

Bracelet — Tayarnerutaq

TAYARNERUTAMEK NULIQA PIKISK'GKA. – I GAVE MY WIFE A BRACELET.



Photo: Wrist clip of baleen, Karluk One Collection, Koniag, Inc.

The Alutiiq word *tayarnerutaq* means “something for your wrist.” In classical Alutiiq society, several objects fell into this category. Some items worn on the wrist were jewelry, bracelets created for adornment. In the nineteenth century, Alutiiq women wore bracelets fashioned from glass beads. Worn at winter festivals, these beautiful ornaments symbolized wealth and were part of a cultural emphasis on beauty.

Traditional shaman’s gear also included bracelets. William Fisher, a collector for the Smithsonian Institution, obtained a pair of such bracelets from the community of Ugashik in about 1885. Each was made from the snouts of river otters and embellished with bone pins and a smooth river pebble.

Alutiiq men wore another type of wristband—functional baleen clips that fastened around the cuffs of waterproof gut parkas. Shaped like a bracelet, these clips kept ocean and rainwater from running up one’s sleeve when the arms were raised. An archaeological example from Karluk is bent from a thin piece of wood and features a thin groove around its center. The clip slipped over the wearer’s hand. Then it was tied around his wrist and cuff with a piece of line that rested in the encircling groove.