

Dawn — Tanqigya'arluni

TANQIGYATURTUQ. – IT IS STARTING TO DAWN



Photo: Sunrise over Mill Bay.

Dawn is the period of early morning twilight that begins as the sun nears the horizon, lifting its leading edge into the sky. The appearance of the first morning light around Kodiak changes with the seasons. In summer dawn comes early and rapidly, as the sun rises high above the horizon filling the sky with strong, direct light for many hours. By contrast, dawn seems to linger in the midst of winter, as the sun remains low on the horizon and casts long shadows. Some areas of Kodiak receive little direct sunlight between November and January. The tall mountains lining narrow waterways can block the low-lying rays of the sun even on cloud-free days. Alutiiq people prepared for winter darkness by choosing village sites in open, coastal locations beyond the reach of persistent winter shadows. Places with names like Sunny Cove on Spruce Island record the locations of such spots.

An Alutiiq legend suggests that the sun and the moon are twins, born from the union of a brother and sister who fell in love. The human-like qualities of the sun are also expressed in an Alutiiq story from Prince William Sound. In this tale, the sun is a man who fights with a family of alders. Although the sun could not defeat the alders, and eventually became their friend, his arrows scarred their bark, causing dark spots, and his heat burnt their leaves. This is why alder leaves become brown each fall.