

## Clean, Cleanse — P’rirca’iluni

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### PLIT’AAQ EPRIRTURU. – CLEAN THE STOVE.

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Photo: Father Gerasim with brooms, Afognak Village  
1918, photo by Clara Helgason. Courtesy of Gene &  
Phyllis Sundberg.

In classical Alutiiq society, house cleaning was both a daily activity and a scheduled spring event. Historic sources and the accounts of Elders indicate that people swept their sod houses with brooms made of eagle wings and covered their floors with clean, dry grass. Alutiiq people also restuffed their mattresses with dry grass, organized food stores in their rafters and side rooms, and carefully stowed gear not in use.

House cleaning is evident in ancient village sites. Archaeologists studying prehistoric dwellings find few artifacts or animal remains on their dirt floors. Only objects that slipped between floorboards, were pressed into the earthen floors, fell into drainage ditches, or were carefully stored away remain.

In addition to physical cleaning, houses were spiritually cleansed with smoke. The smoke from burning grass purified indoor air before festivals, after the birth of a baby, or at the death of a family member.

Maintaining a tidy house is in keeping with Alutiiq views of respect. By caring for one’s house and the objects in it, Alutiiq people show respect for natural resources—for the plants and animals that provided the raw materials necessary for human life.