

Heavily populated — Sugyagluni

KICARWIK SUGYAGTUQ.—A LOT OF PEOPLE LIVE IN ANCHORAGE.



Photo: The City of Kodiak from the water, August 2021, AM725

Before the arrival of European traders, Kodiak was one of the more heavily populated regions of Alaska. The Alutiiq word *sugyagluni* comes from the word for person, *suk*, and means to have many people. The archipelago's abundance of natural resources made it an attractive place to live. Archaeological data suggest that as the Gulf of Alaska climate began cooling about 850 years ago, Alutiiq communities coalesced around key resources like salmon and whales. People began building large villages along the inner courses of major anadromous streams and using stone weirs and intertidal fish traps to harvest large quantities of fish.

Researchers estimate that there were about 8,000 Alutiiq people in the archipelago when Russian traders arrived. This number is probably low, as deadly European disease introduced in neighboring regions likely spread through the Native population ahead of the arrival of sailing ships. In the decades following Russian conquest, the Kodiak Alutiiq population plummeted, ravaged by disease, starvation, and forced labor. Within the first fifty years of colonization, roughly seventy-five percent of the Kodiak Alutiiq population died. The Native population continued to decline until the early decades of the twentieth century.

Today there are at least 7,400 people of Kodiak Alutiiq descent living in communities around the world. Based on census data and Native corporation records, there are about 1,800 Alutiiq people in the Kodiak region. This includes roughly 700 people in rural villages. An additional 5,600 live in other parts of Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond.