two or three on the other’ (1953:48). He also reported that
Capsize recovery with the single-bladed paddle was possible in
the one-hole kayak.

**Bering Sea Paddles**

The Bering Sea people (Bristol Bay, Nunivak Island, the
Kuskokwim/Yukon Delta region and Norton Sound) used
double-bladed paddles for speed and singles for normal use.
After the introduction of rifles, the kayaks became beamier for
greater stability and the use of the double-bladed paddle went
almost out of existence. I saw none in use in the Bering Sea
area in the mid-1970s.
The single-bladed paddles average about 5’ (154.1 cm) in
overall length with blades less than half the total paddle length
and a ‘‘T’’ grip put on with a mortise and tenon joint. Painting of
shaft and blade was common.
Paddling technique was simply two strokes per side with no
twisting or turning of the shaft as in a ‘‘J’’ stroke. Capsize
recovery via single-bladed paddle is reported, but no infor-
mants I talked to could do it or had seen it performed.

**Figure 6:** Hooper Bay, Alaska kayak paddle made by
Dick Bunyan; measurements in cm.

**ANGUARUN** (SINGLE-BLADED PADDLE)

![Diagram of paddle]

Figure 6 is a single-bladed paddle made in Hooper Bay,
Alaska, and now in the collections of the National Museum of
Man in Ottawa. The blade is ridged symmetrically on both sides
with the blade cross-section concave from the ridge to the
blade edge. The shaft has a round cross-section. The blade is
1/4” (0.6 cm) thick at a distance of 3/16” (0.5 cm) from the
edge. The grip ends are 1” (2.6 cm) diameter with the diameter
measuring 1 1/4” (3.7 cm) in the middle. The blade is painted
blue with the shaft and grip green. Kayak builder Dick Bunyan
told me that the correct paddle length for Hooper Bay kayaks is
an armspan (the original measure for a fathom) with the ends
gripped in the second finger-joints.

**Bering Strait Paddles**

Bering Strait paddles exhibit the greatest variability of any
group discussed. There are few examples of double-bladed
paddles. The singles have long symmetric blades with the
handgrips often carved rather than mortised on.
The King Island variety of Bering Strait paddles has the most
elaborate painted decorations on the blades. The paint was
usually black and red. Some of these paddles are further
decorated with grooves carved up the side starting where the
blade joins the loom. Paddle length was determined exactly
the same as in Hooper Bay. The loom was elliptical in cross-
section with the maximum diameter perpendicular to the plane
of the blade. Two strokes on each side paddled the kayak in a
straight course.

According to John Heath’s informants (1972:26), the double-
bladed paddle (pautik) was one and one-half armspans long with
blades about 20” (50.8 cm) long by 4” (10.2 cm) wide. The
loom was elliptical.

**North Alaska Paddles**

Paddles of North Alaska are all double-bladed with short
blades that may or may not be symmetric. Usually they were
ridged on at least one side. Red and black paint on blades, shaft
or both was uncommon.

Figure 7 is of a typical North Alaska double-bladed paddle. It
is in the collections of the University Museum at the University
of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately there is no date or provenance
listed, but it was associated with a short kayak of the type used
for retrieving seals shot from the floe edge. The black-painted
blades are ridged on one side only. The shaft has an elliptical
cross-section.

**Figure 8:** Mackenzie Eskimo paddle; measurements in cm.

![Diagram of paddle]