

Spirit in Glass celebrates beadwork of Columbia River Plateau people

LINCOLN, Neb. – *Spirit in Glass: Plateau Native Beadwork* provides a rare opportunity to experience Plateau culture through the eyes and hearts of the artists themselves.

Narrated by Nez Perce storyteller Nakia Williamson, the film focuses on bead artists from the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama Reservations. The talented individuals behind this spectacular beadwork share their history,

motivation and the key role that beadwork plays in binding their culture together.

This half-hour documentary from Mimbres Fever Productions and Vision Maker Media will air on public television stations nationwide with broadcast rights beginning Oct. 24.

Truly an American story, the very essence of this art form and its story of survival is indeed a glimpse of the heart-felt tradition of a people. The documen-

tary was filmed throughout the culturally rich northwest Plateau and mid-Columbia River regions with the mission of celebrating the Plateau people while respecting the vital role their adaptability has played in their cultural diversity and maintaining a tradition.

The beadwork tradition began to flourish during the restrictive times of the Reservation Period. Deeply rooted in basketry traditions, skilled artists moved from geometric basket designs to floral motifs.

“Creativity and individuality is a shared Plateau cultural value. It is expressed in the woven flat bags and other artistic traditions,” commented Penny Phillips, director and producer of the film.

Adventurers, traders and settlers began traveling through the area in the 1840s, bringing small glass beads in a variety of colors to trade for Native goods. Grandmothers started using beads as a medium to create and offer gifts to family members and trading partners, reinforcing traditional values while developing a new, artistic tradition. Beadwork became a way to show identity and maintain culture.

One of the more memorable aspects of beadwork is the uniqueness of each beaded piece. Each beadwork creation holds special meaning for the person who made it and for the person for whom it was made.

“In the Indian way, when you give that special piece, it’s a way to heal your heart,” said Rose Scott, a bead artist from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Pictorial beadwork is unique to the area. Since this style of beadwork started in a time of catastrophic upheaval, it serves as a metaphor for the vibrancy and survival of Native culture. To keep their culture alive, the Elders adapted by beading individual images and stories. And today, many artists have made a particular beadwork creation their specialty – as a contribution to their generation.



Courtesy photo by Penny Phillips

Suzette White Owl Lavadour (Cayuse/ Nez Perce/ Palouse/Navajo)

Spirit in Glass: Plateau Native Beadwork – which received major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Vision Maker Media – is an offering of the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). This program is suggested for scheduling during Native American Heritage Month in November.

For viewing information in your area, visit visionmakermedia.org/watch.

About Vision Maker Media

Vision Maker Media shares Native stories with the world that represent the cultures, experiences and values of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

For more information, please visit visionmakermedia.org.

About NETA

The National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) is a professional association that serves public television licensees and educational entities in all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Since 1967, our reason for existing is to connect public television people and ideas by providing quality programming, educational resources, professional development, management support and national representation.

Bear claws and teeth available

Periodically the Tribal Natural Resources Department has the opportunity to obtain bear parts, including paws and snouts, from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for Siletz Tribal member use in making regalia and ceremonial items.

Some of the work to remove the claws and teeth already has been done by volunteers, but some work still needs to be done to obtain useable parts for necklaces, etc.

If you are interested in obtaining some of these parts, contact the Natural Resources Department to be put on a list (Mike Kennedy at 541-444-8232 or Rosie Williams at 541-444-8227; or 800-922-1399).

Parts will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis as they become available.

Parts can only be used by Siletz Tribal members and cannot be sold.

Natural Resources looking for photos of hunting, fishing and gathering

The Natural Resources Department is requesting pictures of hunting/fishing/gathering. These pictures will be kept in a photo book at the Natural Resources Department office and will be available for everyone who visits our department to view.

Please send a copy to Rosie Williams at rosiew@ctsi.nsn.us or P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549; or stop by the office.

No originals, please.

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