

# QAMUTIIK

## BACKGROUND

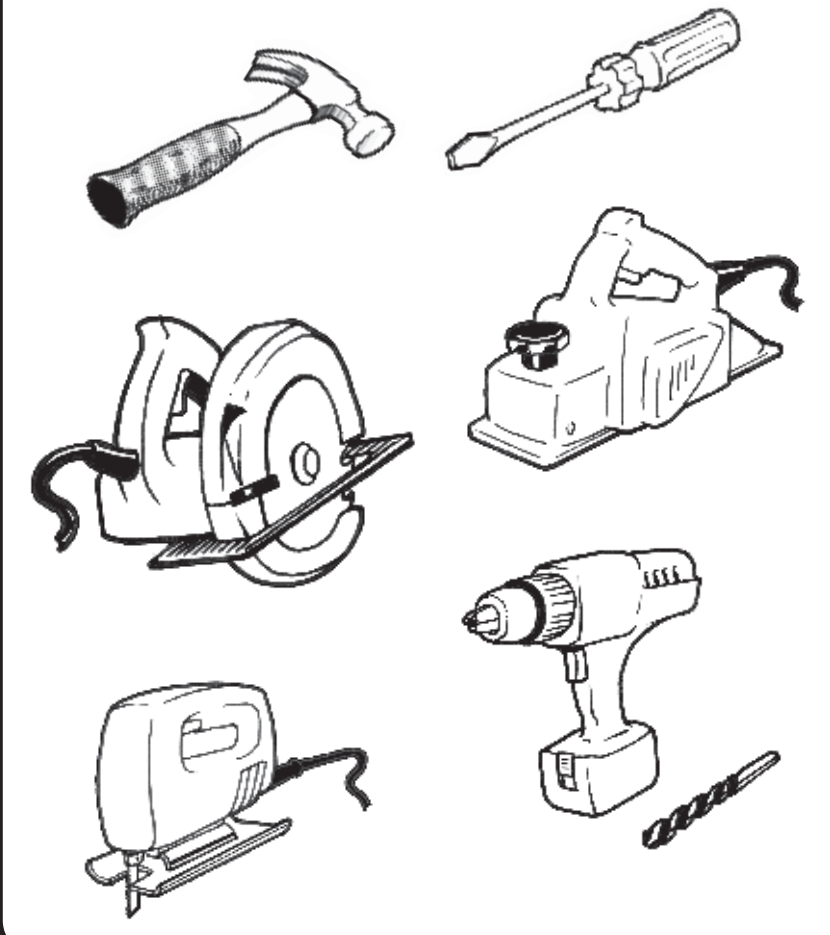
The Qamutiik is an essential tool in the far north. Its versatility, unique construction and dependability have allowed it to endure over time.

Early qamutiik frames were made from whalebone, driftwood, antlers, and sealskin rope. The runners were made from frozen fish held together with frozen caribou or walrus skin. The running surface was prepared from either moistened moss covered with layers of ice or the rib bone of a bowhead whale covered with ice. It was an art to build a sturdy but light qamutiik in order to haul belongings and people over huge distances of ice and snow. These sleds were hauled by dogs and sometimes by people. Maintenance of these sleds was done every day to keep them performing well in the harshest of conditions.

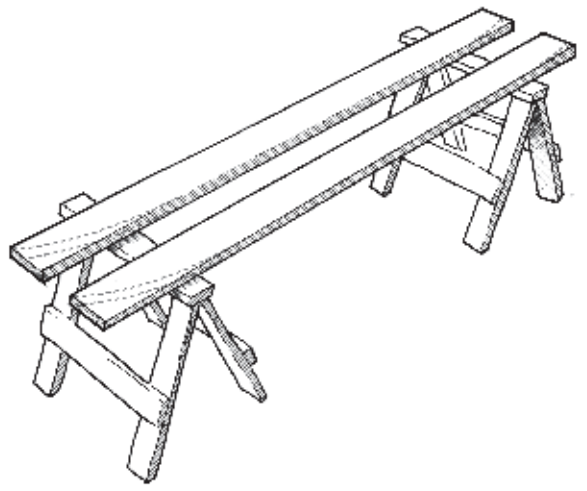
Today's qamutiiks still require a lot of skill to build and are based on the same principles as earlier sleds. There are many different variations of qamutiiks depending on the region of the North in which they are being used. The principle of the qamutiik is for it not to be rigid—but to be able to flex and move with the surface of the ice. Tying the qamutiik with rope rather than using nails or screws to hold it together allows for this flexibility and durability which is essential in the harsh and rough conditions of the Arctic.

This poster describes the steps used in the construction of a North Baffin qamutiik.

## TOOLS REQUIRED

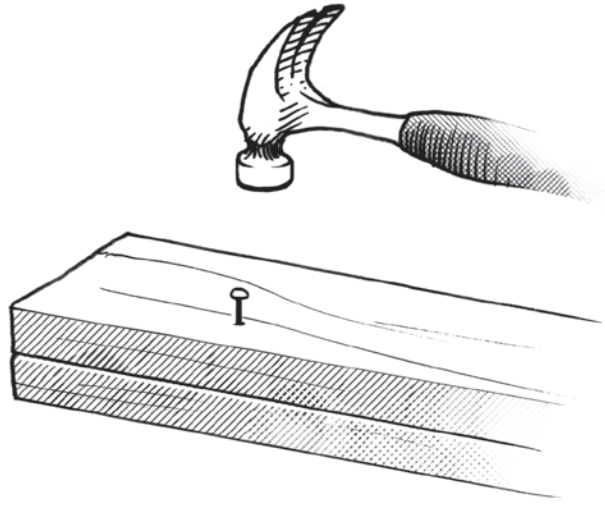


## Shape Runners



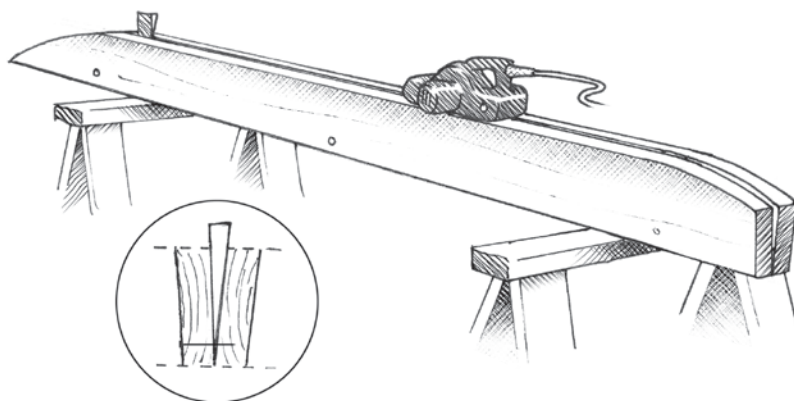
Rough out the shape of the runners with a skill saw or jigsaw. The shape of the front and rear is dependant on ice and snow conditions

## Join Runners



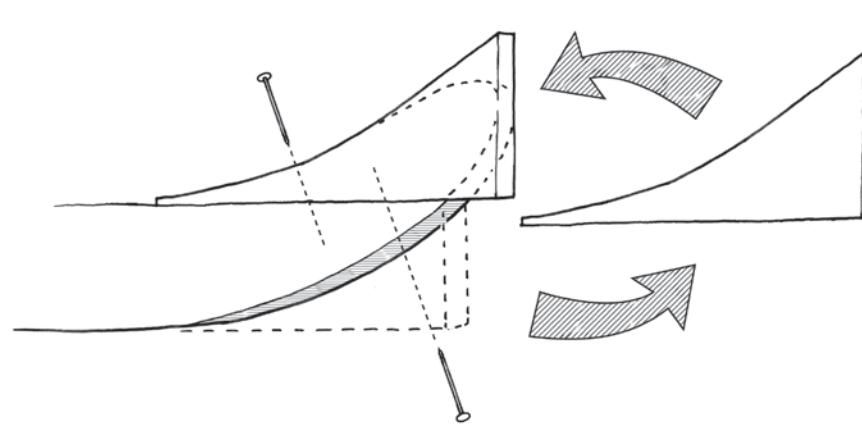
Temporarily join the runners together with spikes

## Angle Runners



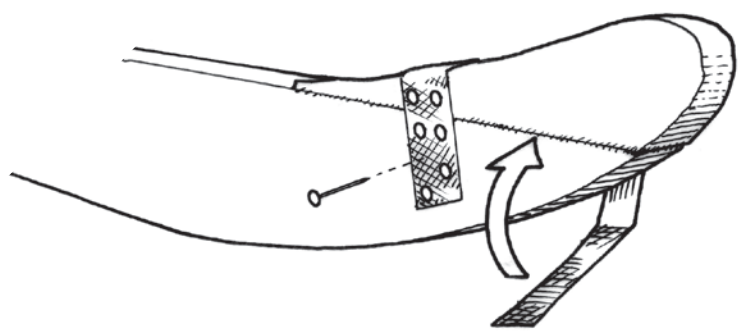
Insert wedges into the bottom seam of the two runners. Using a plane flatten out the top and bottom surfaces to angle the runners

## Shape Front



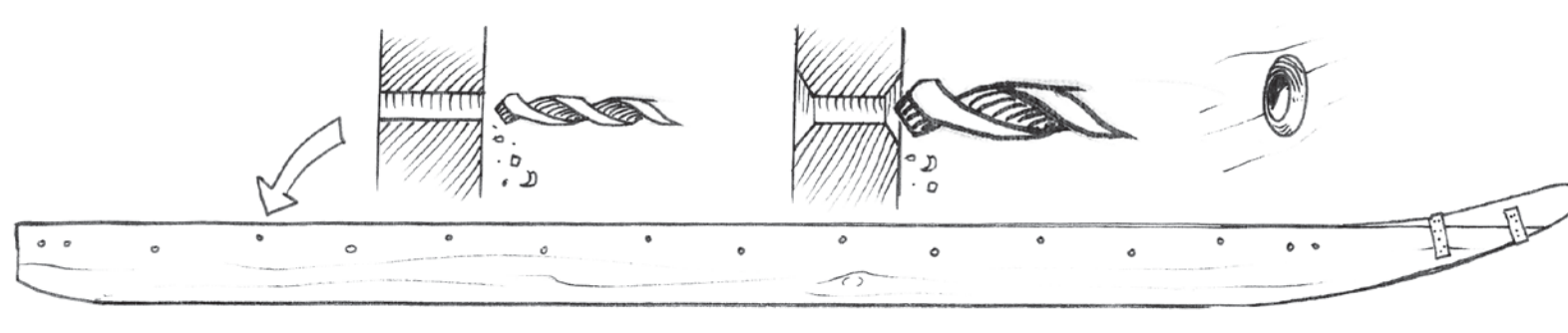
Separate the runners and use the piece you cut off the bottom and fasten it to the top. Shape the front using the skill saw and plane

## Reinforce Front



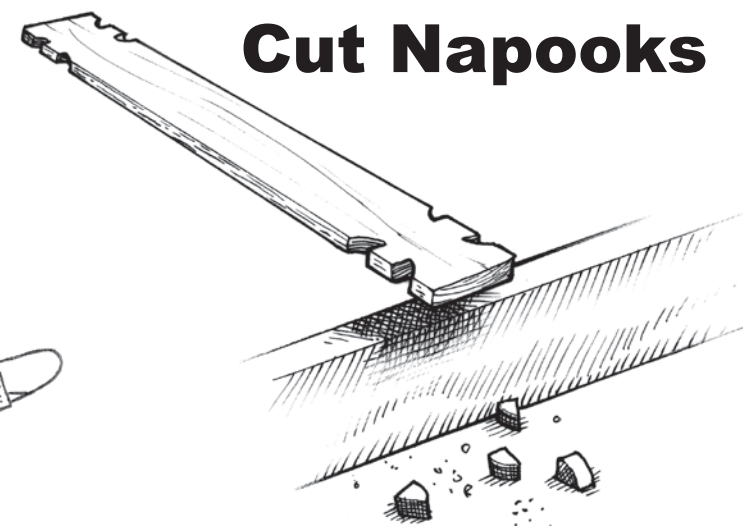
Use light or medium gauge sheet metal to reinforce the front section of the runners. Attach with screws or ribbed nails

## Drill Holes



Drill holes in the runners as pictured above. Ensure the holes are offset to reduce the possibility of cracking. Round off the holes to minimize rope fraying

## Cut Napooks



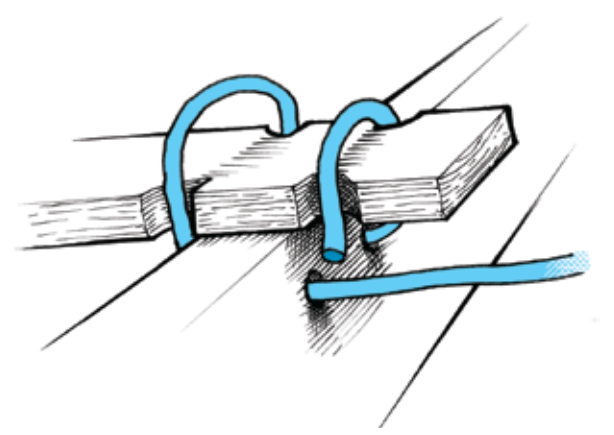
Cut crossmembers (Napooks). There is wide variation in the shape and style of Napooks. Generally hard woods will last longer

## First/Last Napook

(front to back)

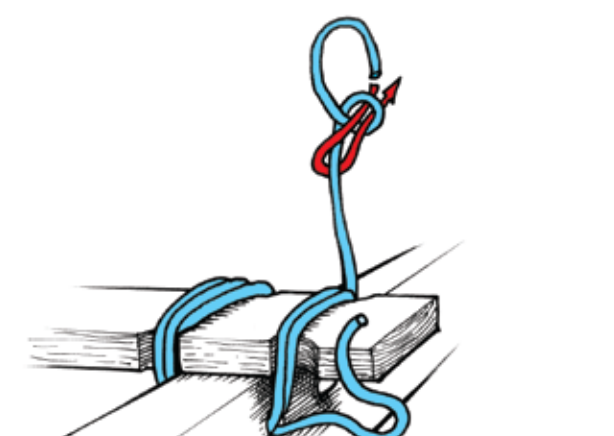
1

Feed the rope through the holes in the runners as indicated



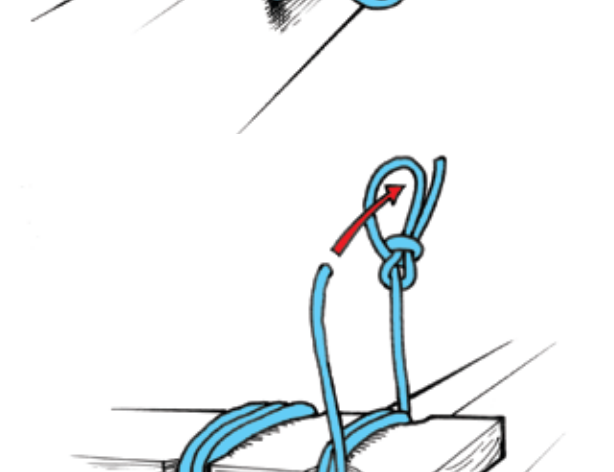
2

Feed the rope twice more as in step 1. Do not tighten. Create a loop in the end of the rope



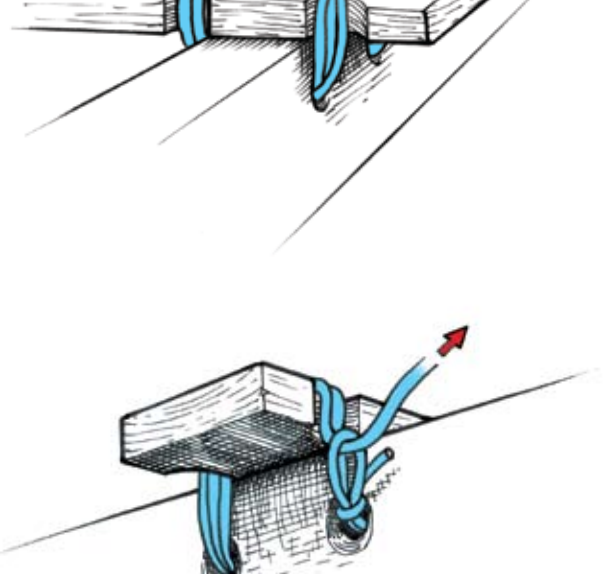
3

Feed the loose end of the rope through the loop you created



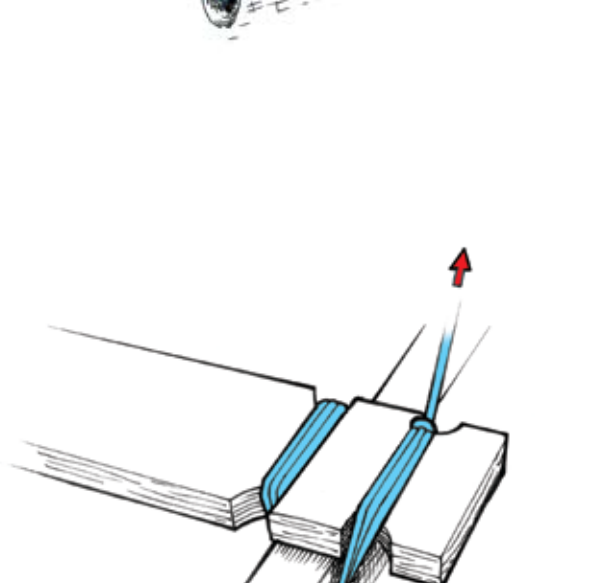
4

Tighten the rope so that the loop is just protruding from the hole in the runner



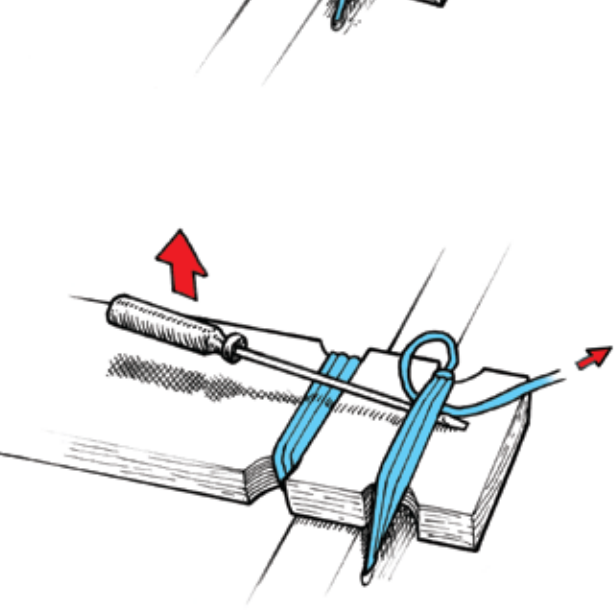
5

Tighten the free end of the rope. You may have to tighten each round or rope separately



6

Lift the outside round of rope slightly with a screwdriver. Feed the loose end of the rope under and repeat many times. Tie off with half hitch



## Tying Napooks

(front to back)

1

Insert a loop into a hole from the inside of the runner



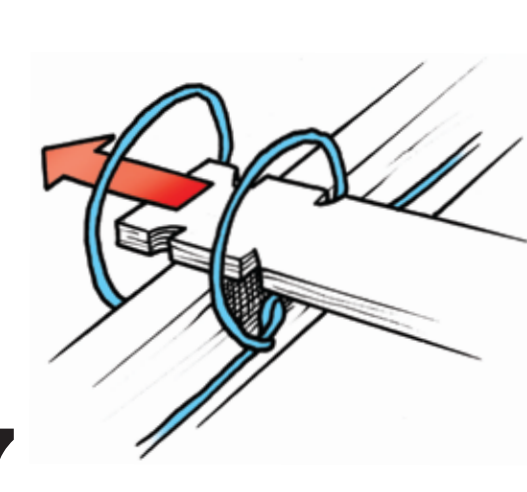
2

Enlarge the loop on the outside of the runner



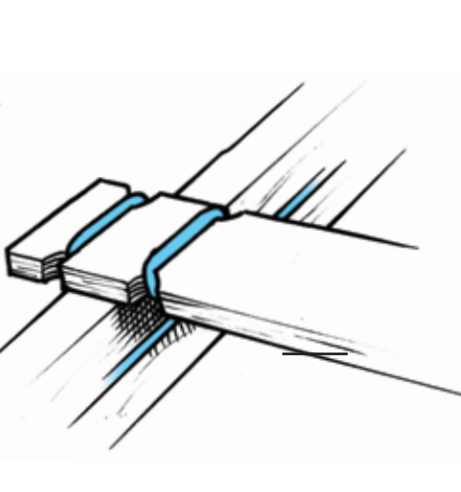
3

Twist the loop once



4

Create a loop on the inside of the runner as indicated. Grab the loops as indicated



5

Twist once as indicated



6

Lift the loops in preparation for napook



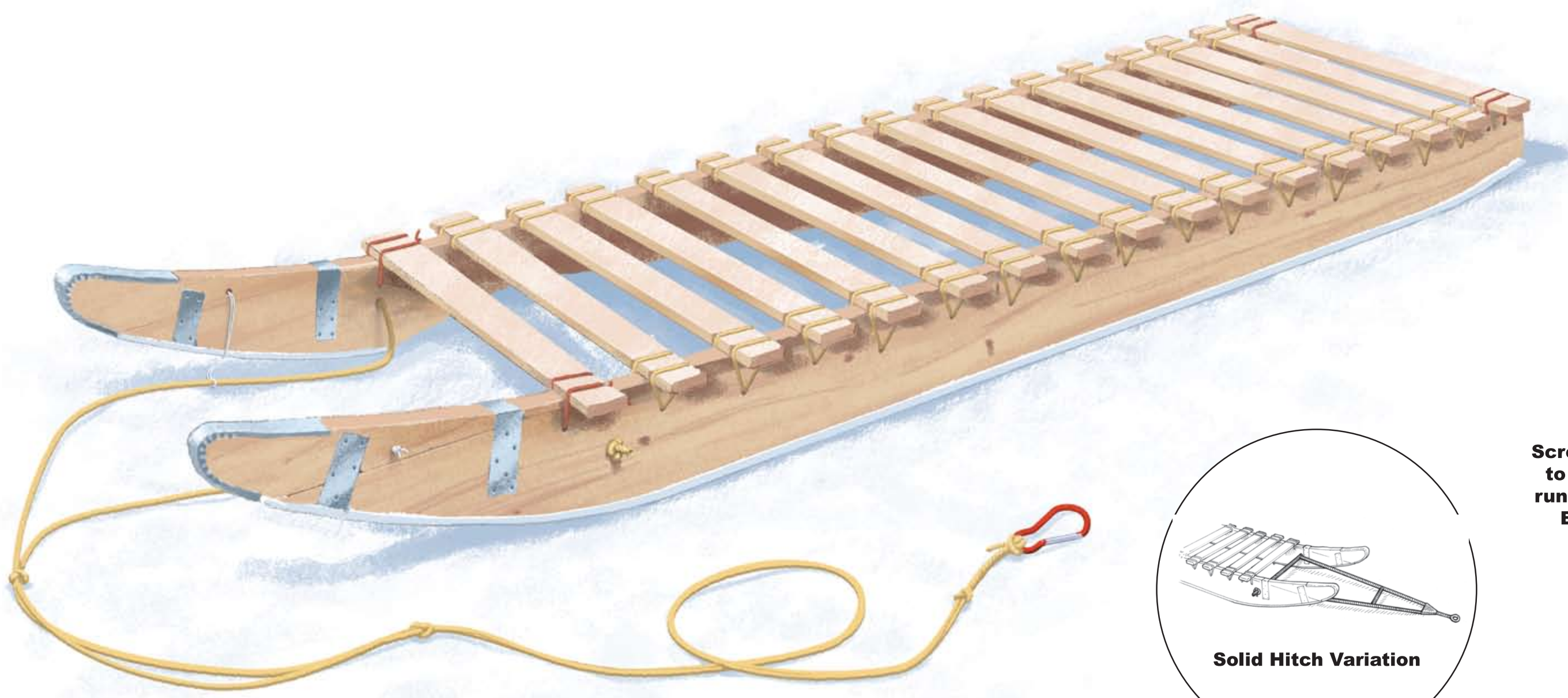
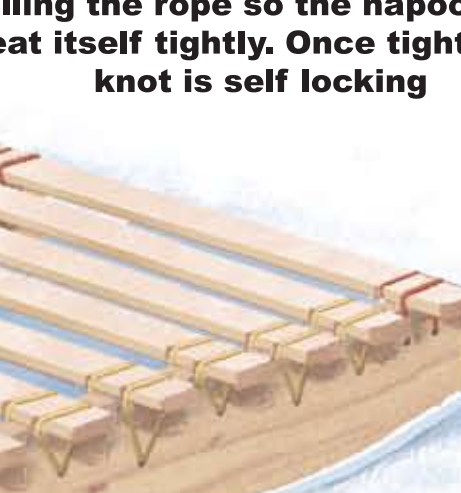
7

Insert napook. Tighten outside loop first



8

Tighten remaining rope and move the napook back and forth while pulling the rope so the napook will seat itself tightly. Once tight, this knot is self locking

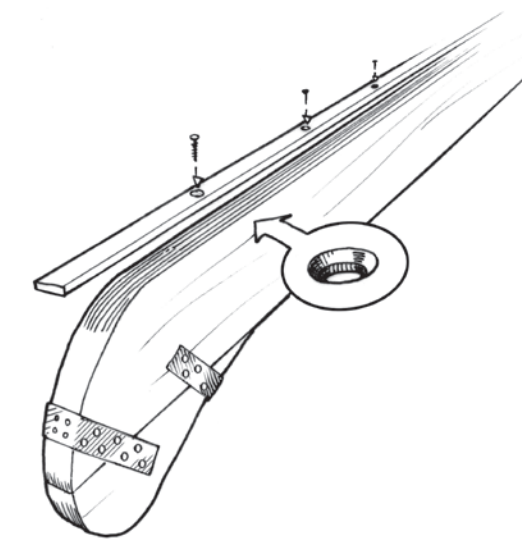


Solid Hitch Variation

## Sliders

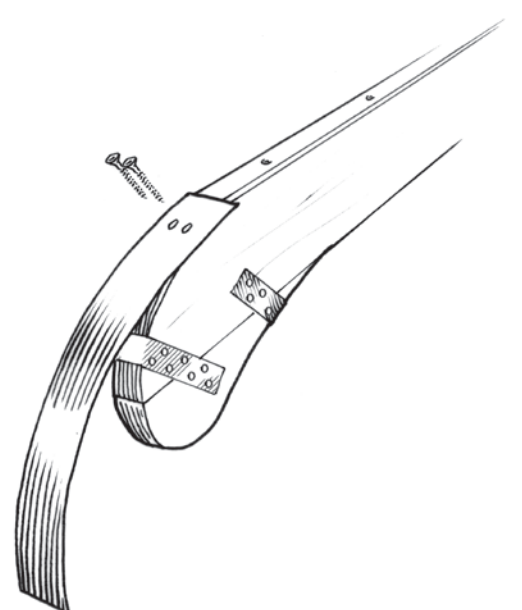
1

Screw nylon "sliders" to the bottom of the runners as indicated. Ensure the screws are countersunk



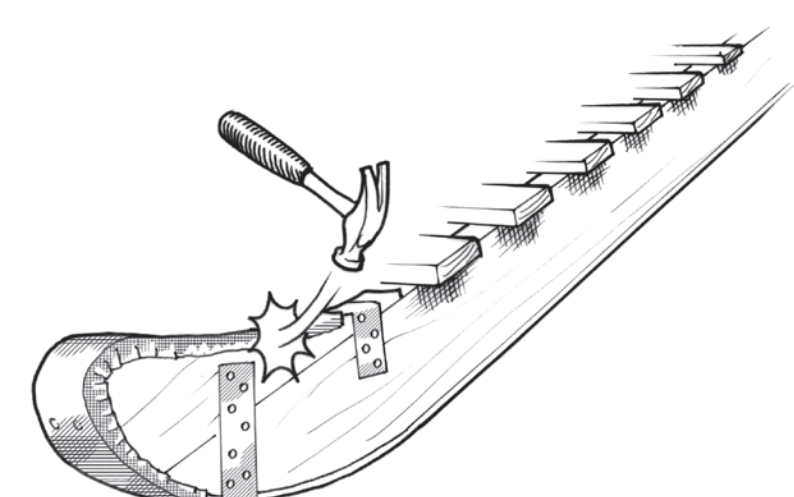
2

Use medium gauge sheet metal to reinforce the "nose" of the runners. Leave at least a 3/4 inch overhang on the sides



3

Hammer down the overhanging sheet metal to protect the edges of the wood



## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Nose:** The curvature of the nose of the Qamutiik depends on the terrain it will be used in - rough jumbled ice requires a more curved nose, smooth flat ice requires a more gently sloping nose.

**Wood Material:** If choosing solid wood for the runners ensure there are no cracks or serious knots. Plywood can be used to face the runners for extra strength. Hardwoods such as walnut or oak are ideal for napooks.

**Rope:** For tying the napooks use rope no thicker than 1/4" and one that doesn't slip on itself when tied in a knot. For a pulling rope choose a material that doesn't stretch too much is at least 1/2" and at least 1.5 times as long as the Qamutiik.

**Runners:** Plane the runners to about 8° slope -this provides stability and strength when carrying a load. Nylon sliders should be slightly wider than the runners to prevent damage to the wood.

