MAY 2008
ISSUE 3
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM BULLETIN

10 Years of Research
40 Volunteer Families
12 Surveys
632 Site Visits
332 Sites Studied
224 New Sites Found

HISTORY PRESERVED

Beach Collecting

Glass floats, Asian pop bottles, crab buoys, and rubber ducks are just some of the interesting things people find along Kodiak’s shores. The North Pacific ocean delivers an abundance of cultural debris to Alaska’s coasts, great pickings for beachcombers.

The wind and waves that carry this flotsam ashore, however, also expose prehistoric artifacts. As winter storms wash village sites away, artifacts tumble onto Kodiak beaches.

Kodiak Islanders have long enjoyed finding these treasures. Archaeologists find old water worn spear points in younger sites, suggesting that even ancient islanders collected ancestral tools.

An archaeologist holds a bone fish hook found on the beach.

Today, many Kodiak families have artifact collections, objects picked off the beaches after storms. The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964 severely damaged many sites, spilling their contents on to the shore.

Although beachcombing is great fun, there are now laws that protect the historic and prehistoric artifacts on America’s beaches. Unlike the modern cultural debris delivered to Kodiak by ocean currents, the island’s artifacts belong to the owners of the land in which they occur, and it is illegal to remove them.

In addition, Kodiak’s artifacts are one of the best sources of information on Alutiq heritage. The deep history of Kodiak’s Native people is stored in the Islands’ archaeological sites. When artifacts are removed from these sites, or from the beach beside them, a piece of the past is lost.

Next time you are beachcombing remember to respect history – take photographs not artifacts. Carry home the floats and soda crates, but leave the old pieces to tell their stories. The past can only inspire the present if we work together to preserve it.

Join the Stewardship Team

Are you a set netter, a fisherman, a pilot, a guide, a lodge owner, or a rural resident? Would you like to document archaeological sites as a museum volunteer? To become a site monitor please contact Curator Patrick Saltonstall [486-7004, x23], or patrick@alutiiqmuseum.org. Learn to see the land like an archaeologist and help to preserve Kodiak history.

Site Stewardship
is a collaboration between the Alutiiq Museum and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
Who owns artifacts on the beach?

In the United States, archaeological sites and their contents belong to the owner of the land on which they occur. On Alaska’s beaches, artifacts have two potential owners. Determining ownership depends on where the artifact lies;

(1) **Objects found ABOVE the mean high tide line** – these artifacts belong to the owner of the immediately adjacent upland – the land behind the beach.

(2) **Objects found BELOW the mean high tide line** – these artifacts belong to the owner of the intertidal area. Around Kodiak this is usually the State of Alaska.

**Mean High Tide Line** = The average limit of high tide – halfway between the highest and lowest limit of high tide in an annual cycle.

Please remember that it is illegal to remove artifacts from the beach without permission of the landowner. State and federal laws protect Alaska’s antiquities even when they are washed onto the beach. And sometimes sites are part of the beach. They may have been exposed by coastal erosion or changes in Alaska’s sea level.

Look, photograph, and enjoy the objects you find on Kodiak’s beaches, but don’t remove them. If you find something interesting, call the Alutiiq Museum. We can help to protect the object and identify its owner.

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**Alutiiq Museum**
Preserving & Sharing
Kodiak Alutiiq Heritage

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**QUYANAA - THANK YOU to 2007 our Stewardship Volunteers**

Stone carving from Chirikof Island

Site Steward Mark Withrow exploring Chirikof Island