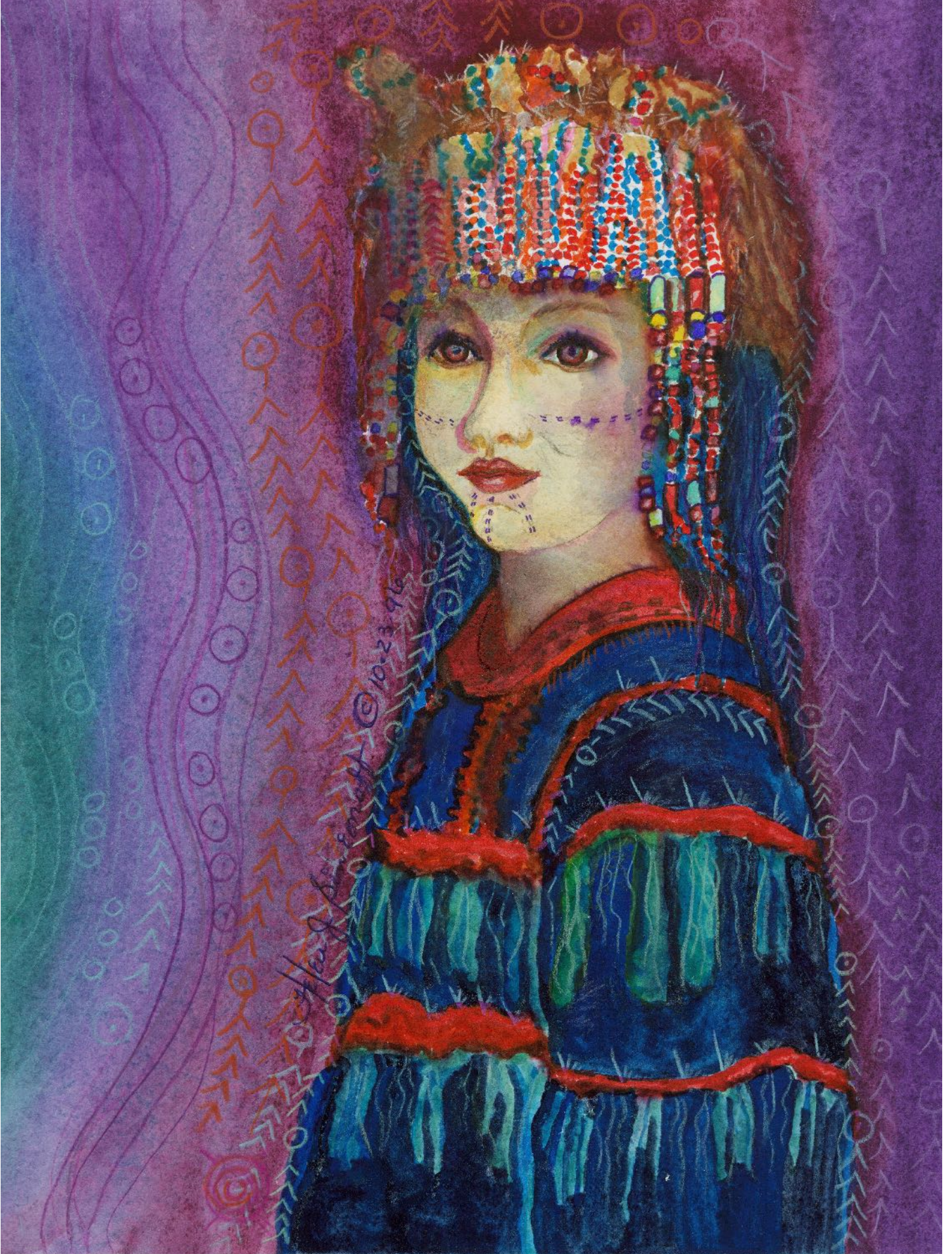


NACAQ

How to Make an Alutiq Beaded Headdress

Developed with assistance from
Kayla McDermott





Nacaq—Headdress

(pronunciation: nah-CHAHK)

Nacat were among the elaborate clothing worn at Alutiiq winter festivals. Participants in these events displayed their prosperity and honored the spirit world by wearing beautifully crafted garments. The materials and decorative elements used in these garments reflected their wearer's age, gender, and social position. Wealthy Alutiiq people wore elegantly decorated parkas of valuable sea otter, fox, or ground squirrel pelts. Nacat, jewelry, and tattoos added to the appearance of prestige conveyed by rich materials. The less affluent wore simple clothing of common materials like bird skins. Whatever your status, your clothes provided a link to the spiritual world. Every animal skin imparted the qualities of the animal to its wearer. Alutiiq people kept their garments clean, well repaired, and nicely decorated to show respect for the creatures that supported human life.

Women's nacat were typically made from hundreds of glass beads strung on sinew. Strands of small beads were tied into a tight-fitting cap with many dangling lengths attached to the sides and the back. These attachments often featured larger, heavier beads that swayed, glittered, and jingled as the wearer moved. In Prince William Sound, the daughters of Alutiiq chiefs wore nacat of beads and dentalium shells that extended far down their bodies, sometimes reaching their heels. Beaded nacat were often accompanied by matching earrings, chokers, necklaces, and belts. Teenage girls and young women wore these lavish ornaments to symbolize their passage into adulthood and availability for marriage.

TERMS

Nacaq (singular) – one headdress

Nacak (dual) – two headdresses

Nacat (plural) – three or more headdresses

The Nacaq Project

How can I make a headdress? Do you have instructions? Is there a class I can take? The Alutiiq Museum hears these questions often. Beading is popular across the Alutiiq world and many people want to make the iconic nacaq, the elaborate beaded cap worn by women for celebrations. The nacaq is the most beloved piece of Alutiiq beadwork, but it is also the most complicated. It takes thousands of beads and hours of careful counting, sewing, and knotting to create this garment.

To preserve and share the nacaq, the Alutiiq Museum partnered with artist Kayla McDermott. Kayla is an experienced beader and talented instructor.

In 2022, we filmed her making a nacaq and created video tutorials to take viewers through the entire manufacturing process. We also collaborated on this matching instruction booklet. Together the videos and written directions illustrate how to create a nacaq from start to finish. Now anyone can build a nacaq with the right supplies and a bit of patience.

Find a digital copy of these instructions and our video tutorials on the beading page of the Alutiiq Museum's website, at www.alutiiqmuseum.org.



Kayla McDermott beading a nacaq in the Alutiiq Museum, 2022.



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A four-part video series accompanies these instructions and can be found on the beading page of the museum's website alutiiqmuseum.org.

Supplies and Suppliers

FROM SHIPWRECK BEADS:
<https://www.shipwreckbeads.com>

Size 6 seed beads (72 strands of 180 beads)

Accent beads (500 beads)

John James three-piece leather needle set (F1281-L)

Nymo beading thread, size F, (50TN112-B) 1049 yards

FROM MOSCOW HIDE AND FUR:
<https://www.hideandfur.com/>

Brain-tanned deer hide (8"x24")

Tools

Scissors

Exacto Knife

Tape Measure

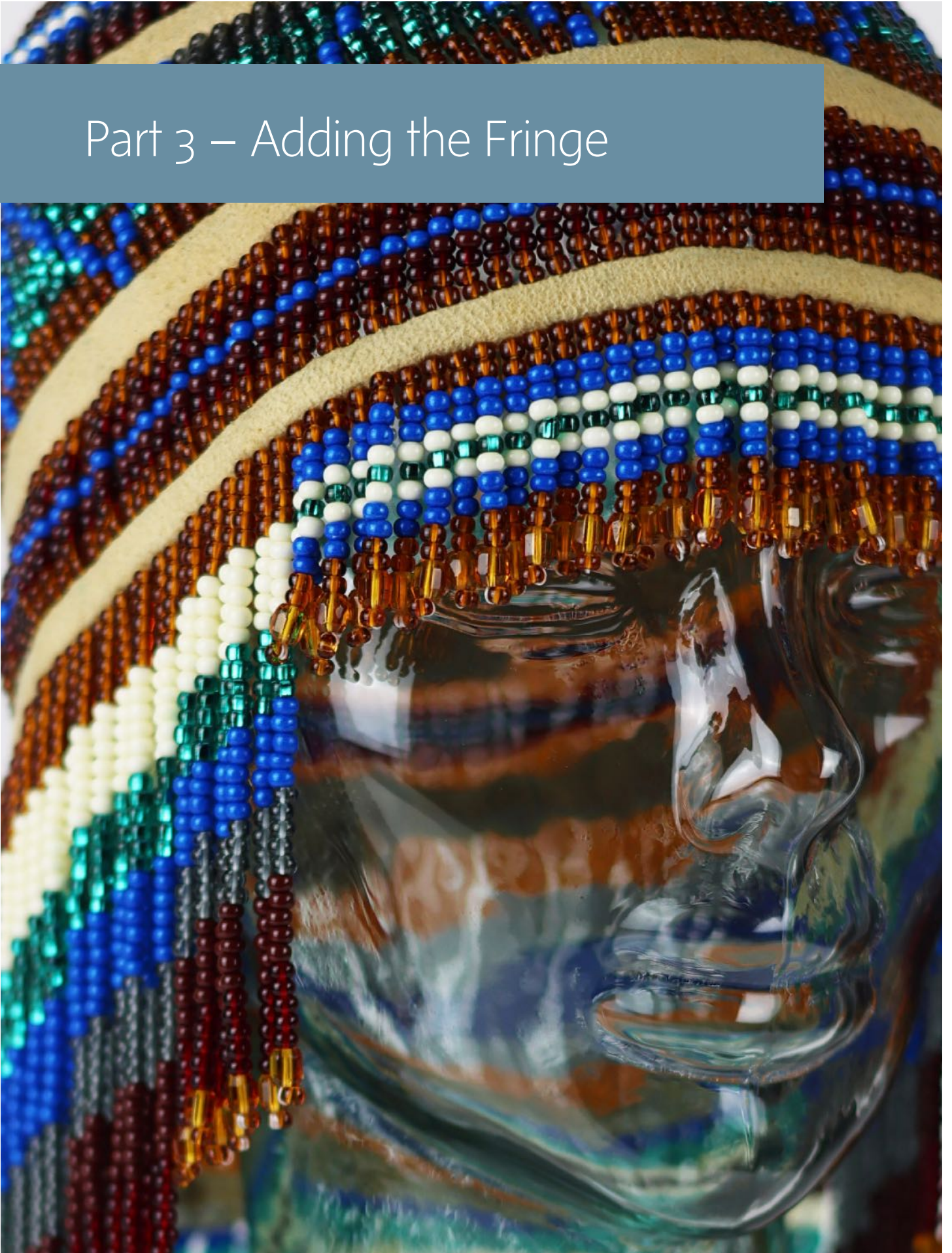
Pen

Disposable Lighter (Optional)

Plate or Tray (to hold beads)

Note: Nacag can be made in different lengths and with a variety of bead sizes. However, if you select beads different than those listed here, it will effect the measurements provided in these instructions.

Part 3 – Adding the Fringe



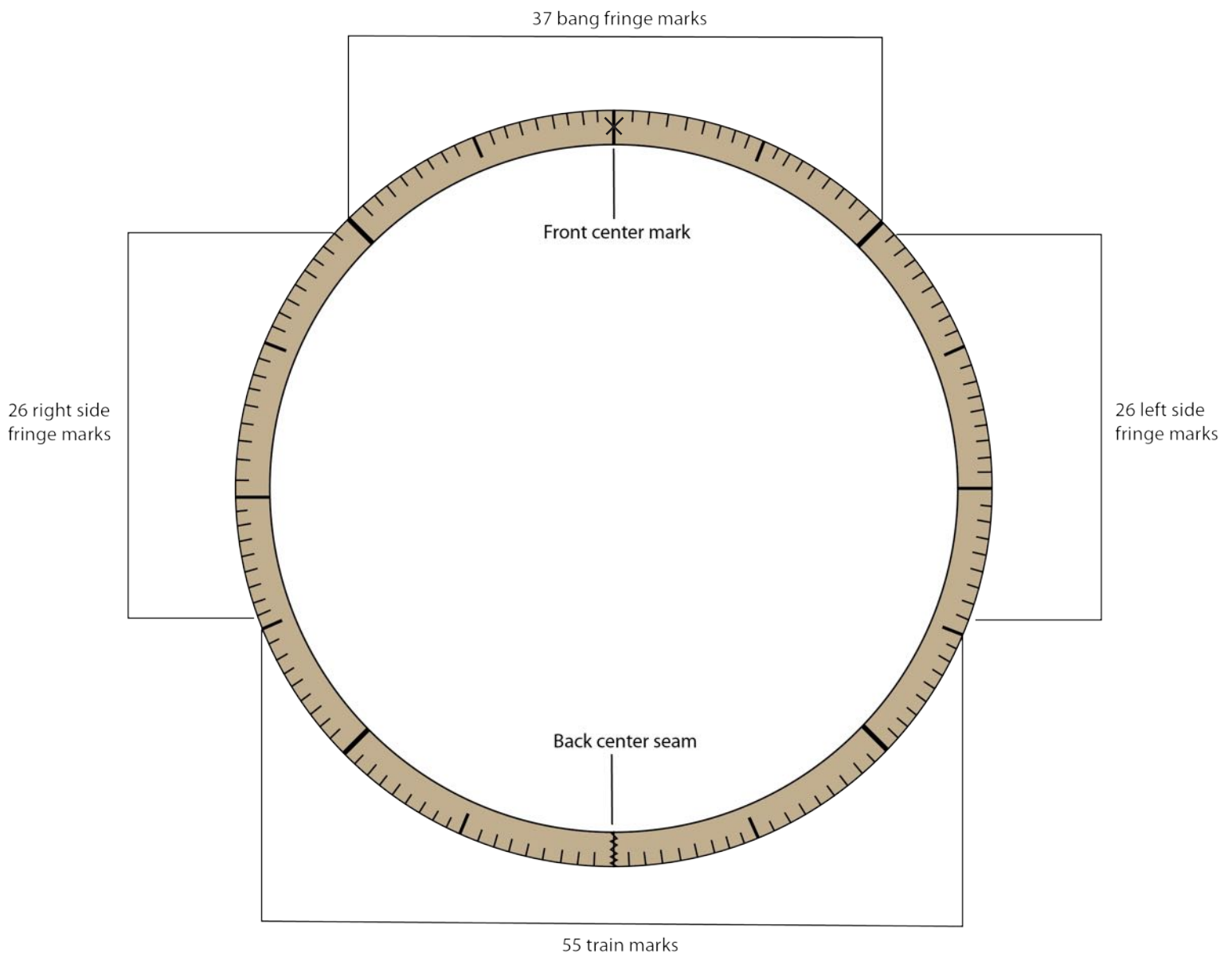
3.1 Mapping out the Fringe

There are 144 marks around the base of the cap. 55 of those marks are reserved for the train, 37 for the bang fringe, 26 for the left side fringe, and 26 for the right side fringe. This diagram will help to identify these sections.

Start with the bang fringe, then work your way from front to back for each section of the side fringe. The train will be beaded last.

Begin by marking the exact center of the front of the nacaq. To find the center, fold the cap in half where the seams line up at the back. Mark an "x" at the mark that sits at the front center. It should be one of the eighth marks.

The seam will be at the back and the front mark should be precisely in the middle of the sections that you are going to fill.





Bang fringe

3.2 Bead the *qikiruat*–bang fringe.

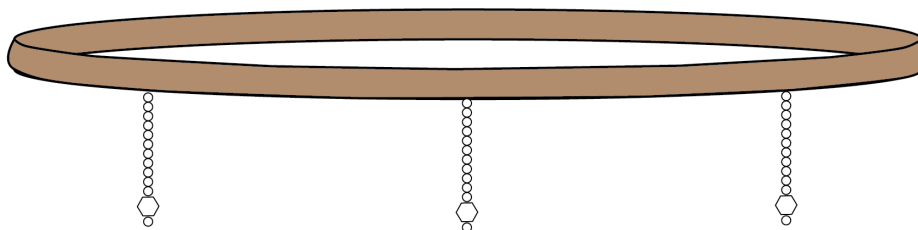
This section of fringe takes up two of the eighths sections, or 37 strands.

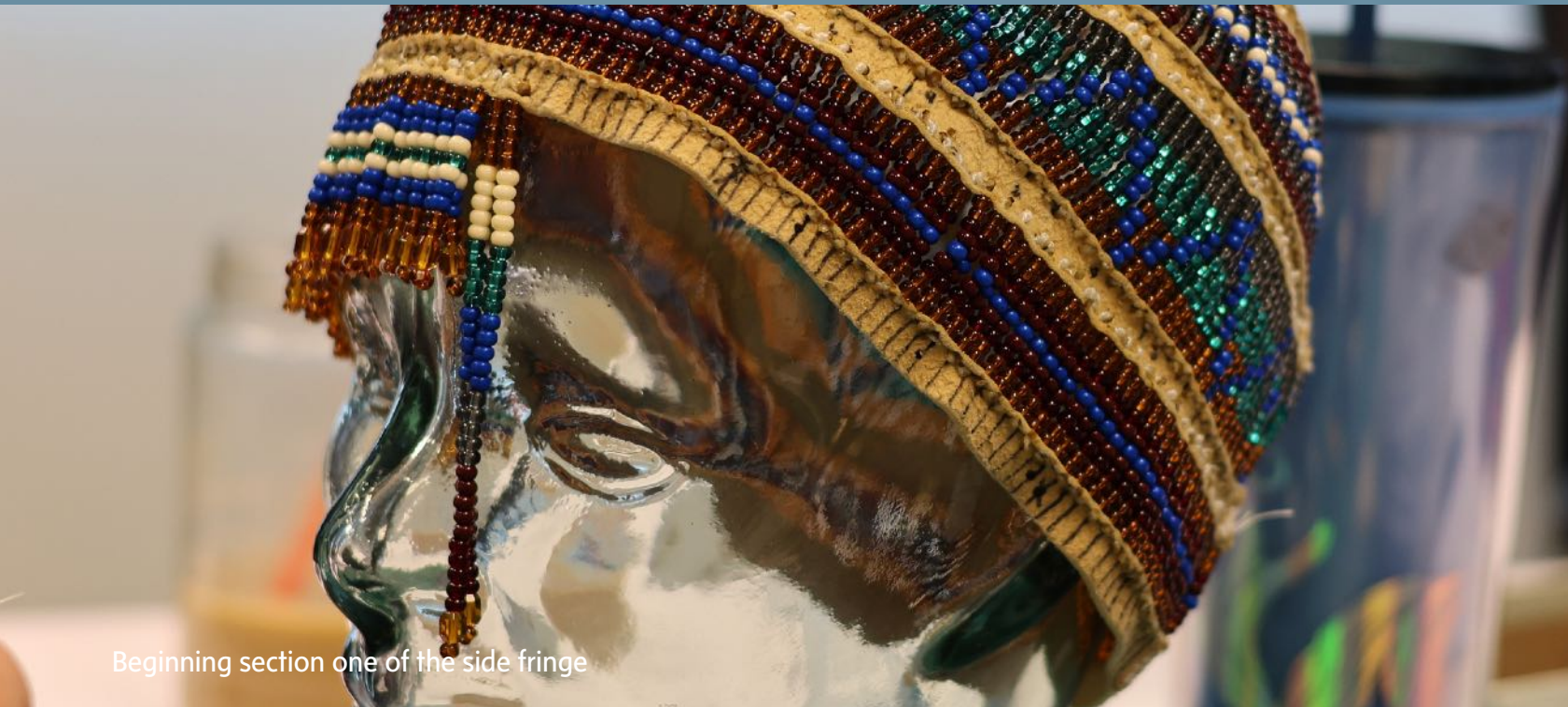
These bang strands will have 11 size 6 beads, one accent bead, and one more size 6 bead at the end of the strand for a total of 13 beads per strand.

Bead the front center mark first, then the strand marking the end of one section to the right, and a strand marking one section to the left. Then fill the 17 strands between each of these sections.

Bead the first strand by adding 11 size 6 beads, one accent bead, then the last size 6 bead. With your needle, thread back up through the strand you just created by skipping over the last bead and going through the bottom of the accent bead and up through the 11 beads. Sew through the smooth side of the band to make your knot in the rough back side of the leather. Tie a knot and burn the ends of the thread.

Repeat this process until all 37 bang strands are beaded.





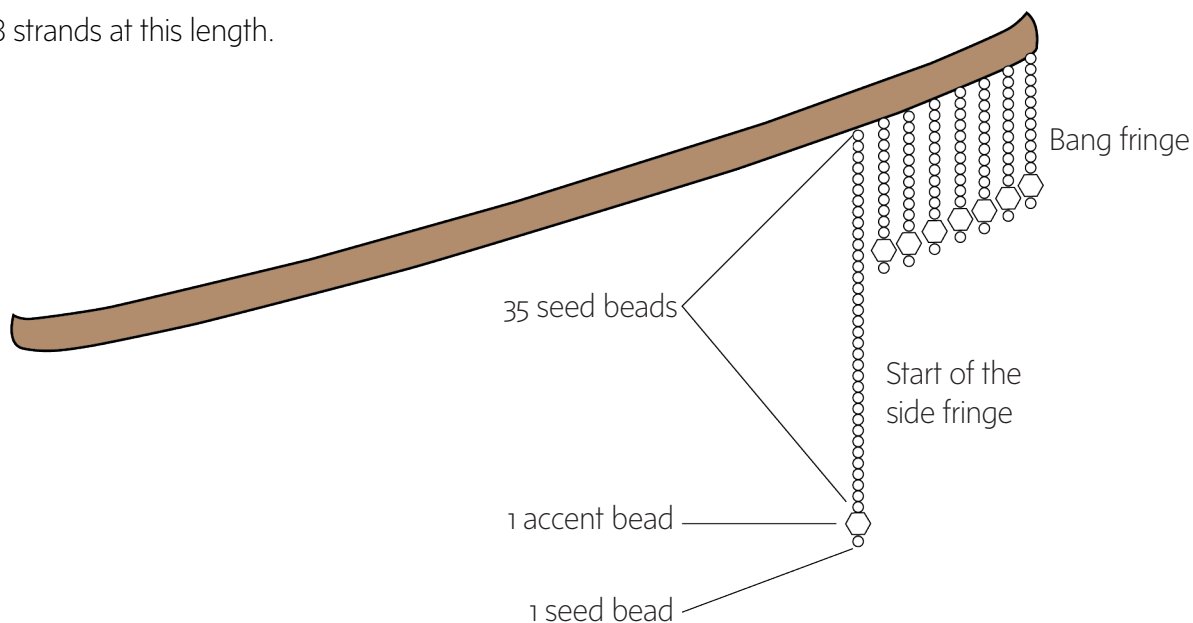
Beginning section one of the side fringe

3.3 Bead the *caniqaa*–side fringe.

The side fringe takes up 26 strands on either side of the bangs for a total of 52 strands. Each side fringe has three different bead length sections. From front to back: section one is 8 strands of 37 beads, section two is 8 strands of 44 beads, and section three is 10 strands of 51 beads. Mirror this pattern on both sides of the *nacaq*.

Section one: Begin beading by going through the first mark after the bangs. Add 35 seed beads, 1 accent bead, and then 1 seed bead. Go up through the strand like you did to tie off the bang section. After adding the last bead, go through the hole of the accent bead, then back through the 35 seed beads. Sew through the leather at the top of the strand on the smooth side, and tie off on the rough back side of the leather. Tie off the strand and burn the thread ends.

Bead all 8 strands at this length.

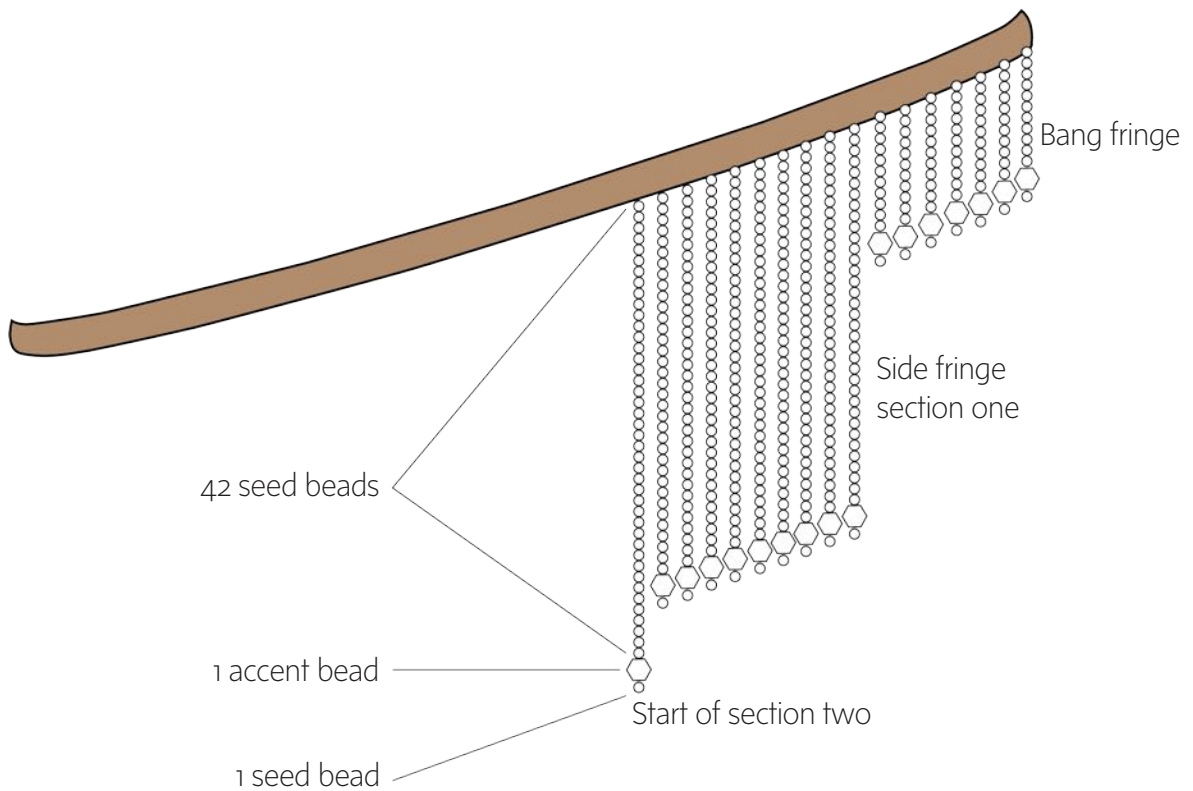




Section two of the side fringe

3.4 Section two: The next 8 strands are 44 beads in length. The strand is 42 seed beads, 1 accent bead, and 1 additional seed bead.

Bead 8 strands at this length, following the steps for side fringe section one on the previous page.





All three sections of side fringe

3.5 Section three: The last 10 strands of fringe are 51 beads in length. The strand is 49 seed beads, 1 accent bead, and 1 additional seed bead.

Bead 10 strands at this length, following the steps for side fringe section one on the previous page.

Make sure both sides of fringe are beaded.

