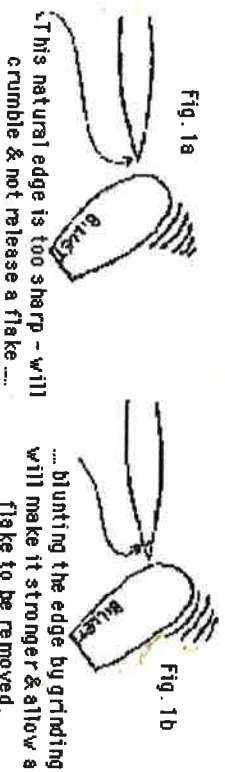
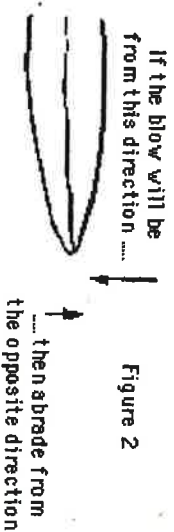


## SOME THOUGHTS ON ABRADING by Mike Potter

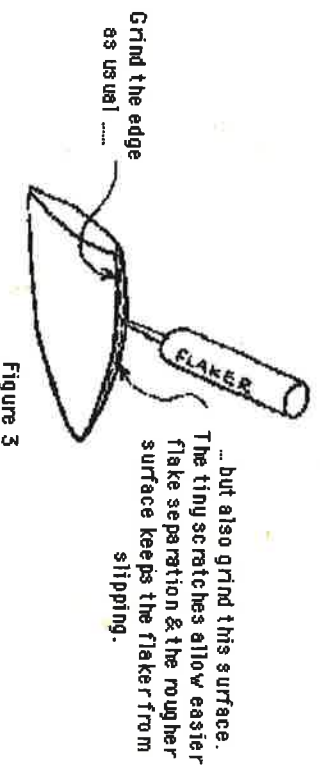
Flintknapping is an art of hard learned techniques, each of which comes into play when making a point. While many of them can be learned by teaching or by observation, sometimes they can be so subtle that it is difficult to spot them when they are used. And worse yet, the expert may have learned a little trick unconsciously and be unaware that he is doing something that might benefit the novice. Abrading is like that. Too many beginning knappers (and a few experienced ones too) make a couple of passes along the edge of the preform and let it go at that when actually, proper abrading can be used to make big differences in the ease of knapping.



The most important function of abrading is to strengthen the striking platform (Figs. 1a & 1b). Often, abrading from the underside of the blank (the side that the flake comes off of) across the edge will not only strengthen the platform, but will help shape it too (Fig. 2). This is especially true if there is some overhang. This style of abrading will remove some small chips from the top side and further help build the platform by "rolling it down" even more. Of course, you could pressure flake and accomplish the same thing, but abrading is both faster and easier.



Some stone, obsidian for instance, will flake a lot better if abraded both across the edge and lengthwise on the striking platform itself (Fig. 3). The minute scratches on the platform will break up the surface adhesion and the flake will release easier. This also works when pressure flaking, and in addition, provides "bite" for the pressure flaker.



Different situations require different abraders. Rough-out work normally requires a very coarse abrader but will damage the edge of a delicate, nearly completed point. And too much grinding can cause such a