

Shoes — Pashmakiit

NAAMA PASHMAKIIGKA? – WHERE'S MY (2) SHOES?



Photo: Historic leather shoe soles, Alutiiq Museum Collections.

Traditional Alutiiq clothing included long hoodless bird-skin parkas, waterproof gut jackets, and a variety of fur, spruce root, and wooden hats, but footgear was rarely worn. Only in the coldest weather did people put on shoes. Next time you watch the Kodiak Alutiiq Dancers, look at their feet. They dance barefooted!

Footwear was made from a variety of raw materials. Throughout the Alutiiq world, fish skin was fashioned into boots, particularly dog salmon skin. A pair of traditional boots from Egigik, an Alutiiq community on the Alaska Peninsula, has a thick hide sole and salmon skin uppers, with leather laces and leather drawstrings at the top.

In Prince William Sound, the Chugach Alutiiq people made boots from sea lion skins and from the hind feet of black bears. The claws and pads were removed from the bear's feet and replaced with a sole of sealskin. People made hip boots by using the fur from a bear's entire hind legs with the feet still attached. To increase their warmth, boots were stuffed with bundles of grass or moss, fitted with a loose sole of mountain goat or bear fur, or paired with socks woven from ryegrass.