

## Television — Ulutegwik

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### ULUTEGWIK IKIRSGU. – TURN THE TELEVISION ON.

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Photo: Marie Hensen and Nick Alokli. Alokli Collection. AM550.

Television began reaching rural Alaska communities in the 1970s, as communication systems evolved following World War II. Alutiiq villages began to receive radio signals in the 1960s and public television a decade later. Satellite television followed in the 1990s, and now many rural communities have Internet access. The recently coined Alutiiq term for television, *ulutegwik*, literally means “place where you look.” Other Alutiiq speakers simply change the English acronym TV to *TViq*.

One indirect and unexpected result of the Exxon Valdez oil spill was the expansion of television viewing. Restoration funds designated to purchase private lands for addition to the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge provided Alutiiq people with opportunities to sell land. Some used the resulting income to purchase luxury items, including satellite dishes that could access hundreds of TV channels. This has made the home shopping network and Hollywood movies part of daily life. It has also created a few jobs installing and servicing television systems.

To some, greater rural access to the media indicates progress. To others, it represents the continued erosion of Native culture and values. The western images and messages that flood Alutiiq homes have profoundly impacted young people. In addition to promoting consumerism and glamorizing high-risk behaviors, these images marginalize and suppress traditional practices. As television became popular in Alutiiq villages, for example, weekly community dances featuring local musicians disappeared.