

## White — Qatesqaq (N), Qat'sqaq (S)

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**QANIQ QATERTUQ. (N), QANIQ QAT'RTUQ. (S) – THE SNOW IS WHITE.**

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Societies around the world recognize and name colors in distinct ways. Among Alutiiq people, there are just four basic color terms: red, white, black, and green. Alutiiq people recognized a broader range of colors, but most were described in reference to these four terms. For example, blue was considered a shade of green. The Alutiiq word for blue translates as “greenish.” Other colors were noted by their resemblance to common things. In describing an object with a yellowish tint, an Alutiiq person might say that it was the color of oil.

The color white was used for both personal adornment and decorating objects. Alutiiq people made a white pigment from limestone obtained in trade with the Alaska mainland. They ground this soft rock to a powder and then mixed it with oil to create paint. At winter hunting festivals, the faces of the first two dance performers were often painted white and red, and masks were often decorated with white. In an analysis of mask design, anthropologist Dominique Desson observed that white was commonly used as a background color, to paint the nose and upper portions of the face, and to outline facial features.

Photo: Payulik - Bringer of Food, painted mask, Pinart  
Collection, Châteaux-Musée, France, 988-2-169.