ENGLARYUMATAARTUQ. – HE IS ALWAYS SMILING.

Photo: Boy playing in pail, Woody Island lower lake, Goudie Collection, Woody Island Tribal Council.

A suffix is a letter or group of letters that can be added to the end of a word to create a new word. For example, if you add the suffix -able to the word excite, you get excitable! Alutiiq speakers build words with a special kind of suffix known as a postbase. These word parts, or particles, add a great deal of meaning to Alutiiq nouns and verbs and can appear at the end of a word or sandwiched in the middle.

By adding a postbase to a root word, Alutiiq speaks can convey location, quantity, characteristics, actions, and much more. Some postbases act like adjectives. For example, you can add the postbase -*ngcuk* to the stem word for dog *aikur-* to create *aikungcuk*, a small dog. Other postbases transform nouns into verbs and verbs into nouns.

A number of words that occur as independent terms in English appear as post bases in Alutiiq. For example, the Alutiiq language has no standalone word for always. Instead, Alutiiq speakers add -*taar-* to words, to suggest continual activity or a state of being. *Englaryumataartuq*. He is always smiling.

This type of word construction reflects the agglutinative character of the Alutiiq language. In Alutiiq, parts of words are added together to form a larger word. Once you know this structure, it is relatively easy to decipher Alutiiq words by identifying the meaning of each word part. Many other Alaska Native languages share this form of construction including Inupiaq, Yup'ik, and Unangan, languages related to Alutiiq, and the Athapaskan languages.