

Goodbye — Tang’rciqamken

TANG’RCIQAMKEN CAMIKU. – I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN SOMETIME.



Photo: People on the dock in Ouzinkie wave goodbye. Courtesy of Tim and Norman Smith.

For example, saying goodbye in Alutiiq is a lot harder than saying hello. *Cama’i*, the Alutiiq greeting, is a simple one-word, two-syllable welcome that people remember easily. To say farewell, however, you must use a full Alutiiq phrase. The common leave-taking salutation is *tang’rciqamken*, which literally means, “I’ll see you.” Fluent speakers often add a variety of endings to this phrase, like *camiku*, which means “sometime.”

Because the Alutiiq goodbye is hard for many English speakers to master, people sometimes Anglicize the phrase for fun. Around Kodiak, you might hear someone say, “drop your pumpkin,” as they wave goodbye.

The difficulty English speakers have in learning Alutiiq reflects both differences between the Alutiiq and English alphabet and the complexity of the language. Alutiiq words contain a number of sounds not found in English, and Alutiiq is one of the more intricate Eskimoan languages. For example, linguists recognize that within the Yupik language family, to which Alutiiq belongs, the rules for accenting words become more complicated from west to east, with the most rules in Alutiiq at the far eastern extent of the Yupik-speaking world.