

# Arctic Technology



*Aleut man and woman from Unalaska, ca. 1760.*

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Anthropology**

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## Aleut

The homelands of the Aleut, who call themselves Unangan, consist of a 1,300-mile-long volcanic-island arc extending from the Alaska Peninsula to the west. Traditional Aleut culture was very similar to that of other Arctic groups, but with some elements of their culture more similar to that of Northwest Coast tribes. Fur traders from Russia dominated Aleut territory from about 1750 to 1820, and European diseases and warfare caused loss of much of the native population and traditional lifeways. Today there are about 2,000 Aleut living in their homelands, and many villages are working to reclaim their identity and to revive traditional practices.

### Animal-Intestine Garments

Like their Inuit neighbors, the Aleut made parkas and other items using animal intestine, or "gutskin." They were made of pieces of seal or walrus gut that have been soaked, scraped, inflated, dried in the sun, and sewed together. The Inuit parka on display in the Museum would be worn over other garments for protection from rain. It is trimmed with fur and decorated with feathers and small pieces of bird beaks.

The Aleut gutskin shirt pictured is another example of this type of garment. It is made of strips of walrus intestine and decorated with yarn, feathers, and eagle down. This particular style, with the high collar and yarn decoration, probably shows the influence of Russian clothing on the production of native garments.



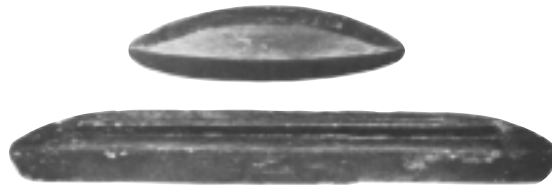
*Aleut gutskin shirt, ca. early 19th century*



*Inuit woman tending an oil lamp inside a house, 1921.*

### Stone Lamps

Stone lamps were common household utensils used by Arctic groups. They were used for cooking and to provide heat and light inside Arctic dwellings. The lamps burned oil or animal blubber on a wick of moss or other material.



### Resources

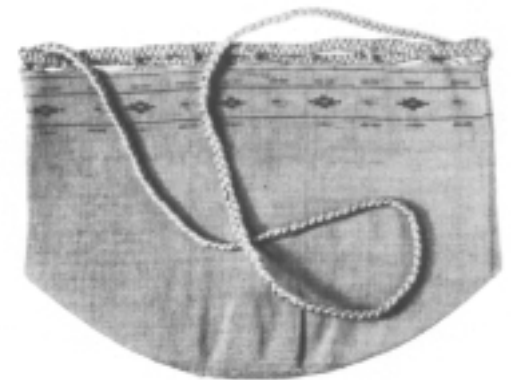
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*Aleut woman making a basket, ca. 1900.*

### Basketry

Aleut women were well known for their finely woven grass baskets. Basketry products included storage baskets, bags, and mats. Baskets were often woven upside down to keep the sides straight.



### Credits

Map and photos are from Damas, 1984 (Cover Photo: p. 170, Fig. 6; Shirt: p. 171, Fig. 7; Stone Lamps: p. 327, Fig. 6; p. 419, Fig. 7; Basketry: p. 168, Fig. 4h; p. 170, Fig. 5)