



SPOON CARVING

In the 'Spoon Carving' project, the learner will be able to acquire the fundamental skills to create a yellow cedar spoon. An elegant and simple shape, the spoons from the Coast were fashioned from materials such as wood, or goat and sheep horns. Some spoons were simple, for everyday use; others were ornately carved with crest figures and brought out for ceremonial feasts. Furthering your knowledge from previous Indigenous Skills workshops, this Spoon workshop starts by looking at art from the Northwest Coast as sculpture. This workshop features an introduction to more symmetrical carving and provides additional experience with hand tools, such as skewers, gauges, and finishing products.

Materials

- Yellow Cedar 2" x 3" x 10"

Supplies

- Pencils: HB, F
- Eraser (gum erasers work best)
- Tracing paper
- Thick construction paper (heavy weight that holds up to tracing)
- Tape
- Flexible clear ruler (knitting ruler)
- Rubber mat (cupboard liner)
- Sandpaper – 100-, 120-, 150-, 220-grits

Tools

- Spoon templates
- Exacto knife or scissors

- Skew, straight chisel, #8L/30 gouge, #3/30 gouge
- Mallet
- Vice (if you have access to one)
- Straight knife, slight bent knife, bent knife
- Palm sander or orbital sander
- Bandsaw (if you have access to one)
- Clamps (c-clamp or f-clamp)

Safety

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

Procedure

This procedure can be used for any size yellow cedar spoon, whether a small feast spoon or a larger ladle.

1. Choose a piece of clear, edge-grain cut yellow cedar with no knots. Knots in the wood on this size project will make it difficult to work with the wood.
2. Fold a piece of transfer paper in half. Using a spoon template, trace the template onto a piece of folded paper using the fold as a center line. Now, fold the paper, pencil side in, and trace over the design. This process ensures that both sides of the spoon are identical.
3. Draw a cross (representing center lines) on a piece of construction paper. Use the tracing paper to transfer the pattern onto thicker construction paper and cut it out (you can re-use at a later date). Place your piece of tracing paper on the construction paper (pencil side down). Line the center lines up and trace over the existing pencil lines.
4. Measure and draw a center line around the entire length and width of the cedar board (front and back). To find the center of the board, draw a diagonal line from corner to corner. The two lines meet at dead center. These lines act as guides to help in carving the project even on both sides, front and back.
5. Line up the center lines and, using your new templates, trace the design onto the piece of wood.
6. Following the pattern, cut the spoon shape out using a bandsaw or scroll saw (a portable jigsaw). I usually do the bottom of the side profile first, followed by the top. Once the top is cut off, I re-draw the top using the template and then cut the top shape. At this point, you are left with a square spoon shape. To ensure your safety and prevent injury, use proper PPE, follow proper operating procedures, and use safety guards.
7. Re-draw all center lines around the spoon.
8. Start with shaping (rounding) the back side.
9. Mark a series of lines, $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart, starting from the outer edge of the spoon working towards the center line.
10. Clamp the spoon to the bench and start carving at the bottom of the spoon. Work your way outwards from the center to slowly round off the spoon. Use a flat chisel and mallet or a skew grasped in both hands. Complete one side then the other.
11. You may use just a skew or straight knife to smooth out the cuts that you have created. Once the spoon's outer shape is close to what you've imagined, move to the inner spoon.
12. Clamp your spoon upright in a vice if you have access to one. If not, you can use your lap with a leather apron. If working on your lap, be extra careful with the chisel and mallet. You can also just use bent knives with your spoon resting on a rubber mat. One hand holds the spoon; the other uses the bent knife.
13. Start carving out the center of the spoon working from the outside edge to the center.
14. Once you have carved most of the wood from the center, use the bent knives to even it up and even the thickness out. Use your fingers to guide your work on the high and low parts.
15. When your spoon and handle are consistent and there is even thickness on both sides, you can begin sanding.
16. Start sanding with 100-grit paper. You can sand by hand or you can use a palm sander or orbital sander.
17. After 100-grit sanding all over the spoon, it is time to go back over the spoon with a knife (bent or straight depending what you are working on) to make sure that the spoon is even.
18. Sand with 120-grit, 150-grit, and finally 220-grit.
19. Your spoon is complete – add a design with acrylic paint or leave it plain, then oil to finish.

NOTE: Oil finishing is covered in another workshop.

