual purchase including the ceremony, historical documents, influential figures, and perspectives will help students conceptualize the concept of international relations.

Studying this sale from the perspective of Alaskan Native people will help inform students of historical themes regarding imperialism, colonialism, and the historical erasure of indigenous people and their rights across the world

**Background:**

After the battle of 1804, the Russians were quick to turn Noow Tlien, the original Tlingit village that existed on Baranof Island, and the surrounding Kiks.ádi lands into a secure and profitable colony. By constructing blockhouses (one of which has been rebuilt and can be seen in downtown Sitka today) and fortifications linking them, the Russian colony of New Archangel became a relatively safe and strong example of Russian imperialism and colonization. For the next 50 or so years, the colony continued to grow and develop, and over time tensions with the Kiks.ádi over their Survival March began to lessen- eventually, nearly 20 years after the Battle of 1804, the Tlingit were welcomed back to New Archangel and were allowed to rebuild their traditional homes just outside the colony’s extensive fortifications. Trade was good, and the Russian American company reliably turned a profit on their fur-trading enterprises.

By the 1860’s, the success and profitability of New Archangel, and virtually every Russian holding in North America, had been severely reduced. The colony and the Russian American Company found itself at the confluence of a variety of social, economic, and political pressures sweeping through the Russian landscape during the 1850’s and 60’s, in a series of moves called the Great Reforms. Militarily, economically, politically, governmentally, legally, and socially the Russian Empire was severely lacking in comparison to other European empires like Great Britain. One of the first of these sweeping reforms was the end of serfdom, a system of indentured peasant labor, in Russia in 1861. Once it was outlawed in Russia, critics of the Russian American company were quick to draw comparisons between the treatment of serfs in Russia to the treatment of Tlingit, Aleut, and Sugpiaq workers in Sitka- criticisms that continued to haunt the company until 1867. Economically, the fur trade had slowed significantly both as a result of overhunting and of technological advancements in both textiles and trade that removed fur’s place, particularly sea otter fur, as a luxury good. Without fur, the Russian American company had little to offer in terms of economic viability- virtually any other natural resources that an Alaskan colony could produce could be found just as readily in Siberia.

Another major factor in Russia’s decision to sell Alaska was a direct result of their one-sided defeat in the Crimean War. Tsar Alexander II and his advisors, particularly his brother Grand Duke Konstantin and his ambassador to the United States Edouard de Stoeckl, feared another potential conflict with Great Britain over their unwillingness to sell their new enemy the Alaskan territory (as they had once considered). Both sides knew that the Russians were overextended, and would not be able to defend the territory should the British decide to move in. As a result, the Russian government reached the conclusion that they would rather sell the whole territory to the United States, the only other party interested in the region, as a way to generate profit, avoid another international incident with the British and further embarrassment, and to consolidate imperial power on their *own* continent and avoid the continued drain of resources and clout the RAC had become in recent years.

The Americans also had a plethora of reasons they would want to purchase Alaska, despite the fact that the Americans had just come out of a brutal and bloody civil war and that Alaska was separated from them by an ocean. Prior “situations” like the Gadsden Purchase in 1854 and the Oregon Territory in the 1840’s/50’s had been a cause for concern in Congress- although the United States was interested in acquiring as much land as they could in order to secure their hold on the continent and expand their borders, the issue of whether or not these new territories would be allowed to practice slavery was a constant. As a result of the Civil War, anti-slavery advocates in Congress, many of whom were also aggressive expansionists, could support these large-scale purchases.

**Teacher’s Guide**

**Program Overview/Teaser:**

The transfer of Alaska from the hands of Imperial Russia to the United States represents a tipping point in American, Alaskan, and Russian history as these places and the world began to modernize. As the city where the transfer ceremony took place in 1867, we here at Sitka National Historical Park are uniquely qualified to enlighten a generation of students, as they come with us to explore the highs and lows of the Russian colony that once stood here, the effects the decisions they made had on the world, and the rights of Alaskan native peoples!

**Program Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Explore the history and growth of the Russian colony of New Archangel
2. Discuss the history of the Great Reforms in Russia, and the role they played in the transfer of Alaska from Russia to America
3. Learn about the history of American expansion and Manifest destiny, and how they shaped American policy decisions in the 1860’s and beyond
4. Learn about the influential American and Russian Figures that negotiated and advocated for the sale/purchase of Alaska, and their reasons for doing so
5. Learn about the details of the transfer through lecture and the study of historical documents
6. Learn about Alaska’s transition from Russian hands to American ones, and the effects it had on the people living here, both Alaskan native and settlers.
7. Learn about the ways in which Alaskan native perceive the “sale” of their traditional homes, lands, and resources without their consent

**Standards Addressed**

See “Learning Standards” table

**Vocabulary and Important Concepts**

Sovereignty, New Archangel, Sitka, Tlingit, Battle of 1804, Fur Trade/Sea Otter, Russian American Company, Great Reforms, Civil War, Manifest Destiny, Alaska Purchase, William Seward, Edouard de Stoeckl, Tsar Alexander II, Charles Sumner

**Pre-program prep**

* Read the [Library of Congress’ brief overview of the Alaska Purchase](https://www.loc.gov/collections/meeting-of-frontiers/articles-and-essays/alaska/the-alaska-purchase/#:~:text=Key%20Players%20in%20the%20Alaska%20Purchase.%201%20Aleksandr,%205%20Andrew%20Johnson%20(1808-1875)%20%20More%20items).
* Review the “Vocabulary and Important Concepts” section with students
* Generate some “Local Knowledge”- discuss with the presenter some facts about your town that will help them connect with students. Things students would know about like businesses or restaurants that have opened or closed, local events like parades or festivals, and the interests you hear being discussed in your classroom will all play a role in making this presentation as interactive and engaging as possible!
* Encourage students to think of questions to ask the presenter. We usually have time at the end of a program to answer questions, and we're happy to answer overflow questions via e-mail. We love chatting with students about Sitka!
* The teacher is responsible for classroom management during the program. This includes calling on students throughout the program and helping to ensure that their answers and comments are understood by all. The teacher is also responsible for facilitating questions at the end of the program.

**Post-program reflection**

* Discuss or write about any of the following essential questions
  + What are some other major “land purchases” the United States has made?
    - How were native people affected during these purchases?
  + Compare and contrast President Abraham Lincoln and Tsar Alexander II! How did these two leaders help affect and shape their countries for the future?
* Read through the [University of Alaska’s summary of ANCSA](https://www.uaf.edu/tribal/112/unit_3/alaskanativeclaimssettlementactancsa1971.php) with students
* [Email in your questions, comments, and feedback](https://www.nps.gov/common/utilities/sendmail/sendemail.cfm?o=4F80D5BA91DA90B990AE10AEED1EA4A36693569C12B18389&r=/teachers/classrooms/why-wilderness-distance-learning.htm)! We love to hear back from students and teachers about ways we can improve our distance-learning materials!

**Learning Standards**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **“Shifting Sovereignty: How the United States took control of Alaska”**   * The history of the Russian colony of New Archangel * **The history of the Russian-American company, and why they ran New Archangel** * How the colony of New Archangel grew and changed over 60 years * **The Russian “Great Reforms” under Alexander II** * The Civil War and its effects on American expansion in the west * **The concept of Manifest Destiny and the “divine rights” of Americans to settle** * The Alaska Purchase and influential American and Russian figures involved * **The transfer ceremony that took place in October of 1867 on Castle Hill in Sitka** * Effects of the transfer on the history of New Archangel and how it changed into Sitka * **The “Alaska Purchase” from the perspective of Alaskan native peoples, and their view on how their rights were infringed** * Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act | **PEOPLE, PLACES, ENVIRONMENT** | **CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTION, DISTTRIBUTION** | **INDIVIDUAL, CITIZENSHIP, GOVERNANCE, POWER** | **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** |
| **The student demonstrates an understanding of the interaction between people and their physical environment by:**  Studying historical drawings of New Archangel from different time periods to understand how places change over time (G.B2, B7, B8)(G.D1-5)(G.F1-3) (H. C2,3)  **Studying the history of “Manifest Destiny” and how expansionism spread to Alaska (H. A1,A7)(G. F1,2,3,5)**  Analyzing the historical, social, political, economic, and military effects of major events in both the USA and Russia, such as the Civil War, the Crimean War, and Great Reforms, and the end of Slavery (H. A1,A7)(H. B1a-e, B2)(H.C2,C3)(GC. B6,B7) | **The student demonstrates an understanding of the discovery, impact, and role of natural resources by:**  Learning about the traditional subsistence use of natural resources by Alaskan natives, and their overuse by Russian and other European fur hunters (G. E1-5)(G. F1-3)  **Learning about the history of the Gold Rush in Alaska, and the effect this had on resource use and the ways it impacted Alaskan native lives (G. E1-5)(G. F1,3)** | **The student demonstrates an understanding of the historical rights and responsibilities of Alaskans by:**  Studying the history of “Manifest Destiny” and how expansionism spread to Alaska (H. A1,A7)(G. F1,2,3,5)(H. C2,3)(A. C2)(A.D2)  **Studying state-level negotiations (and negotiators) between American and Russian diplomats concerning the transfer of Alaska (GC. D1-4)(H. C2,C3)(H.B2)**  Studying how Alaskan Native people were overlooked during the sale of Alaska and suffered for it, as well as modern-day efforts to rectify this (GC. C1-8) | **The student demonstrates an understanding of the chronology of Alaska history by:**  Studying historical drawings of New Archangel from different time periods to understand how places change over time (G.B2, B7, B8)(G.D1-5)(G.F1-3) (H. C2,3)  **Studying the history of the Russian American Company and its role in the history of Alaska to learn about important economic concepts and historical themes (GC. F4,F7,F10)**  Learning about the period of Alaskan History following the departure of Russian settlers and the arrival of the Americans, and the effect this had on Alaskan Native people (GC. C4-8)(GC.B6,B7) |

All learning standards taken from: [Alaska State Educational Standards](file:///I:\Interpretation\SCA\2021\Austin\Misc\Alaska%20State%20Educational%20Standards.pdf)