

## Silly (to be) — Ellaiyarlluni

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### GUANIKUN ELLAIYARLLUNI. – IT'S SILLY AROUND HERE.

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Photo: Boys playing on Karluk Spit, ca. 1955. Clyda Christiansen collection, AM680.166

The Alutiiq verb *ellaiyarlluni* means more than just acting silly. This verb comes from the root *lla* - which refers to consciousness and it can indicate that a person is acting without consciousness or lacks awareness. In other words, *ellaiyarlluni* can be used to describe someone who is acting crazy, foolish, or reckless. Although a sense of humor is appreciated in Alutiiq society and can help people cope with the stresses of daily life, acting with forethought and responsibly is highly valued.

Examples of foolish behavior appear throughout Alutiiq legends and help to reinforce the need for sensible thinking. In the tale of the white-faced bear, a brash hunter kills many bears. He harvests so many animals that his friends beg him to stop killing, for fear he will get himself in trouble. One day the hunter learns of a white-faced bear, a fierce animal with white fur on its head and paws. Unbeknownst to the hunter, the white-faced bear is a person transformed into a bear by a shaman. When the hunter happens upon the bear, he attempts to kill it, but his bow string breaks. The bear offers to let the hunter live if he promises never to kill another member of his bear family. The hunter agrees, but eventually joins a hunting party pursuing the white-faced bear. When the bear spots the men, he tears all of them to pieces so that he can live peacefully.