

## Measure — Uspelluku

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### NUQAQ USP'RKUTA'AQA. – I AM GOING TO MEASURE THE ATLATL.

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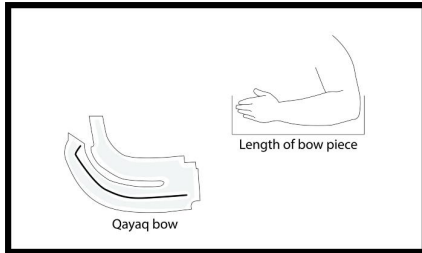


Image: Example of a measurement used in building a traditional Chugach kayak. Courtesy of Bobby Stamp.

All measuring systems rely on uniformity, a standard way to record things like length, weight, and volume. Today we use rulers to measure inches and feet, or a scale to record kilos. Before the adoption of contemporary measuring systems, like the metric system, people relied on relative measurements. Comparisons are the foundation for these non-numeric ways of gauging size. For example, you might compare a fish to the length of a man's arm. Other relative measurements are based on proportions, like knowing the length of Spiridon Bay is twice as long as the length of Larsen Bay.

In classical Alutiiq society, measurements were essential for many daily tasks like making clothing and tools and building houses and boats. Alutiiq Elder Bobby Stamp shared techniques for kayak building with relative measurements. His system is based on finger, hand, and arm lengths, which can be combined in many ways. For example, the length of a kayak stern piece is

the distance of the lower arm, from the elbow to the tip of the fingers, while the height of this part is the width of an outstretched hand. In contrast, gunnel length is a combination of measurements—three out-stretched arms from fingertip to fingertip, plus one lower arm, plus one outstretched hand. This elegant way of measuring boat parts ensured that every kayak fit the unique proportions of its maker. A tall person's boat was proportionally larger than that of a shorter paddler.