

## Kindling — ARastaup'kaat (N), ARastuup'kaat (S)

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UNUARPAK ANGLI ARASTUUP'KAALILLIANGA. – THIS MORNING I MADE ALOT OF KINDLING.

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Photo: Elder John Pestrikoff makes firestarters from driftwood. Photo by Priscilla Russell, KANA Collection.

Starting a fire in wet, windy Kodiak requires both skill and help from some good tinder. Alutiiq families use a variety of natural materials to capture a flame. In forested parts of the archipelago, the small, dead lower branches of spruce trees stay dry in the rain. They are easy to gather and make excellent kindling. Other good sources of tinder include dry grass, birch bark, spruce bark, and even spruce pitch and bird down. Some Alutiiq people also make fine shavings of wood for kindling. Any dry wood can be used, although cottonwood works especially well. The practice of igniting wood chips is quite old. Russian histories note that Alutiiq people used hand-held fire drills to ignite wood shavings.

Gathering tinder is often a job for women and children. While men harvest larger wood and may travel far from home to collect it, women and children gathered kindling and small pieces of wood from nearby beaches and thickets. In the forests of northern Kodiak and Afognak, women gather dried bark or cut it from spruce trees. They place this material in burlap bags and carry it home for kindling to start fires that heat the steam bath.