



PADDLE MAKING

In this workshop, the learner will acquire skills to create a red or yellow cedar paddle. The paddles from the coast of British Columbia are as diverse as the nations and communities that make up the province. Expanding on your knowledge from our Indigenous Skills workshop on paddle pendants, this workshop builds on the use of other tools, such as hand planers and draw knives, for creating a paddle from red or yellow cedar.

The supplies and tools listed below are required.

Materials

- Red or yellow cedar $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $3\frac{1}{4}$ " x 28"

Supplies

- Pencils: 4B, HB, and a red pencil
- Eraser (gum erasers work best)
- 1-metre ruler
- Tracing paper
- Thick construction paper (heavy weight that holds up to tracing)
- Tape
- Flexible clear ruler (knitting ruler)
- Rubber mat (cupboard liner)
- Sandpaper – 100-, 150-, and 220-grits

Tools

- Draw knife
- Block planer
- Skew
- Straight knife, slight bent knife
- Hand saw
- Clamps (c-clamp and f-clamp)
- Palm sander or orbital sander

Safety

- Eye protection
- Ear protection
- Dust mask
- Safety boots

Procedure

This procedure can be used for any size paddle, a small dance paddle or a full-size ocean or river paddle.

1. Choose a piece of clear, edge-grain cut yellow cedar with minimal knots. Knots in the wood will make it difficult to work with the wood.

2. Measure and draw the center line around the entire length of the plank (front and back).
3. Trace a template of the wood onto a piece of thick paper. Measure and draw center line.
4. Draw half of a paddle shape onto one half of a folded piece of heavy paper, thus creating a template. Trace the shape onto the opposite side.
5. Cut the paper template out and then lay it on the cedar plank. Line the center line up on both ends and tape the template down.
6. Trace the template onto the cedar plank. Cut the paddle's shape out using a band saw. Make sure that you cut on the outside of the traced line (a jigsaw can also be used if there is no access to a band saw).
7. With a RED pencil, mark the center line all the way around the edge of the cut-out paddle.
8. Measure one quarter thickness on both sides of the center line and mark all the way around with a different pencil, other than red.
9. Draw a line to mark the location of your handle. Use a handsaw to cut down to the 1/4" line.

NOTE: The thickness of the handle will be determined by the thickness of the cedar.

DO NOT CUT TO THE CENTER LINE.

10. Place the paddle down on a non slip rubber mat that you have placed on your desk/workbench. Prop one side of paddle up and attach opposite end with a C-clamp or F-clamp so that paddle will not slip.
11. Starting at the throat of your paddle blade and working to the tip, use a block planer or the draw knife to take off material. Your goal is to leave the paddle's throat area thicker. You slim

the paddle down towards the tip of its blade. Angle the blades of either the block planer or draw knife just a bit for a smoother and easier cut.

12. Once you have the blade and the throat of the paddle cut to the desired thickness, it is time to shape the grip. Secure the paddle to your table. You will need to use both hands to create this part. I use a skew for cutting across the end grain. You can wet the grip here with a little water to make the cut a bit easier. Before you cut, measure and mark the center on both sides and the end. Draw on the desired shape and then cut. Stop short of the end so that you do not tear the sides of the grip. Draw on the center lines and the shape of the paddle grip. Use a skew to cut across the grain on the grip. Once completed, cut the thumb areas out, either with your bandsaw or a straight knife.
13. Sand the paddle that you have just created. Use a palm sander, orbital sander, or a block of wood with sandpaper wrapped around it. Sand the whole paddle with 100-grit sandpaper from blade tip to grip. Keep moving up in grit from 150 to 180. Conduct a final sanding by hand with 220-grit sandpaper.

Optional Step

Paint a design element on the paddle of your choosing in acrylic paint. You can oil your project to protect it afterwards using a Danish oil, clear or natural finish. Let the wood absorb the oil. Absorption takes a couple days.

Working with the wood grain

Different types of wood have distinct grain patterns and texture. There are a few different ways that wood can be cut: plain sawn, quarter sawn and rift sawn.

Generally speaking, the ideal grain for these paddles is a grain that runs straight and parallel from the grip to blade tip (end to end of the paddle).

When working on the edges of the paddle blade, work away from the widest part of the blade to begin to create the curve.

End Grain

When you are carving the end of the grip, you will be working with end grain. Sharp tools are crucial to success when working on end grain. Finding the easiest direction to work with will make this part of the process more enjoyable. When working across the end grain, I usually pick up the skew knife, which has an angle to it. Using this tool makes working with end grain easier.

