

## Underwear — Iluqlit

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### ILUQLLITEN TANG'RANKA.—I SEE YOUR UNDERWEAR.

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Photo: A boy playing in his underwear, Karluk, ca. 1955, Clyda Christiansen collection, AM680

What did Alutiiq ancestors wear under their parkas? Some people probably wore nothing. Traditional parkas were long, heavy garments. Pants and underwear were not essential for warmth or protection. However, historic accounts suggest that at least some people wore soft skin shorts, likely secured with a drawstring around the waist. One ancient drawing, an image incised into a pebble, shows a person with a cloth tied around the waist. This might be an apron, or perhaps underwear. Men danced in these simple garments, removing their hot coats for comfort. *Ilugllit*, the Alutiiq word for underwear, literally means things located inside.

Traditional underpants were made from the dehaired seal skin known as *lavitak* or *igluqag*. To create this supple leather, people hung a seal skin in a steam bath and let it absorb the hot steam. Then they folded the skin, placed it in a basket, covered it with moss, and added more hot water. After a few days, the hair could be scraped from the hide.

Historic sources note that Alutiiq people were fascinated by European clothing and enjoyed adding coats, shirts, dresses, hats, and shoes to their wardrobes. However, imported clothing was expensive and Alutiiq seamstresses learned to make it from bolts of fabric cloth. Their inspiration came from locally sold clothing and images in newspapers and magazines. In the early twentieth century, people used the soft, brightly printed, cotton fabric of flour sacks to make clothing, including underwear.