

TEA PARTNERS



Joyful Sisters: Cecelia Andrews & Alice Frank Demientieff, Deg Xit'an Athabaskan

The use of Tea Partners (Sixoldhid) is a Deg Xit'an Athabaskan traditional practice that instills a responsibility toward the welfare of others in the community and beyond. Other cultures in Alaska may have similar versions of this practice. Elders and parents connect tea partners together, someone older with someone younger, and a male with a female.

They are described as friendships, mentors, and thinking partners. The spirit of the tea partner means that you share your best food with your partner, king salmon, moose, fish ice cream, that you help your tea partner and offer them support when they come to your community, and that you gift them with things like beaver mittens or a warm marten hat and in turn they will share their catch with you. It is about sharing and caring for others, about reciprocity and balance, and survival.

Your tea partner is someone you will honor throughout their lifetime and in turn they will honor you. It's about responsibility for others. You can imagine the strength these connections create. Tea Partners build a grassroots safety net built into and across communities.