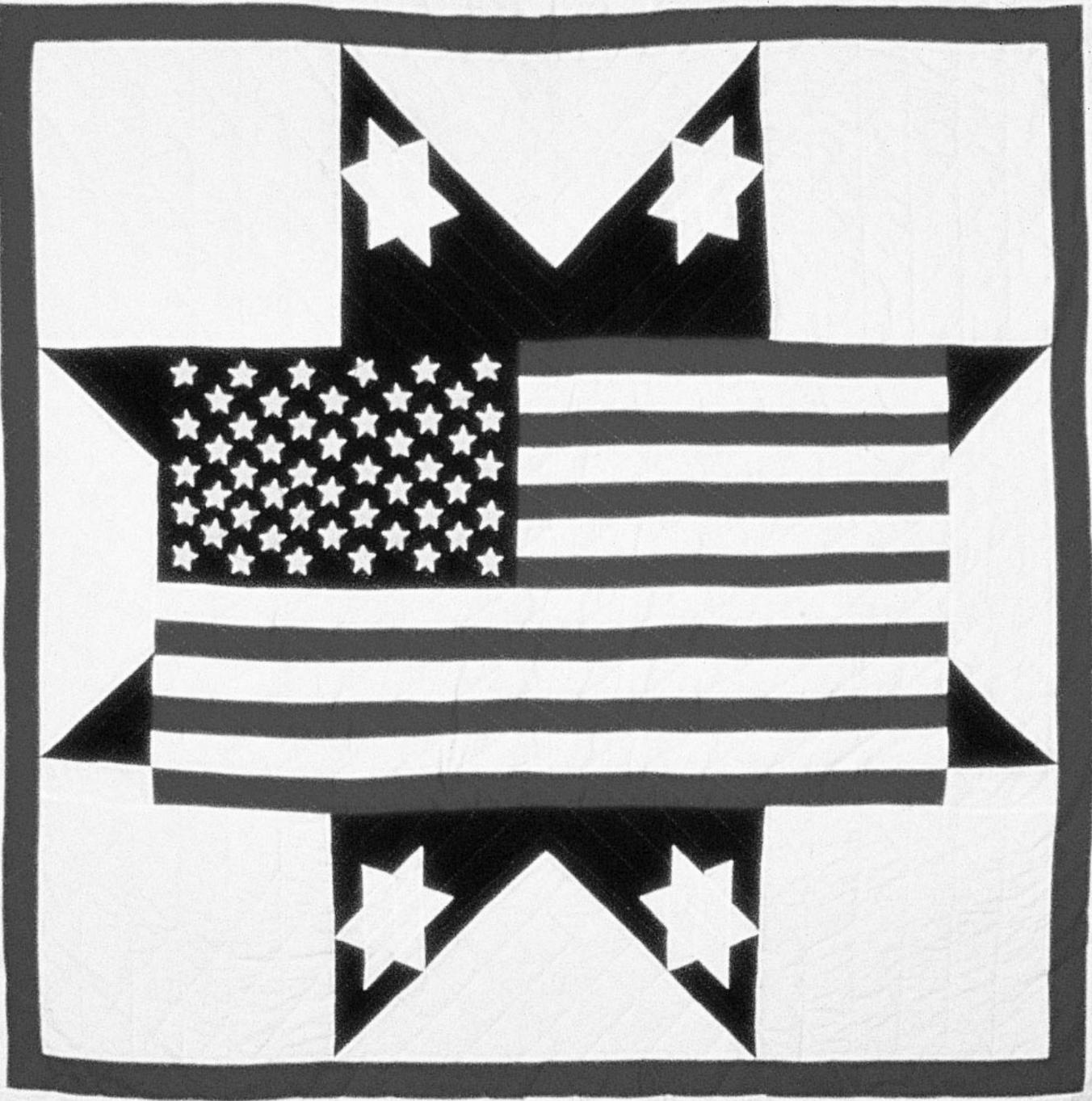


EDUCATOR INFORMATION



T. HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

EXPRESSIONS OF HONOR



To HONOR
& COMFORT
NATIVE
QUILTING
TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To explore how quilts are used in Native ceremonies to bestow honor upon individuals and communities.

Background

Honor is a value worthy of respect that exemplifies integrity, morals, and character. To honor an individual is to recognize his or her virtues and to show admiration and appreciation. In Native communities, quilts bring honor to those who receive them and to those who make them. They are used to acknowledge rites of passage and to recognize specific achievements of individuals.

Quilts are important items in many Native honoring ceremonies. In Lakota and Hopi families, quilts play a significant role in naming ceremonies for newborn babies. Naming ceremonies are celebrations observed when a child receives his traditional name and is formally welcomed into the community. In the Osage Cradleboard Ceremony, a family will give a quilt to the person who makes their baby's cradleboard. In reservation schools, Lakota graduating seniors are presented with star quilts to commemorate the occasion. Quilts are given away at a variety of special events such as weddings, anniversaries, powwows, and basketball tournaments. Quilts are prominent at giveaways.



NMAI-SI (Katherine Fogden)

Lakota Naming Ceremony for Marley Brackett

THE GIVEAWAY

A traditional giveaway embraces many aspects of Native culture and literally means to give away. It is hospitality—Indian style! A giveaway is a ceremony in which an individual or family honors others, or celebrates a special family occasion, by actually giving away large quantities of food and goods. It reinforces the Native philosophy that it is always better to give possessions away rather than to keep items for oneself. Hosting a giveaway is an honor and is taken seriously. Whatever is given should be of the highest quality and it is imperative that there is plenty to give. The giveaway is usually preceded or followed by a feast. On the Northwest Coast, giveaways, called potlatches, mark important life events. Quilts have become an important part of the giveaway and are given as gifts of honor. The act of giving is a vital part of Native culture.

Study Questions

- ❖ What is honor?
- ❖ What is a giveaway and why is it an honor to give away items?
- ❖ Name two Native ceremonies where quilts are given away.
- ❖ Does your school have ceremonies that honor students? Name them.



Minnesota Historical Society (1927-1)

Quilt "Giveaway" – Dakota Women. Poplar, Montana, 1934

VETERAN'S QUILT

Quilts have become a part of traditional ceremonies. One ceremony common to all Native America is the honoring of veterans. Special events that are sometimes held on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day honor all veterans, past and present. At powwows, protocol dictates the first song by the drum group be the Veteran's Honor Song, in which veterans only are invited to dance in the powwow circle.

Native Americans have been a part of the armed forces since the American Revolution. It was not until World War I (1914–19), however, that Native American men were integrated into the regular ranks of the armed forces. It is ironic that, at that time, the United States did not consider all Native Americans citizens. Not until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 did Congress officially make citizens of all Native Americans born within the boundaries of the United States.

In many ways, the honor accorded veterans in Indian communities today embraces the Native tradition of respect for warriors, whose responsibility was to protect the people. Special dances and celebrations are held to commemorate and honor veterans when they leave for service, as well as when they return. Veterans participate in special ceremonies designed to bring them back in harmony with their communities. Veterans' quilts commemorate these ceremonies.

Study Questions

- ❖ What is a veteran?
- ❖ How do Native Americans honor veterans?
- ❖ In what year and why was the Indian Citizenship Act passed?
- ❖ Do you know any veterans? How are they honored?



First Furlough, 1943
Quincy Tahoma (Navajo)
Watercolor on Paperboard

Quilter Profile

OLLIE NAPESNI

Rosebud Lakota



NMAI-ST (Katherine Fogden)

“This quilt means a lot to me. It brought back many memories. This quilt has tears because of the memories.”

Study Questions

- ❖ What are the prominent features of Ollie’s veteran’s quilt?
- ❖ Which symbol is a Native American design?
- ❖ Name other designs that can be on a veteran’s quilt.



MSUM (Doug Elbinger)

“Veteran’s Quilt”
Ollie Napesni
(Rosebud Lakota)
St. Francis,
South Dakota
MSUM 1996:110

Ollie Napesni (Rosebud Lakota) was born in 1917 on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. Her childhood was spent in Salt Camp with Spotted Tail’s people. Spotted Tail was a Brulé chief who signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Ollie teaches language at Sinte Gleska College (the Rosebud tribal college named after Spotted Tail).

When Ollie was 10, her family participated in the annual council meeting held at Rosebud. At this meeting, hundreds of Lakota families camped together for celebrations, giveaways, and traditional ceremonies. The giveaways would last all day, with several going on at the same time. Ollie and her sister visited all the giveaways and feasts, participating and enjoying the tradition of generosity demonstrated at these celebrations.

Like many young Native people, Ollie moved away from the reservation for a time but returned to Rosebud in 1961. She began making star quilts for Lakota people going on vision quests—spiritual rituals for guidance. Ollie began to practice the traditional Lakota ways and decided to make a star quilt for her own vision quest. While continuing to make quilts for ceremonial use, she also created several pieces that are displayed in museums in Hawai’i, Austria, and France, as well as museums throughout the United States.

On the veteran’s quilt, Ollie honors the American flag, considered a flag of honor, which Indian people have died and given their lives to protect. She places the Morning Star behind the flag in honor of the Lakota people. Ollie has a personal interest in veterans’ quilts because her husband fought in World War II and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. She sees this quilt as a staff, or a symbol of leadership and honor.



Gifts of honor for Rebecca Horned Antelope

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Vocabulary

Honor

A value worthy of respect that exemplifies integrity, morals, and character.

Rites of passage

Ceremonies that mark an important occasion in someone's life, and that recognize specific achievements of individuals.

Naming ceremonies

Celebrations observed when a child receives his or her traditional name.

Cradleboard

Baby carrier used by Native American mothers.

Giveaway

Native American ceremony in which great quantities of goods are given away.

Potlatch

Northwest Coast giveaway that marks important life events.

Veterans

Men and women who have served in the armed forces.

Powwow

A cultural gathering of Native people.

Indian Citizenship Act

An act passed by Congress making Native Americans born within the boundaries of the United States U.S. citizens.

Vision quest

A Native American spiritual ritual for guidance.

Staff

A long, decorated pole used as a symbol of leadership and honor.

ACTIVITY 1

Honoring Ceremony & Quilt

Honoring ceremonies are important to Native communities. They recognize virtues and achievements worthy of respect. Individuals can be honored at any age. For example, newborn babies are welcomed into communities in ceremonies, and high school graduates are honored for their accomplishments in ceremonies. Honored individuals are often recognized by gifts of appreciation made especially for them. The presentation of quilts can be an important part of these ceremonies.

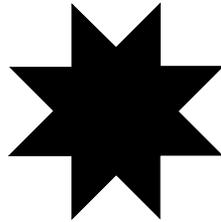
Honoring Quilt Ceremony

- ❖ Discuss honor and what it means to your students.
- ❖ Have your class choose someone they want to honor—perhaps a principal, a school crossing guard, or community leader.
- ❖ Have each student design a paper quilt square in honor of the special person.
- ❖ Tape or connect the squares together to create a patchwork quilt.
- ❖ Plan an honoring ceremony. Discuss what would be considered proper behavior at such a ceremony, for example, standing, being silent, etc.
- ❖ Present the patchwork quilt to the honoree at the honoring ceremony.

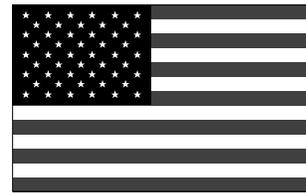
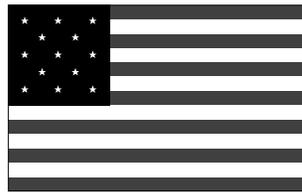
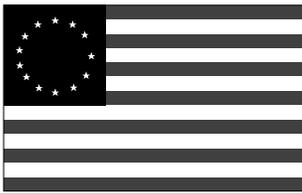
ACTIVITY 2

Symbols of Honor

Stars are often symbols of honor and respect.



To Native Americans on the Plains, the Morning Star announces a new day—a new dawn. It represents fresh beginnings and serves as a reminder to give thanks.



Stars on the American flag represent the states that make up the United States. Study the flags and discuss why the number of stars have changed.

Stars honor achievements of individuals.

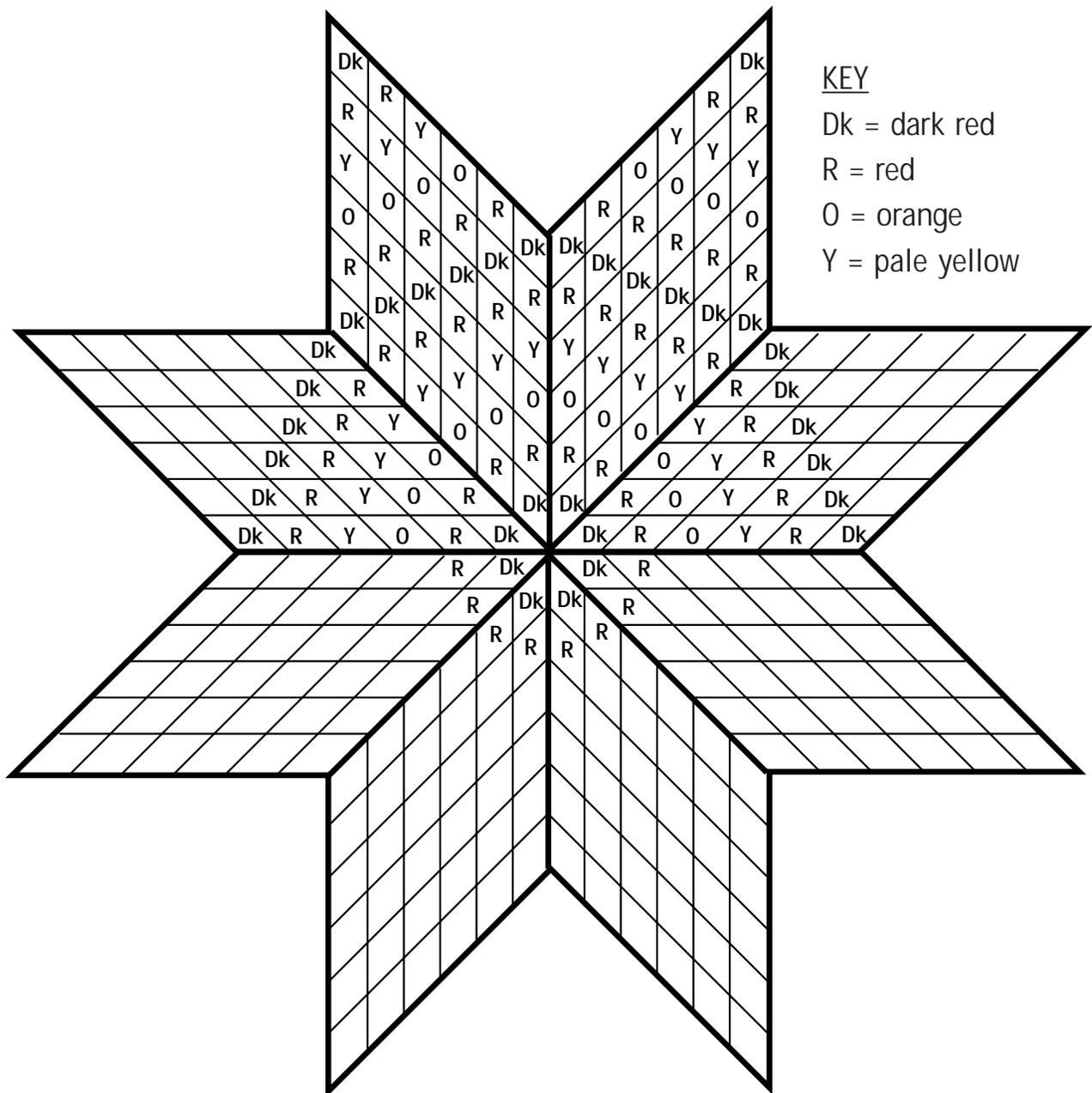


- ❖ Stars are symbols of honor. Discuss what it means to be honored and what traits your students think are honorable. How do they like to have their achievements acknowledged?
- ❖ Using magazines, newspapers, etc., have students cut out pictures that include star symbols.
- ❖ Divide the class into groups to discuss the meanings and symbolism of the stars in the pictures. For example: How are the stars used? What do they represent? Do they show honor?
- ❖ Name other symbols that show honor.

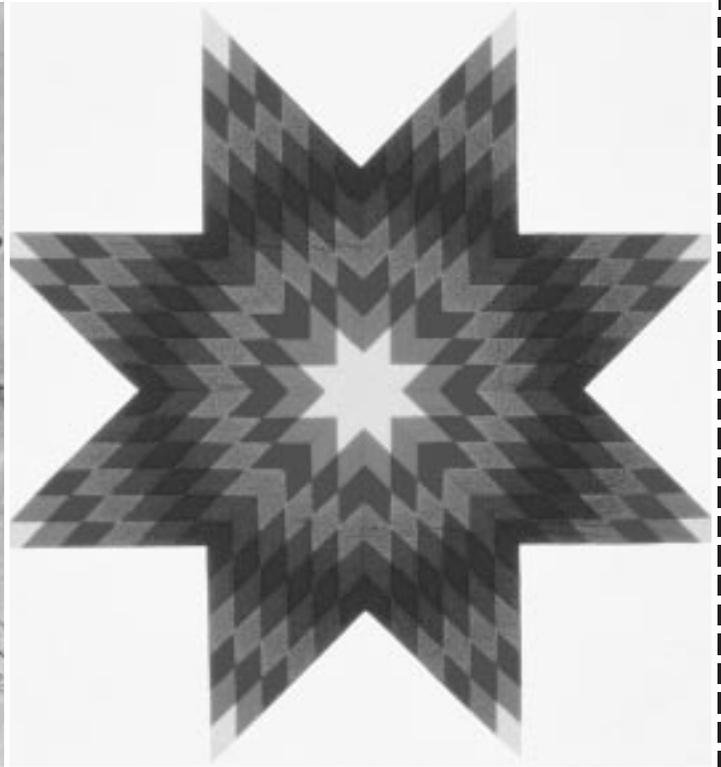
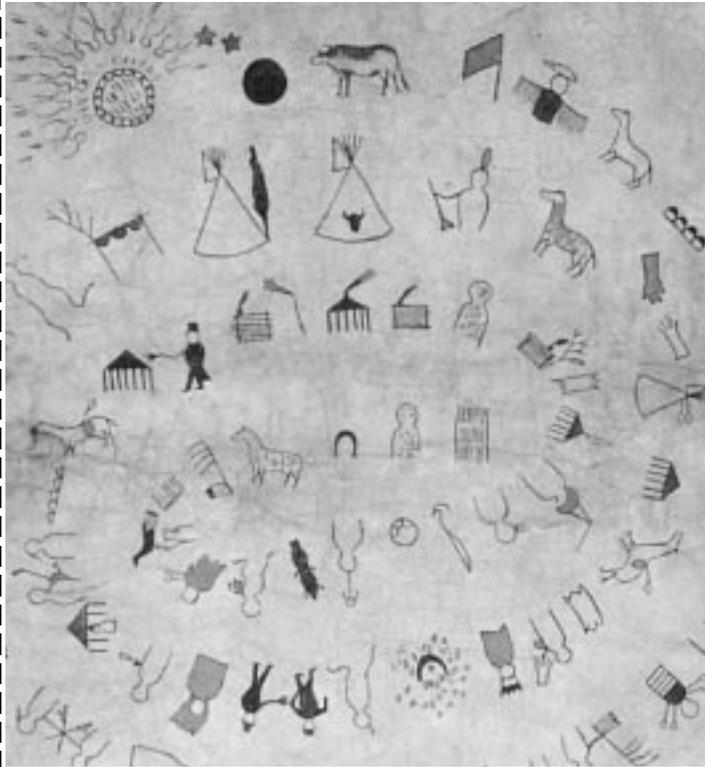
ACTIVITY 3

Morning Star

This is Ollie Napesni's Morning Star design. The colors depict a "sunburst." Enlarge the pattern and use Ollie's color chart to make a Morning Star. The pattern can be colored or diamond pieces can be cut out and pasted onto the pattern. You can also have your students design a color key for their own Morning Star. Have them cut it out to give to someone they want to honor. Ask your students to explain their choice of colors.



ORIGINS OF NATIVE QUILTING



To HONOR
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TRADITIONS

Lesson Objective

To present historical information about the introduction of quilting to Native societies.

Background

Origin means the beginning or starting point. For Native Americans, origins are rooted to the land where they have always lived. Before European contact, there were over 500 individual Native nations in North America. These Native nations had their own distinct languages and cultural traditions. Creation stories were taught through oral history, and traditions were passed down through ceremonies and celebrations. When European explorers arrived in North America, they began to establish communities on Native lands. By the 1600s, missionaries initiated efforts to convert Native people to Christianity. Using education as their primary tool, Jesuit schools were opened along the St. Lawrence River as early as 1611. The tension between the opposing cultures resulted in conflict as Native nations determined to protect their land and way of life. This conflict in the United States resulted in Congress passing the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This act established specific land areas—reservations—which were set aside, or reserved, for Indian habitation.

Study Questions

- ❖ Plains nations depended upon the buffalo. How were the buffalo used in everyday life?
- ❖ What is a reservation?
- ❖ What did missionaries do on reservations?
- ❖ In what way did a quilt replace a buffalo robe?
- ❖ How do Native quilts show adaptability?



Dakota school girls at sewing machines (c. 1900)

QUILTING ON THE PLAINS

In their efforts to convert Native men, women, and children to Christianity, missionaries established churches on reservations. They taught farming to men and sewing to women. Many children were sent to manual labor schools or Indian boarding schools far from home. Officials believed that it would be easier for children to adapt to the new lifestyle if they were away from their parents' influence. Students were not allowed to speak their Native languages or to practice their traditional religions. Families living on the reservations experienced changes never imagined by their ancestors. Buffalo herds were slaughtered by non-Natives who sold the hides for profit. By the 1890s, the buffalo herds had disappeared. This was an immense loss to the Plains nations because their lives were dependent upon the buffalo. Homes (tipis), clothing, rugs, and bedding were made from the hides while the meat provided food that lasted through the harsh winters. Beautifully decorated buffalo robes were used in ceremonies and given as gifts of honor.

Although reservation life brought dramatic changes to the lives of Native Americans, cultural traditions survived through perseverance and adaptability. One example of this is the replacement of buffalo robes with Morning Star quilts. Native women used their sewing skills to create traditional designs on quilts, which were then used in traditional, sacred ceremonies. Today, quilts remain important in many traditional ceremonies.

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS AND QUILTING



Kauai Museum

Layers of a kapa moe

For the Hawaiian Islands, European contact in 1778 also brought many changes. Native Hawaiians were warm and welcoming and by 1790, foreigners had settled throughout all eight islands. Missionaries first arrived in Hawai'i in 1820, introducing new sewing techniques to Native women. Before this time, Native Hawaiians made cloth and bed coverings from a paper-like material called *tapa*. Several layers of tapa were pounded together to make a bed cover called a *kapa moe*. After Native Hawaiians mastered quilting, the kapa moe was replaced by the Hawaiian appliqué quilt.

Living in such close contact with Europeans had many dramatic effects on the Hawaiian culture. Missionaries acquired land throughout the Islands and established sugar plantations. Workers for the plantations were imported from Asia. In a short period of time, over a dozen different ethnic groups had been introduced to Hawai'i.

Traditional life and culture were under attack. Although the eight Hawaiian Islands had always remained politically separate, they united under one leader, Kamehameha, in an effort to obtain greater political strength. Despite this unification, the United States seized control of the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893 and established a provisional government headed by Sanford Dole, son of an American missionary. Hawai'i was annexed by the U.S. in 1898 and the Hawaiian kingdom flag designed for Kamehameha was lowered. Even though Hawai'i became the 50th state of the United States of America in 1959, Native Hawaiians uphold the Hawaiian flag on their quilts as an expression of loyalty and identity toward Hawai'i as a Native nation.



Harriet Soong

Quilted Hawaiian Flag Emblem

Study Questions

- ❖ What was a kapa moe and how was it made?
- ❖ Name an industry introduced to Hawai'i.
- ❖ Why do you think quilts so easily replaced the traditional kapa moe?
- ❖ Who unified the Hawaiian Islands and why?
- ❖ Why was the Hawaiian kingdom flag lowered?

Quilter Profile

LULA RED CLOUD

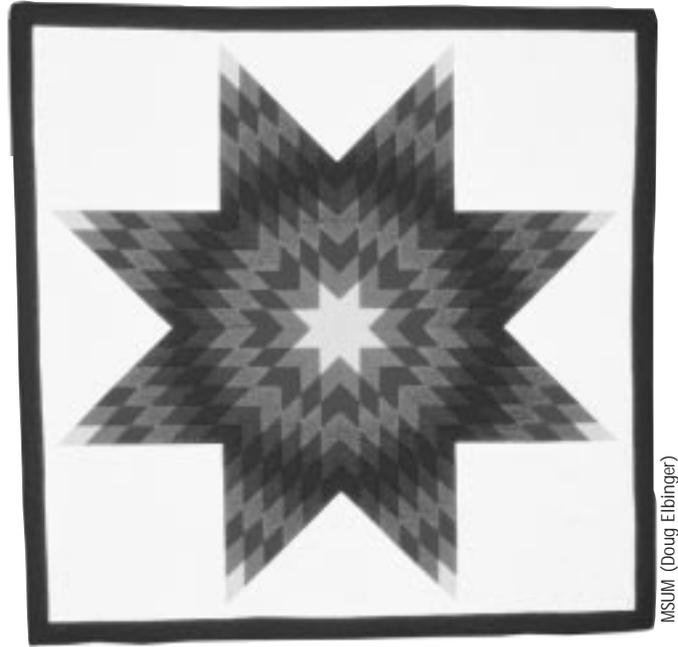
Oglala Lakota



“Existence is doing enough to get by. Living is doing the very best you can.”

Study Questions

- ❖ Why does Lula quilt the Morning Star design?
- ❖ Why would Lula quilt a buffalo pattern?
- ❖ What is the significance of the eagle? Does the eagle have a special meaning to you?
- ❖ Discuss what you can learn about history from quilts.



“A Tribute to the Invisible People”
Lula Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota)
Hermosa, South Dakota, MSUM:1996:130

Lula Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota), from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, is the great-great-granddaughter of Oglala chief, Red Cloud. Statesman and leader of the Oglala nation, Red Cloud was a negotiator and signer of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the basis for Lakota land claims for the Black Hills, or *Hé Sapa*, the sacred land of the Lakota.

Lula’s quilt, “A Tribute to the Invisible People,” is intended to draw attention to present-day American Indians who are overlooked, historically and culturally, by mainstream society. The sentiment voiced by her great-great-grandfather, “Whose voice first sounded on this land?” is heard through Lula’s pictorial tribute to her Lakota heritage.

The focus of Lula’s quilt is the eight-pointed Morning Star design. When the Morning Star is visible, it is a sacred time for the Lakota. It signals a new day has begun and gives Lula’s quilts life. Because the eagle carries Lakota prayers to the Great Spirit, an eagle design is quilted in the center of the Morning Star. Four quilted buffalo images honor the buffalo and four buffalo skulls are a reminder of the loss of the great buffalo herds. A Medicine Wheel, a design of four lines surrounded by a circle, represents the four sacred directions of the earth and symbolizes the balance and harmony of life and nature. The circle is sacred because it has no beginning and no end. Tipis, the traditional home of the Lakota, are a tribute to Lakota families.

Lula Red Cloud’s Morning Star quilts are an inspiration to everyone who sees them—even Lula.



Participants at the Native American Quilters Gathering for the NMAI-SI/MSUM exhibition: *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*

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Vocabulary

Origin

Beginning or starting point.

Native Americans

People indigenous to the Americas.

European contact

When European culture first encountered Native culture.

Missionaries

Men and women who perform religious or charitable work in a territory or foreign country.

Indian Removal Act

Act passed by Congress that established specific land areas for Indian habitation.

Reservations

Land set aside for Native Americans.

Indian boarding schools

Schools where Native students were sent to live. These schools were often located far from reservations.

Plains

A vast area of flat land located in central North America.

Tapa

Paper-like material made by Native Hawaiians and used as cloth.

Kapa moe

A bed covering created by pounding together several layers of tapa.

Plantation

Large farm or estate on which crops are raised.

Morning Star

Traditional design of an eight-pointed star.

Medicine Wheel

Sacred symbol representing the four directions, balance, and harmony.