

## Woodland Indian Clothing

Goal: Students will be able to identify the clothing style of Woodland Indians.

- Objectives:
- 1) Students will be able to name three articles of clothing worn by Woodland Indian men and three articles worn by Woodland Indian women.
  - 2) Students will be able to identify which articles of clothing were worn in the summer and which were worn in the winter.
  - 3) Students will be able to identify at least two ways in which clothing was ornamented.
  - 4) Students will be able to identify at least two ways that clothing of Wisconsin Indian tribes changed following contact with Europeans.

Prior to contact with the Europeans, most Woodland Indians dressed in the type of clothing described below. Men generally wore a breechclout – a buckskin flap often decorated with quillwork that was passed between the legs and tied with a belt at the waist. In colder weather, buckskin leggings and moccasins would be added to keep the wearer warm. Men could also cover themselves with robes made of furs in the cold weather. Woodland men also often wore some type of headdress. A headdress might be a colorful yarn sash or hides worn as a turban. This could be decorated with feathers. Another type of headdress is the “roach,” a crest made of animal hair set on top of the man’s head.

Women wore sleeveless dresses made of two deerskins sewn together at the shoulders and belted. They also added buckskin leggings from their knees to ankles and moccasins in colder weather. In the summer, they might just wear a buckskin skirt.

After trading with Europeans made woven broadcloth available, Native women began to make some items of clothing out of cloth rather than buckskin. Men began to wear a square cloth panel or apron on their front and back in place of the breechclout. This “apron” was often decorated with beads and ribbon work. After 1860, Great Lakes Indian men also often carried a “bandolier bag.” These cloth bags were painstakingly beaded and were worn over the shoulder at ceremonies and for formal occasions. They held tobacco, paint, medicines, and other personal items.

Women began to wrap their bodies in a sheet of broadcloth that met at the front. They decorated the borders of this cloth with silk appliqué or beadwork. A second piece of appliqué or beaded broadcloth was worn as a cape and broadcloth leggings with appliqué or beaded borders kept the legs warm. Moccasins of buckskin were also made fancy with beads or ribbon work. Women generally wore their hair in a single braid, sometimes intertwined with ribbon and set with a German silver comb.

Eventually, Wisconsin Indian men and women adopted other types of European-style clothes. Women began to wear cotton print dresses and men broadcloth shirts and

trousers. However, Native peoples also added traditional Native decorations to these clothes. Women wore beaded necklaces around their necks and often appliquéd their dresses with ribbon or beadwork. Men continued to adorn themselves with furs and wore beaded garters to hold their boot-like moccasins in place.

The clothing worn by many Native people today is no different from that which other Americans wear. Some Native people choose to wear jewelry or other adornments that is a reminder of their cultural heritage.

For those teachers using this curriculum in conjunction with the Wisconsin Indians traveling trunk, point out to your students an example of modern Native dress in *The Sacred Harvest: Ojibway Wild Rice Gathering* by Gordon Regginti and Dale Kakkak.