

Waterfall — Kuica'aq, Qurllurtaq (N)

KUICA'AQ QUS'IGTUQ. – THE WATERFALL IS HIGH.

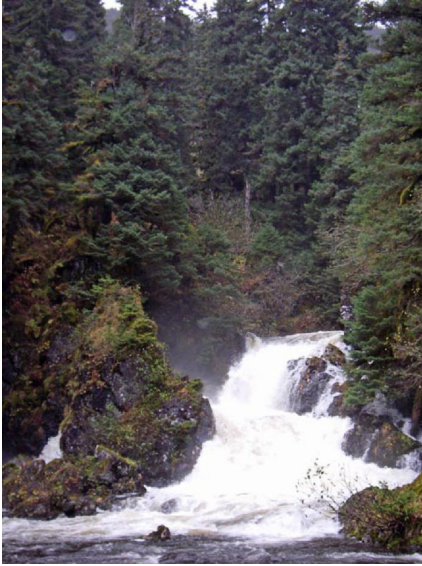


Photo: An Afognak Island waterfall.

Kodiak's rugged topography and its wet weather combine to create many small waterfalls. Heavy rains saturate the ground, providing runoff for streams that spill down mountainsides and plummet over cliffs. Some waterfalls are seasonal, fed by spring rains and melting snow, while others drain steep slopes year-round. The Alutiiq word for waterfall, *kuica'aq*, comes from the word for river, *kuik*.

Waterfalls are a prominent feature in Alutiiq legends and are often associated with the supernatural. In some stories, waterfalls act as passageways into distant and dangerous lands. In one tale, a woman in search of her lost lover paddles over a waterfall that traps her in a world filled with cannibals. When she succeeds in killing the cannibals, the waterfall disappears and she is able to paddle home.

In other tales, waterfall and animal spirits are associated. In these legends, waterfalls provide freshwater for thirsty sea creatures. According to one tale, an Alutiiq boy saw a whale swim toward shore. As he watched, the whale shoved its head onto the beach and opened its mouth. A little man, the whale's spirit, came out carrying a leather bucket in each hand. The little man went up to the waterfall and filled his buckets, and then climbed back into the whale's mouth. Refreshed, the whale closed its mouth and swam back out to sea.