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Tanning moose hide in Watson Lake,
Yukon (2012)

My research is focused on hide tanning and how this act is represented within the archaeological record. I have had the opportunity to learn from Kaska Elders how to tan moose hide.

I have a specific interest in a type of stone tool that is known as a *chi-tho* (or *tabular biface*), which is used in the softening stage of hide tanning



a



b

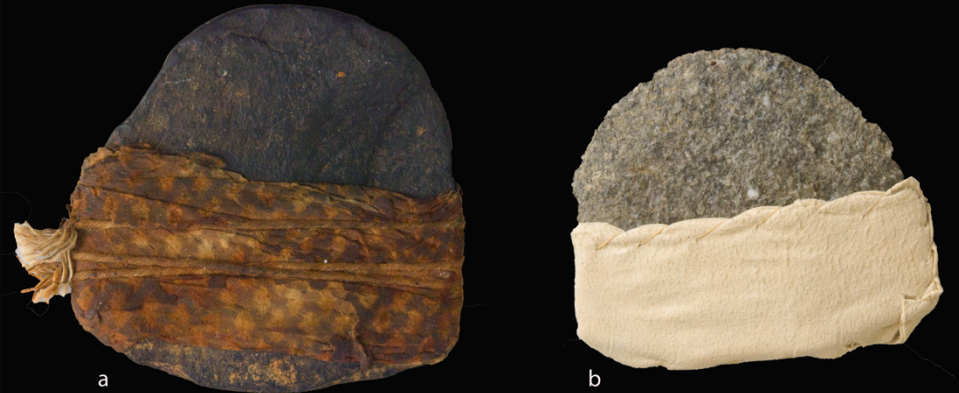


c

0 5 cm

Examples of hafted chi-thos

Tabular bifaces can be used in a hand-held or hafted fashion. They are found at archaeological sites and in some communities continue to be used to this day.



a

b

0 5cm

Examples of hand-held chi-thos



Hide Tanning in Watson Lake, Yukon



The flesh is removed from the hide using a traditional bone flesher.





After the flesh is removed, the hide is strung up on a frame so that the hair can be scraped off.



The hair is removed with a metal scraper. Similar implements made of stone are commonly found at archaeological sites.







The hide is smoked for two days. One day per side.

Rotten spruce wood is used. It results in a golden brown colour of the hide.





Following the smoking, the hide is soaked for 24 hours. Post soaking, it is wrung out and scraped again.







What I have learned from the Elders is helping me to understand how the act of hide tanning is reflected in the archaeological record.

I have been looking at hide processing requirements of tipi covers on the Northern Plains as well as the leather requirements for the moccasins of the Promontory Caves, Utah.



Frances Lake, Yukon (2012)