

Classrooms on the Nuna

Program Overview and Start-Up Guide



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Classrooms on the Nuna

(COTN) Executive Summary

Program Overview

Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN), or "School on the Nuna" in Iñupiaq, is an innovative yearlong educational program that moves traditional classroom learning into natural, culturally relevant outdoor settings. Originating at Meade River School in Atkasuk, Alaska, COTN integrates Indigenous knowledge systems with standard curriculum through place-based education.

Key Components

- **Fall Week on the Land:** First full week of school conducted outdoors in traditional settings
- **Winter Ice Fishing Session:** Three-day cultural activity program
- **Spring Nigliq Camp:** Extended outdoor learning experience
- **Community Integration:** Local elders, cultural leaders, and community members actively participate

Core Principles

1. **Community-Driven:** Success depends on local community support and partnership
2. **Cultural Relevance:** Curriculum connects to students' traditions, values, and connection to the land
3. **Environmental Stewardship:** "Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but memories"
4. **Flexibility:** Each community adapts the program to their unique cultural activities and traditions

Implementation Requirements

- **Early Planning:** Begin formal discussions with land stewards 6+ months in advance
- **Community Partnerships:** Secure support from Native villages, city councils, and local corporations

- **Land Permissions:** Obtain formal approval from land stewards and understand usage restrictions
- **Equipment Sharing:** Leverage community resources and maintain equipment to highest standards
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Include agencies like Iḷisagvik College, ASRC, and village corporations

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced academic achievement through culturally relevant learning
- Stronger community-school relationships
- Preserved and transmitted Indigenous knowledge
- Increased student engagement and connection to place
- Professional development for educators in place-based teaching methods

Success Factors

The program's sustainability relies on genuine community ownership rather than top-down school district implementation. Strong partnerships with local organizations, respect for traditional knowledge, and commitment to environmental stewardship are essential for long-term success.

Program Overview:

Beginnings:

Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN), or *School on the Nuna* (SOTN)—the direct Iñupiaq translation—is a yearlong program where Academic and cultural educational learning takes place in place-based, traditional settings. The program originated in Atqasuk, Alaska, at Meade River School, within the North Slope Borough School District.

The initial version of COTN was designed as a beginning of the year site based inservice out on the natural landscape of the area. The intent was to orient new teaching staff to the local culture, environment, and subsistence lifestyle, with the goal of helping them embrace place-based education. This immersive experience provided new teachers with a deeper understanding of how Meade River School was working to be a true community-centered school.

For the first two days of on-site teacher in-service, activities were held outdoors, along the banks of the Kuulugruaq River. Tents were set up for instruction, and lunch and orientation were shared outside. Community members often stopped by to visit, share coffee, and introduce themselves. Many students also dropped in to meet their new teachers.

For many new and returning staff, this was a disorienting yet eye-opening way to begin the school year—far from the traditional in-service, school setting. This unique model of COTN was continued successfully for two years, laying the foundation for what the program would grow to become.

The next natural evolution of COTN was to completely rethink the traditional idea of school. The plan was to move the first full week of school out onto the nuna (the land), using the natural environment — our students' home — to teach standard based school subjects in a more natural, hands-on setting. This approach gave birth to the current version of COTN.

Today, this version of COTN not only includes the first full week on the nuna but has also expanded to feature a three-day ice fishing

session — an important cultural activity in Atqasuk, which is an inland community — as well as a Nigliq camp held in the spring.

The beauty of COTN is its flexibility: each community can adapt and shape the program based on their own cultural activities and local traditions.

Founding Principals

***Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN) is a community-based program that depends on the cooperation and support of local communities and organizations to survive, thrive, and grow. As a place-based initiative, COTN reflects the values, practices, and priorities of each unique community. The structure and focus of the camp are shaped by local norms and traditional subsistence activities, which vary from one community to another.**

*** All planning and activities related to Classrooms on the Nuna will be communicated openly with the community. Public meetings will be held to invite input, and informational materials will be shared with community leaders and local entities to ensure the event's success. Community members, including Elders and cultural leaders, will be invited and encouraged to participate and contribute to the Classrooms on the Nuna experience.**

*** All students thrive academically when new concepts are introduced, and concepts and beginning knowledge are solidified through culturally relevant, place-based education that reflects their traditions, values, and connection to the land. Integrating Indigenous knowledge systems helps reinforce learning by making it more meaningful and rooted in students' lived experiences.**

*** Classrooms on the Nuna is honored to be granted access to lands owned by Native Corporations and other entities. We follow a deep respect for these lands by adhering to the principle: 'leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but memories.' At the close of each camp, we ensure the area is left as found, and even cleaner than when we arrived.**

Foundational Work

One of the most important foundational concepts of COTN is that this project must be a community-driven activity. The North Slope Borough School District supports this concept and its activities, but its sustainability and success must come from partnering with the community where the activities occur. For example: In the community of Atqasuk, where COTN began, the Native Village of Atqasuk and the City of Atqasuk were instrumental to the beginning of the program and necessary to the sustainability of the project. From its very beginnings, COTN was a whole community undertaking rather than an NSBSD activity. The Inupiat Department of the NSBSD strongly supports COTN and supplies experts in cultural and educational activities, but without direct community support, could not happen.

First Step:

I will be using Atqasuk as an example for many of the foundational steps and procedures, but each community may differ. These initial steps are presented in the way COTN began in the village of Atqasuk.

Before the first tent was erected, a visit to the Native Village of Atqasuk was required to ask for permission to utilize the land from the steward of the land. This was done informally in the example of Atqasuk, but if we knew then what we know now, a more formal request would be made during a meeting of the land stewards as a show of respect and formality to help forge the beginning of a continued supportive structure. One of the main reasons to begin with the land stewards is ask for permission as well as ask for recommendations for areas that would benefit the intended usage. The land stewards will also know of any rules, permissions, permits or any issues that may impact the intended usage.

This meeting should happen well in advance of the date of the intended land usage.

Atqasuk Example: One of the ideas that came from our initial communications with the Native Village of Atqasuk was the concern of the heavy usage of the plot of land. The Nuna heals slowly from heavy use of trails and the number of participants of COTN. We wanted to make sure we did not impact any subsistence areas. We visited with the elders, the keepers of traditional knowledge of our village, to make sure we were not impacting important areas of

substance. We also worked out the arrangement for repeated usage of an area. We agreed that no specific area would be used as a camp again until at least a 5-year moratorium to ensure the rebound of the intended area. As COTN has evolved, we have seen that 5 years may not be enough time in some areas we utilized, but in others was ample for rejuvenation of the land.

In looking to the Native Village of Atqasuk for advice and maps available in their office, we found the initial teacher in-service rendition and the first true COTN, where students were involved, happened on the coal mine property (the coal mine was the first permanent usage of what would become the Village of Atqasuk. We had to obtain permission to use the land as our temporary school. The Native Village of Atqasuk and the City of Atqasuk, along with the community of Atqasuk, helped us gain permission to utilize the land and proved to be invaluable as we asked to utilize the land a second time. An added benefit to keeping in contact with the land stewards of the mine site was that our second usage of this site was enhanced by the fact that the family that controls the land was present during our fall COTN session, and we met as a school at the residence of an elder who presented the history of the site and many stories of education and living on the site as a child. Cooperation and communication with the land stewards were instrumental in this wonderful opportunity. We were officially invited back to use the site any time.

This is a good time to set the expectation that any area utilized for COTN will be respected and honored by leaving it better than found. The commitment in Atqasuk is that any trail will be left better, and the camp area will be clean and left scarless. The afternoon of the last day of camp is used to have students clean up and make sure the camp area is pristine, and nothing is left but footprints.

In short, the planning for instituting COTN at your site must begin well in advance of the first day of the program. I would suggest that a formal meeting with the stewards of the land happen the spring before the intended fall usage. Each community will have its own rules and procedures to utilize the land, and a positive experience for both parties is essential for the success of this program.

Stakeholders to Include:

As previously stated—and as will continue to be emphasized—Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN) is first and foremost a community-driven program, supported by the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) and the NSBSD Iñupiat Education Department. The success and very existence of COTN rely on strong community involvement and support.

In addition to the land stewards, the success of Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN) is strengthened by the involvement of other key partners. Native and village corporations, along with city and borough entities, play an essential role in supporting and enriching the student experience. Their collaboration helps ensure that each community's COTN program is meaningful, impactful, and locally grounded.

The Example of Atqasuk:

Following the initial teacher-led in-service held on the nuna, we began regularly attending City of Atqasuk Council meetings to keep the council informed and to request support for Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN). The City of Atqasuk has long been a strong supporter of Meade River School, including its various clubs and sports programs. We also discovered that many city council members also serve as representatives for other cultural and community organizations, which further strengthened our outreach and relationships.

This open line of communication led to a meaningful partnership that allowed COTN to borrow and utilize equipment owned by the City of Atqasuk to help set up and maintain the camp. We were granted access to ATVs and camping gear, which we treated with the utmost respect. In line with COTN's core principle—**"leave it better than we found it"**—all equipment was returned cleaned, serviced, and in ready-to-use condition.

An additional benefit of this collaboration was the opportunity for our Career and Technical Education (CTE) students to gain hands-on experience. They learned how to service and maintain ATVs and trailers and gained valuable insight into working cooperatively with local agencies and organizations in the village.

Additional agencies such as Iḷisagvik College, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA), and local village corporations play a vital role in supporting Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN). These partners can provide specialized experts, assist with planning, and help lead camp activities. As COTN continues to grow at each site, these organizations—operating outside of the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD)—have the opportunity to align their student programs with COTN, further enriching the student experience.

In Atqasuk, we've seen increasing interest from organizations across the state eager to join the effort, bringing additional expertise to the program. Students, teachers, and visiting professionals alike have found value in the collaborative nature of the experience. These partnerships are both meaningful and beneficial. Throughout the school year, when opportunities arise for student-focused activities, it is worthwhile to work with these agencies to either coordinate with upcoming COTN events or create new experiences that align with its goals.

Site Selection

Once all the permissions are granted and you have gathered community input and support, a site will need to be selected for the COTN. As a reminder, make sure you have permission to proceed with the next step in creating your COTN:

Land Ownership and Permissions

- **Clear ownership:** Understand who controls access (Native corporations, city, borough, private)
- **Formal permission required:** Get explicit approval from land stewards
- **Regulatory compliance:** Ensure any permits or special permissions are obtained
- **Respectful relationship building:** Choose sites where landowners are supportive partners

Once you have obtained permission, it is time to scout out a site to set up camp structure for COTN. When selecting the site, look for guidance from traditional users of the environment. Remember to take into consideration:

Cultural and Traditional Considerations

- **Avoid subsistence areas:** Consult with elders to ensure the site doesn't interfere with hunting, fishing, or gathering areas that the community depends on
- **Cultural significance:** Work with cultural leaders to identify sites that have educational or historical value and community history.
- **Traditional knowledge integration:** Choose locations where elders and community members can easily share relevant stories and teachings, and is easily accessible through walkways or established trails.

In Atqasuk, we try to establish camp where some walking is required to help make the student experience truly on the nuna. We try to be out of direct sight of the village, as this adds to the feeling of being out on the land. We try to make camp at least a 15-minute walk on the

trail. We try to have the camp located on an accessible road to utilize the bus transport for students to and from the camp.

Practical Accessibility

- **Transportation access:** Site must be reachable by the school bus and other support vehicles (ATVs, etc.)
- **Equipment transport:** Consider how to get tents, supplies, and gear to the location
- **Community visit-friendly:** Location should allow community members to easily stop by and participate. Maybe choose areas where visitors can visit while on route to their own subsistence areas.
- **Safety considerations:** Accessible for emergencies if needed. Not so remote that emergency agencies have a hard time responding.

While scouting location possibilities, travel with cultural members or subsistence users to help locate appropriate areas that will make the COTN experience meaningful to all participants and visitors. Keep to the following guidelines discussed earlier:

Environmental Impact and Sustainability

- **Land recovery capacity:** Consider how well the land can heal from heavy foot traffic and camping use
- **5-year rotation minimum:** Plan to not reuse the same site for at least 5 years (though some areas may need longer)
- **Fragile ecosystem protection:** Avoid areas where the "nuna heals slowly" from disturbance
- **Leave no trace compatibility:** Select sites where temporary use won't cause lasting damage

Site Selection Criteria

In Atqasuk, successful camp sites combine practical camping requirements with educational opportunities. The ideal location features flat areas where tents can be established without damaging the natural landscape, positioned on relatively high and dry ground to ensure safety and comfort. These sites serve as strategic hubs

that provide access to multiple learning environments within walking distance, eliminating the need for frequent camp relocations. The best locations offer proximity to rivers for fishing instruction, lake areas for water testing and environmental studies, berry picking opportunities for traditional food gathering, and plant identification sites for ethnobotany lessons. Additionally, access to culturally important locations allows elders to share historical and spiritual knowledge in meaningful settings. This approach allows one base camp to support diverse educational experiences while respecting the land's natural state.

Other additional factors to remember while locating the best placement for COTN areas.

Community Input Priority

The document emphasizes that land stewards and elders should drive site recommendations rather than outsiders choosing locations. Their knowledge of the land's capacity, cultural importance, and practical considerations is essential for successful site selection.

- **Success Factors**
- The program's sustainability relies on genuine community ownership rather than top-down school district implementation. Strong partnerships with local organizations, respect for traditional knowledge, and commitment to environmental stewardship are essential for long-term success.

The last factor, but equally important, is that COTN is all about education. The mission of educating students does not take a second seat during the camp. So, site selection should keep all the aforementioned aspects and considerations, but educational opportunities and room to learn and grow academically in a traditional land use area are at the COTN concept. Please use the guidelines to help in this aspect of site selection.

Educational Value

- **Natural classroom potential:** Areas suitable for outdoor instruction and hands-on learning
- **Cultural activity alignment:** Sites that support planned activities like ice fishing, traditional skills
- **Story-rich locations:** Places where elders can share meaningful local history and knowledge

Site selection is crucial to program success, and the guidance in the previous sections will help you choose the best camp location. However, I firmly believe that the real foundation of a successful COTN student experience lies in thorough preparation: securing proper permissions from land stewards, building strong community partnerships, and carefully selecting the right site. This upfront investment of time and effort—completed well before students arrive—determines whether the program will thrive or struggle.

- **Success Factors**
- The program's sustainability relies on genuine community ownership rather than top-down school district implementation. Strong partnerships with local organizations, respect for traditional knowledge, and commitment to environmental stewardship are essential for long-term success.

COTN Site Selection Checklist

- **Permissions & Community Input**

- ☐ Confirm land ownership (Native corporations, city, borough, private)
- ☐ Obtain formal written permission from land stewards
- ☐ Ensure all necessary permits/regulatory approvals are secured
- ☐ Involve elders and cultural leaders in decision-making

- **Cultural & Traditional Considerations**

- ☐ Avoid active subsistence areas (hunting, fishing, gathering)
- ☐ Prioritize sites with cultural or historical significance
- ☐ Choose locations where elders can easily share stories & teachings
- ☐ Ensure trails or paths connect to meaningful areas

- **Practical Accessibility**

- ☐ Must be reachable by bus/ATVs for student transport
- ☐ Accessible for emergency response teams
- ☐ Allow community members to visit easily
- ☐ Ensure gear/supplies can be transported without excessive effort

- **Environmental Impact & Sustainability**

- ☐ Assess land's recovery capacity (avoid fragile ecosystems)
- ☐ Plan a 5+ year site rotation before reuse
- ☐ Ensure "leave no trace" practices can be followed
- ☐ Choose high, dry ground to prevent flooding or damage

- **Educational Value**

- ☐ Supports hands-on learning (fishing, plant ID, water testing)
- ☐ Provides cultural teaching opportunities (storytelling, traditional skills)
- ☐ Offers diverse learning zones (river, lake, berry patches, historical sites)

- Community-Driven Decision Making
 - ☐ Site recommendation driven by elders & land stewards
 - ☐ Foster partnerships with local organizations
 - ☐ Ensure genuine community ownership of the program
- Final Check
 - ☐ Does the site balance education, culture, safety, and sustainability?
 - ☐ Has community approval been fully documented?
 - ☐ Can this site support long-term program success?

Setting Up Learning Groups for COTN

When organizing learning groups for *Classrooms on the Nuna* (COTN), it is important to consider the existing school and classroom structures of each site. The most effective approach is to align the camp grouping with the school's established procedures, ensuring continuity and familiarity for students and staff. The grouping structure directly influences the organization and implementation of learning activities during the COTN experience.

Atqasuk has successfully implemented two distinct grouping models:

1. Classroom- or Age-Based Grouping. Teacher as own classroom group leader.
2. Family Test-Based Grouping- Students cross grade/age. Teacher/staff as leader.

Classroom grouping: In this model, students are grouped by their regular classroom or age level. Each teacher leads their classroom group and serves as the primary supervisor throughout the camp.

Structure:

- Each classroom is assigned a dedicated tent.
- Learning activities are designed to align with the age range of the group.
- Teachers supervise both academic and outdoor (nuna) activities for their group.

Benefits:

- Promotes strong bonds between teachers and students.
- Especially effective in schools with high staff turnover or newly hired teachers.
- Teachers maintain consistent, direct oversight of their classroom group during all camp activities.
- Reinforces classroom routines and accountability in a familiar setting

2. Family or Tent-Based Grouping

This approach organizes students into mixed-grade “families” or “tent” groups, bringing together students from across all grade levels—elementary, middle, and high school.

Structure:

- Each tent group is led by an assigned teacher.
- The group selects a student leader to represent them in camp governance activities.
- Tents and activities are organized around the family group rather than the specific classroom or age.
- Teachers coordinate supervision responsibilities, especially when students attend age-specific academic sessions.

Benefits:

- Encourages multi-age collaboration and mentorship among students.
- Ideal for smaller schools where interaction across grade levels is common.
- Strengthens overall school unity by fostering relationships beyond the classroom.
- Enables teachers to connect with a broader range of students, including future students they may not otherwise teach.

Special Considerations:

- Coordination among teachers is essential when students participate in specialized or age-specific academic activities.
- Shared supervision responsibilities must be clearly communicated and agreed upon.

Conclusion

Selecting the appropriate grouping model for COTN should be based on school size, staffing, and desired outcomes for student connection and engagement. Both models have proven effective in

different contexts, and some schools may find a hybrid approach beneficial depending on their unique needs.

COTN Learning Group Setup Checklist

Pre-Planning

- ☐ Review the school's existing classroom structures and routines
- ☐ Decide which grouping model fits the site (Classroom/Age-Based, Family/Tent-Based, or Hybrid)
- ☐ Confirm teacher roles and supervision responsibilities

Classroom/Age-Based Grouping

- ☐ Assign each classroom a dedicated tent
- ☐ Align activities with the age level of the group
- ☐ Ensure each teacher supervises their own group for both academic & outdoor learning
- ☐ Reinforce familiar routines and classroom accountability

Family/Tent-Based Grouping

- ☐ Organize mixed-grade “family” groups across all levels
- ☐ Assign a teacher to lead each tent group
- ☐ Select a student leader for each family group for camp governance activities
- ☐ Coordinate supervision for age-specific sessions as needed
- ☐ Plan multi-age learning activities to encourage mentorship

Benefits to Consider

- ☐ Classroom/Age-Based strengthens teacher-student bonds, especially with new staff
- ☐ Family/Tent-Based builds cross-grade relationships & school unity
- ☐ Hybrid approaches may offer the best balance for unique school contexts

Special Considerations

- ☐ Communicate shared supervision responsibilities among teachers
- ☐ Ensure smooth transitions for specialized or age-specific activities

Final Check

- ☐ Does the chosen model support student engagement, connection, and learning goals?

- ☐ Are all teachers clear on their supervision and leadership roles?
- ☐ Have you accounted for school size, staffing, and desired outcomes?

Equipment and Logistics

Once the site has been selected, it is time to set up the camp/classrooms. The priority is organizing the transportation of equipment required for education, comfort, and safety. This process involves a carefully coordinated two-stage system that ensures efficient delivery of supplies from the school to the remote camp location.

Two-Stage Organization System

The COTN setup relies on two distinct staging areas that work together to bridge the gap between village infrastructure and remote camp locations:

- 1. Central Location Staging Area:** A place where all equipment is first gathered and organized (such as a school gym, storage room or community center)
- 2. Camp Staging Area:** The drop-off point near the campsite that serves as the final distribution hub to transport to the COTN camp area.

What is a Central Location Staging Area?

A central location staging area is essentially a “pre-base camp headquarters” – a designated spot within the village that serves as the connection point between school storage areas and the village road system. This is where all equipment is initially collected, organized, and prepared for transport to the more remote camp staging area.

What is a Camp Staging Area?

A camp staging area serves as the “base camp headquarters” – a designated spot that creates the crucial connection between the village road system and the actual learning camp site out on the land. This area must be strategically located to serve multiple critical functions.

Multiple Functions of the Camp Staging Area:

- **Equipment hub:** Where all camping gear, tents, and supplies are initially dropped off before being transported to the final camp location
- **Student transportation point:** Where the school bus drops off and picks up students each day
- **Food delivery station:** Where meals and supplies are delivered and then carried to the camp
- **Emergency access point:** Where medical personnel or emergency responders can reach if needed

Key Requirements for the Camp Staging Area:

Location: Must be accessible by full-sized vehicles (school buses, delivery trucks) on established roads without blocking normal village traffic flow.

Weather Protection: Should have a large tarp system to protect equipment and supplies from rain or snow while they're temporarily stored.

Supervision: Needs a designated person to stay at this location during setup to:

- Organize the efficient movement of equipment from the staging area to the camp
- Coordinate with volunteers who arrive to help
- Serve as a communication point between the remote camp and the village

Strategic Loading Order

The key to efficient setup is prioritizing what gets transported first based on immediate needs at the camp. This strategic approach prevents delays and allows work to begin as soon as the first supplies arrive.

Priority Loading Sequence:

- **Essential set up items** (tents for shelter, basic safety equipment) should be loaded and sent out to the staging area before less critical supplies
- **Start camp transportation and setup immediately** while other equipment is still being transported from the village
- **Don't wait** for everything to be ready before beginning transport

Practical Example:

Send tarps, tents, and basic tools first so volunteers can start setting up shelter, then send cooking equipment, then comfort items – rather than loading everything randomly and having to wait or dig through piles to find what you need first.

Transportation to the Final Camp Site

Once equipment reaches the camp staging area, there remains a critical transportation challenge to get supplies to the actual learning location on the land.

The Transportation Gap:

The final camp location is typically:

- A 15–20 minute walk away from any road
- Only accessible by smaller, specialized vehicles like ATVs
- Out on the nuna (land) where large trucks and buses cannot reach

Essential Planning Requirements:

You must have off-road transportation ready and waiting when supplies start arriving at the staging area. Without ATVs, trailers, or other terrain vehicles lined up in advance, equipment will remain stranded at the staging area while camp setup is delayed.

Atqasuk's Community Partnership Solution:

- **City of Atqasuk** loans us several ATVs and trailers (normally used for village summer cleanup projects)
- **Teachers and staff** contribute

their personal ATVs and equipment • This combination provides sufficient hauling capacity to move all camp supplies from the road-accessible staging area to the remote camp site

Key Lessons for Success

The staging and transportation process illustrates several critical principles for COTN implementation:

Advance Coordination is Essential: Success depends on coordinating with community partners to ensure transportation resources are available exactly when needed. Without this community cooperation, the entire operation can stall at the staging area, regardless of how well other aspects are planned.

Community Support is Practical, Not Just Cultural: COTN relies on community partnerships not only for permissions and cultural guidance, but for the practical logistics that make the program physically possible.

Efficient Planning Prevents Delays: By thinking strategically about equipment priorities and transportation logistics, teams can begin productive camp setup immediately rather than waiting for all supplies to arrive or searching through randomly organized equipment piles.

This systematic approach to equipment and logistics creates the foundation for a smooth, efficient camp setup that allows educators to focus on the educational mission rather than logistical challenges.

COTN Equipment & Logistics Checklist

Pre-Setup Planning

- ☐ Confirm site selection is finalized
- ☐ Assign logistics coordinator for equipment & transport
- ☐ Prepare a detailed equipment list (education, comfort, safety needs)

Two-Stage Organization System

- ☐ Central Location Staging Area ready (school storage or community center)
- ☐ Collect and organize all gear in one place
- ☐ Prepare for efficient loading and transport
- ☐ Camp Staging Area identified near camp site
- ☐ Accessible by full-size vehicles (buses, delivery trucks)
- ☐ Does not block normal village traffic
- ☐ Set up tarp/weather protection for temporary storage

Camp Staging Area Functions

- ☐ Equipment hub for tents, supplies, and gear
- ☐ Student transportation point (bus drop-off/pick-up)
- ☐ Food delivery station for meals and camp supplies
- ☐ Emergency access point for responders

Camp Staging Area Staffing

- ☐ Assign a person to stay at the staging area during setup
- ☐ Organize the movement of equipment to the camp
- ☐ Coordinate volunteers
- ☐ Serve as a communication link between the camp and the village

Strategic Loading Order

- ☐ Load essential setup items first (tarps, tents, safety gear)
- ☐ Send basic tools early to allow immediate setup
- ☐ Transport the cooking equipment next
- ☐ Comfort items last

- ☐ Begin transport & setup immediately; don't wait for all supplies

Transportation Gap to Final Camp Site

- ☐ Final site typically 15–20 min walk from road
- ☐ Only accessible by ATVs or specialized small vehicles
- ☐ Line up ATVs/trailers in advance to avoid supply delays
- ☐ Ensure volunteers and drivers are briefed on routes

Camp Setup Priorities

Once equipment arrives at the final camp location, establishing a camp set up leader to organize and lead the physical camp infrastructure follows a specific priority sequence. This order ensures safety, comfort, and protection of equipment while creating functional outdoor learning spaces.

Priority Setup Sequence:

- 1. Large Tarps and Ground Protection:** Large tarps serve as tent floors and activity area protection. These should be placed in all heavily used areas to prevent mud formation and land trauma from weather and heavy human traffic. Proper ground protection aids in quicker natural recovery of the land after camp closure.
- 2. Tent and Tarp Stakes:** Stake out all tarps first, as this makes tent erection much easier in windy conditions. During this phase, carefully consider environmental factors such as prevailing wind direction, land slope, and student safety when planning the circular camp formation.
- 3. Large Group Activity Tents:** Construct large tents for group activities first so that perishable or weather-sensitive items can be stored safely as additional supplies arrive at camp.
- 4. Bathroom Facilities (Anagvik):** Set up designated bathroom tents with honey buckets (quqtaq) and sanitary supplies, including double trash bags and deodorizer. Position this area away from other camp activities. Use half-sheets of plywood as flooring to keep the honey buckets stable and secure. Establish at least two bathroom tents for adequate capacity.
- 5. Multi-Purpose Service Tent:** Erect one large tent on the outer edge of the camp arrangement to serve as a snack, warm-up, and first aid station. Position this tent at the outer edge of the circular or crescent-shaped tent arrangement for easy access during emergencies or weather events.

6. Essential Camp Supplies: Distribute items such as kitchen equipment, sanitary supplies (tissue, disinfectant wipes), garbage cans and bags, and other daily necessities. Transport and stage these items in weatherproof containers to prevent damage during setup.

7. Individual Group Tents: Position tent doors according to prevailing wind patterns to minimize weather impact and maximize comfort for occupants.

8. Furniture and Comfort Items: Set up cots, chairs, and tables once the basic camp infrastructure is secure and weather-protected.

9. Sleeping Bags as Seating: Place sleeping bags on top of cots to create comfortable seating areas within tents, providing warmth and cushioning for students during learning activities.

Key Setup Principles:

Weather Consideration: Every step accounts for environmental factors, including wind direction, precipitation, and temperature, to ensure student safety and comfort.

Functional Priority: Essential infrastructure (shelter, sanitation, safety) is established before comfort items, ensuring basic needs are met even if setup is interrupted.

Land Protection: Ground protection measures are implemented from the beginning to minimize environmental impact and support the "leave no trace" philosophy central to COTN operations.

COTN Camp Setup Checklist

Pre-Setup

- ☐ Assign a Camp Setup Leader to organize infrastructure setup
- ☐ Brief volunteers/staff on setup priorities & safety considerations

Priority Setup Sequence

1. Ground Protection

- ☐ Lay large tarps in all high-traffic & activity areas
- ☐ Ensure tarps cover tent floors to prevent mud & land damage
- ☐ Plan for quick land recovery after camp closure

2. Tent & Tarp Stakes

- ☐ Stake all tarps securely before erecting tents
- ☐ Consider wind direction, land slope, and safety when forming camp layout

3. Large Group Activity Tents

- ☐ Erect first for storage of weather-sensitive/perishable supplies

4. Bathroom Facilities (Anagvik)

- ☐ Set up bathroom tents with honey buckets (quqtaq) & sanitation supplies
- ☐ Position away from camp activities
- ☐ Use plywood flooring for stability
- ☐ Ensure at least two bathroom tents for capacity

5. Multi-Purpose Service Tent

- ☐ Erect at the camp's outer edge for snack, warm-up, & first aid use
- ☐ Ensure easy emergency/weather access

6. Essential Camp Supplies

- ☐ Distribute kitchen equipment, sanitary items, garbage cans/bags
- ☐ Use weatherproof containers to protect supplies

7. Individual Group Tents

- ☐ Position doors with wind patterns in mind for comfort & safety

8. Furniture & Comfort Items

- ☐ Set up cots, tables, & chairs after core infrastructure is complete

9. Sleeping Bags as Seating

- ☐ Place sleeping bags on cots to provide warm, cushioned seating

Crescent-Shaped Camp Layout

Simplified Overview

A crescent-shaped camp design arranges tents in a curved formation to create a protected interior communal area. This layout is well-suited for locations like Atqasuk, where weather and limited space require thoughtful planning. It supports group activities, cultural sharing, and environmental safety.

1. Choosing and Preparing the Campsite

- **Select a curved layout area:** Choose a campsite large enough to fit a crescent-shaped arrangement with room for a shared middle space.
- **Orient tents for wind protection:** Position each tent so that the entrance faces away from the prevailing wind (the leeward side) to reduce exposure and maintain warmth.
- **Ensure minimal spacing between tents:** Place tents close together to block wind, improve insulation, and enhance acoustic conditions for presentations and storytelling.
- **Secure tents together:** In settings like Atqasuk, tents may be fastened side-by-side for added stability when ground anchoring options are limited.
- **Evaluate environmental factors:** When choosing the location, consider sun exposure, natural resources, wind direction, and surrounding landscape features.

2. Arranging the Tents

- **Create a crescent shape:** Arrange tents in a curved or semi-circular arc, facing inward to define a central area.
- **Designate communal space:** Use the inside of the crescent as a shared area for gatherings and activities.
- **Add walkways or tent connections:** Include safe paths or inter-tent links to support movement, supervision, and shared access.

3. Setting Up the Common Area

- **Use for cultural and group activities:** This space is ideal for:

- Whole group meetings
- Morning gatherings
- Elder storytelling
- Cultural demonstrations
- Student or visitor relaxation
- Install seating and presentation space: Consider portable chairs, a stage area, and designated gathering zones.
- Include shared-use areas: Add food preparation stations, small group spaces, and emergency zones (e.g., wildlife protection areas).

4. Additional Tips

- Encourage supervision: Use an open-door policy so that tents are easily monitored with minimal staff.
- Assign camp duties: Set roles ahead of time for meal service, cleanup, and safety tasks.
- Safety plan: Identify and prepare areas for emergency responses.
- Leave No Trace: Clean and restore the area completely when camp ends.

Crescent-Shaped Camp Design Checklist

1. Choosing and Preparing the Campsite

- ☐ Select a curved layout area with enough space for tents and shared middle space

- ☐ Orient tents so entrances face away from prevailing wind (leeward side)
- ☐ Place tents close together to block wind and improve insulation
- ☐ Secure tents side-by-side for added stability if ground anchoring is limited
- ☐ Evaluate sun exposure, natural resources, wind direction, and landscape features

2. Arranging the Tents

- ☐ Arrange tents in a crescent or semi-circular shape facing inward
- ☐ Designate the inside of the crescent as a communal gathering space
- ☐ Add walkways or tent connections for safe movement and supervision

3. Setting Up the Common Area

- ☐ Use the area for group activities such as meetings, storytelling, cultural demonstrations, and relaxation
- ☐ Provide seating, presentation space, and gathering zones
- ☐ Include shared-use areas like food prep stations, small group spaces, and emergency zones

4. Additional Tips

- ☐ Encourage supervision with an open-door policy
- ☐ Assign camp duties in advance (meal service, cleanup, safety)
- ☐ Plan and prepare for emergency responses
- ☐ Follow Leave No Trace principles; clean and restore the site after camp

Circular Camp Layout

Simplified Overview

A circular camp setup is an effective way to organize COTN tents around a shared central space. This design is especially useful in areas with changing wind patterns and harsh weather, as it promotes group cohesion and protection.

1. Choosing and Preparing the Campsite

- **Pick a large, open area:** Make sure the space can fit your group and a circular tent layout. You may need more space than other setups (like a crescent).
- **Designate a central gathering space:** Choose a flat, open area in the middle where people can gather comfortably. Keep it clear of obstacles and make sure there are multiple safe paths (egress points) in and out.
- **Set up shade or shelter:** A tarp or canopy connected to the tents can protect the center area from rain or sun.
- **Establish the central area first:** Set this up before placing tents to help guide the layout of the whole camp.

2. Arranging the Tents

- **Form a circle:** Place tents around the central area with doors facing inward. Use sturdier tents on the windward side and group tents on the more protected side.
- **Maintain space for pathways:** Leave gaps between tent clusters for easy and safe access to the center.
- **Avoid obstructions:** Keep gear or storage items clear from walkways and common areas.

3. Setting Up the Common Area

- **Cover with tarp if possible:** This keeps the space clean, minimizes damage to the ground, and eases cleanup.
- **Provide movable seating:** Bring foldable chairs and tables for comfort and flexibility during group activities like storytelling or dancing.
- **Include shared tables:** Use them for meals, games, or projects.

4. Additional Tips

- **Assign roles early:** Before camp starts, decide who will manage meals, cleaning, and other chores.
- **Use radios or walkie-talkies:** Helpful in big areas while promoting limited phone use.
- **Prepare for weather changes:** Have backup plans for bad weather.
- **Follow Leave No Trace:** Pack out all trash and leave the area clean.

- **ATV use:** Designate a parking area for ATVs to ensure safety and ease of observation. (see permission slip area for personal usage of ATV.)

Circular Camp Setup Checklist

1. Choosing and Preparing the Campsite

- ☐ Pick a large, open area that fits your group and circular tent layout
- ☐ Designate a central gathering space that is flat, open, and obstacle-free
- ☐ Ensure multiple safe paths (egress points) in and out of the gathering area
- ☐ Set up shade or shelter (tarp or canopy) connected to tents over the center area
- ☐ Establish the central area before placing tents to guide camp layout

2. Arranging the Tents

- ☐ Form a circle of tents around the central area with doors facing inward
- ☐ Use sturdier tents on windward side and group tents on protected side
- ☐ Leave gaps between tent clusters for safe access to the center
- ☐ Keep gear and storage clear of walkways and common areas

3. Setting Up the Common Area

- ☐ Cover the area with tarp if possible to keep it clean and ease cleanup
- ☐ Provide movable seating (foldable chairs and tables) for group activities
- ☐ Include shared tables for meals, games, or projects

4. Additional Tips

- ☐ Assign roles early for managing meals, cleaning, and chores
- ☐ Use radios or walkie-talkies for communication and limit phone use
- ☐ Prepare backup plans for bad weather
- ☐ Follow Leave No Trace principles; pack out all trash and leave area clean
- ☐ Designate a parking area for ATVs for safety and easy observation

Camp Set-Up Responsibilities

The successful setup and operation of the camp require a coordinated effort from the entire staff. Based on experience from earlier COTN sessions in Atqasuk, the following responsibilities and procedures have been refined to ensure a smooth and efficient process.

- **Initial Camp Set-Up (Past Practice):**
In the early years, students participated in camp set-up on the first day. While this was engaging, it took up to half the day and required significant staff supervision. This often led to an unstructured and inefficient start to camp, which in turn impacted the following days.
- **Revised Practice (Current Model):**
Later sessions transitioned to using the **site's Cultural Inservice day** for camp set-up and takedown. This ensured camp was fully operational before students arrived and provided a more structured start to the program.
 - **Set-Up:**
Staff and volunteers arrive **half a day prior to camp** to complete all set-up tasks.
 - **Takedown:**
On the last afternoon of camp, students assist in breaking down camp, transporting materials to the staging area, and helping dry tents in the school gym.
Final cleaning and repacking is completed by staff.
- **Community Involvement:**
Support staff and local community volunteers are encouraged to participate in both set-up and takedown to improve efficiency and support supervision.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

To support effective operations, clearly assigned roles are essential:

- **Camp Master:**
A designated individual with experience in camp construction and logistics.

Responsible for overall coordination of camp set-up, takedown, and daily camp operations.

- **Transportation Coordinator:**

Typically a member of the M&O staff.

Responsible for transporting materials to and from the **staging area** using school district vehicles.

- **Facility Logistics Coordinator:**

Manages the **order of equipment distribution** from storage to staging, ensuring materials are delivered based on priority and set-up sequence.

- **Staging Area Logistics Coordinator:**

Responsible for **loading and sending supplies** from the staging area to the camp.

Coordinate transport via ATV and trailer or other available vehicles.

- **On-Site Construction Supervisor:**

Usually the Camp Master.

Oversees the **unloading and set-up of tents and materials** at the campsite, ensuring construction follows the pre-approved camp schematic.

General Staff Responsibilities

- All other staff and volunteers are assigned to support one of the three key zones:
 - **Initial Loading Area**
 - **Staging Area**
 - **Camp Construction Site**

As each zone completes its tasks, staff rotate to assist other areas, maintaining a flexible and collaborative workflow throughout the set-up and takedown process.

Key Roles and Responsibilities Checklist

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- ☐ A designated individual with experience in camp construction and logistics.
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Tent Designations

In Atqasuk, the COTN camp is organized into four primary types of tents. Each tent serves a specific purpose and is strategically positioned for functionality and student flow within the camp layout.

1. Group / Family / Classroom Tents

These tents serve as the **home base** for each student group. All students begin and end their day in their assigned group tent.

- **Location:** Center of the circular or crescent camp layout
- **Structure:** Smaller tents equipped with a table and 3–4 cots with sleeping bags or cushions to create a seating area
- **Usage Guidelines:**
 - No food or drink allowed to maintain cleanliness and reduce wear on equipment
 - Personal belongings are stored here during the day
 - Group leaders/teachers are responsible for tent maintenance, cleanliness, and weatherproofing before departure

2. Activity Tents

These tents are intended for **instructional use** and are larger in size to accommodate multiple groups or ability-level students.

- **Location:** Adjacent to the group tents
- **Structure:** Equipped with multiple tables and folding chairs, arranged based on daily activities
- **Use Cases:** Instructional space, temporary shelter during bad weather, or hosting visiting elders and community members
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Shared clean-up and weatherproofing duties for all staff using the tent
 - Visiting staff, elders, and unassigned personnel may use these tents as their base
 - Closed approximately 30 minutes before camp departure to allow time for students to return to their group tents

- **Examples from Atqasuk:** Beading, board games, storytelling, and sewing classes

3. Snack / First Aid / Warming Tent

This **multi-purpose tent** provides snacks, first aid, warmth, and communication coordination.

- **Location:** At the end of the crescent or along the side of a circular camp layout, with the door positioned downwind for ventilation
- **Structure and Equipment:**
 - Propane camp stove for hot drinks and warmth
 - Tables for snack and beverage dispensing (not student work)
 - Chairs for resting and warming
 - Nearby outdoor water tables
- **Functionality:**
 - Also serves as the communication hub for the camp
 - Supervised by the camp Aaka (In Atqasuk, the school counselor)
 - Closed down 30 minutes before departure to transition students back to group tents

4. Quqtaq: Restroom Tents

These are designated **restroom tents** designed for privacy and hygiene.

- **Location:** Opposite side of the camp from the Snack/Warming Tent
- **Structure:**
 - Smaller tents, each set on its own ground tarp and spaced apart
 - Half-sheet plywood floor inside for stability
 - Equipped with all necessary supplies
- **Maintenance:**
 - Cleaned and checked regularly by all staff, with oversight by the camp master

- Outside table provides access to personal hygiene supplies (wipes, sanitizer, etc.)
- Waste must be handled daily and according to community safety standards
- **Occupancy Signal System:**
 - **Upright cone:** Occupied
 - **Cone on its side:** Unoccupied

Orientation and Student Awareness

All students must be introduced to each type of tent and its proper use before **participating in camp**. Morning group/classroom meetings before departure are ideal opportunities to review camp rules and structure.

Tent Designation Checklist

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Student Transportation

Student Transportation and Daily Camp Operations

Once camp has been set up, the next step is transporting students to the COTN site. The procedures below outline a safe, organized, and efficient process for transitioning from school to camp, as well as daily routines to ensure smooth operations.

Camp Opening and Daily Setup

The **Camp Master** is the first to arrive at the site each day to ensure the camp is ready to receive students. Morning duties include:

- Verifying the camp is **secure and ready** for the day's activities
- Ensuring **bathrooms are clean**, stocked, and trash containers are in place
- Checking that the **food preparation area is clean**, with adequate stove fuel for the day's activities
- Confirming that **water jugs are full**, and cups are available
- Ensuring food is properly **stored in sealed containers**
- Securing **flammable materials and cooking equipment** and safety equipment is available and adequate
- Confirming **safety equipment is present, functional, and accessible**

Pre-Departure Preparation

- **Permission Slips:**
All permission slips must be signed and collected.
 - *Note:* Office staff should contact parents/guardians for any missing forms while students prepare for departure.
- **Teacher Materials:**
Teachers should have all **materials pre-packed and ready** to transport with their student group to the staging area.
- **Morning Routine (Atqasuk Model):**
 - Students eat breakfast at school and then gather in their assigned **classroom, family, or group**.
 - Groups review:
 - **The daily schedule**

- **Available structured and specialized activities**
(posted on a central whiteboard the previous day by teachers and volunteers)
- **Student Check-In:**
 - Supervising teachers ensure students are **appropriately dressed** for the day's weather and activities
 - Students board the **school bus** to the staging area
 - A **support vehicle** remains at the staging area for safety purposes

Arrival at Camp

- Students and staff walk from the staging area to the camp site in **assigned group formations**
- Upon arrival, students report to their **designated tent**, settle in, and store nonessential items
- Group supervisors remain responsible for their students, unless arrangements are made to transfer students based on **interest or skill level**

End-of-Day Procedures

- Each group is responsible for:
 - **Cleaning their tent** and the surrounding area
 - **Disposing of trash** in designated receptacles
 - **Sweeping interiors** and preparing tents for overnight security
 - **Zippering up tents and securing bedding** against weather
- After returning to school:
 - Students are dismissed at the **regular end-of-day time**
 - Teachers ensure all students in their group have been picked up or dismissed
 - Teachers prepare **lesson materials** for the following day

Camp Closure and Daily Shutdown

The **Camp Master** conducts the final closure duties each day, which include:

- **Securing the camp and all facilities for the night**
- **Cleaning bathrooms and removing all trash and waste for proper disposal according to village regulations**
- **Storing or removing leftover food items and snacks in adequate storage containers**
- **Dumping water jugs and returning them for refilling and disinfecting for the following days' refill and service**
- **Ensuring food is sealed in storage containers**
- **Securing flammable materials and cooking equipment for the event**

Food Services

The concept of Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN) is to provide a fully immersive outdoor learning experience. This blends site-based environmental education with traditional school learning, meaning students spend the entire school day on the Nuna.

- **Breakfast:**
If breakfast is served, it will be eaten at the school before students are transported to the camp as soon as possible afterward.
- **Lunch and Snacks:**
Lunch and snacks are provided at the camp throughout the learning day.
- **Maintenance & Operations (M&O) and the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) Food Services** prepare food items at the school site. These precooked meals are transported to the staging area by M&O staff, then moved to the campsite/learning areas by ATV. The food is served with minimal utensils and consumables that must be returned to the school.
- **Meal Setup and Eating Arrangements:**
Meals are typically served outdoors in the camp's common area on tables set up for this purpose. Eating inside individual classrooms, family groups tents is **not allowed** to minimize mess and allow proper supervision.
It has been observed that students often eat more than they usually do at school.
- It is important to order **well in advance** any food items that differ from the usual school lunch offerings. For the camp, prioritize hand-held foods such as sandwiches, carrots, burritos, and hot dogs. These are preferred because they are easy to serve and eat without containers or utensils, which helps reduce messes, cleanup, and food waste. Avoid serving hot vegetables, as they tend to spill, get cold quickly, and often go to waste. Similarly, foods like spaghetti and stew are not recommended because they are difficult to transport and serve outdoors. Instead, focus on items like sandwiches, chips,

carrots, apples, and other snacks — and be sure to have plenty of them!

- Depending on the camp's layout, students may eat in classroom shifts or by family groups. Lunch service is staggered over time, as different groups and activities finish at varying times.
- **Cleanup and Waste Management:**
Students are encouraged to eat at their own pace, then clean their eating areas and dispose of all used materials properly. Supervisors ensure that uneaten food is discarded in designated receptacles to prevent attracting wildlife. Food waste is removed from the camp daily, and leftover items are stored securely in appropriate containers.
- **Snack Tent and Additional Facilities:**
There is a designated larger tent for distributing snack items. This tent is equipped with a camp stove and serves multiple purposes:
 - A warming area for students who are cold or wet from activities
 - First aid station
 - Communication hub for the camp

A popular feature at the Atqasuk site is the hot chocolate station inside this tent, where students can enjoy a warm drink and snack. The tent is usually staffed by the school counselor or a designated teacher/staff member who can assist with student needs.

COTN Meals & Snack Operations Checklist

☐ Breakfast

- ☐ If served, eaten at the school before students are transported to camp
- ☐ Students taken to camp as soon as possible after at school breakfast

☐ Lunch & Snacks

- ☐ Lunch and snacks provided at the camp throughout the day
- ☐ Food prepared by M&O & NSBSD Food Services at the school
- ☐ Precooked meals transported to staging area by M&O staff
- ☐ Meals moved from staging area to camp by ATV
- ☐ Food served with minimal utensils and consumables that must be returned to school

☐ Meal Setup & Eating Arrangements

- ☐ Meals served outdoors in the camp's common area
- ☐ No eating allowed inside classroom or family group tents
- ☐ Students tend to eat more than usual during camp days—plan accordingly
- ☐ Order food items well in advance, especially if different from standard school lunch offerings
- ☐ Prioritize hand-held foods like sandwiches, burritos, carrots, hot dogs
- ☐ Avoid foods prone to spills or waste (e.g., hot vegetables, spaghetti, stew)
- ☐ Include plenty of simple snack items like chips, apples, carrots

☐ Serving & Scheduling

- ☐ Lunch service may be staggered (by classroom shifts or family groups)
- ☐ Groups served as activities finish to maintain smooth flow

☐ Cleanup & Waste Management

- ☐ Students clean their eating area after finishing meals
- ☐ Supervisors ensure all uneaten food is discarded properly
- ☐ Waste removed from camp daily

☐ Leftover items stored securely in appropriate containers to prevent wildlife attraction

☐ **Snack Tent & Additional Facilities**

- ☐ Larger tent is designated for distributing snack items
- ☐ Equipped with a camp stove for warmth and hot drinks
- ☐ Serves as:
 - ☐ Warming area for students who are cold or wet
 - ☐ First aid station
 - ☐ Communication hub for the camp
- ☐ Hot chocolate station available (popular at Atqasuk site)
- ☐ Staffed by the school counselor or designated teacher/staff member

Morning Meeting / Camp Meeting

Daily Camp Meeting / Safety Meeting

Once all students have arrived at camp, it is beneficial to gather everyone together for a daily Camp Meeting. This whole-group meeting provides an opportunity to review the day's agenda, communicate important information, and address any safety considerations before activities begin.

On the first day of camp, the Camp Meeting should include a comprehensive review of the camp safety plan. Throughout the program, the meeting may include the following agenda items:

- Welcome students, staff, and any visitors.
- Observe a moment of silence or offer a prayer for safety, respect, and treating one another with kindness.
- Recite the Pledge of Allegiance in both Iñupiaq and English.
- Introduce and recognize any visitors or guest presenters.
- Review the day's schedule, including planned activities, excursions, and special guests.
- Discuss the weather forecast, potential inclement weather procedures, and any safety reminders or concerns.
- Review the lunch and snack menu, including serving times and locations.
- Reinforce camp expectations, including tent etiquette and camp procedures.
- Close the meeting with any final announcements or words of encouragement.

A designated meeting location should be established so all participants know where to gather after storing their personal gear in their assigned tents. A central location within the camp area is recommended, as it allows for efficient communication and quick assembly of all participants.

- Students should report to their assigned groups and meet with their designated group leader. Each tent group or student group should identify a representative who can serve as a point of communication between the group and the Camp Master.

This representative will help share important information, relay updates, and communicate questions or concerns from the group to camp leadership.

- **Establishing a clear meeting location and communication structure promotes organization, safety, and a sense of community throughout the camp experience.**

Camp Meeting Location & Group Organization Checklist

Meeting Location Preparation

- ☐ A designated central meeting location has been identified.
 - ☐ The meeting location is accessible and easy for all participants to locate.
 - ☐ All staff, students, and community members have been informed of the meeting location.
 - ☐ The meeting area allows for efficient gathering of all participants.
 - ☐ The meeting location supports clear communication and safety procedures.
-

Student Group Organization

- ☐ Students have been assigned to designated groups.
 - ☐ Each student knows their assigned group and group leader.
 - ☐ Each tent/group has a designated meeting area or gathering point.
 - ☐ Group leaders have a current list of assigned students.
 - ☐ Students know where to report after storing their personal gear.
-

Communication Structure

- ☐ Each tent/group has identified a group representative.
- ☐ Group representatives understand their role and responsibilities.
- ☐ Group representatives know how to receive and share important information.
- ☐ A process has been established for groups to communicate questions, concerns, or needs to the Camp Master.
- ☐ Staff understand the communication process for sharing updates and announcements.

Daily Readiness Check

- ☐ All participants have gathered in their assigned groups.
- ☐ Group leaders have confirmed attendance.
- ☐ Important announcements have been communicated.
- ☐ Safety reminders and expectations have been reviewed.
- ☐ Participants are prepared and ready for the day's activities.

Notes / Follow-Up Items:

Other Considerations

Safety Plan

On the first day of camp, a **whole-group meeting** should be held to review the safety plan. This meeting must include the following safety topics:

- What to do in case of an emergency
- Procedures for wildlife sightings
- Weather alerts and inclement weather protocols
- Identification of emergency activities and responses

A **designated alternate meeting place** must be established in case the primary camp area becomes unsafe. A **common recall signal** (such as a whistle or bullhorn) should be identified so students know when to gather and where to report. Group leaders are responsible for gathering their assigned students and reporting any missing individuals to the Camp Master.

Communication Devices

Reliable communication is essential. Consider the following:

- **Cell Phones:** Use if service is available for group-to-group and staff communication.
- **Radios or Local Devices:** If cell service is not available, request short-range radios or communication tools from the local Search and Rescue office.
- It is strongly recommended to have **multiple communication methods** in case of an emergency.

First Aid Kits

Each camp must include a **well-stocked first aid kit** equivalent to a school sports team kit. Additionally:

- A **user-friendly first aid manual** should accompany the kit and be housed in the food/snack tent for easy access.
- A downloadable example manual: [Basic First Aid Manual – English \(msdma.gov.in\)](https://www.msdma.gov.in/)

- A **biohazard clean-up kit** must be available for handling body fluids.
- At least one adult must be **CPR-certified**, and a **portable AED** should be included if available.

Safety Supervisor

A designated **Safety Person** (usually the CPR-certified staff member) is responsible for:

- Checking and maintaining the first aid kit
- Knowing the exact location of the AED and communication equipment
- Coordinating emergency communication and response

Fire Safety

Several **fire extinguishers** must be stationed throughout camp:

- At least one near any heating source (e.g., the warming tent or cooking areas)
- All personnel must be trained to locate and use them effectively

Emergency Warm-Up Kit

A **Safety Equipment Kit** should be stored in the warming tent and include:

- Space blankets
- Extra socks, gloves, and hats
- Blankets and changes of clothing in various sizes
- This kit is essential for responding to water exposure or cold-weather incidents

Camp Implements

To maintain and manage camp operations:

- Place **garbage cans and bags** throughout the site
- Supply **shovels, hammers (for tent stakes), and parachute cord**

- Assign a student (e.g., “Stake Duty”) to monitor and adjust tent stakes as needed during the day

Sanitary Considerations

Proper hygiene and waste management must be a priority:

- Set up at least **two designated restroom tents** equipped with:
 - Honey buckets
 - Bathroom tissue
 - Handwashing stations (water jugs, wet wipes, and sanitizer)
- Keep **two spare honey buckets** ready for quick change-outs
- Use **double-bagging** techniques for waste, and have **sanitizer tablets** on hand
- The **Camp Master** must ensure daily deep cleaning and waste disposal aligned with local village regulations

Alternative considerations for Classrooms on the Nuna (COTN) Camp Parameters and Site Differences

The model of Class for Meade River School is that the whole student body (KL-12) attends every day of the week-long experience. This model does not fit all sites. The beauty of COTN is that it is site based and can conform to the individual school size or needs. Listed are a few successful variations.

Shorter Intensive Learning Experience: In this model, the camp is used for one or two-day intensive, site-based subsistence activities.

In this model, targeted student is targeted subjects are using the COTN camp for target subjects like water or plant activities.

This format works well for some larger sites where it is not feasible for a school to include all students throughout the entire COTN experience.

Shorter, targeted days for different grade or subject levels. The camp may be set up for a week, but different groups use it during the specific days for specific purposes.

In this model, groups like the high school students may use the camp for two days, the middle school one day and the elementary students one or two days.

The camp setup and schedule remains the same but different groups utilize the camp on specific days.

Larger elementary schools may target one grade level per day to allow all students to participate in the learning experiences.

High school students might use the camp according to classes: ie: science class students study water or plants of the area. Social studies and history may use the camp to explore the local history through visual and oral learning opportunities. Language Arts may journal or work on oral histories or provide writing opportunities in a natural environment. Art and music classes use the camp to fulfill their standards in a natural environment.

The true strength and beauty of the concept of COTN is that it can be whatever the need of the students and school present. The act of taking education out onto the natural environment where students are indeed the experts and can learn in the environment with few distractions and connect with the land and water that surround their natural world.

Ice Fishing/Winter Camp

This portion of the manual introduces the Ice Fishing or Winter Camping option for Classrooms on the Nuna.

The main concern for this camp is not simple comfort but possible survival. Due to the conditions in the Arctic, situations can go from fun to dangerous in a very short time. A good weather condition connection is paramount to planning. NOAA is an excellent choice but it does not have an official app; but has an excellent mobile website that is updated as new weather information is obtained,

<https://www.weather.gov/ilm/mobile>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.weather.gov/ilm/mobile&ved=2ahUKEwidqM6BluuQAxVVJzQIHceNLHcQy_kOegQIARAC&opi=89978449&cd&psig=A0vVaw2lcqoszHH1tr3M7Jat8UzB&ust=1762987405407000.

Safety should be the main objective for all COTN activities but should be a constant thought and plan for all winter activities. Winter camping or Ice Fishing is enhanced by community members joining in to help with local knowledge and expertise in winter and ice conditions.

Ice and ice conditions for winter camping is one of the most important considerations for outdoor activities. Pre-planning with local entities like Search and Rescue, village Police, and local fire departments can help to ensure safe ice conditions and enhanced response times if services are needed. Local police and help to provide wildlife and safety. Ask these entities for advice and follow their lead to help make COTN Winter Camps successful, fun and a community event.

Considerations for Arctic winter camping include proper insulation and layering for warmth for participants. Each student should be checked to ensure they have the appropriate clothing and equipment before leaving the school. Layering is essential as the weather can change dramatically. As all Arctic people know, sweating is a danger, so clothing should be adaptable to the current conditions. Wind is a main consideration for safety and comfort.

Ideal layering of clothing for the Arctic outdoor activities. It is recommended to use a three-layer system: a **moisture-wicking base layer** (like thermal underwear) next to your skin, an **insulating middle layer** (fleece or down) to trap heat, and a **waterproof and windproof outer layer** (parka and pants) to protect against the elements. Always avoid cotton in the inner layers and wear wool socks with warm, roomy boots to keep your feet dry.

Also there should be a high-quality, four-season tent (sites should have at least one Arctic Oven tent and the Inupiat instruction department has access to additional tents if needed). with snow flaps, a way to manage moisture from people and heaters to prevent freezing and structural malfunction like frozen zippers that could hamper clear access in and out of the tent, and frostbite, and ensuring all equipment, especially electronics and stoves, is functional in the extreme cold. Staying hydrated, consuming enough calories, and having an emergency plan are also critical for safety.

Shelter and sleeping

- **Use a quality four-season tent:** Choose a tent designed for severe storms, with snow flaps that can be secured to the ground.
- **Set up the tent correctly:** Orient the tent to face the prevailing wind and consider building a snow or ice wall on the upwind side for added protection. Ensure guidelines are taught and use snow pegs that are given time to set in the snow.
- **Prioritize insulation:** Use a sleeping pad or mats on top of an insulated air mattress or cot to prevent heat loss to the snow.
- **Use proper sleeping bags:** Bring one or two insulated sleeping bags appropriate for the extreme temperatures.
- **Manage your gear inside the tent:** Store sleeping bags and other items not immediately needed in the vestibule to avoid moisture buildup.

Clothing and personal protection

- **Layer your clothing:** Use multiple layers, starting with a base layer and adding insulating and waterproof/windproof outer layers, to manage body temperature and sweat.

- **Protect exposed skin:** Wear a balaclava or face mask with breathable holes, goggles, and a neck gaiter or buff to prevent frostbite from wind and cold.
- **Keep extremities warm:** Wear wool socks, gloves, and a warm hat to protect your hands, feet, and head from the cold.

Food, water, and stove use

- **Stay hydrated and eat well:** Drink plenty of fluids and consume high-calorie, high-fat foods to maintain energy levels in the cold.
- **Use a cold-weather stove:** Ensure your stove is suitable for polar environments and can be properly primed with a stable blue flame.
- **Ventilate properly:** When using a stove, open vents on both sides of the tent to ensure good airflow and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Safety and emergency preparedness

- **Prevent hypothermia and frostbite:** Be vigilant for early signs like numb, whitened skin. Take immediate action by adding layers, resting, building a fire, or consuming a hot drink.
- **Be cautious of ice:** Avoid weak ice and be aware of potential hazards.
- **Carry a power bank:** Cold temperatures drain electronics faster, so a power bank is crucial for recharging phones and other devices.
- **Maintain an organized tent:** Keeping your tent tidy will allow you to locate essential items like safety gear or a headlamp quickly, especially in the dark.

Once camp has been set up, the next step is transporting students to the COTN site. The procedures below outline a safe, organized, and efficient process for transitioning from school to camp, as well as daily routines to ensure smooth operations.

Camp Opening and Daily Setup

The **Camp Master** is the first to arrive at the site each day to ensure the camp is ready to receive students. Morning duties include:

- **Verifying the camp is secure and ready for the day's activities**

- Ensuring **bathrooms are clean**, stocked, and trash containers are in place
- Checking that the **food preparation area is clean**, with adequate stove fuel for the day's activities
- Confirming that **water jugs are full**, and cups are available
- Ensuring food is properly **stored in sealed containers**
- Securing **flammable materials and cooking equipment** and safety equipment is available and adequate
- Confirming **safety equipment is present, functional, and accessible**

Pre-Departure Preparation

- **Permission Slips:**
All permission slips must be signed and collected.
 - *Note:* Office staff should contact parents/guardians for any missing forms while students prepare for departure.
- **Teacher Materials:**
Teachers should have all **materials pre-packed and ready** to transport with their student group to the staging area.
- **Morning Routine (Atqasuk Model):**

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COTN Planning Guide

1. Pre-Planning (6+ Months Ahead)

Key steps to ensure cultural, logistical, and environmental alignment:

- - Land permissions: Meet formally with land stewards/Native village councils to request permission and get site recommendations
- - Community buy-in: Attend city council meetings to inform community and request support
- - Site selection: Work with elders to avoid subsistence areas and ensure cultural appropriateness
- - Rotation planning: Establish 5-year minimum moratorium before reusing same site to allow land recovery

2. Essential Partnerships

Build a network of community-based and institutional support:

- - Native village corporations (land access and cultural guidance)
- - City/borough councils (equipment sharing and logistical support)
- - Elders and cultural leaders (traditional knowledge and storytelling)
- - Local organizations (ASRC, ASNA, colleges for specialized expertise)

3. Site Selection

- - Secure Permissions First: Ensure regulatory compliance and respectful landowner partnerships
- - Prioritize Cultural Guidance: Work with elders and land users to avoid culturally significant sites
- - Accessibility and Immersion: Ensure sites are bus-accessible and foster a land-based experience
- - Choose Educational Hubs: Proximity to hands-on learning environments (rivers, berries, etc.)
- - Practice Environmental Stewardship: Select sites that can handle temporary use without lasting damage

4. Equipment and Logistics

Ensure necessary infrastructure and support mechanisms:

- - Permission slips
- - Instruction tents (outdoor classrooms)
- - Transportation (ATVs, trailers – often borrowed from the community)
- - Camping gear (cooking supplies, sanitation)
- - Communication systems (coordinate with the community)

5. Educational Structure

Design culturally grounded, academically rich learning experiences:

- - Hands-on curriculum integrated with cultural practices
- - Community visits by elders and storytellers
- - Local cultural activities (e.g., ice fishing, traditional skills)
- - Student involvement in maintenance and cleanup

6. Environmental Stewardship

- - “Leave it better than found” principle
- - Final day cleanup with students
- - Trail restoration and low-impact practices
- - Respect for subsistence areas and cultural lands

7. Safety and Respect

- - Follow all cultural protocols
- - Maintain and return all borrowed equipment
- - Maintain open communication with all stakeholders
- - Plan for emergencies with site-specific safety considerations

COTN Summary: Planning, Setup, and Operations

1. Site Selection

Selecting the campsite is a foundational step requiring formal land permission, community input, and environmental consideration. Successful sites balance:

- **Cultural and traditional knowledge:** Avoid subsistence areas and integrate meaningful local teachings.
- **Practical access:** Ensure transport, emergency response, and community visitation are feasible.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Rotate sites every five years and minimize land disturbance.
- **Educational value:** Choose areas that support diverse learning in science, culture, and traditional practices.

Atqasuk's model favors sites about a 15-minute walk from the village for an immersive experience while still maintaining vehicle access for setup and emergencies.

2. Learning Group Structures

Two primary grouping systems support student learning and social cohesion:

- **Classroom/Age-Based Groups:** Keep students with their regular teachers, strengthening relationships and continuity.
- **Family/Tent Groups:** Mix ages across the school, promoting mentorship and unity—ideal for smaller schools.

Both models require clear supervision, flexibility, and alignment with site needs.

3. Equipment and Logistics

COTN relies on a two-stage system for equipment transportation:

1. **Central Staging Area (village):** Organize and prep all gear.
2. **Camp Staging Area (near site):** Final distribution and student drop-off.

Community partnerships—such as ATVs and trailers—are vital to bridging the gap between roads and remote learning sites.

Efficient setup depends on a strategic loading sequence, prioritizing essentials and coordinating with volunteers and staff.

4. Camp Setup Priorities

Camp setup follows a strategic sequence:

1. Ground tarps for land protection
2. Tent anchoring and layout (considering wind/weather)
3. Large group and specialty tents
4. Bathroom facilities (Quqtaq)
5. First aid/warming/snack tents
6. Individual group tents and comfort items

Environmental and safety concerns are addressed at each step. The "leave no trace" principle is central to camp planning.

5. Tent Layout Designs

Two common tent configurations are used:

- **Crescent Shape:** Shields from wind and creates a communal space for cultural activities.
- **Circular Layout:** Promotes unity and central gathering, ideal for unpredictable weather.

Both layouts emphasize supervision, safety, and accessibility.

6. Camp Set-Up Responsibilities

Staff roles are clearly defined to ensure smooth operations:

- **Camp Master:** Oversees all logistics and setup
- **Transportation Coordinator:** Manages vehicle access and gear delivery
- **Facility & Staging Coordinators:** Oversee materials and setup priorities
- **On-Site Construction Supervisor:** Ensures camp matches the design
- **All other staff:** Rotate across loading, staging, and construction zones

Students are not involved in the initial setup but are included in camp takedown.

7. Tent Designations

Each tent type has a specific function:

- **Group Tents:** Student home base, centrally located
- **Activity Tents:** Used for instruction and visitor engagement
- **Snack/First Aid/Warming Tent:** Multi-use space with stove and care area
- **Quqtaq (Restroom Tents):** Strategically placed for hygiene and privacy

Orientation and maintenance are assigned to both staff and students.

8. Student Transportation & Daily Operations

Each day is structured around the following:

- Camp Master prepares the site
- Students check in and load gear
- Bus transport to the staging area, then a walk to camp
- Tent check-ins, learning blocks, and structured dismissal

Staff oversee hygiene stations, safety equipment, and conduct end-of-day cleaning and overnight checks.

9. Food Services

Food is prepared at school and transported to the camp:

- Breakfast is eaten at school
- Lunch and snacks are served at camp
- Meals are eaten in common areas, not tents
- Waste is removed daily to prevent wildlife attraction
- The snack/warming tent includes a hot chocolate station and wellness area

10. Safety & Emergency Operations

Integrated safety systems ensure readiness and response:

- Daily full-group safety briefing
- Emergency signals and backup meeting locations
- Communication via cell phones and radios
- On-site CPR-certified adult and AED device
- First aid kits and biohazard supplies available
- Fire extinguishers near all heat sources
- Warming kits stored in warming tents (dry clothes, blankets)
- Restroom tents include honey buckets and hygiene supplies; all waste is double-bagged and removed daily

