

Native American Story

Impressions of an Indian Childhood:

THE BEADWORK.

Soon after breakfast, mother sometimes began her beadwork. On a bright, clear day, she pulled out the wooden pegs that pinned the skirt of our wigwam to the ground, and rolled the canvas part way up on its frame of slender poles. Then the cool morning breezes swept freely through our dwelling, now and then wafting the perfume of sweet grasses from newly burnt prairie. Untying the long tasseled strings that bound a small brown buckskin bag, my mother spread upon a mat beside her bunches of colored beads, just as an artist arranges the paints upon his palette. On a lapboard she smoothed out a double sheet of soft white buckskin; and drawing from a beaded case that hung on the left of her wide belt a long, narrow blade, she trimmed the buckskin into shape. Often she worked upon small moccasins for her small daughter. Then I became intensely interested in her designing. With a proud, beaming face, I watched her work. In imagination, I saw myself walking in a new pair of snugly fitting moccasins. I felt the envious eyes of my playmates upon the pretty red beads decorating my feet. Close beside my mother I sat on a rug, with a scrap of buckskin in one hand and an awl in the other. This was the beginning of my practical observation lessons in the art of beadwork. From a skein of finely twisted threads of silvery sinews my mother pulled out a single one. With an awl she pierced the buckskin, and skillfully threaded it with the white sinew. Picking up the tiny beads one by one, she strung them with the point of her thread, always twisting it carefully after every stitch. It took many trials before I learned how to knot my sinew thread on the point of my finger, as I saw her do. Then the next difficulty was in keeping my thread stiffly twisted, so that I could easily string my beads upon it. My mother required of me original designs for my lessons in beading. At first I frequently ensnared many a sunny hour into working a long design. Soon I learned from self-inflicted punishment to refrain from drawing complex patterns, for I had to finish whatever I began. After some experience

I usually drew easy and simple crosses and squares. These were some of the set forms. My original designs were not always symmetrical nor sufficiently characteristic, two faults with which my mother had little patience. The quietness of her oversight made me feel strongly responsible and dependent upon my own judgment. She treated me as a dignified little individual as long as I was on my good behavior; and how humiliated I was when some boldness of mine drew forth a rebuke from her! In the choice of colors she left me to my own taste. I was pleased with an outline of yellow upon a background of dark blue, or a combination of red and myrtle-green. There was another of red with a bluish gray that was more conventionally used. When I became a little familiar with designing and the various pleasing combinations of color, a harder lesson was given me. It was the sewing on, instead of beads, some tinted porcupine quills, moistened and flattened between the nails of the thumb and forefinger. My mother cut off the prickly ends and burned them at once in the centre fire. These sharp points were poisonous, and worked into the flesh wherever they lodged. For this reason, my mother said, I should not do much alone in quills until I was as tall as my cousin Warca-Ziwin. Always after these confining lessons I was wild with surplus spirits, and found joyous relief in running loose in the open again. Many a summer afternoon, a party of four or five of my playmates roamed over the hills with me. We each carried a light sharpened rod about four feet long, with which we pried up certain sweet roots. When we had eaten all the choice roots we chanced upon, we shouldered our rods and strayed off into patches of a stalky plant under whose yellow blossoms we found little crystal drops of gum. Drop by drop we gathered this nature's rock-candy, until each of us could boast of a lump the size of a small bird's egg. Soon satiated with its woody flavor, we tossed away our gum, to return again to the sweet roots. I remember well how we used to exchange our necklaces, beaded belts, and sometimes even our moccasins. We pretended to offer them as gifts to one another. We delighted in impersonating our own mothers. We talked of things we had heard them say in their conversations. We imitated their various manners, even to the inflection of their voices.

In the lap of the prairie we seated ourselves upon our feet; and leaning our painted cheeks in the palms of our hands, we rested our elbows on our knees, and bent forward as old women were most accustomed to do. While one was telling of some heroic deed recently done by a near relative, the rest of us listened attentively, and exclaimed in undertones, "Han! han!" (yes! yes!) whenever the speaker paused for breath, or sometimes for our sympathy. As the discourse became more thrilling, according to our ideas, we raised our voices in these interjections. In these impersonations our parents were led to say only those things that were in common favor. No matter how exciting a tale we might be rehearsing, the mere shifting of a cloud shadow in the landscape near by was sufficient to change our impulses; and soon we were all chasing the great shadows that played among the hills. We shouted and whooped in the chase; laughing and calling to one another, we were like little sportive nymphs on that Dakota sea of rolling green. On one occasion I forgot the cloud shadow in a strange notion to catch up with my own shadow.

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Story cont.....

Standing straight and still, I began to glide after it, putting out one foot cautiously. When, with the greatest care, I set my foot in advance of myself, my shadow crept onward too. Then again I tried it; this time with the other foot. Still again my shadow escaped me. I began to run; and away flew my shadow, always just a step beyond me. Faster and faster I ran, setting my teeth and clenching my fists, determined to overtake my own fleet shadow. But ever swifter it glided before me, while I was growing breathless and hot. Slackening my speed, I was greatly vexed that my shadow should check its pace also. Daring it to the utmost, as I thought, I sat down upon a rock imbedded in the hillside. So! my shadow had the impudence to sit down beside me! Now my comrades caught up with me, and began to ask why I was running away so fast. "Oh, I was chasing my shadow! Didn't you ever do that?" I inquired, surprised that they should not understand. They planted their moccasined feet firmly upon my shadow to stay it, and I arose. Again my shadow slipped away, and moved as often as I did. Then we gave up trying to catch my shadow. Before this peculiar experience I have no distinct memory of having recognized any vital bond between myself and my own shadow. I never gave it an afterthought. Returning our borrowed belts and trinkets, we rambled homeward. That evening, as on other evenings, I went to sleep over my legends.

Images from Indian Country



Community Events

Yuba-Sutter Winter POW WOW

Location: Allyn Scott Youth Civic Center, Marysville, CA

Date: February 17, 2018

For more information please call: 530-749-6196

Woman of Wisdom

A evening of storytelling

Chico State University: BMU Theatre

Date: March 6th, 2018

For more information contact: Irma Amaro at 530-895-4212 x 109

41st Annual California Conference on American Indian Education

Theme: Indian Education: Anything is Possible

Location: The Westin LAX, Los Angeles, CA

Date: March 18-20, 2018

For more information contact: Irma Amaro or Rachel McBride, Co-Chairpersons

@ 530-895-4212



Word Search

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b n t e s t u d i n e c c s
c a u d y c a n e n p i r n
b u r r o r u n m g o n a z
u r t k i r e o s e c n w w
l z l r i d l t e l e a l m
b o e e i n x w s s a m n a
s r f l i p p e r a n o q n
w i i e q i c s h e l l t h
i w r n e r s n o c s s s i
m i k e r o u g h o n t t d
w k f n m w t e l o b i t e
s i r e p t i l e t k c y c
p o n d c i d e r e k q e

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Turtle	Reptile	Flipper	Shell	Crawl
Swim	Testudine	Basking	Bite	Ocean
Pond	Hide	Rough		

January 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 2-6 pm	6
7	8 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	9 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	10 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	11 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm Basket./Beading 6-9 pm	12 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 2-6 pm	13
14	15 MLK Holiday No ASP	16 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	17 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	18 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm Basket./Beading 6-9 pm	19 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 2-6 pm	20
21	22 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	23 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	24 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	25 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm Basket./Beading 6-9 pm	26 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 2-6 pm	27
28	29 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	30 Computer Lab 9-4 ASP 3-6 pm	31			
				Computer Lab — GED Preparation, Resume Development, etc. ASP —After School Program		

Keep Tobacco Use Sacred

Basketry/Beading Class

Location: Four Winds of Indian Education Center
2345 Fair Street, Chico CA, **Bldg. 6**

Time: 6:00 p.m.– 9:0 p.m.



Schedule: 9 week session

January 2018: 11, 18, 25

February 2018: 1, 8, 15, 22

March 2018: 1, 8

Gathering times will be on the weekends and seasonal.

Open to students 12 years or older and must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information contact: Irma Amaro, 895-4212 x 109



Four Winds of Education, Inc.

2345 Fair Street
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*Four Winds of Indian Education, Inc. is a commercial tobacco-free facility.
Only traditional use of tobacco is permitted in/on the premises.*