

## Club — Piq'ruutaq (S), Piq'rquutaq (N)

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**LAPTUUKUMTA PIQ'RUUTAMEK ATURTAARTUKUT. – WHEN WE PLAY LAPTUUK WE ALWAYS USE A BAT.**

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Photo: Fish stunning club, Karluk One site, courtesy of Koniag, Inc.

Imagine that you are seated in your skin kayak enjoying a day of ocean fishing. Your boat bobs in the swell as you wait patiently. A strong tug on your hand-held kelp line tells you that a powerful creature has latched on to your hook. As you pull the thrashing fish toward the surface, you stop for a moment to retrieve a club, an essential tool fastened to the deck of your boat.

Just as fishermen today protect themselves from large, thrashing fish with a gaff, or sometimes even a handgun, Alutiiq fishermen once used stunning clubs. With a swift blow to the head, a fisherman could still a writhing fish. This was essential to keeping the creature from escaping the hook, and to protect one's kayak from damage. A few blows to the head and the fish could be tied

to the boat and towed home.

Clubs were also used to dispatch small game caught in snares, like fox or ermine. As a part of their education as trappers, Alutiiq Elders recall learning to club animals.

About 40 cm long, the length of a forearm, Alutiiq clubs featured a thick rounded head and a narrow handle. They look like a small baseball bat. Today, the Alutiiq word for club is also used for baseball bat.