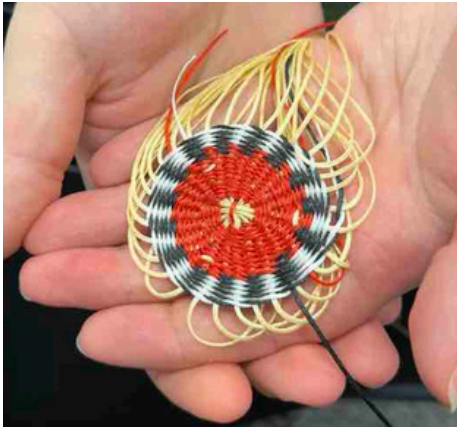


# Alutiiq Woven Circle



## INSTRUCTIONS BY MARIAH STAPLETON

This activity provides the steps to create an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq style woven circle. It is designed for beginning weavers.

## MATERIALS

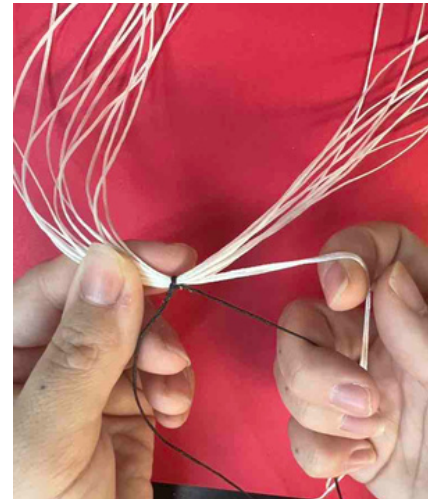
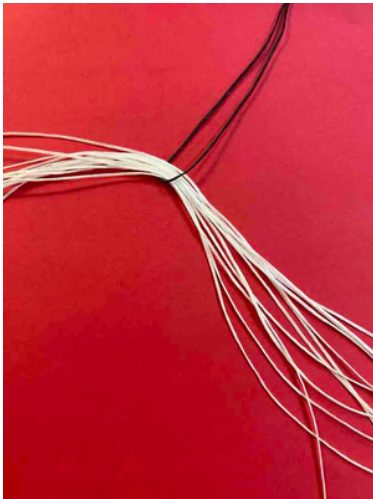
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- Waxed thread, two different colors are recommended

## STEP ONE: PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

- Cut 12 one-foot strands of thread in your base color. These will be your spokes.
- Cut a ten-foot length of thread (about two arm lengths) in a second color. This will be your weaver.

## STEP TWO: PREPARE TO WEAVE

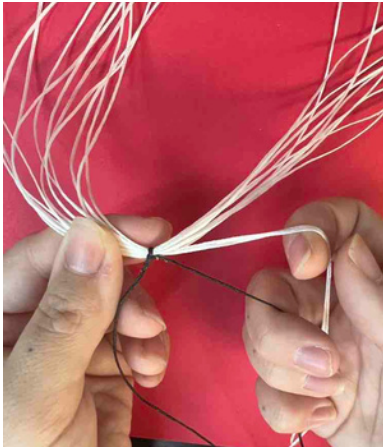
- Lay your spokes on the table in a bundle with their ends neatly aligned.
- Fold a weaver in half to create a loop. Put the loop over the center of the bundle of weavers and tie two strong knots to keep it in place.
- Hold the middle of the spokes and weavers in your hands as shown below



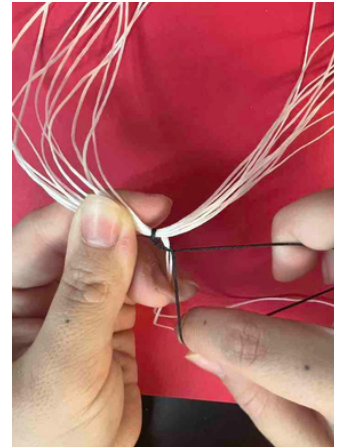
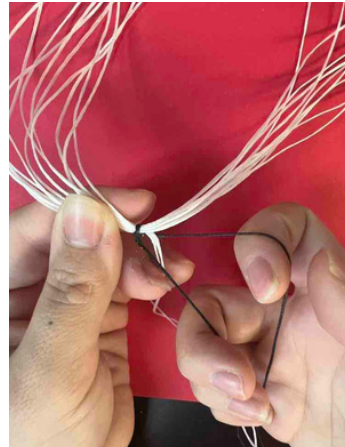
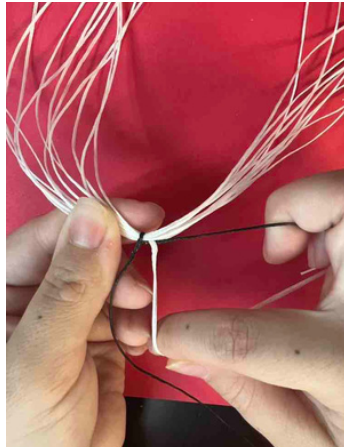
Note: Make sure the weavers are facing you as you start (picture on the right). These photos are looking down at your hands.

### STEP THREE: START WEAVING

- 1. Take two of your spokes and pass them over the right weaver, while holding the bundle your left hand.
- 2. Reach under, grab the left weaver, and twist from front to back. You will always weave towards yourself.

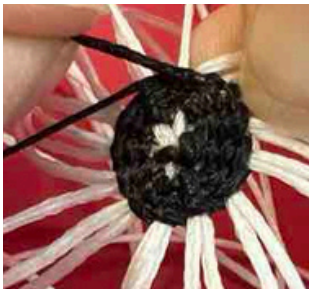


Spokes over weaver

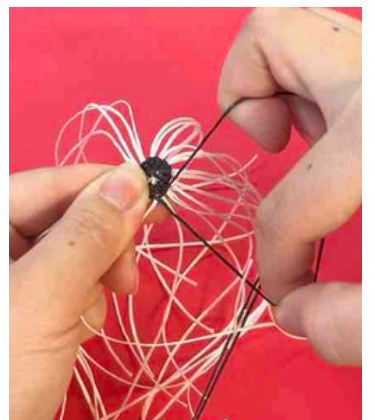
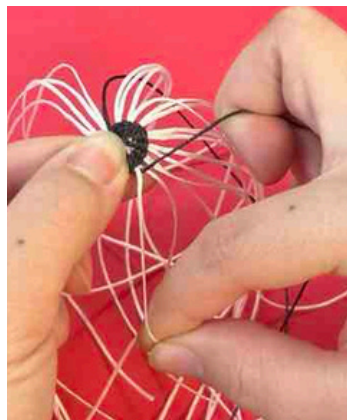


Reach under and twist,  
grab other weaver from under

### STEP FOUR: CONTINUE WEAVING



- Put left weaver over the rest of the spokes.
- The one weaver under your spoke will always be your bottom weaver.
- Continue these steps over and over, pushing the weavers down, closer together.
- Once you work around the circle a few times, switch from grabbing two spokes to using only one.
- Continue to work around until you reach the end of the weavers and spokes.
- Tie your weaver around a spoke to finish.



### MODIFICATION:

- Basic weaving—for younger weavers, use colored pipe cleaners instead of waxed thread. Twist more pipe cleaners to the ends of the weavers and spokes to allow students to make a larger circle.
- Advanced weaving—Enlarge your circle by adding more spokes and weavers. Contact the Alutiiq Museum to learn more.

## ***Inartaq* — Basket**

Only a small number of classic Alutiiq baskets are preserved today. Museums around the world hold just a handful of ethnographic and archaeological examples of this beautiful and functionally important art. Despite their rarity, baskets were an integral part of Alutiiq household equipment. They held small objects; were used as cooking, drinking, and eating vessels; and functioned as containers for food storage and collecting. Very large baskets, fitted with leather straps, even acted as backpacks for travelers to carry clothing and bedding. The tight weave of these baskets protected their contents from rain and sea spray.

In the Kodiak Archipelago, Alutiiq people wove much of their basketry from spruce roots that were dug from the forest floor, cleaned of their outer coverings, and split into flexible strands with a fingernail. Other common weaving materials included beach rye grass and baleen. Spruce-root baskets were woven upside down, with concentric rings of extra twining to reinforce their base. Some were painted or finely decorated with overlays of other weaving materials, for example, maidenhair fern.

Today, basket weaving is experiencing a revival. Elders are passing the art to their families, and artists are studying museum collections to learn ancestral techniques and share their knowledge at community workshops. Traditional forms are reappearing but have been supplemented with tiny baskets made into popular forms of jewelry—necklaces, pendants, and earrings.

### ***Inartamek piliyuq.* — She's making a basket.**



Grass basket by  
Coral Chernoff  
Purchased with support  
from Rasmuson Foundation

