

Native American Trunk

Inventory List, Rules, & How to Pack the Trunk



Wyoming State Museum



Shoshonee Indians - Fording a River
Alfred Jacob Miller, 1858-1860

On behalf of the Wyoming State Museum, thank you for allowing us be a part of your classroom! We hope the items included in this trunk will help you bring the story of the People of the Great Plains to life in your classroom. Please check out the trunk rules on the next page, double check the inventory of the trunk before sending it back, and use the packing guide at the back of this packet to repack the trunk. Thank you for all you do to impact the youth of Wyoming. Please let me know if the museum can be of any help in the future.

Sincerely,

Jeremy
Jeremy Thorbrugh
Curator of Education
Wyoming State Museum
307-286-8627

Native American Trunk

Rules of the Trunk

Here are a few rules pertaining to the museum items within your trunk that you must be aware of before starting the class activities.

Everything is Delicate

The museum spent more than \$2,000 during the summer of 2022 replacing broken and damaged items in our Education Trunks. Please treat them with kindness and respect, and teach students safe handling of all items.

Sharp Items Included

There are knives, arrow points, a tomahawk, and more (potentially) sharp items within this trunk. Each blade has been dulled, but can still be dangerous if handled carelessly. The teacher is responsible for deciding whether these items should be a “show only” item or if they can be handled by students.

Beadwork and Quillwork are Extremely Delicate

Some of these items in this trunk are beaded or quilled. These artforms are incredibly delicate. Please instruct students on safe handling of these items before handing them out.

Do Not Try on the Clothes

The clothing in this trunk should be viewed (as with all the items) as educational artifacts, not as dress up toys. This means that under no circumstance, should the clothes be worn by students or adults.

Don't Lose or Break Anything

The inventory of this trunk has been verified before you picked it up or before it was shipped to you. If something is broken or missing, please call the Curator of Education at 307-286-8627. Please ensure every item is returned in the same condition that you received it. The cost of any broken or damaged items will be the responsibility of the teacher, school, and/or school district who reserved the trunk.

Inventory List

NATIVE AMERICAN

Education Trunk



Important Note:

The Wyoming State Museum has two copies of this education trunk. Depending on which trunk you received to your school, your items may not be the exact items shown in the following pictures. For example, you will have a pair of moccasins in your trunk... but they may look somewhat different than the ones in the picture. Please keep this in mind as you go through the inventory list.

Native American Trunk Inventory List

Bison Hair Rope

Native Americans used the long hair from the bison's head to make rope. First they twisted the long strands on a hook, and then twisted the strands tightly together. The secret to making rope by hand was nimble fingers and lots of practice. This rope was flexible and strong.



Bison Bladder Water Bag

Most of the parts of a bison were used by the people of the Great Plains. But, not every part was used for food. The bladder was frequently used as a water carrier and container, because it could carry water without leaking.



Bone Flesher

Fleshers were used to remove fat, gristle, muscle, and other tissue from the inside of an animal skin. This task was usually done by the tribe's women, and was vitally important in the creation of leather and rawhide. Historically, fleshers were usually made from bison leg bones, like this one is.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Piece of Bison Tanned Leather

Tanned leather (or just leather) was made from the skin of many animals, including the bison. After the skin was scraped clean with a flesher, the Native American women would allow it to dry. Then, they would apply a mixture of animal brain, animal liver, and some water. Once it dried again, it became soft, supple, and pliable.



Piece of Bison Pelt

Sometimes the people of the Great Plains would leave the hair/fur on the animal skin. Bison that were hunted in the winter had thick, furry coats. Often, these skins would be tanned with the hair on to create bison robes and blankets. These were instrumental in keeping the Native Americans warm in the cold.



Piece of Bison Rawhide

Animal skins that were dried, but never tanned, would become rawhide. This was useful when the Native People needed a stronger or more rigid item. The bottoms of some moccasins and the top of drums are examples of items that were frequently made from rawhide.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Feather Bonnet

While any warrior could wear feathers, the right to wear an eagle feather war bonnet was earned by few. Eagle feathers were symbols of bravery among Plains Indian tribes. A warrior would first put on the bonnet when either he felt worthy of it or at the urging of his elders. A bonnet-wearer claimed to be one of his tribe's ablest defenders, with the feathers symbolic of coups, scalps, or heroic deeds performed by him. The feathers were set in a strip of stiff rawhide, and tied so that they stood erect. The front was then decorated with quills or beads. This bonnet is an example of the modern Pan-Indian "Sunburst" feather bonnet with red feathers attached to the ends of the replica eagle.



Girl's Dress

Girls and women usually wore long dresses of deerskin. After trade with European Americans began, trade wool was sometimes used instead of skins. Ceremonial dresses were highly ornamented with beads, shells, quills, or even trade ribbons.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Men's Shirt

Deerskin shirts were part of both everyday dress and ceremonial war clothing for men. They had sleeves, were commonly fringed and reached halfway to the knees, passing over the tops of their leggings. Shirts were made of the skins of deer or other larger animals. War shirts were often elaborately decorated with beadwork or quillwork.



Men's Breech Cloth

The breechcloth was a common men's clothing item used by a vast majority of tribes in North America, including almost all of the tribes of the Great Plains. Early breechcloths were made of hides. But trade cloth quickly replaced these styles, once it was introduced. Decorations ran the gamut from none at all to very elaborate quillwork, beads, and metal ornaments.



Men's Leggings

Leggings were worn to protect and warm the legs. They were originally made of animal skin. Later, after contact with European Americans, leggings were frequently made from trade wool. For men's leggings (like these), they were designed to go from the ankle to the hip and then to fasten to a belt at the waist. Women's leggings fastened to leather strips at the knee.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Breastplate

The breastplate was worn by plains warriors to cover the chest. Originally made of shell, by the middle of the 19th Century they were replaced by manufactured bone hair pipes. Often more ornamental than truly functional, the breastplate was usually decorated with beads, feathers, and even claws or bones.



Moccasins

Moccasins were usually made from deer and/or bison skin to protect the feet of the Native People. On the Great Plains, many (but not all) moccasins had stiff rawhide soles and soft leather for the upper part for summer use. For the winter, bison hide (with the hair side in) was used for the soles. These were a great protection against the bitter cold of the Great Plains winters.



Quirt

Virtually all of the Native Americans tribes of the Great Plains used quirts when riding their horses. Quirts were made of rawhide strips, attached to a wooden or bone handle. They were used to whip the horse for greater speed.



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Drum and Beater

The drum was an important musical instrument. It was used in medicine, dancing, gambling, and religious ceremonies. Its main function was to mark time. Drums were of varying sizes, from small hand-held ones to large ones which rested on the ground and were surrounded by a small group of men. Hand drums were made of green willow and rawhide. The rawhide was soaked in water and then bound tightly over the wooden ring by strong sinew. The rawhide shrank when it dried giving the drum a tight surface. The drum was beaten and with a short stick, which might be bare, or might have a little deerskin or bison-hide wrapped about the beating end.



Turkey Wing Fan

Fans were used by tribal leaders to work spiritual healing. They were often used in dances and religious ceremonies. Medicine men used them in curing illness by waving the eagle or hawk fan over the sick individual to call the bird's sacred power for assistance, and to cool the sick person. This fan is made from a turkey wing.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Beaded Arrow Quiver

A Native American quiver was a leather case (often beaded), that was used to hold arrows and was carried over the shoulder. This item was usually made of otter, mountain lion, or bison calf skin. All these animals were believed to possess spiritual power, and the use of their skins tended to impart some power to the user of the quiver.



Arrows (2)

Arrow shafts were usually made from the straight branches of the cherry bush, but some arrow makers used the straight branches of the currant, and others used “red-willow” and rose. The wooden shafts were cut in lengths measured on the arm, from the tip of the middle finger nearly halfway up the upper arm. The points of the arrows were of chipped stone, bone, deer antler, or from the sole of the hoof of the bison. Once European Americans began trading with the Native People, metal points became very popular. The arrow’s flight depended largely on its feathers. Turkey or buzzard feathers were the best for hunting arrows. Hawk and eagle feathers were used for ceremonial arrows. After the hunt, hunters could locate their own arrows by the markings on the arrows, which symbolized their own individual powers.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Bone Point (1)

Arrow points were often chipped or ground stone, bone, deer antler, or of the sole of the hoof of the bison. When the Europeans and European Americans came, metal began to take the place of many of these piercing materials. Bison rib bones were frequently used for bone points. This point was, in fact, made from a bison rib bone.



Stone Points (2)

Arrow points were often chipped or ground stone, bone, deer antler, or of the sole of the hoof of the bison. Stone points, like these, were made by chipping away pieces of stone, using other stones.



Steel Points (2)

Steel points were trade items. Early fur traders, mountain men, immigrants along the Oregon Trail (and other trails), and other European Americans frequently carried these points for trading with the tribes. Warriors often substituted the more efficient steel points for their stone ones. This allowed them to use the time that would have been used to make arrowheads for other activities.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Stone Knife & Sheath

For sheer utility, the knife was the most serviceable weapon used by the plains warrior. They used it constantly at home, while hunting, and in battle. The earliest knives of the Native Americans of the Great Plains were made of stone and bone. Bone knives were fashioned from the larger bones of the bison (often ribs) and could be honed with sandstone to quite a sharp edge.



Stone Tang Knife

Knives came in different shapes and materials. This stone tang knife would have been used as a butchering knife to skin animal hides (remove the skin from the meat) and for cutting meat for cooking.



Skinning Knife & Sheath

Metal knives (or sometimes just metal blades) were obtained from Europeans and European Americans. A metal-bladed trade knife (like this one) would have been used for skinning game, as an eating utensil, and for cutting wood. Because this knife also served as a weapon in battle, it was sometimes called a “scalping knife.”



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Tomahawk

The tomahawk is a better-known weapon than the stone war club. It was introduced by the European Americans as a weapon, but it was the Native Americans who eventually made the tomahawk a paradoxical symbol of both war and peace. When meeting to arrange treaties, they would often bury the head of a tomahawk in the ground to show their peaceful intent.



War Club

Every plains warrior carried some kind of club when they went raiding or to war. Usually it was held under their belt. But, when fitted with a wrist strap, it could be hung from the pommel or cantle of his saddle. The head styles varied with the shape of the stone, and handles were decorated with paint, feathers, horsehair, scalp locks, and animal fur. The warrior selected the club head with great care, choosing smooth stones from stream beds that would not split on impact. Generally speaking, the stones used for the club heads weighed anywhere from two to eight pounds. The handle was usually made of a rawhide-covered shaft of bone or wood. Many “war” clubs from this time period that are in museum collections are actually ceremonial clubs that would have never seen battle.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

War Shield

The shield was perhaps the most important part of the equipment of the plains warrior. This was a circular piece of dried and toughened bison bull-hide, carried on the arm. It was light, but strong enough to stop an arrow, or even to deflect a ball from a smoothbore gun. Not only could the shields ward off arrows and spear thrusts, it also offered a strong spiritual protection. It might provide, on behalf of the warrior, protective powers of the images of the living creatures painted on it. The figure of a bear painted on the shield or with its claws attached, gave the warrior the bear's toughness, and powers in battle.



Sweetgrass Braid

Dried plants, like sweetgrass, were burned over coals in many different ceremonies. It was believed to have spiritual qualities. It was also used as a perfume and its fragrance can be very noticeable at short distance.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Catlinite Pipe

No ceremony was more widely practiced by the people of the Great Plains than smoking. When an individual lit a mixture of tobacco and various aromatic herbs in the stone bowl of this pipe, their intent was often deeply serious. The smoke that they exhaled was seen as a breath of prayer, and the pipe itself was regarded as an intimate channel of communication to the spirit world. Careful, patient labor went into the making of a ceremonial pipe, and a good one might be worth the price of a horse or several bison robes. Pipe bowls were shaped from soft stone of varying colors, with red considered the most beautiful. The carving of pipe bowls was usually done by specialists using metal tools introduced by the Europeans. The pipe stems were often made of gray ash, willow, or cottonwood.



Beaded Bison Skin Bag

Leather bags of all shapes and sizes were used by the Native People of the Great Plains. This one is made from tanned bison leather, with fur still attached. It is decorated with trade beads. It could have been used to carry a variety of Native American objects.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Bone Awl

Awls were tools used by women when sewing. They were used to punch holes in leather. Sinew was then passed through the hole like thread and pulled tight with the fingers. Awls could be made from tough thorns or bones, sharpened to a fine point. Later, when metal became available, short lengths of iron were set into bone or antler handles to create metal awls.



Sinew Thread

Sinew thread was used for sewing clothing and other objects. The fiber was stripped from the large tendons along each side of the backbone of the bison or deer. The raw tendons were dried and shredded to be turned into thread. Sometimes they were also twisted into a bundle.



Beaded Leather Bag

Leather bags of all shapes and sizes were used by the Native People of the Great Plains. This one is made from soft, tanned leather and is decorated with fringe and beads. It served the same function as a pocket. A bag like this would have been worn on the belt and used by women to hold sewing materials, such as an awl and sinew.



Native American Trunk Inventory List

Parfleche

A Parfleche was similar to a suitcase or trunk that women carried their personal articles in. The word parfleche was originally used by French trappers to describe shields. But, since shields were made from rawhide, eventually “parfleche” came to mean this rawhide container. Usually made from heavy bison rawhide, the oblong piece of skin was folded over and leather strings laced together the two ends. The shape of the case was convenient for packing on a horse’s back. Often they were elaborately ornamented with geometric designs such as straight lines and triangles. Women expanded much effort in making them and in keeping them clean and freshly painted.



Bone Paintbrush

Native Americans often used small bones as paintbrushes, like this one here. Paint could be made from all manner of items found on the Great Plains, including minerals, plants, berries, insects, and animal organs.



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Quillwork Bracelet and Quills

For centuries Native American women had been dyeing the quills of porcupines, sewing them on garments and bags, and weaving them into belts. The art of quillwork was a Native American tradition, practiced nowhere else in the world. They would remove the quills, dye them, boil them to soften them, flatten them by biting them, and attach them to a strip of leather.



Beaded Strip

When Europeans and European Americans first contacted the Native People of the plains, they found that one of the most important trade items desired by the Native Americans was brightly colored beads. traders, explorers, and even officials carried beads. They found that Native women urged their men to trade for them, so that the women might decorate clothing and other objects with brilliant patterns. Beadwork quickly became popular among the tribes of the Great Plains. With the introduction of glass trade beads, the decoration of moccasins, bags, and jewelry could be accomplished more quickly than with the older craft method of porcupine quill embroidery. Many women stopped using the traditional decorating style of quillwork (where each quill had to be sewn in place individually) for the faster method of beadwork.



How to Pack the NATIVE AMERICAN Education Trunk



Native American Trunk

How to Pack the Native American Trunk

Step 1

- Place all of the smaller artifacts in the correct spot within the plastic container. Each spot is labeled for your convenience.
- Please make sure all pieces of the artifacts/replicas are safely within their home.
- Close the container and latch it.



Native American Trunk

How to Pack the Native American Trunk

Step 1

- Gently place the bottom layer items (shown in the picture) into their foam slots and holes – every space is labeled.
 - Please make sure all pieces of the artifacts(replicas are safely within their home.



Native American Trunk

How to Pack the Native American Trunk

Step 2

- Add the layer foam on top of the bottom layer.
- Each of these cut outs contains multiple items, each space is labeled.
- The top left has the plastic bin with smaller artifacts, along with the bison rawhide and leather pieces.
- The bottom left has the breastplate (on the bottom), along with the bison bladder bag, beaded leather bag, bison skin bag, and moccasins.
- The big square has the shield (gently placed – tuck the feathers under the shield), along wing fan.



Native American Trunk

How to Pack the Native American Trunk

Step 3

- Place the solid sheet of foam on top of the second layer.
- Gently place the parfleche and clothing on top of this layer.



Native American Trunk

How to Pack the Native American Trunk

Step 4

- Gently place the feather bonnet (headdress) in the foam envelope. The beaded section should be at the bottom and the feathers towards to the opening.
- Fold the envelope at the line marked on it. Do not bend or break the feathers.
- Place the feather bonnet on the top of the clothing and parfleche.
- Place this booklet on top.
- Close the trunk, latch it, and lock it.

