# Traditional Alaska Transition Skills—Introduction to Traditional Carving

Rain Van Den Berg, Charlie Skultka, Jr., and Chuck Miller
UAA Center for Human Development
2021

Developed for Southeast Alaska school districts as a demonstration project to show how traditional skills can be supported and integrated into transition planning for youth with IEPs. These materials are meant to be adapted and used throughout Alaska.

These materials were created through the Developmental Disabilities Act partnership of the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education and the Center for Human Development, with funding from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

**Land Acknowledgment:** The authors would like to acknowledge that this curriculum was created on the unceded territories of the Sheetk'á Kwáan on Lingít Aaní, also known as Sitka, Alaska. We acknowledge that Lingít (Tlingit) peoples have been stewards of the land on which we work and reside since time immemorial, and we are grateful for that stewardship and incredible care. We also acknowledge the adjacent ancestral homes of the Xaadas (Haida) and Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) throughout what is also known as Southeast Alaska.

## About the Authors

Charlie Skultka, Jr. is a Traditional Arts Specialist for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. He was the 2018 award winner of the Governor's Arts and Humanities Margaret Nick Cooke award for Alaska Native Arts and Languages. Charlie is Haida and has taught traditional arts and culture classes for many years. Charlie teaches a variety of mediums, from painting, weaving, and carving to graphic design, 3D printing, and halibut hook making.

Chuck Miller is the Cultural and Community Liaison for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. He is a Tlingit culture bearer and storyteller that was born and raised in Sheet'ka (Sitka) Alaska. His Tlingit name is Daanax.ils'eik and he is of the L'uknax.adi (Raven/Coho Clan) and caretaker of Kayaash Ka Hit (Mother Coho Clan House) of Sitka. He grew up learning the traditional ways of the Tlingit people through the Sitka Native Education Program and from his maternal Grandparents, along with many other well respected Tlingit elders from the many nearby Southeast Communities. He continues to work with the Sitka Native Education Program as a Cultural Instructor from students ranging from Pre-School to High School. Chuck also shares his traditional knowledge with other community entities located in his hometown, such as the Sitka School District, Sitka Sound Science Center, Sitka Conservation Society and 4-H programs. Chuck continues to seek traditional knowledge from his elders and gives credit to his teachings from the late Kaal.atk' (Charlie Joseph Sr.), who was one of the main elders who preserved the Tlingit ways of life, with the Sitka Native Education Program.

Rain Van Den Berg is an education and training consultant with a background in education, health education, project management, and facilitation. She has a BA in Secondary Education, and a Master's of Public Health in Community Health Education. Recent projects include the Kotzebue units of the Traditional Transition Skills curriculum with co-author Frances Gage last year and a Student Handbook and Teacher Resources Guide for Transition for use in both rural and urban Alaskan communities for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.


## Acknowledgements—

The authors would like to thank the following for their support and contributions to this curriculum:

Sealaska Heritage Institute: Kristy Dillingham, Education Director for permission to include Sealaska Heritage Institute curriculum to use as references and teacher resources for this project.

Sitka Tribe of Alaska for the support of Charlie Skultka, Jr. and Chuck Miller.

Other contributors: Margie Esquiro, Educator (retired); Jule LeBlanc, Sitka School District Cultural Director

Thanks to Chohla Moll for helping with community connections.

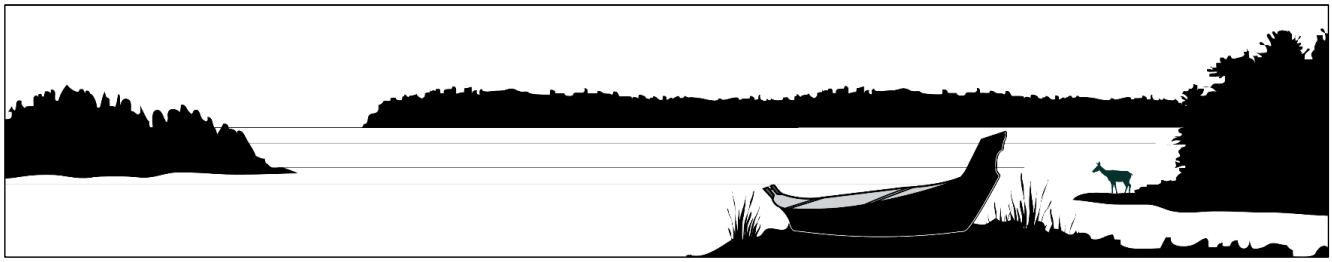
Thanks to Anne Applegate for her inspiration and support of this project.

Thanks to Karen Ward, UAA Center for Human Development, for her administrative support.

# Table of Contents

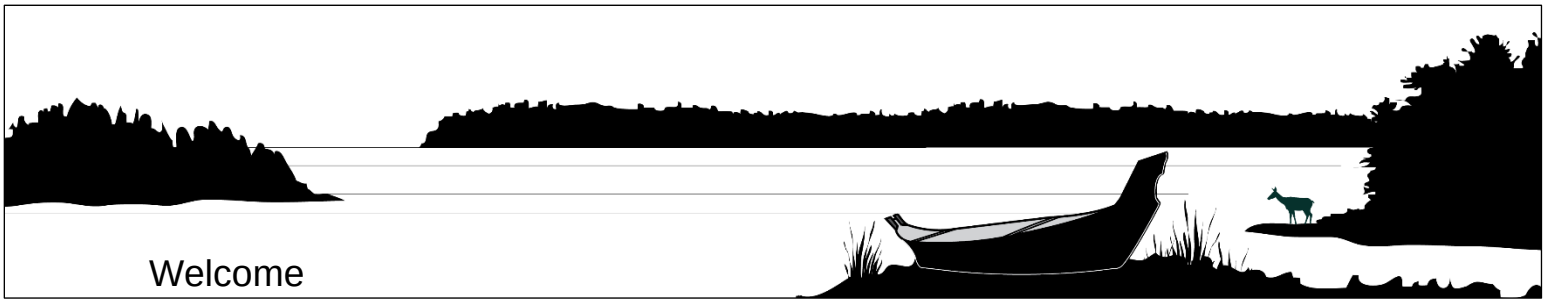


## Note about the Header Image



This image represents the land, sea, and animals of Southeast Alaska and acknowledges the original Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples with the presence of a canoe. The image was created by Rain Van Den Berg for use in this curriculum.


Traditional Alaska Transition Skills, Traditional Carving Skills, 2021, Van Den Berg / Skultka / Miller
UAA Center for Human Development



# Welcome

Without the trees, the people would not have survived. For the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of Southeast Alaska, the trees provided so much of what was needed for life. Trees were made into houses for shelter; canoes for transportation; burned for cooking and warmth; carved into bowls, plates, tools, halibut hooks, and weapons; and connected people to their ancestors and spirit through masks and other ceremonial carved pieces.

Traditional carving techniques were developed through trial and improvement. They are the simplest way to work, proven over tens of thousands of years to work well. Following the traditional steps shows respect for our ancestors and what they developed over that time.

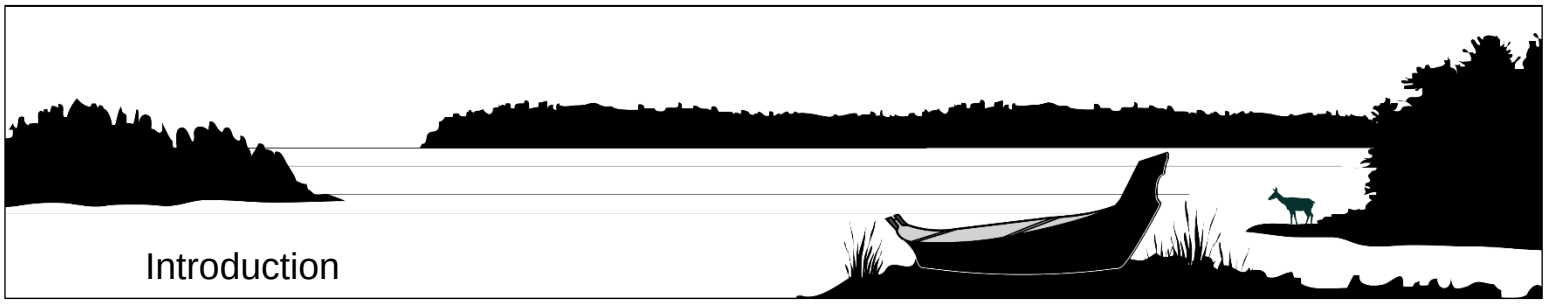
When a carver makes something from wood, he or she is engaging in many kinds of relationships. There is the relationship with the ancestors and the gifts of their knowledge developed over tens of thousands of years. There is the relationship with a mentor, who can demonstrate the traditional ways and guide learning. There is the relationship to self, having a positive attitude, respect, and patience. There is the relationship with the individual tree the wood comes from, and a responsibility to use it well and with respect. There is the relationship with the grain of the wood, and what the wood wants to become.

This introduction to traditional carving and the significance of carving to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of Southeast Alaska will allow students of all ability levels to connect to this important art form and history.

Gunalchéesh (Thank you),

Rain Van Den Berg, Charlie Skultka, Jr., and Chuck Miller

2021



# Introduction

The purpose of this curriculum project is to improve the quality of life, connection to local community, and increase work related skills for teens and young adults with disabilities who live in rural Alaska. It is meant to provide guidance in how traditional values and knowledge can be incorporated into Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for youth who experience disabilities as part of their required transition goals. The skills are meant to create options for youth with disabilities to engage in their communities and culture as they transition to adults. Though each chapter of this project ties to the cultural values and topics of a specific region of Alaska, the skills can be used and adapted more broadly.

In the Dillingham project, we focused on basic skills to engage youth in the subsistence fishery. It was written for youth with IEPs who have a higher level of functional needs. The curriculum wove in Yup'ik values, but the content can be used in many places around Alaska where fishing and life near cold water are part of daily life. In the Kotzebue project, we focused on self-employment and financial literacy skills for those who would want to create work experiences and have more independence managing resources. We also introduced Iñupiaq sewing as a way to explore an important art form and connect to cultural knowledge.

**This chapter of the project is focused on Southeast Alaska Carving.** It is written to be adapted to a variety of learners. All can explore carving and its significance for the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of Southeast Alaska, and then there are two carving projects that can be selected based on the functional abilities of the students. The examples and learning stories reflect life in the Southeast region, but can easily be adapted with parallel examples in other regions of Alaska.

**Alaska Cultural Standards:** Each lesson is tied to the Alaskan Cultural Standards developed by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. A summary document of these standards is included in the appendix.

There are two units in this curriculum: *Introduction to Southeast Alaska Traditional Carving Skills* and *Stewardship and Harvesting from the Land*.

Each lesson has these components:

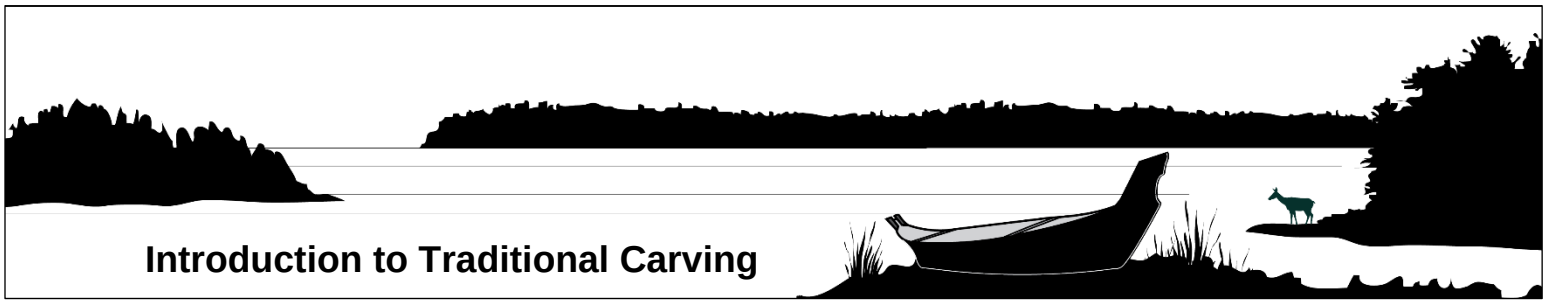
- Overview
- Link to Alaska Cultural Standards
- Link to Southeast Tribal values
- Learning objectives
- Materials including commercial resources (websites, videos, books)

- Vocabulary used in the lesson
- Activities (with adaptation ideas for different abilities)
- Learning stories
- Evaluation
- Resources
- Student handout(s)
- Instructor handout(s)/teaching tools

**Social Skill Development:** There are many opportunities through the lessons to intentionally practice social skills that will support developing skills of empathy, reciprocity, independence, and confidence. Practice how to speak respectfully to an Elder or culture bearer who comes as a guest, and practice helping each other during the activities. These are core skills to being part of a community, and will serve the student well in their adult years. These skills relate to the Alaska Content Standards: Skills for a Healthy Life.

**Southeast Tribal Values:** Each lesson is tied to Southeast Tribal values. Suggestions are made of which values to highlight, along with discussion points. These values are the foundation for learning the skills presented. The values can be discussed as they relate to the learning stories, how guest speakers model the values, or how the values motivate the learning of these skills. Incorporation of this aspect can help make connections to tribal values and traditions, and build more meaningful ties to their culture as the students move to adulthood. The values listed are those used by the school districts and tribal organizations of Southeast Alaska, from "Our Way of Life": Developed, adapted and approved at 2004 Elders forum on Traditional Values. Appendix 2 is the Southeast Tribal Values in Tlingit from http://www.goldbeltheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Tlingit-Values-Translated.pdf. Please see the first lesson of the Stewardship and Harvest from the Land Unit for a detailed lesson on Tribal Values and how values inform a meaningful life.

Note to readers: At the time of publication, "Tlingit" is the spelling being most widely used to refer to one of the groups of indigenous people in Southeast Alaska and the name of their language. In the Tlingit language itself, the correct spelling is "Lingít," where the "L" is referred to by linguists, as a voiceless "L." It is pronounced with the tip of your tongue pushed up behind your top front teeth and blowing air straight out on both sides of your tongue. Both *Tlingit* and *Lingít* mean the same thing.



## Introduction to Traditional Carving

This unit introduces the traditional art of carving and its significance to the peoples of Southeast Alaska.

**Southeast Traditional Carving Unit**

| Lesson | Related Handouts |
|---|---|
| Introduction | |
| Historical Significance of Carving to the Peoples of SE Alaska | Historical Objects Carving Teaching Cards |
| Haida Artist Profile: Charlie Skultka, Jr. | Artist Profile Presentation |
| Tlingit Artist Profile: Kristina Cranston | Artist Profile Presentation |
| Carving Tools and Safety | Carving Tools and Safety Student Handout |
| Carving Materials and Where They Come From | The Trees Provided for Us Student Handout<br>Tree Identification Student Handout |
| Wood Grain and How Trees Grow | Tree Rings Tell a Story Student Handout<br>Wood Grain Student Handout |
| Carving Project: Soap Animal | Soap Animal Project Student Handout |
| Carving Project: Small Canoe Paddle | Canoe Paddle Project Student Handout (with instructional videos) |



# Carving in Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Cultures Part 1

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the different kinds of carving done in the traditional cultures of Southeast Alaska, through stories and video.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A4, A5, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, E1, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe at least three ways carving is used in Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian communities.
- Describe the kinds of wood that are traditionally carved in Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian communities.

## Materials

- Gather examples of traditional carved items to show to the students.

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Carve | To cut away material to create an object or design. |
| Traditional | The holistic, practical, and common knowledge that has been gathered over thousands of years of observation and interaction with the land; it is passed on from generation to generation through practice, oral stories, dance, and art. |
| Wood | The hard material that forms the trunk and branches of a tree. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to start to learn about carving, and what kinds of things that the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of Southeast Alaska carve. To learn about this, we will share ideas, and look at carved objects. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to name at least three things that Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people carve, and what kinds of materials those things are made from."

- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
    - What does it mean if something is carved? *(Material is removed to create a desired shape or object.)*
    - What are traditional Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian things that are carved? What are these things made out of? (*Totem pole, canoe, canoe paddle, wooden spoon, wooden bowl, masks, rattles, all carved from different kinds of wood.*)
    - How is carving done? *(Tools are used to remove pieces of wood to create desired shapes and figures. Carvers can use machines like chain saws to remove large amounts of material, and hand tools to work smaller pieces and shape details.)*
- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
    - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors: *We show respect for things made by our ancestors, and when we make things in traditional ways it shows respect for the knowledge and gifts our ancestors gave to us.*
    - Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Someone learning traditional carving needs to bring a good attitude and respect to the task of learning, and must respect their Elders as they learn.*
    - We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *Carvers need to respect the materials they use and where they come from. They do this by only taking and using what they need, and by caring for the land which provides the materials they use.*

## Learning stories

- Ask the students to share if they have family members that carve, and what they make.
- Watch the video "Carving a Haida Moon" and discuss the process Haida carver Jordan Seward uses as he takes a roughly shaped piece of wood and carves it into a beautiful moon using traditional tools. This shows how carved objects are made; introduces the use of traditional tools; and it shows the process of roughing out the shape before doing the finer more detailed finish work.
- Invite a local indigenous carver to bring in examples of their work and tools to show the students. Have the students prepare questions to ask the carver about how they learned to carve and why working in traditional ways is important to them.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- What are (at least) three kinds of carved objects important to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian communities?
- What kinds of trees are used in carving?

## Additional Resources

- This video shows a Tlingit Canoe being carved in quick image succession: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GkrqKt48Hc (:45)
- Haida Gwaii Traditional Canoe Tour: Shows a traditional Haida canoe being used. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvPV7tZ0qdY (3:03)
- This video shows Haida carver Jordan Seward carving a Haida Moon using traditional hand tools. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNOsTPLCIpI (10:03)



# Carving in Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Cultures Part 2

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the different kinds of carving done by the indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska, and why carving skills were important to the people in the past, through discussion and a learning activity.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A4, A5, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, D4, E1, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Nature and Property

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe how carved objects were used in everyday life in the past: Houses, totem poles, canoes, tools, and masks.
- Describe the purpose and materials used in historic carved objects in an activity.

## Materials

- Teaching Cards: Historical Carved Objects NOTE: These are made to be printed 2-sided, so that the back information matches the picture on front. If you read it in the document, it may look like the description is flipped from the object it describes. This document is not tagged for accessibility as it is meant to be used as a printed teacher resource.
- Gather examples of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian items that have been carved to show to the students.

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Ceremonial Carved Objects | Items used in religious and formal occasions such as rattles, masks, and mask frontlets. |
| Everyday Carved Objects | Items that were carved for everyday use such as bowls, spoons, clubs, halibut hooks, carving tools, and bark beaters. |
| Mask Frontlet | Part of a leader's or shaman's head dress. A carved piece sat at the front, with ermine pelts that hung behind. |
| Mask | Carved covering for the face, used in ceremony and storytelling. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to learn about things that Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples traditionally made from materials provided by the land that were carved. To learn about this, we will share ideas, and look at pictures of some of these amazing things. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to name at least three things that Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people used to make, and explain why they were important for the people."
- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
    - Before there were stores, people had to make everything for themselves from the materials the land provided. Everything we needed was here, but it took hard work to make everything needed for hunting, dancing, eating, and playing. What kinds of things did the people make for themselves for living? *[Clothing, kayaks, hunting/fishing tools, bags, baskets, items used in ceremonies like drums, dancing clothes; houses, totem poles, canoes…]*
    - What are traditional Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian things that are made through carving? What are these things made out of? *(Canoes, bowls, tools like halibut hooks, clubs, bark beaters, totem poles, masks…made from wood and stone.)*
- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
    - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors: *We show respect for things made by our ancestors, and when we make things in traditional ways it shows respect for the knowledge and gifts our ancestors gave to us.*
    - Respect for Nature and Property: *We treasure the objects created by our ancestors as they connect us to the knowledge of our ancestors that lived on this land before us.*
- **Show and talk about the historical object cards with students.** For each card, ask the students questions and try to build on their ideas as you share the information about the objects. Talk about how the items are different or the same as what is used for the same purpose in present day. Use the heritage languages featured on the object cards. Invite a local speaker of the language to demonstrate proper pronunciation.
- **Discuss the significance of red and yellow cedar:** In the traditional Haida view, red and yellow cedar trees are the highest-ranking plants. Their wood went into houses, canoes, crest poles, containers, and implements of all kinds. The bark was woven or twisted into baskets, mats, rope, rain cloaks, hats, and ceremonial rings, and it formed the strong inner core of mountain goat yarn used for weaving robes. After soaking in water, yellow cedar bark could be softened with a ridged bone beater and then shredded or pulled into strips (Alaska Native collections, https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=388). Cedar tree people appear in Haida oral tradition, and cedar bark, so present in daily life, was known as "every woman's elder sister" (Alaska Native Collection, https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=476). Tlingit and Tsimshian peoples traded the Haida for the prized trees, as they don't grow everywhere in Southeast Alaska.

## Learning stories

- Invite a culture-bearer to share about the importance of carving for survival and culture. Suggested topics:
    - Clan houses used carved totems and screens to tell the story of their clan in traditional Southeast communities.
    - The importance of canoes for trade, transportation, and warfare.
    - The importance of totem poles and how they were made.
    - The importance of the cedar tree to the Haida people, and how they traded it with Tlingit and Tsimshian tribes.
    - Everyday items needed for living were made by the people, many of these were carved. Some were very finely crafted and used for special occasions, and others were made quickly for everyday use.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- How were carved objects used in everyday life in the past for Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples? (Houses, totem poles, canoes, tools, and masks).
- Looking at these pictures of carved objects used by the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples in the past, describe the purpose of the object and what it was made from, for at least 4 objects.

## Additional Resources

- **Alaska Native Collection (Smithsonian Project):** There are many more examples of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian carved objects and other traditional objects in this online collection that you can explore and share with your students: Search the Alaska Native collection by region, culture, or object type at: https://alaska.si.edu/search.asp
- **Tlingit Carver Wayne Price on Adzing (2:05):** Watch Wayne Price use an adze and explain why the adze was the main tool for making every day objects the people needed. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iU73EPpDV70
- **Master Tlingit Carver Nathan Jackson on Northwest Coast Art (13:40):** Historic film from 1974 shows the process of carving a Tlingit screen. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfAi5xWZ6Vk

- **The Sheldon Jackson Museum** (Sitka) has excellent teacher support programs that can be used by teachers around Alaska:
    - Loaning and Learning Program: Borrow objects from the museum's collection to use in the classroom. https://education.alaska.gov/apps/hands-on/
    - Museum programs, linked to cultural standards (some available via Zoom): Wonders of Wood (4th Grade & up) The importance of wood in the life of the Tlingit is explored in this program. How wood is used, who uses or works with what part of a tree, ceremonies and respect shown trees are discussed using slides and hands-on materials. Students have a chance to weave using hands-on boards, and experiment with kerfing on heavy cardboard. An activity using observation and inference skills can be used. ACS: Geography A1, B1, E1; History A2, 4, 5, 6, B1b; Cultural E1, 2, 5 https://museums.alaska.gov/sheldon_jackson/teachers.html

*Note: Photos and some text were used for the teaching cards from this collection as allowed for educational purposes.* https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/collections-and-archives-access/rights-and-reproductions

Tlingit

Haida

# War Helmet

xáa s’aaxwú (Tlingit) / gaayhldáa dajangáay (Haida)

Image Credit: Museum of Natural History; Museum ID Number: E168157 and E020883 Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=261 / https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=531

Tlingit

Tsimshian

# Canoe and Paddle

yaakw “canoe” (Tlingit) / duwaay “paddle” (Tsimshian)

Image Credit: National Museum of Natural History; Museum ID Number: E021594 and E000644 Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=533 / https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=499

# Canoe and Paddle

## Ask

- What kind of objects are these?
- What are they used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?
- Why was the material important?

## About this piece

This model of a canoe shows what the canoes looked like. Clan leaders took pride in their large red cedar canoes, which lined the beaches at the old coastal villages. The boats were kept covered with wet cloths to prevent the wood from splitting. The paddle shown is a Tsimshian design.

## Significance

Crews of men paddled canoes at sea or raised sails when the wind was favorable, traveling long distances for trade, warfare, or ceremonies.



# War Helmet

## Ask

- What kind of objects are these?
- What is it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?
- Why was the material important?

## About this piece

Tlingit and Haida warriors wore battle helmets depicting crest animals or ancestors, along with wooden visors, thick leather tunics, and body armor made of wooden rods or slats.

Tlingit weapons included bows and arrows, spears, clubs, and daggers. Haida weapons were a dagger, club, bow, or spear and in later times a musket or rifle.

## Significance

War helmets were worn by warriors to protect their heads in battle. Helmets were carved from hard, dense spruce burls to withstand blows from clubs and even shots fired from Russian muskets.

Tlingit

Haida

# Chest

at.óowu dáakeit (Tlingit) / gud sgúnulaas (Haida)

Image Credit: National Museum of Natural History; Museum ID Number: E060176, E089034; Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=127 https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=630

Tsimshian

# Bentwood Box

gal ink (Gitxsan Tsimshian)

Image Credit: National Museum of the American Indian; Museum ID Number: 066324.000 Link: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=414

# Bentwood Box

## Ask

- What kind of object is this?
- What was it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?
- Why was the material important?

## About this piece

Decorated chests that held blankets, provisions, and ceremonial regalia lined the walls inside traditional Tsimshian houses. Smaller telescoping boxes like this one have lids that fit snugly over an inner lip and were used to protect the most valuable or spiritually powerful treasures.

## Significance

In oral tradition the Leader of Heaven kept the sun in just such a box until Raven stole it and smashed it open at the mouth of the Nass River, bringing daylight to the world. The panels on this Gitxsan treasure box depict Eagle and Beaver crests of the Eagle clan (Laxsgiik).



# Chest

## Ask

- What kind of objects are these?
- What is it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?
- Why was the material important?

## About these pieces

Clan leader's chests held clan regalia and crest objects.

## Significance

The Tlingit chest is decorated with operculum shells on the lid and base. The central carving is a brown bear peering out of the entrance of its cave in spring; the large teeth and nostrils are distinguishing marks of this animal. Carvings of eagles flank the bear on each side, recognizable by their hooked beaks, wings, tails, and curved talons.

The Haida chest belonged to Gida'nsta, leader of Skedans. The front panel shows Raven grasping two human figures dressed in rod armor.

*Historical Carved Items Teaching Cards from the Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills curriculum, 2021, Van Den Berg / Miller / Skultka; University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.*

Haida

Tsimshian

# Masks

Níijaangw (Haida) / ameel (Tsimshian)

Image Credit: National Museum of Natural History; Museum ID Numbers: E074751 and E274242 Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=613 and https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=675

Tlingit

Tsimshian

# Frontlet

l'aýkeit "dance regalia" (Tlingit) /
aamhalaayt "regalia" (Tsimshian)

Image Credit: National Museum of the American Indian (ID 074296.000) and National Museum of Natural History (ID E002662) Links:
https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=170
https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=501

# Frontlet Masks

## Ask

- What kind of mask is this?
- What is it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?

## About this piece

A leader's headdress — with its frontlet, sea lion whiskers and flicker feathers, and long train of ermine pelts — signified his clan, rank, and spiritual powers. Image shows Leader Lelt wearing a frontlet headdress, the photo was taken in 1923.

## Significance

Tlingit: The face appears to be a Hawk crest. The nostrils and mouth may be intended to show that the bird is transforming into a person. The frontlet is inlaid with imported abalone shell and crowned with feathers and sea lion whiskers.

Tsimshian: The crest emblems on this frontlet are Beaver (above) and Eagle (below).



# Masks

## Ask

- What kind of object is this?
- What is it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?

## About these pieces

Haida Mask (Top): Pulling the strings on this Sparrow Hawk mask makes the eyes, beak, and tongue move. Haida dance masks were worn during winter "secret society" ceremonies for the acquisition of supernatural power, and often represented ravens, hawks, puffins, and other birds. The mask is brightened with strips of copper.

Tsimshian Mask: Likely from a Skeena River village and that the black band across the eyes confirmed that it was used for dancing.

## Significance

Masks were among the most important objects representing a leader's halaayt (spirit powers). Each portrayed a different guardian spirit in bird, animal, or human form, and each had a unique name and song.

*Historical Carved Items Teaching Cards from the Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills curriculum, 2021, Van Den Berg / Miller / Skultka; University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.*


# Rattle

shoa shoa (Tsimshian) / sheishóox (Tlingit)

Image Credit: Source: National Museum of Natural History (ID E020583) and National Museum of the American Indian (ID 005573.000) Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=520 / https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=16


# Halibut Hook

Noo (Tsimshian) / ts'úu táaw (Haida) / náxw (Tlingit)

Image Credit: National Museum of Natural History (ID E379805 and E020657) and National Museum of the American Indian (ID 149612.000)
Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=527 https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=703 https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=244

# Halibut Hook

## Ask

- What is this?
- What was it used for?
- How is it used?
- What does it look like it is made out of?

## About these pieces

Halibut hooks were carved with images to attract the large fish to the bait.

## Significance

Halibut were a prized food for the people of Southeast Alaska. The hooks were baited with octopus and weighted down with a stone. A rope made of spruce roots went from the stone to a float on the surface. Halibut areas were owned by families. The fish they pulled up were filleted and dried to preserve them. Halibut was used to trade with other tribes that didn't have access to halibut.



# Rattle

## Ask

- What kind of objects are these?
- What were they used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?

## About these pieces

Tsimshian: This shaman's rattle shows frogs that appear with the rain, springing from the eyes of South Wind, who brings rain and desires the world to be green as in spring. The back of the rattle shows the wind's arms, legs, and body. Frogs were thought to be the shaman's messengers.

Tlingit: Raven is shown with a reclining human figure on his back. The figure receives spiritual power through the tongue of a bird, or from the tongue of a frog that the bird holds in its beak. The face of a hawk is carved on Raven's chest.

## Significance

Rattles were used by shaman, leaders, and dancers during ceremonies.

*Historical Carved Items Teaching Cards from the Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills curriculum, 2021, Van Den Berg / Miller / Skultka; University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.*

Tsimshian

Haida

# Fish Club and Seal Club

hak’alaaxw (Tsimshian) / saj (Haida)

Image Credit: Source: George T. Emmons / Charles F. Newcombe (collectors); National Museum of the American Indian (ID 082608.000 and 019369.000). Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=424 and https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=391

Tsimshian

Haida

Tlingit

# Bowls

ggiehl (Tsimshian) / k’áagaan (Haida) / k’aakanéi (Tlingit)

Image Credit: Sources: Sheldon Jackson, George T. Emmons, Mottrom D. Ball (Collectors); Museums: National Museum of Natural History (ID E316903) and National Museum of the American Indian (ID 004316.000, 012147.000) Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=690; https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=369; https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=379

# Bowls

## Ask

- What kind of objects are these?
- What are they used for?
- What does it look like each bowl is made out of?

## About these pieces

These bowls were all made for feasts for special occasions like potlatches and winter gatherings. You can tell they are not just for every day use as the carving is very fine, and the finish is very smooth.

Bowls held the fruits of the land – crabapples, cranberries, blueberries, and other foods.

## Significance

Haida Bowl: Made from wood, this large feast bowl in the shape of a seal was for serving seal oil to dip dried fish during feasts and winter ceremonies.

Tsimshian Bowl: Made of alder. Carved “wrinkles” at the corners represent folds on the birch-bark baskets that people used in the interior, before they moved to the coast.

Tlingit Bowl: Made from the horn of a Dall sheep was for serving sea mammal or fish oil. Images of owls or hawks appear on the ends.



# Fish Club and Seal Club

## Ask

- What are these objects?
- What are they used for?
- How are these the same or different than fish clubs we use now?

## About this piece

Fish Club (Tsimshian) Hunters used clubs like this to kill halibut and salmon. Hunters killed halibut before they brought them into their canoes, and they clubbed salmon in shallow streams.

Seal Club (Haida) Hunters used heavy hardwood clubs like this one, carved in a sea lion design, to kill seals at their rookeries or to strike them in the water after they had been speared.

## Significance

The figure carved on the Tsimshian fish club is a wolf.

Haida

Tlingit

# Bark Beater

Image Credit: Source: Thomas Crosby and William M. Fitzhugh (collectors); Museum: National Museum of the American Indian (ID 018092.000 and 193502.000) Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=388 and https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=469

Tlingit

Tlingit

Haida

# Carving Tools

t'áa shuxáshaa "straight knife" / x̲út'aa "adze" (Tlingit)

Image Credit: Source: Archer V. Martin, Micajah W. Pope, James G. Swan (Collectors); Museum: National Museum of the American Indian (ID 050420.000 and 200254.000) and National Museum of Natural History (ID E088720) Links: https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=398, https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=471, https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=618

# Carving Tools

## Ask

- What are these?
- What are they used for?
- What does it look like they are made of?

## About this piece

A carver's tool kit would include one or several knives with short, straight metal blades like this one as well as knives with curved blades for shaping hollows and curves. They also used different sizes of adzes, depending on what they were making. Before carvers had access to metal blades, they used polished stone blades.

## Significance

D-shaped hand adzes are among the tools that craftsmen used to shape canoes, house planks, posts, and crest poles. Smooth, evenly patterned adze marks left on finished work are evidence of a master woodworker's hand.



# Bark Beater

## Ask

- What is this?
- What is it used for?
- What does it look like it is made out of?
- What is the same and different about the design of this tool?

## About this piece

The inner bark of red and yellow cedar trees is an important material for traditional art. To soften cedar bark women traditionally soaked it in water and then pounded it with shredding and beating tools like these.

## Significance

In the traditional Haida view, red and yellow cedar trees are the highest-ranking plants. The bark was woven or twisted into baskets, mats, rope, rain cloaks, hats, and ceremonial rings, and it formed the strong inner core of mountain goat yarn used for weaving robes. After soaking in water, yellow cedar bark could be softened with a ridged bone beater and then shredded or pulled into strips.

*Historical Carved Items Teaching Cards from the Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills curriculum, 2021, Van Den Berg / Miller / Skultka; University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.*

Haida

# Haida Village

Image Credits: Haida Village:
Haida House Model: James G. Swan (Collector); National Museum of Natural History (ID Number E089184); https://alaska.si.edu/record.asp?id=635

# Haida

## Ask

- What are all the things in these pictures that were carved? (Totems, clan houses, canoes)
- What kind of wood did the Haida use to make their canoes and totems? (Red cedar)

## About this piece

These photos show how an older Haida village looked, with the clan houses, totems outside the each house to tell the story of each clan, and the clan canoes. These pictures make it easy to see how important carving was to every day life for the Haida.


# Haida Carver Profile: Charlie Skultka, Jr.

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about Haida artist Charlie Skultka, Jr. He is a multi-media artist and carver who enjoys teaching others about culture and traditional ways.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A5, B5, C2, D2, D3, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe how Charlie learned to carve, and why he likes to work in traditional ways.
- Explain the advice Charlie gives people who are learning to carve.

## Materials

- Presentation: *An Interview with Haida Artist Charlie Skultka, Jr.*

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Argillite | A type of shale rock used in carving only by Haida carvers. It is unique to one quarry on Slatechuck Mountain in the upper basin of Slatechuck Creek, near the town of Skidegate on Graham Island just 80 miles south of Ketchikan, Alaska. |
| Clan | A kinship or family group. For Tlingit peoples, within the moiety of Eagle or Raven they are divided into houses and clans based on the matriarchal lineage. For Tsimshian, the culture is matriarchal and divided into four clans (Eagle, Raven, Killer Whale, and Wolf). For the Haida people, there are about 33 clans falling under the Eagle and Raven moieties. |
| Catamaran | A large boat with two hulls in parallel. |
| Multi-Media | Many kinds of materials. Some artists work in one way, like painting. Some like to work with many kinds of materials, and sometimes combine different kinds of art into one art piece. Charlie likes to carve traditionally with wood, but he also enjoys making surfboards and skateboards, stone carvings, welding, metal carvings, and more. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to learn about Charlie Skultka, Jr., who is a Haida artist. We will read through an interview with Charlie about his carving and why he likes to work in traditional ways. Learning about artists and how they work is one way to learn more about the art they make, and can inspire you to try it yourself. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to describe how Charlie learned to carve, and why he likes to work in traditional ways. You will get some advice for people who are learning to carve."

- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
  - How do you think artists get started and figure out what they like to make? *[By seeing Elders or family members making things, and wanting to try to make them too, or seeing a design or something that was made and wanting to learn to make it…]*
  - What are traditional Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian things that are carved? What are these things made out of? (*Totems made from cedar trees, masks carved from wood, canoes carved from trees…*)

- **Values: Connect today's lesson to cultural values:**
  - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors—*Carvers learn to carve from master carvers, usually by watching and spending time learning with respect and patience how things are done.*
  - Respect for Self, Elders and Others—*Patience and mindfulness and respect for the art, the materials, the teachers, are all important when learning to carve.*
  - Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity—*Honoring traditional designs as property of the tribe you belong to ties you to your ancestors and shows respect.*

- **Share the artist interview presentation, and discuss questions on last slide.** Take some time to look at the pictures of the things he has made that are on the slides.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- How did Charlie learn to carve?
- Why does he like to work in traditional ways?
- What advice does Charlie give people who are learning to carve?

## Additional Resources

- This article by the Juneau Empire tells a little more background about Charlie and his philosophy. https://www.juneauempire.com/news/sitkan-charlie-skultka-jr-awarded-for-work-teaching-kids-alaska-native-culture/



# Charlie Skultka Jr.

## HAIDA CARVER AND TEACHER

Photo Credits, L to R: Sitka Maritime Heritage Society; Juneau Empire; Sitka Fine Arts Camp

# Haida Carver Charlie Skultka Jr.

Charlie Skultka Jr. is a Haida carver and teacher that lives in Sitka, Alaska. He carves metal, ivory, argelite (stone) and wood, and also enjoys working with many kinds of materials. He likes to share his knowledge with others.

Artist Charlie Skultka Jr.
Photo credit: Juneau Empire

# How did you learn to carve?

"I was mostly self-taught in the beginning. As a teen, I studied under master carver Reggie Peterson (Tlingit) at the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center. I also learned from my dad, Boyd Didrickson and other uncles."

Raven Pole carved by Charlie's teacher Reggie Peterson. Photo credit: Juneau Empire 2017

# What made you interested in carving?

"The things I needed, I couldn't buy, so I learned to make them myself. I made spoons, paddles, ivory objects, argillite (stone) objects, deer calls, soap berry spoons, and traditional halibut hooks."

An alder spoon carved by Charlie.
Photos by R. Van Den Berg

# When did you start carving and developing your skills as an artist?

"I can't remember not carving or knowing how to make things.

As soon as I could use my hands, I started making things.

I like making useful things, not making things to sell."

Charlie using an adze to make an alder spoon.
Photo by R. Van Den Berg.

# What do you like about carving?

"The satisfaction of making something with my hands. Something I can use. Something that can't be bought. It is very satisfying to take raw materials and turn them into useful objects.

I enjoy passing down knowledge and different techniques to others."

Charlie works with students to design and carve paddles using computer aided tools. Photo credit: kcaw.org

# Why do you like to work in traditional ways?

"I like using traditional methods, because they are the simplest. They have been proven over thousands of years to work very well. Instead of trial by error, it is trial and improvement. Traditional methods just feel natural to me. If you skip steps in the process, you will pay for it later. The quality of the material or what you are making won't be as good if you skip steps our ancestors figured out were the best way to make something."

Cormorant stew spoon by Charlie Skultka, Jr. Photo provided by artist and used with permission.

# Why do you like to work in traditional ways?

"One example is the importance of cooking spruce roots in a crackling fire to get the sap boiling before you try to weave with them. If you skip this step, the roots will be brittle and the weaving won't be strong. The cooking boils the sap, which changes the quality of the roots and makes them more elastic. This knowledge was passed to me by Teri Rofkar, a weaver.

This was learned by trial and improvement by our ancestors."

Collecting spruce roots to make rope.
Photo credit:
https://elfshotgallery.blogspot.com/

# How do you decide what to make?

"A lot of times I look at a piece of raw material, and I imagine what I can make out of it. After I get started, many times it will end up being something else. I may have an idea of what I want to make, but then the material decides what it wants to be.

Charlie was awarded the Margaret Nick Cooke Award for Alaska Native Arts and Languages by Gov. Bill Walker in 2018. Photo credit: turtletrack.org.

I usually carve because there is something specific I need. If I need a spoon, I go and find the right branch to carve a spoon. If I am up a creek, I may need a paddle.

I carve out of necessity."

# How do you pick your designs?

"If I am carving artwork on a piece, I stick to clan property. It is proper to only use the clan designs for the clan you belong to. Let's say you like wolves, but you are not of the wolf clan. It isn't proper to use wolf clan designs without the clan's permission. Designs are clan property.

On projects, people come with an idea and we go from there."

Canoe Project in progress. Photo provided by Charlie Skultka, Jr. and used with permission.

# What advice would you give someone who is starting to learn carving?

"Always have a positive attitude, and remember many people have done this before you. It may or may not be for you. In our culture, it is known that the energy you are putting into what you make can either be positive energy, or negative energy.

Cormorant stew spoon by Charlie Skultka, Jr. (detail). Photo provided by artist and used with permission.

That energy will attract a similar energy around it. If you dump negative energy into a piece, it will have a negative outcome, more than likely. That is a number one thing when doing cultural activities: be respectful to your materials, only take and use what you need, and always have a positive mindset."

# Charlie built catamarans

Charlie worked for 20 years as a master welder and boat building foreman building catamarans for Allen Marine, in Sitka. He believes they are one of his major accomplishments as an artist and a maker. The catamarans he and his team of welders built were used in important rescues in New York city.

In 2009, the catamarans rescued all the people from a plane that crashed in the Hudson river. In 2011, the boats helped rescue people after the attack on the Twin Towers. The boats were very well made, and are still being used today.


Image shows three Allen Marine catamarans rescuing passengers standing on the wings of a plane that crashed in the water (2009). Source: mercurynews.com

# Charlie makes other things

In addition to traditional carving, Charlie likes to make other things as well. He enjoys weaving (here is a pair of leggings he is making). He enjoys building skate boards and surf boards.



Images this page provided by Charlie Skultka, Jr. and used here with permission.

# Your turn

Who in your family can carve?
How did they learn?

Why does Charlie like to work in traditional ways? What do you do to connect to your ancestors and culture?

Think about carvings you have seen. What designs do you like?

(For Alaska Native students)
What clan does your family belong to?
What designs belong to your clan?

Bracelets made at culture camp in a class taught by Charlie Skultka Jr. Photo credit: Juneau Empire.


# Tlingit Carver Profile: Kristina Cranston

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about Tlingit artist Kristina Cranston. She is a multi-media artist and carver who enjoys connecting to her culture through art.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A5, B5, C2, D2, D3, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe how Kristina learned to carve, and why she likes to work in traditional ways.
- Explain the advice Kristina gives people who are learning to carve.

## Materials

- Presentation: *An Interview with Tlingit Artist Kristina Cranston*

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Clan | A kinship or family group. For Tlingit peoples, within the moiety of Eagle or Raven they are divided into houses and clans based on the matriarchal lineage. For Tsimshian, the culture is matriarchal and divided into four clans (Eagle, Raven, Killer Whale, and Wolf). For the Haida people, there are about 33 clans falling under the Eagle and Raven moieties. |
| DNA | Kristina makes a couple of references to DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA is the instruction inside living things that makes the living thing what it is. Within a child, it carries information from their parents on how to look. It tells a tree how to grow and be shaped. It tells a fish to be a salmon or a halibut, based on what the parents were. It makes a person look like their family members. It is rooted deep in who we are, and connects us to our ancestors because we came from them, from parent to child, parent to child, over time. |

Multi-Media Many kinds of materials. Some artists work in one way, like painting. Some like to work with many kinds of materials, and sometimes combine different kinds of art into one art piece. Kristina enjoys carving wood in traditional ways, but she also enjoys painting, doll making, sewing, and ceramics.

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to learn about Kristina Cranston, who is a Tlingit artist. We will read through an interview with Kristina about her carving and why she likes to work in traditional ways. Learning about artists and how they work is one way to learn more about the art they make, and can inspire you to try it yourself. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to describe how Kristina learned to carve, and why she likes to work in traditional ways. You will get some advice for people who are learning to carve."

- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
  - How do you think artists get started and figure out what they like to make? *[By seeing Elders or family members making things, and wanting to try to make them too, or seeing a design or something that was made and wanting to learn to make it…]*
  - What are traditional Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian things that are carved? What are these things made out of? (*Totems made from cedar trees, masks carved from wood, canoes carved from trees, jewelry carved from metal, animals/figures carved from tusk or bone or stone…*)

- **Values: Connect today's lesson to cultural values:**
  - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors—*Carvers learn to carve from master carvers, usually by watching and spending time learning with respect and patience how things are done.*
  - Respect for Self, Elders and Others—*Patience and mindfulness and respect for the art, the materials, the teachers, are all important when learning to carve.*
  - Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity—*Honoring traditional designs as property of the tribe you belong to ties you to your ancestors and shows respect.*

- **Share the artist interview presentation, and discuss questions on last slide.** Take some time to look at the pictures of the things she has made that are on the slides. Kristina primarily focused on Northwest Coast portrait masks. During her seven years carving she made spoons, bentwood boxes, half scale helmet, halibut hooks, and small paddles. She spends her spare time making dolls, hand sewing and watercolor painting. The main materials she worked with were Alder, Yellow cedar, Red cedar, Yew wood, Acrylic paints and mineral pigment. The embellishments she used were copper, human hair or horse hair. Operculum (Baleen, Stainless steel, and beach glass).

- **Note:** Within the cultures of Southeast, carving was traditionally an activity done by males. There is not a taboo against women learning to carve, it is just not usually something women do. Anyone with the willingness and the patience to learn, can learn to carve.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- How did Kristina learn to carve?
- Why does she like to work in traditional ways?
- What advice does Kristina give people who are learning to carve?

## Additional Resources

- This article by the Juneau Empire tells a little more background about Kristina and her art. https://www.juneauempire.com/news/planet-alaska-revitalizing-tlingit-doll-making/




# Kristina Cranston

## TLINGIT CARVER AND ARTIST

# Tlingit Carver and Artist

Kristina Cranston is a carver and multi-media artist that lives in Sitka, Alaska. Her father is Tlingit, and her mother was non-Native so she was adopted by the Shangukeidí, Thunderbird, a clan of the Eagle moiety in Klukwan.

Her passion was carving portrait masks. She also likes to paint, sew, and make dolls.

Artist Kristina Cranston. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# How did you learn to carve?

I have family ties to Southeast Alaska (Haines and Klukwan area), but I hadn't lived in Sitka. I was feeling disconnected from my culture. When I came to Sitka, it felt like my DNA recognized this place. I felt it in my bones.  Sitka was home.

I started spending time at the carving shed and wood studio, at the national park cultural center. It was a space where I met many carvers including master carver Tommy Joseph.

Kristina Cranston. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# How did you learn to carve?

Tommy is a good teacher. He will teach students who show up ready to learn. I showed up every day. I swept wood chips. I watched Tommy and other carvers work. Half of the time I was there I was watching. How the carvers held the tools and how they worked with the wood. I took it very seriously, and felt carving deserved my respect.

I studied with Tommy for 7 years.

Mask by Kristina Cranston. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# How did you learn to carve?

I had an injury early on, and as part of my healing I took a class in ceramics. Working in clay helped me learn to think and create in 3 dimensions, and helped exercise and heal my hand.

Clay is easier to work with than wood, and if you make a mistake, you can just squish it together and start over. Wood is not as forgiving. Once I was healed, I returned to wood carving.

Kristina Cranston carving. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# What made you interested in carving?

The wood studio and the carving shed at the cultural center at that time was a magical place. I felt connected to my culture and the wood.

I love working with wood because it is a natural element. As it dries, it changes how you work with it. You work with a piece of wood, and you listen to what it tells you. Many times, you start out making one thing, but the wood wants to be something else. You have to pay attention to what the wood wants to be.

Kristina carves with carving tools behind her. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# When did you start carving and developing your skills as an artist?

I came to carving later in life, when I was 42. I grew up making things. We didn't have a lot of money, so if we needed something, we had to make it. My mother was very resourceful and taught me that. She and I made dolls for me to play with. After that, I didn't stop making things.

Dolls by Kristina Cranston. Photo from Juneau Empire.

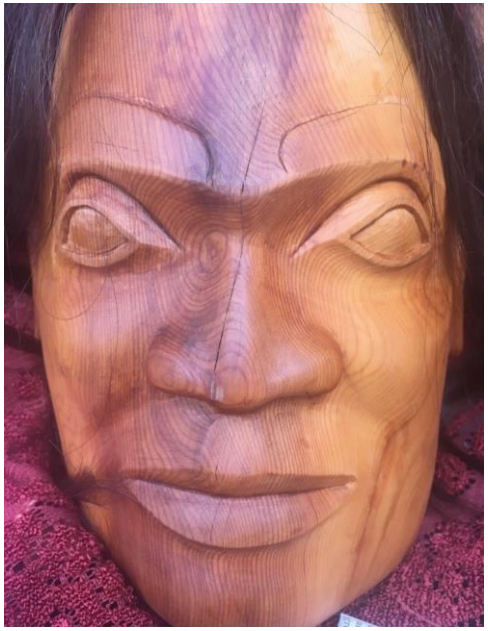
I enjoyed sewing and other hand work, but when I found carving, I fell in love with it.

My passion is the human face, and so what I loved to carve was masks. I love the stories that come from the faces of masks and dolls.

# When did you start carving and developing your skills as an artist?

Sometimes, my inspiration came from my ancestors. I have carved three masks of my great grandmother, Louise Cranston. It is about the face, and the stories they have to tell.

One thing I love about masks and dolls is that they are found in every culture. The materials are different, and the faces and stories are different, but the masks and dolls tell the stories of the people. Making these connected me to my culture, and they are something everyone can relate to.



Great grandmother mask by Kristina Cranston. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# What do you like about carving?

Working with wood requires you to slow down, be patient, and be mindful. You have to pay attention, and be respectful. I tend to be someone who rushes through, and you can't do that when you are carving.

When making masks, I thought about the person who was emerging from the wood. I would get to know them as I carved. It connected me in a real way to my ancestors and their stories.

Kristina painting a mask in her studio. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# What do you like about carving?

Every mask contains many kinds of DNA. Some masks have human hair in them. The carver sweats and sometimes bleeds as they work on them. The oils from a carver's hands get into the wood as they touch and move the piece. The tree's DNA is in the wood, and the DNA of the animals that had used the tree. The DNA of the fish that helped fertilize the tree so it could grow. It is all in the wood and in the mask.

Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# Why do you like to work in traditional ways?

Carving connected me to my Tlingit culture and the land of my ancestors. I was working in a space (the wood studio) where carvers had been working for over 40 years. Carving brought me a stronger connection to being a Tlingit woman.

Working in traditional ways connects me to the land, the trees, my ancestors. It gave me a bigger sense of belonging. It brought more respect, connectedness, and mindfulness.

Mask by Kristina Cranston. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# How do you decide what to make?

Sometimes I would take on a project, like carving a mask for someone else. Then I would work with them to create what they wanted me to make.

Sometimes I would have no idea what I was going to make. I would be inspired by the wood, and the grain in the wood. I would do the rough carving of the mask, and then I could see the story and face that was trying to come out as I carved. The wood sometimes let you know.

Doll using adze and carving a small mask. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# How do you pick your designs?

I liked to work with traditional designs, and use the traditional processes to make the masks. I also got inspiration from the faces of today, and so sometimes the faces of my masks were different than traditional faces. I like to tell the stories of the faces of today, as well as the faces of our ancestors.

Doll with regalia. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# What advice would you give someone who is starting to learn carving?

Be patient with yourself. You get better and better, the more you do it. Your first pieces will be learning pieces. Honor them for what they are. We all have to start somewhere, and wood is not an easy material. Working with wood takes a lot of patience, and being mindful.

Don’t compare yourself to others. It takes the joy out of what you are learning if you compare what you make to what others make. Seek out community spaces you can go to learn from Elders, artists, and others to connect.

Two dolls share a cup of tea. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.

# Making dolls

My great grandmother Minnie Johnson was a seal hunter and doll maker. She hunted the seals, cured the skins, and made beautiful seal skin dolls to sell to help bring in extra money for her family. As I make my dolls, I love connecting to an ancestor in that way.


This doll was made by Minnie Johnson, Kristina Cranston's great-grandmother in Yakutat. Photo from Juneau Empire article, Alaska State Museum archives.

# Your turn

Who in your family can carve? How did they learn?

Why does Kristina like to work in traditional ways? What do you do to connect to your ancestors and culture?

Think about carvings you have seen. What designs do you like?

If Alaska Native, what clan does your family belong to? What designs belong to your clan?

Doll carver takes a break to have a cup of tea. Photo provided by the artist and used with permission.



# Introduction to Carving Tools

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about traditional carving tools and how to use them safely.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A4, A5, B1, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, E1, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Explain three primary tools used for traditional carving.
- Explain what each primary carving tool is used for.
- Explain three safety tips for carving.

## Materials

- *Carving Tools and Using Tools Safely* Student Handout
- Traditional Carving tools (if a local carver can bring them to show, or you can borrow from the Sheldon Jackson Museum through the Loaning and Learning Program.)

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Adze | Tool used for removing larger amounts of material. |
| Bent Knife | Tool used for scooping out material to make a rounded shape. |
| Kevlar glove | Glove made from Kevlar (buy in fishing supply store) that is worn on the non-dominant hand (the hand not holding the tool) to protect the hand that is holding the wood project from nicks and cuts from carving tool. |
| Leather Apron | Protects body from the carving tools. |
| Straight Knife | Tool used for removing fine lines and creating details. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to learn about traditional carving tools and tips for using them safely. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: Explain 4 main tools used for traditional carving and what each tool is used for, and explain and demonstrate three safe tool handling habits. We will learn these things by looking at tools, watching videos of the tools being used, and by reading a student handout."

- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**

  1. What kinds of tools do carvers use to carve? *(Hand tools and power tools.)*
  2. What kinds of tools were used traditionally? (*Hand tools, made from natural materials…)*
  3. What were carving tools made from? *(Wood and stone in the early days, and then later metal blades became available once contact was made with other peoples, and they traded for the new metal).* What are some ways to avoid cutting yourself when working with sharp tools*? (Wear safety glove and apron, pay attention and keep a positive attitude, keep tools sharp so they cut material easily...)*

- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
  1. Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors: *We show respect for things made by our ancestors, and when we make things in traditional ways it shows respect for the knowledge and gifts our ancestors gave to us.*
  2. Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Someone learning traditional carving needs to bring a good attitude and respect to the task of learning, and must respect their Elders as they learn. Tools and learning are to be treated with respect and attention to avoid injury.*
  3. We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *Carvers need to respect the materials they use and where they come from. They do this by only taking and using what they need, and by caring for the land which provides the materials they use.*

- **Primary Traditional Carving Tools:**
  - Look at the student handout, and discuss the common tools. Watch the videos of the tools being used, to get a sense of when each tool would be used.
  - Watch the video and watch a master carver use an adze: **Tlingit Carver Wayne Price on Adzing (2:05):** Watch Wayne Price use an adze and explain why the adze was the main tool for making everyday objects the people needed. Discuss the idea that it takes a lot of practice to get the right rhythm and technique to make a consistent pattern using an adze. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iU73EPpDV70

- **Three Safety Tips for Carving:**
  1. **Wear protective gear:**
     - A leather apron allows a carver to hold and work on smaller projects in their lap, and protects the body in case a tool slips in an unintended way.
     - Kevlar gloves are made to protect fisherman's hands from sharp knives when filleting fish. Wear one on the hand that is holding the project, to protect it from the carving tools.
  2. **Keep tools sharp:** If a blade is dull, a carver has to strain to make the tool cut the wood. That is more dangerous than using a sharp tool which can be controlled more easily. Carvers learn how to sharpen the blades on their tools to keep them ready to use safely. If you can see the knife edge, it is dull.
  3. **Have a positive attitude:** Carving takes practice and carvers learn by trying things and then improving on what they did before. They work to get the cut they are making right the first time. A carver will make more mistakes and is more likely to miss/slip and cut themselves when they are frustrated, tired, and distracted. Keeping a clear mind, being patient, staying focused, and taking breaks when needed are all important ways to be a good carver *and* a safe carver.

## Learning stories

- Invite a local carver to bring their tools to show the students, and demonstrate using the tools in the lesson.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- What are the main kinds of tools used for traditional carving?
- What is each kind of tool used for?
- What are three ways you can carve safely?

## Additional Resources

- This video shows a Tlingit Canoe being carved in quick image succession: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GkrqKt48Hc (:45)
- Haida Gwaii Traditional Canoe Tour: Shows a traditional Haida canoe being used. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvPV7tZ0qdY (3:03)
- Canoe Lesson from Sealaska Heritage Institute: Though it is written for younger students, it has information about the different kinds of trees and what they were used for that could supplement this lesson. Includes Tlingit language resources. Teacher guide: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/CanoeUnit.pdf

  Unit resources: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/canoe_resources.pdf
- **The Sheldon Jackson Museum** (Sitka) has excellent teacher support programs that can be used by teachers around Alaska:
  - Loaning and Learning Program: Borrow objects from the museum's collection to use in the classroom. https://education.alaska.gov/apps/hands-on/

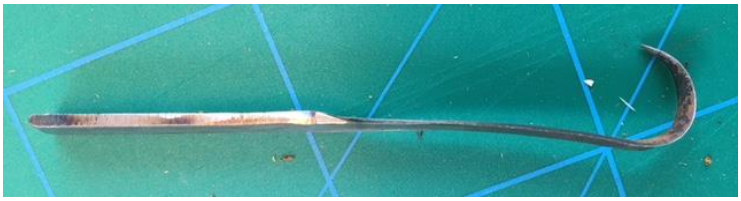
## Carving Tools and Using Tools Safely

Carvers use many kinds of tools. Here is Charlie Skultka's tool kit which he has collected over many years.

There are three main kinds of tools used in traditional carving:
the bent knife, the straight knife, and the adze.

**The Adze** is used to remove larger amounts of material to get the bigger shaping a carver wants before getting into the finer details.

**The Bent Knife** is used to scoop and make rounded shapes. It comes in many sizes, but it has a curved blade.



**The Straight Knife** is used to carve lines and details and remove material from a flat surface. It comes in many sizes, but it has a flat blade.

## Safety Tips for Carving:

1. **Wear protective gear:**

   - **A leather apron** allows a carver to hold and work on smaller projects in their lap. It protects the carver's body in case a tool slips in an unexpected way.

   - **Kevlar gloves** help protect hands from sharp knives. Wear on on the hand that is holding the project, to protect it from the carving tools.

2. **Keep tools sharp:** If a blade is dull, a carver has to strain to make the tool cut the wood. A sharp tool is easier to control. Carvers learn how to sharpen the blades on their tools to keep them ready to use safely. If you can see the knife edge, it is dull.

3. **Have a positive attitude:** Carving takes practice. Carvers learn by trying things and then improving on what they did before. They work to get the cut they are making right the first time. A carver will make more mistakes and is more likely to slip and cut themselves when they are frustrated, tired, and distracted. Keeping a clear mind, being patient, staying focused, and taking breaks when needed are all important ways to be a good carver *and* a safe carver.



# Introduction to Materials and Where They Come From

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the different kinds of trees in Southeast Alaska and how they were used for different things the people needed. Students will learn about the qualities of the different woods that made them suited for the different things that the people needed.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A4, A5, B1, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, D4, E1, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Respect for Nature and Property
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe the main parts of a tree (roots, trunk, bark, leaves, branches)
- Name the most common types of trees used for carved objects by the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples (Alder, Red Cedar, Yellow Cedar, Hemlock, Yew, and Spruce)
- Explain how to identify each of the 6 main trees.
- Describe what each type of tree was used for traditionally, and why it was suited for those purposes.

## Materials

- *The Trees Provided for Us*, *Tree Identification*, and *Raven Makes His Brother* Traditional Tlingit Story student handouts
- Examples of wood from the 6 types of trees (if available).

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Bark | The tough outer layer that covers the tree's trunk and branches. The bark protects the tree. |
| Branch/Bough | The part of the tree that comes off of the trunk. Branches usually hold the leaves or pine needles of the tree. Larger branches are called boughs. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cremated | (From Tlingit Story) When someone has died, part of the funeral ceremony was to build a large stack of logs and burn the body in a big fire until it was ash. After the ceremony, the ashes were gathered in a wooden box that was kept in a gravehouse, which was a small house built up on four high legs (*The Tlingit Indians*, page 277). |
| Leaves | Leaves are usually green and attach to the tree's branches by a stem. The leaves make food from sunlight (called photosynthesis) for the tree. The alder tree loses its leaves in the fall, and regrows them in the spring. Cedar, Hemlock, and Spruce trees have pine needle leaves, and they keep them all year. |
| Roots | The part of the tree that is in the ground. The roots pull water and other nutrients from the ground up to feed the tree, and they help hold the tree in place as it grows. |
| Sap | The liquid that carries water and nutrients to all the parts of the tree. |
| Trunk | The main stem of a tree, usually covered in bark. It is the section that is cut into lumber or used for a totem pole or canoe. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to start to learn about the six main kinds of trees in Southeast Alaska, and what these trees provided for the people. Each tree had qualities that made it good for specific things the people needed. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: Describe the main parts of a tree; name the most common types of trees used for carved objects by the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples; explain how to identify each of the 6 main trees; and describe what each type of tree was used for traditionally, and why it was suited for those purposes. To reach our goal for this lesson, we will talk about the different trees, look at examples (on cards or real life), and use a handout."
- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
    - What kinds of trees do we have in our forest? *(The main types of trees in Southeast are Alder, Spruce, Hemlock, Yew, Red Cedar, and Yellow Cedar. The red cedar and yew trees are more concentrated in the southern section and not found everywhere.)*
    - What are the main parts of a tree? (*Roots, trunk, branches, bark, sap, leaves…)*
    - What part of the tree is used to make lumber, or carve totems or canoes? *(The trunk)*
    - What kind of trees are best for large canoes and totem poles? *(Red cedar)* Why is red cedar good for these things? *(Red cedar naturally resists rot, it grows with a consistent and strong grain, it is less likely to split and crack when carving).*

- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
  - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors: *Our ancestors showed great respect to the trees, and saw them as another kind of tribe or people. Life depended on the trees and all they provided. When we share this respect and attitude toward the trees and land, we continue the tradition of caring for an important resource.*
  - Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Caring for the trees and showing respect for the materials we use when carving is an important way to connect to our ancestors, our Elders, and the materials we work with. This shows up in our attitude and how we learn and how we work with the materials we are carving.*
  - Respect for Nature and Property: *Carvers show respect for the materials they use by only using what they need, not being wasteful, and taking care of the materials and tools they use.*
  - We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *We continue the tradition of our ancestors and Elders by caring for the forests, air, land, and sea, which continue to sustain us.*
- **Discuss the main parts of a tree while looking at real trees or pictures of trees:**
  - **Roots:** Most roots grow underground. The roots pull water and other nutrients (food) from the ground up to feed the tree, and they help hold the tree in place as it grows.
  - **Trunk:** The main support of the tree. It is usually covered in bark. It is the section that is cut into lumber or used for a totem pole or canoe.
  - **Branches:** The parts of the tree that grow from the trunk.
  - **Leaves:** "Leaves are large, small, slender and wide. They can be soft, prickly, hairy, hard, or soft. All leaves have one thing in common - they change sunlight into energy through PHOTOSYNTHESIS. Leaves absorb carbon diocese from the air and with water that comes through the roots of the plant, combines these elements and releases the oxygen into the air. By this exchange, plants maintain a level of oxygen in the air that benefits all living things. Stress to the children that this is how we are connected to Aas Kwaaní (Tlingit for "tree people")- the traditional concept that the trees have spirits. All people need to show reverence and respect for the aas kwaaní. Traditional protocol for harvesting trees for resources is an important reflection of the respect that Alaska Natives show to all living things." (Sealaska Heritage Foundation Alder & Cottonwood Curriculum page 20).
  - **Bark:** The tough outer layer that covers the tree's trunk and branches. The bark protects the tree and acts as the tree's skin.
  - **Sap:** The liquid that carries water and nutrients to all the parts of the tree, like the tree's blood.
- Look at the student handout, *Tree Provided for Us*, and have them learn about the six trees of SE Alaska. If available, bring in example branches of the trees of different local types of trees and let the students apply what they learned to real trees. Only bring samples that were naturally on the ground, and remind students that it would not be respectful to cut off branches for this use but that there are times when branches are taken from living trees with respect. Discuss the qualities of the different types of trees,

and what each type of tree provided for the people. Talk about the qualities of the trees that made them suited for those uses.

- Information about Southeast Alaska's six main trees (From the Canoes curriculum by Sealaska Heritage Institute, used with permission)
    - **Spruce** (Tlingit: Shéiyi): These trees can stand about 70 m tall and 2 m in diameter. The bark is scaly with brown and grayish colors. The leaves are yellowish-green or bluish-green in color with sharp pine needles that are stiff and droop. Brownish-red round pine cones 5-8 cm long hang from the ends of leaves. The pine needles have seeds and have a scaly texture. You will know it's a spruce tree when you grab the leaves and it hurts. Uses: Spruce trees traditionally provide pitch-medicine when mixed with devil's club. It is also used as a fire starter; roots are used for weaving baskets and hats; new-growth of the budding spruce tips can be used for tea or jelly.
    - **Red Cedar** (Tlingit: Laax): Red Cedar trees average about 60 m tall or more. These trees can get fairly large with vertical strands of bark that are grey to reddish brown in color. Strips of bark can tear off with a fibrous look. The flat showering branches have a slightly droopy look that turns upward. The leaves have a glossy overlapping scale texture that is yellowish green and turns brown. Small reddish oval cones with very few scales and about 1 cm. long sprout on the leaves. At the beginning of the sprouting, the cones are green and turn brown with a wood texture and sprout upwards like a flower. Found in the southern part of Southeast Alaska. It was a material that was valued and traded for by tribes living in areas that didn't have red cedar. Uses: Red cedar is traditionally used to weave, carve, and make canoes.
    - **Yellow Cedar** (Tlingit: Xáay): These trees stand about 50 m tall with a dirty white to grayish brown bark having a twisted trunk. The bark has a shredded, peeling look to it. The leaves droop and have a slightly smooth scaly look that are bluish-green and are about 3-6 mm long. The tips are sharp pointed and spread out. The cones are about 4 mm long and start out with a berry look that is bumpy and grow to a brownish cone with scales shaped like a mushroom. Uses: traditionally used for carving, making canoes, and weaving.
    - **Hemlock** (Tlingit: Yán): This tree averages about 60 m tall and has a narrow look to it. The reddish-brown bark has a scaly rough look. The leaves look like spruce tree leaves but are flatter without the sharpness at the tips. The yellow-greenish leaves have needles with a rounded tip that average about 5-20 mm long. The oblong cones are about 2 cm long, are first purplish-green and as they mature, then turn light brown. Uses: Traditional use is mainly to collect herring roe.
    - **Alder (Beach Alder)** (Tlingit: Keishísh): Alder wood trees are about 25m tall and have thin, smooth grey bark with patches of white lichen. Green moss will grow on the bark as well. The leaves are about 5-15 cm. long, broad and elliptic with a sharp tip. The leaves are also green and have a rustic, hairy look underneath the leaf. Brown, long clusters of cones about 2 cm. long will grow on the leaves (even through the winter). Uses: Traditional uses were for making carving tools, for burning to smoke fish, and used by some eagles as nesting trees.

- **Pacific Yew** (Tlingit: S'aks): Also called western yew, is a coniferous tree. Pacific yew tolerates shade, and in undisturbed stands is usually found as an understory tree. They rarely get bigger than 60 cm (24 in) in diameter and 15 m (49 ft) in height. The wood is hard, heavy, and resistant to decay. It is easy to carve when green, but dries to be extremely strong. Found in Haida areas in the southern parts of Southeast Alaska. Uses: Canoe paddles and sheet armor were made from yew. In combat, a yew paddle was much stronger than cedar paddles.

## Learning stories

- Traditional Tlingit Story: *Raven Makes His Brother*. Read the story together and talk about the qualities of the hemlock and evergreen (most likely referring to cedar) trees, and the qualities of alder trees. Share how stories were important ways to pass down information and explain why things are the way they are, as well as why certain customs are done. This story explains the human lifespan and why people were cremated when they died.
- Ask a local carver and culture bearer to share with the students to talk about and show different types of wood, and why they use specific types for specific purposes and the difference between green and cured woods. If possible, go outside and look at the trees as they learn about them.
- To the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people, the trees were very respected. The people relied so much on the trees to survive, and this relationship was a part of everyday life. Examples: Great care was taken to select a tree for special qualities to build a canoe. Before it was harvested, a ceremony was held to honor the tree. A woman who was going to collect bark for weaving referred to the trees as her "sisters." Invite a culture bearer to share a traditional story about the people's relationship to the trees or examples of how the trees were respected and useful.
- "Who Am I?" Game: Write the tree names on cards, and put one on each student's back. Have them figure out which tree they are by asking each other for clues based on what the qualities of the tree's bark and leaves/needles, what it was used for, and what qualities were important about the wood. Once the student guesses which tree they are correctly, they can help others until all students have figured out which tree they are.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- What are the main parts of a tree?
- What are the five main kinds of trees found in Southeast Alaska?
- How can you identify a spruce tree? A red cedar tree? A yellow cedar tree? A hemlock tree? An alder tree?
- What are at least two ways the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people used each of the five trees?

## Additional Resources

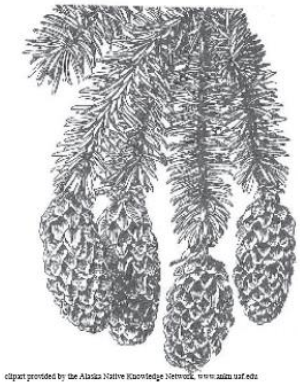
- Canoe curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/CanoeUnit.pdf and teacher resources: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/canoe_resources.pdf
- Alder curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/aldercottonwoodUNIT.pdf
- Hemlock curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/hemlockunit.pdf
- Red and yellow cedar curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/CedarUnit.pdf
- Spruce curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/spruceunit.pdf
- Totem curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/totemunit.pdf
- **The Sheldon Jackson Museum** (Sitka) has excellent teacher support programs that can be used by teachers around Alaska:
    - Loaning and Learning Program: Borrow objects from the museum's collection to use in the classroom. https://education.alaska.gov/apps/hands-on/
    - Museum programs, linked to cultural standards (some available via Zoom): Wonders of Wood (4th Grade & up) The importance of wood in the life of the Tlingit is explored in this program. How wood is used, who uses or works with what part of a tree, ceremonies and respect shown trees are discussed using slides and hands-on materials. Students have a chance to weave using hands-on boards, and experiment with kerfing on heavy cardboard. An activity using observation and inference skills can be used. ACS: Geography A1, B1, E1; History A2, 4, 5, 6, B1b; Cultural E1, 2, 5 https://museums.alaska.gov/sheldon_jackson/teachers.html

## Identify the Tree

You can learn the different kinds of trees by looking at their bark, their leaves, and their cones. Look at these pictures to learn how to identify spruce, hemlock, red cedar, and alder trees.

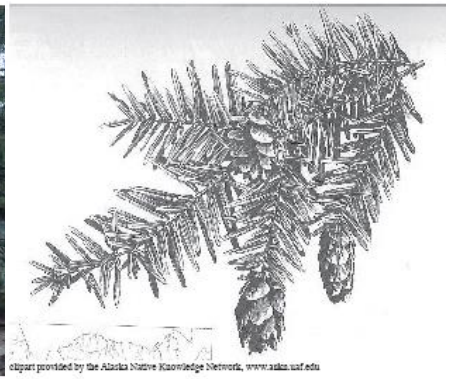
The Spruce Tree






The Hemlock Tree





## The Red Cedar Tree



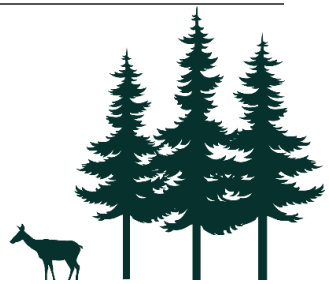

## The Alder Tree



(Images this page from the Sealaska Heritage Institute's Canoe Curriculum, used with permission.)

## The Trees Provided for Us

Without trees, the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples would not have been able to survive. Trees provided the wood for homes, for tools, for canoes, for totems, for masks, and for wood to burn to stay warm. The leaves on trees and other plants help make the air people and animals need to brea Each kind of tree was used for specific things the people needed, due to special qualities it had.



| | Red Cedar (Haida areas) | Yellow Cedar | Alder | Spruce | Hemlock | Pacific Yew (Haida areas) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bark** | Paper like | Similar to red cedar but with more sap | Smooth | Rough | Rough | Reddish/purple that flakes off |
| **Leaves/ Needles** | Flat, soft,flexible | Flat, soft, flexible | Leaves are sticky on back | Hard, sharp, stiff | Little sharp, little stiff | Long flat needles, dark on top, lighter underneath. |
| **Uses** | Bark: weaving<br>Roots: rope and weaving<br>Wood: Carving, totems, large sturdy canoes | Bark: Weaving<br>Boughs: Bedding<br>Wood: Good firewood | Wood: Firewood in smokehouse, tools | Roots: Weaving and rope<br>Wood: small canoe, carvings | Boughs: to gather herring eggs<br>Wood: Firewood<br>Bark: tan deer hide | Wood: Paddles, carving, traditionally used as sheet armor for warriors. |
| **Important Qualities** | Light and easy to carve, abundant (in certain areas), insects don't like it, burns hot and steady. | More difficult wood to carve than red cedar, as it may crack and split. | Easy to carve when first cut, hard and strong after it dries. Natural preservative for foods and smoking fish. | Old growth, clear grain, large size, limbless up to 30' Spruce is heavy but lasts longer | Burns for a long time when used as firewood. | Easy to carve when first cut, then dries hard and strong. Very fine grain. |

## Raven Makes His Brother

*Story told by Charlie Joseph, Sr. (Kaal.atk') and transcribed by Sitka Native Education Program (Ethel Makinen). It is used here with permission.*

**Neech wei yaanagut wei Yeil, yoo awe kaduneek…**

**Raven, walking along the beach…**

After Raven (Yeil) broke daylight on the Night People (Taat Tukuhaani), he continued walking. He came upon a fallen Evergreen tree (Aas) and said to it, "Get up so that you can be my brother (keek')". The evergreen tree got up and started walking with Raven. They did not get very far when Evergreen started to limp. Raven did not want his brother to limp, so he threw him down and told him to be a driftwood (na haa shadi). Raven began to walk again.

He did not walk very far when he came upon a fallen hemlock tree (yan). Raven told him, "Get up and be my brother (keek')". As they started walking, Hemlock began limping just like Evergreen had. Raven threw him down also and told him to be a driftwood (na haa shadi) and walked away from him.

Then Raven came upon a fallen Alder tree (sheix'w) and told him, "Get up and be my brother (keek')". Alder tree got up and started walking with Raven. This time Raven knew he had found his brother. Alder did not limp like Evergreen and Hemlock.

The Lingit people are told that our lives do not last long since we're made from Alder (sheix'w). If we had been made from an Evergreen tree, each of us would have lived two hundred years or more. Also, since we are made from Alder trees, it does not take very much to break us. And when we die, since we were made from an Alder tree, we are cremated and return to the earth, from which we came.



# Wood Grain and How Trees Grow

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about how trees grow, and how that makes wood grain. Wood grain is important to know for carving. It impacts the kind of wood that is selected for a given project, and affects how a carver uses his/her tools when working the wood.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, E1, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe how the wood grain is formed as the tree grows, one ring per year.
- List the layers of a tree trunk (Bark, Phloem, Cambium, Sapwood, Heartwood)
- Describe how a carver picks the right material for a project (learning story of selecting a branch for a spoon or a tree for a canoe)
- Define wood grain and explain why it is important to a carver.
- Describe what it means to carve with the grain, across the grain, and against the grain.

## Materials

- *Tree Rings Tell a Story* and *Wood Grain* student handouts
- Tree slices from trees or branches to show grain (if available).
- Pieces of wood where you can see the grain.

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Bark Layer | Outer layer of a tree protects the layers underneath (like the tree's skin). |
| Cambium Layer | The next layer in from the phloem layer, the cambium layer is what grows each year to make the tree bigger. |
| Heartwood Layer | The dense core of the tree is hard and doesn't have sap running through it. It gives the tree strength (like the tree's spine). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Phloem Layer | The next layer in from the bark, carries food (made from sunlight) from the leaves. |
| Sapwood Layer | These layers carry water and minerals for the tree in sap (like the tree's blood). |
| Wood Grain | The texture of wood, made by the type of wood, and the way the tree grew. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we are going to start to learn about how trees grow, and why that is important for a carver to understand as they pick out the right wood for a project. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: define wood grain and describe how the wood grain is made as a tree grows; list the layers of a tree trunk; describe how a carver picks the right material for a project; explain why wood grain is important to a carver; and describe what it means to carve with the grain, across the grain, and against the grain."

- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
  - Have you ever seen a slice of a tree or branch? What are the rings that you see? *(The tree makes one ring each year as it grows.)*
  - What can you learn about the story of a tree by looking at a slice of it? (*You can tell how old it was, if it was planted somewhere where it had a good amount of water and sun, if it survived a forest fire…)*
  - What is wood grain? *(The grain is the texture of the wood, based on how it is cut and how the rings of the layers are facing.)*
  - Why is wood grain important*? (Working with the grain can make your finished project stronger. Knowing the direction of the grain helps you know how to best use your tools to get the shape you want to carve. Some trees have a very dense wood grain that makes it harder to carve, but may result in a stronger finished object.)*

- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
  - Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors: *Our ancestors showed great respect to the trees, and saw them as another kind of tribe or people. Life depended on the trees and all they provided. When we share this respect and attitude toward the trees and land, we continue the tradition of caring for an important resource. Learning about the trees and their qualities honors the knowledge our ancestors learned through trial and improvement.*
  - Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Caring for the trees and showing respect for the materials we use when carving is an important way to connect to our ancestors, our Elders, and the materials we work with. This shows up in our attitude and how we learn and how we work with the materials we are carving.*
  - Respect for Nature and Property: *Carvers show respect for the materials they use by only using what they need, not being wasteful, and taking care of the materials and tools they use.*

- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *We continue the tradition of our ancestors and Elders by caring for the forests, air, land, and sea, which continue to sustain us*Look at the student handout, *Tree Rings Tell a Story*, and have them learn about the layers and the significance of the rings. Have them count the rings to determine the ages of the two example tree slices (illustration and photo). If available, bring in additional slices of different local types of trees and let the students apply what they learned to real trees. Discuss the qualities of the different types of trees, and how the grain of the wood varies by type.
- Look at the student handout, *Wood Grain*, to expand the idea of the rings to making boards or carving objects from a tree.

## Learning stories

- Ask a local carver and culture bearer to share with the students about the local trees, and why they were important to the people and why the trees are still important now. If possible, go outside and look at the trees as they learn about them.
- (Student handout: Trees Tell a Story) Share the example of Charlie finding a good branch to make a spoon, and have the students think about what kind of tree he would need to look for if making a canoe:
  - The right type of tree (usually cedar)
  - A tree that that is big enough to make a canoe.
  - A tree that has a good belly for the bottom of the canoe, and that has a natural curve of the bow and stern (front and back) of the canoe.
  - Why is it important to take time to find the right tree? Taking this time is one way to show respect to the trees. Picking one that is the right size and shape will also make a stronger, sturdier canoe.
- Go outside and have the students find trees that would be good for different specific projects [Examples: canoe (large cedar tree with a good “belly” for the bottom of the boat and space for the stern), spoons (alder branches that have a “belly” and are the size for a spoon), log cabin (trees that are straight and tall), totem (cedar trees that are wide and straight, with a trunk free of branches]. The goal of this activity is to observe and think about why trees grow different shapes, and picturing the thing you want to make and finding a tree or branch that is that shape.
- (Student handout: Wood Grain) Read through the handout and look at examples of wood and talk about the texture, density, and spacing of the grain. Describe with examples the direction of the grain.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- How does a tree grow bigger?
- What makes a tree grow a thin ring one year, and a wider ring another year?
- What are the layers in a tree's trunk?
- What are some things a carver has to think about when picking out the right tree or branch for a project?
- What is wood grain, and why is it important for a carver?
- What does it mean to work with the grain, against the grain, and across the grain?

## Additional Resources

- **A Question about Wood Grain and Carving** (10:51): This is from a hand carver from the lower 48, not Alaska Native. Shows the difference between working with the grain and against it, with some tips for working with wood. Note that he models wearing a Kevlar glove on the non-dominant hand, and is using a straight blade to carve. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMd7VqGxEnk
- This video shows a Tlingit Canoe being carved in quick image succession: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GkrqKt48Hc (:45)
- Haida Gwaii Traditional Canoe Tour: Shows a traditional Haida canoe being used. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvPV7tZ0qdY (3:03)
- Alder curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/aldercottonwoodUNIT.pdf
- Hemlock curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/hemlockunit.pdf
- Red and yellow cedar curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/CedarUnit.pdf
- Spruce curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/spruceunit.pdf
- Totem curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/totemunit.pdf

## Tree Rings Tell a Story

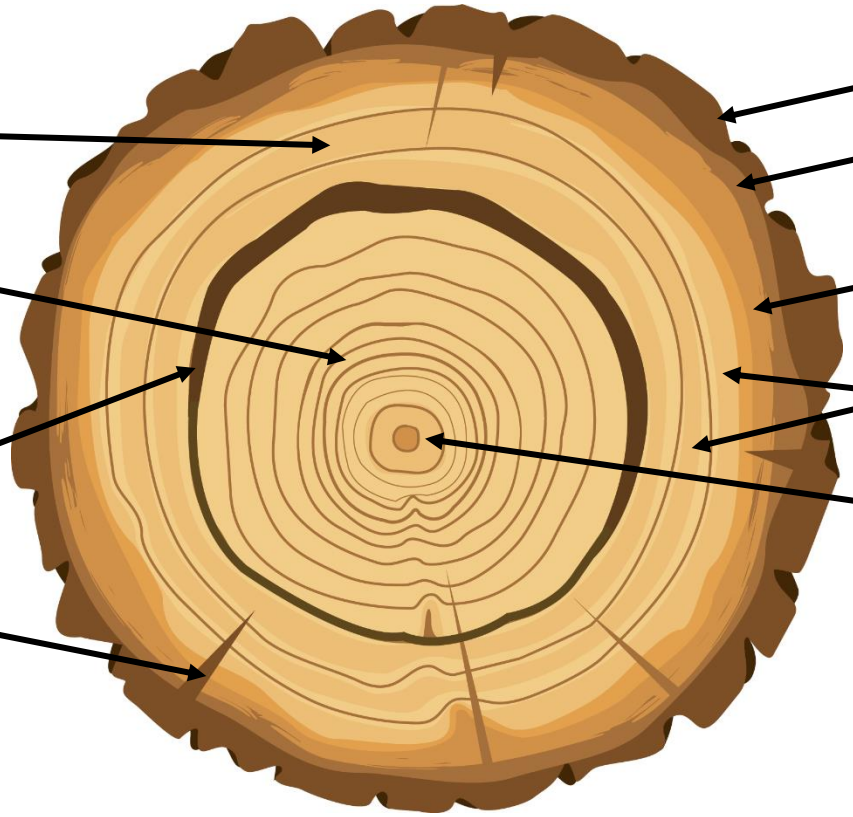
When you can see a slice of a tree, it tells many stories. Each year, the tree grows one ring in the cambium layer. You can count the rings to know how old the tree was. The thickness of the rings tells you if there was enough sun and water for the tree that year.

**Thick rings**—the tree had more sun and water to grow that year.

**Thin rings**—the tree had less sun and water to grow that year.

**Scar**—shows a year there was a forest fire.

**Cracks** form as the slice of the tree dries.



**The Layers of a Tree**

**Bark**—Protects the inside of the tree

**Phloem**—Carries food from the leaves

**Cambium**—Where the tree grows by adding layers

**Sapwood**—Carries minerals and water for the tree in the sap

**Heartwood**—Hard center of tree that supports the tree and gives it strength.

**How old was this tree? _____** **How old was this tree when the fire happened? _____**

**Now look at a picture of a real tree slice.** See the "belly" of the tree? This is where more sun could get to the tree, so that part of the cambium grew more. This is important for picking out the right tree or branch for a project.

**Draw an arrow to the parts of the tree slice below:**

Bark

Phloem

Cambium

Sapwood

Heartwood

## Finding the Right Tree or Branch for Your Project

When Charlie is going to make something, he spends time looking for the right tree or branch. He wants to find a tree or branch that is naturally the shape and size of the thing he is going to make.

When he wanted to carve a spoon, he looked for an alder branch that was a little bigger around than he needed for the spoon. He pictured the shape of the spoon in his mind, and looked at branches until he saw one that could hold the shape of the spoon he wanted to make. He looked for a branch that had a "belly" which would be the natural rounded shape of the spoon.

See how the spoon Charlie wants to make fits in this branch?

This branch is egg shaped when you look at it from the end. You can see the "belly" that will be the natural shape of the spoon.

**Now, Charlie wants to make a canoe. What would he need to look for?**

**Wood Grain—** All of the tree rings make up the "grain" of the wood when it is cut into smaller pieces for a project. These pictures show how the grain looks when a tree is cut different ways.

Different kinds of trees have different kinds of grain. The hardness of the wood also varies between types of trees. Some are soft with a lot of space between rings. Some are hard with a dense texture. Some, like alder and yew, start out soft and easier to carve right when they have been cut down, but harden as they dry.

When logs are cut into short rounds, those cuts go *across* the grain.

When boards are cut from a tree, those slices are going *with* the grain.

When you cut *across* the grain, it is much harder than when you are cutting *with* the grain. Understanding how the grain flows through a piece of wood is part of what carvers learn as they carve.



# Alaska Animal Carving Project (with Soap)

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the art of carving and removing materials to create a desired shape. Patterns and instructions are included to carve an Alaskan animal from a bar of ivory soap using simple tools. This can be done as an introduction to carving before the paddle project, or as a safe alternative to it (as it does not involve sharp tools).

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A5, B1, B3, B5, C2, D3, E1, E2, E3

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Respect for Nature and Property
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe the steps of moving from an idea to a carved animal.
- Demonstrate the act of carving to remove materials to create a desired shape.

## Materials

- *Soap Animal Carving Project* Student handout
- A bar of Ivory soap, a pair of scissors, a butter knife, a pencil, and a large paper clip for each student. Other kinds of clay carving tools may be helpful for more advanced students (as shown in the second resource video) would be easier to use, but if not available, the instructions show use of more commonly available tools. The large paperclip works very well to carve.

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Carve | To remove material in order to create a desired shape. |
| Carving (object) | An artistic creation where the artist or carver creates an object to look like something they picture in his or her mind using tools to carve. |
| Pattern | Usually made of paper, it has the shapes that get marked onto the surface to be carved. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we will explore carving by using simple tools to create an Alaska animal carving out of a bar of soap. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: Describe the steps of moving from an idea for a carving to a carved animal and show how you use tools to carve an animal from soap. To reach our goal for this lesson, we will watch a video and use soap and tools to create an Alaska animal."
- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
    - What does it mean to carve? *(To remove material with tools to create a desired shape or object.)*
    - What are examples of carvings? *(Masks, totem poles, decorative shapes carved onto Bentwood boxes and chests or to decorate canoes or clan houses).*
- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
    - Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Bring a good attitude to the project and learn through watching and doing. If the carving breaks in an undesired way, make the best of it and keep a good attitude as it is all part of learning. These are important ways to connect to this value.*
    - Respect for Nature and Property: *Use the materials with respect, and only use what is needed for the project.*
    - We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *As you carve and think about the animals you are creating, you honor those animals. Reflect on what the animals bring to the people and how important they are.*
- **Watch the video to see the basic steps of creating an animal carving out of soap using simple tools:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y17RweezGi8. Use the student handout with patterns to create a soap animal. *Note: a simpler adaptation of this project is to use the pattern and just carve a relief of the animal or the outline of it with a pencil or toothpick without making it completely 3-D.*

  It is highly recommended that the teacher carves a practice animal before doing this with students. Some important coaching tips:
    - When carving parts that stick off a little (like tails and legs) the soap can easily break. Take your time and just remove a little soap at a time. If it breaks, it can't be put back on.
    - More advanced students can draw their pattern on both sides of the bar, reversing it on the back side. Double-check to make sure it is facing the right way on each side so that when they cut through on one side it will match with what needs to be removed on the other side. This is demonstrated in the second resource video.
    - The paperclip with one opened end works great as a carving tool. The pointy end can make lines and details, and the curved end removes and scoops material with pretty good control. Use it on its side to remove the brand name from the soap.

- When carving animals with legs, make an indentation but don't try to completely separate the two front legs or two back legs, it is too easy for a leg to break. See how in this bear, the legs are grooved, but not carved all the way through.

## Learning stories

- Have the students tell a story about the animal they carved.
- Invite a culture-bearer to share a traditional story featuring the animals in the project.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- What are the steps you used to go from your idea for a carving to making an animal carving?
- What tools did you use to make your carving?

## Additional Resources

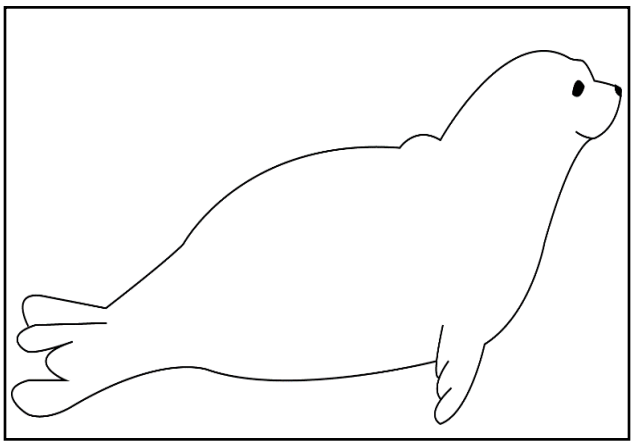
- This video shows the steps in action, using a pencil and paper clip as tools: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y17RweezGi8
- This video shows using clay carving tools, but has a better overall description of what to do, and how to make the carving look more realistic from all angles. A good teacher resource, may be helpful to students depending on the student: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEvYqOeAbog

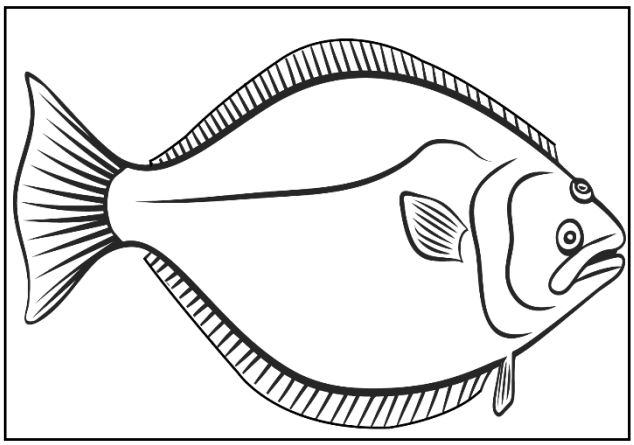
## Soap Animal Carving Project

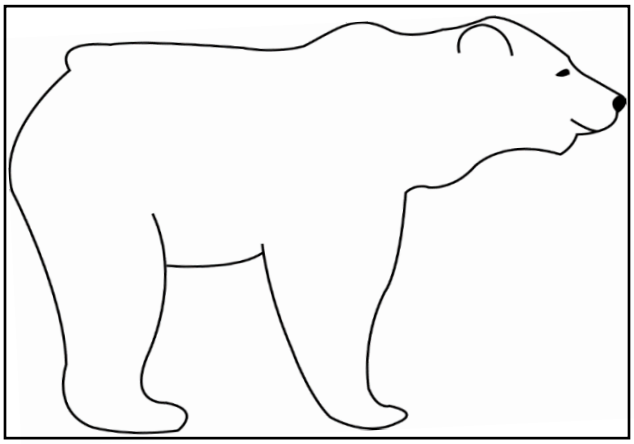
This video shows the steps in action:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y17RweezGi8

1. **Get ready to carve:** You will need a pair of scissors, a pencil, a large paperclip, a butterknife, and a bar of Ivory soap. Open up one end of the paperclip as shown. You can make lines with the pointy end, or carve with the rounded end.

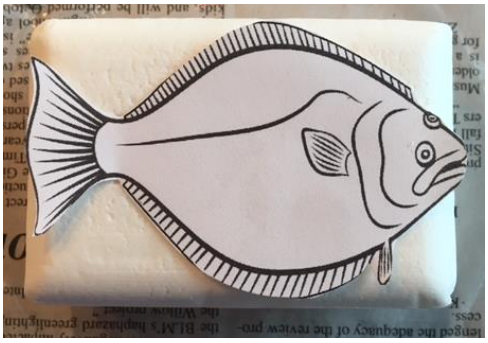
2. **Decide what you want to carve:** Pick a pattern to use from the handout, or draw your own that fits inside the empty box.







3. **Cut out your pattern and place it on a bar of Ivory soap.**



4. **Trace the outline of the pattern with a pencil or the sharp end of your paperclip tool.** If you have details drawn inside the outline that you want to transfer, use the end of a paperclip to poke holes along those lines.

5. **Remove the parts of the soap that are not part of your sculpture.** Be very careful and patient, because if you remove something you don't mean to, you cannot put it back.

    - First, use a knife to remove larger bits, to get the rough shape of the object.

    - Next, use a paperclip to remove the smaller details. Use the rounded end to carefully scoop away the soap. Think about the shape of the animal as you carve.

6. **Round out the sides of the sculpture so it looks less flat,** and more round like the animal you are making. Add details like shaping around the head or tail. Add other details like the eyes and a mouth. Gently remove rough areas so it is smoother. Turn the sculpture and look at it from all angles while you are working.


7. **Finish your carving:** If you want to make it smoother, you can finish by dipping your fingertip in water and gently rubbing the carving anywhere you want it to look smoother and shiny.



# Small Canoe Paddle Carving Project

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the art of carving and removing materials to create a miniature canoe paddle. Student instructions handout and videos with Charlie Skultka, Jr. show the steps of the project. It is highly recommended to have additional help in the classroom with this project, as students will be using sharp knives and may need extra help and encouragement.

## Alaska Cultural Standards

- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, B3, B5, C2, C3, D2, D3, E1, E2, E3, E4

## Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida Values

- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Respect for Nature and Property
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe how the wood grain is running through the cedar stake and how the paddle should be cut to run with the grain.
- Describe the steps of moving from idea to a carved paddle.
- Demonstrate use of tools to create a paddle.
- Demonstrate finishing techniques to finish a paddle.

## Materials

- *Canoe Paddle Carving Project* Student handout
- Monitor to watch instructional videos
- Safety: Heavy apron, Kevlar glove, First aid kit
- Straight knife, sharpened. This can be a small pocket knife.
- Small hand saw
- Cedar stake 3 inches wide, ½ inch thick, cut a little longer than the length of the student's hand. Cedar stakes can be purchased in a bundle, and about 3 paddles can be made from each stake. Look for the ones with the straightest grain to use.
- Pencil, Scissors, and Paper for template
- Sand paper (if desired)
- Acrylic paints or paint pens (if desired)

## Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| Carve | To remove material in order to create a desired shape. |
| Carving (object) | An artistic creation where the artist or carver creates an object to look like something they picture in his or her mind using tools to carve. |
| Hand saw | Small saw used to cut the cedar stake |
| Straight blade | Used to carve the canoe paddle from the cedar. |
| Template | Usually made of paper, it has the shapes that get marked onto the surface to be carved. |
| Thumb chock | Part of the handle where the hand and thumb grips the paddle. |

## Activities and Adaptations

- **Share the goal of today's lesson:** "Today we will explore carving by using a straight blade to carve a canoe paddle from a piece of cedar. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to: describe how the wood grain is running through the cedar stake and how the paddle should be cut to run with the grain; describe the steps of moving from idea to a carved paddle; demonstrate use of tools to create a paddle; and demonstrate finishing techniques to finish a paddle.
- **Begin by finding out what students already know by asking the following questions:**
    - What does it mean to carve? *(To remove material with tools to create a desired shape or object.)*
    - What are examples of carvings? *(Masks, totem poles, decorative shapes carved onto Bentwood boxes and chests or to decorate canoes or clan houses).*
    - What do Haida and Tlingit canoe paddles look like? *(They usually have a pointed blade to scoop the water, and a handle with a good grip for the hand and thumb to hold firmly while paddling. They are often painted or carved with clan designs.)*
- **Connect the Values of today's lesson with the objectives:**
    - Respect for Self, Elders and Others: *Bring a good attitude to the project and learn through watching and doing. If the carving breaks in an undesired way, make the best of it and keep a good attitude as it is all part of learning. These are important ways to connect to this value.*
    - Respect for Nature and Property: *Use the materials with respect, and only use what is needed for the project.*
    - We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea: *As you work with the cedar, appreciate the shape of the wood and the tree that it came from.*

- **Canoe Paddle Carving Project:**
  Begin with a review of safety, and make sure all students have a heavy apron and Kevlar glove on their non-dominant hand that will be holding the cedar. Have a first aid kit ready. Have people with carving experience present to help as needed.
  Depending on the student(s) you can watch the instructional videos before the project, or watch each step at a time. The student handout provides the steps with images from the videos for student reference.

  1. **Getting started. Select a cedar stake or piece of cedar (7:06):** A local carver can prepare these from a piece of cedar, or cedar stakes can be used and pre-cut to make this step easier. https://youtu.be/50kWd5MFZ88
  2. **Make a template (7:29):** Follow the directions Charlie uses to draw the paddle, or for some students you could provide a pattern they could cut out. Search "Haida canoe paddle" images to find examples and inspiration. https://youtu.be/90TkzIjGt3c
  3. **Transfer template onto wood (2:26):** Place the template on the piece of cedar, and trace around it with a pencil so you can clearly see the outline on the wood. https://youtu.be/cU01szckVv0
  4. **Make relief cuts (3:31):** These are cuts that help you remove bigger pieces of wood from the carving. Draw lines on the wood where the relief cuts will go. Use a hand saw to cut on the places you marked. Cut right up to the paddle outline, but not past it. https://youtu.be/-Gkl7nXZIXw
  5. **Rough shaping (15:38):** Carve with and against grain as you work your way around the paddle to remove wood. This is where students will need the most advice and encouragement. It can be very tricky not to split the handle or thumb chuck, so be ready to glue this back together and clamp or tape in place until it dries. If it splits cleanly, it should glue together. https://youtu.be/zRf7KGGngNg
  6. **Fine shaping (10:31):** Draw a center line on edge of wood to use as a guide. Carve to that line and taper the edge all the way around the blade and handle. Carefully notch the thumb chuck area of the handle with the hand saw. This is a tricky step where breakage can occur. https://youtu.be/vWG6D2JliVU
  7. **Finishing and Painting (3:47)** (Optional): Charlie describes how the paddle can be decorated, but doesn't demonstrate the final decorations or painting. Depending on the students and the supplies available, you can either leave the paddles plain, or decorate them. If they will be painted, it is advised to do a clear coat of acrylic or other finish so that the paint can be applied without risk of it bleeding into the wood grain. https://youtu.be/hGDtPt2HdDE

## Learning stories

- Invite a culture bearer to share a story about canoes and how they were important to the people in your community.
- Schedule a session with the Sheldon Jackson Museum over Zoom (if not in Sitka) to see examples of carved canoe paddles.

## Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask the students these questions:

- Tell me about the wood grain in your cedar stake, and what it means for the paddle to run with the grain?
- What steps did you follow to go from an idea about making a paddle, to a carved paddle?
- What tools did you use to make your paddle? How did you use them?
- What did you do to finish your paddle?

## Additional Resources

- Canoe curriculum from Sealaska Heritage Institute: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/CanoeUnit.pdf and teacher resources: https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/canoe_resources.pdf
- **The Sheldon Jackson Museum** (Sitka) has excellent teacher support programs that can be used by teachers around Alaska:
  - Loaning and Learning Program: Borrow objects from the museum's collection to use in the classroom. https://education.alaska.gov/apps/hands-on/
  - Museum programs, linked to cultural standards (some available via Zoom): https://museums.alaska.gov/sheldon_jackson/teachers.html

## Canoe Paddle Carving Project

Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples all made paddles to power the canoes they used for transportation and hunting. Paddles were made from whatever was available, depending on where the people lived. Red cedar and yew make the strongest paddles, from trees in the southern part of Southeast Alaska. Yellow cedar could also be used, but it is more likely to crack than red cedar. Spruce was also used. This project makes a small paddle using cedar, and applies the ideas of carving and what it means to work with (and against) the grain.


Hand carved eagle paddle by Tlingit artist Lance Cesar. Made in Juneau, AK. (MtJuneauTradingPost.com)

Hoonah Tlingit paddling traditional canoe (Photo by Ian Johnson)
Copyrighted image used with permission (ianajohnson.com)

## Make a Small Canoe Paddle from a Cedar Stake

with Haida Carver Charlie Skultka, Jr.

**Needed supplies:**

- Straight knife, sharpened. This can be a small pocketknife.
- Small hand saw
- Cedar stake 3 inches wide, ½ inch thick, cut a little longer than the length of your hand
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Paper for template
- Sand paper (if desired)
- Acrylic paints or paint pens (if desired)

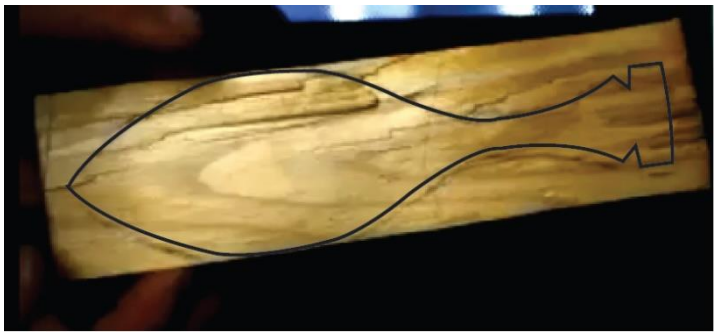
**Steps:**

1) **Select a cedar stake or piece of cedar:** a little longer than the length of your hand, three fingers wide, ½ inch thick. The grain runs length of paddle, and will be centered on the grain. In the video, Charlie shows how he cut a piece from a quarter of a log. You may use a cedar stake.

2) **Make a template:** Draw a paddle shape that will fit on your piece of cedar. You can search online for "Haida Canoe paddle" images for ideas on the shape to use. Draw one half, then fold it and cut it out.

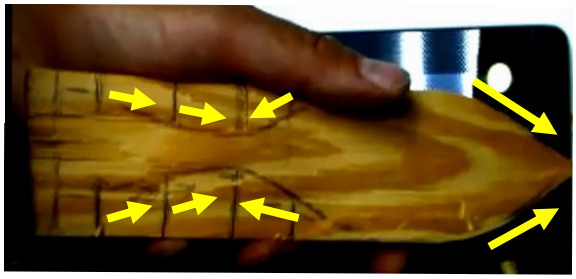
All images in this section are from the instructional videos made for use in this curriculum.

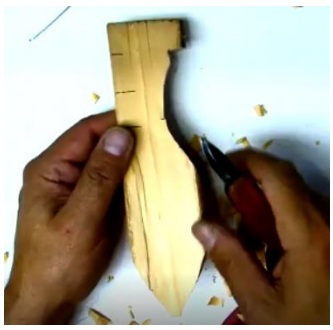
3) **Transfer template onto wood:** Place the template on the piece of cedar, and trace around it with a pencil so you can clearly see the outline on the wood.



4) **Relief Cuts:** These are cuts that help you remove bigger pieces of wood from the carving. Draw lines on the wood where the relief cuts will go. Use a hand saw to cut on the places you marked. Cut right up to the paddle outline, but not past it.

5) **Rough shaping:** Carve with and against grain as you work your way around the paddle to remove wood. Work carefully, so that you don't split off parts on accident. It is easy for your paddle to split, even with a positive attitude and careful moves. If it breaks, depending on where it split, you can glue it and clamp it together until it is dry. Otherwise, you may need to start over. Know that this is part of learning to carve.





6) **Fine shaping:** Draw a center line on edge of wood to use as a guide.

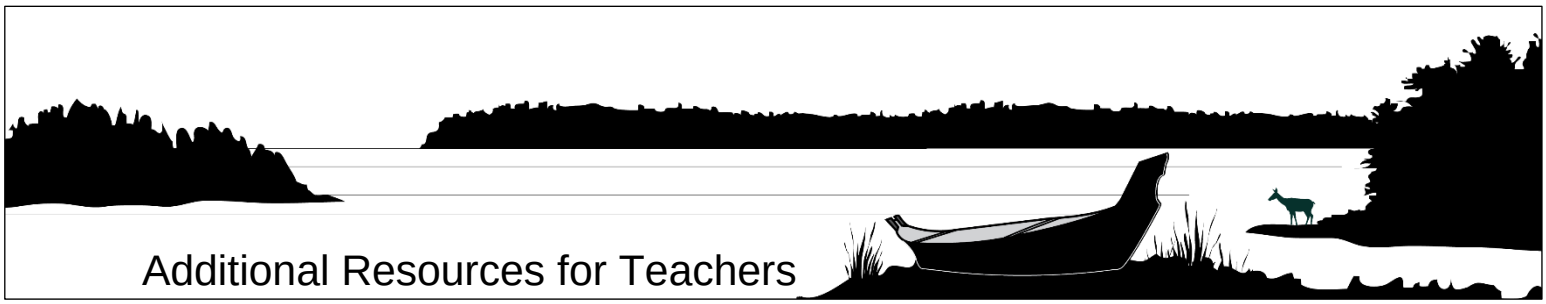


Carve to that line and taper the edge all the way around the blade and handle. Carefully notch the thumb chuck area of the handle with the hand saw.



7) **Finish:** Use sand paper or the side of the blade to smooth the carving.

8) **Painting** (Optional): Seal with a clear coat (like an acrylic spray), and then paint with acrylic paint pens or paint with beveled paint brush. Practice on a scrap piece of wood before painting your paddle. If your painting doesn't look like you want, you can let it dry and then lightly sand it off to start over.



# Additional Resources for Teachers

These were resources we found as we developed the curriculum that may be helpful. These links were accessed 10-2021.

**Tips for Non-Alaska Native Teachers who want to invite an Elder in to speak:**
This is part of a unit on weather. See page 6:
http://ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/Units/PredictingWeather/PredictingWeather.pdf

**Alaska Native Knowledge Network:** More curriculum and other resources related to Alaska Native ways of knowing. http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/

***Alaska Native Artist Resource Workbook*** by the Alaska State Council for the Arts. A very detailed guide for Alaskan Native artists to develop their art as a business. Access it online: https://arts.alaska.gov/Media/ArtsCouncil/pdf/AK_Native_Artist_Resource_Workbook.pdf

**Alaska Native Arctic Studies Collections (Smithsonian Project):** Examples of Alaska Native traditional objects and art in this online collection that you can explore and share with your students: Search the Alaska Native collection by region, culture, or object type at:
https://alaska.si.edu/search.asp

**Smithsonian Arctic Studies Channel: Features videos of many Alaska Native artists and Elders teaching about traditional art forms:** https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNpC1tX-kqJaSU7ZSxUWAfA/videos
Part of the collection includes a series on carving a cedar whistle, with three carvers of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian heritage.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ7volc4T2w&list=PL3wBN-dh9DMSV5iUUVxUPZlXtiMEZjlBA

| Cultural Standard A<br>Culturally responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work. | Cultural Standard B<br>Culturally responsive educators use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the students. | Cultural Standard C<br>Culturally-responsive educators participate in community events and activities in appropriate and supportive ways. | Cultural Standard D<br>Culturally responsive educators work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school. | Cultural Standard E<br>Culturally responsive educators recognize the full educational potential of each student and provide the challenges necessary for them to achieve that potential. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.1**: Recognize the validity and integrity of the traditional knowledge systems<br><br>**A.2**: Utilize the Elders' expertise in multiple ways in their teaching<br><br>**A.3**: Provide opportunities and time for students to learn in settings where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant<br><br>**A.4**: Provide opportunities for students to learn through observation and hands-on demonstration of cultural knowledge and skills<br><br>**A.5**: Adhere to the cultural and intellectual property rights that pertain to all aspects of the local knowledge they are addressing<br><br>**A.6**: Continually involve themselves in learning about the local culture | **B.1**: Regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment<br><br>**B.2**: Utilize traditional settings such as camps as learning environments for transmitting both cultural and academic knowledge and skills<br><br>**B.3**: Provide integrated learning activities organized around themes of local significance and across subject areas<br><br>**B.4**: Are knowledgeable in all the areas of local history and cultural tradition that may have bearing on their work as a teacher, including the appropriate times for certain knowledge to be taught<br><br>**B.5**: Seek to ground all teaching in a constructive process built on a local cultural foundation | **C.1**: Become active members of the community in which they teach and make positive and culturally-appropriate contributions to the well-being of that community<br><br>**C.2**: Exercise professional responsibilities in the context of local cultural traditions and expectations<br><br>**C.3**: Maintain a close working relationship with and make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of their co-workers from the local community | **D.1**: Promote extensive community and parental interaction and involvement in their children's education<br><br>**D.2**: Involve Elders, parents, and local leaders in all aspects of instructional planning and implementation<br><br>**D.3**: Seek to continually learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and communities<br><br>**D.4**: Seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching | **E.1**: Recognize cultural differences as positive attributes around which to build appropriate educational experiences<br><br>**E.2**: Provide learning opportunities that help students recognize the integrity of the knowledge they bring with them and use that knowledge as a springboard to new understandings<br><br>**E.3**: Reinforce the student's sense of cultural identity and place in the world<br><br>**E.4**: Acquaint students with the world beyond their home community in ways that expand their horizons while strengthening their own identities<br><br>**E.5**: Recognize the need for all people to understand the importance of learning about other cultures and appreciating what each has to offer |

# Southeast Alaska Traditional Tribal Values

## "Our Way of Life"

Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of Our Ancestors

Respect for Self, Elders and Others

Respect for Nature and Property

Patience

Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity

Be Strong in Mind, Body and Spirit

Humor

Hold Each Other Up

Listen Well and with Respect

Speak with Care

We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea

Reverence for Our Creator

Live in Peace and Harmony

Be Strong and Have Courage

Developed, adapted and approved at 2004 Elders forum on Traditional Values
From http://ccthita.org/about/values/index.html

# SOUTHEAST TRADITIONAL TRIBAL VALUES IN TLINGIT

## Haa Kusteeyí *"Our Way of Life"*

**Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors**

Kaa wudujeeyí ka kaa x'éix dus.aaxí ch'áagu haa shagóonx'ich kusteeyí

*(Discipline and obedience to the traditions of our ancestors)*

**Respect for Self, Elders and Others**

Sh yáa ayakdané ka ldakát káa yáa at uwanéi

*(Self-respect and respect for everyone)*

**Respect for Nature and Property**

Ldakát át a yáa ayaduwanéi

*(All things are respected)*

**Patience**

Tlél kútx i yáa wdawóodlik

*(Have patience [don't be in a hurry])*

**Pride in Family, Clan and Traditions is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity**

Toowú klagé haa t'aakx'í, ka haa naax sateeyí, ka haa kusteeyí

*(Pride in our family and our clan and our traditions)*

Wooch eenx haa isteeyí, wooch dusxáni, wooch éet wutudasheeyí

*(When we're together, we love each other, we help each other)*

**Be Strong in Mind, Body and Spirit**

Yee toowú klatseen

*(Be strong)*

**Humor**

Lishoogú át kanaylaneek

*(Tell funny stories)*

**Hold Each Other Up**

Dikéex' wooch gayilsháat

*(Hold each other up)*

**Listen Well and with Respect**

K'idéin at sa.áx ka a yáa awuné wáa sá i daa yadukaayí

*(Listen well and respect what people say to you)*

**Speak with Care**

Tula.aan tin yóo x'adutaan

*(People speak with care)*

**We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea**

A káx yan aydél wé tl'átgi

*(Take care of the land)*

**Reverence for Our Creator**

Yáa at wuné haa Aan Káawu jeeyís

*(Reverence for our creator)*

**Live in Peace and Harmony**

Wóoch een kayéix yáx nagatee

*(Let there be peace and harmony among each other)*

**Be Strong and Have Courage**

Yee gu.aa yáx x'wán

*(Have courage)*

These traditional values were translated into Tlingit by Elders/fluent speakers of Tlingit through Goldbelt Heritage Foundation under a project funded by the Administration for Native Americans. Traditional values in English are from the original document.

# Art Unit Structure

This unit can be adapted for other art forms and regions, by following the basic structure of the lessons. Introducing traditional art forms provides a way for students to connect to their culture and community for a more meaningful life. Here is a simple structure to consider when introducing a traditional art form, with the example of beading.

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Introduce the art form and show examples.** | Describe the types of bead work that are important in _____ communities.<br>Describe the kinds of materials that are traditionally beaded in _____ communities |
| **2. Introduce the history and significance of the art form for the indigenous people.** | Describe how beaded objects were used in everyday life in the past.<br>Describe how beaded objects are used in everyday life now. |
| **3. Featured Artist** | Learn about an artist who is recognized for their work in this art form, and what motivated them to learn. Invite an artist who works in the art form to visit with the class. |
| **4. Featured Artist** | Learn about an artist who is recognized for their work in this art form, and what motivated them to learn. Invite an artist who works in the art form to visit with the class. |
| **5. Introduce the basic tools** | Show the basic tools used in the art form. Play a vocabulary game to learn about the tools. Bring in the tools if possible so students can get a feel for them directly. Discuss modern tools vs. traditional tools used. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **6. Introduce the materials** | Show the basic materials used in the art form. Play a vocabulary game to learn about the materials. Discuss why these materials are used. Bring in the tools if possible so students can get a feel for them directly. Discuss modern materials vs. traditional materials used. |
| **7. Basic skills projects** | Use videos to introduce the basic skills. Beading has elements of design, as well as skills to attach the beads. Pick projects that promote a feeling of success and that are not frustrating. |
| **8. More advanced skill projects** | As appropriate and safe, students can try a project using the traditional materials and tools. |
| **9. Next steps for interested students** | Support connecting a student with a mentor who can guide them to learn the art form with additional practice projects and skill building sessions. |