

s Eve — Nuuwikuutam Maqin’ra (N), Snuuwikuutam Maqin’ra (S), Nuta’aq uksugkam Maqin’ra

ERNERPAK NUTA’AQ UKSUGKAM MAQIN’RA. – TODAY IS NEW YEAR’S EVE.



Photo: New Year’s Eve maskers, Ouzinkie. Melinda Lamp Collection.

A favorite Kodiak New Year’s tradition is the annual masquerade ball. This celebration of renewal occurs on January 14, New Years Day on the Julian Calendar that tracks the Orthodox year. The ball begins with a buffet dinner featuring many local foods, including dishes like perok, a fish pie. After the meal, revelers go home and return in costumes, fully masked to hide their identity. The remainder of the evening features lively dancing, comic performances, and a costume contest. At midnight, the revelers unmask themselves to reveal their identities.

While this event has links to Christian spirituality, particularly the biblical story of King Herrod’s murderous masked soldiers, its ties to Alutiiq winter festivals are also evident. Mask dancing was a central part of Alutiiq celebrations where the human-like spirits of animals were called to the dance hall and honored to ensure future prosperity. The masquerade ball also includes elements from other cultures that have contributed to contemporary Alutiiq life: Russian dishes made with traditional subsistence foods and the polkas, Rhinelanders, schottisches, and waltzes introduced by Scandinavian fishermen.