

To be regretful — Kingun'inarluni

KINGUN'INARTUQ. – SHE IS REGRETFUL.



Photo: Frowning face petroglyph from Cape Alitak,
courtesy of Sven Haakanson

The Alutiiq word for regret comes from the root *kingu-*, which means rear, back, or stern. As such, the verb *kingun'inarluni*, to be regretful, literally means to have something behind you or in the past. This verb can also mean to grieve for something, to be sorry, or to repent. In the Alutiiq world, expressing regret is among the regular activities of the Russian Orthodox faithful who confess their sins as part of the sacrament of repentance.

Orthodox practitioners can confess to any trusted individual. This might be a priest or a spiritual advisor. Confession usually takes place in the church sanctuary, but not in a confessional box. People stand before a lectern or a table to share their transgressions, often before receiving communion. Following confession, a priest covers the head of the penitent with his stole and reads a Prayer of Absolution, asking God for forgiveness.

Until 1917, Russian Orthodox churches were required to keep detailed records of those who attended confession and those who did not. As such, confessional records from the Kodiak region provide valuable information on the 19th century Alutiiq population. The oldest records date to the 1830s and preserve information about Russian and baptized Alutiiq people. They list people by name, age, gender, and sometimes village or family group. The early records focus on the community of St. Paul Harbor, the location of modern-day Kodiak, but over time, confessional records documented additional communities.