

Star — Agyaq, Mit'aq (in Karluk)

AGYAT UNUGMI ANTAARTUT. – THE STARS COME OUT AT NIGHT.



Photo: Whalebone carving that may represent a one-eyed star person. US Fish & Wildlife Service Collection, AM606.

In the Alutiiq universe, stars live in the first of five consecutive sky worlds, closest to earth. This world is also home to the moon and northern lights, and the place where people go after dying for the fifth and final time. Like earth, this world has forests, rivers, and animals. Stars are believed to be the eyes of spirits, peering down at the earth through holes in the ground. Legend says each star is a man with one bright eye who lies face down on the ground.

An Alutiiq story tells of a girl who married a star. A chief kept his daughter in seclusion, and in her sadness, she refused to marry any of her suitors. One night, a man crawled through her window and convinced her to leave with him. She agreed, but the man mistreated her, keeping her hungry and cold. An old woman came to her aid, secretly feeding the girl and urging her to marry her son. The girl agreed and was taken by basket to the woman's home in the sky. The old woman's son was a star man. He had moss on his head, twigs for hair, and one bright eye in the middle of his forehead. He provided well for the girl and made her happy. In time, they had a star child. But the girl was homesick, so the old woman lowered her to earth to visit her father's village. The villagers were scared of her, thinking that she was dead, so she returned to her home in the sky.