

Ocean — Imaq

IMAM TAANGA TARYUTUU'UQ. – THE OCEAN'S WATER IS SALTY.



Photo: View of the Pacific Ocean from northern Afognak Island.

The bountiful North Pacific Ocean has been the economic foundation of Alutiiq communities for more than 7,500 years. Kodiak's first settlers arrived by boat and were fully equipped to exploit the marine environment. These early colonists probably came from coastal areas of southwest Alaska and remained in Kodiak to harvest the wealth of sea mammals, fish, birds, and shellfish they encountered. Colonization is itself convincing evidence of a seafaring people because the Kodiak Archipelago was surrounded by water sixteen thousand years ago, more than eight thousand years before the first known Native settlement. Kodiak's first families must have arrived by boat.

In addition to food, the ocean provided Alutiiqs with raw materials. Tools were made of whale bones, boats covered with sea lion skins, and clothing made from the pelts of puffins and cormorants. Although the technologies used to harvest marine resources have changed with time, today's reliance on the ocean is very similar to the ancient economic pattern. Alutiiq communities

continue to make their living from the sea, whether it be through subsistence practices, as part of the tourist industry, or in the commercial arena. The ocean continues to feed Alutiiq families.