

## PROJECT #12 - BUTTON BLANKET



**Main Idea: Pacific Northwest Coast First Nations people wear decorated blankets in ceremonies, dances and for other special occasions.**



### Introduction

This lesson is designed for use at the elementary level. Advanced levels can make a real blanket using cloth, buttons, needle and thread.

Use the symmetrical project for design or any First Nations design converted to one colour plus the background colour of the blanket.

When First Nations people on the West Coast first came into contact with Europeans who had cloth blankets for sale, they quickly found another use for the blankets in addition to using the blankets to keep warm at night. The women made beautiful dancing blanket and dancing aprons to be used on ceremonial occasions. Like all things in our culture, ownership and the right to the use of a particular piece of regalia is important. Permission needs to be given for this right.

These blankets usually had a red felt applique design that was surrounded by mother of pearl buttons, abalone shell, small pieces of copper pounded and shaped, small carved wooden paddles, and sometimes deer hooves and bells were sewn to the aprons. Today, plastic buttons are used as well as sequins. The designs reflected the crest of particular families or clans. These crests are sacred and belong to families. They cannot be used without their permission.



### Objectives: the student will be able to

1. use (after getting permission for an existing design) or create a First Nations design large enough to cover the back part of a ceremonial blanket;
2. Participate in discussions that link new learning to previous learning;
3. Transfer the design to red paper, cut out, and glue to black paper.
4. Add trimming, front and back.

### Materials needed:

First Nations design to transfer to red paper and cut out, large red and black paper for "blankets and applique", scissors, small pre-glued circles from a stationery store (price tag stickers) for "buttons", glue sticks



**Time frame:** 2-4 sessions

**Class Size:**





### Initial Bridging between the student and the lesson to come

Some sample questions to get students thinking or building a bridge:



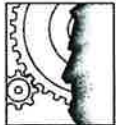
#### To life

Have you ever seen a West Coast Native button blanket? What did it look like? Could you recognize the design? Where did you see it? What do we wear for special occasions? Name some. (weddings, funerals, meetings, birthdays, christenings, graduation)



Why do people wear special clothes at these times? Is that the same as the First Nations culture? How? What other piece of clothing resembles a First Nations button blanket? (capes)

#### To school



When in school do you wear special clothes? (assemblies, graduation, drama, music, sports) Why? In which subjects would we be likely to make a button blanket? (First Nations studies, Home Economics, Social Studies, Dance, Drama, Music)

#### To when you get a job



Match several professions or jobs with their special clothing. What do these clothes do for the wearer? Are some important to safety? Which? To prestige? To identity? To comfort? To discomfort?

#### To how you act and feel about things

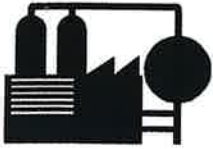


Do certain clothes make you feel a certain way? How and when? Are clothes so important to you that you will make a great effort to get the "right" clothes? How will this affect you in life? How will friends and acquaintance feel when they see you in certain clothes? Does how you feel about your clothes affect how you treat the clothes? How you treat others? Do others know how you are feeling by the clothes you wear? Can they tell something about your beliefs and values right away? How? Does a button blanket tell something about the person who is wearing it? What?

#### Structure: Vocabulary, Cues and previous skills necessary

What terms and words do the students need to understand? Can they explain them in their own words?

button blanket, dancing blanket, dancing apron, clan, crest



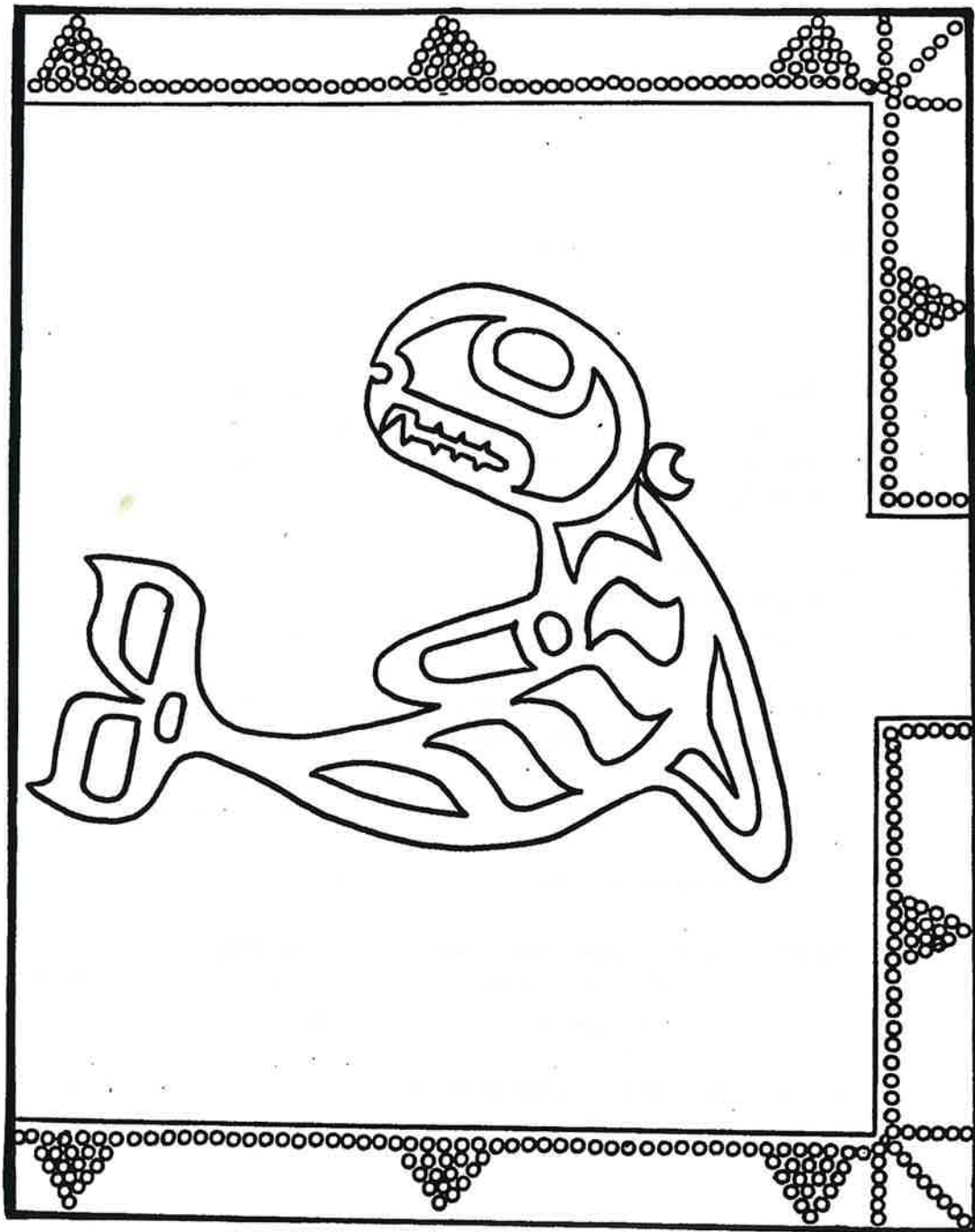
**Process** or method and how to demonstrate that to the students

Steps for students and teachers to take:

1. Gather materials and equipment.
2. Set up room in the following way:
3. Decide on or create the First Nations design.
4. Decide what background colour - red or black. (It is usually a dark colour.)
5. The main colour of the design will be the opposite of the back ground.
6. Make a model to show the students how a finished "blanket" will look.
7. You could supply 4 designs and the children could trace these.  
An eagle head, whale head, Thunderbird head, and frog can be found in the advanced section of the curriculum. You could also use the butterfly or sun from this section.
8. Mark the pieces to be cut out with an x or \*. (Make sure to join all lines i.e. join eyelid line to outside form line so that when the interior pieces are cut out, the remaining design is one single piece of paper or fabric.)
9. Cut out the pieces of paper that are not part of the design. This will allow the background colour to show through.
10. Cut out a large piece of black paper that represents the blanket.
11. Glue the design to the centre of the blanket.
12. Glue stickers around the outside border of the design to represent the buttons.  
For a real cloth button blanket see Lesson #7 Activity # 5 in First Nations Awareness: Putting It All Together by Karin Clark.
13. Put additional trim on the front (or sides- if the blanket is just to be displayed, not worn) if desired.

**BUTTON BLANKET DESIGN**  
by Karin Clark

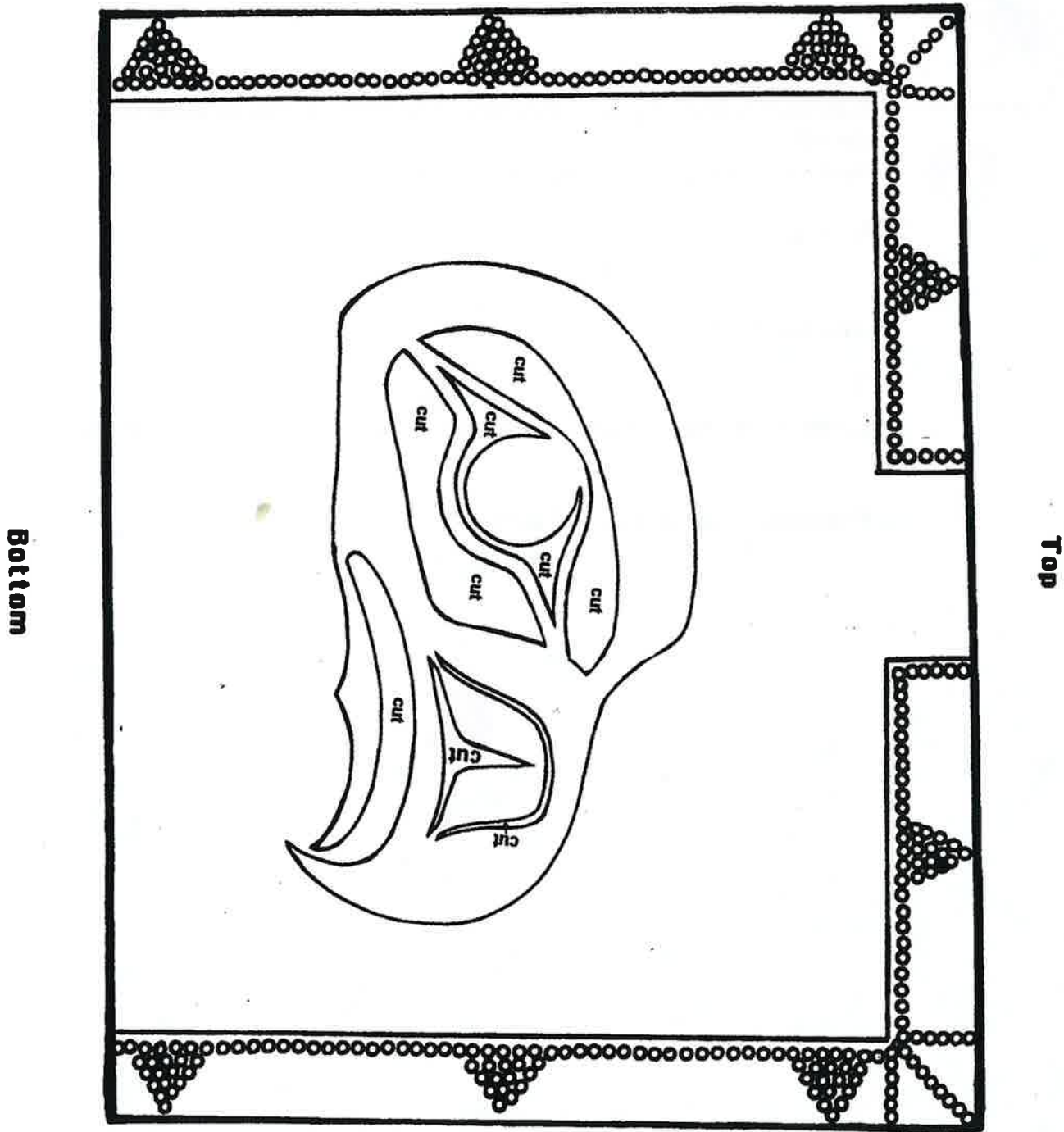
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### BUTTON BLANKET DESIGN by Karin Clark



Bottom

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**Summary- What did the students learn?**

What did we do today? What did we do first...(to get you to remember a routine)

Now what can you do better than you could before? What did you learn about First Nations button blankets? What did you learn about special clothes and special occasions? What did you learn about making display models?



**Summative Bridging- How can they apply that learning to other things in their lives?**

How can you use what you learned today in :



**Your life?**

**At school?**

**Later, when you get a job? (To get you to think about contributing to society)**

**Examining your actions and feelings?**

