

Tree — Uggwik (deciduous), Napaq (spruce)

SUN'AMI MAANI NAPAT AMLERTUT, ANGSINARLUTENG CALI. KAL'UNI, LARSEN BAY-MI NAPAITAARTUKUT. – HERE IN KODIAK WE HAVE A LOT OF SPRUCE TREES AND TALL ONES, BUT IN KARLUK AND LARSEN BAY WE DON'T HAVE ANY.



Photo: A grove of deciduous trees overlooking a bend in the Karluk River.

The Kodiak Archipelago lies at the ecological boundary of the windswept coastal tundra and the foggy rainforests of coastal Alaska. Here, the coniferous forest gives way to grassy meadows and groves of cottonwood trees. Kodiak's forests are young. Biologists believe that the Sitka spruce, known by its Latin name *Picea sitchensis*, began spreading into the area just nine hundred years ago, and it is still spreading southward. Black cottonwood trees (*Populus balsamifera*) are more ancient, colonizing the archipelago thousands of years ago.

The Alutiiq word *napaq* can be used to refer to a tree in general or to a spruce tree specifically. Although Kodiak's forests are relatively young, wood collected from area beaches and both deciduous and coniferous trees are important for fuel and raw material. In Kodiak's northern Alutiiq communities, Sitka spruce is a major source of firewood, and it was used in the construction of traditional sod houses, fish drying racks, temporary shelters, and many common wooden objects. Cottonwood was primarily used for smoking fish, because it burns slowly, creates a lot of smoke, and imparts a nice flavor. It was also used for carving children's toys.