

## Thorn, Sliver — Cukiq

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ALLRANI AIGAQA CUKIRTAARTUQ. – SOMETIMES I GET A SLIVER ON MY HAND.

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Photo: Crown of thorns style ornaments and icon frame, by Carol Gronn.

The Alutiiq word for thorn, *cukiq*, can be used to mean sliver, thorn, barb, quill, or even spruce needle, and the word for the prickly devil's club, *cukilanarpak*, means "plant with big thorns."

When northern European peoples immigrated to Kodiak in the late 1800s, it is likely they introduced a unique woodworking style known as crown of thorns. This carving technique uses notched and uniformly sized sticks to create objects that have a thorny appearance. Artists snap the individual sticks together at their notches, using thousands of pieces to assemble an object without glue or tacks. Puzzle work is another term for this construction technique.

Common examples of crown of thorns objects include bowls and wreath-shaped picture frames that look similar to the crown of thorns worn by Christ. Crown of thorns carving is considered a type of folk art, where artists use small pieces of notched or layered materials to create or cover objects. The materials are often scrounged. In the early nineteenth century, for example, cigar boxes were a favorite raw material for this type of art.

On Kodiak, Alutiiq carvers probably learned the crown of thorns technique from Swedish and Norwegian fishermen who married into their families, as the technique is thought to originate in Germany and Scandinavia. Craftsmen used pocketknives to whittle bits of driftwood into the small sticks needed to build objects, especially picture frames. Today, crown of thorns frames can be found holding icons in community churches or fitted with family pictures in Alutiiq homes.

Red cedar is the favored material for this detailed, time-consuming work, which a few Kodiak artists continue to practice.