

To Honour and Respect: Art Activities

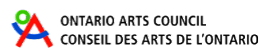


Compiled by Lori Beavis (Hiawatha First Nation)



Table of Contents

Making and Quilling a Wiigwaas Makak/ Birch Bark Basket	3
Quilling on Birch Bark	4
Makakoon Designs	6
Anishinaabe Porcupine Story	7
How the Porcupine Got His Quills	8
Porcupine Art	9
How the Birch Tree Got Its Burns	10
Birchbark Lesson and Decoupage Lanterns	11
Braiding Materials	12
Tattoo Activity - Secondary School Students	13
History and Significance of Indigenous Tattoos	14
Names of the Women	15
Design Your Own Tattoo	16





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Mnaajtood ge Mnaadendaan:

Miigwewinan Michi Saagiig Kwewag Miinegoowin Gimaans Zhaganaash Aki 1860

To Honour and Respect:

Gifts from the Michi Saagiig Women to the Prince of Wales, 1860

Honorer et respecter:

Dons des femmes Michi Saagiig au prince de Galles, 1860

This resource was created for the To Honour and Respect project, 2023. Co-curated by Dr. Lori Beavis (Hiawatha) and Dr. Laura Peers, the To Honour and Respect project brought quilled birchbark makakoons (baskets) that were made at Rice Lake Village (now Hiawatha First Nation) in 1860 as gifts to HRH Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, back to the Peterborough Museum & Archives from April to November 2023.

The project included associated tours, quillwork and Nishnaabemowin language lessons.

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· Ontario Arts Council

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Miigwech to Royal Collection Trust for the loan of the 13 makakoon. All images of the makakoon are courtesy Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III, 2023.





Making and Quilling a Wiigwaas Makak/ Birch Bark Basket

Materials:

- birch bark “sheets”
- spruce root or other roots, like red willow, that can be used as a twine
- a tool to create the holes for threading the roots around the edge of the basket

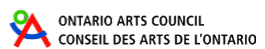
The bark for the basket is harvested during the month that strawberries are ripening. When we harvest the bark, cuts are made into the layers of birch bark but the tree is not harmed.

We pay our respects to the tree and thank the tree for the gift of birchbark with a small offering of tobacco.

The basket is made by warming the birch bark over heat, this makes the bark pliable and easy to bend.

Using a roughly square shape, four cuts are made – one in each corner and the middle pieces are brought together to form a corner. The corners are held in place with the aid of an awl or a sharp tool to poke a hole to create a space to thread spruce root.

Using the awl and the spruce root (and other tree roots) the sides are sewn together to create the basket and help hold its shape.





Quilling on Birch Bark

Porcupine quillwork is perhaps the oldest form of embroidery used by Indigenous peoples. Quills were folded, twisted, wrapped, plaited and sewn using a wide range of techniques to decorate articles of clothing, bags, knife sheaths, baskets, wooden handles and pipe stems.

As an artform, porcupine quillwork is completely unique to the Indigenous people of North America. Quillwork was a major decorative element used by the peoples who inhabited the natural habitat of the porcupine before glass beads were introduced by European traders.

A porcupine quill is just a large 'hair' with a hard, shiny shell and a pithy, soft interior. A grown porcupine has quills and hair of different shapes and sizes.

The quills are plucked from the porcupine – this is a smelly job as it is easier to pluck the quills from the carcass after the animal has been dead for a few days!

The quills are cleaned of fur and debris and then washed in hot soapy water. They are rinsed and washed a few times until the quills are a nice bright white colour. They can then be dyed.

Quills readily take dye. Originally the colours came from natural sources but from the mid-1850s commercial aniline dyes were available through trade, and these began to replace natural dyes. Mordants (an acidic element like vinegar) is often added to make colours more permanent.

The quills are sorted by size depending on the types of quillwork to be done – larger quills from the animal's back fill larger areas while really thin quills, from near the belly, are used for delicate lines.



When it is time to do some quill work, the quills are soaked for a short time in warm water. This softens the quill so that it can be threaded into the birch bark with each end of the quill going into the birch bark. An awl is used to poke a hole in the bark for each quill.

As the pattern is finished the quills on the back side of the design are snipped shorter and a birch bark backing is applied to hold everything in place. As the quills dry they expand a little and stay in place to create a design.



Figure 1: the quills are washed. Figure 2: the quills are dyed. Figure 3: the quills are used to make designs.

Makakoon Designs



Materials:

- Images of makakoon on cardstock
- A variety of slender materials to decorate the image with, such as pipe cleaners, ribbons, string, twine, etc.
- Glue

Instructions:

1. Look at the designs and choose a close-up image of one of the makakoon.
2. Use slender materials such as pipe cleaners, ribbon, and string or natural materials such as raffia and rough twine to glue along the lines and fill in the image.
3. Optional: Colour in the image using pencil crayons or markers.

Anishinaabe Porcupine Story

This is a winter story. Porcupine is a relatively minor animal spirit, most often associated with self-defense and cautiousness.

Long, long ago, the porcupines had no quills. One day, a porcupine was out in the woods. A bear came along and would have eaten Porcupine, but he managed to get up a tree, where the bear couldn't get him.

The next day, Porcupine was out again and he went underneath a hawthorn tree, and he noticed how the thorns pricked him. He broke some branches off and put them on his back, then he went into the woods.

Along came Bear, and he jumped on Porcupine, who just curled himself up. The bear just left him alone because the thorns pricked him so much.

Wenebojo was watching them. He called to Porcupine and asked, "How did you think of that trick?"

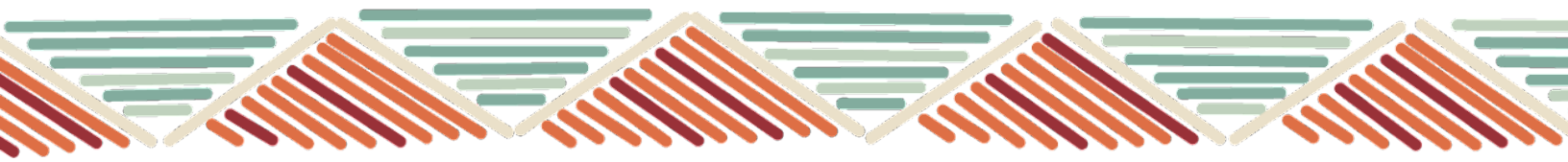
Porcupine told him that he was in danger when Bear was around.

Then Wenebojo took some thorns and peeled the bark off of them until they were all white. Then he got some clay and put it all over Porcupine's back and stuck the thorns in it. Wenebojo used his magic to make it into a proper skin, and told Porcupine to come with him into the woods.

When they got there, Wenebojo hid behind a tree. Wolf came along and saw Porcupine and jumped on him, but the new quills pricked at him and Wolf ran away. Bear was also afraid of the quills and Porcupine was safe.

That is why Porcupines have quills.





How the Porcupine Got His Quills

A Menominee Porcupine Story. As with any legend there are many versions.

Long ago when the first porcupine was placed on the earth by the Great Spirit he had no quills. Porcupine was a gift to the Menominee Tribe and he was given a beautiful coat of fur.

Porcupine's beauty made the other animals jealous. Every day the animals would come to Porcupine and tell him how much they wished their fur looked like his.

Now Porcupine knew he was beautiful but he didn't pay any attention to the other animals. As time went by and every day he heard how wonderful he looked he decided to see for himself.

While Porcupine was taking his morning walk he stopped by the stream to admire his fur.

Now the Great Spirit noticed Porcupine gazing at himself in the stream. The Great Spirit watched Porcupine for ten moons as he sat by the clear water admiring his own beauty.

The Great Spirit had a system of rewards and punishment for every creature. The Great Spirit knew that the time had come to punish Porcupine. The Great Spirit decided to take away Porcupine's beautiful fur and cover his body with ugly sharp quills.

Porcupine wears his coat of quills yet today. This is why he hides during the day and will only come out at night.



Porcupine Art



Materials:

- Brown background paper
- Pencils to draw a porcupine. For younger children may wish to make a tracer of a porcupine's body
- Recycled materials such as raffia, packaging material, twine, brown paper bags, wooden skewers, etc.
- Recycled cards, photos, and/or wrapping paper to use as background.

Instructions:

1. Draw or trace your porcupine shape.
2. For the quills glue on a variety of materials for texture to create a raised pattern.
3. The tips can be marked with a darker colour using markers to create the dark ends of the quills.
4. Create a background by drawing or collaging recycled materials.



How the Birch Tree Got Its Burns

an Ojibwe legend retold by Aurora Conley

The Ojibwe people always had stories to tell that had a moral. A main character who was always used was Waynaboozhoo. But it is told that you cannot tell a Waynaboozhoo story in the spring, summer, or fall, only when there is snow on the ground or it is said that a frog will be in your bed. You can put down cedar and ask to tell the story and nothing will happen to you or your bed. This is what I am told.

Now this is the story about how the birch bark got its burns. Often stories have different morals or different explanations so this one may be somewhat different from others that you have heard.

It was wintertime and Waynaboozhoo's grandmother called him to her. "Waynaboozhoo, omaa bi izhaan!" she called. "Come here. It is cold and we have no fire for warmth or to cook and prepare our food. I ask of you to go to find the fire, ishkodence, that Thunderbird has in the west."

"Grandmother," Waynaboozhoo replied. "I will go and look for the great ishkodence for you." He disguised himself as a waboos, a little rabbit, and headed off to the west looking for the fire.

When Waynaboozhoo finally reached Thunderbird's home, he asked, "Please share the warmth inside your home. I am cold and lost. I will only stay a little while, for I must be on my way."

The Thunderbird agreed and allowed Waynaboozhoo to enter his home. Inside, Waynaboozhoo saw the fire and waited until Thunderbird looked away. Then, Waynaboozhoo quickly rolled in the fire and took off running toward his home with the fire on his back!

Thunderbird flew behind Waynaboozhoo throwing lightning flashes at him! Waynaboozhoo grew tired and yelled for someone to help him. "Widoka! Widoka washin! Help me!" he cried.

Then omaaî mitig, the birch tree, spoke. "Come, hide beside me my brother. I will protect you." The little waboos hid beneath the tree while Thunderbird flashed and thundered, angry that Waynaboozhoo had stolen the fire. The lightning bolts missed Waynaboozhoo every time but they hit omaaî mitig. Dark burn marks scarred the white bark of the tree. That is why the birch tree now has burn marks on its bark.



Birchbark Lesson and Decoupage Lanterns



Materials:

- Yellow and white tissue paper ripped into strips, yellow and black ribbons or string.
- A clear jar and a tea light.
- Decoupage: equal parts mixture of water and white glue.

Instructions:

1. Begin by looking at various photos or samples of Birch bark: what are the colours, the patterns of the markings?
2. Apply a layer of decoupage mixture to the jar with a brush.
3. Add pieces of tissue or ribbon to create a birch bark effect.
4. Apply more decoupage mixture as needed. Do a final coat at the end and leave to dry.

Braiding Materials



Materials:

- A variety of different coloured string and yarn.
- Tape to attach the top of the braid to a tabletop or hard surface.

Instructions:

1. Tie three pieces of string in a knot. Secure the knot to the table.
2. Cross the right string over the middle string. The right string is now in the middle.
3. Cross the left string over the new middle. The left string is now the middle string.
4. Repeat these steps, always bringing the outer string over the middle.
5. Secure ends with a knot or bead.

Tattoo Activity - Secondary School Students



Col Brown, Watercolour. "One of The Indian Women who received His R.H. the Prince of Wales at Pah-metush0gu-tungung Rice Lake, C.W., 7th Sept 1860...."

Credit: Colonel Robert Brown scrapbook, Trent University Archives, Rev. Lloyd Delaney fonds, isolated Manuscripts #18



History and Significance of Indigenous Tattoos

Traditional tattooing amongst Indigenous people in what is now called, North America was largely stopped after European contact. There is now a resurgence of tattooing amongst members of many different Nations.

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, an Inuk from Nunavut, a documentary filmmaker, explores the history of Inuit tattooing in Tuniit: Retracing the Lines of Inuit Tattoos. In the film, she interviews elders and delves into her own controversial decision to get traditional face tattoos.

Arnaquq-Baril has said, “It wasn’t our decision to give up our traditions. So much of our culture was hidden and shamed for so long. It’s been really empowering and healing to get my tattoos and to see a resurgence of the practice.”

Metis artist, Christi Belcourt tells us that Indigenous peoples had tattoos for warriors, healing, birthing, fasting, and visions. The tattooed images were based on deeply moving symbols, often associated with pictographs that reflect the spirits that exist in the earth. All of these symbols helped people remember they were not alone and to underscore our responsibility to care for the Earth and water.

Tattooing is one of the latest efforts to rekindle and restore pride and traditional knowledge for Indigenous peoples.





Names of the Women

It is extraordinary to know the names of the women who created the quilled makakoon as gifts for the royal visitor. Look closely at the names written or quilled with the makakoon.

The Women Were:

Margaret Anderson, Minny Cobierge (Mary Cabbage), Sarah Copway, Elizabeth (Betsy) Crowe, Lizzie Crowe, Hannah McCue, Catherine Muskratt, Nancy Naugon, Emily Rice Lake, Betsy Simon, Polly Soper, Sarah (Sally) Taunchy.

It's worth noting that Col. Brown does not name the woman in the drawing even though we know the names of the women makers as well as their biographical information.

Discuss how unusual it is to know the names of women and Indigenous artists in historic collections, a population largely excluded from history.

Study the Image:

Examine the image of “One of the Indian women...” Have the students look for the woman’s simple line tattoos on her arms. Speculate what might be on the other side of the tattoo – perhaps one of the designs from one of the makakoon?

Design Your Own Tattoo



Materials:

- Cardstock, markers, coloured pencils.
- Optional: permanent markers or paint, and plaster cast strips to create an arm band for drawing tattoos on directly.

Instructions:

- On scrap paper, plan and design your tattoo. Draw inspiration from the Makakoon designs or Anishinaabe stories you have learned.
- On either cardstock or hardened bandage material draw or paint your tattoo design. Present them and explain their significance.

Going Further:

- Ask students to choose one of the women and a makak (provide the student with the woman's name and biographic information).
- Ask the student to design a tattoo for this woman artist in the same way as before. What ideas can you gather from her designs?