

People — Suuget, Suu'ut

KICARWIGMI SUGYARTUQ. – THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN ANCHORAGE.



Photo: A cluster of petroglyph faces, Cape Alitak, XTI-129. Drawing by Sven Haakanson. AM454.

Today, the Kodiak Archipelago is home to about 1,800 Alutiiq people. Although this is not the smallest Native population the islands have sheltered, it is much smaller than in the prehistoric era. However, the number of Native people that once occupied the archipelago remains a source of debate. Russian fur trader Grigori Shelikov claimed a population of 30,000 residents. Historians believe that this is a gross overestimate, one that reflects Shelikov's desire to claim a large number of subjects for the Russian crown and further his political ambitions.

Other population estimates are more modest. Based on the distribution of village sites, archaeologists estimate that the late prehistoric population may have been about 10,000 people.

However, historic records, maps showing the location of villages, and Native place names suggest that the Kodiak region was home to about 6,500 people in the decades following Russian conquest.

Although Kodiak was the most heavily occupied region of the Alutiiq homeland, perhaps due to its wealth of economic resources, significant numbers of Alutiiq people also lived in adjoining regions. Although their exact numbers are unknown, anthropologists believe there were up to 900 Alutiiq residents of the Alaska Peninsula, and perhaps as many as 1,500 Alutiiq people in Prince William Sound at the time of Western contact.