

Run — Qecengluni

USWILLRARAAT QECENGTAARTUT. – KIDS ARE ALWAYS RUNNING AROUND.



Photo: Fourth of July sack race in Old Harbor.
Courtesy of the Rostad Collection.

In classical Alutiiq society, runners passed important news from one village to the next. Elders recall young men running along the beach to carry messages to neighboring communities. When they arrived, a fresh runner would take the message to the next village, and in this way, information would travel up the coast from community to community. Some villages had two or three swift boys who were designated runners. To send messages quickly across water, Alutiiq people used signal fires. These often warned of warfare, and different numbers of blazes provided different details. Runners watched for these fires to carry the news overland.

Running was also a popular sport in Alutiiq communities. At gatherings, young people participated in activities designed to test their strength and endurance. These included boat races, swimming and diving contests, wrestling matches, rope-jumping competitions, and running races. Races remain popular in Alutiiq villages, particularly at Fourth of July celebrations, where villagers hold sack races, buoy races, and even mountain marathons.