

Thunder — Kalliq

KALLIKAN ALINGNARTAARTUT. – WHEN IT IS THUNDERING IT IS SCARY.



Photo: Cumulus clouds over a Kodiak peak.

Thunder is the loud, booming noise created by the rapid expansion and contraction of air heated by a lightning strike. As electricity, in the form of lightning, travels through the air, it opens a channel. When the electricity dissipates, the channel collapses, creating thunder. The Alutiiq word for thunder—*kalliq*—references this sound. *Kalliq* comes from the word *kalluk*—to make a sharp noise—especially a bang, clank, or clatter.

Although storms are common in Kodiak, thunder and lightning are relatively rare. This is because thunderstorms occur when cold and warm weather fronts collide, and warm air masses pass over Kodiak infrequently. However, electrical storms do occur, creating dangerous conditions in both summer and winter.

Alutiiq people have long feared thunder and lightning, for their power and connection to the unseen world. In January 1801, a Russian naval office recorded an eerie event during an electrical storm. Residents of an Alutiiq settlement were hosting a winter festival. During the storm, many people observed a rock jumping up and down, making its way up a hillside. No one could explain this phenomenon, but villagers suspected it was caused by thunder.

Similarly, an Alutiiq legend suggests that thunder and lightning were once two, poor, hungry girls whose community tired of caring for them and sent them away. This mistreatment led the girls to wander for many days until they flew into the sky and became the angry and powerful thunder and lightning. The story reminds people of the importance of generosity.