

## Wet — Mecuuluni

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### ITGANKA MECUU'UT. – MY FEET ARE WET.

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Photo: An example of waterproof stitching on gutskin  
by Coral Chernoff. Photo by Sven Haakanson.

In Kodiak's cool, wet environment, staying dry is a constant battle. Alutiiq people, who thrived in this moist land for thousands of years before rubber boots and Gortex, devised many ingenious ways to keep from getting wet. Hunters coated the sea lion skin coverings of their kayaks with oil to make them waterproof. Seamstresses fashioned lightweight, flexible rain gear from the intestines of bears and sea mammals using special waterproof stitches, and men built warm, weather-resistant homes to protect their families.

Traditional sod houses had many features designed to keep out the rain. Elders recall many of the details of building these waterproof structures. The first step was to dig a large hole in which to build a house. Where possible, this hole was dug down to gravel to help the floor drain. In some cases, builders also dug a network of drainage ditches into the floor. Covered with boards, these narrow subfloor trenches helped to move water out of the house. Next, the builders used driftwood logs to erect a wooden structure inside the hole. This was covered with a layer of insulating grass, with the blades oriented to help shed moisture. In some cases, the grass was held in place by a mud plaster, in others, it was weighted down with sticks and logs. Sod blocks were piled against the structure with the grassy surface facing inward, again to provide insulation. Final touches included a window covered with waterproof gut and a small trap door in the ceiling that let out smoke while keeping the rain out.