

## Independence Day — Kasnaam ernera

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### ERNERPAK KASNAAM ERNERA. – TODAY IS INDEPENDENCE DAY.

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Photo: Community members watching July 4th festivities in Old Harbor.

People often think of summer as a time when communities disperse, as people move to fish camps or travel. But where resources are abundant and predictable, communities often gather in the summer. Long, warm days offer opportunities to harvest foods and socialize. Archaeological data from the banks of Kodiak's salmon streams suggest that Alutiiq families gathered in large groups in late summer to harvest fish. Historic accounts suggest that these gatherings were filled with visiting, eating, and game playing.

Summer gatherings are still part of the rhythm of Alutiiq communities. The Fourth of July, for example, is a popular community celebration in Kodiak villages. In Old Harbor, residents gather for a morning church service dedicated to blessing the community's many fishermen. A blessing of the fleet follows. Boats and their crews pass slowly by the community dock to be sprinkled with holy water by a priest, then line up in the bay for a wild race back to the harbor. The rest of the day is filled with contests for all ages. Pie-eating challenges, running races, arcade-style games, and boxing matches amuse children and adults, followed by an evening bingo game and sometimes a dance.