

## Red — Kawisqaq

---

### GIINAN KAWIRTUQ. – YOUR FACE IS RED.

---



Photo: Decorated bag, Etholen Collection, National Museum of Finland, Helsinki.

In prehistoric times, Alutiiq people manufactured red pigment from naturally occurring ochre, a locally available iron oxide. Historic sources suggest that this soft mineral was ground to a powder and then mixed with seal oil and blood to produce paint. Several thousand years ago, ochre may have been used to tan and clean hides. Ochre grinding tools and layers of bright red, ochre-smeared earth occur throughout the archipelago's ancient campsites. In more recent times, ochre was used as body paint. Dancers painted red lines on their bodies, and the faces of hunters, travelers, and the dead were adorned with red paint.

Craftsmen also made red pigments from a variety of local plants to color grass, spruce root, gut, hide, sinew, and wooden objects. On Kodiak, people produced a reddish-brown dye by boiling alder bark. In Prince William Sound, boiled hemlock bark or a mixture of cranberry and blueberry juices produced a dark red dye.

The symbolic meaning of the color red has been obscured by time, but among the Yup'ik people, who are closely related to Alutiiq people, it represents ancestral blood.