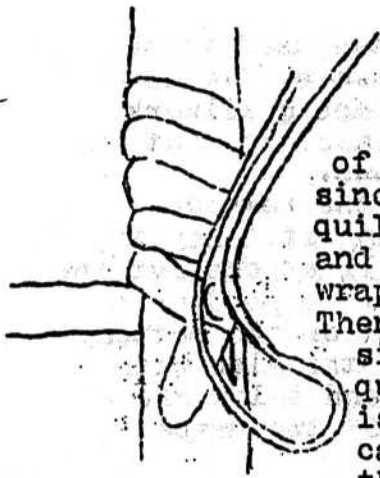


WRAPPED QUILLWORK



Now that you have completed wrapping an entire strip it is time to talk about how to end your quillwork. You will need to plan a little ahead and prepare just before you reach the final quill. Get a small piece of real sinew, or other substitute. Note that the real sinew is the best you can use since it tends not to cut the quills like the other substitutes. Then make a small loop and lay it on top of the quills. Proceed on to the end, wrapping over the sinew as you complete the quillwork. Then, tuck the remaining end in the loop and pull the sinew out, as you do so tucking the end of the last quill underneath the previous wraps. That's it all there is to it. If you don't want to try this BEST method, you can just fold and tuck the end of the last quill under the wraps by using a small awl to push, but this can break the quill and cause you to do it again.



CLEANING AND DYEING QUILLS:

With very few exceptions, you will obtain quills from a porcupine hide. This is the best method to use as it gives you thousands of usable quills at a much lower price than retail at the trading posts. However, most porcupine hides are not fresh when bought, smell, and are often very dirty. This means that after you have soaked the hide in water and pulled the quills out in bunches, you will then have to wash the quills using a mild detergent, like a dishwashing liquid. Then let them dry, and then proceed to sort out the good usable quills out. When you have enough, it is time to dye them to usable shades. Do this using RIT fabric dyes. Use a No. 10 can or so, and mix the dye in boiling water, relatively strong. Then add quills and let them boil awhile. (This also helps to sterilize your quills). Let the quills stay in the dye until they are a shade darker than what you want to end up with. Fish the quills out with a strainer, and then let water run over them to take out the excess dye. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. If the extra dye is not washed off, your quillwork may bleed when wet or sweated upon, and your mouth and fingers will be dyed in colors. Try to stick to the following RIT colors: #42 Golden Yellow, #40 Tangerine, #38 Aqua, #25 Dark Brown, #5 Scarlet, #26 Light Blue, #29 Royal Blue, #30 Dark Blue & #13 Purple. These correspond to the colors often seen in older quillwork, but for more modern pieces other colors can be used. You can also try mixing your own shades. I also like to use a little vinegar in my dye lots to help set the color in well. Of course, if you know how, natural dyes can be used to dye the quills, and there are numerous publications on this available for you to use. Remember that quills are like beads, so you need to dye enough quills at one time so that they will match in color and shade to complete the quill piece that you are working on.

With this you should be able to produce fine quillwork. Some sources of information: Quill and Beadwork of the Western Sioux, by Lyford, The Technique of Porcupine Quill Decoration among the Indians of North America, by Orchard, "Plains Indian Art of the Fur Trade Era", by Gary Johnson, Muzzleloader magazine, Sept/Oct 1981; Nov/Dec 1981; March/April, 1982.

WRAPPED QUILLWORK

This quillwork technique is what you commonly see used in such items as armbands, kneebands, pipebag sections and wapegnaka's. It is a very simple technique to employ and create some fine quillwork.

To begin, you need to lay out your rawhide base, and cut into strips. You can then commence to quill as follows:



A. Take your first quill and lay it on the rawhide strip after flattening it and softening it. Lay it near the top of your strip, so the quill sticks out the top, with about a 1/4 inch border. Depending on your preference, you can leave the point end out or the bottom. After the quill is laid on the base, turn it to the side with a fold at a 90 degree angle. Then wrap around and below where you started. Each quill should give you at LEAST two wraps around and will cover over the end of the quill.



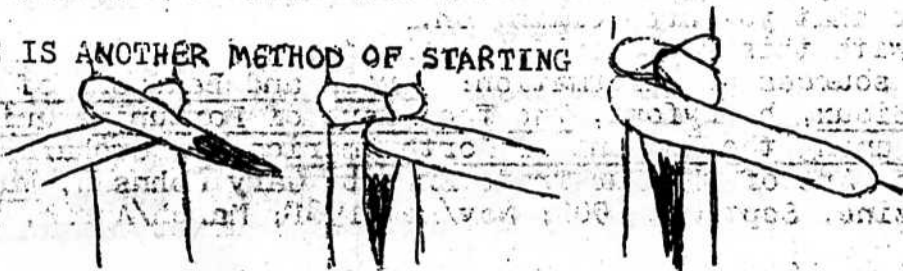
B. Once you have started the work, you need to be careful to wrap around the rawhide base working down. Each quill should be soft and pliable and should be wrapped around as tightly as you can manage. Lay each quill as close to the one before it as possible, but don't overlap. Work each quill until you cannot go around any more without the black showing. (or if you are using the back end out, until just enough to tie the next quill in is left--this technique is particularly effective in pipebags where both sides show)

C. At this point, add the next quill by laying it over the remaining part of the first quill. Then fold the first quill over the second with a sharp fold. This is the trickiest part of the process to master, as your fingers will not want to hold all of the various quills in place, but with a little practice and perseverance, you'll soon have the hang of it without any problems.



D. The last step in the process, is to fold the second quill back over the first and wrap around the base with the first wrap holding all of the folds in place and hiding all of this work behind and underneath. It is very important to make sure that enough quill ends are caught in the folds and under the wraps so that the wear can hold the quill ends in and not allow the quill to pull out at some future point. If you carefully select your quills, they'll be long enough each time to enable you to insure this. Add each quill in each time like the procedure given herein until you finish each of the strips. Remember to change colors as per the design in the front of the base. Keep each wrap as horizontal as possible for a nice geometrical look. Good luck.

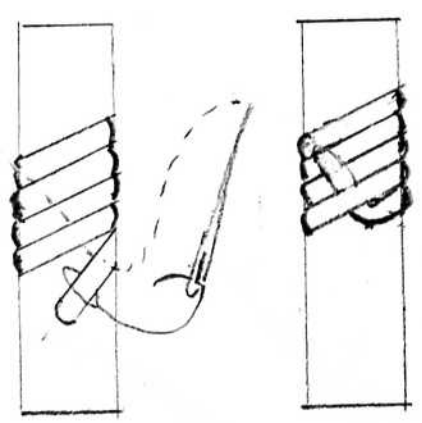
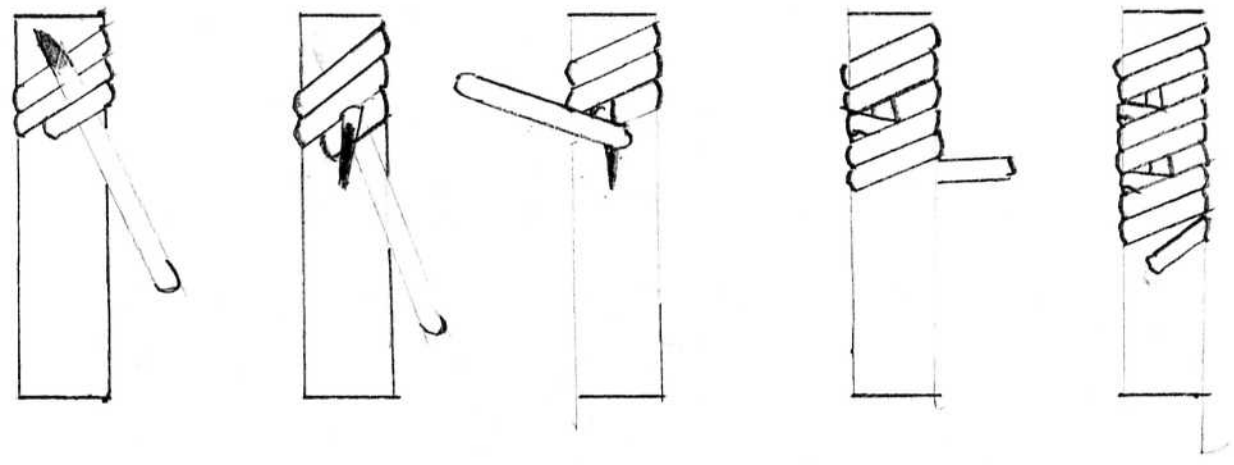
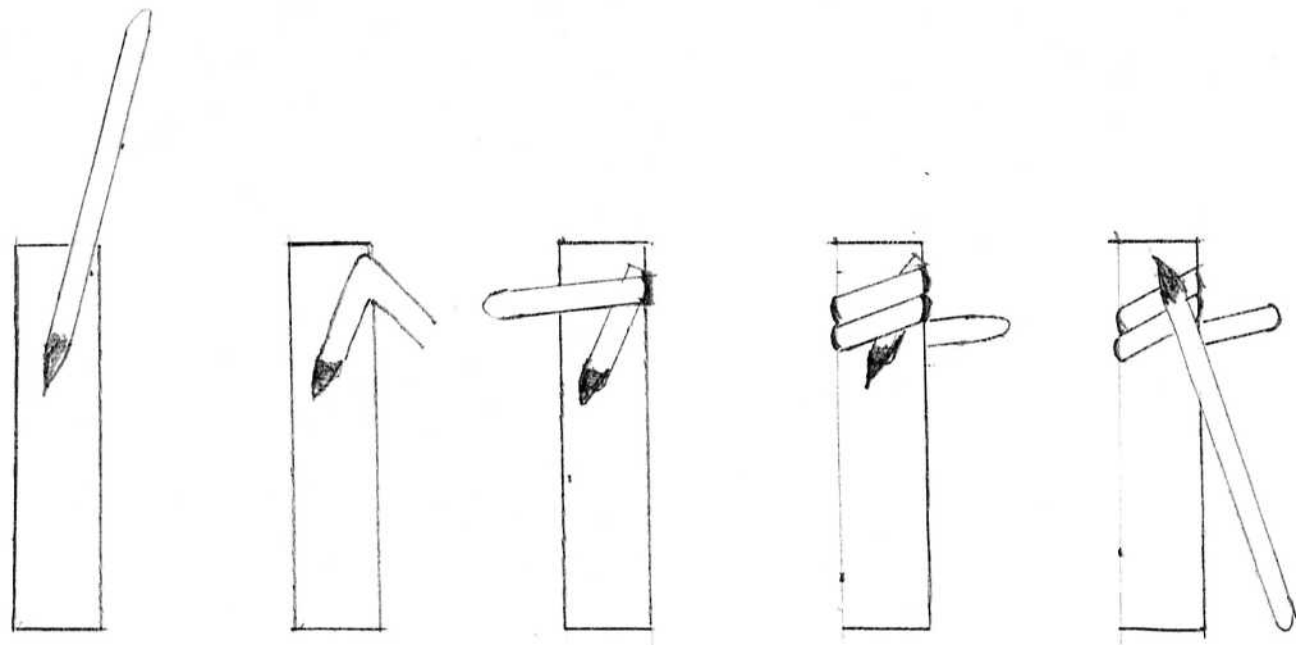
HERE IS ANOTHER METHOD OF STARTING



WRAPPED QUILLWORK

1. Sources of quills (These may be found on the Internet, but this list does not include all suppliers, just the ones with whom I have experience.)
 - a. Crazy Crow.
 - b. Matoska (pelts and quills).
 - c. Native American Visions. They are **very** expensive but, generally, their quills are higher quality.
 - d. Moscow Hide and Fur (pelts and quills).
2. Quill Preparation.
 - a. Purchased quills come cleaned and dyed. They are expensive AND frequently only 25-30% are useable for wrapping.
 - b. Pelts require removing quills, cleaning quills, and dyeing quills, a tedious process, but yields much better quills. This is the most cost-effective way to get quills, but it is very time consuming. Usually you will want to buy a pelt with the guard hairs REMOVED. This is cheaper and makes removing the quills easier. If you are going to do a big project, this is the way to go. However, you will make no friends in your home since porcupine pelts are very smelly! Work outdoors or in your garage/shop. There are several ways to remove the quills, but the two most effective ways are (i) picking them by hand, one by one, and (ii) using a soft sponge or cloth. Be prepared to get stuck—clean all punctures and treat with Neosporin! Be very certain to clean the quills carefully. Ordinary Rit dye in works fine for coloration; follow the instructions for dissolving the dye. Do some testing with short quills to learn how long you need to immerse the quills. Rinse the dyed quills until the rinse water is no longer colored. If the quills are too light, they can be re-dyed. Dry them overnight.
3. Quill use. Before you start, sort the quills and try to use ones that are about the same diameter. The minimum usable length is about 1 ½”
-1 ¾”
 - a. Prepare rawhide strips or wheels--3/16” wide to 1/4” wide.
 - b. Remove barbed part of quill for safety.
 - c. Soften quills with a damp paper towel (recommended for beginners) or in mouth (could be hazardous!). Be aware of “ballooning”; this can be corrected by allowing the ballooned quill to dry out.
 - d. Flatten quills with fingernail, flattening tool, or teeth.
 - e. Wrap quills according to attached drawing.
4. Finish wrapping by tucking end of final quill under the previous wrap. Use a needle and cotton thread.
5. Flatten (burnish) the quills one more time—carefully!
6. If the piece consists of multiple strips, “bind” them together using sinew or cotton thread. Use the “interweave” technique.
7. Quillwork can be more delicate than beadwork and, thus, needs excellent protection when not in use. Backing with leather and/or cloth is very desirable.

Basic Wrapped Quillwork Technique



ABBREVIATED QUILLWORK BIBLIOGRAPHY

Heinbuch, Jean

1990 A Quillwork Companion.

Eagle's View Publishing, Liberty, Utah. A wonderful technique book that I highly recommend. It is very readable and very clear. It describes everything one needs to know about the subject including cleaning and dying of quills. There is also a section on braintanning for the truly masochistic person. If you can only get one book, this is it.

Lyford, Carrie A.

1979 Quill and Beadwork of the Western Sioux.

Johnson Books, Boulder, Colorado (reprint of 1940 edition from the US Department of Interior). A classic book on these subjects with some description of technique. I recommend reading it.

Orchard, William, C.

1984 The Technique of Porcupine Quill Decoration Among the Indians of North America.

Eagles View Publishing, Ogden, Utah. The classic book on quillwork, originally published in 1919, describing nearly every technique used by Native Americans. This is not a "how-to" book. However, I recommend reading it for its wonderful history and insights.

Halvorson, Mark J. and Todd Strand (Photographer)

Sacred Beauty: Quillwork of Plains Women. If you can find this, it is excellent.

Joe Rosenthal 2006
