

## History of Trade Beads (4-12)

### Lesson Plan (1 hour)

#### Materials Needed:

- History of Trade Beads Kit
- Assortment of pony beads
- Keyring with string tied on (presenters to complete this prior)

#### Introduction:

##### 1. Introduce yourself

- Introduce yourself (name, title, where you are from, who you are as an Indigenous Person)
- Acknowledge the territory. "We acknowledge that we reside on the traditional ancestral unceded shared territory of the Sumas and Matsqui First Nations, Sumas and Matsqui First Nations have lived in the Fraser Valley for at least 10,000 years.
- Ask who are Indigenous people? (Answer: 3 groups, First Nations Métis and Inuit People)

##### 2. Introduce the Presentation

- I am going to tell you a story today. There are four chapters. We will talk about the history of trade beads from 10,000 ago to present in this story.

Take four items and put them in order from oldest to newest.

#### Presentation:

##### Chapter 1

Now, hold up what you think is Chapter 1.

The main hint is **Chapter 1 is title "Pre-Contact"**. Students all need to hold up their answer. (ANSWER: THE GRID)

Shell Abalone/paua	Shell cowrie	Shell dentalium
Wood paddle	Wood small round	Bone deer/elk
Stone agate	Porcupine quills	Fresh water pearls

The Grid is the answer. Now, what do all these things have in common, where do all these things come from? (ANSWER: NATURE)

All these can be found in nature!

First Nations people have been here for at least 10,000 years. They/we were doing famously! They/we had complex knowledge systems, technologies, and complete societies.

Everything they/we needed they/we found in their/ our environment.

Have a look at the Grid! Put your finger on the stone agate. Where could you get this stone! (ANSWER: BY THE RIVERS) Yes, even today you can walk along the Fraser River and find these rocks.

This stone has a hole drilled into it so one could attach it to clothing or a necklace.

Have a look at the porcupine quills. These quills are very sharp/the fur is not. Now Indigenous people transform these quills so they can weave them. How? How do they do that? (ANSWER: THEY SOFTEN THEM IN THEIR MOUTHS AND THEN FLATTEN THEM WITH THEIR TEETH).

## Uses of Traditional embellishments

(hold up the knife sheath up)

This is an example of woven porcupine quills. This is a knife-covering or knife sheath. And what it represents is:

- The EMBELLISHMENT on personal items. This would also be found on clothing, moccasins, gloves, bags, baby carriers.
- The natural PROGRESSION of an item. Anything you owned could be decorated. This is a very fancy knife case. It was seen that the longer or more personal an item is, the more likely you decorate it. Like your backpacks or binders!
- Also, for IDENTITY. Families would own certain designs. So, if this was a “Smith” design, and you wore it out in the community, people would know that you are part of the “Smith” family. Maybe, that family is a high-status family.
- Also, it is not JUST THE things around us but the relationship we have with the things and what I mean is. The item represents 1 TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS: **one**, is when one sews these items, they are taught to have great patience. **Two**, when you begin to master this skill you are taught that Humans are meant to be humble, we cannot be perfect. You would be told to sew a MISTAKE into your work on **purpose**, because humans cannot be perfect. This will show up again in another Chapter!

Have a look at the wood bead and the wood paddle. The beads can be made from a small branch. You then cut it up and drill a hole into it ready to attach to items you wish. The ones in front of you are manufactured and are uniform in shape. The 2 examples are to show how wood is very versatile, it can be shaped into whichever shape/symbol that is important.

The paddle is made from the cedar tree. The cedar tree is the tree of life to many First Nations in B.C. The paddle symbol is a very important symbol to the Stó:lō people here in the Fraser Valley. Why? What does the paddle symbolize? (ANSWER: IT SYMBOLIZES THE CANOES). Why the canoe, what are they using it for? (ANSWER: TRANSPORTATION, TRADING AND FISHING)

Have a look at the bone bead. This is a bead made from the bone of a deer or elk.

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Have a look at the shells. Where do these come from? (ANSWER: THE OCEAN). Now, how did the Stó:lō people get these shells, without going to the ocean? (ANSWER: THROUGH THE TRADE SYSTEM).

The dentallium shell was widely used and was an expensive item. It took great time and energy to get these shells from the ocean floor. They were used in the north, on button blankets instead of buttons, for example. They were used on hats, headwear, and all kinds of clothing and decorating.

## Chapter 2

Now, hold up what you think is Chapter 2. The main hint is **Chapter is titled “Contact”**. (ANSWER: THE TRADE BEADS) Look around. If you are holding the string of Blue beads you are right! These are called Trade Beads.

With the Europeans coming to North America (1490's) they brought many portable items to trade: one item being the trade bead.

This was a time that Europeans and Indigenous people traded many things for what they respectively needed. Europeans had glass technology. Indigenous people had everything else! (ha ha)

Trade beads are glass beads that were produced in Europe and were traded to North America and Africa during the Contact era, as a means of exchanging goods with the new world.

### **Why trade for beads:**

Indigenous people were already trading with each other. Indigenous people felt that Europeans were just another group of people to trade with.

Europeans needed what first, when they arrived? (ANSWER: THE BASIC NEEDS, FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER)

Once Europeans were able to survive and be in North America, they realized other items which Indigenous people had were valuable. What did they need next? (ANSWER: KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND, LANGUAGE, AND RESOURCES.) They would ask, "how do you get to the next mountain? How do you catch fish from this river?"

### **SHOW SAMPLES OF TRADE BEADS**

This string of beads is an example of portable wealth, meaning easy to carry! This small string, in the year 2013, is worth approximately \$100 in a specific market.

I am going to ask questions about these beads, and I want you to figure out the answer!

- Very old beads have layers (looking at the side), the more layers = more valuable.

### **Which ones are the Russian Blues?**

Russian Blue Beads – Solid blue discs faceted (not round – have sides and edges; today these edges are cut with a laser)

- The beads are called Russian blue but made in Venice.
- Russian Blue Trade beads have been found on beaches on the coast of BC.

Check all the groups have an answer.

### **Which ones are the Millefiori bead? (*milly-fee-oree*)**

1 Millefiori beads – (means a thousand flowers in Italian). Glass beads, no stripes, generally has flowers or designs, very popular.

Check all the groups have an answer.

### **Which ones are the Chevrons?**

Chevron beads (one strand only has 2) – beads that have stripes, can be different colours.

- Chevron beads have layers, look inside to see the pattern! Originally from Italy, Mirano glass from Venice.

All are Venetian trade beads – an umbrella term for all trade beads.

### **Which ones are the Watermelon Bead?**

4 Watermelon beads – the beads look like watermelon; they are not as rare or as expensive. Check all the groups have an answer.

### **Chapter 3**

Now, hold up what you think is Chapter 3. The main hint is **Chapter 3 is titled “post-contract”**. (ANSWER: POW WOW REGALIA)

Look around. If you are holding up the PowWow items, you are right. They are a continuation of the glass beads.

### **Importance of beads to Indigenous people in present day:**

- The glass beads are a continuation of the complex knowledge systems, technologies, and complete societies.

The glass technology is used for THE SAME REASONS!! Just new materials.

What you have in front of each of you are parts of a Pow Wow regalia. This is the belt, this is the leg covering, these are the moccasins, and this is a belt attachment.

Now have a look on the back of the items or inside the items. Have a close look at the tiny stitches. Someone has sewn down all the tiny beads. So, the embellishment reasons still apply.

It can be:

- **Family designs** – Identify the area AND STATUS OF where a person was from and/or their family lineage (instead of a last name)
- **Used on clothing** – Personal items that were used every day were decorated – moccasins, gloves, bags, quiver, baby carriers/cradleboards.
- **Traditional teachings** – Creating designs on the materials was a skill used to pass on to youth/family (patience, commitment, skill...).

The 2 teachings still apply. It teaches GREAT patience to sew all these beads, also, the teachings around humility are still taught. The person sewing these are taught to sew in a mistake!

- **Natural progression of items.** Indigenous languages don't have a word for Art – was just assumed that any item was decorated. It shows personal pride and having time.
- Many Elders of today **don't** consider themselves artists – they are just doing what they were taught.

### **Chapter 4**

Now, hold up what you think is Chapter 4 (ANSWER: PLASTIC BEAD NECKLACE). Look around. If you are holding up the plastic bead necklace, you are right!!

I wish to invite you to be part of this 500-year Story of beads and create a necklace of your own!! Like this one!!

## **Material TIME!!**

Supplies out to each group! 2 Large bead containers and 1 small bead container (faux bone and findings) and cut string. And sheet of instructions.

Steps to share! Eyes up to me again (attention is needed back to presenter: pause).

Anchor bead: Please tie down the first bead onto your string. Why, oh WHY do you need to anchor bead? (ANSWER: SO ALL THE BEADS DO NOT FALL OFF).

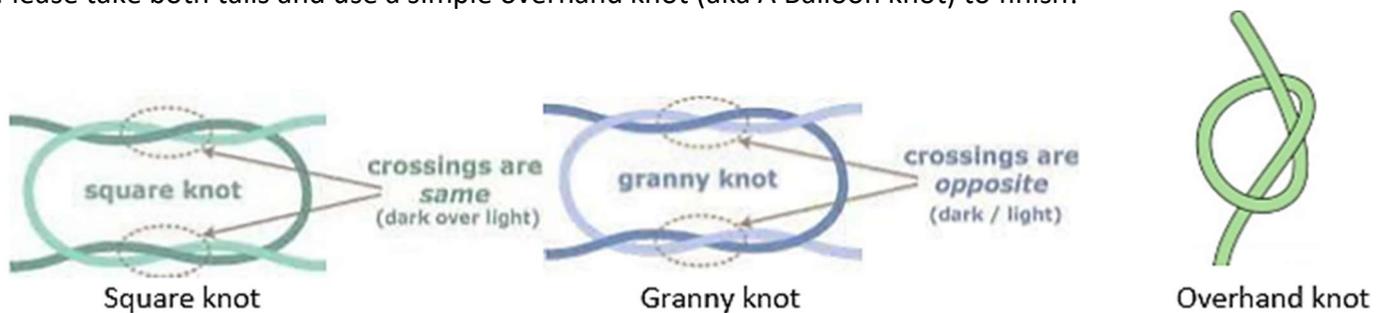
Rules to share: 4 bones beads to each necklace.

Add your beads and your jump ring and clasp/hook.

Have a look on your paper – there are 3 different ways to attach the ring and clasp – have a look.

Please do a quick measure of your necklace to your head!! (otherwise it will be not fit over your head)

Please take both tails and use a simple overhand knot (aka A Balloon knot) to finish!



And then for extra measure, take the tow tails and make a granny or square not.

Walk around for help.

Clean-up.

## **Conclusion!**

Reminder!

What you are wearing around your neck represents 500 years of history.