

HISTORY



*Eskimo paddler from Lake Harbour, Baffin Island.
Note typical long-bladed East Arctic paddle with drip rings.
Courtesy Public Archives of Canada.*

If you want to make your own paddle, and I strongly suggest you do, use the tables of offset given in this article. A pine or spruce 2 x 4 from the lumberyard will do nicely, but be sure to look for a piece of relatively knot-free wood or you may suddenly find you have two paddles instead of one.

For a paddle of greater width than a 2 x 4, glue on (with waterproof glue) some 1 x 1's or 1 x 2's and then pencil in centerlines on all sides of the paddle blank. Now measure off the half-breadths from the table of offsets and connect the points with a wood batten. Also measure off the thicknesses from the offsets onto the paddle sideview. Cut out the profile with a bandsaw, jigsaw or skilsaw and plane down the overall thickness until it matches the maximum thicknesses on the table of offsets. Finally plane down the blades to achieve the proper edge thickness and carve in the concave parts of ridged paddles with a curved knife. A good commercial curved knife may be purchased from Kestrel Tool, Route 1, Box 1762, Lopez, WA 98261.

In Conclusion

Sea kayaking has evolved to the point where it no longer needs the excess baggage of boats and paddles designed for a different purpose. Traditional Arctic paddles were developed and evolved over thousands of years of use in hunting and transporting people and goods. They are the logical place to

start today in designing paddles for modern day sea kayaking. After all, today's basic needs are not far removed from those of sea kayakers a thousand years ago.

REFERENCES

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A 43 page Bibliography of Kayak Literature is available from David Zimmerly, 193 Holmwood Ave., Ottawa, Canada K1S 2P3. Please send US \$5.00 or equivalent. Kayak plans are also available — write for a price list.