

Dart Game — Augca’aq

AUGCA’ARCIQUT. – THEY ARE GOING TO PLAY THE DART GAME.



Photo: Dart set by Speridon Simeonoff, purchased for the Alutiiq Museum's collections with support from the Rasmuson Foundation.

Gaming has long been a favorite recreational activity in Alutiiq communities. For centuries, people have gathered in each other's homes to test their skills and make bets. Traditional throwing games, where people tossed darts or discs at a target, emphasized hand-eye coordination, mimicked skills needed for hunting, and provided hours of fun.

In *augca’aq*, a game based on marine mammal hunting, players took turns throwing darts at a wooden porpoise dangling from a string. Teams of players knelt on the floor as if sitting in a kayak and threw their darts at the swinging model. The object was to score twelve points, which were awarded for the location of each strike. Elders recall that people would bet quantities of food, clothing, and even valuable items like firearms, outboard motors, and houses on the outcome of matches.

Gaming remains part of the seasonal rhythm of life in Alutiiq communities. Although new forms of gambling, like bingo and pull tabs, are popular today, many people remember the old games. Old Harbor men compete at *augca’aq* during the six weeks of Russian Orthodox Lent when both

hunting and bingo are prohibited.