



Kodiak Archaeology:

A Guide to Sites, Artifacts, and Historic Preservation



Partnership

Produced with support from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. For over two decades the Service and the Alutiiq Museum have partnered to locate, describe, study, and protect the remarkable archaeological record of the Kodiak Archipelago.

Produced by the Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository
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The Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and living culture of the Alutiiq people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.

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Cover photos—Top, Patrick Saltonstall records site information in Deadmans Bay, 2021. Photograph by Philip Tschersich; Lower right, a slate ulu knife found on a Kodiak beach. Lower left, petroglyphs near Afognak village, Back cover—archaeological survey of the coast of Kizhuyak Bay, 2017.



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Photos on facing page: Left, a pebble incised with a human face, Olga Bay, USFWS Collection. Middle, fish bones from the Mikt'sqaaq Angayuk site. Right, a slate slab hearth filled with cooking stones at the Kugyasiliwlik site.



ARCHAEOLOGY — AN INTRODUCTION

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of history from the materials people leave behind. For tens of thousands of years, people have built shelters, made tools, harvested resources, raised families, and celebrated life. Archaeologists search for evidence of these activities and collect information to study past societies and how they changed. Archaeologists are historians who work with objects to reveal the past.

Archaeologists study sites of all ages, from ancient times to the recent past. Many sites record life before written records and offer a rare glimpse of distant history. Archaeological studies can fill gaps in written history. For Native American people, ancient sites are particularly important as they illustrate the lives of ancestors.

What is the Archaeological Record?

The archaeological record is the collection of materials created and left by people. These materials are also known as cultural resources.

Sites – Locations with archaeological materials. The places people lived and worked, like a village or a campsite.

Features – Structures built by people. Immoveable objects like a house or a hearth.

Artifacts – Portable objects made by people like tools, clothing, toys, or artwork.

Faunal Remains – The remains of animals harvested by people.

Botanical Remains – The remains of plants harvested by people.

Preserving the Past

Archaeological sites are a non-renewable resource. The sites that exist today are the only record of history available for all time. For this reason, sites and their contents are protected by state and federal laws. This booklet introduces the archaeological record of Alaska's Kodiak Archipelago, shares the laws that protect cultural resources, and discusses how you can respect sites. The past can inspire the future if we work together to preserve it.

SITES

There are more than 2,400 archaeological sites in the Kodiak Archipelago and more waiting to be discovered. Although archaeologists have studied many regions, large areas remain to be investigated. Every site is recorded in a statewide database known as the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey maintained by the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology.

Alutiq Sites

Alutiq people colonized Kodiak about 7,500 years ago, and most the region's sites represent their history. Most of these sites hold stone tools. Some well-preserved deposits have bone and wood artifacts and animal remains. The remains of sod houses are another common find. Alutiq people built their houses by digging a foundation, fitting it with a wood frame, and covering the frame with sod. When these houses collapse, they create depressions.

Villages—long term settlements

Refuge Rocks—settlements on islets where people retreated for protection

Camps—short term settlements

Waiting Places—places where hunters watched the weather, the tides, and for game

Caves—places where whalers stored gear and prepared for hunting

Fish Trap & Weirs—stacked stone walls used to trap fish

Processing Sites—places where people cared for fish and game

Quarries—places where people mined stone for tool making

Rock Art Sites—places where people pecked images into boulders and bedrock

Cairns—stacked stone markers

Trails & Portages—habitually used overland routes



House depression



Long Lagoon stone fish trap



Elephant Rock refuge site



Cave site



Cape Alitak petroglyphs



Fox farm pens



World War II concrete bunker



Dory knee tree



Gold mining shaft



Helgason Bear Camp

Western Sites

Kodiak's archaeological record also includes sites representing recent history, from Russian conquest to the Cold War. In Alaska, any property with evidence of human use more than fifty years old can be considered a site.

Airstrips
Brick Kilns
Buildings
Bunkers
Cabins

Campsites
Canneries
Cemeteries
Dory Knee Trees
Downed Aircraft

Fish Traps
Fox Farms
Gold Mines
Hatcheries
Ranches & Corrals

Roads
Salteries
Shipwrecks
Whaling Station
White Alice Stations

Who Owns It?

In the United States, archaeological sites and their contents belong to the owner of the land on which they occur. This includes sites of all ages— in any location, on land, on the beach, or underwater. It is illegal to disturb or collect from a site without authorization and permission from the landowner.

Looting

It is exciting to find an archaeological site, but you should never dig in one. Recreational digging, or looting, is vandalism. Under state and federal law, it is illegal to disturb a site without permission from the land owner. Looting is damaging and disrespectful. Digging in a site without professional documentation is like ripping pages from a history book. It destroys information and makes it difficult to interpret the deposit. Archaeologists get permission for their studies.

You Can Help

Obey state and federal laws, preserve history, and show respect for Alaska Native people.

Never dig in a site. Take photographs and notes (page 13). Report your finds to the landowner, an archaeologist, or to the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology.

Teach your family and friends to respect archaeological sites. Most people do not know that it is destructive, disrespectful, and illegal to alter sites.

Report site vandalism to the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 907-269-8700.

Leave No Trace

This old camping motto is a great way to think about archaeological sites. Recognize sites and do not camp on them, remove brush, or leave bear-attracting garbage. Also, be careful not to worsen erosion. Many of Kodiak's ancient settlements are sloughing into an adjacent stream or on to the beach. Climbing the bank or digging into a site can enhance the damage.



Eroding Alutiiq village site in Kiliuda Bay, 2022.

PROTECTING PETROGLYPHS

What are Petroglyphs?

Petroglyphs (rock pictures) are images carved into stationary pieces of rock. Alutiiq ancestors used stone hammers to peck designs into large rocks beside waterways. Kodiak has two different types of petroglyphs. Some boulders show people, animals, and tools. Other boulders have circular pits and cut lines.

Why did Alutiiq people make rock art?

Rock art is often associated with spiritual life. The location and content of Kodiak petroglyphs suggests that they were tied to harvest rituals. Some may have been family territory markers. Others may have help animal souls pass into the spirit world.

Be Respectful

If you encounter petroglyphs, treat the carvings with care. The images are the work of Alutiiq ancestors, and they remain spiritually important to Alutiiq people.

Be Careful

Although they are carved in stone, petroglyphs can be fragile. In places, the rock may be disintegrating. Wind and waves gradually wear away the artwork and algae, barnacles, and mussels grow over the pictures and damage their surfaces. If you find rock art, enjoy looking the images, but don't walk on them, enhance the carvings with chalk or paint, scrape away marine creatures, or make rubbings. These activities can damage rock art.



Petroglyph faces at Cape Alitak

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are plentiful in Kodiak sites, and they are a great source of information on Alutiiq heritage. The deep history of Kodiak's Native people is stored in the many objects ancestors made and used. Because Kodiak has many archaeological sites and many are eroding, artifacts are a common find.

Ownership

Like archaeological sites, artifacts belong to the owner of the land on which they occur. Taking artifacts from a site without permission is stealing. This is true for both public and private lands, including the beach.

Provenience

The location of an artifact in a site, its provenience, is an important part of the object's story. Artifacts can tell us more about the past when their origins are known. Archaeologists record the site an object came from and its location in the site. Each piece of information helps to illustrate activities that took place in the past. When artifacts are removed from sites, or from the beach, this information is lost. Moreover, artifacts that are taken from sites are often lost, damaged, or treated in disrespectful ways.



Some common artifacts—From left, bone fishhook barb, hand painted European ceramic plate fragment, chipped stone projectile point of red chert, slate lance with incised design, pecked stone plummet of greywacke.



Left, a slate slab hearth uncovered on the beach, Uganik Passage; Right, a fishhook shank found on the beach on Uganik Island.

Beach Combing

Although beachcombing is great fun, laws protect the artifacts found on Kodiak's shores. Unlike the flotsam delivered to the beach by ocean currents, the island's artifacts belong to the owners of the land on which they occur. It is illegal to remove them.

On Alaska's beaches, artifacts have two potential owners. Determining ownership depends on where the artifact lies.

- Objects found ABOVE the mean high tide line belong to the owner of the immediately adjacent upland—the land behind the beach.
- Objects found BELOW the mean high tide line belong to the owner of the intertidal area. Around Kodiak this is usually the State of Alaska.

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 sea level.

You Can Help

Obey state and federal laws, preserve history, and show respect for Alaska Native people.

If you find an artifact enjoy it. Take photographs and notes but leave it where you found it. Report your finds to the landowner, an archaeologist, or to the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (page 14).

Teach your family and friends to respect artifacts. Most people do not know that it is destructive, disrespectful, and illegal to collect artifacts.

Family Collections

Visit homes around Kodiak and you will often see artifacts displayed. Most of these objects were collected long ago. As Islanders learn more about Alutiiq heritage, they are leaving artifacts where they find them. For those with old family collections, however, the situation can be confusing. What should you do with objects gathered a generation ago?

For more than a century it has been illegal to collect artifacts without permission from landowners. Very few local collections are legally owned by those who possess them. There are a few important things to understand.

- These collections are still the property of the landowner at the time they were collected, and with some research they can sometimes be returned.
- It is illegal to sell artifacts you don't own.
- Alutiiq People feel a strong connection to objects made by their ancestors. All artifacts should be treated with respect.
- Alutiiq artifacts contain information on local history that can be used by researchers, educators, and artists. They are not simply curiosities.
- The Alutiiq Museum is authorized to care for amateur collections on behalf of Kodiak landowners. You can give family collections to the museum so they can be used for education. Contact Amanda Lancaster at 844-425-8844 to learn more.



Left, staff members share artifacts in the Alutiiq Museum's Mobile Museum display, Alutiiq National Festival, 2022. Right, artifact storage at the Alutiiq Museum.



Alaskan artifacts for sale in a Seattle Shop. Courtesy the Komm Family.

Artifact Trafficking

It is illegal to, sell, trade, exchange, or transport artifacts you do not own. If you take an artifact from land that does not belong to you, the artifact does not belong to you.

Under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, anyone who sells an artifact must be able to prove that they are the object's lawful owner. Most people cannot provide this proof. Most family collections are not legally owned unless they came from family land. Do not sell artifacts. There are serious penalties for trafficking in antiquities. Similarly, do not buy artifacts. It is also illegal to purchase artifacts that were not lawfully obtained.

Under federal law, artifact trafficking can result in fines of up to \$20,000 and two years in jail for a first offense. Offenders can also lose equipment and vehicles used while trafficking.

Artifact trafficking is disrespectful. Buying and selling artifacts removes them from the community, and it fuels the market for antiquities. The sale of artifacts encourages looting of archaeological sites and the destruction of cultural resources.

RESPECTING ANCESTRAL REMAINS

For thousands of years, Alutiiq people buried their dead in their villages. Today as rain, waves, and wind reshape Kodiak's coast, many old Alutiiq villages are eroding into the sea. Sometimes this process unearths burials. It is not uncommon to find ancestral remains on Kodiak's beaches or to see human bones eroding from a coastal bluff.

For decades beachcombers collected these remains as curiosities, taking them home and even selling them. Others dug in archaeological sites disturbing burials and removing bones. This is very distressing to Alutiiq people whose ancestors and graves deserve respect.

"The remains are our ancestors. They came before us, and they made our lives possible. Even if we don't know them, we respect them. They are a part of us."

—Alutiiq Elder Ruth Dawson

Know the Law

- State and federal laws protect human remains of all ages, whether ancient or recent.
- No matter where they are found, it is illegal to disturb, damage, collect, or sell human remains. If you find human remains, do not move them. The intentional disturbance of human remains is a felony in Alaska, no matter where the remains are found.
- If you find human remains in Alaska, contact the Alaska State Troopers as soon as possible, regardless of the age of the remains.
- If you possess human remains, turn them into the Troopers. If they are ancient, Alutiiq tribes can work to claim the remains for reburial.



Report Human Remains To:

Alaska State Troopers, Kodiak Post
2921 A Mill Bay Road
Kodiak, AK 99615
907-486-4121

RECORD THE PAST



Left, Molly Odell documents the Long Lagoon fish trap, 2019; Right, a stone oil lamp on a Chirikof Island beach, photographed with a pen for scale.

You can help archaeologists learn about Alutiiq history. If you find a site or an artifact, treat it with respect and record what you see. Take photos and notes, not artifacts!

Documenting Sites

Photograph: Take photographs that show the site and its location in relation to the surrounding landscape—the shoreline, streams, mountains, terraces, etc.

Locate: Put a dot on a map. Estimate where you are and mark it on a chart, a map, or with a sketch. Take a GPS point if you can.

Describe: Write some notes.

- What do you see?
- What suggests this is an archaeological site?

Report: Share your find with an archaeologist at the Alutiiq Museum, US Fish & Wildlife Service, or Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (page 14).

Documenting Artifacts

Photograph: Take a photograph of the object from several angles and use something for scale (e.g., a quarter, a lens cap)

Locate: Put a dot on a map! Estimate where you are and mark it on a marine chart, a topographic map, or with your own sketch. Take a GPS point if you can. Describe where it is lying.

Describe: Write some notes. What do you think the object is? What is it made of? What are its dimensions?

Report: Share your find with an archaeologist at the Alutiiq Museum, US Fish & Wildlife Service, or Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (page 14).

SITE STEWARDSHIP

For more than two decades community volunteers have helped the Alutiiq Museum and the US Fish & Wildlife Service document the condition of archaeological sites in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. With the help of 70 volunteers, our team has evaluated over 800 sites in more than 1600 site visits. Monitoring by site stewards and public education by the museum have slowed the rate of destructive site vandalism.

You Can Help

Are you a set netter, a fisherman, a pilot, a guide, a lodge owner, a rural resident, a hiker, a hunter, or a camper? Would you like to document archaeological sites as a museum volunteer? Contact Patrick Saltonstall or Molly Odell to learn about site stewardship and how you can participate, 844-425-8844.

Quyanaa—Thank you to our Site Stewards

Abraham Family
Barker Family
Michael Bach
Joe Black
Paul Chervenak
Andy Christofferson
Donald W. Clark
Sarah Corbin
Ryan Cross
John Crye
Jen Culbertson
Steele Davis
Dodge Family
Ginger Duncan
Samantha Dunning
Rick Ellingson
Foster/Finkle Family
Daniel Fox

Ilva Fox
Harry Golden
Jacob Harding
Eva Holm
Alex Hughes
Jeffrey/Ogg Family
Sarah Kennedy
Jean Kimple
Kinsley Family
Hans Klausner
Jeanne Larsen
Marnie Leist
Ronnie Lind
Jill Lipka
Little/Frederick Family
Shelley Lawson
Patrick & Juney Mullen
Mike Munsey

Myrick Family
Omlid Family
Payne/Dumm Family
Pearson Family
Tom Pogson
Tyler Pollum
Leila Pyle
Ryan Rankin
Jennifer Richcreek
Mark Rusk
Richard Saltonstall
Andy Schroeder
Jeanne Schuckmann
Simeonoff Family
Brock Simmons (AST)
Mike Sirofchuck
Stover Family
Donn Tracy

Thomet Family
Chase Tingle
Philip Tschersich
Indiana Turkisher
Underwood Family
Preston Van Curen
Van Daele Family
Keller Wattum
Catherine West
Wipfli/Harrison Family
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LEARN MORE

Alutiiq Museum Resource

Visit the Museum Gallery

See artifacts and explore Alutiiq culture and history with exhibits and publications.
Tuesday – Friday, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Saturday, Noon – 4:00 pm.

Visit the Museum Website

Find the results of recent archaeological research on the museum's website.
<https://alutiiqmuseum.org/research/archeology>

Stewards of Heritage

Watch three short videos that introduce Kodiak archaeology and explore the value of archaeological sites and the issues surrounding their care.
<https://alutiiqmuseum.org/research/archeology/site-stewardship>

State Resources

Alaska Office of History & Archaeology Website

Learn about archaeology and historic preservation across Alaska.
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/>

From Caribou Corrals to Seaplane Hangars: A Cultural Resources Overview of Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges

https://alaskarefugefriends.org/tuesday-october-19-2021-5pm-akdt/?fbclid=IwAR26qNorJmroSzoQQN55BD_oGxTyjPPf6PIZG2Esl8Zxel_I0uj6l7RTSug

Alaska Historic Preservation Act of 1971

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/akhistoricpreservationact.pdf>

National Resources

Archaeology Nationwide

<https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/nationwide.htm>

Society for American Archaeology

<https://www.saa.org>

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

<https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/2018-06/nhpa.pdf>



The Kodiak Archipelago has more than 2,400 archaeological sites. This rich record documents over 7,500 years of history, particularly the activities of Alutiiq ancestors. Because sites are common, people enjoying public lands often encounter them. This booklet introduces Kodiak archaeology. It describes common finds and explains the laws that protect sites and their contents.

The archaeological record is a non-renewable resource. The ancestral settlements found on Kodiak represent the only record of ancient history available for all time. What should you do if you discover a site or an artifact? Open this booklet to learn how you can help to protect Alaska's heritage.

