Qik’rtarmiu’allret Elwillret – Kodiak Archaeological Sites

Native people have lived in the Kodiak Archipelago for at least 7,500 years, yet the written record of their history extends back just 250 years, to the time of Russian conquest. Archaeological sites offer the opportunity to study the remaining 7,250 years of Alutiiq history. They are an Alutiiq library.

• There are more than 15,650 prehistoric archaeological sites in Alaska. Over 1,000 of these are in the Kodiak Archipelago. Although Kodiak comprises only 0.5% of Alaska’s landmass, it holds roughly 6.4% of the state’s known prehistoric settlements.

• Kodiak’s high density of archaeological sites reflects 7,500 years of human occupation and large prehistoric populations. Before Russian traders arrived, archaeologists believe that there may have been as many as 10,000 Alutiiq people on Kodiak – about the size of the region’s modern population.

• Kodiak’s large number of sites also reflects the intensity of archaeological research. Scientists have been studying Kodiak prehistory since 1930. Kodiak is one of the more intensely researched regions of Alaska from an archaeological perspective.

• Many of Kodiak’s archaeological sites are remarkably well preserved. A number contain bone, ivory, and antler tools, and some hold wooden and fiber artifacts. These unique finds reflect the archipelago’s consistently cool, wet climate, which helps to preserve organic materials.

• Archaeologists recognize a variety of different sites from large coastal villages dotted with the remains of sod houses, to stream side fish camps, fort sites on precipitous cliffs, stone quarries, fish weirs, trails, cairns, petroglyphs, and secluded mountain caves where whalers prepared for the hunt.

• Archaeologists recognize five distinctive cultural traditions (see facing page), each representing a different way of life. Despite changes in the organization of ancient societies, archaeologists believe that modern Alutiiq people are descended from Kodiak’s earliest residents.

You Can Help

• Never dig in a site or collect artifacts from the beach.
• If you find an artifact, enjoy it but leave it. Take a photograph but not the object.
• Teach your family and friends to respect artifacts. Most people do not know that it is illegal, destructive, and disrespectful to collect artifacts.
• Report illegal collecting to the National Park Service (1-800-478-2724). Rewards of up to $500 are available for information on illegal collecting.