

Dream — Qawangurtuaq, Qawanguq

QAWANGURTUATAARTUT. – THEY ALWAYS DREAM.



Photo: Woman asleep in a skiff, Ouzinkie 1940s.
Smith Collections, courtesy of Tim and Norman
Smith.

For Alutiiq people, dreaming is a magical state, one that draws people closer to the spirit world. Encounters between people and spirits often take place in dreams or as a person awakes from sleep. Shamans, people who interact closely with spirits, their apprentices through dreams, and dreams are thought to foretell the future. A person's death might be predicted while dreaming, or a lucky amulet envisioned before it is found. Sleep is also the realm of the human soul. Shaped like a miniature person and stored in its owner's breath, the soul was thought to travel during sleep, leaving the body to talk with other souls. Elders believe that this is why people sometimes feel tired when they awake from sleeping.

A legend recorded on Kodiak in 1872 tells of a hunter's dream. A man was unable to hunt successfully, and he pleaded for help. In his sleep, he dreamed of masks and heard an unknown voice singing songs. When he awoke, he began to repeat the songs. The next time he went hunting, his luck improved, and he killed many animals. Other hunters asked about his good fortune. The lucky hunter taught them his songs and made the masks from his dream.