



Name _____

Woodworking Virtual Gallery

Woodworking and the use of wood is an important part of aboriginal culture. Not only does it represent the use of an abundant resource, but also reflects the cultural beliefs about the world around them.

What symbols or images can you see here? (For example, the adze handle has an animal carved on it.) What do you think they might mean?

Because wood does not preserve well in the archaeological record, wooden tools are rare finds. We learn from the people themselves how woodworking has been done by their ancestors. What parts of these tools would be preserved in an archaeological site? (What parts are made from metal or stone?)

Splitting wood into planks

As wood was an abundant resource on the Northwest Coast, the aboriginal people developed complex and efficient techniques of woodworking. Small wooden pegs were inserted into a groove in a log and struck with a maul until the log split. Do you think it would have taken a lot of time and energy to split logs into planks? What might people do with the planks? What would they build?

Hafted Maul

A 'composite' tool made of different materials. These mauls were used like a hammer to split logs and planks.

D-Adze

Used for planing or smoothing wood planks. The handle is made of carved wood and the blade is metal. Before the arrival of Europeans the blades of adzes were made of stone. Why do you think the people would adopt the new style of adze blades?

Bailer

Used to remove water from a canoe during trips. The form makes it very easy to scoop water quickly. It is made from folded cedar bark, a stick and some string. If you were out canoeing you might need something like this, what would you use?

Crooked knife

Common composite carving tool. A crooked knife has a curved metal blade hafted onto a wooden handle. How do you think they were used? What types of objects were carved with a crooked knife? Look in a specialty tool catalogue like Lee Valley. Can you find a similar tool? What does this tell about the efficiency of the design?

Hand Adze

Wooden handle lashed to metal blade. When you think of archaeology what do you think is usually the only part of the tool that is usually preserved? If you found only that part, could you imagine the rest of the tool? What mistakes might you make? ("I thought it might be ___ instead.")

Animal shaped D-Adze

Used for planing or smoothing wood planks. Do you think this tool is more modern? Why?

Hand Maul

Hand mauls were used much the same way that hafted mauls were used, basically like a hammer. But because they are held by hand much more fine, finishing work can be done with a hand maul. These tools were made by pecking and grinding until the desired shape was achieved. Do you think it would take a long time to make these tools? Do you think they were a valued tool by the woodworker? Do you think a woodworker made his or her own hand mauls, or might there have been specialists who made them? If so, what would this tell us about the economy?

Elbow Adze

Used also for smoothing planks of wood. How is this adze different from other types of adzes?

Cedar Bentwood Box

Made from one plank of wood, steamed, bent, and painted. On top of the box are small wood carving tools for fine, detail carving. Can you tell what animal form is painted on this box?

Engraving and Incising Tools

Engraving awl can be used to drill holes in wood. Incising tools used for relief carving. Because bone and ivory are not always preserved in sites, they are found in the archaeological record less often than stone tools. Yet we know that for the fine work necessary for carved wooden bowls, masks and other ceremonial objects, these types of tools were used often.

Carving Knife

Carved by Henry Hunt. Wood carving knives of the distant past were also made from stone blades. Do you think that carving is easier with stone or metal blades? What is the figure carved on the handle?

Bone Chisel

Using a small hand maul, the carver would tap the end of the chisel and carve out grooves from the wood. Different sized chisels would produce different sized grooves. The end on the right side of the picture is the cutting end.

Ray Wesley Tsimshian Beaver Carved Bowl

This ceremonial bowl used for feasting and potlatch was carved by Ray Wesley, a Tsimshian artist. Look again at the different tools and try to figure out which tools were used to manufacture and decorate this bowl. What clues do you see that will help you identify this animal as a beaver?

Birchwood Mask

Trimmed with ermine and human hair. Carved and painted by Ken Mowatt. What tools were used to carve this mask? Ermine are small weasels that change their color in winter. Do you think these are winter or summer pelts? Why do you think they are on a mask?
