

LESSON PLANS

ACTIVITY PROCEDURES

COILED, TWINED AND WOVEN: WEAVINGS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLE

Recommended grades: 4 - 12

Time required: 3 – 45 minute class sessions

Materials: Please see each individual lesson

INSTRUCTIONS

The natural environment provided everything needed for survival for the Coast Salish people. There was an abundance of food. Fish, especially salmon, contributed the greatest amount of food but the oceans and rivers also provided an abundance of clams and sea mammals. Land animals such as deer and bear could be found in the plentiful forests in the area. Plants provided edible sprouts, stems, bulbs, roots, berries and fruits. Mountain goats and a small, now extinct, domesticated dog provided wool for robes, aprons, hats and other items of clothing. Clothing could also be made of woven cedar bark or animal hides.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

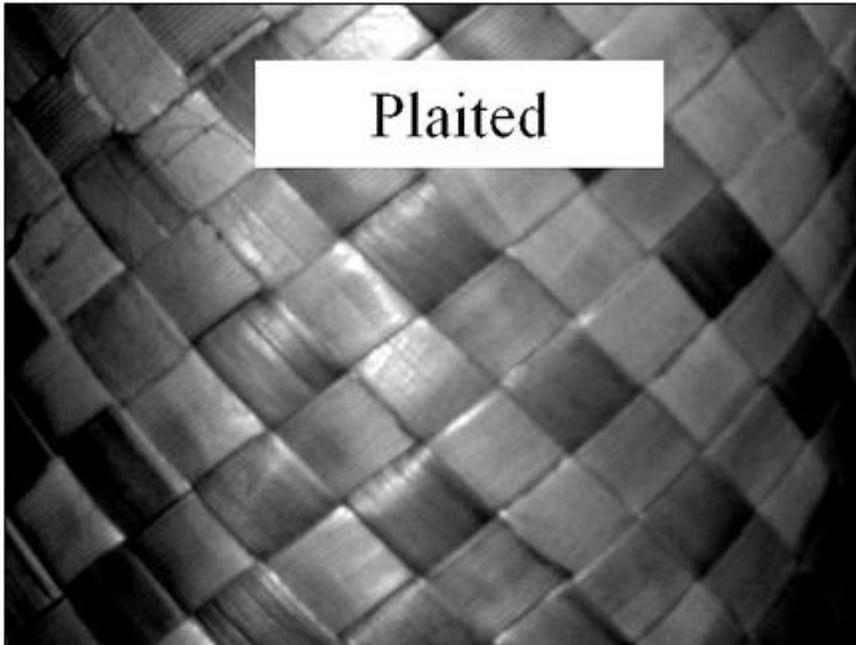
- Look critically at artifacts to compare and contrast various ways of weaving.
- Understand that the relationship between environment, natural resources and tradition in the Coast Salish culture.
- Experiment with various materials to create a woven artwork.

TYPES OF WEAVING

There are many techniques to weaving along with variations in decoration. Here are examples of the most common techniques used in Coast Salish weavings and basketry:

*Note: The **warp** is the tightly stretched core of the fabric, usually the vertical elements of the basket. The **weft** is what is woven between the strands of the warp to create the designs and decoration.*

PLAITING



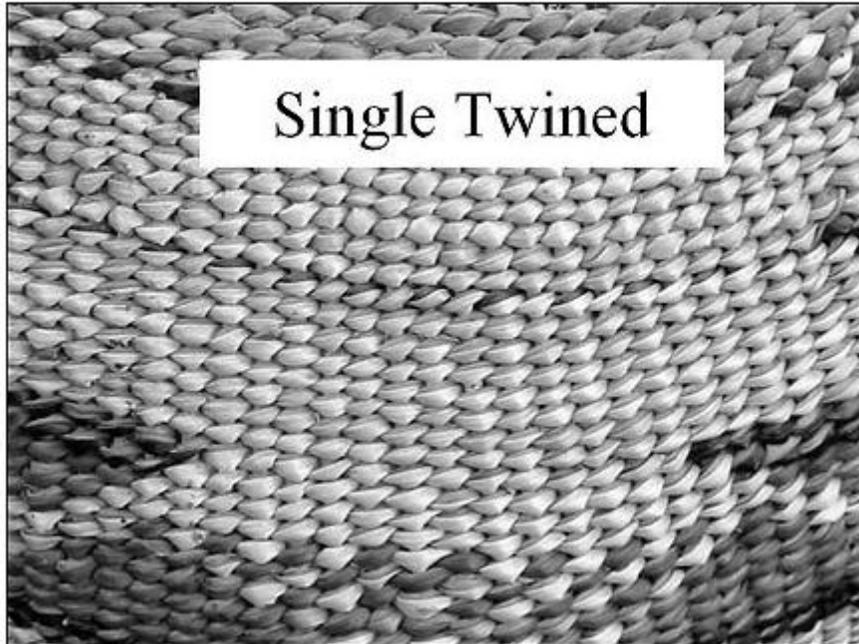
Includes checker work, twilled work and wicker work

Checker work is when the warp and weft are the same width, thickness and pliability. This is created by weaving the weft in and out, over one warp strand and under the next.

Twilled work is similar to checker work but the weft is passed over and under two or more warps strands. This creates a diagonal pattern.

Wicker work is different in that either the warp or the weft (but not both) is rigid.

TWINING



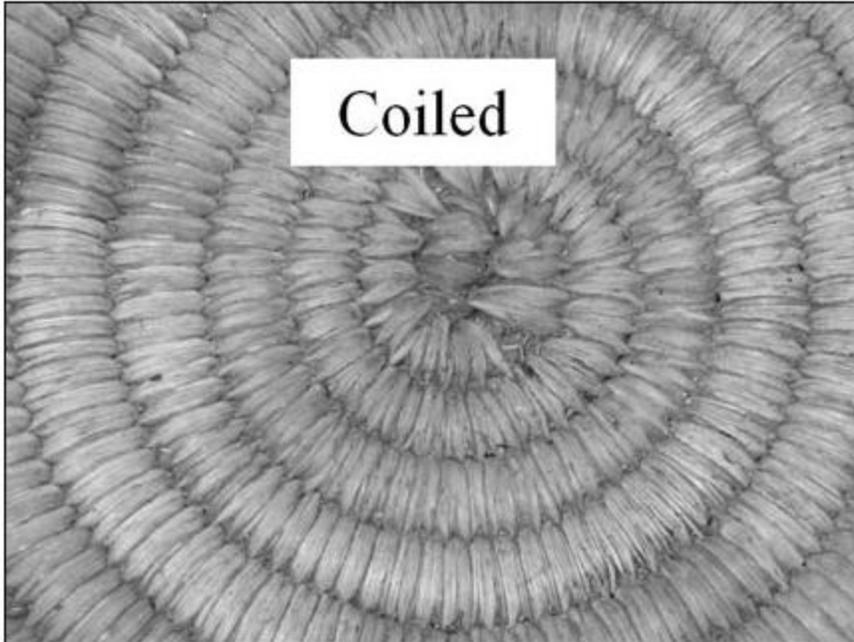
Includes open, closed, diagonal and crossed warp twining

Twining work has two or more weft strands that are twisted, or twined, on each other as they weave in and out between the warps. Twining is good for both open and closed baskets. Closed twining can be watertight and is the standard weave of many woven baskets. Open twining has open space between the rows.

Diagonal twined weaving differs from the plain closed twining in that the wefts cross over two or more warp strands so the ridges on the outside are not vertical, but diagonal.

Crossed warp twining has two different warp strands, one leans left and one leans right. The twining bind the two together to form a decorative mesh.

COILED



Coiled basketry uses a needle, such as a bone awl, and thin, flexible material (like string) to attach coils to form a basket. Beginning at the base, coils made of grasses spiral around. Stitches are used in various ways to hold the coils together.

In **wrapped crossed warp twining** style there is both a vertical and horizontal warp. The waft is then wrapped around the place where the warps intersect, forming an open, lattice weave.

IMAGES

Please print for use in activity



Wool Beater
Coast Salish
early 20th century
wood
AA 239

Although this looks like a sword, it was really used as a wool beater.

Preparing wool for weaving was a time-consuming activity. First, the wool was collected either by shearing dogs or by gathering mountain goat hair that had been snagged on bushes. If a mountain goat had been killed for food, the hide was soaked until the hair was loose and could be easily removed. Grass, twigs, coarse guard hair and other material was then carefully picked out of the wool. Then, the clean wool was placed on a mat and pounded with a beater to break down the fibres.

When moist clay is cured in a maple wood fire, it bleaches white. This clay was then mixed with the wool to whiten and clean it, and to remove some of the oil.



Creasers

Coast Salish

mid 20th century

cedar wood, alder wood, paint

AA 980

Can you see the groove along one side? Women pulled this tool across the surface of the fibrous leaves of cattail plants to crush the fibres, making the leaves more pliable. The material was then easier to weave into mats that were hung along house walls to provide insulation.

Cattails grow in marshy areas that are also home to ducks, gulls and shorebirds. When Salish women gathered and processed the plant materials, it seemed as though the birds were accompanying them. Were the birds helping the women in their work?

The entire creaser seems to be a figure. What animal does it remind you of? Could this be a bird? Creasers were often carved into bird figures.



Needle

Coast Salish
mid-20th century
alder wood
AA 1215

This long needle was used for making mats out of water plants (such as tule reeds), which were found in marshy areas. Once the outer leaves were removed from the plant's stem, the leaves were laid length-wise and sewn together with thread spun from nettle.

Can you see the triangular cross-section of this needle? This helped make a channel through the reeds as women wove and tied them together in mats. A mat creaser was used to press down the stalks while the needle passed through.

The reeds, used to being in water, become drier once removed from the marsh. Too much bending and pressure can cause them to split. By pushing the reeds down as the needle went through, this was less likely to happen.

WEAVINGS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLE

Recommended grades: 4 - 12

Time required: 3 – 45 minute class sessions

Materials: Paper, pencils, images

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather students together in a circle and pass around the images (needles, wool beater, creaser). Ask students to look carefully at the photographs and hypothesize what the object might be used for. Suggested questions to further inquiry include: What do you see? What makes you say that? What more can you find? Encourage students to look carefully at the objects and give clues to help them come to the conclusion.
2. Explain that these objects are all used by the Coast Salish people to create weavings. Weaving was a very important part of the Coast Salish people's traditional life. Still today, the Coast Salish people earn a living weaving extraordinary baskets, sweaters and rugs. Though both men and women knew how to weave, it was the women who were responsible for creating intricate baskets and clothing. Women made several types of containers including baskets for collecting clams, cooking baskets, pouches for gathering materials and lidded boxes. Women also collected the fur from the mountain goat and dog, twisted it into a long yarn and spun onto a spindle. This yarn was woven to create blankets, mats and items of clothing.

Ask students to look around the classroom and at each other, can you find evidence of something that has been woven? Sweaters, cloth, baskets and carpets are examples of weaving.

3. The Coast Salish used the natural resources in their environment to weave items. As a class, discuss natural resources. **Natural resources** are elements of the natural environment that are of use to humans. They include nonrenewable and renewable resources. Nonrenewable resources, such as oil, natural gas and minerals, are limited in quantity; renewable resources, such as forests, water and fish, can be regenerated and can last indefinitely if used carefully. What might be a good renewable resource to use for weaving? (grasses, roots, leaves, wool from animals)

4. Look at an example together that shows several techniques of weaving – show detailed image of **AA 547 – Basket** (below) – shows many techniques in one basket.



What do you see?

What natural resources were used to create this basket?

Ask students to figure out which technique was used?

*How has this basket been decorated? **Imbrication** is when the coil is wrapped with an extra strand of bark or fibre in a contrasting colour to create a pattern. Imbrications are what give the baskets their decorative quality. Why would the women decorate the basket? What does this pattern remind you of?*

5. Divide students into 5 groups. Explain that each group will receive a photograph of a woven object. Ask students to look carefully at the object and discuss the following questions. You can write the questions on the white board or just ask students to look carefully at the object and read the accompanying label copy to learn more.

How was this object created? What type of weaving might this be?

How would this object be used?

Is this the best design for this use? Why or why not?

Have symbols or decoration been added to this object? If so, what?

Why do you think the artist added this design?

IMAGES

Please print for use in activity



Blanket

Coast Salish

early 20th century

mountain goat wool, burlap cord

AA 703

Blanket

Coast Salish

early 20th century

mountain goat wool, burlap cord

AA 703

Coast Salish people are renowned for their weaving.

This blanket is made of mountain goat wool. Mountain goats were hunted for both food and their wool. Dogs, resembling very hairy Pomeranians, were also kept and their fur was sometimes converted to wool. (These dogs became extinct in the late 1800s.)

One edge of this blanket has been reinforced with selvage and has a looped fringe. (*Selvage* is a border made of different material than the main body of the piece and is often woven in a way that won't unravel.) If you look closely, you can see how burlap has been used as selvage along the opposite edge. This selvage also helps the blanket keep its original shape.

Look closely at the way the fibres are woven. Why would there be hoops along the top edge? Could this blanket have been hung as a curtain in a house? Or was it made to be sold and hung as a work of art?

Look closely at the yarn. It is made from two single strands of yarn spun together. This is called *two-ply*. (If only one strand was used, it would be called *one* or *single-ply*.) Can you see any difference between the way a single strand is spun and the way the two are spun together?

If you look carefully, you can see that each individual piece of yarn is twisted, or spun, in a counter-clockwise direction. This is called an "S" spin. When two strands are twisted together, they are spun in a clockwise direction. It seems that all the yarn for goat hair blankets was spun in two different directions. This may be symbolically significant for the weavers.

This style of blanket was probably used in a potlatch ceremony in the early part of the twentieth century. The wool was woven in a twilled or twined weave. Spinning the wool required the use of a spindle and whorl.



Coat

Musqueam First Nation (Coast Salish)

1985

Made by Robyn Sparrow

sheep wool

AA 2134

This coat was woven using a twining technique. Twining is when two strips are twisted around each other between each pair of warp threads. Dark brown and grey triangles enhance the sleeves and back.

This coat is unique because it shows how men and women worked together to make it. Joe Becker made one of the looms on which the coat was woven and the buttons were carved by Jim Kew. The buttons are carved to look like two animals. One is a plumed bird in flight. The other is a wolf.

The design of this coat is based on traditional coats that can be seen in historic photographs of the Musqueam people. It was made by Robyn Sparrow and woven on an upright Salish loom. Her weaving technique is the same that was used to make the wool blankets.

Weaving was traditionally the work of women and was a source of pride and prestige. Ms. Sparrow and other women weavers are concerned that the skill and knowledge of their ancestors be kept alive for future generations.



Hat

Coast Salish
late 19th century
cedar bark
AA 549

Hats made from woven cedar bark were common on the Northwest Coast of North America. The bark is closely woven, using a twined technique. Notice how a separate band has been woven and then sewn into the inner band. Can you see the reinforcing strips of bark on the crown? These hats are so skillfully woven that they are watertight.



Mat

Coast Salish
late 19th or early 20th century
wool, worsted tape
AA 361

This mat is made of commercial wool and modern chemical dyes.

Can you see the three different decorative styles or motifs? The motifs along each side resemble patterns that are most common among Salish-speaking people from the interior of British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. The central design is more similar to other Coast Salish works.

Look closely at the edges of each motif. How has this been made? It looks like these are three separate pieces that have been joined together, but it seems to be all one piece.

This mat was donated to Glenbow by a church minister. Perhaps the varied designs reminded him of the places where he had lived and worked.



Basket

Coast Salish

mid 20th century

spruce root, cedar root, cedar with

AA 1817

This basket has a very open weave, with spruce and cedar roots twined and woven between cedar with uprights. Can you see the loops on each outside corner? This is where a tumpline would be attached. A tumpline is used to carry a basket or pack by placing the strap over the top of the head.

What is the advantage of such an open basket? It was used to carry clams after they were dug up in the inter-tidal zone. The open basket would let water and sand drain.

6. Gather the class together and share what you learned about the weavings of the Coast Salish people. Why was weaving important? How did this technology help meet their needs? Is weaving still important today? How does traditional weaving keep contemporary artists connected to their culture?

Thinking Further

Look at the various patterns on the Coast Salish basketry. What do the symbols represent? How do these baskets show honour to the natural environment? If you could create a basket, what design would you put on it?

Try weaving your own basket using recycled materials using a paper cup and yarn. Cut an odd number of cuts, about ½" apart on the paper cup. Weave various colours of yarn, in front of and behind the paper cup. How did this exercise make you feel? What was easy? What was difficult?

ART ACTIVITY

COILED, TWINED AND WOVEN: WEAVINGS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLE: PATTERNS AND WEAVINGS

Recommended grades: 4 - 12

Time required: 3 – 45 minute class sessions

Materials: Wooden dowels – 12” long, coloured burlap – precut into 9” x 12” Various colours of yarn, large plastic tapestry needles, buttons, beads and other objects that can be woven onto the burlap, glue

1. Gather the class together and look at the image of the woven blanket from the image bank.

Blanket

Coast Salish, early 20th century
mountain goat wool, sheep wool
AA 1261

2. This blanket is made of mountain goat wool, but can you find the black pieces? These are probably from a Hudson’s Bay blanket. These blankets were common trade items during the fur trade and European exploration and continue to be sold by the Hudson Bay Company. Why would an artist today weave this blanket piece into a traditional style blanket? Notice the loops at one end. Why would these be added to the edge? Hand-woven blankets are often hung as works of art in homes.

3. Explain that students will be creating their own woven work of art inspired by the woven designs of the Coast Salish on baskets, clothing and blankets. Demonstrate how to create the woven art hanging.
- Begin by attaching a dowel to the top. You can also attach a piece of paper to the dowel for student names.
 - Pull out a select few strands of the burlap to create aesthetic spaces.
 - Demonstrate how to thread a needle and tie a knot at the end. Using the threaded needle, begin weaving designs onto the burlap. Vary the colours and technique to add interest to the work. Add buttons, beads and other materials to the composition.
 - Demonstrate how to place a knot at the end of the yarn when finished weaving.
 - Using a long piece of yarn (approximately 12”), attach each end to the end of the dowel using a knot. Add a dab of glue to secure the yarn to the end. Display your woven designs.

Thinking Further

Display your woven art hangings in your classroom or around your school. Share what you've learned about the Coast Salish with others.

When do you create art? Do you have art in your house? If so, where is it? What is it? Art, for First Nations cultures, is an integral part of their daily lives. Art is on clothing, common objects even on their houses. Is this different from your culture? If so, how?