

Fishing—Iqallugsurtaallriit

The carved tools in this category are associated with both marine and riverine fishing, including spear fishing for salmon in rivers, line fishing for cod and halibut in marine waters, and ice fishing with a lure and a leister (Table 8.3, Figure 8.11). It is important to note that many of these items are pieces of larger composite tools. Hilary Stewart’s book *Indian Fishing* (1982) has many helpful illustrations that show similar fishing gear used by neighboring people of the Northwest Coast.

Table 8.3. Alutiiq terms for fishing tools

English	Alutiiq	Comment
Fish Harpoon Valve	Ayaqum iqua ^c	“spear tip”
Fishhook	Iqsak ^m	
Fishhook Barb	Iqsam iqua ^c	
Fishhook Shank	Iqsam ilakua’a ^c	
Leister Center Prong	Akeq qukasqaq ^c	
Leister Side Prong	Akeq canisqaq ^c	
Leister Socket Piece	Iqum tuumiaqsuutii ^c , Kakiswik ^h	
Line Leader	IRafkum tuumiaqsuutii ^c	“tool for holding rope”
Lure	Narya’aq ^m	
Net Float	Pugtaq ^m	
Rig Spreader	Canamasqaq ^c , Iqsaguarsuuteq ^c	
Snood	IRafkum kupuraa ^c	
Spacer Bar Sinkers	Kitsuut’ruaq ^c	
Stunning Club	Piqrutaq ^m	

m = term in modern usage, h = historic term, c = term created by Elder Alutiiq speakers

* = suggested term needing additional review

Figure 8.11. Marine fishing gear (left) and leister (fish spear, right) from Karluk One (AM193).



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names

Fish Harpoon Valve

Alutiiq Names

Ayaqum iqua - spear's tip

Industry

Carving

Activity Fishing

Function

Spearing fish behind a barrier

Common
Materials

Bone, Antler

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition

Ocean Bay

Kachemak

Koniag

Alutiiq

Miniature

Yes

Example Sites Found

Karluk One

No/Unknown

Description

These artifacts are typically found in Koniag tradition sites, and reflect a change from net fishing for salmon in the Kachemak to barrier spear fishing (with a weir, trap) later in time. They are common artifacts, especially as each harpoon head at two or three parts (known as valves) depending on design. Similar fish harpoons were used among the Native people of Southeast Alaska.

These small, composite harpoon heads sat on a wooden shaft and were tied to a line. The fisherman speared a salmon, recovered it, then put a new harpoon head on the tip of shaft to continue fishing (see diagrams on following pages). Inside the fish, the harpoon head toggled (turned sideways), securing the line to the fish.

There are three basic styles of harpoon - shown in the attached photos. All feature one long piece and one short piece that fit together to form the two halves of the harpoon head and rest atop a shaft.

Socketed: These feature a u-shaped indentation in the proximal end designed to accommodate the tip of a spear shaft. There is often a rim around the outside of the socket (dorsal side), likely for insuring the the line used to tie the two pieces together did not slip off.

Scarfed: These valves feature a stepped cut on the flange (distal portion of the harpoon head) - and were often part of a three-piece assembly.

Spurred: These valves feature a flared flange and then a shaft socket in the center portion of the valve.

Harpoon valves, especially the longer portion, were frequently broken as a result of use (hitting river rocks?) and resharpened. Some appear blunted from resharpening.

References

Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

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Amy Steffian

Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

FISH HARPOON VALVE

Fish harpoon valves from Karluk One (AM193)



Ventral side



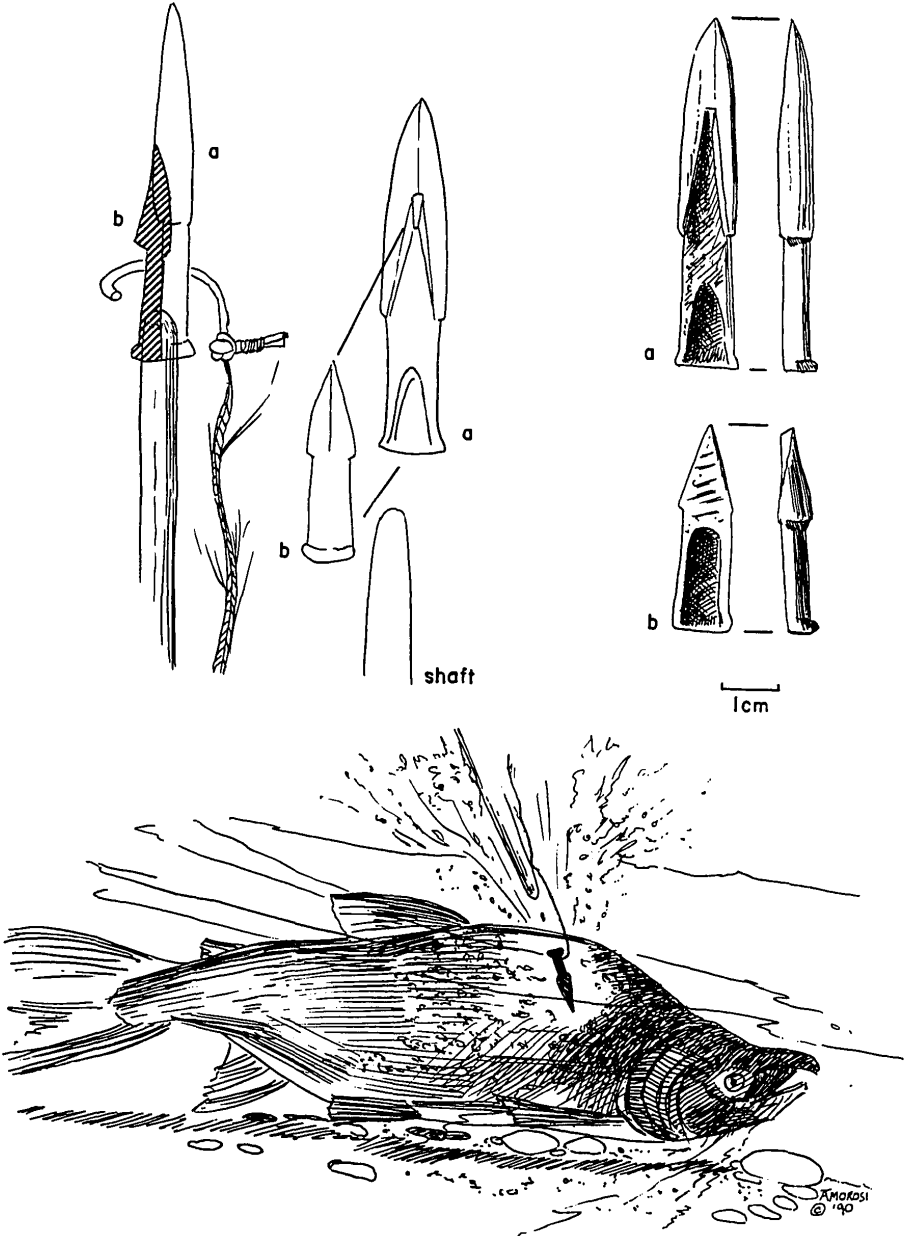
Dorsal side



From left: socketed, scarfed, and spurred examples

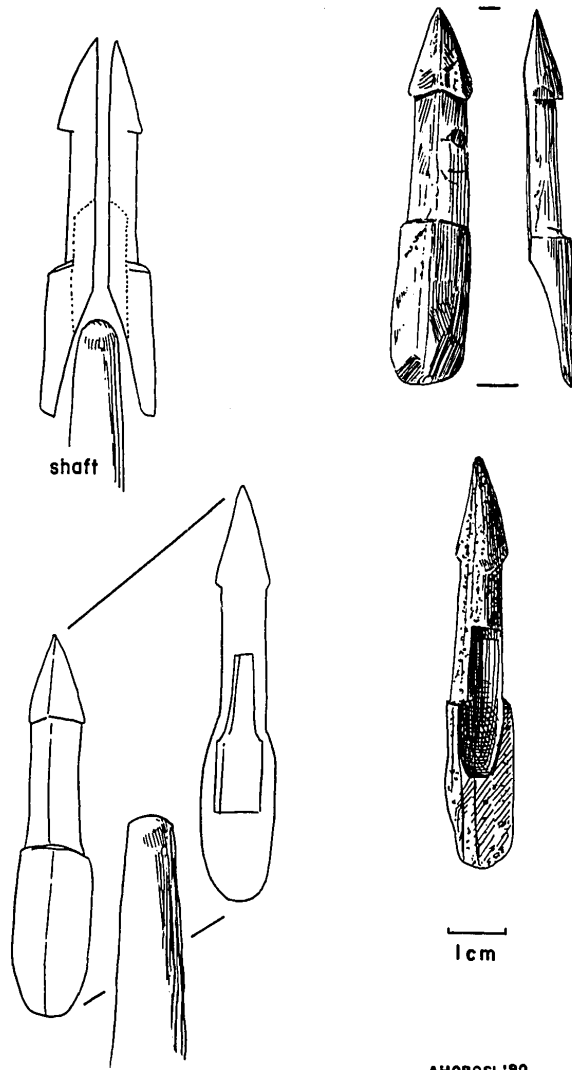
Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Socketed fish harpoon assembly – from Knecht 1995:202



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

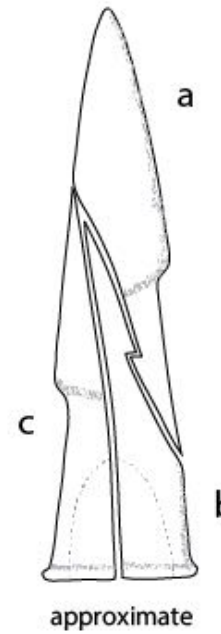
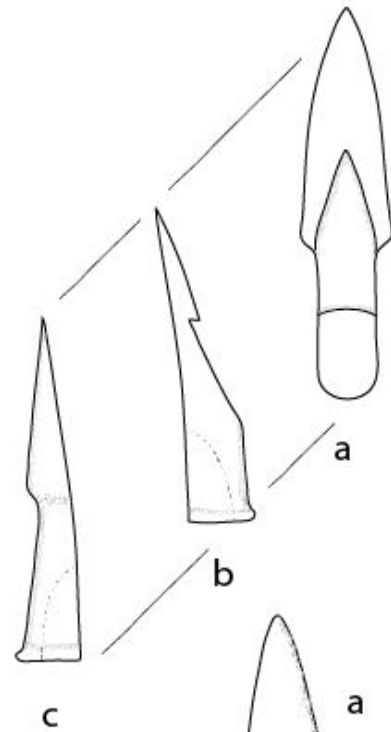
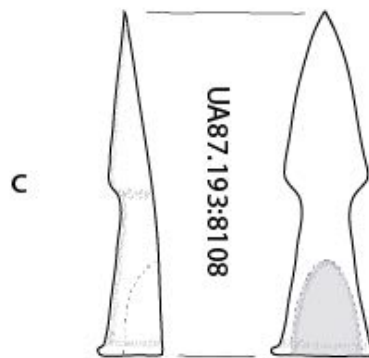
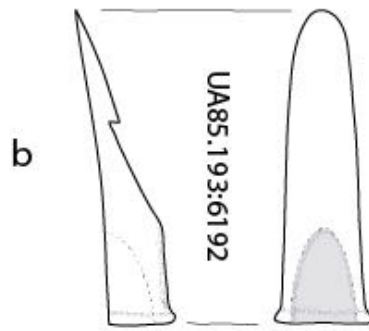
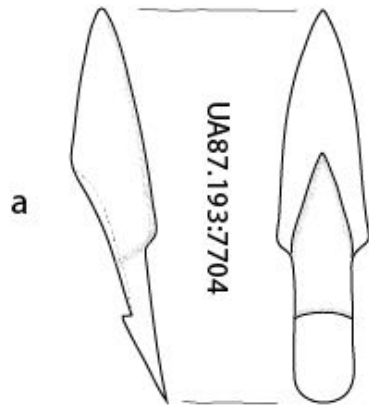
Spurred fish harpoon assembly – from Knecht 1995:213



Three-Piece Fish Harpoon

a - step-scarfed long component
b - step-scarfed short component
c - small component

(a + b together make one "long component - as if one half of a 2-piece harpoon.)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names	Fish Hook		Alutiiq Names	Iqsak	
Industry	Carving	Activity	Fishing	Function	Line fishing for small fish
Common Materials	Bone				
LxWxD (cm)	4 cm long				
Tradition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ocean Bay	<input type="checkbox"/> Kachemak	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Koniag	<input type="checkbox"/> Alutiiq	
Miniature	<input type="radio"/> Yes	Example Sites Found	KAR-310		
	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No/Unknown				
Description	<p>Single piece fishhooks are rare in Alutiiq assemblages, but they are present. They are typically small, carved of bone, and appear to be intended for line fishing for small fish (e.g., Dolly varden, rainbow trout) in fresh water. Another piece from Rice Ridge features a straight center shaft with a prong on either side of the distal end.</p> <p>An example from KAR-310 features a tight, sharply pointed, u-shaped hook (distal end) and a slender shaft with two small knobs on the outer edge of the proximal (line) end. The line was likely tied between the two knobs which were designed to keep the line from sliding off.</p> <p>Types of single piece fishhooks were found at Rice Ridge. one is the J-shaped piece, much like the hook described above from KAR-310, but with a small knob on the proximal end. The other has a central shaft with a barb on either side - like a Western anchor.</p>				
References	Odell, Molly E., Amy F. Steffian, Patrick G. Saltonstall, 2019, Excavations at KAR-310, Karluk Lake, Kodiak Island, Alaska. Report prepared for Koniag, Inc. by the Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak.				
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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

FISHHOOK

Single-piece bone fishhook from KAR-310 (AM869)



Single-piece bone fishhooks from Rice Ridge (AM19)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names	Fish Hook Barb		Alutiiq Names	Iqsam iqua	
Industry	Carving	Activity	Fishing	Function	Marine sea fishing
Common Materials	Bone, wood				
LxWxD (cm)	Variable				
Tradition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ocean Bay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kachemak	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Koniag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alutiiq	
Miniature	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	Example Sites Found	Uyak, Settlement Point, Karluk One		
	<input type="radio"/> No/Unknown				
Description	<p>Composite fishhook used in marine fishing feature two parts lashed together—a barb (distal piece) and a shank (proximal piece). The barbs come in at least three types, and vary in size depending on the size of the rig / fish sought.</p> <p>Bone barbs - these are typically less than about 5.5 cm long. They are gently curved with a single barbed at the distal end (a few have more elaborate barbing but this is unusual in Kodiak assemblages and more typical of older, Kachemak assemblages). On the proximal end of the barb, there is often a thinned area / notch, designed to help the barb fit snugly against the distal end of the shank, where it is lashed.</p> <p>Wooden barbs - there are two styles of wooden barbs. Some are narrow, rounded pieces of wood less than about 9 cm long that taper to a sharp point. These has a variety of proximal ends, from no treatment, to a notch or a ring carved around the end to create a small knob. A similar wooden barb is more stylized and may be designed for a specific function. These pieces are long, thin, narrow triangles of wood with a sizable notch cut into one side near the thicker, proximal end. They are sharply pointed.</p> <p>Alutiiq fishermen used these hooks in marine fishing rigs. They tied a pair of composite hooks to a wooden rig spreader, with one on each end., and then tied a stone line sinker to the center of the rig spreader to sink the apparatus (see attached photo). The presence of line sinkers in Ocean Bay assemblages suggests that this technology is quite old.</p>				
References	Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.				
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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

FISHHOOK BARB

Example of a deep sea fishing rig assembled from pieces in the



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Bone fishhook barbs from Karluk One (AM193) – photo courtesy Amy Margaris



Wooden fishhook barbs from Karluk One (AM193)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names	Fish Hook Shank		Alutiiq Names	Iqsam ilakua'a	
Industry	Carving	Activity	Fishing	Function	Marine fishing
Common Materials	Bone (ribs of sea mammals especially), wood				
LxWxD (cm)	Variable				
Tradition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ocean Bay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kachemak	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Koniag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alutiiq	
Miniature	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	Example Sites Found	Uyak, Karluk One		
	<input type="radio"/> No/Unknown				
Description	<p>Composite fishhook used in marine fishing feature two parts lashed together—a barb (distal piece) and a shank (proximal piece). The barbs come in at least three types, and vary in size depending on the size of the rig / fish sought.</p> <p>Curved Shanks - Many shanks are curved pieces of bone or wood. Often, craftspeople used an animal rib to create these pieces, taking advantage of the natural curve of the material to create a shank. these pieces typically have a notch near the distal end to accommodate a hook, and a knob at the proximal edge for typing the hook to a line.</p> <p>Straight Shanks - A smaller number of shanks a small, straight pieces ca. 12 cm long. These pieces have a notch near the distal end to accommodate a hook, and a groove along the inner edge of the proximal end to hold the line. Above this groove, on the outer edge there may be a lip designed to keep the lashing that holds the hook to the line from slipping.</p> <p>Trapezoidal Shanks - A small number of shanks found at Karluk One, are almost diamond shaped. They feature a bulge near the center where there is a notch in on face for insertion of a hook barb. The inner edge (on the hook side), above the bulge, is sometimes gently curved.</p> <p>Alutiiq fishermen used these hooks in marine fishing rigs. They tied a pair of composite hooks to a wooden rig spreader, with one on each end., and then tied a stone line sinker to the center of the rig spreader to sink the apparatus (see attached photo). The presence of line sinkers in Ocean Bay assemblages suggests that this technology is quite old</p>				
References	Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.				
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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Fishhook barbs and shanks from Karluk One (AM193)



Fishhook shank of bone (rib) from Karluk One (AM193) – photo courtesy of Amy Margaris



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Wood and bone fishhook shanks from Karluk One (AM193) – photos courtesy of Amy Margaris



Trapezoidal wooden fishhook shanks from Karluk One (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names

Leister Center Prong

Alutiiq Names

Akeq qukasqaq

Industry

Carving

Activity Fishing

Function

Spears fishing, bird hunting

Common
Materials

Bone, antler

LxWxD (cm)

6 to 19 cm long

Tradition

Ocean Bay

Kachemak

Koniag

Alutiiq

Miniature

Yes

Example Sites Found

Karluk One

No/Unknown

Description

This is the central piece of a leister - the weapon that fits either into a socket piece of a shaft used to impale fish or birds. Center prongs are typically bilaterally barbed, but they can also be an unbarbed point (see attached photo). Center prongs tend to be thick - up to 1 cm.

There are common finds in Kachemak and Koniag sites.

References

Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

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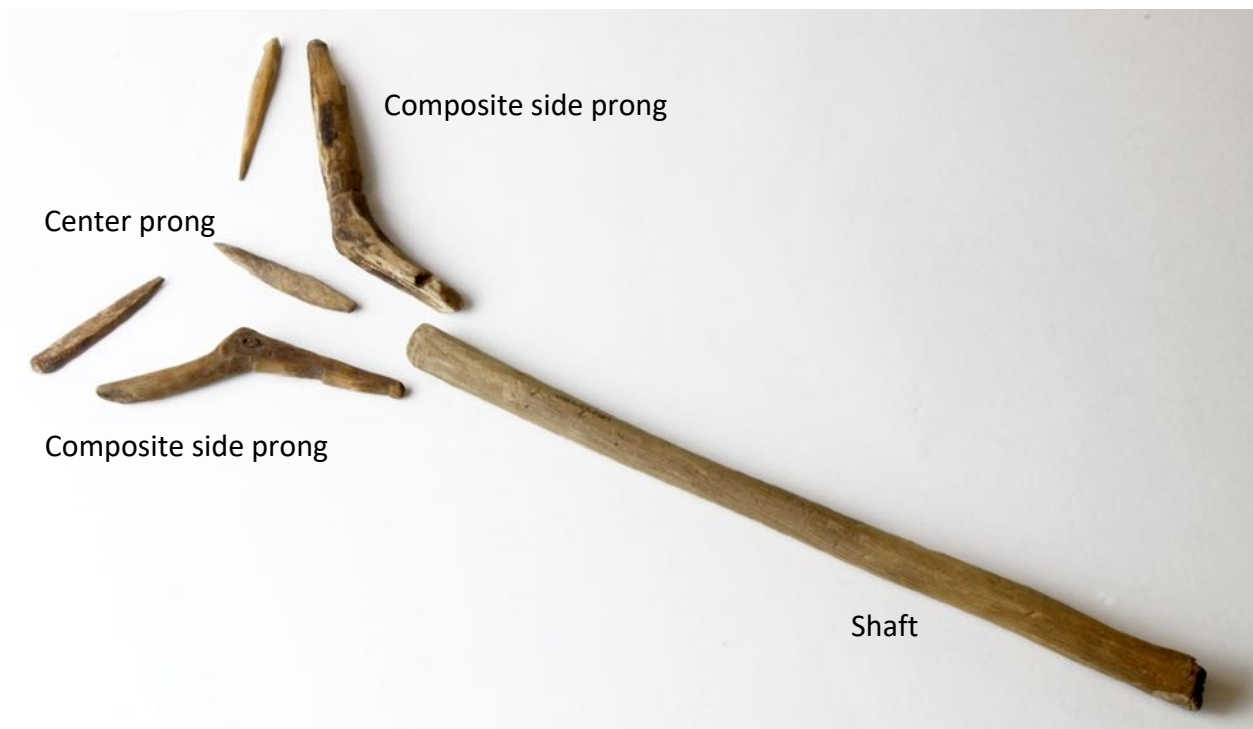
Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

LEISTER CENTER PRONG

Leister assembly with a central socket piece, Karluk One collection (AM193)



Leister Assembly with two-piece side prongs, Karluk One collection (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Leister prongs from Karluk One (AM193)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names **Alutiiq Names**

Industry **Activity** **Function**

Common Materials

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found**

Description

Side prongs are the pointed arrow-like pieces that fit around the sides of fish or bird spear. They are the weapon heads of this tool.

There are two types of leisters in Alutiiq assemblages— those that have prongs designed to be inserted in a central socket, and those that have a pair of composite side prongs ties to a central shaft. See attached photos. Side prongs vary depending on the type of leister.

Side prongs for socket assembly: These side prongs have a knob at the proximal end a flat area above the knob on the side on the prong that rests against the socket. The rest of the prong slopes outward away from the socket. Side prongs are often barbed (unilaterally or bilaterally) and may be slightly curved.

Composite side prongs: These two piece side prongs feature a wide v-shaped piece that ties to the weapon's shaft and smaller pointed pieces that form the piercing part of the prongs. These smaller pieces are lashed to the large pieces so that they point inward.

References

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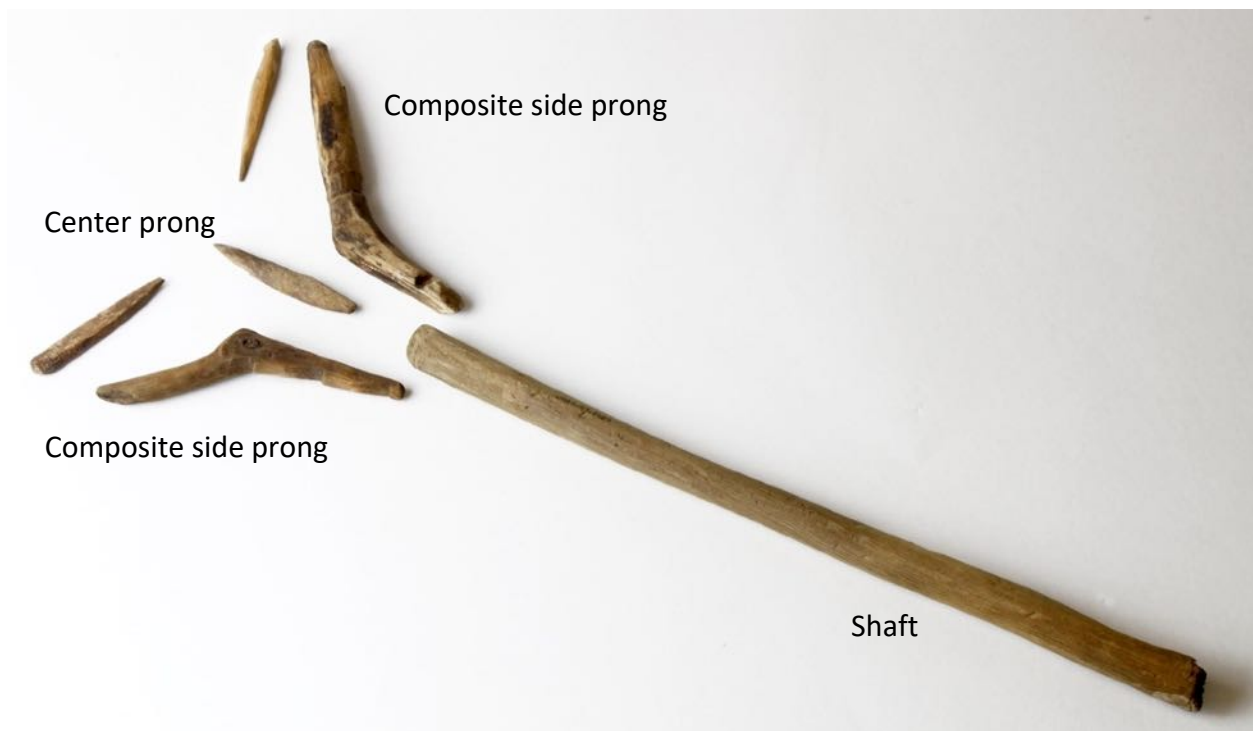
Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

LEISTER SIDE PRONG

Leister assembly with a central socket piece, Karluk One collection (AM193)



Leister Assembly with two-piece side prongs, Karluk One collection (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Wooden leister side prongs from Karluk One (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names

Leister Socket Piece

Alutiiq Names

lqum tuumiaqsuutii

Industry

Carving

Activity Fishing

Function

Spears fishing, bird hunting

Common
Materials

Wood

LxWxD (cm)

16 cm long

Tradition

Ocean Bay

Kachemak

Koniag

Alutiiq

Miniature

Yes

Example Sites Found

Karluk One

No/Unknown

Description

A leister is a fishing or birding spear with multiple parts. To a long shaft, craftsmen fitted a socket piece designed to hold a series of prongs—one in the center and several along the sides. The results was a spear with multiple barbs useful for spearing fish in the water (often through the ice) or hunting birds.

An example of a socket piece from Karluk One is about 16 cm long and carved from wood. The proximal end feature a long, narrow cylinder designed to fit in a socketed shaft. The distal end has a deep slot, designed to hold a center prong. The center of the tool is a large cylinder with slots on the sides for side prongs. A groove around the top (distal end) of the slots is likely for adding lashing to keep the side prongs in place.

References

Steffian, Amy F., Marnie A. Leist, Sven D. Haakanson, and Patrick G. Saltonstall, 2015, Kal'unek—From Karluk, Kodiak Alutiiq History and the Archaeology of the Karluk One Site. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks.

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

LEISTER SOCKET PIECE

Wooden leister socket piece from Karluk One (AM193)



Wooden leister socket piece from Karluk One (AM193) showing center and side prong placement.



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names

Line Leader

Alutiiq Names

IRafkum tuumiaqsuutii

Industry

Carving

Activity Fishing

Function

Strengthen marine fishing line

Common
Materials

Baleen

LxWxD (cm)

18 cm

Tradition

Ocean Bay

Kachemak

Koniag

Alutiiq

Miniature

Yes

Example Sites Found

Karluk One

No/Unknown

Description

There is one example of this tool in the Karluk One assemblage. One end is bent into a hook shape, while the other features a small knob for tying it to a fishing line. Like a snood, this piece protected a fishing line from being cut by rock or fish teeth.

References

Steffian, Amy F., Marnie A. Leist, Sven D. Haakanson, and Patrick G. Saltonstall, 2015, Kal'unek—From Karluk, Kodiak Alutiiq History and the Archaeology of the Karluk One Site. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks.

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

LINE LEADER

Baleen line leader from Karluk One (AM193)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names **Alutiiq Names**

Industry **Activity** **Function**

Common Materials

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found**

Description

Alutiiq assemblages contain small carvings of fish. Some are abstract (fish shaped but with limited details. Others have many anatomical details. In one case a lure from Karluk One has an inlaid eye.

These pieces typically have a hanging hole along the top (dorsal) edge of the carved fish, for hanging. Elders report dangling such lures through holes in the ice to catch fish in winter.

References

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

LURE

Lures from Karluk One (AM193) – Top to bottom: ivory, antler, bone





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names **Alutiiq Names**

Industry **Activity** **Function**

Common Materials

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found**

Description

These tools functioned like the cork line on a modern fishing net. They provided buoyancy for the top edge of a net, helping it to stay afloat and open in the water. There are two general types

Single piece floats - 8 to 10 cm long: These are typically carved from cottonwood bark. There are a variety of styles. Most have a large section cut out of the top side, and sometimes a notch into the remaining wood on either side of the cut out, so the float can be tied to a net. Another type is a bar with a raised rectangular section in the center and a hole drilled in either end of the bar. See attached photos.

Two-piece floats - 10 - 26 cm long: These are oval to rectangular shaped pieces of wood with two or three grooves carved perpendicular to their long axis. One side is rounded and the other is flat. Two pieces were lashed together with their flat sides touching to form a float.

References

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

NET FLOAT

One-piece net floats from Karluk One (AM193)



Two-piece net floats from Karluk One (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names	Plummet / Line Weight		Alutiiq Names	Itsuuteq	
Industry	Carving	Activity	Fishing	Function	Line weight
Common Materials	Bone				
LxWxD (cm)	up to 11 cm long				
Tradition	<input type="checkbox"/> Ocean Bay	<input type="checkbox"/> Kachemak	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Koniag	<input type="checkbox"/> Alutiiq	
Miniature	<input type="radio"/> Yes	Example Sites Found	Karluk One		
	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No/Unknown				
Description	<p>These small, carved line weights look like their much larger stone counterparts. They have a cylinder of bone with a narrow, tapering, cylindrical projection carved at the top of the proximal end, with a small knob at the end. The knob is to aid in tying a line to the weight and keep it from slipping off. They appear to be a type of line sinker, perhaps for fresh water fishing.</p> <p>Another example, from the Pestrikoff Family collection is an oval with pointed ends (football-shaped). On the proximal end there is a small knob and from this knob a thin groove runs the length of the piece down its center. It appears this piece was tied to a line, so that the line rested in the groove.</p>				
References	Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.				
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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

PLUMMET

Bone plummet / Line Weight from Karluk One (AM193)



Bone plummet / Line Weight from Pestrikoff Family Collection (AM330)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names **Alutiiq Names**

Industry **Activity** **Function**

Common Materials

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found**

Description

These long, narrow, wooden objects feature a uniform bar of wood (round in cross section) with small knob on either end. The knobs are typically formed by a notch or indentation carved into the wood, but in some cases there is a true knob on the end of the spreader (carved all around). Other examples may be long, narrow pieces of wood with a hole drilled in either end.

The spreader is the piece to which fishermen tie hooks (one on either end) and a stone sinker (to the middle), to create a marine fishing rig. A picture on the next page illustrate the construction of this rig.

References

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

RIG SPREADER

Example of a deep sea fishing rig assembled from pieces in the Karluk One assemblage (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

Wooden rig spreaders from Karluk One (AM193)



Detail of notches at end of wooden rig spreaders from Karluk One (AM193)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names Snood **Alutiiq Names** IRafku kupuraa

Industry Carving **Activity** Fishing **Function** Line strengthening

Common Materials Wood

LxWxD (cm) 15 to 31 cm long

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found** Karluk One

Description
These long, slender pieces of wood taper from a small knob (for attaching the proximal end to a line) to a thin, blunt point (distal end). Snoods were used to reinforce fishing lines and to keep lines from tangling, e.g. with a deep sea fishing rig that has multiple items hanging from a rig spreader.

References
Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

SNOOD

Wooden snoods from Karluk One (AM193)



Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names

Spacer Bar Sinker

Alutiiq Names

Kitsuut'ruaq

Industry

Carving

Activity Fishing

Function

Common
Materials

Bone

LxWxD (cm)

10 to 20 cm long

Tradition

Ocean Bay

Kachemak

Koniag

Alutiiq

Miniature

Yes

Example Sites Found

Uyak, Karluk One

No/Unknown

Description

These tools are used to weight fishing nets and keep them from bunching up in the water. They are about the same size as net floats, but they are heavier and typically made of bone. They are a long oval shape over all, and there are two types. Some have a hole drilled in each end to tying to a net. Others have a thin projection at each end of the long axis with a small knob on the end for tying to a net. See attached photos.

References

Knecht, Richard A., 1995, The Late Prehistory of the Alutiiq People: Culture Change on the Kodiak Archipelago from 1200–1750 AD. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

SPACER BAR SINKER

Spacer bar sinkers bone and antler from Karluk One (AM193)





Alutiiq Technological Inventory

Artifact Class Summary Sheet

English Names **Alutiiq Names**

Industry **Activity** **Function**

Common Materials

LxWxD (cm)

Tradition Ocean Bay Kachemak Koniag Alutiiq

Miniature Yes No/Unknown **Example Sites Found**

Description

Small clubs likely used to stun fish before bringing them into a boat, are made from branches of wood (e.g., alder). Some retain characteristics of the branch, others are more finished. These clubs features a long cylindrical barrel and a gently curved indentation on the lower third - for gripping. They resemble small, novelty, baseball bats. Some have a wedge-shaped proximal end, that may be functional or decorative. The feature give the end of the handle and animal-like quality.

References

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Alutiiq Technological Inventory—Carved Organic

STUNNING CLUB

Wooden stunning clubs (fish billies) from Karluk One (AM193)

