

Buy — Igu'urluku

KAARAMEK IGU'ULLIANGA. – I BOUGHT A CAR.



Photo: Ouzinkie store (center behind dock), 1949.
Marie Heinrichs Collection.

Before the development of a western cash economy, Kodiak's Alutiiq people obtained many of the foods and materials they needed through trade. In good weather, men traveled by skin boat to communities to share their surplus goods and barter for items. Trade with the Alaska mainland was particularly important. Here, Kodiak Islanders could acquire resources not locally available. These included caribou skins, walrus ivory, antler, volcanic rocks, and other exotic items. What did Kodiak Islander's offer in trade? Mainlanders coveted Kodiak's high-quality slate, perfect for making ulus and spear points.

In the historic era, Alutiiq people found opportunities to earn money. At first, families sustained themselves through subsistence activities, earning small amounts of cash through trapping and reinvesting these funds in hunting and fishing equipment. But as cannery jobs became more widely available, people began to work for wages and to purchase more of their supplies.

Today, most Alutiiq communities have a local store where families can buy necessities. Many also purchase food and clothing in Kodiak, order from catalogs, and as computers have become more accessible, shop via the Internet. But bartering remains an important and valued part of village economies.