

## Baseball — Laptuuk

---

### KIAGMI LAPTUUGTAARTUKUT. – WE PLAY BASEBALL IN THE SUMMERTIME.

---



Photo: Children playing Laptuuk outside Ouzinkie School, 1965. Courtesy of Tim and Norman Smith.

In classical Alutiiq society, community gatherings were an opportunity for games, particularly those played outdoors. Both men and women enjoyed participating in athletic challenges, including everything from swimming, boating, and running races to wrestling, high jumping, target throwing, and team sports. Competitions were a way to show off one's strength and endurance and to compete in a friendly arena.

Outdoor games continue to be popular in Alutiiq communities, particularly during the long, warmer days of summer. Children play a variety of games, from familiar Western favorites like hide and seek to Alutiiq games like *laptuuk*, a type of baseball.

*Laptuuk*, derived from a Russian batting game, resembles American baseball with some interesting differences. Alutiiq people typically play this game on the beach, using a soft rubber ball, two bases, and any number of people. Just divide your group in half and get ready for lots of laughter. To start, one team takes the field while the other bats. The pitcher tosses the ball gently, allowing the batter to hit. When the ball is hit, everyone on the batter's team runs to the opposite base, and if they can, back to home plate to score a run. Each batter has three chances to hit before it's a teammate's turn at-bat. However, there are no strikeouts. A player can only be out if a fielder catches the ball he hit or if a fielder holding the ball tags him. A fielder can also throw the ball directly at the runner. Hit a runner with the ball and he is out! Just one out retires the side, and the opposing team is up to bat. With many people running the bases at once, *laptuuk* is full of both confusion and excitement. Often people are having too much fun to keep score.