Kodiak Alutiiq Plantlore Published

Released today, a new book from the Alutiiq Museum explores an ancient subject, the traditional uses of Kodiak plants. Naut’staarpet—Our Plants, A Kodiak Alutiiq Plantlore, is a colorful, 181-page paperback featuring the research of ethnobotanist Priscilla Russell. With support from the Kodiak Area Native Association, Russell visited all of Kodiak’s Alutiiq communities in 1990 and interviewed more than a hundred community members about their use of local plants. She visited in different seasons, collected with people, and sat in their kitchens as they cooked and made medicines.

A team of editors helped to transform Russell’s research into a book, updating her report, selecting photographs, and adding Alutiiq language vocabulary. The book features 184 images of people, plants, plant harvesting tools, and environments from both Russell’s research and the museum’s collections. Alutiiq plant names appear throughout the presentation and include both terms shared by culture bearer Ephraim Agnot in 1990, and words provided recently by a team of Elder Alutiiq advisors. The combination of Russell’s text with photographs of community members and traditional vocabulary make this book a trove of cultural information.

“Russell’s research is an incredibly important archive,” said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director April Laktonen Counsellor. “Her work provides a broad view of Alutiiq plant use in the twentieth century and an in-depth documentation of our traditional ecological knowledge. It is also preserves the knowledge of many Alutiiq people who are no longer living, whose knowledge would otherwise be lost to time.”

The Kodiak Area Native Association, Koniag, Inc., the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the Alaska State Museum provided support for Naut’staarpet—Our Plants. Copies of the book are being distributed to local tribes and libraries. They are also available at the Alutiiq Museum Store for $25. They may be purchased in the museum or online at https://alutiiqmuseum.org/shop/museum-store/books.

The Alutiiq Museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Alutiiq, an Alaska Native tribal people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.