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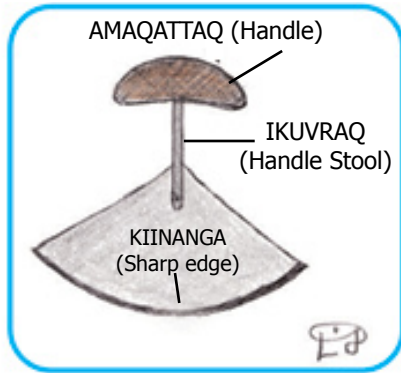
Inuit Working Tools and Implements

**Working Tools
for Women and Men**

**Mark Kalluak
March 1999**

Inuit Working Tools

Women's Tools & Implements



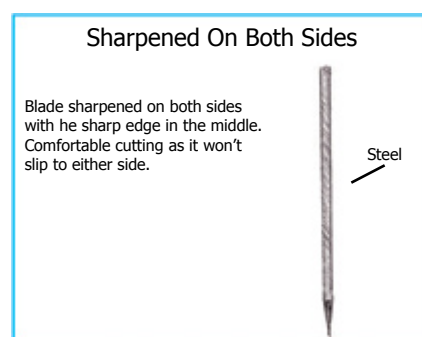
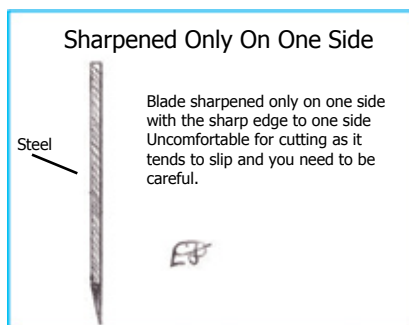
Ulu is normally used by women, it's a cutting blade specially designed for women with a handle above the blade. Ulu's are never the same size, some are medium size used for eating or cutting up meat. eating or cutting up meat. Some are large ulus called "ulu'juaq" and intentionally designed that way.

Ulus not designed for eating were treasured as they were used for cleaning seal skins and were kept extremely sharp. The owner really treasured them because she wants the blade to be kept sharp all the time. A sharp blade meant neat work and quicker job.

KIMALIQ – Is used for cutting caribou skin patterns for making clothing like kamiks (skin boots), skin mits or any other useful things around home. Kimaliq ulu also had to be extremely sharp in order to cut up neat straight line continually and without much effort, and it meant doing it quicker. A woman with a sharp kimaliq that is comfortable to use will be happy, and her sewing will be all that much neater. A kimaliq ulu was also treasured carefully by its owner. She made sure it is well looked after, and she would never leave it laying around unattended as it is designed specifically for cutting up designs, and she would never let others use it, it was used only by its owner. It is made solely for cutting patterns, and never used for eating or other things as it is not designed for eating.

Anything that was sharpened carefully were termed as "kinnaksaqsimajuq" "sharpened blade". If anything had a sharp blade, when the edge is sharp it was termed as kinnariktuq and object with extremely sharp edge. It could be an ulu (woman's blade) or a knife or anything that has a sharp edge, they would refer to it as Kiinariktuq (an object with a sharp blade).

How The Blade Is Sharpened – There are two ways of sharpening an ulu. If you look at an ulu from the side of the blade, this is what you would see:



ORDINARY ULU – Normally, there are ordinary large ulus used for cutting or chopping food, they are comfortable to use and can cut big piece of frozen meat.



LARGE ULU – Women often owned large ulus specially designed for butchering meat and they were called ulu'juaq (large ulu).

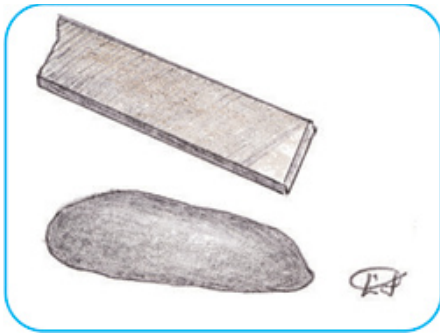


SKIN DRESSING ULU – They also had ulus specially designed for dressing seal skins and they were kept extremely sharp and treasured carefully.



OLD SAW BLADES FOR ULUS – Saw blades were often chosen for making ulus. There are different kinds of steel, some are easy to sharpen, some are very hard to keep sharpened. Ulus and knives were not allowed to be kept in warm water as they become hard to sharpen.





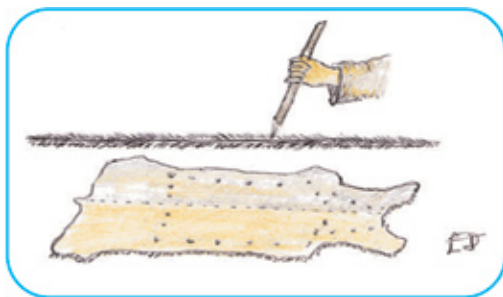
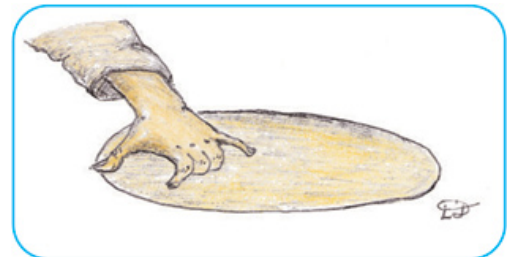
SILLIT (Sharpener) – Use for sharpening ulus Long ago I used to see women owning pieces of broken off old files with one side made smooth to sharpen the blade of their ulu. Some times they had piece of stone with the top perfectly smooth which was called a sillit (blade sharpener). Of course they were treasured and the owner had them for a very long time, the longer they had them the more valuable they became. Sillit and an ulu had to be together all the time because she had to sharpen the blade often.

QIURVIK (Wooden Cutting Block) – I used to see ladies owning wooden blocks from hard wood. Qiuarviit (wooden cutting blocks) were also very useful as it was needed to as underlay for patterns being prepared for sewing. It was also needed for cutting up fringes fur coats. They would cut up strips of nice even strips side by side. So a wooden cutting block was very useful. They had to cut all the hair off using the block.



UUKTURAUTIT (Measuring Instruments) Piece of string with knots – They would have a piece of string for taking measurement and tie knots for indicators. They used the knots to determine their measurements.

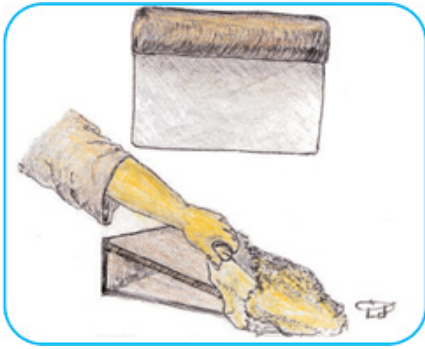
STRETCHED HANDS – Some times they would use their hand to take measurements. They would stretch their hand and used the tip of their thumb and the tip of their little finger. They would make their hand take a walk as they measured by folding their hand and placing the thumb where the little finger was and stretching again.



MAKING INDENTS WITH THE TIP OF FILE – File and a piece of skin. Fold the skin in half, with skin to skin. Take the tip of file and press down to make indents. Unfold the skin and following the indents for cutting out a pattern with a kimaliq ulu. Just following the indents for cutting out straight patterns.

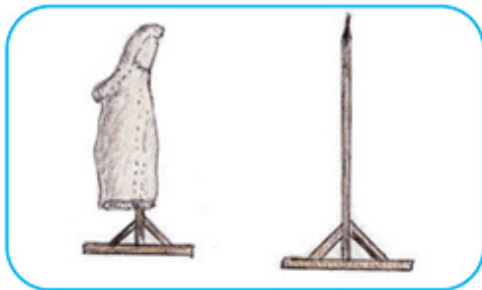
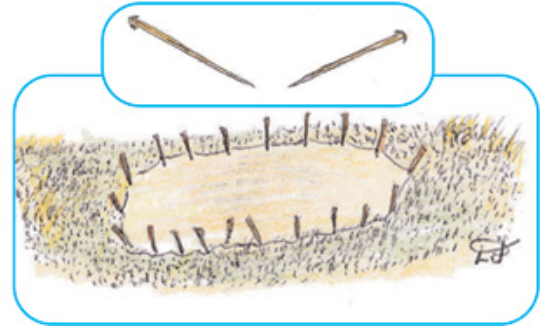
AGVIK (low table) – Inuit normally possessed things that to help them do their work with more comfort, so women had this implement called "agvik". It's a piece of small flat table low on one end and slightly on the other end towards the knee where the woman is sitting on her knees with her ulu, cleaning seal skin.





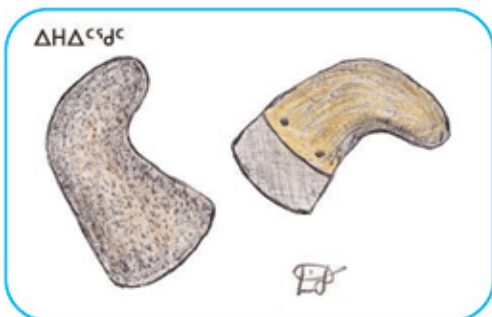
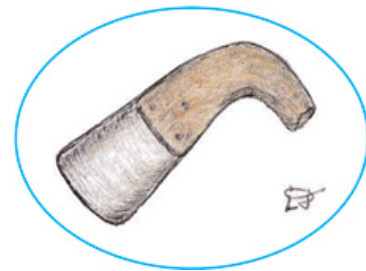
SALIGUUT (hair remover) – It's a piece of metal slid into a wooden handle. It's used by a woman removing hair off seal skin. First the skin is dunked into hot water so the hair can begin to peel off using this saliguut (hair remover). They made sure skin is not singed as it is dunked into hot water, except the root of the hair. The saliguut (hair remover) is used by pressing hard on the skin, scraping down to remove the hair and it's root. When it gets hard to scrape the hair off, they would dunk it in hot water and repeat the whole procedure until all the hairs is successfully removed.

PAUKTUUT (peg) – Before new and better things were in use, they used what ever was handy to use. When the skin was ready for drying they would cut small holes along the edge for stick pegs to go through. They used wood pegs with pointed tips. Sometimes they would peg caribou skins, especially bull caribou skins that were used as mattresses. They would peg the skins to the ground stretched out neatly. They would remain pegged to the ground until they were dry enough to be used.



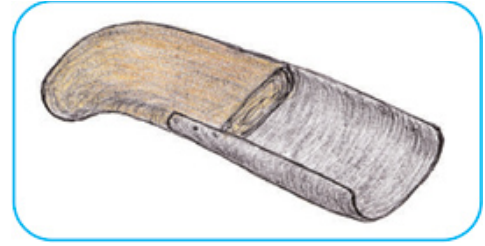
IKUUT (skin boot stretcher) – This is a piece of wood with a piece of dull metal on the tip. It is used to stretch seal skin dry boot. Skin boots tend to get dry and shrink and the foot area tend to shrink smaller. So an ikuut was very used full to reshape the boot so it is comfortable to wear.

IQTUQSIT (skin stretcher) – It is is a piece of metal with dull blade and wooden handle. It belongs to women for working with dry skins to stretch out folds around dry skins before they are kept in warm place under skin covers over night to siirliq (brittle dry) the skin. The ladies would work on the skin some more with the skin stretcher to make it pliable. The stretcher is also used to stretch dry boots or dry caribou skins or seal skins.



SAKUUT (skin scraper) – This is a piece of hard metal extremely sharp with wooden or antler handle. It belongs to a woman. It is used on skins that have already been made pliable siirliliit. It is used for scraping off tissue stuck to the skin, making the skin more pliable and white. When they are scraping skins with a sakuut, they say "isitiqtuq" (scraping tissues off pliable skin). When the skin is scraped like that it becomes more pliable and becomes lighter color. Another term used by another tribe is "ta'jikkit" for the skin scraper.

KILIUTAQ (urine scoop) – This is a piece of metal with a wooden handle with very dull edge. It is designed to scoop off baby urine. When babies urinate on skin diapers. Urine scoop is used to scrape it off. Or when the baby wets the bed, urine scoop would be used to scoop it off. Or if anything spills on the skin, urine scoop would be used to scoop it off.



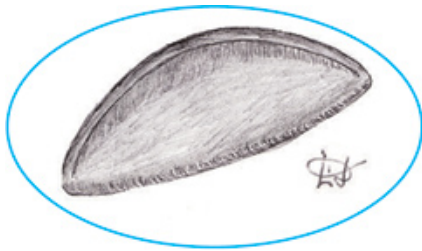
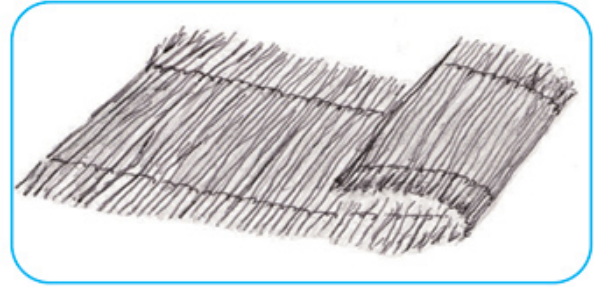
TILUKTUUT (snow beater) – This piece of wood made into tiluktuut (snow beater) is used to remove snow from clothing or anything that has snow by beating surface of fur carefully to shake the snow off. It was an important instrument in an iglu or if you are out camping in a small iglu inland. It was important to keep everything free of snow during winter and not let it stand and melt. The snow that is on the surface of clothing or anything is called "tiluk", so therefore the term "tiluk"tuut means an instrument for removing snow or snow particles.

TILUUT (snow remover) – Piece of flat antler from bull caribou that has been cut off to be used for collecting moss from under the snow. Tiluut is almost like tiluktuut but it's use is specifically for collecting fire wood from under the snow. It is specifically designed for digging out fire moss called "tingaujat". They wood stomp on the snow first to break it up, slap on the snow and lift it up with the snow remover. When it's removed, they would put it on top of a flat stone and slap it to shake the snow off. The fire wood or moss would be free of snow and ready to burn, just like dry wood. This is an invention by our ancestors and has been in use for many years in the Arctic.



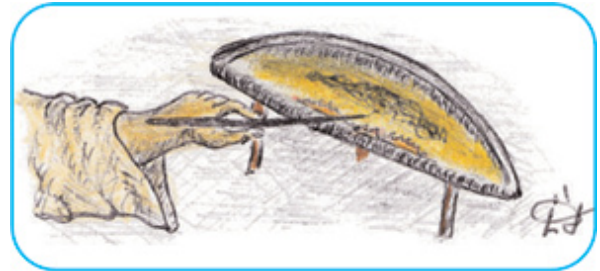
SAULLUUT (marrow pick) – It is made from caribou leg bone. It was used to pick marrow out stuck inside the bone, marrow that you can't dig out with your fingers. It is just a long piece of bone for digging out marrow that is hard to reach with your fingers.

QILAKTAT (tied together place mat) – These are arctic twigs tied together side by side with braided sinew. They are used by being placed under caribou mattress. They were useful for making the bed soft and kept the skin from getting wet underneath. They were handy to use as they were tied together and you just had to roll it out. They were handy things during winter. The snow ledge for sleeping tended to melt down slowly from body heat. So they had to take all the bedding off to add more from snow to level the sleeping area. When they do that, the special term they used was “tutijuq” (stomping on new snow to level sleeping area). They would bring in fresh snow and stomp on it to make it hard. So that is why they said “stomping”.



QULLIQ (soap stone lamp) – Made from soap stone, and uses seal blubber oil to keep aflame. It was also used to have heat inside the iglu and to cook food or for drying above the lit qulliq. For cooking they would stick a piece of stick above the qulliq, loop the handle and slow cook above the flame. Cooking like that was called “qulipsiqtuq” (slow cooking above the flame).

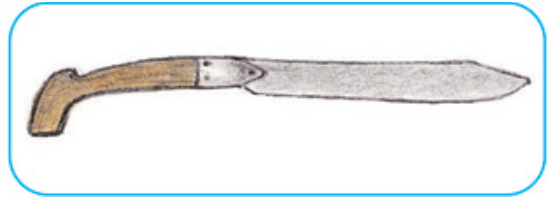
TAQQUT (flame pick) – Taqqut is used for fixing flames flame on Inuit qulliq. It is a long piece similar to a nail. Inuit qulliq uses moss called maniq for a wick. It is generally chopped up, put in the palm of hand and ground further and places on the front edge of the qulliq. So a taqqut is needed to adjust the flame by moving sod wick around to produce an even flame. The can make the flame burn higher or lower with the flame pick, or extinguish it. Women are skilled adjusting qulliq flame with her flame pick.



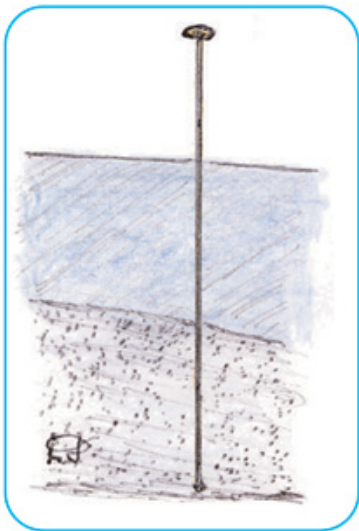
INNITAQ (drying rack) – Drying rack is made with a wooden frame with string netting attached to the frame.. Innitاق is a drying rack used during winter in an iglu by pegging it on the wall of the iglu above the qulliq flame. It had to be kept slightly high above the flame so it won't singe drying materials. Innitاق means it is a rack to place boot, mitts and other wet materials that need to be dried above qulliq flame.

MEN'S TOOLS & IMPLEMENTS

PANA (snow knife) – Pana is the most useful implement for building an iglu big enough to shelter the entire family and also for building an over night iglu shelter. Pana must be carried anytime you are away from the iglus or out hunting. When Inuit were trapping for foxes, pana was an important instrument for setting traps and making a thin snow covering above the trap.



Pana was so important that men always carried it around anytime they are going somewhere outside their home iglu. Of course it was dangerous to be without it, since no one could build a complete iglu with his bare hands when a sudden snow storm came, or during a whiteout weather where you could get disoriented or lost. Anyone could be in danger of perishing to death by weather exposure in the tundra without a snow knife.



SAVGUT (snow probe) – Savgut is just as important as a snow knife as snow is never the same. As snow come in the fall different layer of snow builds up. Sometime there is rain even after snow came. Even when there is permanent snow on the land, good fall snow perfect for building iglus tend to get covered up with fresh hard snow after the snow storm. So a snow probe is quite an important instrument for detecting unexposed snow. Snow probe is used by slowly shoving it down and your hands can feel what kind of snow is underneath. You can tell instantly whether the snow is the right texture for building an iglu or it's a layer of good snow and bad snow. Or whether it has ice on the surface or other type of snow beneath.

If the snow is bad it will tend to break as you try to cut blocks or break in half. Or if its too hard it would be hard to handle producing a poor iglu. Even when it's completed, parts of it will begin to buckle. So a snow probe is an important implement for searching good snow to build a good iglu.

PUALRIT (shovel) – A shovel is also a very useful piece of implement as the walls of a new iglu generally needs to be covered up with loose snow for insulation (particles of snow broken up into small pieces). It is important to cover exterior with loose snow otherwise it will be hard to keep warm.

A shovel has many uses, it is needed to clear the entrance of snow after a snow storm, or for digging cache of meat on the land under the snow. Hunters normally take a shovel along for general use.



