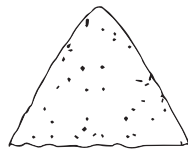


Slate Grinding Activity

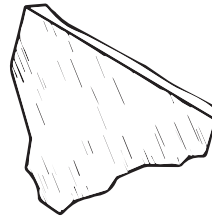
Supplies



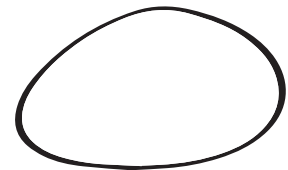
Water



Sand



Slate



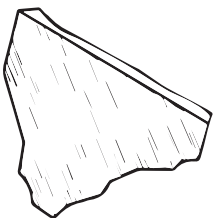
Whetstone
(a stone used for grinding)

Slate is a plentiful material on Kodiak and it can be shaped into a variety of tools. In addition to the ulus and double-edged knives used for butchering, Alutiiq people ground lances, bayonets, and arrows for hunting, and made beads and labrets from slate.

The best slate for tools is hard, black material. Softer, lighter colored slate breaks easily.

Step 1

Select a piece of slate.

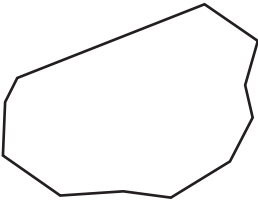


Kodiak beaches have many different types—but not all slate is suitable for tool making. The ideal material is hard with few visible layers. A good way to test slate is to break it into pieces and observe how they fall apart. Choose a thin sturdy fragment.

Step 2

Chip the slate into the shape of an ulu.

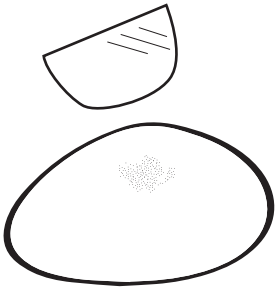
Find a hard beach cobble (a water-rounded rock) to chip your thin leaf of slate into a rough tool form—working along the edges. Another way of creating a rough tool, particularly if you wish to make a lance, is to saw the slate with a hard, sharp rock. A flake knocked off of a beach cobble works well as a saw. With the flake, wear grooves into the slate from both sides then gently snap the pieces apart along the groove.



Step 3

Use a flat beach rock to smooth the surfaces of your ulu.

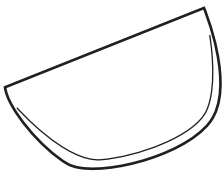
Use a hard, flat beach rock to grind a smooth surface on both sides of your tool. Keep the tool flat as you grind. Water and a small amount of beach sand make a good lubricant and will speed up the grinding process. Keep grinding until you have a smooth flat surface. Try to remove any nicks or indentations in the slate.



Step 4

Sharpen the edge.

Sharpen the edges of your ulu by grinding at an angle. Turn the tool over to grind both sides of each edge. This will create a bevel (a v-shaped edge) that can be sharpened and resharpened.



Note: To see a video demonstration of this activity visit the craft page of the museum's web site at alutiiqmuseum.org.



Slate ulu with a wood and spruce root handle, Koniag, Inc. collection from Karluk One.