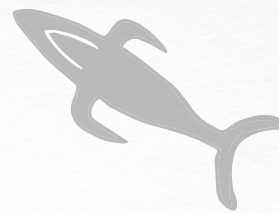


Quliyanguat – STORIES



Quliyanguiciiqaken. – I WILL TELL YOU A STORY.

At day break a whale came to the surface and swam towards the shore. The tide was low and the waterfall was up some ways from the sea. The boy wondered how it could get up there to drink. As he watched, the whale slowly shoved its head up the beach and opened its mouth and a little man, with a leather bucket in each hand, came out and went up to the waterfall. He filled the buckets with water and went back down and into the whale's mouth. The whale closed its mouth and turned out to sea and disappeared.

Story collected from Ralph Demidoff, from Desson 1995:39.

Among societies without a written language, storytelling is an important way to record history. Events, accomplishments, values, spiritual beliefs, and even survival techniques are passed from generation to generation through people rather than books.

Traditional Alutiiq/Sugpiaq tales held many lessons. Stories (*quliyanguat*) recounted the pursuits of ancestors, explained unusual events, and discussed community history. Legends (*unigkuat*) explained the cosmos—the origin of people, the stars, and the animals. The Man of Winter, a story told to noisy children, warned that those who misbehave may cause bad weather. Children learned that poor behavior can have consequences for an entire community. The Thirsty Whale story reveals the Alutiiq belief that every creature has a human-like consciousness, represented by a small person that lives inside of it. Whalers told such stories when training their apprentices.

LEARN MORE:

Unigkuat—Kodiak Alutiiq Legends, 2018, edited by Dehrich Chya and Amy F. Steffian, Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak.

Although many people practiced storytelling, in the past, each Alutiiq community had at least one ritual specialist. Known as a *kas'aq*, this person had an expert knowledge of stories, songs, and dances. He led traditional ceremonies and helped to educate children.



Petroglyphs from Cape Alitak, Kodiak Island. From a drawing by Sven Haakanson, Jr.

