

***Apeso* (Open Hearth)**

The traditional Ainu dwelling, or *cise*, is focused on the open hearth (*apeso*, from the Ainu word for fire, *ape*). Traditionally, the cooking pot suspended from the rafters over the fire was used to prepare dishes such as *ohaw* (a traditional soup or hot pot) and *sito* (dumplings). Fish was hung from the rafters and cured in the smoke from the fire. Apart from serving as the main source of heat, the fire was the focal point of social interaction. Rather than being in the center of the main room, the *apeso* is slightly closer to the entrance. This creates a large clear area near the sacred window on the far side of the dwelling, opposite the entrance. Treasured objects are displayed next to the sacred window, and it is on this side of the hearth that an honored guest would be seated.