

Table — Stuuluq

STUULUMI NERTAARTUKUT. – WE EAT AT THE TABLE.



Photo: Children in Larsen Bay around a table, 1950s.
Smith Collection, courtesy of Tim and Norman Smith.

Western-style furnishings are fairly recent additions to Alutiiq houses. In prehistoric times, Alutiiq builders fitted their homes with earthen benches. Woven mats and bear hides covered these benches, providing dry, comfortable places to sit and sleep. Household rafters, and pits and boxes built into the floor, provided places to store belongings.

Historic descriptions suggest that Alutiiq people began using Western furniture in the late 1800s, as European-style houses became common. Most houses were modestly furnished with a table, a few chairs, and small beds, although wealthier families might also have a sofa, a rocking chair, a sewing machine, or a piano.

Today, a special *stuuluq* can be found in many Alutiiq homes. Families who practice the Russian Orthodox faith keep a small shrine in a corner of their living room where they display icons and an oil lamp – or *lampada*. This corner is a reminder of the presence of God and a place where family members pray. Below the shrine, there is often a table. As priests are not always available to lead services in rural Alutiiq communities, local church readers use such tables to hold their religious books. Families also store oil, water, wicks, and their Easter kulich, a sweet bread, on their corner tables.