

# Naniq

## The Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Oil Lamp



The *naniq*, or oil lamp, is an ancient piece of Alutiiq technology. For over 7,000 years our ancestors used stone lamps to heat and brighten their homes. In cozy sod houses, families gathered around the lamp to sew and carve, share meals, and tell stories. Alutiiq culture was perpetuated by lamplight.

The burning lamp is a symbol of culture and prosperity. It reminds us of the ties between people and nature. The natural materials in the lamp work together to provide light and heat that push back the darkness and cold of winter. Oil lamps illuminate the interconnectedness of our world and remind us of the importance of respectful living.

Today, a burning oil lamp is also a symbol of cultural pride and perseverance. We light stone lamps at gatherings to illuminate our heritage, and to shine the light of culture far into the future. An Elder and a young person light the lamp together to represent the passage of cultural knowledge between generations. The ceremony of lamp lighting reminds us that we all have a role in preserving and sharing our heritage, so that our grandchildren and future generations will benefit from the light of Alutiiq culture.

Produced by the Alutiiq Museum.