

## Driftwood — Pukilaaq, Kapilaq, Tep’aq (small, medium, full log)

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### PUKILAANEK IWA’AT’S Kut. – LET’S LOOK FOR DRIFTWOOD.

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Photo: Driftwood on the beach at Cape Alitak, May, 2010.

Spruce trees are a recent addition to the Kodiak environment. Pollen and tree-ring studies indicate that the spruce forests of Shuyak, Afognak, and northern Kodiak are 500 to 900 years old. For ancient Alutiiq communities, driftwood was the primary source of lumber for home construction, tool production, and fuel. Locally available alder and cottonwood were useful for some tasks, but they were no substitute for the spruce, hemlock, yew, and cedar logs that washed onto Kodiak beaches.

Today, driftwood heats Alutiiq homes, fuels *banyas*, and smokes salmon. Families collect wood, searching the coast for suitable logs, particularly after stormy weather. Logs are tapped with a rock to ensure that they are not waterlogged and then towed home behind a skiff. Others may be marked and left for future collection. People use different signals to show log ownership. Some carve their initials into the ends of a log. Others will place a rock on top of a log or stack driftwood and tie a line around one end of the pile. These actions signal that the finder will be back to retrieve his supply.