



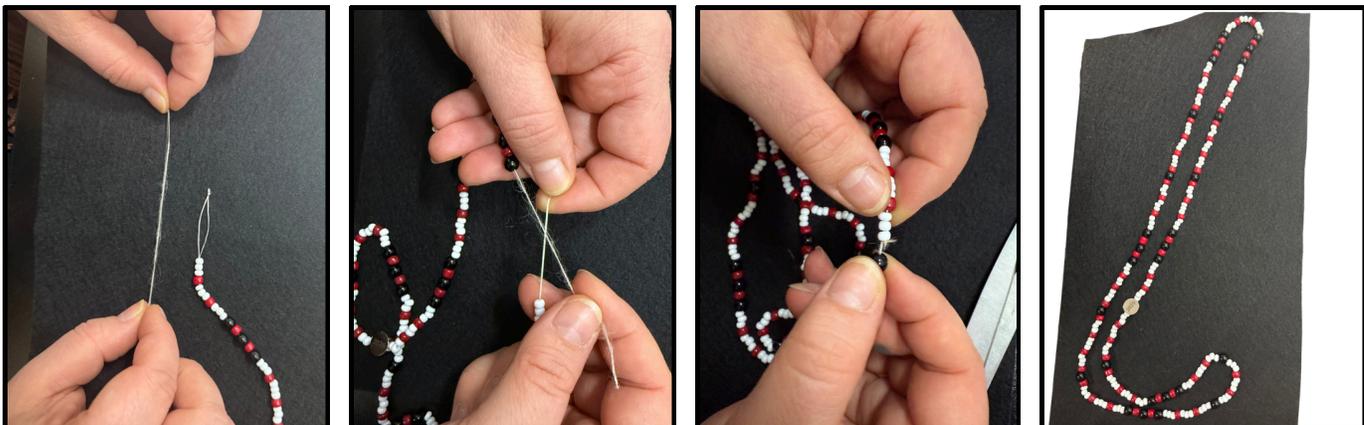
Single Strand Beaded Necklace

500 Necklaces

For the Alutiiq Museum's Grand Reopening in May 2025, volunteers made 500 single-strand beaded necklaces. Each necklace was given to a visitor to share our thanks for the tremendous community support that helped to renovate the Alutiiq Museum. The necklaces were very popular and many people asked for instructions to make their own.

Instructions

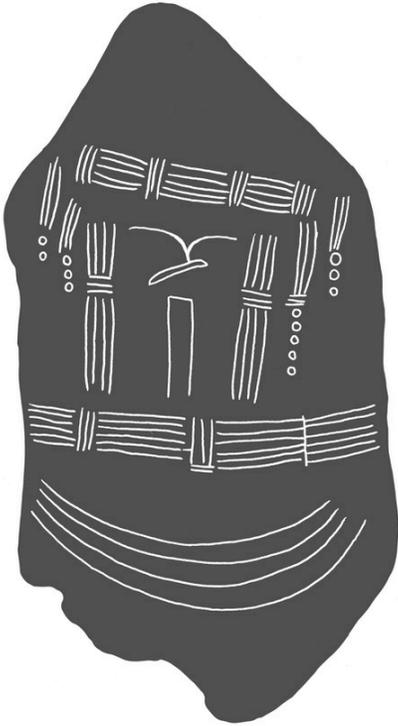
- A completed necklace should be about 33" long. To begin stringing beads, cut a 74-inch length of thread, which will be 37" when doubled. This will give you enough room to build and knot a necklace before cutting off unneeded thread.
- Thread your needle, bringing it to the center of the thread. Double up the thread to make it double-stranded. Tie the double end to a bead as a stopper. This bead will later be removed.
- Bead the necklace using a repeating pattern of your choice. You can design your own pattern(s) or consult traditional patterns for inspiration. The pattern at each end of your beaded strand should match up with the beginning of the pattern when the strand is tied into a circle. For example, if your repeating pattern is 10 black beads, 2 red beads, and 6 white beads, the beginning of the necklace should start with the 10 black beads, and the end of the necklace should end with the 6 white beads.
- When you have beaded about a 33" strand, cut both ends of the thread close to the stopper bead and needle, leaving two loose ends. Be careful not to let your beads fall off! Now tie a secure knot to connect the two thread ends. There should be no more than one bead's width of thread visible after tying the knot. Do your best to hide the knot between the beads. Now you are done!



From left: threaded needle, beaded strand after cutting off needle and knot, tying knot, completed necklace



Traditional Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Beading



*Incised pebble showing beaded regalia
Settlement Point Site
Afognak Native Corporation Collection*

In classical Alutiiq/Sugpiaq society, wealthy people displayed their social position through elaborate personal ornamentation. In addition to jewelry, members of the Alutiiq elite wore tattoos and ornate garments to symbolize prestige. Before the availability of European goods, clothing and jewelry were embellished with a variety of hand-carved beads. People fashioned shell, bone, ivory, amber, coal, slate, and even halibut vertebrae into decorations for parkas, rain gear, headdresses, bags, and labrets. In Prince William Sound, Alutiiq people made shiny beads of unbaked clay mixed with seal oil, and on the Kenai Peninsula, people carved beads and nose rings from a distinctive red shale.

With the arrival of Russian fur traders, glass beads replaced those made locally and became an important commodity. Manufactured in distant Asian and European factories, these colorful trinkets were inexpensive, easy to ship, and coveted by Native peoples. In return for their labor, the Russians paid Alutiiq people with beads and other cheap baubles, ensuring a large profit for themselves. For the Alutiiq, new varieties of brightly colored beads fit well into the prestige-based economy and were widely incorporated into ancestral arts. The Cornaline d'Aleppo, a dark red bead made in Venice, was particularly prized, perhaps because its color resembled traditional red pigments.

Traditional Alutiiq beading patterns often feature alternating and repeating colors of beads—with sections of multiple beads of the same color. Ancestral beaders would carefully plan their projects making the most of limited colors or sizes for accent beads. The most common colors are black, white, red, blue, and amber—the colors we used for the 500 necklaces project.



Beaded Alutiiq/Sugpiaq items from collections of the Alutiiq Museum, & the Musee Bolougne sur Mer.

