

Finger — Sua'aq

QULNEK SUA'ANGQ'RTUA. – I HAVE TEN FINGERS.



Photo: Harpoon finger rests. Koniag, Inc. collection, Karluk One.

The Alutiiq word *sua'aq* refers generally to a finger. Like English speakers, however, Alutiiq speakers have unique words for individual fingers. For example, Alutiiqs call the middle finger *akulimaq*, from the word for in-between. The second, or index finger is *tekeq*. Alutiiq people have a joke about people who wag their index fingers at others. This sort of nagging is said to make your finger grow longer!

Because most Alutiiq speakers don't know the individual finger terms, language instructors recently translated "Where is Thumbkin," a popular British children's tune that teaches finger terms, into Alutiiq.

Some classic Alutiiq tools had special places for fingers. The throwing boards used to loft harpoons had specially carved grooves for the last three fingers. Harpoons featured a small finger rest, a crescent-shaped piece of wood or bone tied to the weapon's shaft. The hunter placed his index finger on the rest to steady the harpoon while he prepared for a strike. One example in the

Alutiiq Museum's collections is carved from a walrus molar.