

## Crow — Qalngaa'aq

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QALNGAA'AQ TAN'ERTUQ. (N), QALNGAA'AQ TAMLERTUQ. (S) – THE CROW IS BLACK.

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Image: The Crow and the Goose. Textile by Abigail Hanna, 2021.

Alaska is home to one species of crow: *Corvus caurinus*, the northwestern crow. Smaller than its cousin the American Crow, this black bird frequents the Pacific coast from Washington state to southcentral Alaska and occasionally the eastern Aleutian Islands. The northwestern crow is a coastal species, typically found around beaches, tidal marshes, and spruce forests bordering the ocean. It nests in trees, boulders, and deadfalls and eats shellfish, fish, berries, and insects. Crows are also common around human settlements where they forage in garbage.

The Alutiiq word for raven, *qalnga'aq*, is very similar to the Alutiiq word for crow, *qalngaa'aq*, which may mean something like “little raven.” Many people confuse crows with ravens, although crows are smaller and have a distinctive square tail. Crows also have a unique set of calls. They say “kaah” and “wok-wok-wok,” make clicks and rattling noises, and can even meow like a cat.

An Alutiiq story from Prince William Sound warns of the sneaky behavior of crows. Like ravens, crows will steal your food. In a small village on Hinchinbrook Island, an old woman hung her fish to dry in the open air. Later, a group of children came running to say that crows were eating her fish. Angered, the woman grabbed her bow and arrow. While singing a song to shoo the birds away, she launched arrows at them. She missed the crafty crows but learned to dry her food inside the smokehouse.