

## Adopt — Pilinguar

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### WIIWAQA PILINGUA'UQ. – MY YOUNGER SIBLING IS AN ADOPTEE.

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Photo: Reverend Goudie with children at the Kodiak Baptist Orphanage. Goudie Collection, courtesy of the Tangirnaq Tribe.

The Alutiiq word *pilinguar* translates literally as, “to make one’s own.” Alutiiq speakers use this word for adoption. It is a very specific term for adding a person to one’s family, or for fostering a child. It is not typically used for circumstances like adopting a pet or a practice. There are other words for these activities.

Adoption is a very important tradition in Alutiiq communities. Being an orphan, or *lliya’aq*, is dangerous, as family affiliation provides support and social standing. Orphaned children were often adopted by members of their extended family—grandparents, aunts and uncles, or even an older sibling. This safeguarded them from becoming laborers in another family’s home. Sometimes, however, a local adoption was not possible.

In the twentieth century, Alutiiq children in need of a home were sent to orphanages like the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska and the Kodiak Baptist Mission orphanage on Woody Island. One of the lesser-known homes was Baker Cottage, a Baptist Mission facility in Ouzinkie. Baker Cottage operated from 1938 to 1958 and cared for up to about 15 children at a time. It was built after a fire destroyed the facilities on Woody Island. The youngest children in the Woody Island orphanage were sent to Ouzinkie, where they lived in a large, wood-framed home supervised by house parents. The house sat among the spruce trees on a hill overlooking Ouzinkie harbor and had running water.

When the orphanage closed, it became a community mission, overseen by the Reverends Norman and Joyce Smith. Children still gravitated to the home, where the Smiths taught Kindergarten, had a playroom, provided nursing care, hosted clubs, parties, game nights, films, and Bible study.