

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

Native American Dolls

Activity Description: In this activity, students will explore the different types of Native American dolls from the perspective of various Native American doll makers. Students will then have the opportunity to make their own cornhusk dolls.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Wifi Access (optional)
- [Youtube Video: "How to Series: Cornhusk Doll"](#)
- Haudenosaunee Guide (printable PDF)
 - [How to Make a Cornhusk Doll](#)
- [Smithsonian In Your Classroom: Native American Dolls](#) (printable PDF)
- 10-12 pieces of dried cornhusk (in the grocery store look for cornhusks for tamales)
- Twine or string
- Scissors
- Bowl of warm water to soak the cornhusks
- Newspaper
- Paper Towels

STEPS

1. Read through the [Smithsonian guide](#) with your child that highlights various Native American doll makers from Navajo, Inupiat, Ojibwe, Seneca, and Seminole culture.
2. Examine each image, paying special attention to the materials that are used.

Making a Cornhusk Doll

1. To engage in this activity with your child, you can watch the step-by-step [Youtube "How-to-series: Cornhusk Doll" guide](#) from the Choctaw Nation on how to make a cornhusk doll.
2. However, you may also utilize page 20 of the the Haudenosaunee Guide that provides you with [step-by-step instructions on how to make a Haudenosaunee Cornhusk Doll](#).
 - a. Note: You may want to cover the tables with newspaper, so as not to get water everywhere.
3. You will always begin making a cornhusk doll by soaking several pieces of cornhusk in warm water for 10 minutes.
4. As you use each piece of cornhusk, you will need to move them and drain on paper towels.

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: This is an opportunity for your child to practice working with minute details and staying focused on a task for a long stretch of time.

- Before you begin this activity, ask your child what different types of dolls they are familiar with, and note the things they mention that are significant to them.
- While reading through the [interviews in the Smithsonian Guide](#) with your child that highlights various Native American doll makers, consider the following questions:
 - How did the dollmaker learn to make dolls?
 - What materials does the dollmaker use to make dolls?
 - What things do you see in the images that might have been used to make this doll?
 - What else does this doll show about where it might have come from?
 - How is this doll different or similar to other dolls you have seen or have?
- For your younger children, consider showing them each photo as you talk through these questions.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and Educators: This activity gives young people an opportunity to make a significant cultural item that is important to many Native American cultures. Many Native American doll makers may create dolls to sell, however they draw upon cultural knowledge, and the use of traditional materials and skills to help make and preserve these items.

- This activity may open up talking points around other Native American art forms that are significant to their culture.
 - Learn more about various other types of [Native American art](#) and [Native American art history](#).

Activity Adapted from:

- *Haudenosaunee Guide For Educators*: <https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/HaudenosauneeGuide.pdf>
- *Smithsonian in Your Classroom: Native American Dolls*: https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/SiYC_Dolls.pdf

Additional Resources:

- *Cherokee Nation "How-to-Series: Cornhusk Dolls"*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXI4v-xBOPM>
- *Native American Art*: <http://nativeamerican-art.com/>
- *Native American Art History*: <http://www.nativeamericanarthistory.com/>