

# The Learning Circle

By Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Publishing, Inc.

## CHILDREN'S PENDANT NECKLACE

The cowrie shell has an important part in the ancient stories of the Ojibwa people about their migration from the Atlantic coast to the Great lakes area starting about 1000 years ago, which lasted about 500 years.

Small shells like these were found in the shallow waters of the great island seas as they migrated up the St. Lawrence into the great Lakes. In Ojibwa it is called a "Megis" shell.

Like many people throughout the world, Native American people enjoyed making and wearing decorations made of natural materials. When traders from Europe crossed the oceans to come here, they brought colored glass beads popular in their part of the world. When they showed the beads to the people living here, it was natural that they could see all kinds of good things to make from them.

Native American people like to wear things that give honor to the earth or to someone. If they are given a gift, they always want to wear it to show respect. They know that things like shells from the water are a gift from the earth. So they make beautiful necklaces to show their oneness with things of the earth.

So with these beads and a cowrie shell from the water, you can make a necklace that shows your respect for your Native "brothers and sisters". Someone older might have to help you follow our instructions, so listen carefully.

### Stringing the necklace

It is best to lay out all of your beads on a rug or a towel on the floor so they don't spill all over. If you work on a table, keep your beads in little bowls. The longer spaghetti beads should also be put in a separate bowl or pile.

It will work easier if an adult uses a scissors to cut a point on each end of the waxed string. Then take one end of the waxed string and roll it between your fingers until it becomes pointed and somewhat stiff like a big needle. Do the same to the other end.

Now thread the pointed string through the hole in the cowrie shell as shown in Figure 2, Step 1. Put the shell in about the middle of the string. Take one pony bead and thread both ends of the string through in the same direction as shown in Step 2. Lay that all down on the rug or towel.

Thread a bead on each end of the string so that one bead is on each side of the cowrie shell and the single pony bead strung in the first step. Next thread a long spaghetti bead on each end of the string. Now depending on the pattern you want to try, keep stringing beads in this way making both sides of your necklace match. See figure 4 for some pattern ideas.

When your necklace is long enough to go over your head, you can then tie the strings together as shown in Figure 3. Pull the knot tightly, as the string is waxed and may otherwise pull loose. Cut the strings about 1/2 inch from the knot.



Figure 1

Tie a square knot after stringing the beads.



Figure 3

Thread the shell first and move to the center of the string.

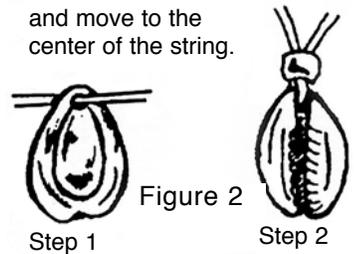


Figure 2

Step 1

Step 2

Here are some other patterns you might want to try, or make up your own

Figure 4

