

## Arrow — Ruuwaq

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**NUKALLPIAT RUUWARTAALLRIIT AGAYUWIM TUNUANI. – THE MEN USED TO SHOOT ARROWS BEHIND THE CHURCH.**

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Photo: Bone and antler arrow heads from Karluk One Site, Koniag, Inc. Collection. AM193.

Alutiiq hunters carried a variety of arrows: powerful, accurate weapons launched with a stout wooden bow. Each arrow had a slender wooden shaft carved from spruce, cedar, or hemlock and was painted red and fletched with eagle feathers. This shaft supported a sharply pointed head fashioned from bone, wood, and even copper obtained through trade with Athabaskan people. Arrows for land hunting had fixed heads and people carried them in a skin quiver. In contrast, arrows used to hunt seas otters and ducks had detachable heads attached to the shaft by a line. People carried them in cylindrical wooden quivers that could be lashed to the deck of a kayak.

Toy bows and arrows are common finds in Kodiak's well-preserved archaeological sites. Elders recall that boys used these miniature versions of adult implements to improve their hunting skills. When migratory birds returned to the archipelago each spring, signaling the rebirth of the year, youth were allowed to take their toys from storage and engage in competitions on the beach. Adult men would often challenge boys to shooting matches. Players aimed their arrows at wood or kelp targets while spectators cheered for their favorite archers.