

# Traditional Native American Art



Newspapers for this educational program provided by:



## TEACHER'S GUIDE



The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum (AICCM) is honored to present, in partnership with *The Oklahoman* Newspaper; Newspapers In Education, the Native American Supplement. The Native American Supplement will focus on the cultures, histories and governments of the American Indian Tribes of Oklahoma. The supplement will be produced twice a year: November and April. Each supplement will be organized into four thematic-core areas: Origins, Native Knowledge, Community, and Governance. Because it is impossible to cover every aspect of the topics featured in each edition, we hope the supplement will comprehensively introduce readers to a variety of new subjects and ideas. We hope you will be inspired to research and find out more information with the help of your teachers and parents as well as through your own independent research.

Special Thanks goes to the following for contributing to the content of the publication:

- The Denver Art Museum
- National Museum of the American Indian
- Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard
- The University of Oklahoma Libraries
- Tamara Faw Faw

## Director's Message

Halito! The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum continues to serve as a living center for cultural expression promoting awareness and understanding for all people regarding Oklahoma's American Indian cultures and heritage. Native cultures have contributed to the very fabric of America today, especially in traditional arts. American Indians have always woven beauty into everything from elaborately decorated headdresses to everyday objects like shoes. From the past to the present, Native artists and craftsmen have played a vital role in tribal cultures; keeping alive important artistic traditions such as pottery, beading, ceramics, weaving, and painting. In this edition, we celebrate the amazing meanings, histories and the superb quality of traditional native art. We hope you enjoy learning about these ancient traditions that are based on the identity, talent and creativity that continues to astound and inspire us today.

— **Gena Timberman, Esq.**, Executive Director of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority

## About the Cover

*Otoe Dream Coat  
1890, Photo courtesy  
of the National  
Museum of the  
American Indian*


*The vibrant beaded coat on the cover was made for William Faw Faw or Wanosa (Waw-no-she) a member of the Otoe-Missouria tribe. Around 1890, during a time when the Otoe-Missouria Tribe was in turmoil as a result of Indian removal, Waw-no-she became very ill. While he was sick with fever he had a vision of two young Otoe men who gave him a spiritual message. The message was instruction for a religious ceremony that would restore traditional ways of the Otoe-Missouria people. The message; or Faw Faw religion as it became known, stressed that people treat each other well, to be responsible to the community, to be a good and upstanding person, and to be honest and respectable; a very simple, but important message for humanity to live by. Faw Faw's dream was the inspiration behind the designs on the coats that were worn during the ceremony. These designs would provide a visual language for participants to further understand the religion and to inspire followers to adhere to the principals of the religion.*



**William Faw Faw (Wanosa) wearing a dream coat**  
Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma  
Libraries, Lenny and Sawyer Collection number 13



# Introduction



To better understand the designs, patterns and symbols found in Native American objects, this exciting edition of Newspapers in Education will explore **Traditional Native American Art**. The beauty and symbolism in Native American art has long inspired people to learn more about the tribal communities and artists who created these intriguing works of art. Throughout this edition you will learn some of the meaning and cultural importance of various Native American art forms and how traditional art can offer insight into the rich culture and beliefs of Oklahoma's Native American tribes.

Traditional art refers to art that was created from the early beginnings of Native cultures to the year 1900.

The next edition, in the spring, will focus on contemporary art. Contemporary Native American art refers to art that was created from 1900 to the present and will show how Native art, like culture, is always founded upon traditions, but also changes and adapts with time.

Before we begin learning about traditional Native American art, let's start by understanding what art is in the first place. *Art is defined as the expression or human application of human*

*creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as a painting or sculpture.* These works of art are usually created to be appreciated primarily for their beauty and emotional power. This edition will focus on traditional visual art – that means art you can look at as opposed to other art traditions like dance. Now that we understand the definition of art today, it's also important to understand how Native people regarded "art". Many Native people believe that everything has an artistic or aesthetic value – so there is often no distinction made between art and everyday objects, like the bag mentioned earlier. In many Native languages, there is not even a word for art – which further shows

that everything a person creates regardless of its purpose, may be infused with meaning, design and symbolism. Although traditionally, Native people viewed their creativity and art different than we do today, Native American "art" is certainly considered one of the most beautiful and masterful artistic traditions in the world.

There are many things that can influence and inspire how a piece of art is created, from the materials that were used to the designs that were applied. Traditional materials included natural paints, animal hides, wood, animal fur, seeds, freshwater pearls, and even metals like copper. These materials were transformed into baskets, pottery, beadwork and many other genres of Native art. The designs and imagery applied to each piece were decided by the artist and usually conveyed some type of meaning - a visual language that speaks of identity, beliefs, history. Because many tribes communicated in ways other than a written language in historic times, these symbols, colors, and designs were ways that they shared cultural knowledge and conveyed information to others.

In addition to educating and sharing information, Native art remains as a way of honoring cultural heritage and the spiritual connections with people, animals, the Creator, and the elements of nature. Most often these elements were the very inspiration for much of the art that was traditionally created. Perhaps most importantly, Native art is essential because it continues to be a way that cultural knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next.

Oklahoma is very unique because it's home to thirty-nine tribal nations; each nation has aboriginal homelands located in regions spanning the entire United States, Canada and Mexico. Because of this cultural diversity alive in Oklahoma today, you will also find an amazing variety of distinctive art forms created by and handed down for hundreds and hundreds of years. So let's dive in and explore Traditional Native Art!

*To help with the art language used in this publication, please have students define the vocabulary words found in the teacher's guide.*

## VOCABULARY:

Aesthetic  
Esthetic  
Genre  
Design  
Stylistic  
Process  
Material  
Medium  
Organic material  
Trade  
Antiquity  
Abstract

Symbolic  
Realistic  
Technical  
Function  
Primitive  
Ethos  
Cultural expression  
Narrative painting  
Motif  
Mnemonic

## VOCABULARY DEFINITIONS:

**Aesthetic-** Pertaining to a sense of the beautiful or to the science of aesthetics, having a sense of the beautiful; characterized by a love of beauty, pertaining to, involving or concerned with pure emotion and sensation as opposed to pure intellectuality.

**Esthetic-** A principle of taste or style adopted by a particular person, group, or culture.

<b>Genre-</b>	A class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, technique or the like.	<b>Beadwork-</b>	Ornamental work in beads.
<b>Design-</b>	To work out the structure or form of something, as by making a sketch, outline, pattern, or plans, to plan and make something artistically or skillfully, to form or conceive in the mind; to invent.	<b>Weaving-</b>	To form by interlacing threads, yarns, strands, or strips of some material: to weave a basket; to weave cloth, to form by combining various elements or details into a connected whole: to weave a tale; to weave a plan, to introduce as an element or detail into a connected whole.
<b>Stylistic-</b>	Of or relating to style, especially artistic or literary style	<b>Painting-</b>	A picture or design executed in paints, to produce a picture, design, etc. in paint: to paint a portrait, to represent in paint, as in oils, tempera, or watercolor.
<b>Process-</b>	A series of actions that produce a change or development 2. a method of doing or producing something 3. a forward movement 4. The course of time	<b>Abstract-</b>	Theoretical; not applied or practical, of or pertaining to the formal aspect of art, emphasizing lines, colors, generalized or geometrical forms, etc., especially with reference to their relationship to one another, pertaining to the nonrepresentational art styles of the 20th century.
<b>Material-</b>	The substance of which a thing is made or composed; component or constituent matter: raw material— adj 5. of, relating to, or composed of physical substance; corporeal.	<b>Symbolic-</b>	Serving as a symbol of something, of, pertaining to, or expressed by a symbol, characterized by or involving the use of symbols: a highly symbolic poem.
<b>Medium-</b>	The category of a work of art, as determined by its materials and methods of production: the medium of wood engraving b. the materials used in a work of art	<b>Realistic-</b>	Interested in, concerned with, or based on what is real or practical, pertaining to, characterized by, or given to the representation in literature or art of things as they really are: a realistic novel or painting, Philosophy of or pertaining to realists or realism.
<b>Organic material –</b>	Materials that come from nature.	<b>Technical-</b>	Belonging or pertaining to an art, science, or the like, peculiar to or characteristic of a particular art, science, profession, trade, etc., skilled in or familiar in a practical way with a particular art, trade, etc., as a person.
<b>Trade-</b>	The act of buying and selling goods and services either on the domestic markets or on the international markets, a personal occupation, especially a craft requiring skill, the people and practices of an industry, craft, or business, the exchange of one thing for something else	<b>Function-</b>	The purpose for which something is designed or exists.
<b>Antiquity-</b>	The quality of being ancient or very old, the far distant past, especially the time preceding the Middle Ages in Europe, the people of ancient times collectively; the ancients, the quality of being ancient; ancientness, the peoples, nations, tribes, or cultures of ancient times, something belonging to or remaining from ancient times, as monuments, relics, or customs.	<b>Appliqué-</b>	A decoration or trimming of one material sewn or otherwise fixed onto another, the practice of decorating in this way, ornamentation, as a cutout design, that is sewn on to or otherwise applied to a piece of material.
<b>Textiles-</b>	Any cloth or goods produced by weaving, knitting, or felting, a material, as a fiber or yarn, used in or suitable for weaving, of or pertaining to weaving.	<b>Primitive-</b>	Being the first or earliest of the kind or in existence, especially in an early age of the world, an artist of a preliterate culture, a naive or unschooled artist, an artist belonging to the early stage in the development of a style.
<b>Pottery-</b>	Articles, vessels, etc, made from earthenware and dried and baked in a kiln, the craft or business of making such articles, ceramic ware, especially earthenware and stoneware.		

**Ethos-** The fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs, or practices of a group or society; dominant assumptions of a people or period: In the Greek ethos the individual was highly valued.

**Cultural expression-** Cultural means relating to a particular society and its ideas, customs, and art.

**Narrative painting-** Refers to art in which storytelling is the chief reason for the work's existence

**Motif-** A recurring subject, theme, idea, etc., especially in a literary, artistic, or musical work, a distinctive and recurring form, shape, figure, etc., in a design, as in a painting or on wallpaper, a dominant idea or feature.

**Mnemonic-** Assisting or intended to assist the memory, something intended to assist the memory



## Origins of Native American Art

Dating as far back as 8,000 years ago, some of the earliest Native American art forms that we can still see today are called petroglyphs and pictographs (also known as rock art). Rock art produced by Native Americans both before and after European contact is found throughout the state of Oklahoma. These artistic representations of animals, people, and geometric designs were pecked (petroglyphs) or painted (pictographs) onto rock walls and cliffs. While we can only imagine what these artistic expressions meant, what's certain is that this ancient art was probably created for the same reasons art is created today - as visual way for people to communicate and share stories or information.

The subject matter of some rock art can reveal the relative time it was made; for example, figures of horses and guns have been found which clearly were made after the first Europeans entered Oklahoma in the 16th century. However, it is hard to determine exactly when most of the Oklahoma rock art was done.



**Handprint Site in McIntosh County**

Handprints, like six of the 15 petroglyphs found at the Handprint Site in McIntosh County, are among the most common motifs in rock art.

The petroglyphs at the Handprint Site were pecked into the dark patina of the sandstone to reveal the lighter, unweathered surface. The figures have been somewhat protected from weathering by a small overhang. In addition to the handprints, there are also "shield" figures, a footprint (see below) and a zigzag figure.

Pictographs (painted) are not as common in Oklahoma as are petroglyphs (pecked). Perhaps this is simply a matter of preservation since the pigmented art is more fragile.

Another place where petroglyphs and pictograms are found in Oklahoma is Cimarron County, the western most county in Oklahoma's panhandle. Featured on rocks and on cave walls, Plains tribes frequently visited or lived in the area and created rock art that illustrated things like the types of animals in the area.

During this early period, Native people also began to master other art forms. Some of the earliest, highly crafted, designed creations date back to almost 5,000 years ago when cultural groups also known as "Moundbuilders" (See Moundbuilders NIE, Fall 2009) began to add decorative and symbolic elements to objects like baskets, woven mats, and pottery. These were some of the first Native Americans to create art that spoke a visual language; depicting images of leaders, religious ceremonies, and shared social and civic practices such as ball games. In the 1930s in eastern Oklahoma, the site of Spiro Mounds was

discovered and later excavated by archaeologists. The art that was found in the earthen mounds was so exquisite that it sparked the interest of people around the world. The site known as Spiro Mounds is believed to have an important role in the larger Mississippian Moundbuilder cultures. Spiro was occupied for close to three hundred years (circa 900AD-1500AD). During that time generations of artist created art at the site or came to Spiro bringing with them cultural art from as far away as the Great Lakes region. Thousands of art



**Petroglyphs and pictograms in Cimarron County**



pieces were found that included skillfully crafted stone pipes, woven textiles that include ancient lace, feather capes, pearl necklaces and copper that was hammered into beautiful headdresses and jewelry. At the time, it was considered one of the richest Native American art finds in American history.

Another important ancient art piece found in Oklahoma is what is known as the "Cooper Skull". Found in 1994 in Harper County, along the Beaver River, the Cooper Skull has a painted zigzag design on the forehead. What makes this so important is that the skull is dated to 10,000 years old, making it the oldest known painted object in North America!

*Sourced from OUI Dept. of Archeology*



Wampum shells and beads

## Materials

Native people were able to both master the use of materials found in their traditional homelands and produce art that reflected their environment. People living in heavily wooded regions where wood was a plentiful resource became expert sculptors in wood; people who had access to clay became skillful potters; and those living in the grasslands and areas that were rich in weaving materials became master basket weavers. There is virtually no natural medium that was

not explored for its potential use and then mastered by Native people. Media or materials like turquoise, shell, metals, stone, river-cane, birch bark, porcupine quills, deer hair, eagle feathers, fresh water pearls and seeds— were all used by Native people to lend color and texture to everything they created. Native people used these materials to also help inform the artistic design of the piece. Certain objects were not



Wyandotte Moose Hoof Purse, 1890

*Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian*

regarded as truly powerful and authentic unless they were made from a specific material. In the case of objects made for religious purposes, a substitute was not allowed. For these special objects, the materials used created a cultural value within the tribe.

## Genres of Native art

**Weaving:** Technique of interlacing materials together, usually organic materials like strips of wood, vines or reeds, to create a form like a basket or a mat. Among Native American tribes, baskets were the ideal container because they don't break like pottery. There are several tribes in Oklahoma who are known as specialists in the art of basket making. These tribes include the Cherokee who are known for their double-walled basket weave and the Chickasaw who are known for creating colorful baskets and trays that have many uses. These tribes often made dyes out of berries, plants and even roots to create contrasting colors. They would dye the weaving materials different colors to create patterns in the baskets. The Apache people created baskets that often featured a man or maze design.



Cherokee Basket

## Beadwork:

Method of taking beads and sewing them with a needle and thread to materials such as hide or cloth. The application process can be done directly to the object or it can be done on a loom that is next applied by sewing down the complete piece of beadwork to another object, like a bandolier bag. Beadwork is most synonymous with Native American art as almost every Native American tribe has some type of beadwork tradition. The types of beads that are commonly used today are called trade beads. These beads are made of glass and originated in Europe. The most highly prized beads came from Italy and Czechoslovakia. European beads were introduced as early as the first contact with Native people and explorers. Beads were often traded with tribes or given as gifts. Prior to glass beads, Native people used seeds, pearls, porcupine quills, and made beads out of clay and wood.



Great Lakes Region

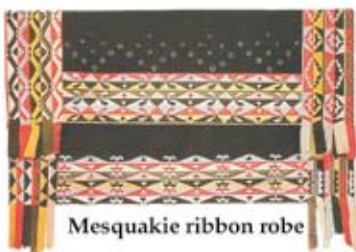


## Origins of Native American art –continued



Osage girl wearing robe

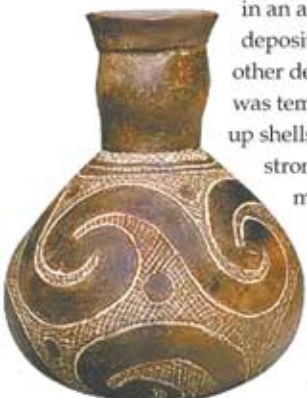
**Appliqué:** Designs cut out of fabric are layered over or next to each other to create a pattern. The Osage, Sac and Fox and Potawatomi are masters at the beautiful tradition of appliqué. These designs in Osage appliqué or sometimes called ribbon work can symbolize clans, family lineage and prosperity (design of a horse).



Mesquakie ribbon robe

### Pottery:

Process of using clay to form a shape, usually a bowl, pot, or water jar. Utilitarian objects like cooking pots, water jars, storage containers for things like corn, seeds and other supplies were made out of pottery. The process of creating pottery started by digging clay out of the ground, usually in an area close to a river, found in places called clay deposits. Once the clay was gathered, rocks, sticks, and other debris were removed from the clay. Next the clay was tempered which means other materials like ground up shells or pottery shards were added to it to make it stronger. Then the piece was formed by one of two methods: the coiling method or the building-up method. The last step was to fire the pottery. Each of these steps had to be a precise scientific process. Think of it as baking a cake. The ratio of ingredients and the process from which it was made had to be perfect or else the pottery wouldn't be durable or come together at all. Two tribes known for their masterful pottery are the Caddo and Quapaw tribes – these tribes would form the pottery into interesting and beautiful shapes, sometimes representing animals and people. The pottery was sometimes painted or incised with ancient designs that were and continue to be meaningful to the tribes.



**Featherwork:** Feathers hold a special importance to Native people. Featherwork refers to the various ways Native people use and incorporate feathers into art forms like basketry, headdress, clothing, jewelry and other art traditions. Most people are familiar with the feather headdress that many Native people traditionally wore. To show the diversity of the use of feathers – this image shows a feather necklace worn by Sac and Fox men as a symbol of bravery.



Sac and Fox feather necklace worn as a sign of bravery, 1800s

### Quillwork:

The ancient technique of weaving or sewing dyed and flattened porcupine or bird quills. This is unique to Native people in North America and is not found anywhere else in the world. Plains tribes like the Cheyenne and Arapaho have a long tradition of quill work and the technique often artfully adorned clothing and cradle boards.



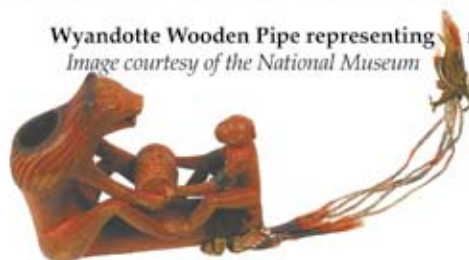
### Carving:

To cut a solid to create a three-dimensional sculptural form. Many Oklahoma tribes have a strong tradition of carving a variety of materials like animal bone, stone, and wood. The moundbuilder cultures were very innovative with the techniques and tools they developed to carve pipes, masks, and figures of animals and people. Decedents of Moundbuilder cultures, like the Miami continued these traditions and examples of their skill can be seen in this pipe featuring a water serpent and man.



Miami Pipe 1780

Wyandotte Wooden Pipe representing man and bear, 1879  
Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian





## Hide Painting:

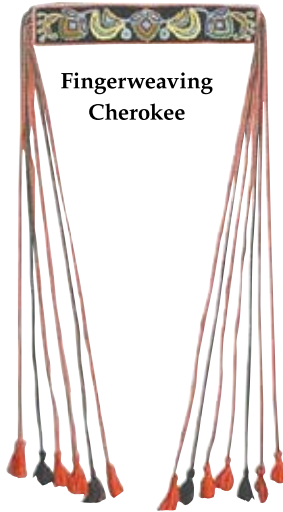
Hide painting is the artistic practice of painting on animal hides. Tipi's, tipi liners, shields, parfleches, robes, clothing, drums, and winter counts are forms of hide paintings. The Plains tribes, like the Kiowa, are known for their pictorial hide paintings. These paintings recorded events in history, memorialized family members, and shared other information through pictorial imagery.



Apache Hide Painting

## Fingerweaving:

Practice of using strings of yarn or other string-like fiber to weave together in a braiding technique to create a sash. These sashes were traditionally worn over the shoulder or around the waist. Creek and Cherokee tribes along with tribes from the Northeast like the Seneca-Cayuga created colorful finger woven sashes.

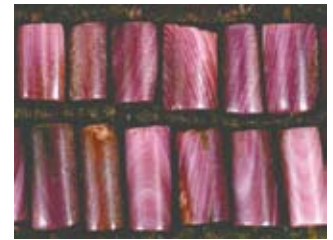


Fingerweaving  
Cherokee

**Jewelry:** These traditions in Oklahoma are as diverse as the tribes themselves. Types of jewelry could range from colorful beads strung to make a necklace to hammered silver made into earrings and gorget necklaces. Moundbuilder cultures donned copper arm cuffs and headdress. Tribes from the east made highly valued jewelry out of wampum—purple and white beads cut and drilled from quahog and whelk shells.

Wampum is also used to make treaty belts that are often used to record history and agreements between tribes and the early European settlers.

The art of adorning one's self with jewelry and beautiful clothing – and overall looking regal and well-kempt ; was believed to please the creator.



Wampum beads



Shawnee silver earrings: circa late 1800s



Shawnee Pair Bracelets

*Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian*

Oklahoma's Native Tribes, whether they are indigenous or came here as part of Indian removal, have something in common: they each have an ancient and rich artistic tradition that speaks to their history, their culture and their beliefs. By exploring Native Art, we can learn a lot about Native Culture.

## Activity:

See teachers guide for fun classroom art activities.

To learn more about the origins of Native American Art look for *The Oklahoman* lesson in the November 7 paper.

## Origins Lesson:

Use the attached activity sheets for the origins lesson.

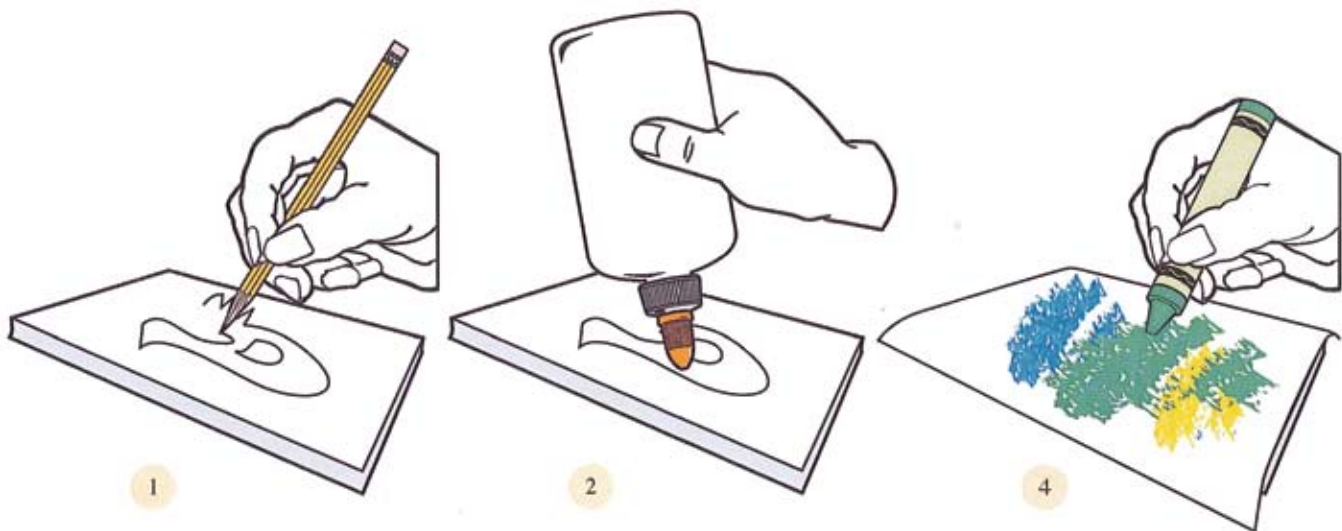
## Watch the PBS program history detectives to learn more about Modoc Baskets:

<http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigation/modoc-basket/>



# Rock on, rock art! Make your own rock art rubbing plate.

People around the world and throughout time have pecked, carved and painted on rock surfaces to create rock art.



## Materials

- Copies or printouts of rock art from the Internet or books. Make sure the images are simple and can be hand copied. (Keep notes on locations and the cultures that produced the art.)
- Scrap pieces of foam core board, approx. 5"x 8"
- Pencil (optional)
- Tooth picks
- Small containers/palettes
- Glue in bottles with small nozzles (Carpenter's glue works best, but white glue is fine.)
- Tape – masking or duct
- Thick crayons
- Paper

## To make the rubbing plates:

1. First, use a pencil to sketch a design from the rock art images onto the foam core.
2. Place a puddle of glue on a palette. Now trace over the sketch on the foam core with the glue. For smaller lines, dots or finer details use a toothpick when placing the glue. Go slowly. For thick lines "draw" with the glue flowing directly from the nozzle. The thicker the glue, the better the rubbing will look later.
3. Let glue dry completely overnight. Tape over the rough edges of the foam core before using.

## Using the rubbing plates:

4. Place paper over the plate, making sure to cover it completely.

Rub hard with a crayon over the design while holding the paper in place. Try using more than one color per rubbing and the result will be a rainbow-like effect.

### Variation

Crumple the paper after rubbing to give it a rock-like texture.



Eiteljorg Museum  
**Teachers' Newsletter**  
Autumn 2007

## Make a cardboard loom and weave at home!

A willow basket, a Navajo rug, a cotton t-shirt—What do they have in common? They were all woven! Use a magnifier to look at your shirt. What do you see?

Looms are used to help connect pieces of fiber together to make something. What you choose may depend on where you live and what's available in your area—flax, silk or cotton for fabrics; wool from sheep, llamas or goats; willow, cedar or ash for baskets.

Do any of these grow or live in Indiana?

Follow the directions to make a loom and then weave a coaster for yourself. What other materials could you use to weave a coaster? What else can you weave?

### Materials

- ⑥ 4" x 5" piece of heavy cardboard
- ⑥ Glue
- ⑥ Tape
- ⑥ 3 1/2 yards of cotton string
- ⑥ Scissors
- ⑥ 3 craft sticks
- ⑥ Yarn to weave with

### Instructions for making your loom

#### Step 1

Glue a craft stick on each 4" end of your cardboard and let the glue dry.

#### Step 2

Warp your loom using the cotton string. Hold the end of the string against the back of your loom. Then bring the string up and around the front of the loom.

Continue this pattern until you have 12 warp strings on the front of your loom.

#### Step 3

Tie the two ends of string together on the back of your loom.

### Weave a coaster on your cardboard loom!

#### Step 1

Tape a piece of yarn to the third craft stick. This stick will act as your needle as you weave.

#### Step 2

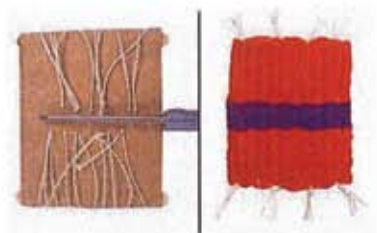
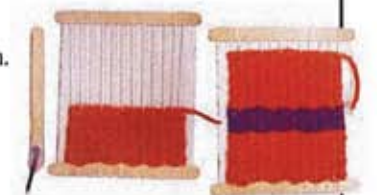
Insert the weaving stick over the first and under the second warp string. Continue this pattern across the loom. At the end of each row, push the woven thread down firmly toward the base of the loom using your fingers.

#### Step 3

Continue weaving back and forth until you need more yarn. Attach another piece of yarn to the craft stick with tape. Do not pull the yarn too tight—this will cause the edges to pull toward the center.

#### Step 4

After you have finished weaving, cut the warp threads in the center back of your loom. Separate the strings into groups of three. Wrap each group around your finger and tie a knot. Trim these strings slightly to make fringe.



**Meet weavers from Mexico, October 20,  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

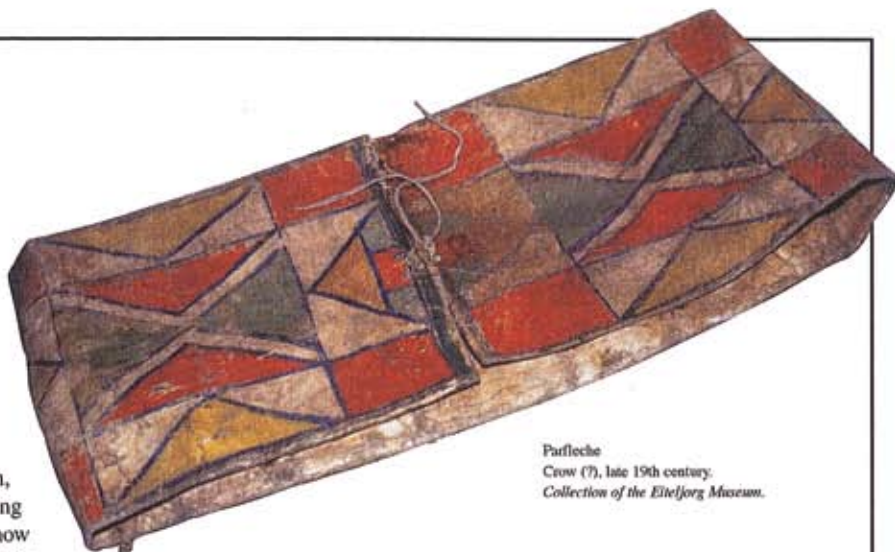
Visit the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art to learn more about weaving.  
[www.eiteljorg.org](http://www.eiteljorg.org)



# Create a Parfleche

Parfleche (pronounced: PAR flesh) was the word the French gave to rawhide. The French observed how tough, thick hide shields could carry (from French *parer* meaning "to ward off") a *flèche* (French for arrow). The word is now used more often to mean a rawhide container. A parfleche is tough, lightweight, sturdy, durable and water resistant.

Designs on parfleches identify the owner or maker. Sacagawea's parfleche may have had Hidatsa geometric designs, from the group which she was living when she met Lewis and Clark in November 1804.



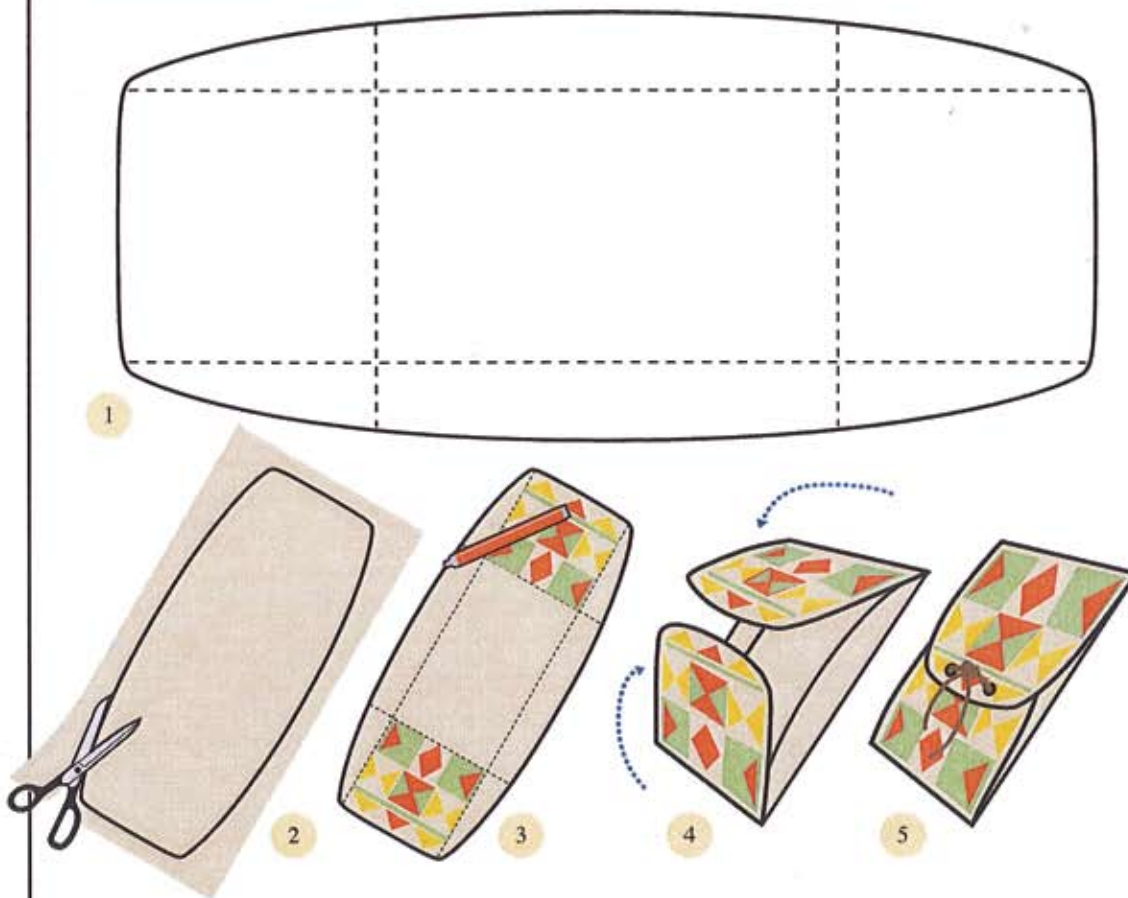
Parfleche  
Crow (?), late 19th century.  
Collection of the Eiteljorg Museum.

## Materials

- Ⓢ Heavy paper
- Ⓢ Copier
- Ⓢ Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Ⓢ Hole punch
- Ⓢ Yarn, string or fake sinew (waxed nylon twine)
- Ⓢ Scissors

## Instructions

1. Copy template onto heavy paper, enlarging the design and erasing the fold marks, if desired, or trace around the shape.
2. Cut out the shape.
3. Draw designs on the two areas that will become the top flaps. Linear geometric designs are traditional. See what happens if you are limited to three colors; just a few colors are used on authentic parfleches.
4. Fold up toward the blank side—first the long sides, then the outside flaps.
5. Punch holes to tie, if desired.



*Optional:* You can try this activity with real rawhide. Look for thin rawhide at leather or craft stores. Thin hide from deer or goats, often sold for drum heads, will work for a smaller parfleche. Cut out the shape with craft shears. Moisten the hide and use a nail to score fold lines and to scratch lines into the design surface area. Moisten once more and fold. Place the hide, wrapped in a paper towel, under a phone book with a brick on top to dry. If the dried hide is slick, rub it with sandpaper to get a "tooth" for the design. Use colored pencils on the dry parfleche.



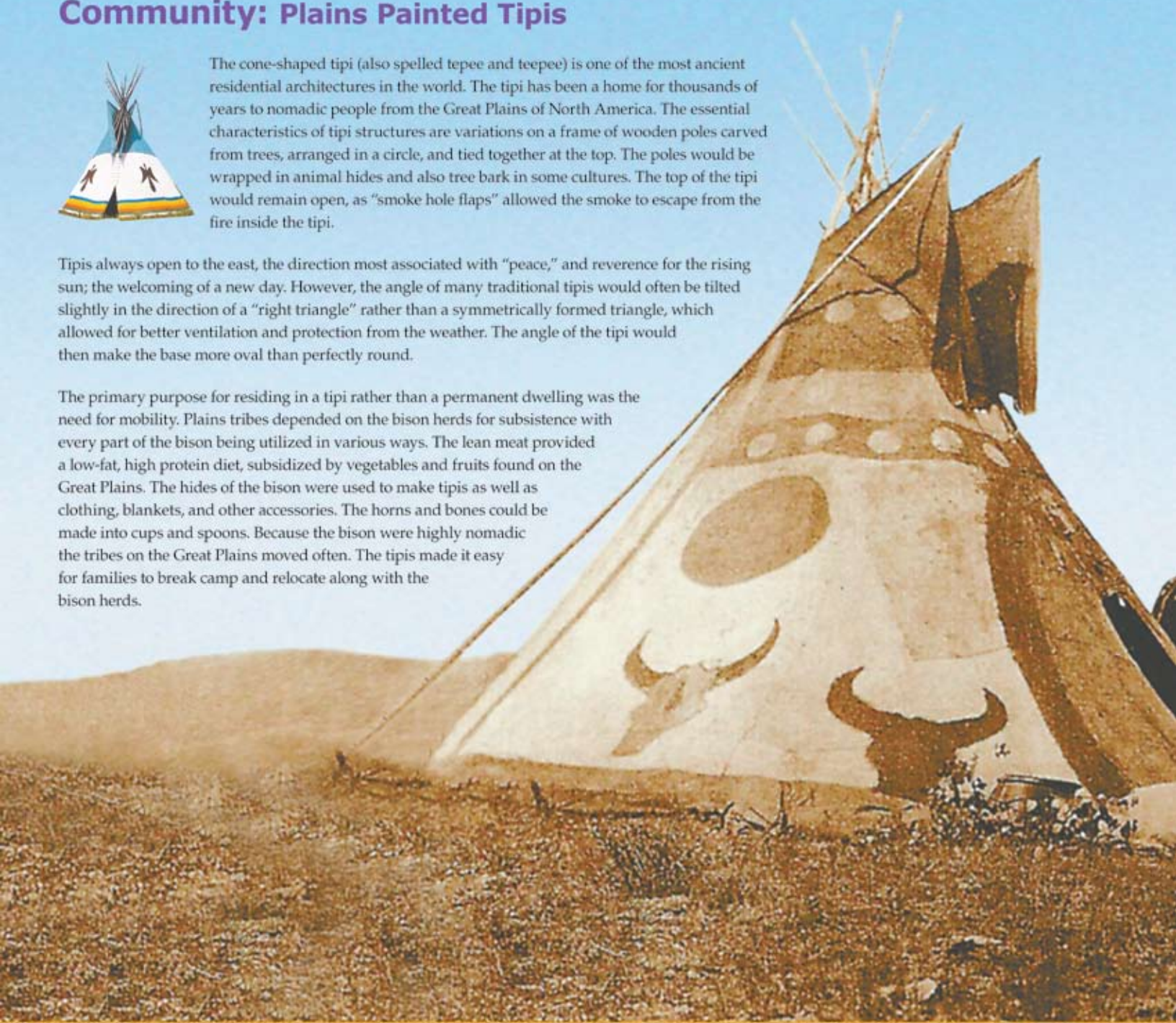
## Community: Plains Painted Tipis



The cone-shaped tipi (also spelled tepee and teepee) is one of the most ancient residential architectures in the world. The tipi has been a home for thousands of years to nomadic people from the Great Plains of North America. The essential characteristics of tipi structures are variations on a frame of wooden poles carved from trees, arranged in a circle, and tied together at the top. The poles would be wrapped in animal hides and also tree bark in some cultures. The top of the tipi would remain open, as "smoke hole flaps" allowed the smoke to escape from the fire inside the tipi.

Tipis always open to the east, the direction most associated with "peace," and reverence for the rising sun; the welcoming of a new day. However, the angle of many traditional tipis would often be tilted slightly in the direction of a "right triangle" rather than a symmetrically formed triangle, which allowed for better ventilation and protection from the weather. The angle of the tipi would then make the base more oval than perfectly round.

The primary purpose for residing in a tipi rather than a permanent dwelling was the need for mobility. Plains tribes depended on the bison herds for subsistence with every part of the bison being utilized in various ways. The lean meat provided a low-fat, high protein diet, subsidized by vegetables and fruits found on the Great Plains. The hides of the bison were used to make tipis as well as clothing, blankets, and other accessories. The horns and bones could be made into cups and spoons. Because the bison were highly nomadic the tribes on the Great Plains moved often. The tipis made it easy for families to break camp and relocate along with the bison herds.





Originally, tipis would be strapped to the backs of dogs, who would drag the tipis from camp to camp by what was known as a travois, which is like a wooden sled. After the introduction of the horse to the Great Plains peoples, the dogs lost their jobs to the larger and stronger beasts of burden.

Once an individual received inspiration for a tipi design, she would commission an artist in the community to paint the tipi. Painting a tipi was done with great reverence and often included a ceremony as part of the adornment. Painting a tipi was a community event accompanied by fellowship, including meals and even dances. The designs for tipi paintings could be inspired by dreams and visions; clan symbols, such as bison, deer, or birds; war deeds; tribal cosmology and creation stories;

or other symbols important to the owner. Many painted tipis were so beautifully and masterfully adorned that they came to be revered as "Murals in the Round," by Smithsonian artists, scholars, and historians. Tipis originally were decorated with paint made from earth pigments, including various hues of red and yellow clay from river beds, black from charred wood, and green from plants, moss, and water algae found in lakes and ponds. While women often gathered the paint, men would typically execute the painting. With the near extinction of bison by the late 1800s, hides were replaced by cotton canvas as the tipi cover, and manufactured paints brought to the Great Plains people by traders from around the world replaced paints harvested from the surrounding environment.

Since tipis are distinct to each owner, there are many types of tipis in communities. A "Calendar Tipi" may reflect important events in the owner's life or the life of the tribe. A "Native American Church" tipi may have a waterbird symbol painted onto it to signify that the tipi was a sacred place for worship. A "Battle Tipi" may reflect a war scene in which the owner participated. Painted tipis were so personal to the owner that the individual may come to be known by his or her tipi, such as "Red Tipi," a prominent 19th century Kiowa leader who was known in name by his tipi, which was painted entirely red.

The tipi tradition lives on today in Oklahoma as well in other parts of the United States. Painted tipis continue to relate the stories and experience of those who own them.



**Sources:**

"Murals in the Round Painted Tipis of the Kiowa and Kiowa-Comanche"  
"Painted Tipis By Contemporary Plains Indian Artist"

**Activity:**

Create designs that represent you, your family and your interest. Think about the colors that best capture the meaning you want to share. Next arrange the designs in a way that could be displayed on a tipi so that people could learn something about you and your family. Share your design with the class.

Kiowa mother and son next to tipi  
Photo: Edward Curtis



# Native Knowledge

\*Refer to the map in Spring 2011 NIE for tribal regions.

Throughout this NIE we have been sharing how the designs, symbols and materials all have a special meaning and cultural significance to tribes and we have talked about how art serves as a visual language, so what does it all mean? Each tribe has its own unique designs, symbols and art forms that are encoded with meaning unique to the tribe. Although these traditions are unique – there are some traditions and meaning that are shared by tribes from the same region. In most cases, tribal designs are the first clue in learning about where a tribe was traditionally located. As a starting point of learning about tribal designs and symbols, we will look at regional designs of tribes that are located in Oklahoma today.

The first region we will explore is the **Northeast region** of the United States. Some of the Oklahoma tribes who are traditionally from the Northeast are Seneca-Cayuga and Delaware. A shared tradition between these tribes was the use of Wampum. Wampum beads are small, cylindrical drilled purple and white shell beads. Considered a sacred material, one of the most important things made out of wampum were commemoration belts. These belts carried a visual language of a pictorial history or agreement – this could include agreements of peace, war battles, or historical encounters with other tribes. After European settlements, these belts were used to record agreements, or treaties between the settlers and tribes. White beads represented peace, promise, and good intent. Purple beads represented hostility, sadness and even death. A hatchet design meant war; figures of people holding hands represented friendship or alliance. Even if these Northeastern tribes didn't speak the same language – they still understood what was being said on the belts.



**Wampum Belt:**  
*Northeast region*



**Woodpecker Shell Gorget:**  
*Southeastern region*

Most of the tribes who come from the **Southeast region** of the United States are descendants of Mississippian Moundbuilders. Some of these tribes are the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Yuchi. A popular and sacred motif featured in Mississippian symbolism is the whirling sun, which is believed to represent life. This design dates back thousands of years. The whirling image can also represent the movements of dancers around a ceremonial fire. The cross

in the design is believed by many to represent four fire logs that face the cardinal directions. This design might provide instructions to the viewer about the orderly direction in ceremonies.

Floral designs from **Great Lakes region** of the United States dominate the artistic tribal traditions of that region. Colorful abstract patterns depicting flowers, vines and leaves adorned everything from moccasins to jackets. The Potawatomie created floral designs with porcupine quills or beadwork as a way to honor the natural elements which surrounded the tribal communities.

Like most tribes, the **Plains Tribes'** religious beliefs and world view were depicted in their traditional art. But unlike the tribes of the Great Lakes who created elaborate floral patterns, many of the Plains Tribes like the Arapaho, utilized geometric shapes in their designs.



**Arapaho Baby Carrier 1800s,**  
*Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian:*  
*Plains region*

For example, the image of a star is a vortex of light that is slanted down. The stars and the sun in the sky were often viewed as an inverted tipi which looks like a V; the reflection of the sun and stars on earth took the form of X; this symbol represents the connection of the sun and stars on earth representing unity. Color also played an important role in their art. Important colors were white, which represents religion, blue which represents the heavens and red which represents people and the connection to relatives and the red road on which they live.



**Floral designs:**  
*Great Lakes region*





The Ft. Sill and Apache Tribes are two tribes from the **Southwest region**. One of the most important symbols found in Apache art is the hoop. The hoop represents the circle of life from birth to death and is used in traditional ceremonies. The type of ceremony determines whether a single hoop or four hoops are used. It also is believed to possess special healing and protective powers which may include: blessing an individual by adorning a pair of moccasins they wear or perhaps being incorporated onto a basket.



**Chiricahua-Apache Legging Moccasins**  
Apache, 1800s, *Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian: Southwest region*

helps the learner retain the information. Let's look at two traditional art forms to see basic lessons of math and science. Pottery and weaving are two good examples to examine.

The process of pottery is full of science! Every step in preparing pottery has to be a precise order of measurements, just like in chemistry. When the clay is gathered it has to be the right consistency to withstand tempering, molding and firing. The actual process of firing clay varies from tribe to tribe, but the overall heat temperature is always very high and involves direct and indirect heat. Native people have developed a sophisticated method of adding certain elements to achieve a finished look to the pots. This takes an in-depth working knowledge of various elements, materials and their qualities to understand the effect it will have on the finished pots. Some tribes added animal dung to the fire to give the pottery a shiny, dark finish. It's not just adding the dung to the fire that achieves the color; it's also understanding the right temperature to achieve the look. There are many scientific steps involved from beginning to end in achieving success and creating from clay a beautiful piece of pottery.

Weaving is all about adding, subtracting and geometry. Weaving is the process of counting the number of warp and weft threads to create a basket or textile. Adding designs involves the knowledge of geometry where the weaver has to understand the relationship of the shapes in the design to create the overall composition.

To learn more about Modoc baskets watch: <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigation/modoc-basket/>



**Modoc Basket:**  
*West Coast region*

The Modoc Tribe is the only tribe in Oklahoma with origins reaching all the way to the **West Coast**. The Modoc were known for their skillfully twined baskets of cattails, tule (tu-lee, a grass-like reed) and porcupine quills. The dark brown and light brown diamond designs used in their artwork represents the sacred mountains of the traditional

Modoc homelands of Northern California and Southern Oregon.

## Traditional Learning through Art

The traditional classroom for young Native Americans was usually at the side of an adult who would teach through hands-on learning and experience. This was done through everyday activities including making art. As we have learned about Native American art and objects, much more goes into it than just jumping into a project or making something for fun. Ideally, the purpose of the piece should be understood - is this a gift to honor someone? Is this a shield that will be carried for protection? Is this a piece of pottery that will display a family design? The other consideration is, knowing the materials to use and also understanding the right time to gather those materials. The answer to this might come in the form of a traditional song or proverb that relayed traditional information on how to do things like dig clay or when to harvest grasses. This process could also be told through traditional stories – and these stories would tell how to prepare the materials for creating the art. This might sound different from how you learn in the classroom today – but it is really not very different because it

## Activity:

Use Pony Beads, Glass Beads, or Colored Macaroni to make a necklace. In the necklace you must use at least three colors to create a repeating pattern. While you are designing the pattern make note of your creative process. At the end of the project go back to your notes and see how you came up with the design. Did you count the number of beads it took to make one color of the design? Did you use another number of beads to separate the color? How did you create balance or symmetry in your design? While you were making the necklace did you find that you had to go back and correct a mistake? After reviewing your creative process did you realize how much math was involved in creating the necklace? Did you count how many beads you wanted for each color? That is addition! While making the necklace did you perhaps use too many beads and had to remove some to maintain the balance in the design? That is subtraction! The balanced design of the colors is geometry!

## Governance

### Symbols of Leadership: Gorgets, Bags, And Headdress

In countries around the world it is usually easy to identify a leader by the type of clothing they wear, the type of military decoration that adorns their uniform, or other symbols of status like hats or crowns. These decorated objects are art in their own right and are designed and created by the most talented and skilled artisans to signify and honor leaders. In America, Native American leaders were traditionally identified in the same way. Wearing or carrying regal things like highly polished silver gorgets, bandolier bags heavily beaded in leadership symbols, or sacred feather headdress were examples of "status symbols" - what leaders wore to display their high status in society.

### Headdress

The Plains tribes' headdress has long been identified as being worn by an important chief. Colorful and vibrant American Indian headdresses were usually worn by very important members of the tribe such as the tribal chiefs and spiritual leaders.

One of the first known tribes to wear this type of headdress were the Sioux tribes—like the Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes (located in western Oklahoma today). These grand headdresses were created from feathers that had been collected over the years through acts of bravery and devotion to the tribe and the customs. The feathers were attached to a cap that fit on the head. Often across the front of the headdress was a band of beadwork that articulated a special meaning about the leader. Hair was attached to the tips of the feathers which was from a horse or from an enemy.

Otter-fur turbans (also known as otter-skin caps) are ceremonial headdresses worn by men in certain Prairie and Southern Plains tribes, such as the Potawatomi, Pawnee and Osage. These are round hats made of otter fur with the otter's tail either hanging behind or jutting out to one side in a beaded sheath. The turbans and



Cheyenne Headdress

tail sheaths were often elaborately decorated with beaded and painted designs symbolizing the owner's war honors. A leader or chief and his descendants usually attach eagle feathers to the back of their turbans.

### Gorgets

A gorget is an ornament worn on a necklace. Historically, Mississippian Moundbuilder gorgets were made of freshwater mussel shells. Using a stone tool, Native people cut out a disk-shaped piece of shell, incised decorated designs significant to the person wearing the gorget, and then drilled two holes through which they strung a cord of rawhide or plant fiber. The design often was an abstract circle-and-cross design, which is sometimes interpreted as the annual renewal of Mississippian life. Certain symbols were also incised onto a gorget that represented the leaders rank and status in government, military or as a medicine man. An example of this is in the woodpecker motif. It is believed that the woodpecker signified a high ranking status perhaps as warrior or leader.



The shell gorget tradition changed with European contact in the 1600 and 1700s. English officers wore silver gorgets as a symbol of military rank. As gestures of recognizing a Native American leader's status in the tribe or during war, the English military began to award Indian

chiefs silver gorgets. Worn primarily by tribes located in the eastern region of the United States, Native leaders regarded these stately, polished, crescent shaped silver necklaces the same as the highly valued traditional gorgets made of shell. Over time Native people learned the art of silver smithing and began to make gorgets themselves and incorporated traditional cultural symbols of leadership. Native people made the early silver gorgets from silver coins that were smelted down and formed



Chief Osceola, Seminole  
(1804-January 30, 1838)

into sheets of silver and then modeled into the crescent gorget shape. The Seminole leader Osceola is pictured wearing a three-tiered gorget necklace that shows his position as a leader and warrior.



## Bandolier Bags

Eye dazzling fully beaded bandolier bags have been carried for hundreds of years by Native leaders. They wore these bags, depicting symbols and designs, to show their tribal affiliation, cultural status and even as protection from enemies and other threats. Although Native people have always created bags, usually made from a hide like buckskin or buffalo. European military carried ammunition bags that inspired Native people to create bags that were similar but were decorated with traditional beadwork. This new art form became very important for Native people when sacred religious practices and beliefs became outlawed. The designs on the bandolier bags allowed Native people to continue to use and display traditional symbols within the community through a secret visual language unbeknownst to the non-Natives. This was very important because it allowed the traditions to continue without being lost forever. Wearing a bandolier bag displayed imagery of rank and political status.

Today, all of these art forms are continued by tribes in Oklahoma and some leaders still wear these symbols as a way of honoring their traditions and maintaining the cultural integrity of the traditional customs.



Creek Chief Neamathla's Deer Effigy  
Bandolier, 1853 Bag



Wampum Belt 1682

## The Art of Giving

*"One gives to strangers, not simply hoping to make friends, but because it is the honorable thing to do. One gives to honor a relative, and this in turn honors that person in the eyes of the community. One gives when one seemingly has nothing to give." – Unknown*

Generosity and sharing are and have been historically of great importance within the American Indian culture. One of the most beautiful traditions shared among tribes in Oklahoma as well as throughout the Americas is the practice of "giving away" material possessions to family and friends. A gesture of respect and gratitude, this practice stems from an ancient tradition in which generosity is more important than possession. Giving away highly valued, beautiful and artistic objects as well as food and household items was and continues to be a way to maintain balance and order in life. Creating a work of art like a beaded buckskin dress or a bandolier bag to be gifted to someone is a traditional way of sharing beauty and artistic expression which is often viewed as a gift from the creator, so the act of giving something beautiful away is viewed as a blessing from the Creator.

The 'give-away' is one example of this and is practiced at honor dances, weddings and on many other occasions. When an honor dance, for example, is held for a particular person, that person or the family of that individual is the gift-giver, and the gifts are given to the guests. Traditionally, the more some families gave away, the higher in rank they were considered. These give-aways, as they came to be called, also served to redistribute and share the wealth in many communities, honor the memory of a loved one, and to share with those around them. The more you gave away, the more you would receive. It was a circular pattern that took away fear or concern for simply acquiring objects of value.

Today, the give-away tradition continues in American Indian communities as a way of maintaining balance between the natural and spirit worlds for the good of the community and the environment. High value is placed on giving away and sharing what is ours. There is a strong belief among many American Indian people that what is given always comes back to the giver in one way or another in the form of good. For, it is always the giver who receives the greatest blessing.

## Activity:

Visit [aiccm.org](http://aiccm.org) to watch a video on an American Indian give-away.

## Resource List

### Online teaching tools

<http://www.indigenousartwork.com/>  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/06/arts/design/06infinity.html?pagewanted=all>  
<http://www.nativetech.org/finger/beltinstr.html>  
[http://creativity.denverartmuseum.org/1953\\_131/](http://creativity.denverartmuseum.org/1953_131/)  
<http://youtu.be/Il0qIRkkCvw>

[http://www.eiteljorg.org/ejm\\_EducationActivities/TeacherInformation/ClassroomResources.asp](http://www.eiteljorg.org/ejm_EducationActivities/TeacherInformation/ClassroomResources.asp)  
<http://home.nps.gov/labe/planyourvisit/upload/MODOC%20WAY.pdf>  
<http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigation/modoc-basket/>  
<http://www.nga.gov/kids/catlin/catlin1.html>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Il0qIRkkCvw&feature=youtu.be>

### **Books:**

The Give-Away: *A Native American Tradition*, By Ray Buckley

### **Sources:**

Ewers, John Canfield. Murals in the Round: Painted Tipis of the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache Indians. An exhibition of tipi models made for James Mooney of the Smithsonian Institution during his field studies of Indian history and art in southwestern Oklahoma, 1891-1904. Pub. for the Renwick Gallery of the National Collection of Fine Arts by the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978.

Painted Tipis By Contemporary Plains Indian Artists. Catalogue of the exhibition published and distributed by the Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative, Anadarko, Oklahoma, 1973.

## **Social Pass Skills**

### **All Visual Arts Pass Skills Apply to this NIE**

**Social Studies**  
Grade 1

**Origins**  
St 2.5, 4.2

**Community**  
St 2.2

**Grade 2**  
Origins  
3.4

### **Native Knowledge**

**Grade 2**  
St 3.5

**Grade 3**  
St 1.2, 3.1

**Governance**  
Grade 3  
St 3.3

**Grade 4**  
St. 1.1  
2.1  
4.1  
5.1  
5.2  
5.4  
5.5

**Grade 5**  
St 5.1, 7.3

**Grade 7**  
St 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4

**Language Arts**  
**Grade 2**  
St 5

**Writing St 1 & 2**  
Oral St 1, 2, 3

**Language Arts**  
**Grade 3**  
St. 4

**Reading Comprehension**  
St 2, St 3

**Grammar St 3**  
Oral St. 1 & 2

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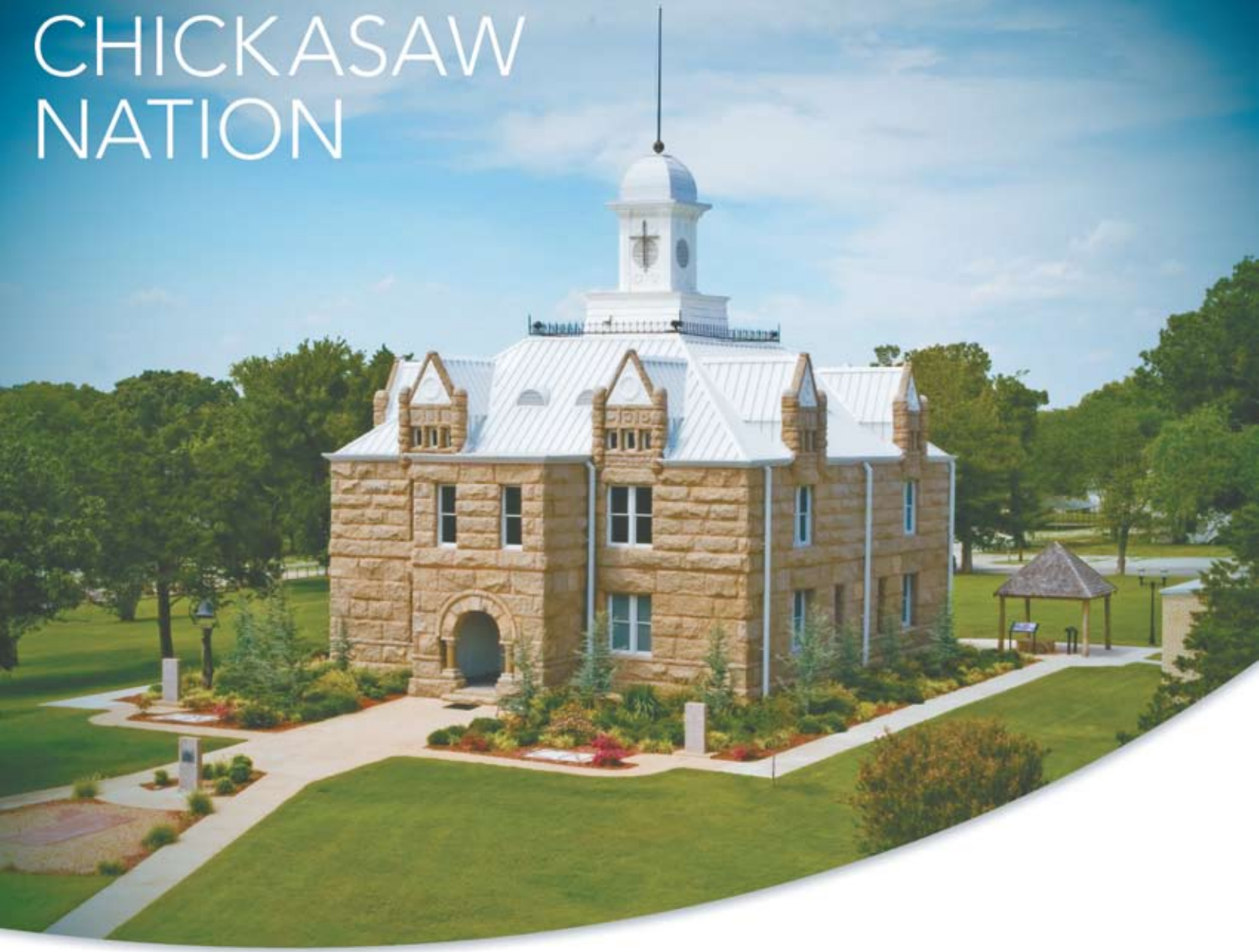
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Allen C. Houser  
(U.S., Chickasaw Apache, 1914-1994)  
Apache Mask, 1976, Bronze, 14.5 x 5.5 in.  
The Eugene B. Adkins Collection at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma and the Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



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