

Share Them — Ilakuilluki

CUQLLIIPET NIUTAAKAITKUT, "ILAKUILLUKI CAQINEK PINGQ'RKUT." – OUR ELDERS USED TO TELL US, "ALWAYS SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE."



Photo: Sharing a ride in Old Harbor, Berns Collection, AM920.

Sharing is the act of giving away a portion of one's knowledge or belongings to support others. People share for many reasons. Although kindness can be one motivation, another common explanation is risk management. By sharing people spread resources among a family or a community and help to ensure that no one goes without. Importantly, the act of sharing creates social ties and builds opportunities for future support. When you share, there is a good chance someone will share with you.

Among the Alutiiq, sharing is a core cultural value. Alutiiq people value generosity and teach it to their children. Whether it is dividing up a seal, sharing information about the weather, or giving someone a ride, sharing is an ethical responsibility with deep roots in ancestral tradition. In classical Alutiiq society coming of age ceremonies featured sharing. When a young man killed his first animal, his parents hosted a gathering to distribute the catch. This demonstrated the young man's abilities as a harvester and highlighted his responsibility to care for his community.

In Alutiiq communities, sharing also extends to work. People share their labor, working collectively to build houses and boats, butcher animals, and put up fish. Alutiiq legends record the importance of sharing labor. One tale tells how the girl who married the moon lightened her husband's burden. In the weeks when the moon is waxing, the moon travels the night sky wearing his many masks. In the weeks when the moon is waning, his wife travels in his place while he rests.