

## Baby Song — Inquq

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### ATURTUQ INQUMEK CARLIANI. – SHE’S SINGING A BABY SONG TO HER BABY.

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Photo: LaRita Laktonen with her baby daughter at the Alutiiq Museum.

In the Alutiiq language, *inqueluni* means to amuse a young child by rocking or playing or to sing to a loved one, particularly a baby. Nouns derived from this verb include *inquun*, *inquq*, and *inequteq*, which refer to baby songs. These are special tunes sung to a baby by a loved one. Alutiiq baby songs are not like American lullabies, widely known and sung by many people. Among Alutiiq people, each song is a unique composition, written for a specific child by someone who loves or favors that child. Parents, grandparents, and godparents often author these private tunes, which commonly include nonsense words. A person who sings such a song is said to be sweet-talking a child.

One Elder recalls a baby song that belonged to a little girl who loved tea and soup. Her simple song went, “Suupama-ho-hoooo . . . Sarsanga-ho-hoooo!,” which means “Soup-ho-hoooo . . . have tea ho-hoooo!” When they were older, he would tease the girl by singing the song to her.

Songs for babies are common throughout Native Alaska. Many cradle songs and lullabies are found among the Indian societies of southeast Alaska. Some of these are individually composed for specific children, while others are family-owned songs sung to all the infants in a particular household.