

Crying Place — Qiawik

QIKERTAQ QIAWIK. – THE ISLAND IS A CRYING PLACE



Photo: View of Litnik, a crying place near the mouth of the Afognak River, 1997, AM725.

In classical Alutiiq society, the relationships between communities sometimes soured. Although people from neighboring villages visited, traded, assisted each other, married, and celebrated together—they also clashed. Insults and stealing were common sources of feuds. To seek revenge, a party of warriors would raid the offender’s village. Raids took place both within the Kodiak region and between Kodiak and mainland communities. For example, historic sources suggest that the Cook Inlet Dena’ina and the Kodiak Alutiiq were long-standing enemies. Elders recall that despite competition between communities when outsiders threatened a village, people united in its defense.

Raids were secretive, designed to surprise unsuspecting victims. Many attacks occurred at night while people slept. Warriors would wait patiently for several days, watching their adversaries for the right moment to attack. Then they would surround the village, light houses on fire, shoot arrows, and take plunder and hostages. Women and young people were routinely captured, and men and the elderly killed. Whatever the result, it was customary to leave several people alive to tell the story.

Today, the locations of infamous raids are known as *qiawiget*—crying places. Some Elders believe this term refers to the tears of defeated enemies. Others suggest that the survivors of enemy raids were weeping for their slaughtered friends and family members. A place near the mouth of the Afognak River in the Litnik area is known as *qiawik*. This is just one of a number of places in the Kodiak Archipelago with this sad name.