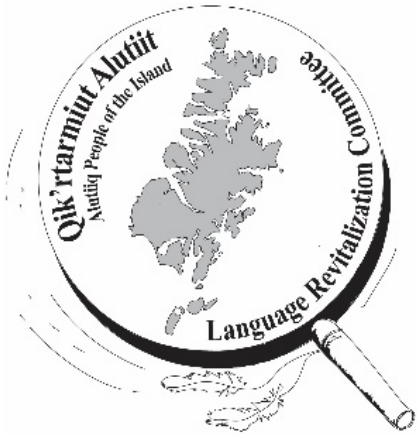


# Alutiiq Language Classes Now Available for All Ages

by Candace “Cutmen” Branson, second language Alutiiq speaker and teacher

## Erinarpet OUR VOICES



**K M** by Alutiiq Language  
Speakers & Learners

Learning the Alutiiq language, whether community members are Alaska Native or not, is now more available than ever before.

As the school year kicks off, classes are starting for preschool, high school, and college students, supplemented by weekly family workshops or Family Language Nights for all ages.

Preschool students, ages 0 to 5 years old, can enroll in the *Alutiit'stun Niuwawik* Alutiiq Language Nest immersion program. Children ages birth to 3, or who are not potty-trained, must be accompanied with a caregiver. This innovative program supports children to develop kindergarten readiness skills as they problem solve, explore, and play through the Alutiiq language in a supportive multi-generational setting.

Alutiiq Language Nest classes are held each Tuesday,

Wednesday, and Thursday, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Subsidized through an Administration for Native Americans grant project, enrollment fees are set at a low \$50 per semester, for a total of \$100 per year.

The goal of a language nest is not to formally “teach” children the language, but rather to create a child-focused immersion environment where language can be acquired naturally, just as young ones acquire their first language.

In the Alutiiq Language Nest, teachers and volunteers only speak Alutiiq. Students are immersed in the Alutiiq language with a primary goal of developing Alutiiq language fluency. Instruction works toward kindergarten preparedness so students can transition to kindergarten smoothly.

The dream is that Alutiiq language will spill over into the home, community, through the play-based activities of *Alutiit'stun Niuwawik* students. Family members and those closest to the students are encouraged to attend community language learning activities to develop their fluency alongside enrolled preschool students. Families are required to attend at least two language classes each month while their child is enrolled. This shows to students that they are part of a language family and community.

Raissa Boskofsky, our lead Alutiiq Language Teacher, is a dedicated member of the community and a passionate learner of the Alutiiq language. She earned her Occupational Endorsement Certificate (OEC) in Alutiiq Language from Kodiak

College in May. Raissa plans to remain on Kodiak Island long-term and will be aiding the program’s revitalization efforts by working in the Language Nest, also providing support at Kodiak High School Alutiiq language classes.

Our second Alutiiq Language Teacher, Jacob Cawley, started learning Alutiiq in high school. He is a member of the Sun’aq Tribe and has lived in Kodiak since 2009. He has been working in the construction field until recently, and is excited to focus on growing his Alutiiq language abilities while working with children.

At Kodiak High School (KHS) Alutiiq 1 and 2 has been available to students since the spring semester of 2011. These classes either serve as electives, or World Language credit. Currently, KHS offers Spanish and Alutiiq languages in the school. The Alutiiq classes at KHS are dual credit, meaning that the students are offered an opportunity to sign up for the college credit for Alutiiq 1, while taking the Alutiiq 1 course at KHS. The students are required to complete the whole year, to earn four transferable UAA credits in Alaska Native Studies.

Students in the KHS classes learn many vocabulary words, as well as simple sentence structures, leading to conversational fluency in Alutiiq. Students are challenged to speak and write Alutiiq, working on projects such as creating a video introducing themselves and their families, writing a letter to Santa at Christmastime. They practice Alutiiq songs and play Go Fish & Clue in Alutiiq!

Because students also are interested in learning about the

Alutiiq culture, they always have good questions about things like the origins of Alutiiq language & language loss, and the importance of cultural resources. Students enjoy hearing stories and playing traditional games throughout the class. High school students interested in learning Alutiiq should sign up as soon as possible. This year it is 7<sup>th</sup> period and there is room for a few more students!

Candace Branson is the Kodiak High School Alutiiq Language Teacher, and the project manager for the *Tamamta Liitukut*—“We Are Learning” grant, which features the Alutiiq Language Nest, and curriculum alignment for elementary and middle school grades this year.

This fall the Kodiak College is offering the Alutiiq 101 class, taught by Peggy Azuyak on Thursday nights, 5:00-6:30 p.m. For those interested in college credit, and guidance about where to start and what to learn next, registration is still open, classes start next week.

The Alutiiq Language Apprentice course is open now as well and is struggling with enrollment numbers. This course is for students of the language who plan to spend time with speakers and learners more fluent than themselves in the fall semester. This course is for students who have some language experience and want to spend time practicing Alutiiq in a less structured environment.

Family Language Night will kick off for the year next week on Wednesday August 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:00-6:30pm at the UAF fisheries Research Building on Near Island. This program is open to anyone. Teens, adults, families, and individuals, Native or not! We welcome people with an interest in Alutiiq language, to join us for beginner language lessons. We know we cannot host a successful gathering at dinner time without feeding people, and at the same we cannot purchase meals for all attendees, so we have come to a solution that rocks – Stone Soup.

Each week the Family Language Night group makes a different soup together, and asks attendees to bring soup supplies, such as an onion, 4 carrots, 1.5 lbs of chicken, noodles, etc. When participants arrive, the group makes soup in an immersion environment, and while it simmers engages in either adult or youth language activities, so that adults can focus on their language acquisition skills. At the end, we sit down together and eat soup. Visit the Alutiiq Language Learners and Speakers Facebook Page to learn more about Family Language Night via weekly posts.

This program is a great opportunity for families to bring Alutiiq back into their homes!

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*Learn more about the Alutiiq language at: [www.alutiiqlanguage.org](http://www.alutiiqlanguage.org) or [www.alutiiqmuseum.org](http://www.alutiiqmuseum.org)  
Facebook: Alutiiq Language Speakers & Learners*