

## Ojibwa Sewn Bead Designs

**Objective:** Students will recognize and describe the sewn beading style of the Ojibwa tribe that was influenced by seventeenth-century French floral embroidery and fabric prints. They will adapt and recreate a hand-sewn Ojibwa bead motif on felt using seed beads similar to those in the Museum's collections of trade beads and beaded objects

**Grade Levels:** 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>

**Time Required:** Two class periods. (or students can work on their own time)

First Period: Motivation and research: 20 minutes to see beaded objects on Museum's Web site; (extension) 10 minutes to view French designs online); 10 minutes to look at diagrammed motifs and discuss the style's characteristics; 10-15 minutes to draw and perfect a motif on paper.

Second Period: 10 minutes to draw motif on felt with chalk or use dressmaker's carbon paper to transfer it. Chalk easily rubs off as one works. Use the rest of the period to sew beads.



**Motivation:** Ojibwa girls started to learn to sew beads at the age of seven. They began by sewing an outline of beads around the edge of a motif marked on cloth or deerskin. As they progressed, they sewed echoing lines of beads inside the outline, eventually filling in the whole design, either with one color or several. Designs were geometric prior to 1800, but with the appearance of European patterned fabric in trade, floral patterns became popular. Ojibwa Indian floral bead designs incorporated stems, leaves, and flowers into fanciful patterns that fit the shape of the object being beaded. The designs are realistic, but simplified. We can adapt this method and style today. Beading has experienced a resurgence in popularity recently, and supplies are abundant and easily accessible.

With what types of beading are students familiar? (bracelets, necklaces)

What do sewn beading designs remind us of? (decals, appliqué patches)

How is the use of beading today similar to the Ojibwa use of beading? It decorates fabric on clothes or parts of clothes (collars, yokes, trims) with (floral) motifs, dressing up the garment.

How can we adapt our own floral or animal design to one suitable for sewn beading? (by simplifying the lines and shape when we draw a version of it) Show examples.

Where could we sew a sewn beaded motif on our clothes? ( on shoes, vest, collar, yoke, skirt, cuff, purse, pocket, sweatshirt)

### Materials:

Pencil

Paper

Chalk

Felt square

Seed beads

Bead needle

Beading thread

Scissors

Multi-partitioned container for beads

## Procedure:

### Drawing

After viewing the examples of sewn beads on the Web and in print, and discussing the style, students will use a picture of a favorite flower, leaf, or animal to make a cartoon or line drawing of on paper.



### Transfer

Transfer this design to felt by 1) redrawing it in chalk or use dressmaker's carbon paper to transfer it.

### Thread the Needle

Cut off an 18-21" length of beading thread. Thread a beading needle. Tie a knot in one end. (Loop thread end around forefinger and roll off between thumb and forefinger, creating a knot.)

### Sewing on the Beads

Place the needle at back of felt piece. Push needlepoint up through the felt along a line in the design, gently pulling the thread all the way through to the knot. Place 3 beads of your planned color on your needle. Hold the beads along the line on the felt and push the needlepoint down through the line again at the edge of the third bead. Bring the needle up slightly behind the last bead you sewed and thread the needle through that bead again, then add three more beads. (This anchors the line of beads.) Repeat this process along the outline. When you have about 4-5 inches of thread left, push the needle to the back and make several shallow, small

stitches in one place to anchor the thread. Cut the end off. Continue beading with another thread.

*Caution:* Handling the felt will cause the chalk to rub off. You may need to reapply the chalk design, so keep your original sketch handy.

### Using the Completed Patch

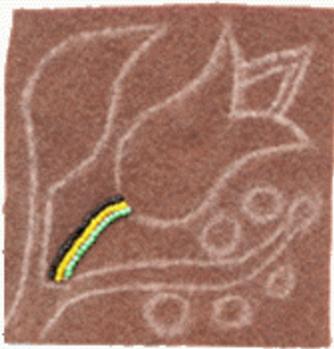
The patch can be sewn on as a square, or you can cut around the shape of the motif and hand-sew it (or glue it) onto an object.

### Assessment:

Students will be able to relate their design to an Ojibwa style motif and explain the derivation of the style.

They will be able to describe how they designed the motif using a flower or a photograph of one as a model and simplified it.

They will have outlined and filled in the motif with colored seed beads. Older or more adept students will have smoother results; there is a learning curve. Perseverance and increasingly good results through the project are to be marked. (The sample seen here took an adult 6 hours to complete on the 4 1/2" square.)





### **Sample Sewn Bead Patch**

#### **Web Resources:**

The Museum's online Frost Trade Bead Collection and examples of beaded objects from the ethnographic collection.

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/anthropology/collections/Frost>

Milwaukee Public Museum site on Wisconsin Indian's clothing

<http://192.206.48.3/wirp/ICW-38.html>

PDF file with page on a bandolier bag that has a photograph of the beading technique described below. -<http://www.artsmia.org/surrounded-by-beauty/curriculum/NEwoodlands.pdf>

Native American Resources Online exhibit of Ojibwe beaded bandolier bags

<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/art/beads/bando1.htm>

#### **Illinois State Goals and Standards Addressed:**

##### **Visual Arts:**

**26.A.3e** Describe how the choices of tools/technologies and processes are used to create specific effects in the arts.

**27.B.2** Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.

**27.B.3** Know and describe how artists and their works shape culture and increase understanding of societies, past and present.

##### **Social Science:**

**18.A.2** Explain ways in which language, stories, folk tales, music, media and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture.

**18.A.3** Explain how language, literature, the arts, architecture and traditions contribute to the development and transmission of culture.