

## Refuge Rock, Fortress — Nagaayuq

---

### NAGAAYUQ IKANI ET'UQ. – THERE IS A REFUGE ROCK OVER THERE.

---



Photo: Awa'uq - a refuge rock off the coast of Sitkalidak Island and the site of the 1784 massacre of Alutiiq people.

To protect their families from raiders, Alutiiq people built temporary settlements at the top of precipitous cliffs and small, rocky, cliff-bound islands. These strategically located refuges were designed to repel attackers. Here, families prepared shelters and stockpiled supplies. When communities feared aggression, they retreated to these sites for protection. Women and children might stay at a refuge site when the men in their community were traveling, or an entire community might withdraw to one when they learned of a possible raid. Sometimes, people took refuge in the mountains. One Elder recalls that Old Womens Mountain, overlooking Kodiak Airport, is named for a group of women who fled from a village at the mouth of the Buskin River.

Refuge sites are confirmed in Kodiak's archaeological record about one thousand years ago and coincide with other evidence of increasing warfare. Archaeologists believe that as Kodiak's population grew and strong political leaders emerged, warfare became more common. The most famous refuge rock lies off the coast of Sitkalidak Island, not far from Old Harbor. Here, in a bloody massacre, the Native people of Kodiak lost political autonomy and control of their

homeland to Russian traders in 1784. After minor skirmishes, the Russians attacked the refuge with cannon. They stormed the settlement, killing many Alutiiq people and taking others as hostages.