

## Puffins — Tunngat

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### TUNNGAT MANIGTUT P'HNAML – THE PUFFINS ARE LAYING EGGS ON THE CLIFF.

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Photo: Carved ivory puffin, Settlement Point site, Afognak Island. Afognak Native Corporation collection.

Puffins, also known as sea parrots, are members of the auk family. The Kodiak Archipelago is home to two varieties of this bird, the tufted puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*) and the horned puffin (*Fratercula corniculata*). Both have large, brightly colored, yellow and orange beaks, with white breast feathers and black back feathers. In summer, they live in nearshore ocean waters where they nest on cliffs, between boulders, and in burrows. In winter, they move out to sea. Although puffins are small, weighing just one to two pounds, Alutiiq people captured them for both food and raw material. The meat of the puffin is said to taste like tuna fish.

Puffin skins were one of the most common materials used for parkas and were typically worn by the poor. It took up sixty puffin skins, complete with their white breast feathers, to make such a garment. Puffin beaks also adorned a variety of objects. They decorated clothing, were tied to drums, and in Prince William Sound, they were worn on the aprons of shamans performing at festivals. However, their best-known use was on dance rattles. One of three traditional musical instruments, these rattles were about twelve inches wide and had as many as five concentric

wooden hoops. Craftsmen painted the hoops red and black and lashed them to a cross-shaped handle. Then, they drilled each ring with small holes so that clusters of puffin beaks could be attached.