

EDUCATOR INFORMATION



T. HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Overview:

This curriculum/study guide will serve as an educational tool to accompany the exhibition, *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*. Designed to enhance a classroom visit to the museum, or to act as an independent resource for educators, the curriculum focuses on eight quilters, their communities, and their individual quilt stories. Developed for middle school students, this material can be adapted for all ages.

What You Will Find:

Four distinct lesson plans correspond with exhibition sections: Origins, Honoring, Design, and Community. Each lesson plan will include an objective, background information, study questions, vocabulary words with definitions, references, and classroom activities.

How To Utilize This Material:

The background information presents educators with material that will enhance their understanding of the lesson plans presented. This information can be used as a resource for class project development and may be reproduced for handouts. Words from Native languages are in italics and are defined in the vocabulary section.

Study questions in each section offer guidelines for developing discussions. As an educator, you are encouraged to adapt questions and activities to the learning level of your students. The questions are structured to encourage students to examine the material from a Native point of view. Vocabulary words are underlined in the background information and defined in the vocabulary portion of each lesson section.

References are provided for further study. Activities have been developed in cooperation with the quilters and offer educators a choice of projects. These activities can be adapted to meet a variety of educational needs.

TO HONOR AND COMFORT: NATIVE QUILTING TRADITIONS

(An Educational Curriculum)

Welcome to the world of Native American and Hawaiian quilts!

The National Museum of the American Indian–Smithsonian Institution’s (NMAI–SI) Education Department has developed this curriculum/study guide to assist educators in their studies of indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere. This material has been created to accompany the exhibition, *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*, developed by NMAI in collaboration with Michigan State University Museum (MSUM). This educational package may be used to enhance a class visit to the museum or for independent study in the classroom.

Studying Native quilts gives students the opportunity to understand present-day Native American lives. While quilts, in themselves, are not unique, it is the way quilts are used by Native Americans and Hawaiians that gives them distinction. Incorporating quilts into ancient ceremonies and celebrations, Native people have created a contemporary tradition. Native American history leaps boldly off the colorful quilts in patchwork designs and patterns.

As the author of this curriculum, it was my privilege to work with eight quilters who are not only passionate about quilting, but also committed to their Native heritage. With quilts displayed in tribal, national, and international museums, these quilters are making an impact in their communities and the world. On a personal level, their individual stories reinforced my own childhood memories. When Ollie Napesni (Lakota), reminisced about her mother’s old army quilts, I could feel the heaviness of my own grandmother’s quilts that kept me warm as a child. Army quilts were created by using strands of yarn to tie a patchwork cover to a rough, woolen army blanket that was used for batting. In the summer the ties, which were scattered throughout the quilt, were undone so the army blanket could be removed for cleaning and storage. The remaining patchwork cover was called a summer quilt. When students hear a story like this, it enables them to experience Native history on a personal level.

Working with these Native women has been an honor, and as a Lakota, I am comforted at the strength of the traditional Native values they present. Together, we hope this material will enrich your classroom study.

Shawn Termin

Acknowledgments

To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions Educational Curriculum is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency.



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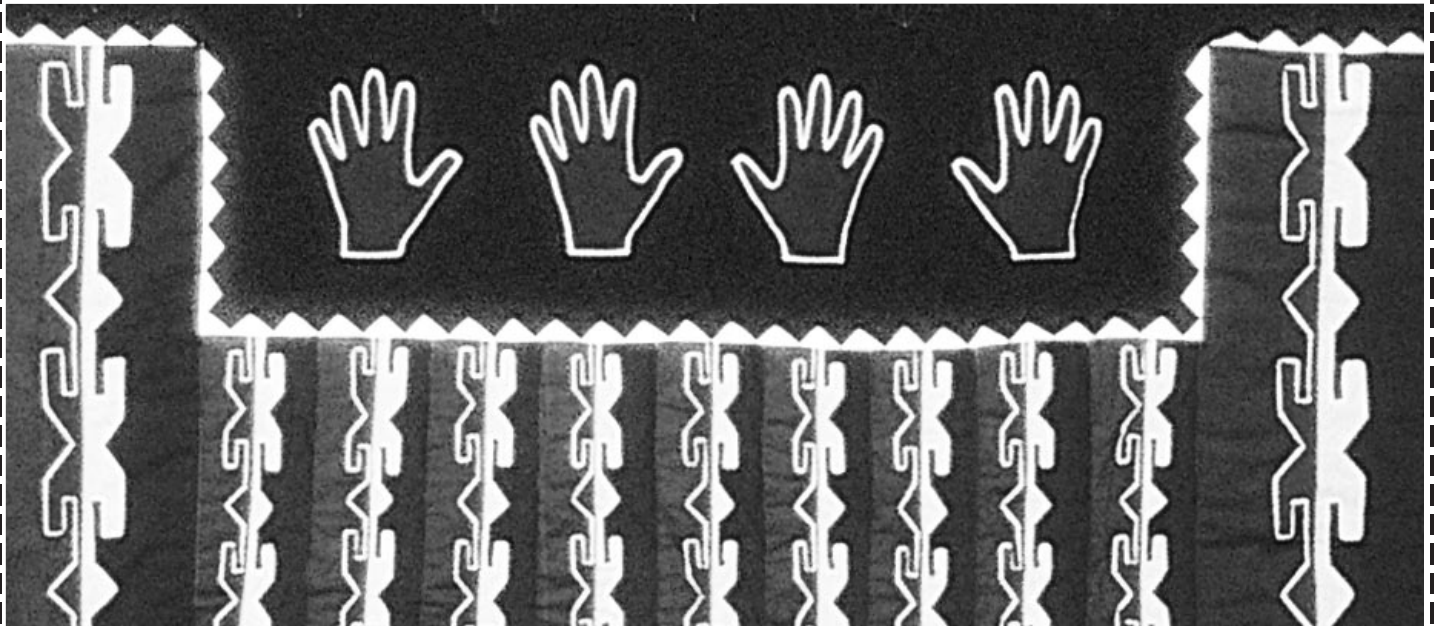
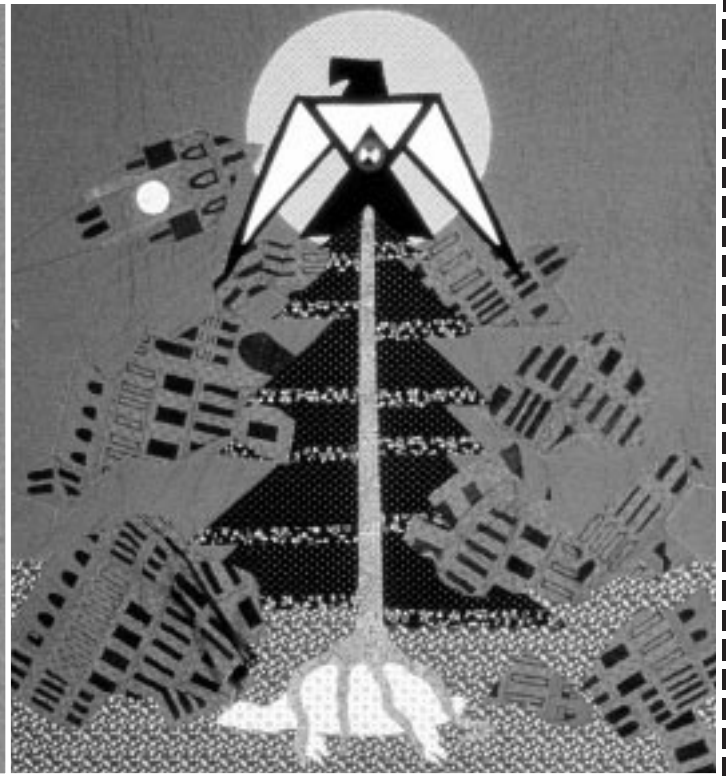
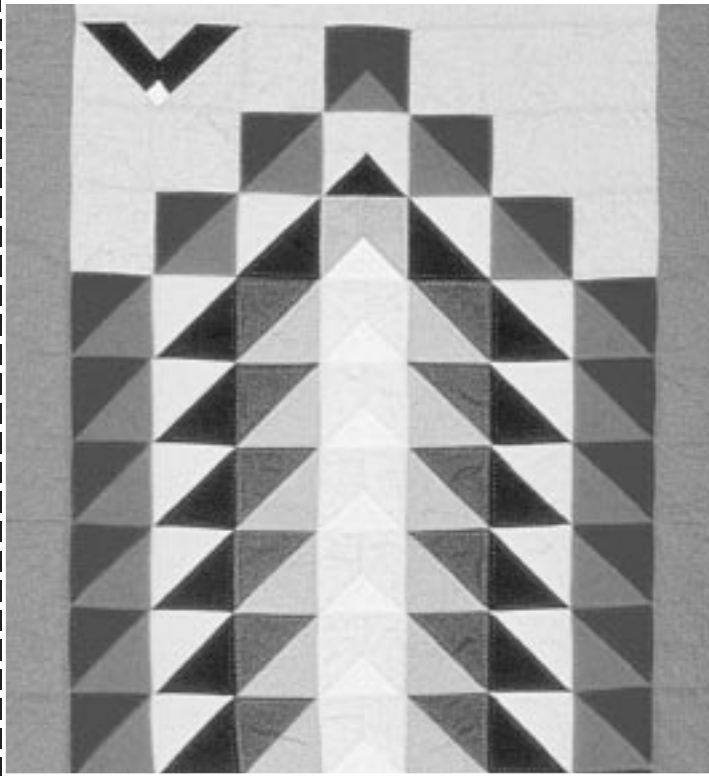
Other funding has been generously provided by the National Museum of the American Indian–Smithsonian Institution’s Community Services Department, Education Department, and Exhibition Department.

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Johanna Gorelick, Curriculum Project Director
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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY



To HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To examine how quilts and quilting activities strengthen and unite Native communities.

Background

People are the heart of Native communities. Whether celebrating the birth of a newborn, mourning the loss of an elder, or supporting a common cause, individuals unite to strengthen their community bonds. Traditional ceremonies and celebrations reinforce an individual's place in his or her community while upholding each sovereign nation as a whole.

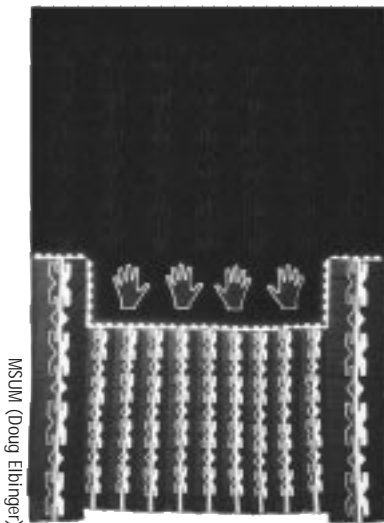
Native nations are sovereign nations. As such, they have the authority to independently control their own governmental affairs without external influence. Native nations elect their officials, determine tribal laws, and support their communities independent from outside influence. In the past, Native leaders signed treaties, in good faith, with European, colonial, and federal governments in efforts to protect their rights and their land. Today, these treaties remain the basis for contemporary land claims filed by Native nations. Some nations issue their own passports, which are recognized internationally. All nations gain strength from traditional celebrations and activities that support and strengthen community cultural identity.

QUILTS AND YUP'IK SEAL PARTIES

The Yup'ik are an Arctic nation in Alaska. In the spring, a family celebrates the killing of the first seal by sharing the seal meat with individuals in the community. Other items, such as strips of cloth used to make quilts, are also given away. This ceremony shows respect for the killed seal because Yup'ik have concern for the soul of the animal. It also acknowledges Yup'ik ancestors and bonds individuals in the community. In the past, seals were the staple food for the Yup'ik. The seal oil warmed their homes and seal skin was used to make boats, clothing, and tents.



James H. Barker



MSUM (Doug Ehringer)

“Osage Tribal Blanket Quilt”
Mary Bighorse (Osage)
MSUM 1996:125

The Osage Nation— Blankets of Tradition

Located in Oklahoma, the Osage Nation consists of three districts: Greyhorse, Hominy, and Pawhuska. These districts are united under one constitution established to promote and protect Osage ancestral heritage and cultural traditions. Each June, Osage tribal members from all over the country return to Oklahoma to participate in the *I'lon-Ska*, the Osage Ceremonial Dance. This is not a powwow but a sacred occasion of respect and honor. Families host giveaways to show gratitude and respect to various members of the community and to individual family members. Traditional ribbonwork blankets are presented at this time as a symbol of identity for the Osage.

Quilter Profile

MARY BIGHORSE

Osage



MMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)

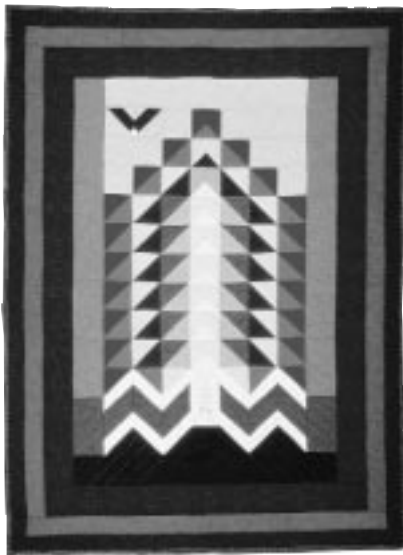
“My wish is to honor my tribe, the Osage people.”

Mary Bighorse (Osage) is from Pawhuska, Oklahoma, and is respected for her Osage ribbonwork. Taught by her aunts, Mary creates ribbonwork for traditional Osage blankets. She did not begin quilting until after her father suffered a stroke and had to be hospitalized. She soon discovered the process of quilting was comforting, as well as creative. When Mary's father saw the traditional Osage ribbonwork on her quilts, he encouraged her to continue quilting. He believed she had “captured something” for their tribe. Her father has passed on, but Mary's quilting continues.

Mary's quilt, “Osage Tribal Blanket Quilt,” honors the traditional Osage Friendship Hand Blanket. The hands represent friendship and peace. Women wear this sign on their blankets and men place it on their horse blankets. Intricate Osage ribbonwork designs have been placed on the quilt in the style of traditional blankets. Reflecting the rich tribal history of the Osage, the motifs and colors of the ribbonwork symbolize dignity and honor. Mary has quilted the Osage Fork Design, representing the four directions, onto her quilt, and has used colors significant with meaning. Purple represents the heart of the Osage, teal green is the water, lime green is the earth, and the cerise represents the sky.

Hoping to fulfill her duty to pass down knowledge to the next generation, Mary is committed to the importance of carrying on the ribbonwork of the Osage.

MSUM (Doug Elbringer)



“Tree of Peace Quilt”
Sheree “Peachy” Bonaparte (Akwasasne–Mohawk)
Richard Skidders, co-designer (Akwasasne–Mohawk)
Akwasasne, New York
(Collection of Reginald J. Stanley)

Quilter Profile

SHEREE “PEACHY” BONAPARTE

Mohawk

NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)



“The chiefs of the Confederacy are trying their best to keep the Tree of Peace from falling. The people need to help them. We don’t need weapons to settle our differences.”

The Freedom School Quilt Auction

The Akwasasne Mohawk Nation is committed to the traditional education of its children. In 1979, the community established the Akwasasne Freedom School to teach Mohawk children their cultural traditions and language. While parents support the school financially, the community unites in fundraising efforts to strengthen the school. One major event is the annual Freedom School quilt auction.

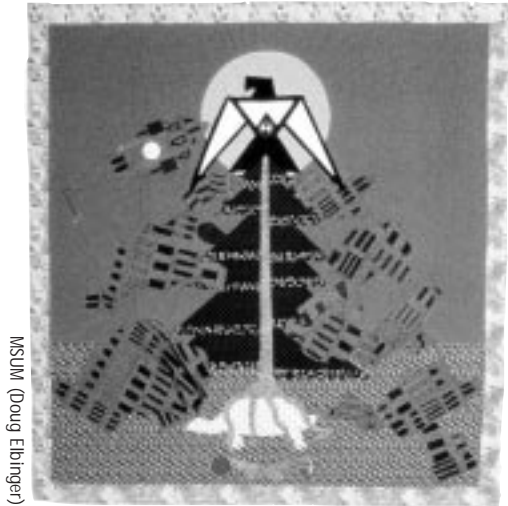


NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)

Sheree’s commitment to the preservation of Mohawk culture permeates every aspect of her life. She is the supervisor of Archival Services of the Mohawk Council of Akwasasne, a supporter of the Akwasasne Freedom School, and a dedicated mother of nine (soon to be ten). As an archivist and as a Mohawk, Sheree believes that all ethnic groups should safeguard their records and take ownership of their own histories.

Sheree’s “Tree of Peace Quilt” was made for the Akwasasne Freedom School quilt auction. The focus of the quilt is the Tree of Peace design, a symbol of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Fifty figures, representing the chiefs of the Confederacy, surround the tree. They are holding hands in a gesture of strength, showing unity in their commitment to protect the Tree of Peace. The eagle is the guardian of the Confederacy and soars above the tree.

During the time Sheree was making this quilt, Akwasasne was experiencing turmoil. Political issues were creating unrest on the reservation—not with outsiders, but within the community. Deeply disturbed by the unrest, Sheree decided to make her quilt a statement for peace. She thoughtfully quilted symbols of war buried beneath the Tree of Peace. Nervous about how the quilt would be received, Sheree learned that her neighbors longed for peace as much as she. The quilt was immediately auctioned for an excellent price.



MSUM (Doug Ebringen)

"The Tree of Peace Saves the Earth Quilt"
 Alice Olsen Williams (Anishinabe)
 Curve Lake First Nation, Ontario, Canada
 MSUM 7593.1 (FAD 94.80.2)

Quilter Profile

ALICE OLSEN WILLIAMS

Anishinabe



NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)

“The Medicine Wheel helps me to recognize and be thankful for the gifts of life, which have been given to me.”

Alice makes her home at Curve Lake First Nation, an Anishinabe reserve in Canada. The daughter of an Anishinabe mother and a Norwegian father, Alice incorporates her unique heritage into quilt designs. Alice's strong belief that women are the heartbeat of Native nations is evident in everything she does. Artistically, her thought-provoking quilts not only celebrate her Anishinabe beliefs and traditions but also protest social inequities.

While each Native nation is independent, Native people often come together as a unified community to support and encourage each other for the common good of all. This spirit of support and concern is evident in Alice's quilt, "The Tree of Peace Saves the Earth." As an Anishinabe, Alice wanted to pay tribute to the Mohawk Nation and its struggles during the Oka crisis. Under the threat of losing their sacred land, the Mohawk Nation took a stand against the Canadian government. In her quilt, Alice wanted to remind the world that Native issues are not only about what happened 500 years ago but also about what is happening now.

Central in Alice's design is the Mohawk Tree of Peace, which represents a time when peace will cover the earth. Sitting at the top of the tree is an eagle surrounded by the sun. The eagle is the sacred bird who carries prayers, and the sun gives life. The tree's four roots symbolize the four directions, which embody the teachings of sharing, honesty, kindness, and caring. The roots cover the back of a turtle, which represents Turtle Island. Alice depicts the Tree of Peace destroying Parliament, the Canadian Government buildings, and the principles they represent. Alice believes that most First Nations people will teach others how to live in peace and in balance with the natural world.

Alice signs each quilt with her interpretation of the medicine wheel, which represents the four directions and the teachings associated with them.

Vocabulary

Sovereignty

A state or nation having the authority to independently control its own affairs with no external influence.

Treaty

Formal agreement between two or more nations.

Haudenosaunee Confederacy

Also known as the Iroquois, or Six Nations—composed of Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations.

Akwesasne

Freedom School

Established to teach Mohawk children in a traditional manner.

Tree of Peace

A symbol of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

I'lon-Ska

Osage Ceremonial Dance.

Regalia

Traditional Native American dress.

Turtle Island

The Earth.

First Nations

Canadian term for indigenous people.

Study Questions

Native American nations are independent, sovereign nations.

- ❖ What is sovereignty?
- ❖ Why are Native nations sovereign?
- ❖ How does language keep a culture strong?
- ❖ Should Native languages be taught in your school?

Traditions and ceremonies hold communities together.

- ❖ Why is the seal important to Yup'ik communities?
- ❖ How does celebrating the first seal killed in the spring bring together Yup'ik people?
- ❖ How are quilts used to bring together the Akwesasne community?
- ❖ Why are blankets important to the Osage?

Quilts express Native identity and commitment.

- ❖ Compare the Tree of Peace stories. How are they different? How are they the same?
- ❖ What does the hand on the Osage quilt represent?
- ❖ How do all of these quilts connect with community traditions?
- ❖ What contemporary Native American struggles are reflected in the quilts?

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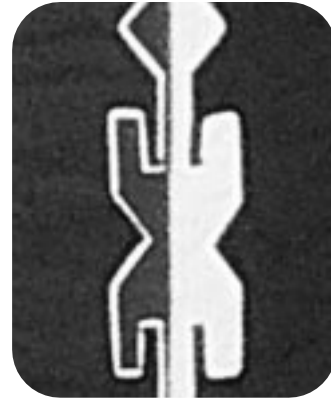
Community Stories



Individuals Strengthen Communities

Forming a peaceful alliance, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations founded the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This confederacy is a democracy committed to the sovereign rights of each nation. To symbolize their commitment to peace, the nations buried their weapons beneath a pine tree. The roots of this tree were so pure they became white. It is the hope of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that these great white roots of peace spread throughout the earth bringing worldwide peace.

Contemporary Native issues have sometimes strained the ideals established by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As a member of the Akwesasne community, Sheree Bonaparte addressed these issues in the "Tree of Peace Quilt" by burying ancient and contemporary weapons beneath the Tree of Peace symbol. Her statement for peace did not go unnoticed.



Traditions and Celebrations Bond Communities

Members of the Osage Nation gather in Oklahoma each June to participate in the Osage Ceremonial Dance, the I'lon-Ska. Traditional ribbonwork blankets, which are a source of cultural identity for the Osage, are worn during this sacred occasion. The patterns and colors of the ribbonwork have special significance and meaning for each wearer.

The Osage fork design represents the four sacred directions of the earth. During their annual celebration, Osage families host giveaways to honor community and family members. Many times quilts are a part of the giveaway. Mary Bighorse honors Osage traditions by using traditional ribbonwork on her quilts.

Community Activities

A Classroom Community Quilt

Communities often commemorate special occasions by joining together to create a community quilt. Have your students bring a piece of material from home to piece together a classroom quilt. Let students explain the significance of the material they brought.

Class Mural

A mural is a picture or scene painted directly onto a large surface, like a wall. Murals are often artistic projects involving several collaborating artists. Have your students work collectively to make a mural that represents their community. Have the students agree on what scene best depicts their community. Have the students collaborate on an artist's statement explaining the mural.

An Essay on Community

Have students write an essay about their community. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What can they do to change it for the better?

A Diorama on Community

Using butcher paper, create two classroom dioramas. On the first, have students portray their community the way they see it. They can draw or paste magazine cutouts, etc. to describe their neighborhoods. On the second, have students draw their community the way they would like it to be.

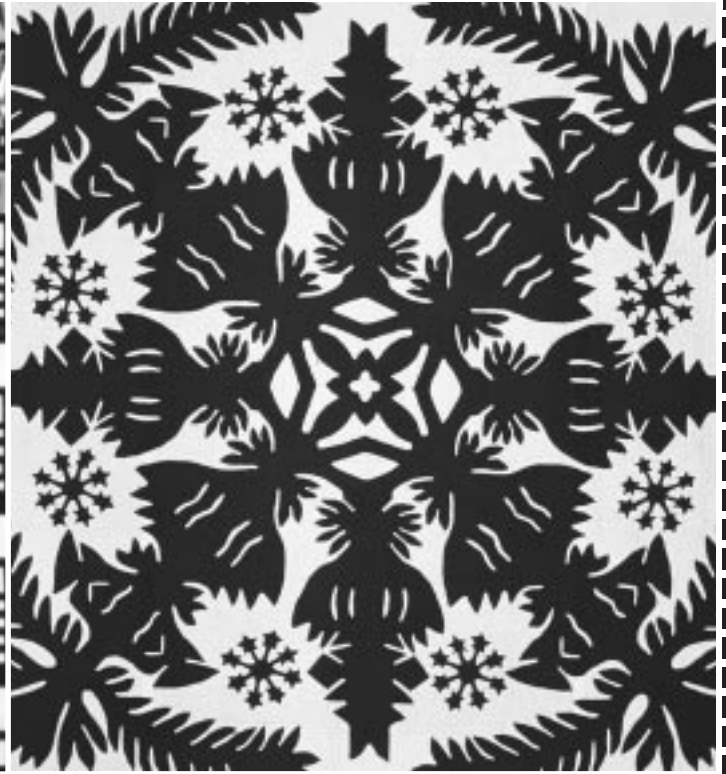
Classroom Community Feast

Plan a classroom celebration feast for which students bring food items that represent their communities or family origins. Have each student write a descriptive label about the food he or she brought to the feast.

Questions for Discussion

- ❖ As an individual, what can you do to strengthen your community?
- ❖ What community traditions do you celebrate and how do they strengthen your community?
- ❖ What can you do as a class to strengthen your community?

DESIGN TELLS A STORY



TO HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To study the use of traditional and contemporary Native designs in quilt patterns.

Quilter Profile

NANCY CRONE NARANJO

Eastern Cherokee



"A New Time"
Nancy Naranjo (Eastern Cherokee)
Frederick, Maryland
MSUM 1996:96

“Quilts have
a soul and reach
out to others.
They are a joy.”

Background

Native quilters incorporate both traditional and contemporary designs on their quilts. Some tell their stories using figures and drawings of their ancestors. Others are inspired to use traditional designs in a more contemporary format. Either way, their talents are displayed in each unique artistic quilting design.

An established potter, artist, and designer, Nancy uses watercolor and appliqué to create her detailed images. Quilts are an artistic outlet for Nancy and have become an important part of her life. Her Native heritage is joyously expressed in her quilts. Nancy learned to quilt from her mother and grandmother while listening to family stories. Quilting connects Nancy to her family, both past and present.

Through the use of watercolors, appliqués, and quilting, Nancy creates paintings on material. Titled, “A New Time,” Nancy’s quilt depicts a traditional scene when spring is approaching and individual groups separated during the winter months unite to celebrate the coming of a new season—a new time. Pipe offerings are made to renew their spiritual relationships with each other and the community. This quilted scene represents a reunion of wholeness in the community as the eagle soars over the village and the travelers greet the sunrise.

Nancy’s designs are created by appliquéing pieces of dyed material onto her quilts. Using watercolor techniques, she carefully mixes dyes to create the right hue on the pieces to be appliquéd. The message of her quilt is embroidered across the bottom edge of the quilt.

As is the case for many Native artists, the process of making an object is just as important as the final outcome. Focusing on tranquil scenes of beauty, peace, and love, Nancy puts something of herself in every quilt she makes.

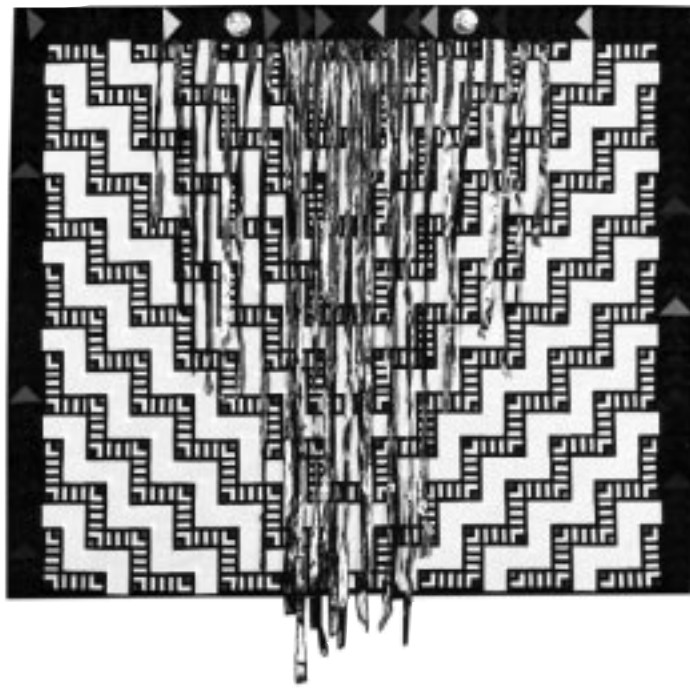
Quilter Profile

BERNYCE COURTNEY

Wasco-Tlingit



“Wasco
basket designs
honor us all.”



“Wasco Button Blanket Quilt”
Bernyce K. Courtney (Wasco-Tlingit)
Warm Springs, Oregon, Private collection

Bernyce Courtney is a traditional Wasco weaver, as well as a fiber artist and a quilter. As a weaver, she specializes in twined, two-color baskets known as sally bags. These baskets were used as root-gathering bags or storage containers by Wasco women. Some collectors believe the term sally bag refers to a Wasco weaver named Sally. The most probable explanation is the corruption of a Wasco word. Whatever the source, the term sally bags refers to the twined baskets which served as the inspiration for Bernyce’s “Wasco Button Blanket Quilt.”

Transforming traditional designs into contemporary art forms is a rewarding process for Bernyce. She uses her artistic expression to reflect the Wasco heritage of her mother and the Tlingit ancestry of her father. Using the Columbia River Gorge pattern, she honors her Wasco ancestral land. Pearl shell buttons honor the Tlingit button blankets used during Tlingit ceremonies and potlatches. These buttons are sewn in intricate, traditional designs that give the blankets a descriptive history. Bernyce has added silver streamers to represent the graceful movement of time—past and present.

Quilting traditional patterns is comforting to Bernyce. It is a connection to the past, as well as to the future. She sees her art as a way of defining herself as an individual, a woman, and especially, a Wasco woman.

Quilter Profile

HARRIET SOONG

Native Hawaiian

MMAL-SI (Katherine Fogden)



MSUM (Doug Elbinger)

"Ke Kahi O Ka'iulani" (The Comb of Ka'iulani)
Harriet Soong (Native Hawaiian)
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i MSUM 1997:67

“Hawaiian quilts have aloha and quilting is a very rewarding experience.”

A member of the Kapa Apana O Waimea quilting group on the Big Island of Hawai'i, Harriet is considered a master Hawaiian quilter. This compliment describes not only Harriet's quilting expertise but also refers to the enthusiasm and respect she brings to the art. Hawaiian quilts are unique in their design and in their construction. The intricate pattern, or *lau*, is cut out in one piece and appliquéd onto a background, *kahua*, of contrasting color. The stitching, *kuiki lau*, follows the contours of the pattern. Pattern designs are owned by their creators and it is considered dishonorable to use another quilter's pattern without permission.

Harriet's quilt, "Ke Kahi O Ka'iulani," (The Comb of Ka'iulani), is not only beautiful but also rich in Hawaiian history. This pattern tells the story of the last Native Hawaiian princess, Victoria Ka'iulani, who died in 1899 at the age of 23. Native Hawaiians had deep respect for the young princess because she traveled to Washington, D.C., after the overthrow of the monarchy, to plead for the restoration of the Hawaiian throne. This quilt pattern, given to Harriet by her mother, tells the story through symbols of Hawaiian royalty, including crowns, *leis*, and the combs worn in the hair of Princess Ka'iulani. Traditional designs originally imprinted on tapa cloth are also seen on this quilt. The clusters of stars represent the eight main Hawaiian Islands.

Hawaiian quilts record history while encouraging and perpetuating Hawaiian culture. In this way, Harriet is preserving history for future generations. Quilting also offers Harriet times of reflection and calm, whether she is quilting in the early morning or late at night. When Harriet finishes a quilt, she is grateful for the gift of quilting and the warmth and beauty it offers.

Study Questions

Quilt designs come in a variety of styles.

- ❖ Study Bernyce Courtney's and Nancy Naranjo's quilts. Each depicts the natural world. Compare and contrast the way in which each artist depicts her subject matter.

Contemporary quilters use a variety of techniques.

- ❖ Discuss quilting techniques. Why do you think the artists chose the techniques they did?

Many quilt designs are passed down through tradition.

- ❖ How do these artists adapt traditional designs in their contemporary quilts?

Quilts teach history.

- ❖ What story is told on Harriet Soong's quilt? Who was Princess Ka'iulani?
- ❖ Why did Bernyce Courtney use basket designs on her quilt?

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Vocabulary

Watercolor

Paint mixed with water instead of oil.

Appliqué

Sewing technique in which cutout patterns are sewn to another piece of material.

Dye

To color an object (material) by dipping it into a color-staining substance.

Hue

A gradation of color.

Embroidery

Designs of raised stitching sewn onto material.

Weaver

A person who makes textiles by weaving, or twining, fibers together in intricate patterns.

Sally bags

Wasco twined baskets used to hold roots.

Button blanket

A traditional robe used during Tlingit ceremonies and potlatches.

Lau

Hawaiian quilting pattern made by folding material into eighths before cutting the pattern.

Kahua

The foundation sheet of material in a Hawaiian quilt.

Kuiki lau

Stitching pattern that follows the contours of an appliquéd design.

Lei

A wreath of flowers worn around the head or neck.

ACTIVITY 1

Hawaiian Lau Pattern

Make Harriet Soong's Hawaiian lau pattern by following the instructions below:

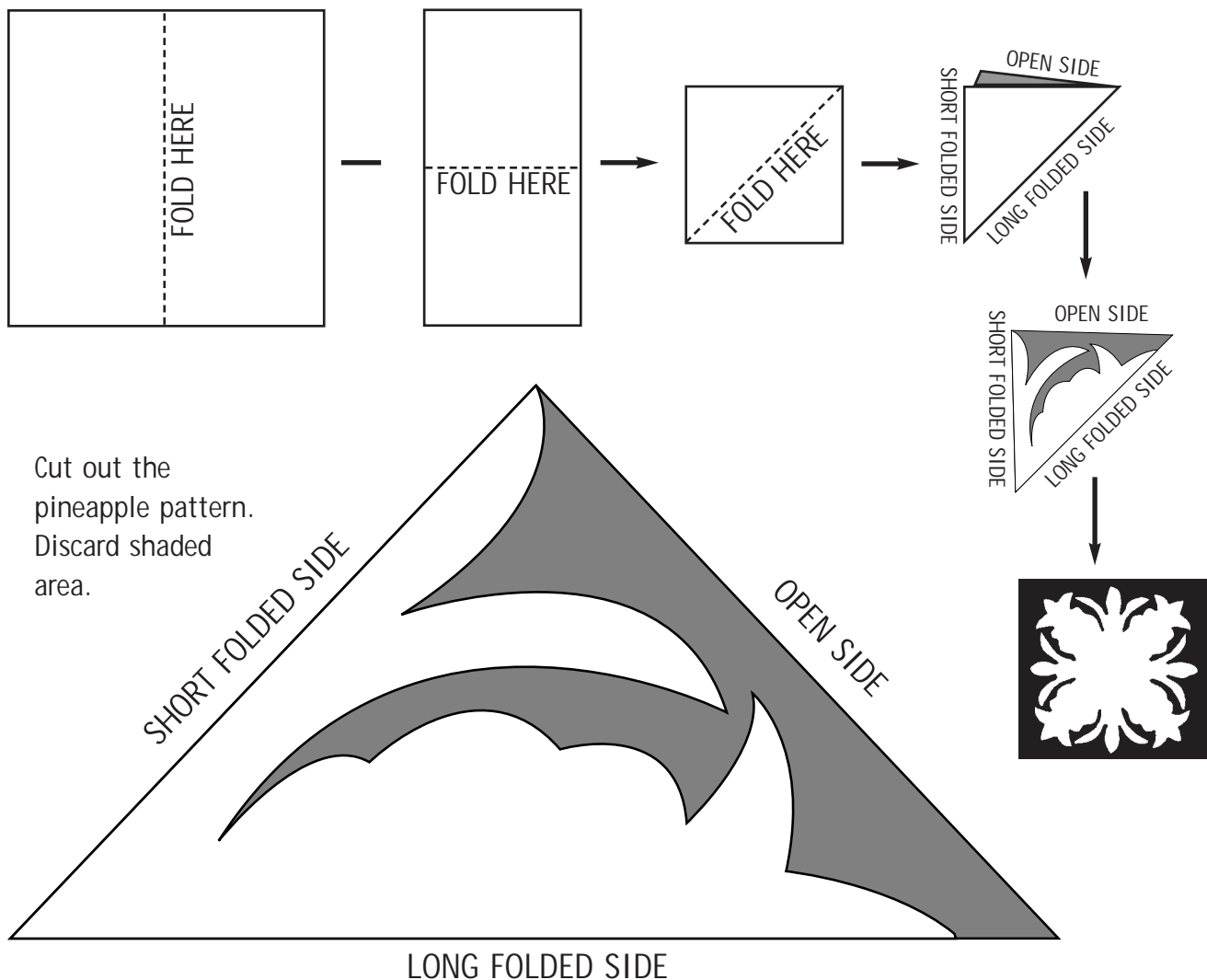
Step 1. 8½" x 8½" paper; fold three times to create a triangle.

Step 2. Cut out the pattern below.

Step 3. Place the pattern on the triangle. Match the pattern to the correct folds and edges of the triangle.

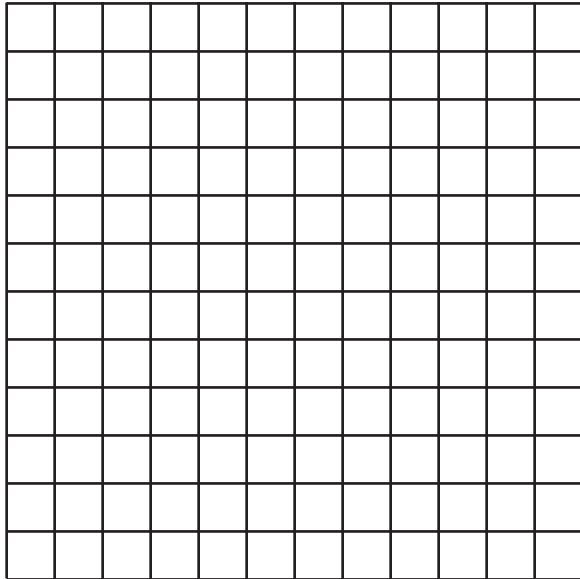
Step 4. Trace the pattern onto the folded triangle and cut out the pattern.

Step 5. Carefully unfold the pattern. Can you see the pineapple? The lau would be appliquéd to a background or *kahua*.

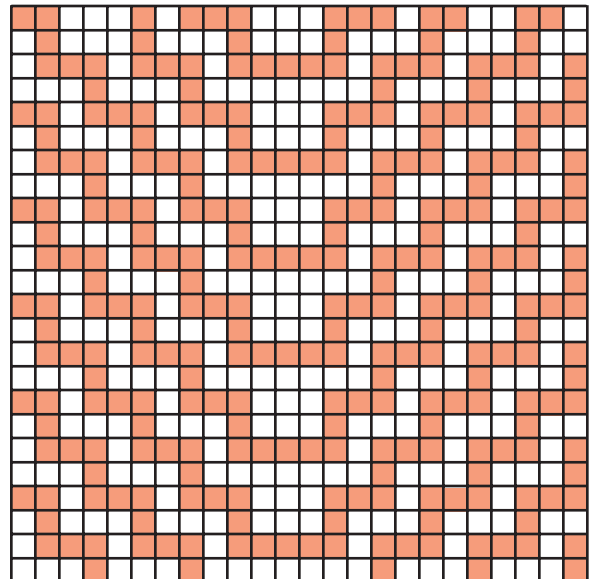


ACTIVITY 2

Creating a Design from a Graph



Wasco Spiral Design



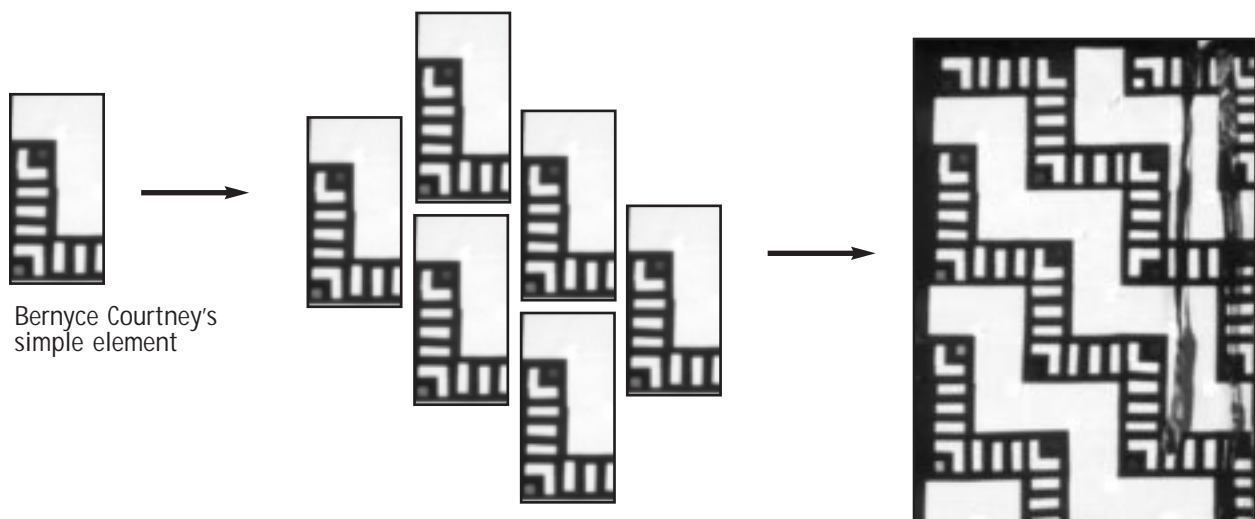
Wasco Columbia River Gorge Design

- ❖ Native quilters are often inspired by traditional designs. Bernyce Courtney transforms Wasco basket designs into contemporary quilt patterns by graphing them onto paper. The geometric pattern is transferred to material.
- ❖ A gorge is a deep, rocky valley created by the running water of a river. On Bernyce's Columbia River Gorge pattern, can you visualize the gorge and the river?
- ❖ After examining Bernyce Courtney's designs, let your students create their own geometric pattern on graph paper. The students can name their patterns and explain them in class.

ACTIVITY 3

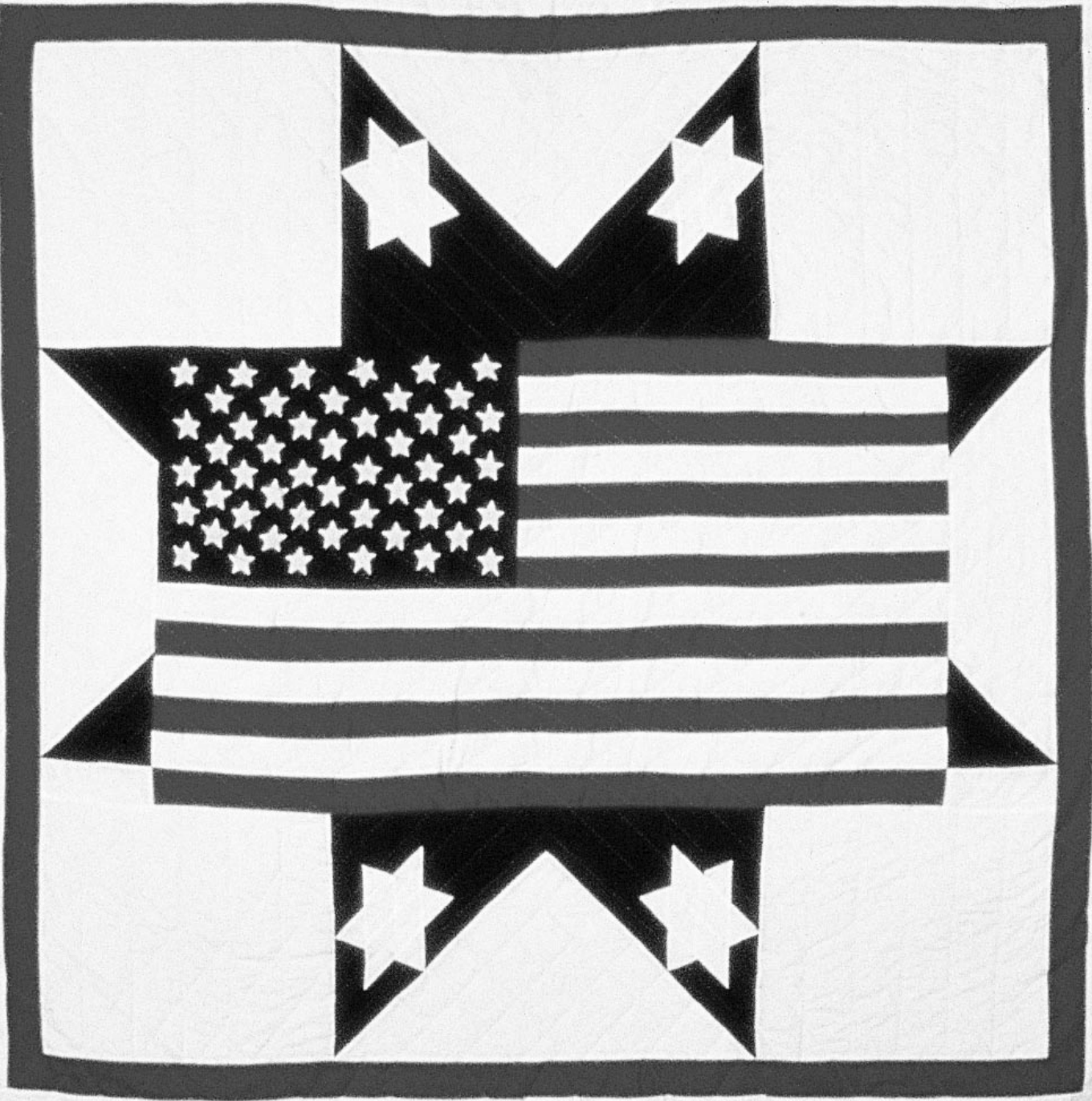
Creating Quilt Designs

Many quilts are created by making one small design and repeating it multiple times to form a complicated pattern. For example, Bernyce Courtney has made her quilt by designing one block and then staggering it to create a more elaborate pattern.



- ❖ Have students identify some of the primary elements repeated to make up the other quilt designs.
- ❖ Using a pencil, have each student draw a design on a 2"x 2" piece of graph paper. Thicken the lines with a black pen when the design is done. Bernyce honors her ancestral land by symbolically representing the Columbia River Gorge. Have your students consider what their designs will represent.
- ❖ Copy the 2"x 2" squares to make 36 identical squares.
- ❖ On a 12"x 12" paper, draw a 2"x 2" grid. Positioning each square on the grid, create a variety of repeating patterns. Rotate the squares, overlap them or stagger them to create designs. How many different variations can you come up with, using your one simple element?
- ❖ Once students have found their favorite arrangement, have them paste the squares to paper and color in the designs.

EXPRESSIONS OF HONOR



To HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To explore how quilts are used in Native ceremonies to bestow honor upon individuals and communities.

Background

Honor is a value worthy of respect that exemplifies integrity, morals, and character. To honor an individual is to recognize his or her virtues and to show admiration and appreciation. In Native communities, quilts bring honor to those who receive them and to those who make them. They are used to acknowledge rites of passage and to recognize specific achievements of individuals.

Quilts are important items in many Native honoring ceremonies. In Lakota and Hopi families, quilts play a significant role in naming ceremonies for newborn babies. Naming ceremonies are celebrations observed when a child receives his traditional name and is formally welcomed into the community. In the Osage Cradleboard Ceremony, a family will give a quilt to the person who makes their baby's cradleboard. In reservation schools, Lakota graduating seniors are presented with star quilts to commemorate the occasion. Quilts are given away at a variety of special events such as weddings, anniversaries, powwows, and basketball tournaments. Quilts are prominent at giveaways.



NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)

Lakota Naming Ceremony for Marley Brackett

THE GIVEAWAY

A traditional giveaway embraces many aspects of Native culture and literally means to give away. It is hospitality—Indian style! A giveaway is a ceremony in which an individual or family honors others, or celebrates a special family occasion, by actually giving away large quantities of food and goods. It reinforces the Native philosophy that it is always better to give possessions away rather than to keep items for oneself. Hosting a giveaway is an honor and is taken seriously. Whatever is given should be of the highest quality and it is imperative that there is plenty to give. The giveaway is usually preceded or followed by a feast. On the Northwest Coast, giveaways, called potlatches, mark important life events. Quilts have become an important part of the giveaway and are given as gifts of honor. The act of giving is a vital part of Native culture.

Study Questions

- ❖ What is honor?
- ❖ What is a giveaway and why is it an honor to give away items?
- ❖ Name two Native ceremonies where quilts are given away.
- ❖ Does your school have ceremonies that honor students? Name them.



Minnesota Historical Society (1927-1)

Quilt "Giveaway" – Dakota Women. Poplar, Montana, 1934

VETERAN'S QUILT

Quilts have become a part of traditional ceremonies. One ceremony common to all Native America is the honoring of veterans. Special events that are sometimes held on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day honor all veterans, past and present. At powwows, protocol dictates the first song by the drum group be the Veteran's Honor Song, in which veterans only are invited to dance in the powwow circle.

Native Americans have been a part of the armed forces since the American Revolution. It was not until World War I (1914–19), however, that Native American men were integrated into the regular ranks of the armed forces. It is ironic that, at that time, the United States did not consider all Native Americans citizens. Not until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 did Congress officially make citizens of all Native Americans born within the boundaries of the United States.

In many ways, the honor accorded veterans in Indian communities today embraces the Native tradition of respect for warriors, whose responsibility was to protect the people. Special dances and celebrations are held to commemorate and honor veterans when they leave for service, as well as when they return. Veterans participate in special ceremonies designed to bring them back in harmony with their communities. Veterans' quilts commemorate these ceremonies.

Study Questions

- ❖ What is a veteran?
- ❖ How do Native Americans honor veterans?
- ❖ In what year and why was the Indian Citizenship Act passed?
- ❖ Do you know any veterans? How are they honored?



First Furlough, 1943
Quincy Tahoma (Navajo)
Watercolor on Paperboard

Quilter Profile

OLLIE NAPESNI

Rosebud Lakota



NMAI-ST (Katherine Fogden)

“This quilt means a lot to me. It brought back many memories. This quilt has tears because of the memories.”

Study Questions

- ❖ What are the prominent features of Ollie’s veteran’s quilt?
- ❖ Which symbol is a Native American design?
- ❖ Name other designs that can be on a veteran’s quilt.



MSUM (Doug Elbinger)

“Veteran’s Quilt”
Ollie Napesni
(Rosebud Lakota)
St. Francis,
South Dakota
MSUM 1996:110

Ollie Napesni (Rosebud Lakota) was born in 1917 on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. Her childhood was spent in Salt Camp with Spotted Tail’s people. Spotted Tail was a Brulé chief who signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Ollie teaches language at Sinte Gleska College (the Rosebud tribal college named after Spotted Tail).

When Ollie was 10, her family participated in the annual council meeting held at Rosebud. At this meeting, hundreds of Lakota families camped together for celebrations, giveaways, and traditional ceremonies. The giveaways would last all day, with several going on at the same time. Ollie and her sister visited all the giveaways and feasts, participating and enjoying the tradition of generosity demonstrated at these celebrations.

Like many young Native people, Ollie moved away from the reservation for a time but returned to Rosebud in 1961. She began making star quilts for Lakota people going on vision quests—spiritual rituals for guidance. Ollie began to practice the traditional Lakota ways and decided to make a star quilt for her own vision quest. While continuing to make quilts for ceremonial use, she also created several pieces that are displayed in museums in Hawai’i, Austria, and France, as well as museums throughout the United States.

On the veteran’s quilt, Ollie honors the American flag, considered a flag of honor, which Indian people have died and given their lives to protect. She places the Morning Star behind the flag in honor of the Lakota people. Ollie has a personal interest in veterans’ quilts because her husband fought in World War II and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. She sees this quilt as a staff, or a symbol of leadership and honor.



Gifts of honor for Rebecca Horned Antelope

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Vocabulary

Honor

A value worthy of respect that exemplifies integrity, morals, and character.

Rites of passage

Ceremonies that mark an important occasion in someone's life, and that recognize specific achievements of individuals.

Naming ceremonies

Celebrations observed when a child receives his or her traditional name.

Cradleboard

Baby carrier used by Native American mothers.

Giveaway

Native American ceremony in which great quantities of goods are given away.

Potlatch

Northwest Coast giveaway that marks important life events.

Veterans

Men and women who have served in the armed forces.

Powwow

A cultural gathering of Native people.

Indian Citizenship Act

An act passed by Congress making Native Americans born within the boundaries of the United States U.S. citizens.

Vision quest

A Native American spiritual ritual for guidance.

Staff

A long, decorated pole used as a symbol of leadership and honor.

ACTIVITY 1

Honoring Ceremony & Quilt

Honoring ceremonies are important to Native communities. They recognize virtues and achievements worthy of respect. Individuals can be honored at any age. For example, newborn babies are welcomed into communities in ceremonies, and high school graduates are honored for their accomplishments in ceremonies. Honored individuals are often recognized by gifts of appreciation made especially for them. The presentation of quilts can be an important part of these ceremonies.

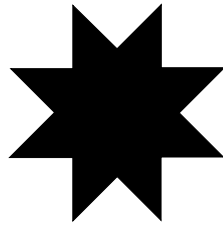
Honoring Quilt Ceremony

- ❖ Discuss honor and what it means to your students.
- ❖ Have your class choose someone they want to honor—perhaps a principal, a school crossing guard, or community leader.
- ❖ Have each student design a paper quilt square in honor of the special person.
- ❖ Tape or connect the squares together to create a patchwork quilt.
- ❖ Plan an honoring ceremony. Discuss what would be considered proper behavior at such a ceremony, for example, standing, being silent, etc.
- ❖ Present the patchwork quilt to the honoree at the honoring ceremony.

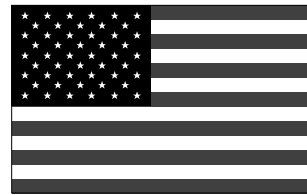
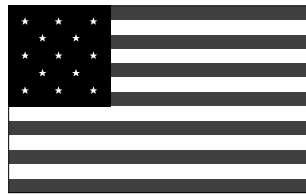
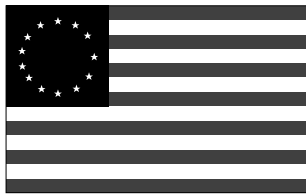
ACTIVITY 2

Symbols of Honor

Stars are often symbols of honor and respect.



To Native Americans on the Plains, the Morning Star announces a new day—a new dawn. It represents fresh beginnings and serves as a reminder to give thanks.



Stars on the American flag represent the states that make up the United States. Study the flags and discuss why the number of stars have changed.

Stars honor achievements of individuals.

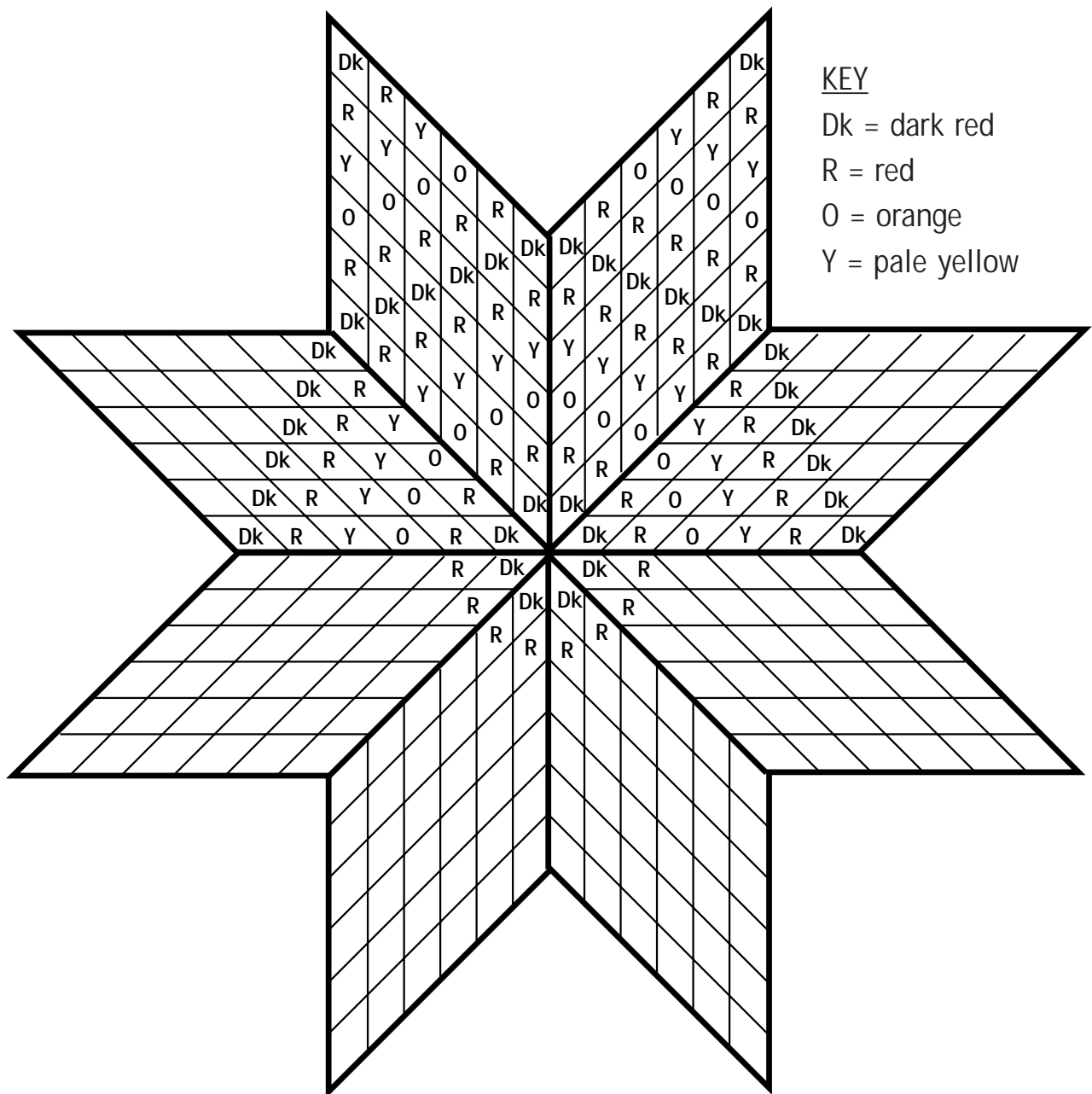


- ❖ Stars are symbols of honor. Discuss what it means to be honored and what traits your students think are honorable. How do they like to have their achievements acknowledged?
- ❖ Using magazines, newspapers, etc., have students cut out pictures that include star symbols.
- ❖ Divide the class into groups to discuss the meanings and symbolism of the stars in the pictures. For example: How are the stars used? What do they represent? Do they show honor?
- ❖ Name other symbols that show honor.

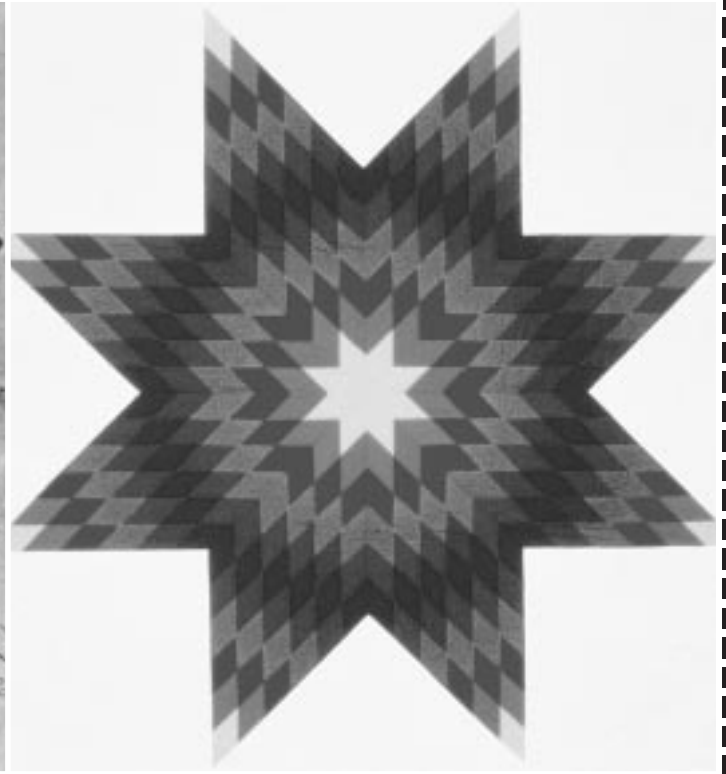
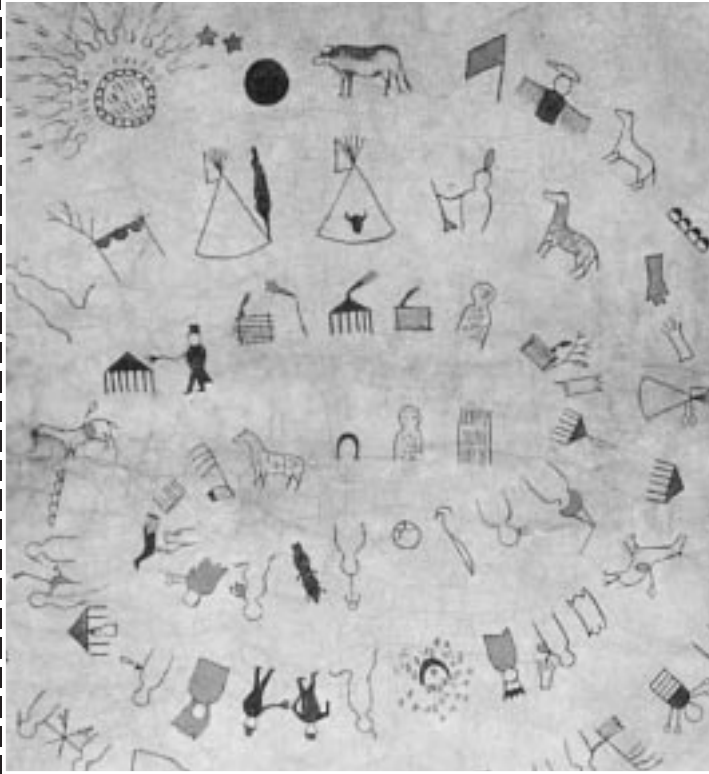
ACTIVITY 3

Morning Star

This is Ollie Napesni's Morning Star design. The colors depict a "sunburst." Enlarge the pattern and use Ollie's color chart to make a Morning Star. The pattern can be colored or diamond pieces can be cut out and pasted onto the pattern. You can also have your students design a color key for their own Morning Star. Have them cut it out to give to someone they want to honor. Ask your students to explain their choice of colors.



ORIGINS OF NATIVE QUILTING



To HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To present historical information about the introduction of quilting to Native societies.

Background

Origin means the beginning or starting point. For Native Americans, origins are rooted to the land where they have always lived. Before European contact, there were over 500 individual Native nations in North America. These Native nations had their own distinct languages and cultural traditions. Creation stories were taught through oral history, and traditions were passed down through ceremonies and celebrations. When European explorers arrived in North America, they began to establish communities on Native lands. By the 1600s, missionaries initiated efforts to convert Native people to Christianity. Using education as their primary tool, Jesuit schools were opened along the St. Lawrence River as early as 1611. The tension between the opposing cultures resulted in conflict as Native nations determined to protect their land and way of life. This conflict in the United States resulted in Congress passing the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This act established specific land areas—reservations—which were set aside, or reserved, for Indian habitation.

Study Questions

- ❖ Plains nations depended upon the buffalo. How were the buffalo used in everyday life?
- ❖ What is a reservation?
- ❖ What did missionaries do on reservations?
- ❖ In what way did a quilt replace a buffalo robe?
- ❖ How do Native quilts show adaptability?



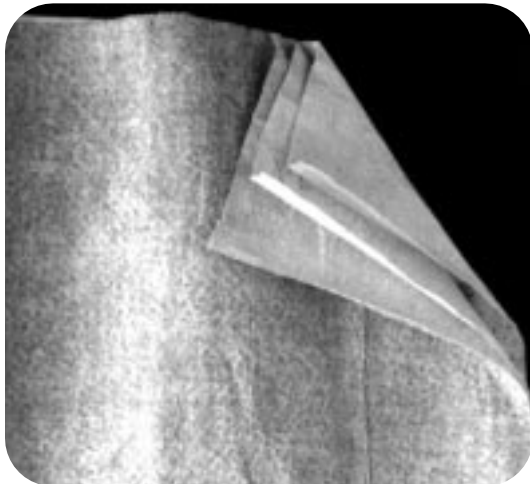
Dakota school girls at sewing machines (c. 1900)

QUILTING ON THE PLAINS

In their efforts to convert Native men, women, and children to Christianity, missionaries established churches on reservations. They taught farming to men and sewing to women. Many children were sent to manual labor schools or Indian boarding schools far from home. Officials believed that it would be easier for children to adapt to the new lifestyle if they were away from their parents' influence. Students were not allowed to speak their Native languages or to practice their traditional religions. Families living on the reservations experienced changes never imagined by their ancestors. Buffalo herds were slaughtered by non-Natives who sold the hides for profit. By the 1890s, the buffalo herds had disappeared. This was an immense loss to the Plains nations because their lives were dependent upon the buffalo. Homes (tipis), clothing, rugs, and bedding were made from the hides while the meat provided food that lasted through the harsh winters. Beautifully decorated buffalo robes were used in ceremonies and given as gifts of honor.

Although reservation life brought dramatic changes to the lives of Native Americans, cultural traditions survived through perseverance and adaptability. One example of this is the replacement of buffalo robes with Morning Star quilts. Native women used their sewing skills to create traditional designs on quilts, which were then used in traditional, sacred ceremonies. Today, quilts remain important in many traditional ceremonies.

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS AND QUILTING



Kauai Museum

Layers of a kapa moe

For the Hawaiian Islands, European contact in 1778 also brought many changes. Native Hawaiians were warm and welcoming and by 1790, foreigners had settled throughout all eight islands. Missionaries first arrived in Hawai'i in 1820, introducing new sewing techniques to Native women. Before this time, Native Hawaiians made cloth and bed coverings from a paper-like material called *tapa*. Several layers of tapa were pounded together to make a bed cover called a *kapa moe*. After Native Hawaiians mastered quilting, the kapa moe was replaced by the Hawaiian appliqué quilt.

Living in such close contact with Europeans had many dramatic effects on the Hawaiian culture. Missionaries acquired land throughout the Islands and established sugar plantations. Workers for the plantations were imported from Asia. In a short period of time, over a dozen different ethnic groups had been introduced to Hawai'i.

Traditional life and culture were under attack. Although the eight Hawaiian Islands had always remained politically separate, they united under one leader, Kamehameha, in an effort to obtain greater political strength. Despite this unification, the United States seized control of the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893 and established a provisional government headed by Sanford Dole, son of an American missionary. Hawai'i was annexed by the U.S. in 1898 and the Hawaiian kingdom flag designed for Kamehameha was lowered. Even though Hawai'i became the 50th state of the United States of America in 1959, Native Hawaiians uphold the Hawaiian flag on their quilts as an expression of loyalty and identity toward Hawai'i as a Native nation.



Harriet Soong

Quilted Hawaiian Flag Emblem

Study Questions

- ❖ What was a kapa moe and how was it made?
- ❖ Name an industry introduced to Hawai'i.
- ❖ Why do you think quilts so easily replaced the traditional kapa moe?
- ❖ Who unified the Hawaiian Islands and why?
- ❖ Why was the Hawaiian kingdom flag lowered?

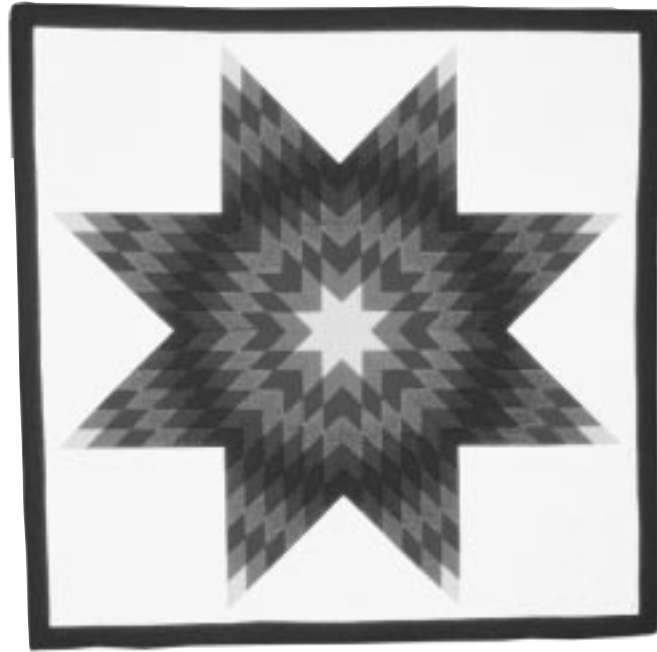
Quilter Profile

LULA RED CLOUD

Oglala Lakota



NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)



MSUM (Doug Elbinger)

"A Tribute to the Invisible People"
Lula Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota)
Hermosa, South Dakota, MSUM:1996:130

“Existence is doing enough to get by. Living is doing the very best you can.”

Study Questions

- ❖ Why does Lula quilt the Morning Star design?
- ❖ Why would Lula quilt a buffalo pattern?
- ❖ What is the significance of the eagle? Does the eagle have a special meaning to you?
- ❖ Discuss what you can learn about history from quilts.

Lula Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota), from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, is the great-great-granddaughter of Oglala chief, Red Cloud. Statesman and leader of the Oglala nation, Red Cloud was a negotiator and signer of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the basis for Lakota land claims for the Black Hills, or *Hé Sapa*, the sacred land of the Lakota.

Lula's quilt, "A Tribute to the Invisible People," is intended to draw attention to present-day American Indians who are overlooked, historically and culturally, by mainstream society. The sentiment voiced by her great-great-grandfather, "Whose voice first sounded on this land?" is heard through Lula's pictorial tribute to her Lakota heritage.

The focus of Lula's quilt is the eight-pointed Morning Star design. When the Morning Star is visible, it is a sacred time for the Lakota. It signals a new day has begun and gives Lula's quilts life. Because the eagle carries Lakota prayers to the Great Spirit, an eagle design is quilted in the center of the Morning Star. Four quilted buffalo images honor the buffalo and four buffalo skulls are a reminder of the loss of the great buffalo herds. A Medicine Wheel, a design of four lines surrounded by a circle, represents the four sacred directions of the earth and symbolizes the balance and harmony of life and nature. The circle is sacred because it has no beginning and no end. Tipis, the traditional home of the Lakota, are a tribute to Lakota families.

Lula Red Cloud's Morning Star quilts are an inspiration to everyone who sees them—even Lula.



Participants at the Native American Quilters Gathering for the NMAI-SI/MSUM exhibition: *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*

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Vocabulary

Origin

Beginning or starting point.

Native Americans

People indigenous to the Americas.

European contact

When European culture first encountered Native culture.

Missionaries

Men and women who perform religious or charitable work in a territory or foreign country.

Indian Removal Act

Act passed by Congress that established specific land areas for Indian habitation.

Reservations

Land set aside for Native Americans.

Indian boarding schools

Schools where Native students were sent to live. These schools were often located far from reservations.

Plains

A vast area of flat land located in central North America.

Tapa

Paper-like material made by Native Hawaiians and used as cloth.

Kapa moe

A bed covering created by pounding together several layers of tapa.

Plantation

Large farm or estate on which crops are raised.

Morning Star

Traditional design of an eight-pointed star.

Medicine Wheel

Sacred symbol representing the four directions, balance, and harmony.

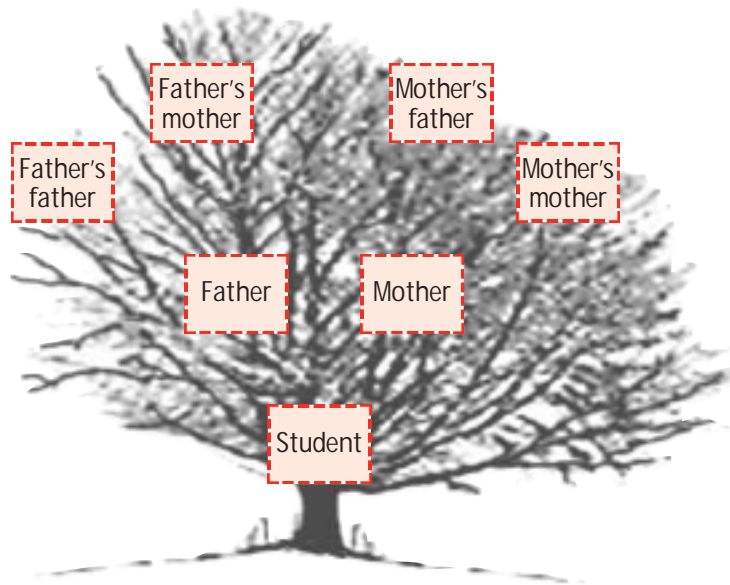
ACTIVITY 1

Stories from Your World

Oral Tradition

The oral tradition of storytelling is an important part of Native American culture. Oral tradition is any story, history, or moral that is passed from one generation to the next through storytelling, or by word of mouth. These stories teach younger generations about their origins, important family values, and tribal history. The presentation of stories can take a couple of minutes or several days. Native children learn by listening. As adults, they tell the stories they heard as children to their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

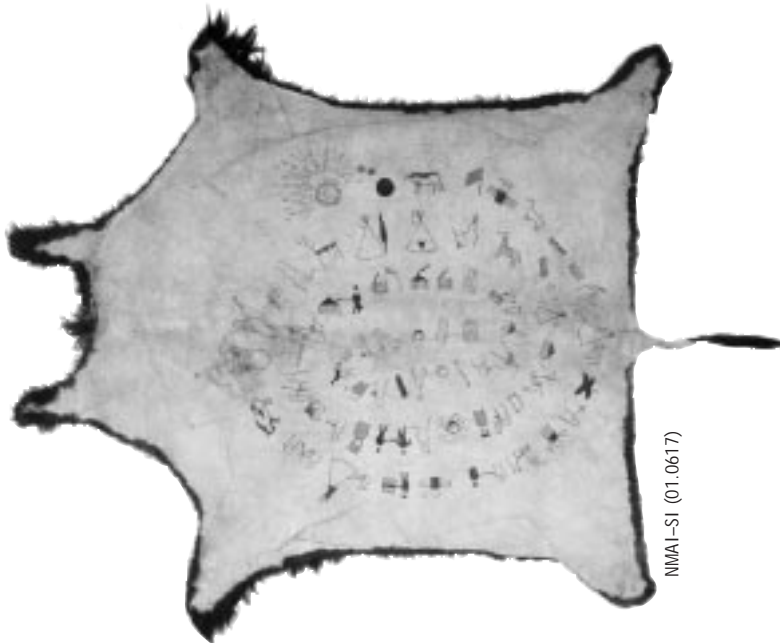
- ❖ Family gatherings such as holidays are times when people recount stories. You may have heard the same story on many different occasions and still find it amusing. Ask your students if there are any stories that are particular to their families. When are they told? By whom? Who is the audience?
- ❖ Many of us can learn by asking our relatives to tell us a story about their history. Have your students examine their family histories and origins by interviewing relatives. Where do they come from? Did they all come to America at the same time? What languages did they speak in their native homelands?
- ❖ Oral traditions are not necessarily old stories. Have your students make oral presentations in the classroom in which they develop or share a story about their family. (Ideas to get them started: tell us a story about something that happened with your sister/brother/mother/father/grandparent, etc).
- ❖ Have your students create a family tree. Use the example below:



ACTIVITY 2

Designs Teach History

Native Americans on the Plains drew pictorial histories, or winter counts, on buffalo hides. These winter counts were considered tribal calendars recording significant events that happened during a year.



Lone Dog Winter Count (Lakota, c. 1880)



Lula Red Cloud's Eagle Design

The designs on Lula Red Cloud's quilt are a part of her family history. For example, for the Lakota, the eagle carries prayers to the Great Spirit. That is why eagle feathers are so revered.

Have your students use symbolic designs to create a calendar time line. For example, they can track the daily weather or daily classroom activities. Have them make a key explaining what their symbols mean.

ACTIVITY 3

Objects Teach History

Many times objects or artifacts displayed in museums are items that were made to be used or worn in everyday life. For example, shirts displayed in an exhibition were worn, cooking utensils were used to make meals, and canoes provided transportation.

Have students bring one object from home that tells something about themselves, their family's origins, or their community. Make a classroom exhibition of the objects. Use the label below to identify each piece, explain what it is and how it is used. Have the class develop a theme for the exhibition.

Object:

Origin of Object:

Meaning:

Significance to collector:

Collector (student):