

## Saint — Tanqisqaq

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### TANQISQAT NALLUNILGNUT. – THE SAINTS WERE KNOWLEDGEABLE.

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Image: St. Peter the Aleut, Kupol collection, courtesy of Natives of Kodiak, Inc.

The Russian Orthodox faithful believe that sainthood is a condition of holiness and a gift from God. Saints are people who live virtuous lives, following the values of scripture. They are prophets, teachers, defenders, and thinkers who uphold the faith and set an example for others through their actions. The Alutiiq word for saint, *tanqisqaq*, mirrors these characteristics. It translates as holy one or bright one.

Orthodox scholars recognize six types of saints. Among these are the martyrs, people who sacrifice their lives in the profession of their faith. Cungagnaq, an Alutiiq man, is an example of a martyr. Born about 1800 in the Kodiak region, Cungagnaq was baptized by Orthodox missionaries and received the name Peter.

As a young man, Peter worked along the coast of northern California with a seal and sea otter hunting party. In 1815 the party was captured by the Spanish and taken to San Francisco. Here, Roman Catholic clergy attempted to convert Peter and the other hunters to Catholicism, claiming they were heretics despite their Russian Orthodox faith. When Peter objected, he was tortured. Even as his toes and fingers were cut off, and he was disemboweled, he refused to betray his faith. Following Peter's death, the Spanish ordered the prisoners' release and the survivors told Peter's story. Peter was formally recognized as a saint in 1980 and is often painted wearing a traditional gut skin parka.