

Socks — Cuukiiq

CUUKII'ITUA! – I HAVE NO SOCKS!



Photo: Grass socks woven by June Pardue, AM727.

In the past, Alutiiq people often went barefoot. A historic account from Karluk tells of Alutiiq ladies dressed in stylish, velvet dresses, walking to church barefoot. Boots were saved for cold winter weather, and often included a lining of moss or grass and a pair of handwoven grass socks.

Why did people line their boots with grass? Dried grass is naturally absorbent. It contains air pockets that pull in moisture. This is important. The human foot contains over 250,000 sweat glands and can produce half a pint of moisture a day! Like a good pair of wool socks, loose grass and grass socks provided insulation and wicked sweat away from the wearer's feet. They also absorbed moisture that leaked into the boot from the outside.

Grass socks were usually ankle-high and sometimes decorated with dyed strips of grass incorporated into the weaving. Weavers created tightly woven socks to create more grass-covered surface area with greater wicking ability. The socks acted as a barrier, moving sweat away from the feet and into loosely stuffed grass between the boot and the sock. People dried their socks after wearing them, which helped these ingenious garments last a long time.