

EXPLORE

The Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona is where the Akimel O'odham have lived since time immemorial.

LEARN

While this may look like a stick, it is actually an Oos:hikbina, or calendar, which is made from the "rib," or wood frame, of a saguaro cactus. Symbols were carved on it to record special events that happened from year to year. Saguaro cacti, which can grow up to 50 feet tall, are special to the Akimel O'odham and are used in many ways, including ceremonies.

LOOK CLOSELY

Find the symbol that looks like a red ladder. What do you think this represents?

Akimel O'odham Oos:hikbina, Gila Crossing, Arizona, ca. 1833–1921. Saguaro cactus wood, paint. 10/4878

EXPLORE

Many contemporary Native American artists use their cultural knowledge and blend it with their own experiences to create innovative art. Bentley Spang is an artist and author. He is Northern Cheyenne from southeastern Montana.

LEARN

This is Mr. Spang's contemporary interpretation of a traditional Plains Indian war shirt. Traditional war shirts were made of tanned, fringed animal hide and decorated with designs representing the warrior's feats in battle. Mr. Spang's shirt tells his story as a modern warrior.

LOOK CLOSELY

What materials are used to make this shirt? How do they tell a story?

Bentley Spang (Northern Cheyenne, b. 1960) *Modern Warrior Series: War Shirt #2*, 2003. Photographs, imitation sinew, 16mm film, velvet, glass beads, metal, plastic. 26/2745

EXPLORE

The Mexica once ruled the Aztec Empire. They continue to live in their native homeland, known today as Mexico, the most southern country of North America.

LEARN

This Mexica statue is made of basalt, a volcanic stone. It represents the goddess Chicomecoatl. She was an important deity to farmers. They believed she protected their crops, especially corn.

LOOK CLOSELY

What is Chicomecoatl holding in her hands?

Mexica Chicomecoatl maize goddess, probably Tenochtitlan, Mexico, AD 1521. Basalt. 8143

EXPLORE

The Iñupiaq live in the cold climate of northern Alaska, within the Arctic Circle. This challenging environment has been their home for thousands of years.

LEARN

A parka is a loose-fitting, hooded pullover made of animal fur. It is vital to surviving the freezing weather. The fur trim around the opening of the hood shields the wearer's face from the freezing wind. Wolf or wolverine fur is used because frost does not form on this type of fur.

LOOK CLOSELY

This parka is made from many types of animal furs. How many can you find?

Iñupiaq man's parka, Cape Nome, Alaska, ca. 1900. Caribou, fox, and wolf skins; wool; sinew. 6/3308

EXPLORE

In the Peruvian rainforest, the Conibo live along the Ucayali River of the Amazon Basin.

LEARN

Conibo pottery is made by the women and girls. They paint elaborate geometric designs that have complex meanings. Each design is unique, and individual artistry is highly valued. The designs represent ideas, beliefs, and elements of the natural environment such as leaf veins and Anaconda skin. Conibo pottery is coated with a resin that makes it shine and reflect the sun.

LOOK CLOSELY

What does the intricate design on the pot look like to you?

Conibo jar, Amazonas State, Brazil, ca. 1910. Clay, paint. 18/1949

EXPLORE

The northern part of Vancouver Island, located off the coast of British Columbia in western Canada, is the homeland of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

LEARN

Masks are an important part of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture. They are worn for ceremonies, traditional dances, and storytelling. This mask may represent a halibut-like sea monster. Red cedar wood is used to make masks. This is a mechanical mask; the strings allow the dancer to move different parts, creating a dramatic effect.

LOOK CLOSELY

Notice the strings. When they are pulled, what parts do you think move on the mask?

Kwakwaka'wakw mechanical mask, Cape Mudge, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, ca. 1900. Wood, paint, fur, cordage. 10/254

EXPLORE

In South America, the Manteño (AD 500–1500) lived along the beautiful Pacific coast of western Ecuador.

LEARN

This Manteño seat is carved from one block of stone. A carving of a human figure creates the stand for the seat. While little is known about how the seat was used, it is believed that spiritual leaders might have used a seat like this during ceremonies throughout the year.

LOOK CLOSELY

Study the carving of the human figure. Can you identify the jewelry the Manteño might have worn?

Manteño seat, Cerro Jaboncillo, Ecuador, AD 500–1500. Stone. 1/6380

EXPLORE

This duck decoy was found in Lovelock Cave, located in western Nevada, part of the Great Basin region of the United States.

LEARN

Duck decoy making is a tradition handed down for generations among the Northern Paiute. This duck decoy is more than 2,000 years old, one of the oldest in the world. It was a tool used by hunters to attract ducks in marshlands. This decoy, made from tule reeds and feathers, looks like a canvasback duck.

LOOK CLOSELY

Why were duck decoys made to look like real ducks?

Duck decoy, Lovelock Cave, Humboldt County, Nevada, ca. 400 BC–AD 100. Tule rush, feathers, cordage, paint. 13/4512

EXPLORE

At the southernmost tip of South America, a chain of many islands called Tierra del Fuego is the homeland of the Yámana.

LEARN

This model bark canoe is a replica of the canoes used by the Yámana. Yámana families spent half the year in canoes traveling between islands to hunt, fish, and gather marine life. Fires were made on a piece of turf kept in the center of the canoe. The fires provided heat for cooking and warmth for the family.

LOOK CLOSELY

Identify the following tools in the model canoe: basket, fire turf, bailer, spear, net, paddles. How do you think they were used?

Yámana model canoe, Navarino Island, Chile, ca. 1900. Beech bark, wood, whale gut, plant fiber, turf. 05/8572

EXPLORE

The Anishinaabe live around the Great Lakes in both the United States and Canada.

LEARN

This birchbark house is an elaborate container. The floral designs and window curtains are made with porcupine quills. Quills were used to decorate clothing and objects long before glass beads were brought from Europe. The edging around the house is sweetgrass.

LOOK CLOSELY

Can you see how the container opens? What would you store in a container like this?

Anishinaabe birchbark house, Upper Great Lakes, ca. 1885–1910. Birch bark, porcupine quills, dye. 21/1979

EXPLORE

The Yup'ik live on the southeastern coast of Alaska. They have always depended on the sea for food.

LEARN

This Yup'ik hunting hat was traditionally worn while hunting in a kayak on the icy Arctic seas. Its special design improved the hunter's skills. The sloping front of the hat protected his face from the waves, sea spray, and sun glare. The curved design enhanced sounds, which helped the hunter locate seals. The hats were often painted white to blend in with the floating ice.

LOOK CLOSELY

Study the carved ivory decorations made from walrus tusks. What animals do you see?

Yup'ik hunting hat, Yukon River, Alaska, ca. 1870. Wood, ivory, baleen, iron alloy, cordage. 10/6921

EXPLORE

The Omaha live on the Great Plains of the United States in the state of Nebraska.

LEARN

Susette La Flesche (Omaha), also known as Inshata Theumba (Bright Eyes), 1854–1903, was raised on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska. Encouraged by her father, Chief Iron Eye, Ms. La Flesche obtained a formal education. She became a lifelong activist for the rights of Native Americans. In 1994, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

LOOK CLOSELY

In 1881, Susette La Flesche was married in this beautiful dress. How do you think this dress reflects the fact that Ms. La Flesche was a woman of her times?

Woman's wedding dress/outfit, Nebraska, ca. 1881. Wool, cotton, silk, lace, mother-of-pearl buttons. 25/2192

Infinity of Nations ADVENTURE GUIDE



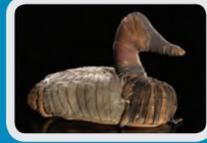
EXPLORE the exhibition. **LEARN** about objects of great beauty and function. **LOOK CLOSELY** at the objects and observe details of Native ingenuity.



Arctic and Subarctic



Northwest Coast



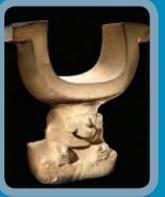
California and Great Basin



Southwest



Mesoamerica and Caribbean



Andes



Woodlands



Plains and Plateau



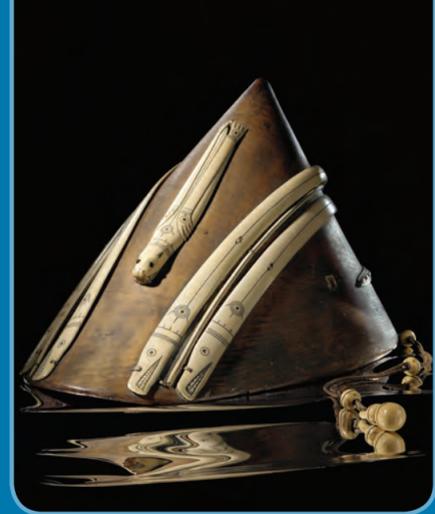
Amazon



Patagonia



HEADDRESS Yup'ik hunting hat



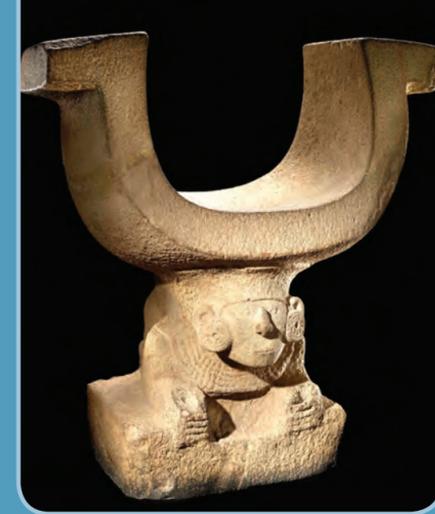
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PATAGONIA Yámana model bark canoe



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ANDES Manteño seat



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AMAZON Conibo jar



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MESOAMERICA Mexica Chicomecoatl



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SOUTHWEST Akimel O'odham Oos:hikbina



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PLAINS Inshata Theumba wedding dress



© 2010 Smithsonian Institution

WOODLANDS Anishinaabe birchbark house



© 2010 Smithsonian Institution

GREAT BASIN Duck decoy



© 2010 Smithsonian Institution

NORTHWEST COAST Kwakwaka'wakw mechanical mask



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ARCTIC Iñupiaq parka



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MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART Modern Warrior Series: War Shirt #2



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