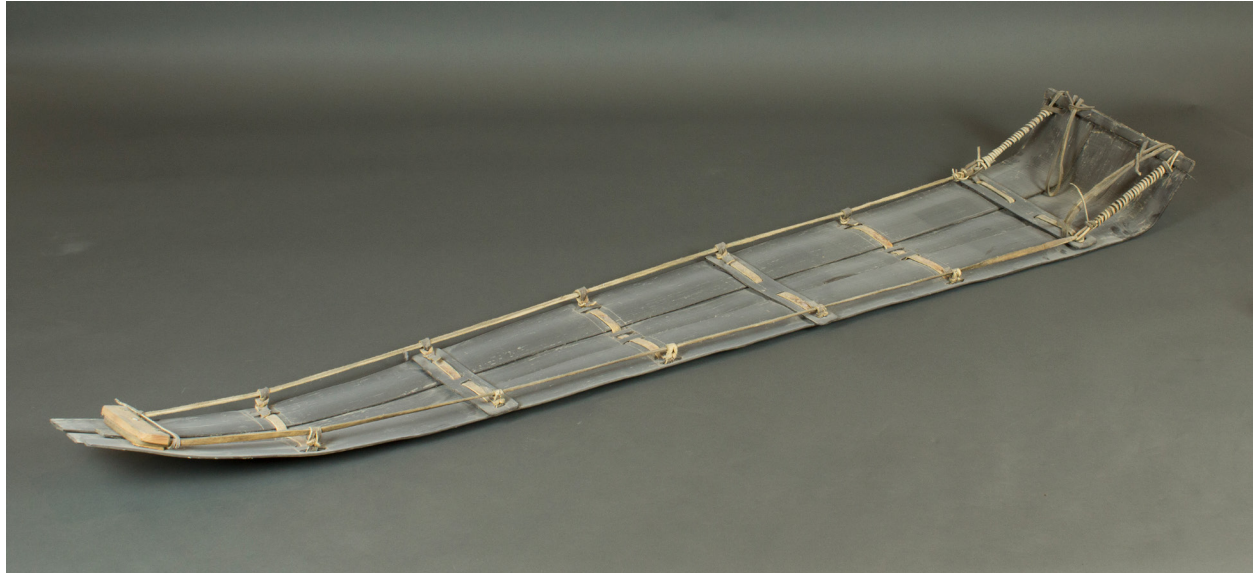


# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## BALEEN & SCRIMSHAW

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### ***SLED***

Baleen, seal hide  
1969.021.001

### **ROGER SAAVLA SILOOK SR.**

### ***SCULPTURE***

Baleen  
2014.023.011



This curriculum was created on Eklutna Dena'ina homeland. It is dedicated to all Indigenous peoples working to share their knowledge and culture, striving for a more inclusive future for western education. This resource addresses how to create and implement culturally-competent arts curriculum that uplifts Indigenous voices and ways of knowing. In the creation of this curriculum, we acknowledge and honor all Elders—past, present, and emerging—for their stewardship of the lands, plants, waters, and animals across Alaska. We thank them for sharing their lifeways, experiences, and cultures with students and the wider community. This curriculum would not be possible without their efforts.

We would like to express our gratitude to Aaron Leggett, John Hagen, and Solomon Elavgak for sharing their time and knowledge to refine this curriculum. Thank you for your guidance and support.

## LESSON AT A GLANCE

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**Cultural Arts 1:** Students will focus on scrimshaw. Students will view the sculpture by Ron Saavila Silook Sr. from the Anchorage Museum collection and apply scrimshaw-inspired technique onto a soft surface to create their own artworks.

**Cultural Arts 2:** Students will learn about the baleen and its larger context. Students will view the baleen sled from the Anchorage Museum collection and apply scrimshaw-inspired technique to a variety of hard materials to better understand the process of making marks on hard surfaces.

### A NOTE ABOUT CULTURAL APPROPRIATION FOR EDUCATORS

In this unit, students learn about and develop an appreciation for culturally-specific art-making techniques. Cultural appropriation occurs when students replicate culturally-specific techniques or designs from a non-dominate culture. To avoid cultural appropriation, student projects do not use traditional materials or techniques. Instead, students gain inspiration from cultural artwork and practice skills that are not specific to one culture.

Educators are encouraged to invite an Elder or culture bearer into the classroom to share their cultural practices related to this unit. Elders and culture bearers should receive financial compensation for their time and expertise. Consider grants from the Anchorage School District or the Alaska State Council for the Arts to help cover this cost.

If an Elder or culture bearer visits your class, discuss what they will share and how they want students to use this information. In this case, it may be appropriate for students to use traditional materials or techniques (e.g. an Elder provides ivory or baleen for students or wants students to copy a specific design).

## STANDARDS

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### Alaska Arts Standards:

VA:CR1a&b-6	VA:CR1a&b-7	VA:CR1a-8
VA:CR2b-6	VA:CR2b-7	VA:CR2b-8
VA:RE7a-6	VA:RE7a-7	VA:RE7a-8,
VA:RE8a-6	VA:CN10a-7	



### Cultural Standards for Students:

- B.1 acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own
- C.4 enter into and function effectively in a variety of cultural settings
- E.6 anticipate the changes that occur when different cultural systems come in contact with one another
- E.7 determine how cultural values and beliefs influence the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds
- E.8 identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world

### MATERIALS

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#### Cultural Arts 1:

- Plain bar of unmarked generic soap, wax, or similar soft material with a non-porous surface
- Scrap paper
- Writing utensil
- Cuticle pusher or precision knife
- Pushpin or similar
- India ink or similar liquid
- Brush, cloth, or paper towel to apply liquid
- Gloves
- Cloth or paper towel for clean up

#### Cultural Arts 2:

- Common dried and polished bone, antler, shell, plastic, or thin balsa/similar plywood treated with a non-porous finish
- Scrap paper
- Writing utensil
- Precision knife or sharp pointed tool
- Pushpin or similar
- India ink or similar liquid
- Brush, cloth, or paper towel to apply liquid
- Gloves
- Cloth or paper towel for clean up

### KEY TERMS

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<i>baleen</i>	flexible plates found in the mouths of baleen whales used to filter out water while eating
<i>verdigris</i>	the green residue from copper being exposed to air over time, used as a pigment
<i>scrimshander</i>	one who carves designs and adds pigment onto whaling byproducts
<i>whalebone</i>	a term used to describe various hard materials derived from a whale including teeth, baleen, and bone
<i>cuqaaq</i>	Central Alaska Yup'ik term for baleen
<i>suqqaq</i>	Kobuk Iñupiaq term for baleen
<i>qaxsaḷ</i>	Unangaḷ term for baleen
<i>taḷin duni</i>	Outer Inlet Dena'ina term for baleen, literally 'whale's beard'



### A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

The Anchorage Museum refrains from using the terms Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut and instead uses language identified by the Alaska Native language groups. Due to these words' complicated history, the Anchorage Museum does not use these terms. However, it is important to note that Indigenous communities and individuals are at different places of healing and self-identity and may use these terms.

The largest Indigenous language family in North America is the Dene language family, which is commonly identified as 'Athabascan'—a word that is not native to any of the Indigenous languages to which it refers. Dene is a word for Indigenous peoples belonging to several cultures whose languages belong to the Dene language family with traditional homelands in Interior Alaska and into Western Canada; the word Dene means 'people' in several Dene languages.

## CULTURAL ARTS 1: SCRIMSHAW SCULPTURE

**TIME FRAME** Approximately 10 minutes

**MATERIALS** *Sculpture*, Roger Saavla Silook Sr.; 2014.023.011

**DIRECTIONS** 1. Begin by looking closely at the artwork. Use the questions below to guide discussion.

[10 min.]



**CLOSE-LOOKING:** Look closely, quietly at the object for a few minutes.

**OBSERVE:** Share your observations about each photograph.

#### ASK

- *What do you notice about the artwork?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What moods do the artworks create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

### SCRIMSHAW

In much of the 19th century, European and American whaling companies commercially hunted whales for their blubber and baleen. The high demand for whale oil made from the blubber led to unsustainable and wasteful whaling practices (see [Yankee Whaling](#) for an overview). Sailors on Euro-American whaling ships would often be out at sea for months at a time. Outside of maintaining the whaling vessel, hunting whales, and other duties, sailors would pass the time by using the byproducts of both toothed and baleen whales (bones, teeth, and baleen) in carving and in scrimshaw.

Scrimshaw is an art form that involves engraving and sometimes polishing a material such as whale teeth, baleen, ivory, bone, or sometimes shell. After etching or scratching an image into the surface of the material, a coloring agent like lamp soot or verdigris, the green residue from weathered copper, may be rubbed onto the etching to emphasize the linework. Many artists also use commercially produced pigments such as ink. Whaling ships often hired people from various Alaska Native communities as interpreters to facilitate trade. The influx of western materials led to Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, and Siberian Yupik communities incorporating paper, ink, and pencils into their respective art practices.

**DISCUSS** USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the artwork.



**WATCH:**

Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center Alaska - [Sculpting Ivory \(8 of 17\): Materials - Baleen](#)  
Cook Inlet Tribal Council - [Scrimshaw \(Never Alone Insight Collection\)](#)  
Curiosity Show - [Scrimshaw for Landlubbers](#)  
[Scrimshaw Timelapse](#)  
Nantucket Historical Association - [Scrimshaw, The Whaler's Art](#)

**READ:**

Journal of the American Institute for Conservation - [Baleen In Museum Collections](#)  
New Bedford Whaling Museum - [Art of Whaling](#)  
New Bedford Whaling Museum - [Yankee Whaling](#)  
Smithsonian National Museum of American History - [Scrimshaw Whaling Busk, 19th Century](#)  
Mystic Seaport Museum - [Diversity in the Whaling Industry](#)

## CULTURAL ARTS 1: SCRIMSHAW-INSPIRED TECHNIQUE

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Note that this art activity takes inspiration from the processes used in the creation of the artwork, rather than copying or replicating forms. It is culturally appropriative to replicate Iñupiaq, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, and Siberian Yupik designs.

**TIME FRAME**

Approximately 55 minutes

**MATERIALS**

Plain bar of unmarked generic soap, wax, or similar soft material with a non-porous surface

Scrap paper

Writing utensil

Cuticle pusher, or precision knife

Pushpin or similar

India ink or similar liquid

Brush, cloth, or paper towel to apply liquid

Gloves

Cloth or paper towel for clean up

Curiosity Show - [Scrimshaw for Landlubbers](#)

[Scrimshaw Timelapse](#)

**A NOTE ABOUT CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND THIS ACTIVITY**

This project takes inspiration from scrimshaw techniques, but students are not copying or replicating Alaska Native designs to avoid cultural appropriation. Instead, students will practice etching and coloring in designs that are not tied to specific cultures.



## DIRECTIONS

1. Rewatch **Scrimshaw for Landlubbers** and **Scrimshaw Timelapse** to observe the techniques used to etch and apply liquid pigment. Invite students to discuss specific techniques seen in the video.  
[10 min.]
2. Invite students to sketch out their designs with a writing utensil and ensure that they are not larger than the material on which they are engraving.  
[5 min.]
3. Encourage students to lightly trace their designs onto the material on which they are engraving with either a cuticle pusher or precision knife and begin etching.  
[10 min.]
4. Shavings may sometimes stick inside the etchings. Invite students to widen and deepen their linework to allow liquid to flow in without cutting through material.  
[5 min.]
5. Once all basic linework is finished, allow for students to use pushpins to etch finer details.  
[5 min.]
6. Invite students to put on gloves and apply India ink or a similar liquid using a brush or a cloth.  
[5min.]
7. When the liquid has set in, invite students to carefully wipe off the surface of the material using a damp cloth, being careful to avoid the linework.  
[5 min.]
8. Invite students to share their finished bag with the class. Discuss as a class: how did your skills and approach grow as you gained more experience? What did you learn about scrimshaw through this experience? How do you view the Baleen Sculpture by Ron Saavila Silook Sr. differently now that you have made your own scrimshaw-inspired work?  
[10 min.]

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of artwork, and artwork presentation to the class.

## CULTURAL ARTS 2: *SLED*

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	Approximately 10 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<i>Sled</i> , 1969.021.001



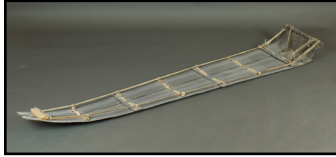


## DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by looking closely at the following object. Use the questions below to guide discussion.

[10 min.]

**CLOSE-LOOKING:** Look closely, quietly at the objects for a few minutes.



**OBSERVE:** Share your observations about each photograph.

### ASK

- *What do you notice about the object?*
- *What colors and materials does you notice?*
- *What might the object be used for?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

## DISCUSS

USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the artwork.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT BALEEN

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### WHAT IS BALEEN?

Unlike Beluga whales and other toothed whales, baleen whales like the bowhead whale possess large bristly plates in their mouths known as baleen. These plates are keratinous, similar to the structure of our nails and hair. The primary food source for baleen whales are small crustaceans such as krill. Baleen whales consume millions of krill per day through a process called filter feeding. By opening their mouths to take in up to 31,000 gallons of water, baleen whales can consume the large number of calories necessary to survive. After taking in water, baleen whales push it out of their mouths with their tongue while the plates of baleen act as a filter keeping everything else in for the whale to swallow.

### USES OF BALEEN

As a material, baleen is both strong and flexible. Its relative scarcity and the unique combination of properties responsible for its tensile strength, how well something resists stress, makes baleen valuable.

Alaska Native cultures use baleen for a variety of purposes. Thinner stands are pliable and can be used in snares, woven into baskets, fishing line, and nets. Thicker pieces can be used to make buckets, cups, and other containers as well as ice scoops, boat ribs, and sled runners. Historically, though baleen was available to any Alaskan Native group through trade and access to the coastal regions, items made of baleen are more prevalent in Iñupiaq and Siberian Yupik regions, where baleen is more readily available than other material such as wood.

In Europe and the United States, demand for whale oil in the late 1700s through the mid 1800s drove the whaling industry to expand outside the Atlantic Ocean as whale numbers in the Eastern United States plummeted from commercial hunting. At that time, baleen came to be used in Europe and the United States as springs in beds and early typewriters, as stays for dress shirt collars and corsets, as fishing rods, and even as hat brims. A combination of depleted whale populations and the widespread adoption of alternatives to whale oil and other whale products such as kerosine, turpentine, and steel led to the end of large-scale whaling as an industry.



## ALASKA NATIVE WHALING AND IÑUPIAQ WHALING FESTIVALS

Across Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, and Siberian Yupik communities, whaling provides thousands of pounds of calorie and nutrient rich food every year. Whaling harvests in Alaska occur when whales migrate around the end of spring in late April to early May and during the open water season in the late summer and fall. Alaska Native communities along the coast have continually and sustainably harvested whales for thousands of years. Archaeological digs on St. Lawrence Island provide physical evidence of harvested whale meat and blubber dating back one thousand years. The cultural significance of whaling is evident, with the International Whaling Commission acknowledging that “Whaling, more than any other activity, fundamentally underlies the total lifeway of these [Alaska Native] communities.”

The success of a whale harvest is reflected in the celebrations of sharing meat and maktak, whale blubber and skin, within and between communities. Once a whaling crew successfully harvests a whale, they butcher and divide the whale among the whaling crew, which they further divide for redistribution. In Iñupiaq communities, whaling crews share whale meat during celebrations like the captain's feast, *Apugauti*, *Nalukataq*, American Thanksgiving, Christmas, and to individuals in personal distributions throughout the year.

The first successful whaling crew holds the captain's feast the day after butchering the whale. The crew's flag is set up on the roof of the captain's home where the crew and their spouses spend the day preparing food for the whole community. Once all preparations are in order, the captain announces the start of the feast by Citizen's Band (CB) radio. Members of the community visit the captain's home, where crew member spouses distribute bags of food. Relatives of the captain and elders dine with the captain and the crew and receive additional bags of maktak and cooked whale meat. Lastly, the captain and crew members personally deliver bags to elders who were unable to attend. Once the captain and the crew have distributed all the food, the crew flag is taken down and the captain makes the closing announcement over CB radio.

Single whaling crews typically hold various *Apugauti* feasts in early to mid-June. These are smaller in scale than *Nalukataq*, serving anywhere from 100 to 400 guests. Several whaling crews come together to hold *Nalukataq* festivals near the summer solstice to honor the successful bowhead whale harvests of the year as well as the people involved in hunting and processing the harvest. Various Iñupiaq communities often schedule their *Nalukataq* festivals to overlap to allow for relatives to travel across communities and celebrate together. The festival spans several days and hosts upwards of 2000 guests.

### WATCH:

Cale Green - [Tikiqag - A Point Hope Whaling Story](#)

BBC - [Whale Hunters of Alaska](#)

Voice of America - [Nalukataq footage from 2018](#)

University of Alaska Fairbanks - [Nalukataq footage from 1945](#)

## LEARN MORE

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### Additional Related Museum Resources:

Attungaruk the Third's Whale: <https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/programs/for-educators/teaching-resources/art-attungaruk-the-third-s-whale/>

Bowhead Whale: <https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/programs/for-educators/teaching-resources/bowhead-whale/>

Neqeniighta: <https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/programs/for-educators/teaching-resources/art-neqeniighta/>





## CULTURAL ARTS 2: SCRIMSHAW ON HARD MATERIAL

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Note that this art activity takes inspiration from the processes used in the creation of the artwork, rather than copying or replicating forms. It is culturally appropriative to replicate Iñupiaq, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, and Siberian Yupik designs.

<b>TIME</b>	Approximately 50 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Common dried and polished bone, antler, shell, plastic, or thin balsa/similar plywood treated with a non-porous finish
	Scrap paper
	Writing utensil
	Precision knife or sharp pointed tool
	Pushpin or similar
	India ink or similar liquid
	Brush, cloth, or paper towel to apply liquid
	Gloves
	Cloth or paper towel for clean up
	Curiosity Show - <a href="#">Scrimshaw for Landlubbers</a>

### [Scrimshaw Timelapse](#)

#### **A NOTE ABOUT CULTURAL APPROPRIATION, SOURCING MATERIALS, AND THIS ACTIVITY**

This project takes inspiration from scrimshaw techniques, but students are not copying or replicating Alaska Native designs to avoid cultural appropriation. Instead, students will practice etching and coloring in designs that are not tied to specific cultures.

Educators are encouraged to invite an Elder or culture bearer into the classroom to share their cultural practices related to this unit. Elders and culture bearers should receive financial compensation for their time and expertise. Consider grants from the Anchorage School District or the Alaska State Council for the Arts to help cover this cost.

If an Elder or culture bearer visits your class, discuss what they will share and how they want students to use this information. In this case, it may be appropriate for students to use traditional materials or techniques (e.g. an Elder provides baleen for students or wants students to copy a specific design). Otherwise, avoid using material that is not easily commercially attainable.

<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Rewatch <a href="#">Scrimshaw for Landlubbers</a> and <a href="#">Scrimshaw Timelapse</a> to observe the methods used to etch and apply liquid pigment. Invite students to discuss specific techniques seen in the video. [10 min.]</li><li>2. Revisit the objects and invite students to brainstorm ways in which similar materials may be used for scrimshaw. Distribute different materials for students</li></ol>
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to practice scrimshanding.  
[5min.]

**3.** Invite students to sketch out their designs with a writing utensil and ensure that they are not larger than the material on which they are engraving.  
[5 min.]

**4.** Encourage students to lightly trace their designs onto the hard material with either a precision knife and begin etching.  
[15 min.]

**5.** Shavings may sometimes stick in the etchings. Invite students to widen and deepen their linework to allow liquid to flow in without cutting through the material.  
[5 min.]

**6.** Once all basic linework is finished, allow for students to use pushpins to etch finer details.  
[15 min.]

**7.** Invite students to put on gloves and apply India ink or a similar liquid using a brush or a cloth.  
[2min.]

**8.** When the liquid has set in, invite students to wipe off the surface off the hard material using a damp cloth, being careful to avoid the linework.  
[2 min.]

**9.** Invite students to share their finished artwork with the class. Discuss as a class: how did your skills and approach grow as you gained more experience? How did your design shift from your original plan? What have you learned about scrimshaw through this experience? How would you view the sculpture and the sled differently now that you have more experience working with scrimshaw technique? What differences did you see with students working with other materials?  
[10 min.]

## CULTURAL ARTS: POLISHING BALEEN

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Note that this activity should be done with the guidance and permission of an elder or a culture bearer who has provided the baleen. In the absence of an elder or a culture bearer, please skip ahead to step 6. Instructions courtesy of Solomon Elavgak of Utqiaġvik.

**TIME** Variable depending on size of baleen pieces. 25 minutes for discussion topics.

**MATERIALS** Baleen provided by an elder or culture bearer

Palm sander

150 grain felt pad

220 grain felt pad

180 grain sandpaper



220 padded sand paper

Fine steel wool

White and green compound chalk

Rotating buffer machine

Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center Alaska - [Sculpting Ivory \(8 of 17\): Materials - Baleen](#)

#### **DIRECTIONS**

1. Attach a 150 grain felt pad to a palm sander and sand your piece of baleen.
2. Attach a 220 grain felt pad to a palm sander and sand your piece of baleen.
3. If removing deep scratches, use 180 grain sand paper to remove deep scratches and 220 grain padded sandpaper to smoothen it by hand.
4. Scrub using fine steel wool starting at the wider portion of baleen.
5. Dip a small amount of white and green compound chalk onto a buffing machine. Compress the baleen against the buffing machine starting at the wider portion and work upwards to shine.
6. Discuss as a class: From the instructions above, with what materials might baleen be similar or different? What other ways can you polish baleen? How might the experience of polishing an entire piece of baleen differ from polishing a small piece?  
[10 min.]
5. Watch the video on polishing baleen from Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center Alaska - [Sculpting Ivory \(8 of 17\): Materials - Baleen](#). Invite students to discuss similarities and differences to polishing baleen between Clifford Apatiki's technique in the video with Solomon Elavgak's directions listed above.  
[15 min.]

#### **ASSESSMENT**

Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of artwork, and artwork presentation to the class.

