

Map — Nunam Kalikaa

IKUK'GKA NUNAM KALIKAAMI. – I FOUND IT ON THE MAP.



Photo: Archaeologists mapping an ancient village site, Kodiak Island, 2010.

The Alutiiq word for map, *nunam kalikaa*, literally means “the land’s paper.” Although maps and marine charts are important to modern hunters and fishermen, they are recent navigational tools. For thousands of years, Alutiiq people stored information about the landscape in place names and stories.

Eighteenth-century Russian fur traders made the first maps of Alaska. Sailing eastward from Siberian ports, they charted portions of the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska coasts, weaving together their observations and geographic details gleaned from Alaska Natives.

Early hand-drawn maps show details for portions of the coast, with gaps for regions yet to be investigated. By the early 1800s, however, extensive exploration allowed Russian cartographers to produce a relatively accurate map of the North American coastline between the areas now known as western Alaska and southern British Columbia.

Russian traders first learned of the Kodiak Archipelago in about 1760. Residents of the eastern Aleutian Islands, including a Kodiak man taken captive by the Unangan, reported a distant island off the southern coast of the Alaska Peninsula that was rich in foxes and sea lions. Based on their information, Petr Shiskin, a crewmember aboard the *Sv. Iulian*, created the first known map showing Kodiak.