

## Spring — Ugnerkaq

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### UGNERKARTUQ AWA'I. – SPRING IS HERE.

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Photo: Spring in Horseshoe Cove, Uganik Bay, 2004.

Spring is an unpredictable season in the Kodiak Archipelago. Some years, calm weather ushers in longer days and milder temperatures, but in others, winter storms pound the coast, and snow falls well into April. For Alutiiq people, spring is a time of waiting as the subsistence cycle renews itself. People collected shellfish from the intertidal zone during low spring tides, while they watch for whales and sea mammals to return to nearshore waters. In late March and early April, grey whales begin to reappear and halibut and cod move closer to shore. By mid-April, marine birds flock back to rookeries to lay their eggs and herring spawn in protected bays. And in May, king salmon arrive, initiating the salmon fishing season.

Spring was a time of community renewal. Alutiiq people cleaned their houses and cut fresh dry grass to cover house floors and fill mattresses. Men oiled their kayak skins to protect them from rotting, and children took their toys from storage and played on the beach. Boys and girls floated model boats, tested their skills with bows and arrows, and played with dolls as soon as migratory birds returned, signaling the rebirth of the year.