

## Telephone — Niuwasuuteq, Niuwat'staaq

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### UNA NIUWAT'STAAQ. – THIS IS A TELEPHONE.

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Photo: Woman speaks on the telephone ca. 1970.  
KANA Collection.

In the days of cell phones and high-speed Internet connections, it's hard to imagine that just a few decades ago, many of Kodiak's rural families had no phone service. Elders recall that signal fires were once used to send messages from one village to the next and that lookouts were posted on mountainsides to signal the arrival of boats before ship-to-shore radios helped fishermen communicate with their families.

In the mid-twentieth century, communication improved with regular mail boat service and the use of telegraph machines and short-wave radios. However, CB radios were the most popular form of communication before the telephone. In the mid-twentieth century, many islanders kept these portable devices in their homes and took them on fishing and hunting trips. Every family had their own radio name, which they used to call others on a widely monitored frequency. To talk, the callers switched to a different channel. Because anyone could listen in, callers often used codes to indicate private information, like the location of good fishing spots.

In the 1950s, Larsen Bay residents established their own community telephone system with surplus World War II phones, linking each house with wire strung through neighborhood trees and bushes. Modern telephone service to the villages began in the 1970s. Although most families did not own a phone, centrally located phones in places like the village post office or community hall provided worldwide telecommunication.