

Reuse — Atunkirlluku

ASUQ ATUNKIRCHQAQA. – I'M GOING TO REUSE THE POT.



Photo: Grace Harrod and Susan Malutin plan repairs for a squirrel skin parka, 2015.

Salvaging, recycling, and reusing are essential components of Alutiiq spirituality. In the Alutiiq world, animals are smarter than people. Seals, ducks, and salmon give themselves to people who must in turn demonstrate their respect. Thrift is an essential component of this relationship. By utilizing resources carefully, including every part of an animal, people show their appreciation and help to ensure a future supply of game.

This sense of thrift includes recycling. Alutiiq people are well known for reusing objects and materials. Archaeologists note this in ancient tool collections. Alutiiq people ground broken slate ulu fragments into lances and arrows, created fire starters from old kayak parts, and used the broken bases of wooden containers as cutting boards. In more recent times, Elders recall stitching underwear and slippers from the pretty flowered sacks that held cooking flour and fashioning stoves for their banyas from empty 55-gallon fuel drums.

Modern Alutiiq artists also demonstrate the value of thrift in their work. Look closely at contemporary works and you will find strips of a plastic crab pot buoy framing a painting, or pieces of polar fleece garments cut into decorative designs to adorn a scarf. Like their ancestors, artists transform leftover materials into objects with lasting beauty.