

# NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

**PK-2**

Subject

**Social Studies  
Art**

Lesson Title

**How the Porcupine Got Its  
Quills**

**Activity Description:** In this activity, students will learn about the significance of the porcupine to Native culture, and the concept of being brave and cautious. Your student will then have the opportunity to make their own "porcupine" art.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi access (optional)
- [How the Porcupine Got Its Quills Story](#)
- Clay or play dough
- Toothpicks or a package of spaghetti
- Markers
- Googly Eyes (optional)
- Pipe cleaners (optional)
- [Menominee Porcupine Legend about Humility/Modesty](#) (optional)

## STEPS

This activity is for children to do with a person from the family or community, but can be done by the child themselves.

1. Help your child to create and shape the clay or play dough into the body of the porcupine.
2. Take the toothpicks and/or spaghetti and color them different colors using the markers, if so desired.
  - a. You may also use different color pipe cleaners to make these quills.
3. Once, you have finished coloring, place them all over the porcupine's body to make the "quills".
4. Finally, place the googly eyes on the front of your porcupine, or draw eyes onto the clay/play dough to give your porcupine eyes.
5. Finally, draw a mouth on your porcupine (or you can also use a pipe cleaner to make the mouth).

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**K-12**

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**Social Studies  
Art**

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Quills**

## HELPFUL TIPS

**Parents and caregivers:** This activity may help your child gain a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of various animals to Native American tribes and culture, such as the porcupine, as well as the concept of bravery and cautiousness.

- While reading the story, share the significance of the porcupine with your child:
  - Ask you child, why the bear ran off at the end of the story?
    - Share with them that Porcupines play a variety of roles in different Native American tribes.
    - Share with them that in most tribes, porcupine is a relatively minor animal spirit, most often associated with **self-defense and cautiousness**, just like in this story, where the thorns (or quills) helped the porcupine to defend himself against a larger animal because they were sharp.
    - Ask your child how your child might they have to stand up/speak up for themselves? (note: hint at bravery and communication).
- Share with your child the significance of the porcupine to other tribes:
  - In some Southwestern tribes, such as the Hopi, porcupines are seen as a symbol of humility and modesty.
    - For a story on the importance of being modest, consider reading this porcupine story, a [Menominee Legend about modesty](#), with your child.
- Share with your child that in other tribes, porcupines were considered lucky animals-- in particular, a hunter who spotted a porcupine was sure to have a good day hunting.
- Consider asking your child what animals are important to them in their lives, or what characteristics they might represent?

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

**Families and Educators:** Perhaps, this activity may interest your child in the other roles porcupines play in different Native American tribes.

- Check out these other [Porcupine legends](#) from different Native American tribes.

### Activity Resource Links:

- Adapted from:
  - *How the Porcupine Got Its Quills Story*: <http://nativeamericanliteratureblog2012.blogspot.com/2012/04/how-porcupine-got-his-quills.html>
  - *Native American Porcupine Mythology*: <http://www.native-languages.org/legends-porcupine.htm>
  - *Toothpick Porcupines*: <http://earlylearning.momtrusted.com/2013/03/toothpick-porcupines/>
- *Menominee Porcupine Legend about Humility*: <http://web.archive.org/web/20080725025320/http://www.menominee.edu/Culturemain/2002Pages/MenomineeLegends.htm#How%20The%20Porcupine%20Got%20His%20Quills>