

## Chipped One — Ilaiyarngasqaq

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### YAAMAQ ILAIYARNGAUQ. – THE ROCK IS CHIPPED.

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Photo: Chipped stone points from the Kashevaroff site, courtesy of the Kodiak Island Borough.

Flint knapping, or stone chipping, is the process of transforming a piece of stone into a useful tool. This technology relies on fine-grained and glassy stone, material a knapper can break in desired ways. Knappers typically use a hard rock to knock flakes off a nodule and create a roughly shape tool. Then, they refine and sharpen the tool with a smaller stone or a flaker, a piece of bone or antler used to remove small flakes. Obsidian, basalt, and chert can be chipped into tools, but materials like granite and slate don't work for this purpose.

Red chert, a stone that outcrops along the western coast of the archipelago, was a favored material for making projectile points, knives, scrapers, drills, and incising tools. This distinctive, blood-red material is part of the Uyak Formation, a band of Cretaceous-aged rocks that stretches about 600 km from Cook Inlet to the Shumigan Islands. The stone formed from the silica-rich skeletons or radiolaria, billions of tiny zooplankton that thrived in a rich marine environment. As these creatures died, their skeletons sunk to the ocean floor where they were buried. Over time, heat and pressure transformed this sediment into chert.

Chert can be harvested at tidewater and on mountain slopes along the coast of Shelikof Strait. Although the most distinctive variety is red, Kodiak outcrops also contain green and grey chert. This material can be tricky to work. Abandoned tools illustrate that red chert fractures in blocks and has quartz veins that make chipping unpredictable. Despite these flaws, Alutiiq ancestors harvested it in great quantities, traded it across the archipelago, and transformed it into a stunning array of hunting and butchering tools.