

I Got It!, Bingo! — Pingua!

BINGO-MI PINGNEQ PINGAKTAAQA. – I LIKE TO WIN AT BINGO.



Photo: The Sun'aq Tribe's bingo hall, 2021.

“*Pingua!* I got it!” you might shout while reeling in a big salmon. However, this Alutiiq word is most commonly heard in Alutiiq language bingo games in classroom settings. Alutiiq students shout “*pingua!*” instead of “bingo!” when they fill a card. This game, used to teach Alutiiq vocabulary, is not the only popular bingo game in Alutiiq communities.

Bingo has been popular in Kodiak communities since the 1950s. As other types of Alutiiq gaming declined in the twentieth century, bingo took hold. In Ouzinkie people began playing after community movies, and in Old Harbor, bingo often followed community dances.

Today, bingo halls are popular gathering places where people visit in the evening. An evening of bingo typically runs from seven o'clock to ten or eleven. In Kodiak, people play bingo four nights a week at the Sun'aq Tribal Center. In Old Harbor, bingo takes place several times a week in the community hall. Bingo often also follows other evening events, like a basketball game or a tribal council meeting, and coincides with community celebrations like the Fourth of July.

Tribal governments run bingo, providing community entertainment, funds for tribal activities, and part-time employment to community members. Each hall hires a cashier, a caller, and a card checker.