

Activity and Teacher's Guide:

# *The Itchy Little Musk Ox*

Written by Tricia Brown, Illustrated by Debra Dubac

Alaska Northwest Books®

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Have you ever wanted to change something about yourself that you didn't like? Ever wondered why you were like that and what it was good for? These questions about self-discovery and acceptance are explored in the new children's book *The Itchy Little Musk Ox* for children 4 years and up. Young readers will learn important life lessons in patience and embracing the qualities that make them unique. Happy reading!

## Reading/Writing/Language Arts

1. Read *The Itchy Little Musk Ox* and answer the following questions:

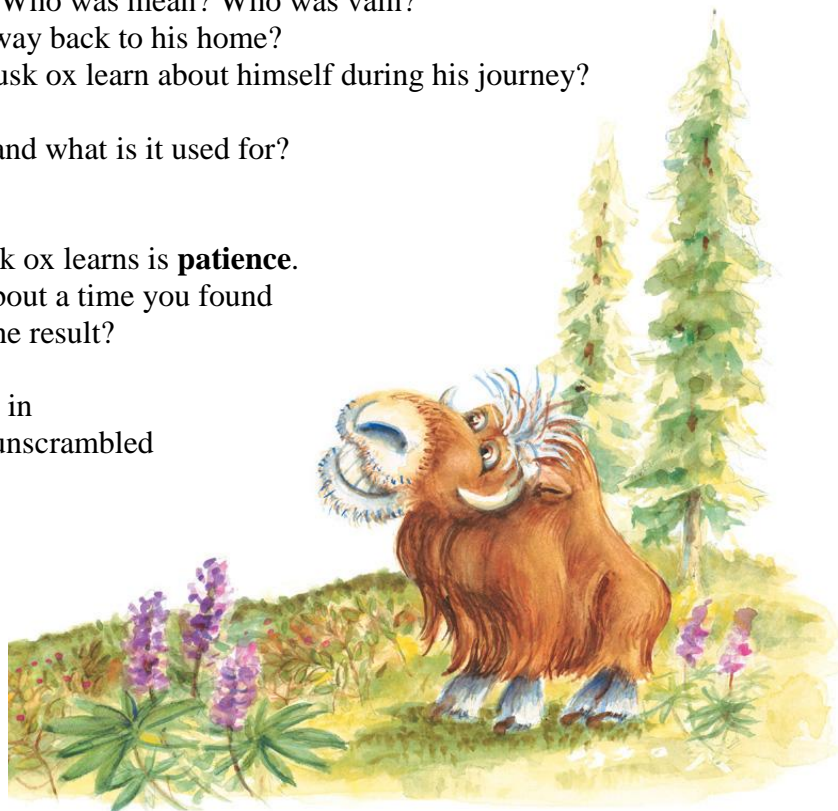
- Why can't the little musk ox scratch his itch?
- What part of his body puts him in a very bad mood? Why?
- What does the little musk ox do to try and forget his itch? Does it work?
- His mother gives him advice about his itch. What is it? Does he listen to her?
- Where does the little musk ox wander off to? What is he looking for?
- Who does he meet along the way? Who was mean? Who was vain?
- Who shows the little musk ox the way back to his home?
- What three things does the little musk ox learn about himself during his journey?

2. What is *qiviut*? Where does it come from and what is it used for? How is it different from other wools?

3. One of the important lessons the little musk ox learns is **patience**. What does patience mean to you? Write about a time you found you had to use your patience. What was the result?

4. Unscramble these words that can be found in *The Itchy Little Musk Ox*. After you have unscrambled the words put them in alphabetical order.

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| ● CIHYT   | ● NOHSR    |
| ● OLOWLY  | ● DURANT   |
| ● TSACRHC | ● LBAOFUF  |
| ● OWLF    | ● IPTAECNE |



## Science/Natural History

1. What animal family does the musk ox belong to? What other animals belong to this family?
2. Are a musk ox and a buffalo the same animal? If not, what are their differences? Do they have similarities?
3. Do musk oxen sleep standing up or lying down?
4. What do they eat? Does this make them **carnivores** or **herbivores**? Explain.
5. Do musk oxen migrate or stay year-round in one place?
6. Do they stay in groups or do they like to be by themselves?
7. When predators attack, how do they defend themselves?  
(*Hint: You can find answers to these questions in your library and on the internet.*)



## Geography

1. Define **tundra**. What features are unique to the tundra where musk oxen live? Where in the world do you find tundra?
2. The little musk ox meets a Native woman with shiny black hair and a gentle smile. Which Native people groups live in the same region as wild herds of musk ox?

## Math

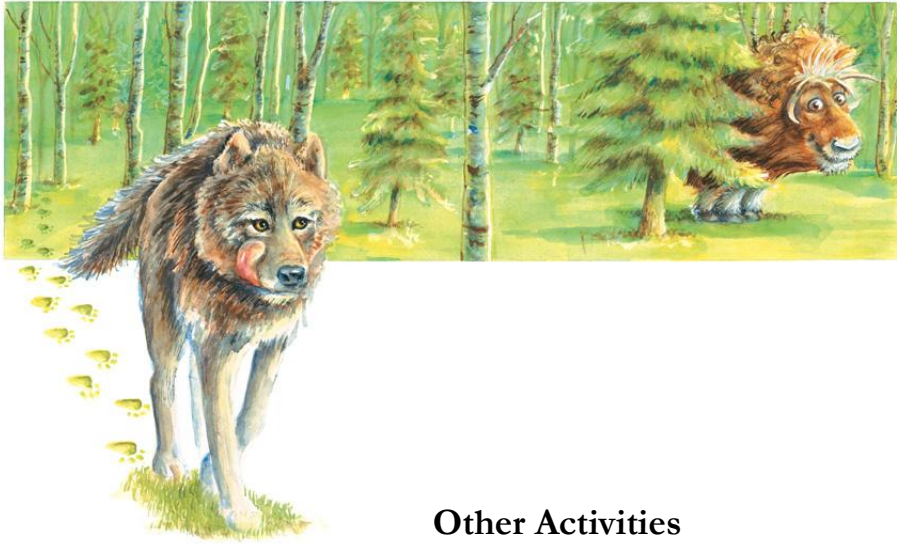
1. **Qiviut** is considered the softest wool in the world! It is softer than the softest sweater you've ever touched. One musk ox can produce up to 6 pounds of qiviut each year. If a musk ox is 6 years old, how many pounds of qiviut has it possibly produced in its lifetime?
2. If a Native woman from a village can knit 1 hat, 2 scarves, and 1 pair of mittens in 1 day, how many does she have of each after 3 days?
3. Musk oxen live in herds of 10-20 members. If one herd has 15 members, another herd has 11 members, and a third herd has 19 members, how many are there in total?



## Art

### 1. Design your own Qiviut Pattern!

- Qiviut is collected from musk oxen and distributed to Alaska Native women in certain villages. Each village has its own special knitting pattern.
- Split the class into 5 or 6 separate “villages” and have them come up with their own special pattern and name using one long piece of white construction paper and colored markers. Display each pattern!
- To see examples of different village patterns, visit:  
<http://www.qiviut.com/store/index.cfm?target=SCARVES>



### Other Activities

#### 1. *The Itchy Little Musk Ox* Word Find!

H	E	C	N	E	I	T	A	P
O	P	H	A	T	H	E	R	D
R	C	S	M	N	J	A	U	G
N	L	O	O	O	E	R	O	K
S	F	O	W	O	O	L	L	Y
B	X	O	K	S	U	M	D	H
Q	L	T	U	N	D	R	A	C
F	M	I	Q	I	V	I	U	T
B	U	F	F	A	L	O	V	I

Find these words from *The Itchy Little Musk Ox*! They can be found across, down, diagonal, and backwards.

**BUFFALO**  
**HERD**  
**HORNS**  
**ITCHY**  
**MUSK OX**  
**PATIENCE**

**QIVIUT**  
**TUNDRA**  
**WOLF**  
**WOMAN**  
**WOOLLY**

#### 2. If you live in Alaska, visit a **Musk Ox Farm**!

Plan a trip with your students to see a farm and take an informative tour led by a knowledgeable guide. See tame cows, powerful bulls, and newborn calves that will make your heart melt. To schedule a tour for your class, visit:

**Palmer:** <http://www.muskoxfarm.org/>

**Fairbanks:** [http://www.uaf.edu/lars/tours\\_2006.html](http://www.uaf.edu/lars/tours_2006.html)



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## INTERESTING MUSK OXEN FACTS!

- Musk oxen have roamed the North American tundra since prehistoric times, when mammoths and mastodons were still alive.
  - Alaska's musk oxen were hunted down to extinction in 1865. In 1930, thirty-four animals were shipped from Greenland to reestablish a herd in Alaska.
  - Now more than 2,000 musk oxen live in the Alaska wilderness.
  - A male musk ox can weigh between 500 and 900 pounds and stand about 5 feet tall at the shoulder.
  - A female musk ox can weigh between 300 and 700 pounds and stand about 4 feet tall at the shoulder.
  - They eat low shrubs and small, woody plants that can be found on the tundra.
  - Both genders have horns that slope down each side of their heads.
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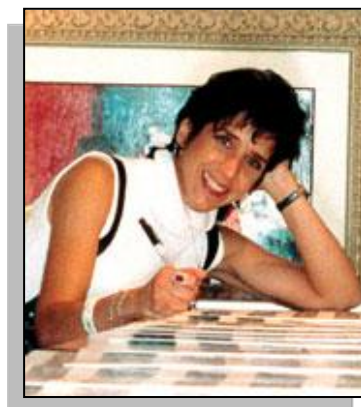
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tricia Brown is a veteran Alaska writer who has already written two children's books: *Children of the Midnight Sun: Young Native Voices of Alaska* (with photos by Roy Corral), and *Groucho's Eyebrows* (illustrated by Barbara Lavallee) as well as several nonfiction books for adults, mostly on Alaska subjects, from **The World-Famous Alaska Highway to Iditarod Country**. A former newspaper writer and editor, and later editor-in-chief of *Alaska* magazine, Tricia lived in Alaska for twenty-one years before her work with Alaska Northwest Books brought her to Oregon. She travels frequently to Alaska, and many friends and family members live in the state, which she calls her "heart home." [www.TriciaBrownBooks.com](http://www.TriciaBrownBooks.com)

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Debra Dubac is a full-time illustrator/designer and mom living in Anchorage, Alaska with her husband and son. Since moving to Anchorage in 1990, she has acquired a deep passion for Alaska and all its natural resources, which continuously inspire her colorful expressions of some of the most admired wildlife and nature in the world. Through her art, Dubac wants to make an awareness of the beauty that decorates and supports our lives as humans. In turn, we as humans will hopefully understand our crucial responsibility to cherish, honor, and protect these precious natural gifts. With numerous published art works including the 2002 print for the Alaska Railroad, this is her first children's book. [www.Dubac.net](http://www.Dubac.net)



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