

Japanese Person — Yapuun'saaq

YAPUUN'SAAT TAILLRIT ATTU-MEN. – THE JAPANESE CAME TO ATTU.



Photo: World War II era bunker on Kodiak Island.

The Alutiiq word for a Japanese person, *Yapuun'saaq*, comes from the English word Japan. This word may have entered the Alutiiq language at several points during the twentieth century. The Russian American Company had a Japanese employee in Kodiak. Japanese people have long participated in Alaska's fishing industry, and in the early 1900s they worked at canneries in Alutiiq communities like Chignik. A Japanese family also settled near the community of Kaguyak, in a place known as Jap Bay. They eventually moved to the Alutiiq community of Aiaktalik where their descendants married into Alutiiq families.

Yapuun'saaq was also a familiar word during WWII. Kodiak Islanders feared Japanese attacks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 and attacks on the Aleutian Islands in 1942. Residents of even the smallest Alutiiq communities had to maintain blackout conditions and respond to air raid sirens by fleeing their homes. Families had to run into the hills and hide in the

bushes every time the sirens blasted.

Today *Yapuun'saat* are a vital part of Kodiak's fish processing industry, where they process, preserve, and package chum salmon roe for Asian markets. Specially trained Japanese technicians remove salmon eggs from their skeins, rub them with brine, and air-dry them for shipment. In Japan, people season the eggs with soy sauce to make *ikura*, a popular dish.