

## Dry Them (to) — Kinert'slluki

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### AGUNANKA KINERT'STANKA. – I AM DRYING MY CLOTHES.

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Photo: Laundry drying on a sunny day in Kodiak,  
Jarvela Family Collection, AM991

The Gulf of Alaska is a storm graveyard, a place where low-pressure systems stall against high coastal mountains saturating the landscape with rain and wind. In this persistently rainy environment, staying dry is important. Wet conditions are very common and when combined with wind and cool temperatures they can quickly lead to hypothermia, spoiled food, and misery! Alutiiq people devised many ways to stay dry. With houses insulated with earth, bird skin parkas that shed the rain, and kayaks waterproofed with sea mammal oil, the Alutiiq thrived in one of the world's stormiest regions for over 7,000 years. Clothing was one their most critical tools.

One garment used by every kayaker was an *akuilitaq* or literally, a protective skirt. This tool functioned like the neoprene spray skirts used by modern kayakers. Paddlers tied an *akuilitaq* around their chests and under their arms. Then, they secured the other end around the hatch of their boat. This kept waves, rain, and water running off their paddles from filling the kayak and it protected the paddlers from sea spray. Like the *kanaglluk*, or gutskin rain jacket worn by kayakers, *akuilitat* were made from animal intestines. An historic example collected on Kodiak in

about 1851 features horizontally stitched strips of gut about 11 cm wide, drawstrings of braided sinew, and seams decorated with caribou hair.