



# Atkut (N); Agunat (S) - CLOTHING

The traditional Alutiiq/Sugpiaq parka was a long, hoodless robe worn by both men and women. Alutiiq people fashioned these garments from bird skins, squirrel pelts, caribou hide, or otter fur. A typical adult parka might require as many as 60 bird skins. Many parkas had slits in the sides so that the wearer could remove their arms from the parka's sleeves to work freely. Pants were seldom worn under Alutiiq robes and shoes were only used in the coldest months. Whale leather was a preferred material for the soles of boots, and beach grasses were woven into socks.

Alutiiq men wore hats woven from spruce root or crafted from wood. Similar to Lingít hats from Southeast Alaska, these garments were decorated with shells and beads, painted with bright colors, and considered a sign of wealth. Some spruce root hats were even passed from father to son. Other indications of social standing included facial tattoos and jewelry. Alutiiq people wore nose pins, earrings, necklaces, and labrets—plugs of stone or bone inserted in a hole below the lower lip. The larger the labret, the older and more important its wearer.

Alutiiq people also fashioned special clothing for hunting and traveling. Every kayaker wore a gut-skin jacket, or *kanaglluk*, cut to his unique proportions and designed to fit snugly over his kayak hatch. Known today by the Siberian term *kamleika*, Alutiiq people sewed these garments from the intestines of bears or sea mammals. Strips of gut-skin were sewn together with sinew and special waterproof stitches. Alutiiq skin sewers rolled a piece of dried beach grass into every seam, then made careful stitches through the grass. When water seeped into the needle holes, it was absorbed by the underlying grass, which swelled and prohibited more water from entering. This ingenious stitching technique kept the hunter dry and protected him from hypothermia.

## LEARN MORE:

The Ethnohistory of Alutiiq Clothing, 2001, by Dolores C. Hunt. Master's thesis in Museum Studies, San Francisco State University, San Francisco.



*Man's Ground Squirrel Parka—made by Susan Malutin and Grace Harrod, 1999 with support from the Alaska State Museum. Based on a parka collected in Ugashik for the Smithsonian Institution in 1883.*

## BIRD MATH

Consider the number of birds needed to dress Kodiak's Alutiiq people in a bird-skin parka! Archaeologists believe that the Alutiiq must have harvested hundreds of thousands of seabirds. Here are some conservative estimates:

**Kodiak's population about AD 1600**  
—8,000 people

**Number of people wearing the common bird-skin parka**  
—6,500 people

**Life span of a bird-skin parka worn daily**  
—5 years

**Number of people needing a new bird-skin parka each year**  
—1,300 people

**Number of bird skins per parka**  
—60 skins

**Birds harvested yearly for parka production**  
—60 X 1,300 = 78,000 birds

Birds were harvested around Kodiak and on the Alaska Peninsula. All of these birds were eaten.