

Why I use a Greenland Paddle

An appreciation of the subtle joys of the traditional paddle by **Christopher Crowhurst**

LIKE religion, people newly converted to traditional paddling can be a little over zealous. Proclamations of the Greenland paddle's superiority over other styles are rampant on the Internet, and are generally fraught with bias and subjective conjecture. My own preference is built upon an obsession. I have been obsessed with Greenland Paddles since the very first time I saw a Greenland roll performed (which was performed by the president of the local paddle club at the time, Jeff Forseth, in the middle of Cedar Lake, an urban lake in the Twin Cities).

There is a simple elegance to Greenland Rolling and traditional paddling in general that builds upon the characteristics of the Greenland paddle, its

symmetry, its simplicity, its buoyancy. There is also a deep sense of connection that one can derive from paddling with a tool that you have made yourself. Simply fashioned from a 2x4 with basic tools like saws, planes, or my favorite, the spoke shave. A Greenland paddle is within the reach of anyone and everyone.

I have a collection of roughly fifty Greenland paddles, each with its own unique properties and characteristics. Slight changes in a Greenland paddle's shape, length, and width can profoundly affect the paddle's performance in specific conditions, or its effectiveness to perform specific tasks. My favorite Greenland paddle for surfing is not the same as the one I like to use on long trips, which is not the same as the one I use when practicing rolling, which is not the same as the one I use in a sprint race. It is not unusual to see me paddling with three Greenland paddles on board, not because I am indecisive, but because I like to use the right tool for the job.

The simplistic appearance of the Greenland paddle belies the complex nuances that this elegant tool possesses.

Just as there is a dichotomy in the simplicity and complexity of the paddle shape, the paddling strokes used to propel and turn the kayak are also nuanced in history and purpose. Whether learning to paddle silently to hunt sea mammals (or Styrofoam targets) or swiftly to



retrieve fallen prey (or chase down your fellow paddlers), the ancient strokes of the Inuit paddlers of Greenland provide a stroke for every scenario. Yet due to the friendly, non-threatening simplicity of the paddle, anyone can pick one up and propel a kayak forward with ease and control.

Rather than forming a dogmatic opinion of any paddle type or style, my recommendation is to experiment, try them all, and see what fits you, your body, your kayak, and your situation. Maybe the Greenland paddle will capture your heart too.

Christopher Crowhurst was runner up in 2016 for the "All-Around Good Guy Award" as decided by an unverified list of Greenland paddlers. He is also this year's president of Qajaq USA.

SEALECTDESIGNS

Paddle Clip
Split Clip Design
Integrated Hook Eyes
Anti-Snag Ends

Industry Leading Kayak Fishing Gear

Kayak Outfitting, Accessories and Replacement Hatch Covers

seallectdesigns.com | come visit us at booth **K13**