Starring Tradition Celebrates Russian Christmas

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

While the holidays are over for many folks in Kodiak, they’re also just beginning for some. Today is Russian Christmas, a holiday celebrated by the Russian Orthodox Church, which follows the Julian calendar. Alutiiq Museum Director Alisha Drabek said the holiday often spans multiple days, and is best known for the practice called starring.

“The caroling or starring that happens here in Kodiak and throughout Russian Orthodox faith is anywhere from three nights to several more, but here locally they practice a three day caroling celebration. So after church services on January 7, the parishioners gather after the evening church service and start at Father Innocent’s house, and sing songs, traditiaonl Alutiiq caroling songs, Russian Orthodox Church songs, usually around eight to nine songs with a small group of people.”

Drabek said from there they travel to the Alutiiq Museum second and sing songs and then go on to other houses within the church community.

“They bring with them the church star. And it symbolizes when the wise men followed the star of Bethlehem to find the birth of Christ. So they’re bringing that star to each home of the parishioner families that are on the list to be honored in that way.”

Drabek said she wasn’t sure exactly how large the Russian Orthodox community is in Kodiak, but she said they spend about five hours on each of the three nights traveling to different houses and there are usually about 25 people that join in on the caroling.

The entire Kodiak community is invited to watch and celebrate the starring at the Alutiiq Museum. Drabek said the carolers should arrive around 6:30 p.m. tonight and everyone is invited to come and learn a little bit about the Russian Orthodox faith and enjoy some traditional Christmas songs.