

THE LEARNING CIRCLE

by Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Trading Company

WRAPPED MEDICINE WHEELS

Nothing surpasses the beauty of an old time Quilled Medicine Wheel made on rawhide, yet Eskatuff Wheels will give you a chance to learn the art and discover new ideas for making these wheels.

The medicine wheel reminds us of a common understanding of the hoop and the four directions. Each tribe has special understandings to teach how the medicine wheel shows our relationship to others and mother earth. Seek these understandings in your area.

The wheels provided are the basis of the wrapping design. This kit provides rayon flat fringe as the wrapping medium to make the design. Various color combinations of wrapping can be used to make your special wrapped wheel. These instructions are for right handers, left handers should try reversing all of the directions.

Steps:

Cut a length of rayon about 18 inches. This is enough to wrap two sections of this size wheel. Turn the wheel upside down. (The top surface has more of a matte finish and the edge is slightly beveled.)

Hold the wheel with your left hand between index finger and thumb, with the underside facing you. Always start at the right edge of each section to be wrapped. Fold the starting end of the rayon over the wheel as shown in Figure 1 and hold the end down with your left thumb nail.

Begin wrapping with your right hand in the direction shown in Figure 2. We find it easiest to put a loop of rayon through the open section of the wheel as shown, which tends to hold the rayon in place so you can let go and it won't fall out again. Then reach around to the back and pull the whole rayon ribbon through.

Pull the rayon snugly down across the front of the wheel as shown in Figure 3 and hold in place with your index finger. Push the loop towards you and pull through to the back (towards you) and you have completed one wrap.

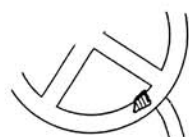


Figure 1

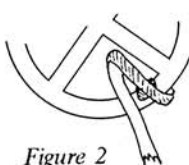


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

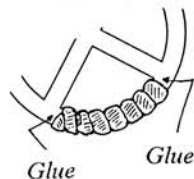


Figure 5

Always work from the back side of the wheel.



A completed wrapped wheel.



Figure 6

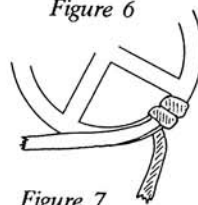


Figure 7



Figure 8

Some hints: The first wrap is the hardest to catch the loose end in the wrap and keep it from slipping out. You will need to feel out the technique so your thumb and index fingers of both hands are alternated on clamping the wrap as you move the rayon. If at first this gives you some trouble, cover the starting section of wheel with a light coating of rubber cement, let dry to tacky, and then start your wrapping as shown.

Also, after the first wrap, slant the rest of the wrappings so the rayon doesn't overlap the last wrap. This looks smoother when completed.

Continue in this way until you reach the end of that section of wheel.

When you reach the end of the section, hold the last wrapping open as shown in Figure 4, and thread the end of the rayon through the loop from the outside in. This makes a tight half hitch when pulled snug.

On the back side of the wheel, apply a small drop of super glue at each end of the wrappings in this section as shown in Figure 5. Let it run from the wheel into the rayon, locking it in place. Now trim off the excess rayon end.

Continue this same process for each section of the wheel, including the cross pieces. If the colors stay the same on both sides of the vertical or horizontal cross sections you can continue wrapping across the intersection by crossing over on the back side as shown in Figure 6.

One further refinement can be tried after some experience with the above technique. You can include a second color in the section of wrapping by concealing a second piece of rayon under the wrappings on the back side. See Figure 7. Then when you want to wrap with the second color, exchange the wrapping as in Figure 8 by twisting them together and switching positions. You can go back to the original color by repeating the twisting switch. This all works much better if you first lightly coat the wheel section with rubber cement and dry to tacky.

Spare rayon can be used for a little fringe tied to the center of the wheel.

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