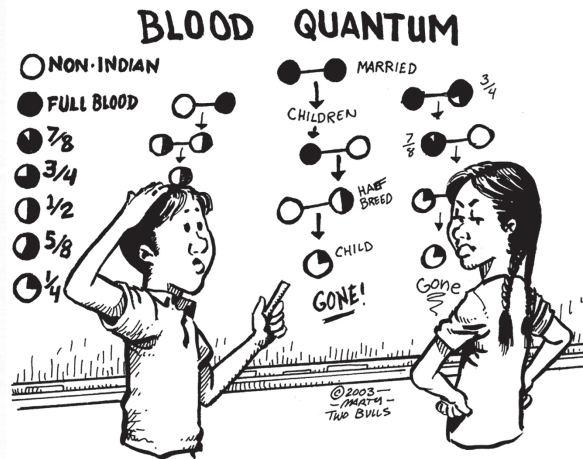


# Augmek Uspengnaqlluni – BLOOD QUANTUM



Hey wait a minute, we're disappearing!

*Cartoon, courtesy of Marty Two Bulls.*

Tracing kinship is an important part of life in Alaska Native communities, and Elders are especially knowledgeable about family ties. Knowing their extended family helps people create and maintain economic and social bonds. For example, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq boat captains often select and train crews based on relatedness. Tracing cultural and family ties is also the best way to know who is Native. This is the way Native people recognize Native identity. However, many state and federal regulations require a different method known as blood quantum.

Blood quantum is an attempt to identify Native people based on their fraction of Native ancestry, or blood. The United States began establishing blood quantum laws in the 18th century as part of a broader effort to eradicate Native people. The early laws excluded Native people from civil rights protections and encouraged

them to marry and have children with non-Native people. Today, most Native Americans and Alaska Natives have a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) issued by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs. The CDIB records what fraction of a person's blood the government considers Native. A person with one Native parent is considered to have a 50 percent blood quantum, while a person with one Native grandparent has a 25 percent blood quantum.

Blood quantum laws can create identity issues. Some federal laws allow tribal enrollment for Native people to receive services or benefits. Others require a specific blood quantum. For example, the Marine Mammal Protection Act requires a Native blood quantum of at least 25 percent to legally harvest and use sea mammals. Such limits make some community members feel disconnected because they are "not Native enough" in the eyes of the government.

Every tribe establishes its own requirements for enrolling members. For example, some tribes enroll anyone whose ancestry can be linked to a list of original tribal enrollees. Other tribes require a certain Native blood quantum for membership. Still others enroll anyone with Native heritage and an enrolled parent. You can request a tribe's enrollment requirements by contacting their tribal office.

In Alutiiq society, people have always traced ancestry through kinship. A person is Alutiiq if they are descended from an Alutiiq family. Alutiiq/Sugpiaq people commonly married people from neighboring cultures, such as the Lingít of Southeast Alaska. Children from these marriages were no less Alutiiq than their cousins and neighbors. The concept of using a blood quantum to identify Native people is entirely Western. On Kodiak, it was introduced in the 18th century by Russians wishing to distinguish between Natives and Creoles. Creoles were more acculturated Native people, often of mixed blood.