

Moon — Iraluq

UNUGPAK IRALUQ TATARTUQ. – TONIGHT THE MOON IS FULL.



Photo: Moon mask by Perry Eaton. Alutiiq Museum collections.

In classical Alutiiq cosmology, there are five sky worlds, layered one on top of the other. The fifth sky world, farthest from the earth, is the purest. This is the home of *Llam Sua*, the Alutiiq supreme being. The first sky world, closest to earth, contains the moon, the stars, and the northern lights. Alutiiq tradition holds that the moon is a man who wears a different mask each night. At dusk, he enters a cave, changes his clothes, and puts on the mask for that evening. When the moon is eclipsed, the man is said to be wearing grease that darkens his face. When the eclipse fades, he has cleaned himself.

Legend tells how the moon met a girl and carried her to his sky world. They were married and he took good care of her. She became angered, however, when he would not tell her where he went each night. One night, she set off on her own to explore the sky world. She came to a house with a curtain and looked behind it. Here she found masks representing the different phases of the moon. She put a nearly full moon up to her face and it stuck. From then on, she became her husband's assistant, sharing the work of the moon with him.