



# ALUTIIT CAQILLRIT -

## ALUTIIQ OBJECTS IN MUSEUMS

In the 18th and 19th centuries, wealthy men from western powers ventured across the globe on missions of exploration. Alaska was a popular destination. Entrepreneurs, military officers, naturalists, illustrators, and anthropologists came north in search of land, resources, and information. Visitors to Kodiak made detailed accounts of the island and its Alutiiq people, and they took examples of Alutiiq clothing, tools, and artwork home. Why did they collect Alutiiq objects?

Some bought or commissioned items as souvenirs. Russian sailors impressed by Alutiiq skin sewing paid seamstresses to make European-style caps and capes from gut skin. Other collectors sought to document distant places and cultures. Following a brutal century of conquest, many people assumed indigenous societies were vanishing. Collectors rushed to document Native traditions and amass objects, as they expected these “primitive” cultures would soon disappear. Between 1870 and 1930 huge quantities of Native objects flowed out of communities and into museums—sometimes through unethical means. American and European audiences flocked to exhibits of cultural curiosities. Yet Native communities rarely knew where their objects went.

In the 1980s, Alutiiq people began to learn of ancestral objects in places like Finland and France and to study these treasures. Each historic object preserves valuable details about its construction, from design, to material use, fabrication methods, and decoration. Reconnecting with objects is helping artists learn and reawaken artistic traditions suppressed by colonialism. Studies of ancestral objects are also helping museums learn about Alutiiq traditions from culture bearers and better document their collections.

Date	Collector	Collection Location	Objects in Collection
1762-1867	S.G. Glotov, J. Billings, G.A. Sarychev, Uri Lisianskii, V.M. Golovnin	Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology & Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg, Russia	Harpoons, spears, throwing boards, animal figurine, hunting hats, stone tools, arrows, bows, model boats, paddles, fishing hook, feast bowls, oil lamps, baskets, bags, mats, spruce root hat, bentwood visors, headgear, parkas, raingear, footwear, masks, dance rattles, drums
1818-1846	Arvid Adolf Etholén, Finnish naval officer	National Museum of Finland, Helsinki	Clothing, headgear, footwear, bags, spruce root hats, hunting visors, figurines, basket, drums, dance rattle, arrows, wooden objects, kayak models, ulu, stone tools, bows, harpoons, throwing boards, sinew line
1872	Louis Alphonse Pinart, French anthropologist	Château Musée, Boulogne-sur-Mer, France	Masks, beaded regalia (headdress, cuffs, and sash), bow, spoons, harpoon heads, tools, bowls, drum, model boats
1879-1894	William J. Fisher, American naturalist	National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC	Stone and bone tools, beaded regalia, headgear, bentwood visors, masks, amulet, doll, spoons, boat model, throwing board, sewing bags, spool, spruce root hat, ivory figurines, drum, rattles
1888-1889	Hugh Cecil Lowther, British Aristocrat	British Museum, London	Model kayaks, masks, paddles, stone tools, bows, arrows, quivers, skin clothing, spruce root hat, grass socks, baskets, spoons, beaded regalia, bag

Amutat Database <http://alutiiqmuseum.org/collection/index.php> : Explore Alutiiq collections.

**LEARN MORE:**

Captured Heritage, 1985, by Douglas Cole, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

# Cuumillapet – ANCESTORS: CULTURES THROUGH TIME



A multitude of archaeological sites preserve the history of Kodiak's Aluti̅iq/Sugpiaq people. Dense prehistoric populations left large accumulations of cultural debris that has resisted decay in the region's cool, wet environment. In addition to the stone tools commonly found in Alaskan archaeological sites, many of Kodiak's ancient settlements contain shell, bone, antler, and ivory objects. A few hold spectacular assemblages of wood and fiber artifacts. This rich record documents at least 7,500 years of continuous human occupation and chronicles the adaptation of Native people to the region's productive marine environments. Archaeologists divide Kodiak history into five cultural traditions, each reflecting a distinct way of life.



*Tatiana Charliaga at the Amak site with a slate lance.*

**EARLY ANCESTRAL HUNTERS – CUUMILLAT PISURTAT – (7,500-4,000 YEARS AGO)**  
(AKA OCEAN BAY TRADITION) – The first occupants of the Kodiak Archipelago arrived at least 7,500 years ago, colonizing an environment warmer and drier than today. Archaeologists believe these people came from southwestern Alaska and were well adapted to life along the coast. Like their descendants, they used barbed harpoons, chipped stone points, and ground slate lances to hunt sea mammals, delicate bone hooks to jig for cod, and large bone picks to dig for clams. Some early residents probably lived in skin-covered tents, although oval, single-roomed houses with piled sod walls were in use by about 7,000 years ago.

**EARLY ANCESTRAL FISHERMEN – CUUMILLAT IQALLUGSUSQAT – (4,000-900 YEARS AGO)**  
(AKA KACHEMAK TRADITION) – About 4,000 years ago, Kodiak people began to focus more intensely on fishing, harvesting quantities of both cod and salmon. They developed nets to harvest salmon, and slate ulus and smokehouses to process larger catches for storage. Over time, villages grew, suggesting that the island's population was also expanding and filling up the landscape. By the end of the Kachemak Tradition, people were trading for large quantities of raw materials from the Alaskan mainland. Antler, ivory, coal, and exotic stones were manufactured into tools and jewelry. Labrets—decorative plugs inserted in the face—became popular at this time, perhaps to signal the social ties of the person wearing the labret in a landscape where there was increasing competition for resources. The first signs of warfare appear at the end of this period.

**CHIEFS AND SLAVES – TUYUNKUT, METQIT-LLU – (900-250 YEARS AGO)**  
(AKA KONIAG TRADITION) – About 900 years ago, Kodiak's climate began to change dramatically. Temperatures cooled, the weather worsened, and small sea mammals became more difficult to catch. Aluti̅iq people responded by relocating their villages to the banks of productive salmon streams and hunting more whales. Fishing grew even more important as people harvested even greater quantities of salmon to feed their families and trade with neighbors. Related families began living together in large, multiple-roomed sod houses, pooling resources and labor. Chiefs emerged, perhaps to organize labor. They led war and trading parties, and hosted elaborate winter ceremonies to display their wealth and power, honor ancestors, and ensure future prosperity.

**RUSSIAN – KASAANKAT – (1763-1867)**  
By the 1780s, Russian fur traders had worked their way into the central Gulf of Alaska and colonized the Aluti̅iq Nation. Aluti̅iq people were quickly forced to adopt new social and economic practices and many people died from starvation and infectious diseases. During the Russian period, Native people were forced to work in camps dedicated to sea otter hunting, salmon fishing, and whaling. Russian clergy introduced the Russian Orthodox faith, a religion that remains strong in many communities.

**AMERICAN – MERIKAANSAT – (1867-PRESENT)**  
With the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, life on Kodiak changed again. The American period saw the development of the modern fishing industry, where many Aluti̅iq people worked for wages in canneries. Aluti̅iq people moved gradually from a subsistence lifestyle into the Western market economy. At the turn of the 20th century, wood-framed houses began to replace sod structures. Educators suppressed Aluti̅iq speech, punishing children for using the language and halting its transmission. Efforts to reawaken cultural traditions began in the 1980s.

5500 BC to 2000 BC

2000 BC to AD 1100

AD 1100 to AD 1763

AD 1763 to AD 1867

AD 1867 to Now

# *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.



## **PROTECT THE PAST**

Archaeological sites are a non-renewable resource. There is a limited amount of information available about the past. Yet, each year sites are damaged by vandalism. Recreational digging and artifact collecting are illegal and destroy our ability to interpret the archaeological record.

## **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.

# *Mingurngasqanek Ipegyanek Aulutalilita –* **LET'S MAKE GROUND SLATE TOOLS**

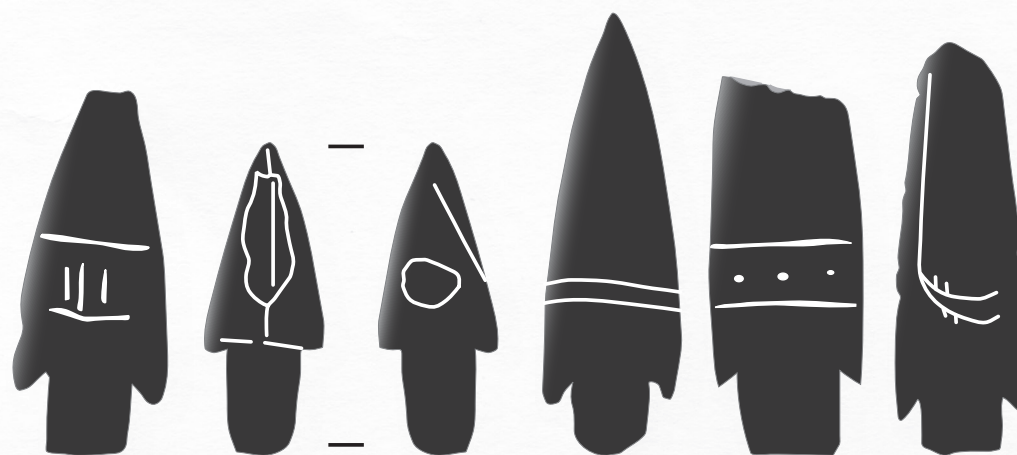
Slate is a plentiful raw material in the Kodiak Archipelago and can be fashioned into a variety of tools. In addition to the ulus and double-edged knives used to process subsistence foods, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq people ground lances, bayonets, and arrows for hunting, and fashioned beads and labrets from slate. Try your skill at slate grinding. Here are the basic steps.

**STEP ONE** - Select a piece of slate. Kodiak beaches have many different types—but not all slate is suitable for tool production. The ideal material is hard with few visible layers. A good way to test slate is to break it into pieces and observe how they fall apart. Choose a thin, sturdy fragment, that is internally cohesive.

**STEP TWO** - Use a hard beach cobble (a water-rounded rock) to chip your thin leaf of slate into a rough tool shape—working along the edges. Another way of creating a rough tool, particularly if you wish to make a lance, is to saw the slate with a hard, sharp rock. A flake from a beach cobble works well as a saw. With the flake, wear grooves into the slate from both sides and then gently snap the pieces apart along the groove.

**STEP THREE** - Use a hard, flat beach rock to grind a smooth surface on both faces of your tool. Keep the tool flat as you grind. Water and a small amount of sand make a good lubricant and will speed the grinding process. Keep grinding until you have a smooth, flat surface. Try to remove any nicks or indentations in the slate.

**STEP FOUR** - Sharpen the edges of your tool by grinding at an angle. Turn the tool over to grind both sides of each edge. This will create a bevel (a v-shaped edge) that can be sharpened and resharpened.



*Ground slate points with makers marks from Late Kachemak tradition sites.*



# Yaamat Igarua'it – PEBBLE DRAWINGS

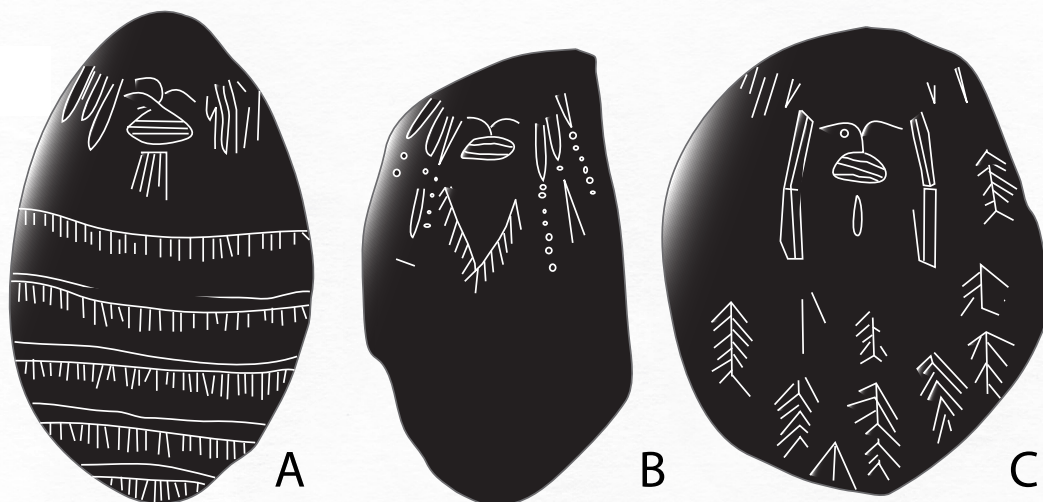


Objects left in archaeological sites tell many stories. Tools indicate the tasks people performed, and animal remains record ancient meals. In the Kodiak Archipelago a unique type of artifact also documents how people dressed. Between AD 1300 and 1500, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq ancestors sketched images of people on small pebbles, cutting designs into the rocks. These pebble drawings show human faces, but many also include drawings of clothing, jewelry, and headdresses. Some individuals are even pictured with a ceremonial item—a drum or a rattle. These pebbles provide information that is not available from any other source.

These pebbles illustrate different types of clothing and jewelry. Example A (below) shows an individual wearing a decorated gut-skin garment (represented by horizontal lines) and a labret (lip plug) with hanging attachments.

Example B shows an individual with a V-neck garment and a headdress decorated with beads. Example C displays a person in a bird-skin garment (represented by a feather motif) with a labret and a headdress. Patterns seen in these pebbles suggest that people in different parts of the archipelago once wore different styles of parkas and labrets. People all over the world use clothing to signal their affiliation with social groups. Perhaps each Alutiiq community had its own unique dress code.

What were pebble drawings used for? Some archaeologists think they were pieces for a throwing game; others suggest that they were used to record the pictures of powerful people. Whatever the answer, they continue to speak to archaeologists, providing valuable information on ancient Alutiiq life.



*Slate pebbles with etched designs, ca. AD 1500, Koniag, Inc. Collection, Karluk One Site.*

## LEARN MORE:

*Igaruacirpet: Our Way of Making Designs*, 2018, edited by Amy Steffian. Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak.

# Yaamatni Igarait – PETROGLYPHS



*Petroglyphs from Cape Alitak, Kodiak Island.*

## LEARN MORE:

From the Old People, the Cape Alitak Petroglyphs, 2003, by Woody Knebel, Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA.

Cape Alitak Petroglyphs DVD, 2013, WonderVisions, Bend, OR.

Petroglyphs are designs pecked into boulders, cliff faces, and other stationary pieces of stone. This type of artwork is rare in Alaska. The Tlingit of southeast Alaska made such carvings and a few pieces of rock art are known from other parts of Alaska. In the Kodiak Archipelago, there are at least seven petroglyph locations that depict human figures, animal forms, and geometric designs. These characters are probably from Alutiiq myths or family stories.

**HOW DID THE ALUTIIQ CREATE PETROGLYPHS?** There are clues in other types of stone tools. Kodiak's prehistoric residents made many objects out of hard greywacke and granite beach cobbles by pecking. Craftsmen used stone hammers to shape water-worn rocks into lamps, mauls, fishing weights, and even anchors. With similar tools, people probably pecked petroglyph images into Kodiak's bedrock. Recent experimentation suggests that artists used two hand held stones to hammer away fragments of rock and create the designs, perhaps employing a hammerstone to drive a pecking stone. However they were created, Kodiak's petroglyphs are finely made. Artists created deep, clean lines and carefully formed shapes and silhouettes. Some of these images are quite large, more than a meter (three feet) across. They must have taken a very long time to craft.

No one knows the precise age of this art form. Alutiiq people believe the petroglyphs are very old. Even a hundred years ago, Elders had no knowledge of this art form. Archaeologists suspect that the images date to the centuries surrounding AD 1,000, as other types of stone carving flourished at this time and many of the petroglyphs occur near village sites of this age. But why did Alutiiq people make petroglyphs?

Other Alaska Natives used rock art as territorial markers, permanent signs that linked families to particular subsistence harvesting areas. Perhaps the Alutiiq did the same. Kodiak's petroglyphs commonly occur at the entrances to bays, facing outward toward the open ocean, and would have been easy to see when freshly carved. It is also possible that the images are part of a hunting ritual. Historic accounts report that whalers carved images into rocks to bring them luck before the hunt. At Cape Alitak, both of these explanations seem possible. Here, there are thirteen clusters of petroglyphs with more than 1,300 individual images. Petroglyphs showing faces tend to appear below old village sites. In contrast, petroglyphs showing whales appear at the tip of the cape, overlooking an area where whales swim past.



# Ciqlluaq – SOD HOUSE

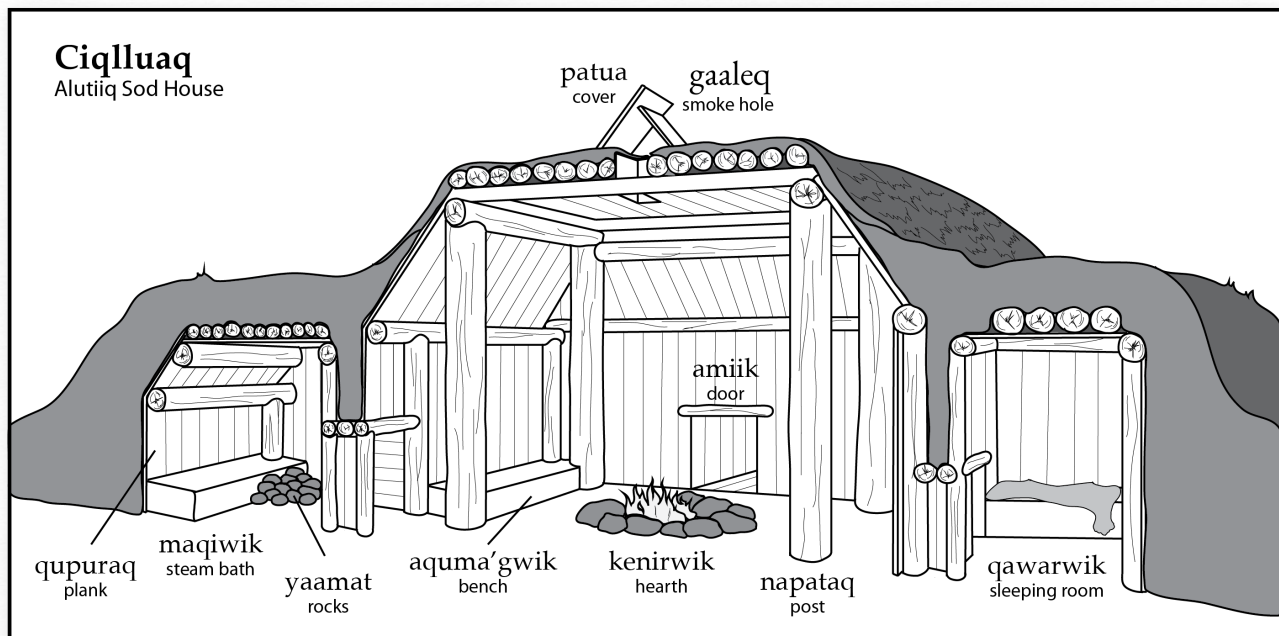
The traditional Alutiiq/Sugpiaq house—*ciqlluaq*, often referred to by the Russian term *barabara*, was a sod-covered structure built partially underground. After digging a foundation, builders erected a post—*napataq* and beam frame covered with planks hewn from driftwood. Logs were split with stone mauls and whalebone wedges, and formed into planks with stone adzes—an axe-like tool. Blocks of sod or grasses were then piled over the frame for insulation. A small hole—*gaaleq* (smokehole) was left in the center of the roof and covered with a hatch—*patuq*, which could be opened to release smoke or let in fresh air.

Each house had a set of rooms connected by narrow tunnels—*amiik* (doorways) to side rooms. Houses were entered through a low passageway—*siinaruaq* that led into a large room with a central hearth—*kenirwik* (place to cook). Around the walls were earthen benches for sitting and sleeping covered with dry grass or bear hide mattresses. Here, Alutiiq people cooked, repaired tools, sewed clothing, and hosted visitors. Stores of

food hung from the ceiling, some in seal stomach containers.

Attached to the central room were a number of side chambers for sleeping—*qawarwik* and steam bathing—*maqiwik* (also known by the Russian term *banya*). Rocks heated in the hearth were carried to the steam bath with wooden tongs—*tuulautek* and splashed with cold water to create steam. The *maqiwik* was always the smallest room in the house with a low roof designed to trap heat. Hot rocks were traditionally piled in the corner so bathers could exit easily.

The outside of Alutiiq houses had many features. A drainage ditch might surround the entire house, and racks—*initat* for drying fish and meat were commonly constructed beside houses. On the roof, residents stored larger gear including kayaks—*qayat*, paddles—*anguat*, and fishing nets—*kugyasit*. Some houses had a small shed beside them.



Parts of a *ciqlluaq*. Illustration by Alisha Drabek.