Flint

Like all American Indian



groups, those people living in the villages near the confluence on the Knife and Missouri Rivers of North Dakota made tools, house wares, clothing, toys, and musical instruments from things that were available nearby or sometimes farther off if the material was important in the production of the item.

Knife River flint, a dark brown, glassy quartz material, was used extensively by Knife River Indian villagers in the manufacture of chipped stone tools. The largest concentrations of the material are found in Dunn and Mercer counties of western North Dakota. A predictable chipping pattern made Knife River

flint valuable as a raw material for stone tool manufacture. Gathered from pre-Ice Age deposits, flint was utilized in tool manufacture not only by the villagers but by many Native

American



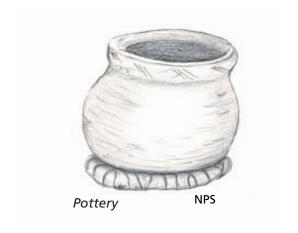
Making a blank

groups for the past 11,000 years. Arrowheads are what we think of when we think of stone tools, but Native Americans made tools from flint for scraping hides and shaping wood and bone; piercing tools like awls and drills; cutting tools like knives; and chopping tools like axes. People traveled great distances to gather the raw material. It is believed that pre-

shaped tools, called blanks, were locally made and then traded to people living greater distances from the quarries. It was so important a trade item that projectile points made from it have been found in sites as far away as Missouri and Ohio.

The primary flint gathering areas were located about 50 miles west of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, in present day Dunn county. Archaeological investigation of these areas may answer questions about the life ways of the people who came here thousands of years ago.

Several different techniques were used for the shaping of tools from stone. Two basic techniques are chipping and pecking. Chipped stone tools are made from a prethinned piece of material. Pecking was to pound one stone with another stone of equal or greater hardness. This technique was used to make grooved mauls, hammers, and war clubs.



Pottery

The Hidatsa and Mandan made pottery as far back in time as their villages can be traced. This continued until the major smallpox epidemic of 1837. Pottery making was a

Knife River Indian Villages NHS Unit Four Arts

protected right of certain women of the tribe. They made very usable and artistic pots. The pots were made by building up the sides gradually with rolled clay coils. A smooth stone or anvil was held inside the vessel with one hand while the outside was beaten using a paddle.

Designs were often carved into the paddle. Designs could also be added by impressing twisted cords, pressing the fingers into the moist clay, using sharpened sticks or bones, or deeply scratching in designs. Clays used for the pottery came from deposits found along the Little Missouri river and from other deposits in the Knife River area. The clay was mixed with water, temper of sand, crushed granite, clam shells or broken bits of pottery was added to keep the pots from cracking when fired.

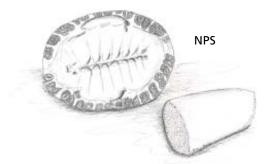
After painting a buffalo robe or rawhide, the paint was "fixed" with glue; this glue was made by boiling hide scraping, horns or hooves from buffalo and deer. Porous bones were used as paint brushes. Capillary action draws the paint into a fine pore. When that pore is placed in contact with another material (rawhide, etc.), the paint flows out.

Most Indian items were decorated in some fashion. Their possessions were not only utilitarian, but also works of art.

Painting

Painting was an important form of decoration for the Indians of this area. Pigments from the natural colors of clays were mixed with animal fat to form paint. Blood from animals and juices from plants, and trees, bark, and fruit also produced a wide range of colors. Indian women sometimes extracted the dyes from colored trade cloth by boiling it. This colored extract was then used to dye the material of their choice (i.e. quills). The traders introduced vegetable dyes, which became a valuable trade item since their use was much more convenient.

Buffalo robes were painted with pictures that told a story of important events that occurred during the year. These stories recounted specific events like battles and important occurrences in the natural world. Some painting was primarily decorative such as the painting of parfleche containers.



Turtle Shell and Bone Paint Brush