

Stormy — Kayunguq

KAYUNGUQ, EH? – IT’S STORMY, EH?



Photo: A stormy day in Chiniak Bay.

Despite mild temperatures, Kodiak lies in one of the most meteorologically active regions on earth. From September to April, a storm crosses the Gulf of Alaska every four to five days, bringing intense rain, high winds, and heavy seas. Kodiak’s location guarantees exposure to the complete force of these storms, which build to their fullest stage by the time they reach the central Gulf. For Alutiiq people, stormy weather presented special challenges. Storms pushed subsistence foods farther away from shore and limited kayak travel. In winter, hunters could not always access foods and raw materials by boat.

To prevent food shortages, Alutiiq people stockpiled large quantities of summer resources for winter use. Fish and sea mammal meat were dried, oil rendered from blubber, berries preserved, and fish pickled. Stores hung from the rafters of sod houses or were kept in containers and special rooms. During stormy weather, Alutiiq families gathered to work and socialize. Men repaired their hunting tools, women stitched clothing, children played with toys, and everyone participated in traditional games.