

Montana Small Schools Alliance
HONORING MONTANA'S FIRST PEOPLES

UNIT: Making a *Par Fleche* Bag

AUTHOR: Traci Manseau

SCHOOL AND COUNTY: Deerfield Colony School in Fergus County

GRADE LEVEL: 3-6

INDIAN RESERVATION REFERENCED: Flathead

SUBJECT AREAS: Art

LESSON DESCRIPTION: Students will study the buffalo and how it was useful to the American Indians. They will make a par fleche bag similar to that of the American Indians.

This activity will take 2 days.

CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Art Standard 5: Students create, perform/exhibit, and respond to the arts.
Benchmark 1

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MONTANA INDIANS:

Essential Understanding 3: The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

Editor's Note:

These are a series of eleven short instructional units that integrate various subject area content standards and the Montana American Indian Essential Understanding 3. The different units can be used at different times throughout the year so that students will have several opportunities to learn to Honor Montana's First Peoples of the Fort Belknap and the Flathead Reservations.

Before beginning these units, teachers should view the official website of the Fort Belknap Nations (www.fortbelknapnations.nsn.gov) and read the home pages of the histories of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Peoples. Also, teachers could review and use the three DVD's provided to all Montana school districts by the Indian Education for All Program at OPI. The three are *Long Ago in Montana*, *Talking without Words*, and *Tribes in Montana*. In addition, the author has provided some specific resources for these units.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:

Students will have prior knowledge as to how the parts of a buffalo were used by the American Indians. They will understand that every part of the buffalo was used; they wasted nothing. Students will have studied the buffalo during the unit on the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribe that can be used for reference. A *par fleche* was a rawhide pouch that was used by the American Indians to carry dried food, clothing and personal belongings.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will design and construct a *par fleche* bag. Students will discuss the many uses of the buffalo.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

Teacher will read aloud *Chip the Buffalo*, by Cheri Lawson. Have the class make a *par fleche* bag out of brown grocery sacks. The teacher will have one made ahead of time to demonstrate. Students trace the pattern of the *par fleche* bag that the teacher has provided. Fold on the dotted lines. (Teacher will demonstrate.) After the folding is completed, open up the bag and crumple it to form creases, so that it is not perfectly flat. The students now may draw American Indians patterns that were used by the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille tribes. After they have finished drawing, rub the brown paper bag with paraffin wax, creating a little bit of shine. Then fold the bag back together, and poke holes where the X's are and run a piece of twine through to tie together. Make the twine long enough so they can carry the bag around their neck. Students will then explain why they chose the patterns they did to the class and what they will carry in their bag. They should know that whatever they choose, the objects will always be with them. They will always have a story to tell with the items.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will be assessed on their classroom participation of the discussion of the buffalo and their completion of the *par fleche* bag. They will also be assessed on their knowledge of the many uses of the buffalo.

Wounded Hawk



Parfleche can be made in many sizes, depending on the purpose, and size of the hide or fabric. To make your own pouch, purchase some fabric, or real leather. Begin by making a pattern similar to the one shown right using a paper bag and pencil.

Materials:

- paper bag
- scissors
- pencil & ruler
- leather fabric or leather
- leather laces, shoe laces or string
- acrylic paints or permanent makers
- hole punch
- pins or tape



Open parfleche



Partially folded parfleche



Folded parfleche

Construction Steps:

- Measure your skin or fabric.
- Decide on the dimensions of your finished pouch. (Note if you want the closed pouch to be 20 inches long and 18 inches wide you will need a pattern that is 40 inches wide and 36 inches wide. Do you know why?) Fold your paper bag in half and cut curves to match the curve of the end flaps.
- Fold your paper bag pouch following the lines in our pattern.
- Now you have prototype for the real thing.
- Pin or tape your pattern to the leather or fabric and cut it out.
- Follow the same procedures using your paper pattern as a guide.

- Now you are ready to decorate. Examine the [designs](#) below and draw your own design using the paper bag pouch for your trials.
- Transfer your design onto your pouch material and paint or color it.
- Let the paint dry and enjoy a beautiful case to hold important papers, favorite drawings or other special collections.
- With a hole punch, add holes and then lace the strings to tie it shut.

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[Parfleche](#)

http://www.natureshift.org/oldsite/natureshift/curricula/Wounded_Hawk/pouch/wh_pat.htm

Expansion of the Unit

At the end of the unit the class could read “The Talking Cloth” by Rhonda Mitchell. This is a story from Africa and is in the Grade 3 of the Houghton Mifflin Reading Series.