

The Cedar Box

Petersburg, AK

“ From the start, Spruce Root was just so supportive of the whole concept of our business — almost like a cheerleader for us just to get this business started. It really helped us get that sense that Spruce Root was a team player. ”

WILL WARE
CO-OWNER, THE CEDAR BOX



Spruce Root
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

An Alaska Native Gift Shop Educating Through Art

Over the last ten years, Will Ware, of Petersburg, refined his sea otter and seal fur craft and always kept his eyes open for opportunities to sell his merchandise. When the local co-op where Will and his wife, Christy, sold their handcrafted pieces closed, it occurred to them to look no further than each other. “We wanted to have a place to sell our product, and that started the conversation of opening up our own gift store,” Will said.

Will and Christy recognized the greater opportunity when they considered there were no other stores in Petersburg that sold predominantly Alaska Native art. “We got excited about the opportunity to educate our community about Alaska Native art—the diversity of it and the stories behind each individual piece of art,” Will said. The concept of The Cedar Box gift shop was born when they expanded the idea to include a diverse range of other artists.

“It really is a network of artists,” Will explained. “We know each and every artist that we represent in our store, and we try to work really closely with those that don’t have the means to share their work outside of their communities.”

Along the way, Spruce Root worked with Will and Christy to help make their dream a reality. First, Spruce Root assisted with building and fine-tuning a thorough business plan. Next, Spruce Root provided reasonable financing with more breathing room in the loan’s terms.

“Spruce Root was really supportive of the whole concept of our business and was so helpful in the underwriting—even keeping in contact with us afterwards,” Christy said. Will followed, “The terms that other places offered were too short to provide us comfort and stability in opening and starting a new business.”

Spruce Root’s thoughtful and comprehensive support enabled Will and Christy to follow their vision, and, in turn, support artists throughout Alaska. “We are supporting artists in different communities, and it is helping our region as a whole,” Will said, reflecting on The Cedar Box with pride.



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Coming from owning your own small
in-home business to opening up a shop
is a huge step, and Spruce Root really
helped walk us through that.

They helped us to know what
to expect and how to handle some
of the obstacles and difficulties
that you experience.

— Christy Ware
Co-owner, The Cedar Box

Spruce Root, Inc. is a nonprofit lender with a mission to assist Southeast Alaska’s people and businesses to reach their full potential through loan capital and support services that promote economic, social/cultural, and environmental resiliency.