

Cheater, Trickster — Iqlluwista

IQLLUWINGNAQAATEN. – HE IS TRYING TO CHEAT YOU.



Image: Ravens in the Kodiak spruce forests. Raven, a central character in Alutiiq legends, is often portrayed as a trickster.

Things are not always as they seem! This is a message found in many Alutiiq legends, which feature tales of trickery. Trusting people are fooled by the seemingly good intentions of others—betrayed by loved ones, tricked by friends, or cheated by strangers. Such tales highlight both the need for caution in social relationships and the great value of trust. Trust is a core cultural value and necessitates both honesty and selflessness. The ability to trust oneself and others is essential to survival. When trust is broken, bad things happen.

This warning is evident in an Alutiiq tale of a husband who betrays his wife. A mother and father with two sons lived a happy peaceful life. The father left daily to hunt and fish, always returning with an abundance of food. One day, he was very late and brought little to eat. From that day forward, the father departed for longer and longer stretches and his family suffered hunger. Eventually, he stopped returning. Fearing for her husband's safety, the mother put on an eagle skin and flew off to search for him. She found him in a large village, living with a young woman. Grabbing her unfaithful husband with her talons, she dropped him in the ocean where he

drowned. The woman returned to her home and armed her oldest son with tools to help him evade the trickery of others. The boy used these implements well, defeating evil beings and improving life in his community.