

Fishy Things

Curiosity is a big part of the can-do spirit!

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice for the warmth of love, the light of truth and the energy of action. May curiosity and imagination guide us on our way!

Story: Kumak's Fish: A Tale of the Far North by Michael Bania

Read this picture book or watch the video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUhQKroYvOw>)



Mindfulness: Vilhjamur with the Inuits

Move into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Take three deep breaths. Now, imagine you are in the cold arctic living with the indigenous people called the Inuit.

Read the following story for your meditation/visualization:

There was a Unitarian explorer from Iceland named Vilhjamur Stefansson (vil'hyoul mur stef un sun). He was a rugged boy who loved the outdoors. His father died when Vilhjamur was just a boy, and to ease his mother's hardship, he lived with his sister and helped a brother with his cattle and horses.

Vilhjamur didn't get to school very often, but he managed to put himself through college at the University of Iowa. He had first attended University of North Dakota, but he was kicked out for organizing a student protest. He liked to express his opinions.

School friends called him Windjammer. Detractors nicknamed him Will-yell-more for his aggressiveness in a debate. Stef, as he asked people to call him later in life, was the last Arctic explorer to travel on the ground-- by foot or dogsled. After Stefansson, Arctic exploration was from the air--by dirigible or airplane. By the estimates of some historians, he is one of the three greatest Arctic explorers in history.

He was famous for living like the [Inuit]. But at first, he made them specially bake his fish, only for him, because he thought he didn't like fish. Here is what "Stef" wrote about trying fish with the [Inuit]:

"Against my expectation, and almost against my will, I was beginning to like the baked salmon trout when one day of perhaps the second week I arrived home without the children having seen me coming. There was no baked fish ready, but the camp was sitting round troughs of boiled fish. I joined them and, to my surprise, liked it better than the baked. Thereafter the special cooking ceased, and I ate boiled fish with the [Inuits]."

In the morning, about seven o'clock, winter-caught fish, frozen so hard that they would break like glass, were brought in to lie on the floor till they began to soften a little. One of the women would pinch them every now and then until, when she found her finger indented them slightly, she would begin preparations for breakfast. First, she cut off the head and put them aside to be boiled for the children in the afternoon ([Inuits] are fond of children, and heads are considered the best part of the fish). Next best are the tails, which are cut off and saved for the children also. The woman would then slit the skin along the back and also along the belly and getting hold with her teeth, would strip the fish somewhat as we peel a banana, only sideways where we peel bananas, endways...

Thus prepared [and boiled], the fish were put on dishes and passed around. Each of us took one and gnawed it about as an American does corn on the cob. An American leaves the cob; similarly we ate the flesh from the outside of the fish, not touching the entrails. When we had eaten as much as we

chose, we put the rest on a tray for dog feed.” From “Adventures in Diet, Part I” by Viljhamur Stefansson, Harper’s Monthly Magazine, Nov. 1935.

When you are ready, leave the land of ice and snow of the Far North. Now, open your eyes and return to the present. Think about your imagined trip to the North.

Activity: Try Different Fishy Things

Like Vilmar Stefansson we can try something new!

Go to the grocery store to find fishy things (frozen foods, cans, jars, pouches), such as:

Fishy Thing	Tried It (Yes/No)	Liked It (Rate 1-5)	Comment
Fish Sticks			
Tuna fish			
Salmon			
Pickled herring			
Shrimp			
Clams			
Smoked oysters			
Anchovies			
Caviar			

Prepare the fishy things you have found. Try them with crackers, pickles, olives, and lemon juice.

“The core of [Stefansson’s] message was that by keeping an open attitude and learning from the people whose ancestors lived in the Arctic for thousands of years -- adapting to the environment and accumulating a body of knowledge handed down between generations – we discover that the Arctic can be a friendly and hospitable place.”

Closing Words

May we use our curiosity to try new things! Amen. Blessed Be.