



MAKE YOUR OWN GROUND SLATE TOOLS

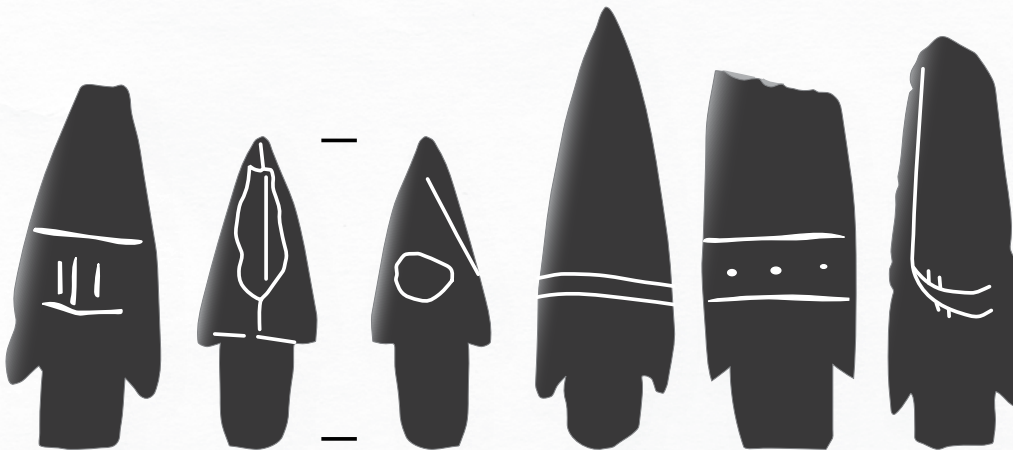
Slate is a plentiful raw material in the Kodiak archipelago and can be fashioned into a variety of tools. In addition to the ulus and double-edged knives used to process subsistence foods, Alutiiqs ground lances, bayonets, and arrows for hunting, and fashioned beads and labrets from slate. Try your skill at slate grinding. Here are the basic steps.

STEP ONE - Select a piece of slate. Kodiak beaches have many different types - but not all slate is suitable for tool production. 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, one that is internally cohesive.

STEP TWO - Use 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 from a beach cobble works well as a saw. With the flake, wear grooves into the slate from both sides and then gently snap the pieces apart along the groove.

STEP THREE - Use a hard, flat beach rock to grind a smooth surface on both faces 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 the grinding process. Keep grinding until you have a smooth flat surface. Try to remove any nicks or indentations in the slate.

STEP FOUR - Sharpen the edges of your tool 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.



Ground slate points with makers markers from Late Kachemak tradition sites.