

Thank you — Quyanaa

QUYANAA TAILUCI. – THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING.



Quyanaa is the Alutiiq word for thank you. People offer this common expression of gratitude throughout the Alutiiq nation. “*Quyanaa*,” you might say to your host at the end of a visit, or to a friend who gives you some smoked salmon. To many, using this word symbolizes pride in Alutiiq culture and continued respect for Native language and traditions. Add the suffix *-sinaq*, meaning “large” or “great,” and you get *quyanaasinaq*, thank you very much.

Different pronunciations of this word illustrate regional differences in the Alutiiq language. There are two major Alutiiq dialects, Koniag Alutiiq spoken in the Kodiak Archipelago and on the Alaska Peninsula, and Chugach Alutiiq spoken in Prince William Sound and on the Kenai Peninsula. Although these dialects are mutually intelligible and use the same alphabet, some words in each dialect have unique pronunciations. For example, Koniag Alutiiq speakers say *quyanaa* with an emphasis on the first a, but if you live on the Kenai Peninsula you emphasize the second a. These subtle differences may not register with casual students of Alutiiq, but among fluent speakers, they provide evidence of a person’s origins, much like a New York accent or a Scottish brogue to an English speaker.

The word *quyanaa* sounds familiar across Alaska because it is shared with other Native languages. In the Yup’ik language, which is closely related to the Alutiiq language, people also say *quyana*, but spell the word with just one a at the end instead of the two used in Alutiiq. In Iñupiaq, the language of northern Alaska, thank you is *quyanaq*: *quyana* with a *q* at the end.