

Respect — Ling'aklluku

ATAN LING'AGIU. – RESPECT YOUR FATHER.



Photo: An elaborately stitched and woven clothing decoration, National Museum of Finland, Etholen Collection, Photo by Sven Haakanson.

To Alutiiq people the world is alive. It is a place where all things are aware of and sensitive to human action. Caring for this world requires respect: a reverence for natural resources, recognition of the accomplishments of ancestors, and a modest view of one's place on earth. Alutiiq people do not see themselves as conquerors of the land but as one component of a complexly integrated, life-giving system based on mutual respect.

In this system, the resources necessary for life give themselves to people, who must prove their worth through responsible acts. A hunter's ability to show respect for the animals he seeks determines his success, not his skills. To Alutiiq people, seals, bears, fish, and birds are much smarter than people and can easily avoid being captured. But when a hunter demonstrates his humility, game will give itself to him. In this world carelessness, arrogance, and waste are signs of disrespect. They unsettle the natural balance and poison a person's luck.

How do people show respect? Hunters dress neatly and keep their gear in good repair to show respect for previous gifts. They butcher animals carefully, returning a portion of the animal's body to the land or the sea. This shows concern for the animal's spirit, which will live on to create more game if treated properly. Families use materials from the land judiciously, wasting little, sharing with others, and creating beautiful objects.