

UNIT 6: NIHE'IINA' BITS'ÁÁDÓÓ NA'ACH'ÀÀH BEE ÁK'IHALTA' - Arts and Crafts

GOAL:

To become knowledgeable of the aesthetic, cultural and financial value of Navajo Arts and Crafts.

CONCEPTS:

Na'ach'ąąh - creativity, expression of beauty.

Ó'ool'ííł - tradition handiwork

Choo'íídoo - utilitarian (multi-use, i.e., home, ceremony, decoration)

INTRODUCTION:

The arts and crafts of the Navajo are not only appreciated for their beauty, but also for their practical purposes. For example, they pottery may be used as a kitchen implement, as a water jug and also as a sacred drum to be used in the Enemy Way or Nidáá'.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Ná'ach'ąąh Baa hane'

TOPICS:

Pottery

Painting

Basket Making

Wood Carving

Weaving

Silversmithing

Moccasin making

Sand Painting

Beading

OBJECTIVES:

POTTERY /Łeets'aa'

Origin story

The student will:

- Identify Diné pottery styles and purposes.
- Identify the uses of Diné pottery.
- Identify the materials used in pinon pitch.
- State three types of pottery and its use; i.e. pipe, drum, food.
- Learn the difference between Anasazi pots and Diné pottery.

Rules and Restrictions:

- Do not disturb Anasazi bones or other belongings. If you do enter their dwellings, always exit the same way you entered.
- Do not pick Anasazi pots herd.
- Do not copy their drawings/designs.

Types and Design:

According to the Franciscan Fathers' Ethnologic Dictionary of Navajo, major classification of Diné pottery include pipes, drums, cooking pots, spoons/dippers, water pots (canteens) and bowls or crucibles (melting pot).

Tools:

- Tsé daashjéé' - Mano: for grinding the clay used in pottery making.
- Tsé daashch'íní - Matate: for grinding the clay used in pottery making.
- Naadq'ástsiin - Corncob: to smooth the exterior and sometimes the interior.
- Tsé áwózi tó nabismázígíí - Water-worn pebble: for smoothing and polishing.
- Adee ts'iil - Gourd piece: to smooth the inside surface of the pottery.

ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

- Tsé daashjéé' - Mano
- Tsé daashch'íní - Matate
- Naadq'ástsiin - Corncob
- Tsé áwózi tó nabismázígíí
- Adee ts'iil - Gourd piece

WEAVING/Atł'ó

The student will:

- Become knowledgeable about the oral history of how Diné were given the art of rugs by the Holy People.
- Learn about the different styles of Diné rugs.
- Learn about the uses of Diné rugs.

Rules and Restrictions:

A rug must not be perfected. There must be an opening left so that the creativity of the Holy People may have the freedom to move and breathe. Pictorial weavers of ceremonial symbols and characters such as Ye'ii must be sanctioned by a ceremony in order to be able to reproduce them in design, and thereafter periodically have a prayer over them.

Types and Designs: Diné Rugs

Information taken from Navajo Arts and Crafts, 1983.

- Lukachukai - Yeibichai type, large in size
- Shiprock - Yeibichai, not large in size
- Teec Nos Pos - intricate, bright colors, broad border.
- Crystal - early style; red in color, borders, crosses, diamonds used. Late style; vegetable dyes, banded in straight or wavy lines.
- Chinle - vegetable and aniline dye; borderless, stripes and hands as well as serrated designs used.
- Wide Ruins - pastel vegetable dyes, natural gray and white.
- Two Grey Hills - intricate geometric, natural wool used with white, brown, gray and black, very light in weight and fine tapestry.
- Ganado - geometric crosses and diamonds set against a deep red background.
- Coal Mine Mesa - storm patterns characterized by raised outline.

Sis łichí'í - Sashbelt

Sashbelts have multi-uses. Besides being used as an article of dress, it may also serve as a girdle and was used as a brace when a woman was birthing.

Ak'idah'a'nií - Saddle Blankets

Biil éé' - (rug dress), vest

Decorative Arts - Ojo de Dios with Navajo design.

Braiding - of bullwhips, cinch straps and bridles.

ACTIVITIES

Preparation:

Tá dígéésh - Shearing

Yiigis - Cleaning/washing

Hanilchaad - Carding

Yidiz - Spinning

Yiil chíih - Dyeing wool

Tools:

Dah'iistł'ó - Loom

Bee ha'nilchaadí - Carder

Bee adizí - Spindle

Naanoolzhee' - Warp

Bee ak'í'níltłish - Batten

Atł'ótsin - Loom crossbeam

Dahneilo'í - Tension bar

Bee adzooí - Batten comb

VOCABULARY

Tá dígéésh - Shearing

Yiigis - Cleaning/washing

Hanilchaad - Carding

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Dah'iistł'ó - Loom

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Bee adizí - Spindle

Naanoolzhee' - Warp

Bee adzooí - Batten comb

Bee ak'í'níltłish - Batten

BASKETRY/Ts'aa' Yistł'

The ceremonial basket has been referred to as a “covenant” basket because of it’s multi-uses in secular and sacred matters. It is used as a dahníiikááh (holder or container of sacred paraphernalia). It serves as a drum (when the basket is placed up side down) in a nine night ceremony and chant or as a holder of water in a purification ceremony. It is also used as a container of the mush used in the traditional wedding ceremony. The basket is also used as a

The student will:

- Learn the origin story of the Diné basket.
- Learn the symbolism of the design woven into the Diné basket.
- Become knowledgeable of the uses for the basket.
- Be able to recount the process of making the basket.
- Be able to name the plants used for dyeing the designs of the basket.

Rules and Restrictions:

- One must never invert the basket and place it on their head.
- The basket must not be used as a drum outside of a ceremony.
- The basket must not be spun otherwise the individual leaves him/herself vulnerable to spells of dizziness.
- The basket should not be punctured through the center coil lest you puncture your own thought processes.
- Never work on the basket while on your menses. Purify self before resuming work.

Types and Designs:

The Navajo ceremonial basket has one design representing rainbow (naats'íílid), mountains (dzíí), male clouds (níłtsá biká'), early dawn light (haashch'ééłti'í bé ats'os) (plume of Talking God). The colors of the basket design are characteristically white, black and brown.

Other basketry forms include the water jug or the pitch basket bottle. Pinon pitch is used to cover the basket so that it can hold water. In both the wedding basket and the water jug, the opening at the beginning and at the top of the water jug are the same.

Tools:

- Knife to cut the sumac
- Awl or ice chipper to use in sewing

ACTIVITIES

Preparation of the material for making the basket

- Gathering the sumac
- Splitting the sumac
- Dyeing the sumac
- Coiling the sumac bunch and begin sewing

VOCABULARY

- Chiiłchin - Sumac berries
- Tsah - Awl

SILVERSMITHING/Atsid

Silversmithing has been used for centuries. They are made for wealth, security, appearance,

artistry and strength. Generally speaking, silversmithing was introduced to Diné perhaps as early as 1840 to as late as 1868. There are accounts of Navajo dressed in silver finery at Fort Sumner. There is even reference made to Navajo rarely being seen without silver jewelry as early as 1795 according to an account by a Fernando de Chacon.

The student will:

- Learn about the history of how Diné obtained the art of silversmithing.
- Be able to distinguish between the old style to contemporary style.
- Be able to determine base metals such as German silver, brass and copper used in the place of silver.
- Learn about the different types of stones compatible for use with silver, i.e. turquoise, white shell, jet, abalone, pearl and coral.

Types and Designs:

Besides jewelry such as squash blossom, silver crosses, concho belts, bow guards and other items of silvercraft include silver embellished saddles, bridles and bits.

Tools:

- Bikí atsidí: Anvil
- Bee na'ach'ąąhí: Stamps
- Bee atsidí: Hammer (mallet)
- Bee ach'iishí: Saw
- Bee adilyíhí: Torch
- Bikáá' ahída' diiljeehé: Braising Board
- Yoostsah bee bí' neel' ąąhí: Ring Mangler
- Látsíní bee bí' neel' ąąhí: Bracelet Mangler
- Bee adil kqohí: File
- Bee ahída' diil jeehí: Solder

ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

- Bikí atsidí: Anvil
- Bee na'ach'ąąhí: Stamps
- Bee atsidí: Hammer (mallet)
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WOOD CRAFT/CRADLEBOARD: Awééts'áál

Cradleboards have been in use as baby's crib for centuries. They are made for endurance, to ensure emotional security and to provide the perfect perch for looking out into the world,

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thereby strengthening cognitive development.

The student will:

- Learn the history of the first cradleboard.
- Describe the significance of two Diné child rearing customs that are intended to make Diné children realize they are special, i.e. cradleboard, baby's first laugh.
- Learn the symbolism for each piece of the cradleboard.
- Become knowledgeable of the specific materials used in making a cradleboard and why.
- Become knowledgeable of the process for making and preparing a cradleboard for use.

Rules and Restrictions: Cradleboard

- The cradleboard is made specifically for a person and should not be loaned out indiscriminately even within a family.
- The making of a cradleboard is symbolic of rainbow, sunbeams, black cloud, lightning bolt and as such is made with very specific materials and special prayer.
- A cradleboard is always dismantled after each use.

Rules and Restrictions: Woodcraft -

- Never use wood from a tree struck by lightning, broken by winds or against which a bear had rubbed because it is thought to be injurious and therefore prohibited.

Types and Design:

The materials used in a cradleboard are specified and the design is uniform due to its origin story.

Tools:

- Tsin: Wood
- Bììh bikágí: Deer hide
- Naak'aat'áhqá: Cloth

ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

- Aweets'áál: Cradleboard
- Tsin: Wood
- Bììh bikágí: Deer hide
- Naak'aat'áhqá: Cloth

MOCCASIN - Kéłchí

Traditionally, moccasins are made from skin of various animals: cowhide for soles, buckskin for uppers and sinew for sewing. According to the origin story, the sole was to be made from the neck skin of the badger, the upper from deerskin and sinew for sewing was to come from the back of the mountain sheep.

The student will:

- Become knowledgeable about the making of moccasins.
- Become knowledgeable about stitching types used in moccasin making.
- Learn the origin story of how moccasin was given to Diné.

Rules and Restrictions:

- Ké nitsaá is your identity and should always be worn when praying or having a ceremony, the gods will recognize you by this.
- Only the hide of a young deer which was never wounded (doo k'aak'ehii) was used in the making of the moccasin.

Types and Design:

Traditionally, women and men's style of moccasin are basically the same, i.e. ankle high. However, there is a style of men's moccasin which is longer and is extended another four inches on the leg.

The Ké nitsaá (big shoe) or wrap around boots are made specially for a particular person and becomes her signature possession.

Tools/Materials:

- Akał: Rawhide
- Abaní: Buckskin
- Bee ná'alkadí: Sinew or nylon thread
- Tsah: Awl

ACTIVITIES:

VOCABULARY:

- Nálkad: to sew, to stitch
- Kékał: sole (leather)
- Kélchí: upper moccasin
- Ats'id: sinew
- Akał: Rawhide
- Abaní: Buckskin
- Bee ná'alkadí: Sinew or nylon thread
- Tsah: Awl

BEADS/Yoo'

Beads are mainly decorative. They come in many forms and from many sources. They may be made from glass, stones, natural berry seeds, animal quill, bones or tusks.

The student will:

- Learn of the many types of beads available.

- Demonstrate setting up a loom for beadwork.
- Complete a beadwork piece of art.
- Learn that yoo' beads represent life, thinking, self-identity, confidence.

Rules and Restrictions:

- If a medicine man gives you a bead after a particular ceremony, no one else may wear your hat or use your hair tie.
- One must take special care in valuing their jewelry.

Types and Designs:

- Yoo' nímazí: round beads
- Yoołchíí ts'óóz: tubular coral beads
- Yoo' łchí'í: coral
- Yoołgai: white shell beads
- Dootł'izhii: turquoise
- Názhahá: squash blossom
- Diichiłí: abalone

Tools:

- Bee agháda'a'nilí: Pump drill
- Bee ach'iishí: Saw
- Yoo' bee yit'eeshí: Beading Thread

ACTIVITIES:

VOCABULARY:

- Yoo' nímazí: round beads
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SANDPAINTING/Iikááh

Sandpaintings have not only aesthetic beauty but also represent the power and strength of the Holy People replicated in the painting. These are made on the floor, inside the hooghan, and are used only once. After this one use, the painting is erased, mixed with sand, taken out of the building and deposited to the north. Today, artists sell sandpainting pictures but these are not exact replications of religious rendering.

The student will:

- Learn that sandpaintings are considered sacred and are not to be made indiscriminately.
- Demonstrate an art project where various objects are used as colors.
- Learn that there is no paint or painting involved, no brush, no fluid medium.

Rules and Restrictions:

- Never replicate sandpainting in detail outside of a ceremony.
- Should not be made for commercial use.

- Never work on sandpainting when you are pregnant, or for a male, when your wife is pregnant.

Types and Design:

There are different types of sandpaintings for different ceremonies. They may vary from a single symbol, such as circular Sun, with its turquoise mask. Or, the circle of the Moon, wearing its white shell mask, and guarded on the four directions by snakes, Foster, Kenneth, Navajo Sand Paintings, Navajo Tribal Museum, May 1964. Others may become very elaborate. All depict exploits of the Holy People taken from oral tradition.

Tools:

- Bee ak'íníltłish: Batten
- Séí: Sand
- Bee ak'áhá: Grinding stone
- Bee na'achąąh bee naakáhá: Palette

ACTIVITIES:

VOCABULARY:

- Iikááh: Sandpainting
- Bee ak'íníltłish: Batten
- Séí: Sand
- Bee ak'áhá: Grinding stone
- Bee na'ach'ąąn bee naakáhá: Palette