

Five — Talliman

TALLIMANEK UNA IQALLUGNEK PIT'LLIA. – THIS GUY GOT FIVE FISH.



Photo: A coal labret with a concentric circle design likely representing the layers of the Alutiiq Universe. Uyak Site, Larsen Bay Tribe Collection. AM3.

Five is a divine number in the Alutiiq world. The Alutiiq universe has five sky worlds and five underworlds. Layered on top of each other, these worlds contain a hierarchy of spirit beings. *Llam Sua*, the Alutiiq supreme being, resides in the fifth and most pure sky world. Other powerful spirits that guide human life live in the successive sky worlds. The first sky world, closest to earth, contained an earth-like landscape and the spirits of celestial bodies. Kodiak Alutiiq people believed that this world was the final resting place of the human soul. It was land where souls traveled after their fifth and final death and became the star people whose bright eyes looked back at earth through holes in the ground. Although little is known about the five underworlds, they were located beneath the sea and may have been the home of animal spirits. Fish, sea mammals, and even birds were thought to have homes under the ocean.

A reverence for the number five is expressed in the traditional female seclusion practices that surrounded major rites of passage in Alutiiq society—birth, menstruation, and death. Women giving birth were secluded in special huts for multiples of five days. Postpartum seclusion lasted five days, ten days, or occasionally longer, depending on the health and status of the mother. Additionally, young women were secluded for ten days at the onset of their first menstrual period. A similar seclusion occurred after the death of a child.