

No. 15278

Native American Craft Papers



Native Americans are the original settlers of the Americas. They migrated from Asia to the Western Hemisphere along the Bering Strait during the last ice age. Our craft paper designs represent interesting and colorful motifs developed by some of North American's first people.

Native American Craft Papers come in eight intriguing patterns, each from a different tribe! Here are some facts about each tribe:

Navajo: The Navajo migrated to the Southwest from the Northwest lands of Canada and Alaska. They are the largest North American tribe. They learned to make cloth and weave blankets from wool sheered from sheep brought over by Spanish explorers. The wool was dyed with natural vegetable dyes. Today, many Navajo live in Arizona.

Potawatomie: These people lived in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois. Later many were moved to reservations in Iowa and Kansas. The Potawatomie lived in wigwams in the winter months, but later began constructing log cabins. They produced beautiful beadwork in floral designs.

Coast Salish: The Coast Salish lived in plank houses along the Northwest coast of North America. They wove blankets from mountain goat wool and various plant fibers. A single blanket could take up to two years to make. Blankets were worn by the leaders or elders as symbols of wealth.

Seminole: The Seminoles live in Florida today. Several culturally related tribes moved into Florida in the 1700's forming the Seminoles. Their patchwork design for their clothing developed in the 1900's as European materials and sewing machines became readily available.

Kwakiutl: This group lives in British Columbia, on the Queen Charlotte and Vancouver Islands. The Kwakiutl are known for the Potlatch, a celebration that included dancing, singing, eating, and giving gifts. One of the coveted gifts was the Chilkat blanket. These could take a year to weave and were made of mountain goat wool, sometimes mixed with dog hair and cedar bark. Lichen, hemlock bark, and copper were used to produce dyes for the colorful blankets. Only the person who designed the blanket would know the meaning of the blanket's symbols.

Blackfoot: The Blackfoot followed the buffalo herds across the Plains. Today, many Blackfoot live on reservations in Alberta and Montana. While hunting buffalo, the Blackfoot lived in tent-like teepee, often painted with special designs. The upper part of the teepee represented heaven; circles represented stars. Animal designs in the middle depicted the spirit helpers of the teepee owner. The bottom represented Mother earth.

Nez Perce: The Nez Perce lived in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Their reservation is in Idaho. After the horse was introduced to the Americans, the Nez Perce became great horsemen. They were one of several groups who made corn husk bags for storing vegetables or valuables. There was usually a different design on the back of the bag that complemented the design on the front.

Mi'kmaq (micmac): During the 1600's the Micmac lived in the Canadian Maritimes, but some have moved into Maine, New York and Massachusetts. They are famous for their use of porcupine quills to create beautiful clothing, boxes and baskets. The French called them "Porcupine People" because they were so adept at quilling.

Now that you are familiar with some Native American tribes, try these art activities:

Decorate with Native American Craft Papers! Dress-up paper dolls with beautiful patterns; cut into a bookmark for your favorite book; or, create a perfect picture frame or greeting card. These papers are great for decorating old shoe boxes and turning them into Native-designed storage containers.

Reproduce Native American patterns! Choose a sheet of the patterned craft papers. On a plain sheet of paper, try to draw the designs you see on the pattern sheet. Add color with markers or crayons. Instead of reproducing the paper designs, try using them as inspiration for your own

Native American Design.

Research other tribes using encyclopedias, non-fiction books or the Internet. Look for information such as where tribes were located, the homes they build, the food they eat and their everyday activities. Report your research on the back of design paper, along with pictures or drawings of the tribe's culture. For a fun activity, make a map of North America that shows where each of the tribes lived or lives today. Use Native American Craft Paper to make models of their homes and use these structures to mark the tribe's location on the map.

