

Holidays observed differently throughout Alaska

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Seasons's greetings, yuletide carols, Ho-Ho-Ho and Merry Christmas. Across Alaska the many regions share these messages during the holidays in many different languages and traditions. Although not all the villages across the state could be reached, many of the larger regions were contacted so they could share their traditions of the Christmas season.

Angniq, A Merry Christmas (Central Yupik); *Spraasnikam*, Happy Holidays and *Amlertut Kiaget*, Many Happy Years (Alutiiq); *Shayadiheini Taakw*, Many Happy Years (Tlingit); *Nayaannamik Piqagin*, Season's Greetings (Inupiaq); *C'ehwggelnen Dzaen*, Holy Day, Holiday (Central Ahtna); *Natukda Qizlan Na'el Qanahdghalen*, Merry Christmas (Tanaina); *Drin Tsal Neenjit Goozu'*, Merry Christmas (Kutchin); and *Dinaahuto' Hoolaanh Di Dzaanh Sodeelts'eeyh*, Merry Christmas (Koyukon).

The Aleut region participates in 'Starring' wherever there is a Russian

Orthodox Church. It began in observance of the miracle worker from Myra known today as St. Nicholas, on December 19th. The ceremonial preparations end on the eve of the Russian Orthodox Christmas Day, January 7th after evening vespers. The 'blessed stars' are taken to the homes of the faithful and friends. Following the old customs, the 'Stars' are carried by carolers past the church and cemetery.

There are two main parts of any star: one is called the body and the other, the centerpiece or "vin'sulla." Think of the spokes of a expensive hub cap on a cadillac. The body is the spokes and the centerpiece is the axle.

The "troper," or the theme song is sung and the stars turn. The centerpiece is the nativity scene and the star is lit up. As the singers continue with the "troper" followiwn is the part of the Virgin Mary is highlighted. The song continues to explain the glorious birth the Christ Child in Bethlehem. As the groups go from house to house singing the priest goes from house to house blessing all in the community.

The custom requires that the star is

carried in the community and to do so the carolers must dress warm.

The Arctic Slope Region will prepare potlatches and observe Christmas pretty much as they have for many years. The day after Christmas the Eskimo Games begin and are held until the January 1.

Prizes are awarded to the winners of each game and on the last day of the games the competitors go for about 24 hours of non-stop competition.

The school district will ring in the new year in a stylish manner by sending gifts to all the school districts in the villages. Gifts are sent to the children, who are also greeted by Santa himself. Cape Smythe Airlines, despite some possibly adverse weather conditions, will stand in for Sleigh and Reindeer, spiriting Santa around to the villages.

The Ahtna Region observes many traditions during the holidays. Potlatches are important, with the Elders preparing for the Christmas season. Delicacies such as Moosehead soup will fill hungry potlatch-goers' stomachs during the holidays. A party for the Elders will begin and 'flag

bags' put together by the community will have gifts of many sorts. Traditional dance and entertainment will warm the hearts while the blistering cold outside is forgotten.

Toys for youngsters and packages for elders are put together by many organizations.

The Calista and the Chugach regions will observe Christmas day on the 25th of December, though Russian Christmas is observed by the community for three days in January. *Slavic*, meaning Russian Christmas, is a tradition within the Russian Orthodox Church. Christmas caroles are sung in their language. There are over 15 communities in the regions observing Slavic.

Kodiak Area Native Association will have a special Christmas dinner for the needy people of the community. Christmas dinner is served for homeless families and individuals. Volunteers have a program for children and Elders on Christmas day, and on the 21st the senior citizens home will host a Christmas program.

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Southeast Alaska will have an annual Old Timers' Basketball Tournament. A children's Christmas party will be hosted at the Alaska Native Brotherhood and at the Alaska Native Sisterhood. Santa will give out presents during the party.

And in Anchorage, the Cook Inlet Native Association will be hosting 350 children for their annual Christmas party. Santa Claus will make an appearance there as well, to distribute gifts to the children. CINA will also be helping about 150 families in the Cook Inlet region by providing Christmas baskets with a variety of foods, so that nobody goes without something special during the holiday season.