Welcome to
21st Century Learning – Links to Our Collection.
This online module and supplemental education guide was developed to allow access to hundreds of digitized images and lesson plans from Glenbow Museum’s collections.
Our hope is to extend our vision of ‘More people, interacting with art, culture and ideas more often.’

Please visit and enjoy 21st Century Learning - Nehiwayak: Traditions of the Cree People.
This educator’s package presents the traditional way of life of the Cree people. The information encourages students to examine artifacts from the Glenbow Museum’s collection and connects them to other cultures, communities and environments from within Canada.

Included in this guide are:

- Information on the Cree people including high-resolution artifact photographs, online and print readings and resources.

- Lesson plans including discussions for looking at primary sources, curriculum connections and lesson plans for a variety of ages and abilities.

- Detailed listing of vocabulary and concepts.

- Suggested sources for further research and other information.
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HISTORY OF GLENBOW MUSEUM

Glenbow Museum began with the remarkable vision of petroleum entrepreneur and lawyer Eric Lafferty Harvie. Mr. Harvie came into his fortune when oil was discovered in 1949 on land near Leduc and Redwater, for which he held the mineral rights. With this prosperity, he decided to pursue his favourite passion — collecting — and simultaneously return some of his good fortune back to the region that had been so generous to him. Mr. Harvie's goal was to collect the objects representing the history and culture of Western Canada as well as from around the world.

Eric Harvie began collecting material relating to the history of Western Canada in the 1950s, developing an extensive collection of art, artifacts, books and archival material from North America that tell the fascinating story of Aboriginal peoples, frontier exploration, and the development of western life. He built on these North American collections with extraordinary artifacts and art from Asia, West Africa, South America, and islands in the Pacific, eventually amassing a huge museum collection. Establishing the Glenbow Foundation in 1954, Mr. Harvie's collection became an eclectic blend of western history and international art and artifacts.

In 1966, Eric Harvie and his family donated his impressive collection of art, artifacts, and historical documents to the people of Alberta. Today, Glenbow Museum is one of the largest museums in Canada, playing an essential role in defining Western Canadian culture.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The intent of Glenbow Museum’s Digitization Project is to infuse Alberta classrooms and communities with Glenbow Museum’s collection of culture and art. The importance of engaging viewers in primary source investigation is essential to developing creative thinking, visual literacy and observational skills.

This program was developed in conjunction with the Glenbow Museum and the Alberta Government to establish exciting curriculum connections between the Glenbow Museum and Alberta communities. This program consists of six exhibitions of digitized images from our collections, educational materials for viewers of all ages and online resources.

We encourage you to spend time with each online exhibition and use these resources.
EDUCATIONAL GUIDE PURPOSE

The purpose of this educational guide is to assist educators and other viewers with the incorporation of the Glenbow Museum Digitization Program into the classroom or other educational site. This guide contains education philosophies for looking at and working with primary sources, vocabulary on relevant terms, curriculum connections and ways to gather meaning from the artifacts.

Also included are suggested lesson plans for a more in-depth look at the various areas of content. The lesson plans include questions to encourage discussion and deeper looking, inquiry-based activities, extensions and assessment. All of these lesson plans can be adapted to any age or ability level.

Please take time to preview the educator's guide and enjoy Nehiwayak: Traditions of the Cree People from Glenbow Museum’s Digitization Program.
Gauntlets, Nehiwyans, mid 20th century, buckskin, fur, glass beads, denim, AP 2174
MAPS

TRADITIONAL CREE TERRITORY

Key: Y = Plains Cree, D = Woods Cree, N = Swampy Cree, L = Moose Cree
LISTING OF ARTIFACTS AND IMAGES

Cape
Nehiwy'an, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
velveteen, glass beads
AP 1825

Pipe Bag
Nehiwy'an
mid 20th century
buckskin, glass beads, sinew thread
AP 2501

Birch Bark Basket
Nehiwy'an
mid 20th century
birch bark, dye, roots, porcupine quills
AP 585 A-B

Child’s Jacket
Nehiwy'an
late 19th or early 20th century
hide, brass buttons, plastic buttons, glass beads, wool stroud
AP 2523

Gauntlets
Nehiwy'an
mid 20th century
buckskin, fur, glass beads, denim
AP 2174 A-B

Breechcloth
Nehiwy'an
mid 20th century
buckskin, cotton cloth, glass beads
AP 1643 A-B
**Saddle**
Nehiwyen
early 20th century
moose hide, brass beads, glass beads, cotton fabric, cotton thread
AP 2962

**Gloves**
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
moose hide, muskrat fur, thread, cotton cloth, glass beads
AP 249 A-B

**Cape**
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
velveteen, denim, glass beads, brass bells
AP 3184

**Moss Bag**
Nehiwyen, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
cotton, buckskin, glass beads
AP 266

**Breastpiece**
Nehiwyen
early 20th century
smoked hide, embroidery thread, fur, silk
AP 2396

**Deer Leg Container**
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
deer legs, velvet, beads, cord, cloth
AP 2313
**VOCABULARY**

**Artifact** - An object produced or shaped by humans, especially a tool, weapon or ornament of archaeological or historical interest.

**Aboriginal** – In addition to the definition of Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal refers to the first inhabitants of a given area.

**Aboriginal Peoples** – The descendents of the original inhabitants of North America. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

**Balance** - An even distribution of weight enabling someone or something to remain upright and steady OR Stability of one's mind or feelings

**Ceremony** - The formal activities conducted on some solemn or important public or state occasion; a formal religious or sacred observance;

**Community** – A group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history and /or geographically defined shared space.

**Cultural Diversity** – Differences in groups having a variety of languages, ethnicities, nationalities, within a shared space.

**Cultural Heritage** – The beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and historical experiences shared by a given group.

**Culture** – The beliefs, values, socially transmitted behaviors and traditions, language, arts and other human endeavors considered together as being characteristics of a particular community, period or people.

**First Nations** – Refers to the various governments of the First Nations peoples of Canada. There are over 630 First Nations across Canada with 46 in Alberta.

**Group** - People who are together and connected by shared interests and characteristics.

**Honour** - honesty, fairness, or integrity in one's beliefs and actions: a source of credit or distinction: high respect, worth, merit, or rank

**Natural Resources** – Elements of the natural environment that are of use to humans. They include nonrenewable and renewable resources. Nonrenewable resources, such as oil, natural gas and minerals, are limited in quantity; renewable resources, such as forests, water and fish, can be regenerated and can last indefinitely if used carefully.

**Oral Tradition** - oral culture and oral lore is cultural material and traditions transmitted orally from one generation to another
**Symbol** - A letter, figure, or other character or mark or a combination of letters or the like used to designate something.

**Symmetry** - the property of being symmetrical; *especially*: equality in size, shape, and relative position of parts on opposite sides of a dividing line or median plane or about a center or axis.

**Traditions** – Beliefs, principles or ways of acting which people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time, or all of the beliefs, principles or ways of acting in a particular group or society.

**Traditional** – Of or pertaining to traditions or characteristics of past styles, ways of life. Today, people value their cultural traditions and struggle to keep alive the practices of the past in the face of a rapidly changing society.
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART
Reflection: responses to visual forms in nature, designed objects and artworks
Depiction: development of imagery based on observations of the visual world.
Expression: use of art materials as a vehicle or medium for saying something in a meaningful way.

LANGUAGE ARTS
1.1 Discover and Explore
1.2 Clarify and Extend
2.1 Use Strategies and Cues
3.1 Plan and Focus
3.2 Select and Process
3.3 Organize, Record and Evaluate
3.4 Share and Review
4.1 Enhance and Improve
4.3 Present and Share
5.1 Respect Others and Strengthen Community

SCIENCE
Grade 4 – Topic A: Waste and Our World
Grade 6 – Topic E: Trees and Forests

SOCIAL STUDIES
Grade 1 – Citizenship: Belonging and Connecting
1.3 Moving Forward with the Past; My Family, My History and My Community

Grade 2 – Communities in Canada
2.1 Canada’s Dynamic Communities
2.2 A Community in the Past

Grade 5 – Canada: The Land Histories and Stories
5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada
5.3 Canada: Shaping an Identity

Grade 7 – Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of Peoples
7.1 Toward Confederation
LESSON PLANS

THE CREE:
CONNECTING ART AND SPIRITUALITY

Recommended grades: 1 – 6
Time required: 30 minute class lessons
Materials: Map of Traditional Cree territory, Tracing or Rice Paper, Ballpoint Pens
Images Required: AP 1825, AP 2501, AP 585 A-B, AP 2523, AP 2174 A-B

INTRODUCTION

How did the Cree people traditionally live? How was art used to illustrate spirituality? What methods were used to evoke spirituality within their art? Through the use of images, vocabulary and lesson plans, students will gain knowledge of the Cree people’s lives and beliefs and discover how their art is informed by these values and philosophies.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the Cree’s connection to their environment, natural resources and how these connections are reflected in their traditions.

- Recognize how cycles of life and balance are exhibited within the art of the Cree.
IMAGES

Please print in colour if possible

Cape
Nehiwyen, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
velveteen, glass beads
AP 1825
Cape
Nehiwyen, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
velveteen, glass beads
AP 1825

I find that the beadwork on this cape is very striking.  

Gerry Conaty

It is very creative how these cut beads were used. What is fascinating is that the cut beads are right across this way. It’s not just the small beads. The small beads are used for the outside of the leaf pattern. But there is also the middle. Then there is that darker green. I would say this is very artful.... Someone who is not an expert in beads might say they wanted to get this done real fast so they just used small beads. These are small beads. Whoever came up with this was a genius in their own time.

Joe Deschamps
Pipe Bag
Nehiwyans
mid 20th century
buckskin, glass beads, sinew thread
AP 2501
Pipe Bag
Nehiwyans
mid 20th century
buckskin, glass beads, sinew thread
AP 2501

One of these pipe bags, [the blue bag], was for a short pipe stem.

Gerry Conaty

If you measured from half-way on the neck of the bag to the bottom, you have the length of the pipe stem. They tie the stem about half way along the neck of the bag.

Joe Deschamps

See how the lighter and darker pink beaded trim goes all the way around the bag? It is a circle or hoop around the pipe.

Joe Deschamps

These pipe bags are all different sizes and slightly different shapes. Why would pipe bags vary so much?

Gerry Conaty

Most of the old men had up to four pipes. According to my research, for example, Big Bear had maybe three or four pipes. Each one of them was used for a different ceremony. A lot of people don’t know that. What does a red pipe mean? What does a green pipe mean? What does a black pipe mean? What do all these other exotic pipe colours mean? There are some that are brown or grey. But all those colours mean something in a ceremonial sense. A lot of people are so commercial, they think commercially. They don’t really have the ins and outs to know the approach, the protocol of pipes. So this one probably indicates that the owner had a nicer pipe. The nicer pipe bag you have, the nicer the pipe is. So that’s why I think these pipe bags should go together. These had a very short stem – medium-long.

Joe Deschamps
Birch Bark Basket
Nehiwyän
mid 20th century
birch bark, dye, roots, porcupine
AP 585 A-B
Birch Bark Basket
Nehiwyane
mid 20th century
birch bark, dye, roots, porcupine
AP 585 A-B

If you look closely at the quill work and the inside of the basket, you can see how intricately the porcupine quill work is. How would an artist decorate birch bark with porcupine quills?

During the process of fastening the porcupine quills to the birch bark, small perforations are made in the bark with an awl that is just a bit smaller that the quills. These perforations follow a pattern that has been drawn on the bark with a blunt-pointed object, usually made of bone or antler. The perforation is made immediately before the quill is inserted.

This work is done while the bark is still wet. When the bark dries and contracts, the quills are held tight. A thin piece of bark is fastened on the inside of the basket, protecting the cut ends of the quills and adding a neat finish to the inside.

Gerry Conaty
Child’s Jacket
Nehiwyen
late 19\textsuperscript{th} or early 20\textsuperscript{th} century
hide, brass buttons, plastic buttons, glass beads, wool stroud
AP 2523
Child’s Jacket
Nehiwyán
late 19th or early 20th century
hide, brass buttons, plastic buttons, glass beads, wool stroud
AP 2523

This jacket is very nicely decorated. It looks like an adult jacket, but made in miniature. This seems to be a very unusual jacket for a child.

Gerry Conaty

This one is so adult – it doesn’t look like a child’s jacket. It looks like an adult jacket. I like the design on the sleeve – you rarely see it full length on a child’s sleeve. I don’t know how he bent his arm with the beadwork on. The buttons make me think. I like this. His grandfather or dad must have been in the high ranks the way this little coat is made. What I mean by that is, back then you wouldn’t see many families that could afford beads. I’m thinking along that line. What I’m thinking for a date is mid 1800s or late 1800s.

Joe Deschamps

The designs on the sleeves and along the front are very unique.

Gerry Conaty

That’s another thing that’s important. These designs – you can tell immediately where that person came from.

Joe Deschamps

Does the rosette circle design on the back have a special meaning?

Gerry Conaty

It has to. This one is quite different the way that the beadwork goes. There are four sets of three trapezoids. The centre in each set goes higher. There are only four that are different here. It’s almost a fancy way of acknowledging the four directions. And what has been put in the middle has to be acknowledged as well. That is the red stroud. When we made offerings a long time ago, we used hide and this cloth. This was sought after. The old men still say today...if you want to put a hierarchy, this would be the top. You get answers. But it definitely has meaning – it is protection for the child and the whole family.

Joe Deschamps
Gauntlets
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
buckskin, fur, glass beads, denim
AP 2174 A-B
Gauntlets
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
buckskin, fur, glass beads, denim
AP 2174 A-B

The beaded design on these gauntlets is very interesting.  
Gerry Conaty

This represents a Nehiwyen hoop or, as I like to call it, a dream catcher, although we don’t have those webs. That is how we recognize the hoop. We say for the east, yellow. We say for the blue, south. We say red for the west. And for the north, white. And a lot of those have a lot of meaning. A lot of people respect what they are. Yellow represents spring. South – summer. Red – fall, white – north-winter. Those were our colours.

Joe Deschamps

Did people copy designs very often?

Gerry Conaty

The majority of the time these patterns and designs and colour belong to families. In other words, back then they had their trademark and copyright already. If one family member sews something that isn’t theirs they would be stopped and told, ‘You have to go ask that family. That’s their design or that’s their colours.’ And sometimes back then, too, if someone liked a design they might eventually marry into that clan. That’s also important to talk about. A lot of these designs and patterns belonged to clans. At least that’s what I was told.

Joe Deschamps
Breechcloth
Nehiwyان
mid 20th century
buckskin, cotton cloth, glass beads
AP 1643

I see that the designs on this breechcloth are different from some of the other Cree items we’ve seen.

Gerry Conaty
This is a floral design. Wealthier people who could afford to hire skilled beadworkers [would have owned a breechcloth such as this].

Joe Deschanps
How do you tell the front from the back?

Gerry Conaty
The front is shorter.

Joe Deschanps
ACTIVITY PROCEDURES

THE CREE:
CONNECTING ART AND SPIRITUALITY

Recommended grades: 1 – 6
Time required: 30 minute class lessons
Materials: Map of Traditional Cree territory, Tracing or Rice Paper, Ballpoint Pens
Images Required: AP 1825, AP 2501, AP 585, AP 2523, AP 2174, AP 1643

The Cree people lived in many areas throughout Canada. For thousands of years, the surrounding environment has been their source of food, shelter, and clothing. This area has an abundance of natural resources including; trees, bushes, bison, elk, deer, rabbits, birds, and water. The way the Cree thought about their environment was reflected in their artwork. Most things the Cree created were decorated and the decorative patterns were derived from their spiritual beliefs. Their connection to the environment, land, animals and their belief in the spiritual realm all became part of their art, decoration and craft.

The Cree believe that creating balance in one’s life is reached through living harmoniously with the universe. When you are living a balanced life with all living things you in turn will have balance in your own life. This belief is reflected in their decoration through the symmetry you’ll find in many of their patterns.

Teachers: Try to have the students identify Tribal ID, special meaning, symmetry and balance within the decoration. Why do the Cree use this symbol? What do you think it means?
INSTRUCTIONS

Introduce the terms **tradition, symmetry and balance**.

- **Traditions**: beliefs, values and ways of acting that are a part of a community for a long time. What are examples of **traditions?** Family? School? Community? (celebrations, special events, holidays)

- **Symmetry**: balanced proportions; being symmetrical: correspondence in size, shape, and relative position of parts on opposite sides of a dividing line or median plane or about a center or axis.

- **Balance**: equal distribution of weight, amount, etc.; mental steadiness or emotional stability; habit of calm behavior, judgment, etc.

1. Introduce the concept of Birch Bark Biting

   Cree women used *Birch Bark Biting* as a way to create pattern templates for their decorative beading. The birch bark was folded into an even square shape with four layers. The bark was thin enough, that when bitten, the tooth mark would be left in all layers creating a perfectly symmetrical pattern when the bark is unfolded. The bark was then laid over a piece of material (e.g. leather) and used as a template to sew beads into a decorative pattern, destroying the bark in the process. Today Birch Bark Biting has become an art form all its own. They are created in the same manner, but rather than destroyed they are displayed as artwork.

2. Divide the students into small groups and distribute the ‘Required Images’ evenly throughout the groups. Ask the groups to look carefully at the images to find evidence of the Cree’s spiritual belief in symmetry and balance in life. Look critically for patterns, symmetry and balance in the decoration.
3. With the images as a resource, have the students begin to think of a pattern they would like to create. Using tracing, rice or any variation of fine paper; have the students create a SQUARE piece of paper. Fold the squared paper into 4 quadrants by folding in half and then in half again.

4. Beginning with a pencil, have the students lightly and gently mark out their pattern on the top layer of the paper. Now using a ballpoint pen (or teeth if preferred) go over the pattern pressing into the paper; be sure to have the students press or bite hard enough that the pattern will transfer onto all four layers.

5. Once the students are finished pressing the marks into the paper layers, slowly and gently unfold it.

6. What’s left will be a beautifully symmetrical and balanced pattern much like the Cree would create! Display the finished pieces in a window or near a light source to really make the patterns visible!

An Alternative

Grades 1 – 3

Using the templates create a ‘beaded pattern’ with acrylic paints of various colours. Paint coloured dots over top of the patterns formed with the pen. This will allow the students to use their colour skills and add another level of learning. The patience and tranquility needed to finish this task will also connect the students to the spiritual and meditative process that brings balance to one’s life, much like the Cree.

Grades 4 - 6

Using the templates, create an actual beaded pattern with thread, needles and various coloured beads. This will provide an alternative level of learning by allowing the students to experience the time required to complete these decorative arts. The patience and tranquility needed to finish this task will also connect the students to the spiritual and meditative process that brings balance to one’s life, much like the Cree.
THE ART OF HONOURING:
CONNECTING ART AND TRADITIONS
OF THE CREE PEOPLE

Recommended grades: 7 - 12
Time required: 45 minute class lessons
Materials: Map of Traditional Cree territory, Watercolour Paper, Pencil Crayons
Images Required: AP 2962, AP 249, AP 3184, AP 266, AP 2396, AP 2313

INTRODUCTION

How did the Cree people traditionally live? How was art used to illustrate spirituality? What methods were used to evoke spirituality within their art? Through the use of images, vocabulary and lesson plans, students will gain knowledge of the Cree people’s lives and beliefs and discover how their art is informed by these values and philosophies.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the Cree’s connection to their environment, natural resources and how these connections are reflected in their traditions.

- Understand the relationship between the art of the Cree, their spiritual beliefs, honour of hard work and the interconnection of all things.

- Recognize how cycles of life and balance are exhibited within the art of the Cree.
IMAGES

Please Print in colour if possible

Saddle
Nehiwyen
early 20th century
moose hide, brass beads, glass beads, cotton fabric, cotton thread
AP 2962
Saddle
Nehiwyann
early 20th century
moose hide, brass beads, glass beads, cotton fabric, cotton thread
AP 2962

When I look carefully at the floral patterns on each corner of this saddle they seem to be in pairs. This creates symmetry in the pattern and brings a balance to the design.

Gerry Conaty

Most of these saddles were used for ceremonies, such as weddings. They also show their artwork. Most of these were used only occasionally in parades for great honour and distinction. Keeping that in mind, this might have belonged to a chief.

Joe Deschamps

How did they choose what to use to create this art?

Gerry Conaty

They used whatever was out there. For example these blue beads – basket beads. It’s quite the art work. The gold and black and reddish kind of orange. Over here it’s a different colour. This is a nice work of art. ...

Joe Deschamps
**Gloves**
Nehiwyän
mid 20th century
moose hide, muskrat fur, thread, cotton cloth, glass beads
AP 249 A-B
Gloves
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
moose hide, muskrat fur, thread, cotton cloth, glass beads
AP 249 A-B

The elaborate beadwork on these gloves makes them very special. The style of the gloves and the design of the beadwork is very distinctive.

Gerry Conaty

We used to take greater pride in identifying ourselves and part of the territory and who we were. Which culture and society [we] were: Cree, Metis, Blackfoot. You could tell their culture by how they dressed and by their beadwork. A lot of people wore beadwork to let people know they were proud to wear these beads and proud of their heritage. And this beadwork reminds me of that.

Joe Deschamps

Do you think these were only used on special occasions?

Gerry Conaty

Some of these were only worn at special times, such as going to church. Some were actually used in the winter. Again sometimes for weddings or ceremonies. It wasn’t just all about summer or spring or fall. Weddings happened in the wintertime too, and this reminds me of a young man, a very strong young man. When you see this beadwork it often makes you think how they came to own this. It was a gift and must have been very special.

Joe Deschamps
**Cape**
Nehiwyana
mid 20th century
velveteen, denim, glass beads, brass bells
AP 3184
Cape
Nehiwyen
mid 20th century
velveteen, denim, glass beads, brass bells
AP 3184

This is very creative. It takes the cake for looking interesting and as art work. Look at how they used velvet as a background that complements the colour of the bead work. I think this cape was for a woman or a teenager by the size of it. It would have looked good when it was new.

Joe Deschamps

Look closely at the lace work that forms the fringe. What did they use to sew the beads together?

Gerry Conaty

They didn’t use thread. It looks like they used the string that they used in the stores.

Joe Deschamps

There are stars made of glass beads on the back to the cape. Do you think these had any special meaning?

Gerry Conaty

The blue stars probably represent morning and evening stars. For what we know, those stars might have some relationship to the owner’s name. Some people are gifted with a name ... if something came to them in a dream. You wouldn’t put a flower like that without a reason. The stars and the flowers stand out. There had to be a reason for putting stars on it.

Joe Deschamps
Moss Bag
Nehiwyen, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
cotton, buckskin, glass beads
AP 266
Moss Bag
Nehiwayan, Onion Lake First Nation
mid 20th century
cotton, buckskin, glass beads
AP 266

Traditionally, these bags were filled with moss to keep a baby dry. The moss acted like a diaper and could be thrown away once it had been soiled. The women of a family all contributed to making a nice moss bag for a newborn.

Gerry Conaty

We should note one other important thing about moss bags. Some of them would have and should have been handed down from one generation to another. Nowadays they call it hand-me-downs. A lot of people, the ones [who] keep up with their traditions and culture, their family heritage... that’s how they pass things along, from one generation to another, but always staying in one family. There’s always someone who took care of that, who maintained that.

Joe Deschamps
Breastpiece
Nehiwy an
mid 20th century
smoked hide, embroidery thread, fur, silk
AP 2396

This very unique item is a breastpiece with silk embroidery. If I look very closely, I can see a small hole cut in the centre.

Gerry Conaty

I don’t know what that would be for. It might be buttoned onto a shirt.

Joe Deschamps
Deer Leg Container
Nehiwyans
mid 20th century
deer legs, velvet, beads, cord, cloth
AP 2313

This is a very unusual item. Look carefully at the beadwork. Notice how velvet has been used as a background to enhance the designs and colours of the beads.

Gerry Conaty
ACTIVITY PROCEDURES

THE ART OF HONOURING: CONNECTING ART AND TRADITIONS OF THE CREE PEOPLE

Recommended grades: 7 - 12
Time required: 45 minute class lessons
Materials: Map of Traditional Cree territory, Watercolour Paper, Pencil Crayons
Images Required: AP 2962, AP 249, AP 3184, AP 266, AP 1929, AP 3372

The Cree people lived in these areas throughout Canada. For thousands of years, the surrounding environment has been their source of food, shelter, and clothing. This area has an abundance of natural resources including; trees, bushes, bison, elk, deer, rabbits, birds, and water. The way the Cree thought about their environment was reflected in their artwork. Most things the Cree created were decorated and the decorations came from their spiritual beliefs. Their connection to the environment, land, animals and their belief in the spiritual realm all became part of their art, decoration and craft.

The Cree believe that creating balance in one’s life is reached through living harmoniously with the universe. When you are living a balanced life with all living things you in turn will have balance in your own life. This belief is reflected in their decoration through the symmetry you’ll find in many of their patterns.

Teachers: Try to have the students identify Tribal ID, special meaning, symbolism balance and colour within the decoration. Why do the Cree use this symbol? What do you think it means? How does this decoration mirror their traditional ways of life.
INSTRUCTIONS

Introduce the terms *tradition, symmetry and balance*.

**Traditions**: beliefs, values and ways of acting that are a part of a community for a long time. What are examples of *traditions*? Family? School? Community? (celebrations, special events, holidays)

**Symmetry**: balanced proportions; being symmetrical: correspondence in size, shape, and relative position of parts on opposite sides of a dividing line or median plane or about a center or axis.

**Balance**: equal distribution of weight, amount, etc.; mental steadiness or emotional stability; habit of calm behavior, judgment, etc.

1. *Introduce the concept of Decorative Beading*

Cree women used *Decorative Beading* as a way to create pattern, tell stories through symbols and colours and identify tribe names and areas in which they lived throughout Canada. Decorative Beading was a highly skilled and contemplative process that was passed on through generations of women from mother to daughter for thousands of years. Traditionally using porcupine quills the women would gather, dye and sew the quills into a piece of clothing or accessory. Eventually through contact and trade the porcupine quill gave way to glass bead brought to Canada by the European Fur Traders. Almost everything in Cree culture was decorated, ranging from clothing and moccasins to quiver pouches and saddles. The beading was highly intricate and often reflected the spirituality of the people, land and animals. Many of the patterns were created in a symmetrical and balanced way to reflect the Cree’s beliefs in balance and cycles of life.
2. Divide the students into small groups and distribute the ‘Required Images’ evenly throughout the groups. Ask the groups to look critically at the images to find evidence of the Cree’s spiritual beliefs, honour of hard work and connection to all things living. Attempt to find meaning within the patterns, evidence of tribal ID and locations, colour association and evidence of the Cree’s connection to their spiritual beliefs such as equilibrium and balance within life.

3. With the images as a resource, have the students begin to consider a pattern they would like to create. Remind them to consider the use of balance and symmetry in their pattern. Using watercolour paper, do a light wash of a colour or perhaps use tea to create a background colour. Let the paper dry thoroughly.

4. With a pencil, lightly and gently mark out a pattern beginning with lines. Once a pattern has emerged go back in and fill between the lines with dots. The dots become the beads in the pattern. Once the pattern is completed go back over the lines and dots with black fineliners and coloured markers, pencil crayons or acrylic paints.

5. The finished piece with resemble the beaded decoration the Cree would have crafted for their designs!

An Alternative

Grades 7 – 12

Using the same process as above provide the students with a piece of fabric or leather, thread and coloured beads and create designs for the students to actually produce beaded works!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded in part by the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation.

THE GLENBOW MUSEUM WOULD LIKE TO THANK THEM FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION.
RECOMMENDED READINGS AND RESOURCES:

WEBSITES

Alberta Curriculum Standards: education.alberta.ca

Inquiry Based Learning: http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks/teacher/english/inqbl.html

A PDF version of the full Focus on Inquiry document is available on the Alberta Education Web site at: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/focusoninquiry.pdf

PRINT


LINKS TO COLLECTIONS

To locate the remainder of the collections not provided in this package, please use the following link:

http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/collectionsResults.aspx?XC=/search/collectionsResults.aspx&TN=OBJECTS&AC=QBE_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DF=WebResultsDetails&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&MR=10&QB0=AND&DQFO=Audience-mediator2&QI0=Main21cCree