

Akhiok — Kasukuak

KASUKUARMIU'AK TAUGKUK. – THOSE TWO ARE FROM AKHIOK.



Photo: Akhiok in winter, view northeast. Photo by
Sven Haakanson Jr.

Surrounded by grassy hills and tundra flats, Akhiok is Kodiak's southernmost Alutiiq village. The present location of this remote community, ninety miles from the City of Kodiak, was settled in 1881. Additional residents moved here from Kasukuak in nearby Humpy Cove. The original community was a sea otter hunting settlement established by Russian fur traders. As the sea otter industry waned, fishing gained economic importance.

During World War II, the U.S. Postal Service briefly renamed the community Alitak, to avoid confusing it with Akiak, a Yup'ik village in Western Alaska. Akhiok has always been a small community. The village's initial population was 114 people, which declined to a low of 72 in 1950. But by the 1980s, the population had climbed back to over 100 individuals. In part, this rise reflects immigration. The residents of Akhiok include the descendants of several families from Kaguyak, a village destroyed by the tsunamis that followed the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake. Today, Akhiok has about 80 residents living in 25 homes.

Fishing is central to Akhiok's economy. Strong salmon runs enter Alitak Bay, supporting both commercial harvesting and a subsistence lifestyle. Many families make a living in the fishing industry: working at the Alitak cannery five miles south of Akhiok or fishing commercially for salmon, halibut, and crab. Like all of Kodiak's villages, Akhiok can only be reached by boat or airplane. Community facilities include a gravel airstrip, a public school, a cemetery, and the Protection of the Theotokos Chapel—a Russian Orthodox Church.