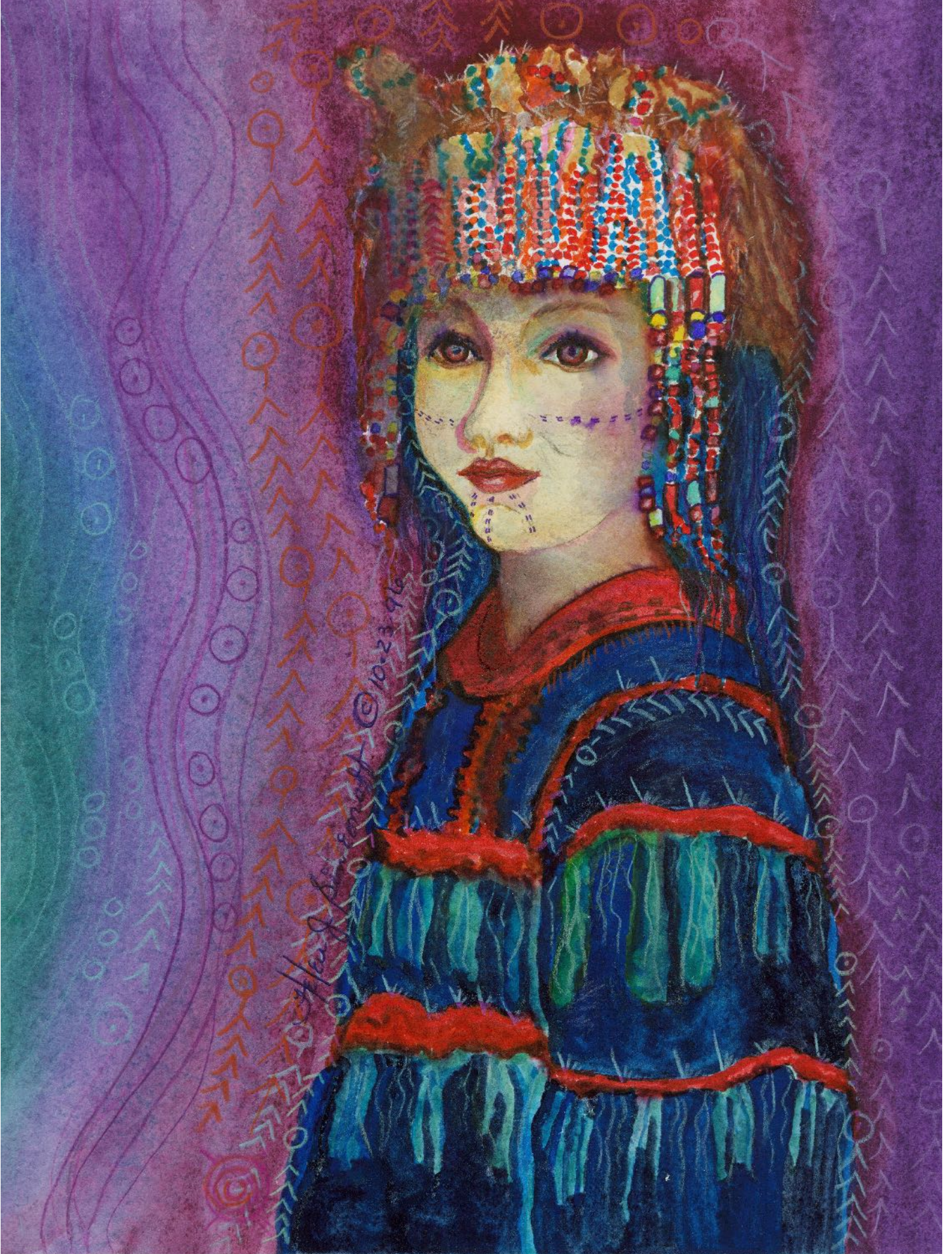


NACAQ

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.



Contents

INSTRUCTIONS.....	4
Part 1. Getting Started.....	4
Part 2. Building the Cap.....	13
Part 3. Adding the Fringe.....	19
Part 4. Creating the Train.....	25
ARTISTS & NACAT.....	38
Patricia Abston-Cox.....	37
Melinda Abyo.....	38
Virginia Aleck.....	40
Leona Haakanson-Crow.....	41
Kayla McDermott.....	42
June Pardue.....	44
Marie Skonberg.....	45

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.

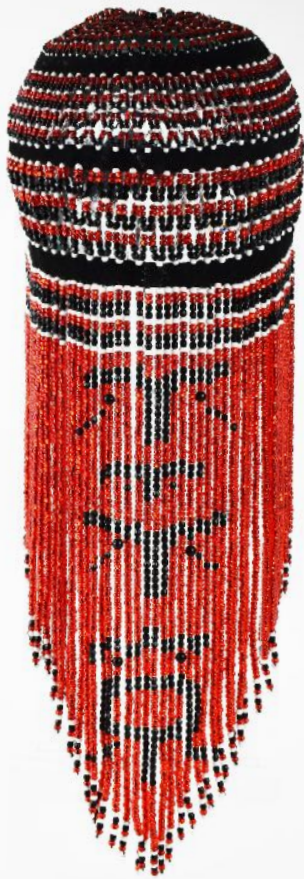
Part 4 – Creating the Train



Pamyua–train style options:

There are two ways you can choose to bead the *pamyua*–train of the *nacaq*. You can make loose train strands, which would look like a continuation of the side fringe but with longer strands. This style is common in contemporary *nacat*. The style demonstrated here uses connected rows, a method found in historic Alutiiq *nacat*.

Loose strands



Headdress by Marie Skonberg, before 2010. Purchased with support from Rasmuson Foundation, AM677.

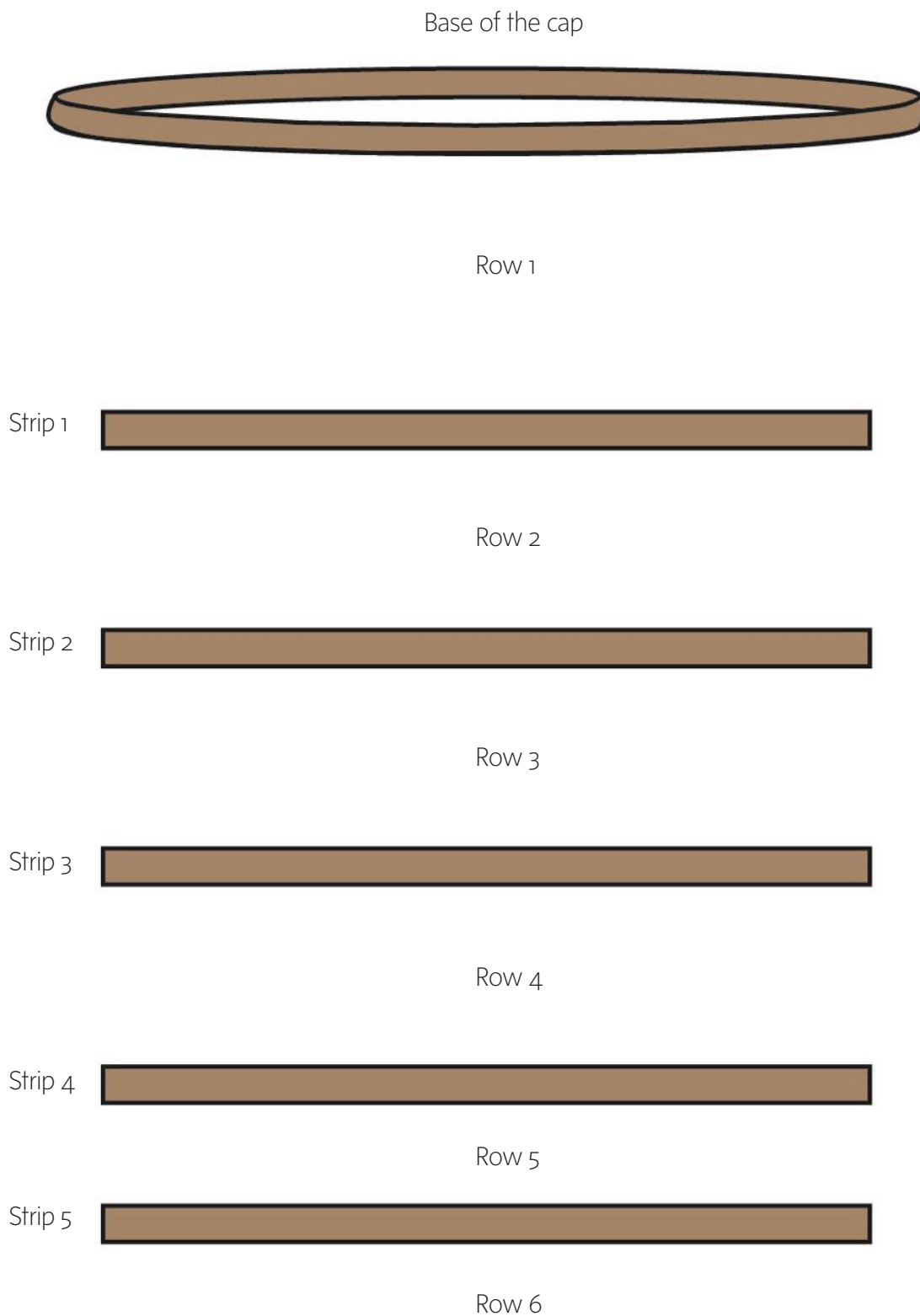
Connected strands



Teacher–Litnauwista, a beaded headdress by Kayla McDermott, 2022, AM1024.

If you choose to bead loose strands, make the beaded strands 98 beads long. This is a good starting length, but you can make the strands any length. Be sure to use enough string to go back through the strands to tie them off like the side fringe. Follow the directions to learn how to bead a connected train.

4.1 Prepare strips of leather for the *pamyua*-train.



There will be 6 rows of beads in the *pamyua*-train. The first row connects to the base of the cap in the 55 spaces left open between the two sections of side fringe. The last row hangs loose from the fifth strip of leather. Cut 5 strips (9" long by 1/2" wide) from the leather. Then mark each strip with the following strand count:

Strip 1: 55 marks on top, 55 marks on bottom



Strip 2: 55 marks on top, 55 marks on bottom



Strip 3: 55 marks on top, 55 marks on bottom



Strip 4: 55 marks on top, 43 marks on bottom



Strip 5: 43 marks on top, 55 marks on bottom



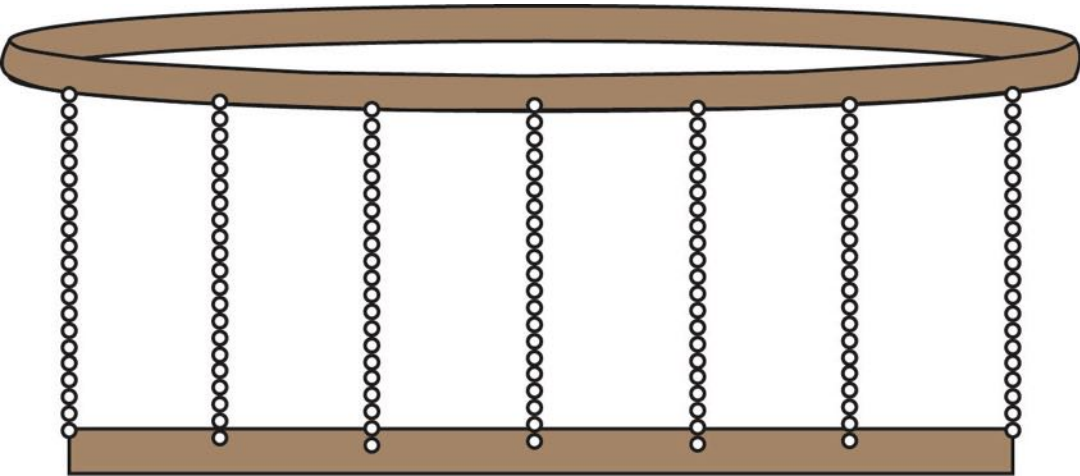
Row 5, between strips 4 and 5, has 43 strand marks because it uses accent beads which are larger than seed beads. If you choose to use seed beads rather than accent beads in this row, make 55 marks like the other rows.

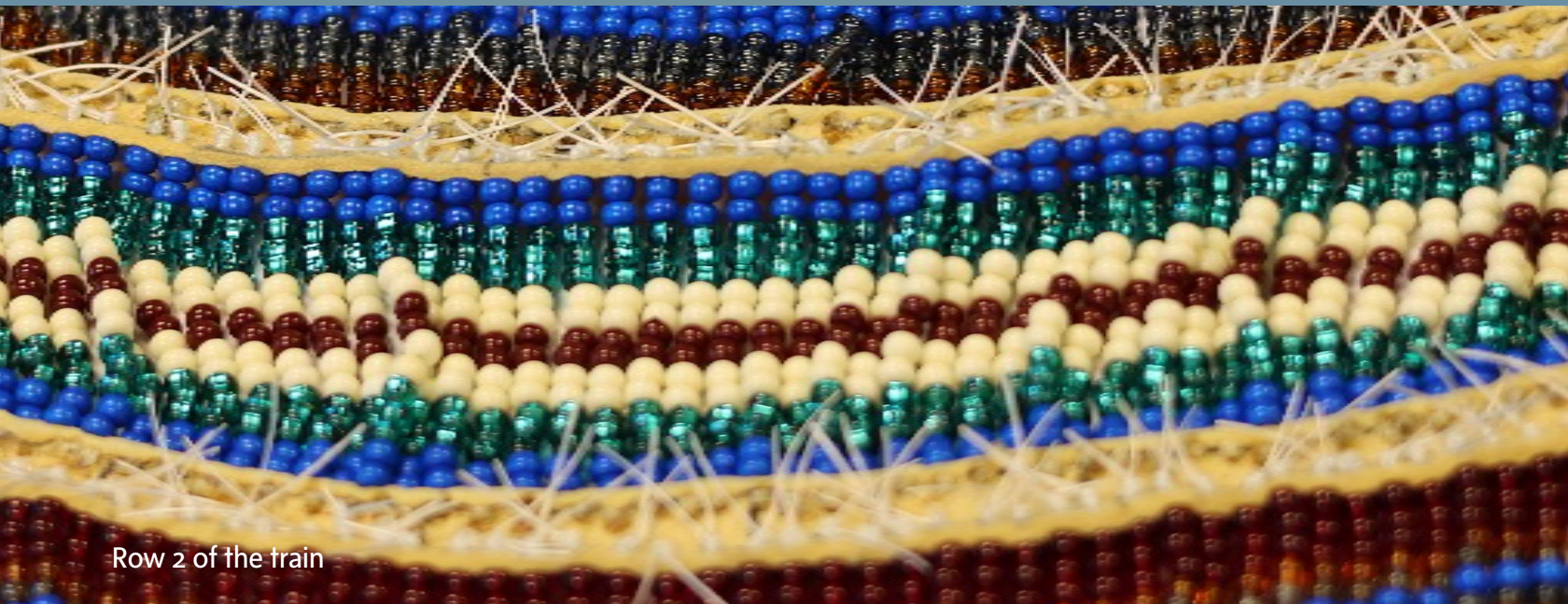


Row 1 of the train

4.1 Bead the first row of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 55 strands in this row with a bead count of 21 beads long. Sew through the bottom of the cap at the first mark after the end of the fringe on the left. Add 21 beads. Sew through the top of leather strip 1, tie off the strand, and burn the thread ends. To keep the row even, bead the center mark and the right side before filling in the rest of the strands. Continue beading the whole row.

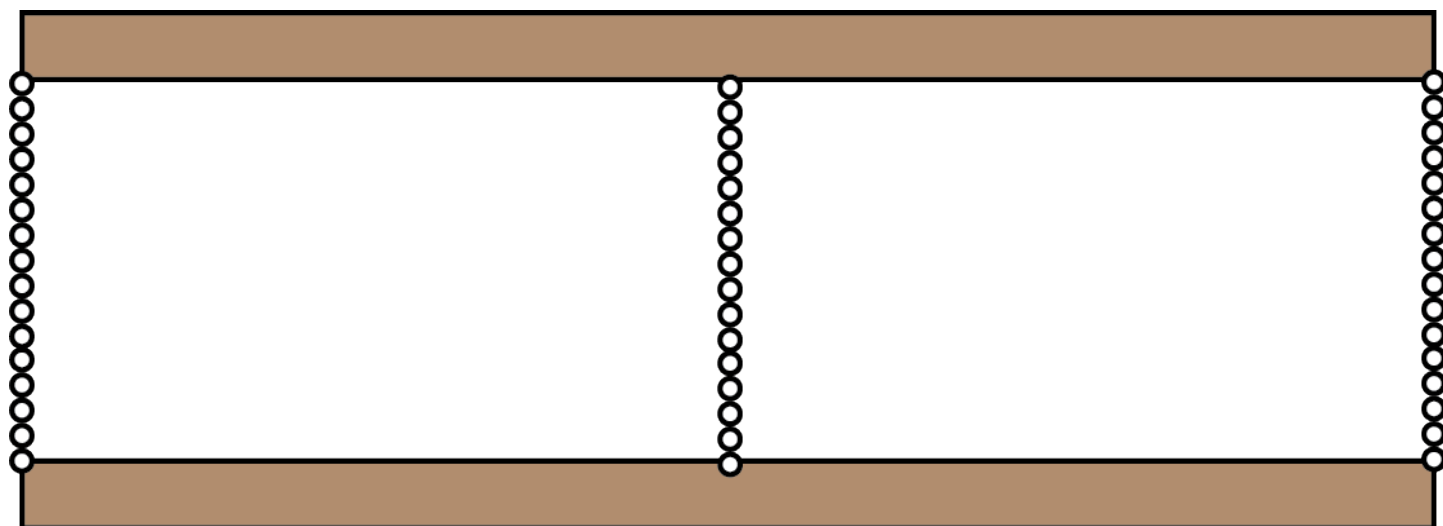




Row 2 of the train

4.2 Bead row 2 of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 55 strands in this row with a bead count of 16 beads long. Sew through the bottom of strip 1. Add 16 beads. Sew through the top of leather strip 2, tie off the strand, and burn the thread ends. Continue beading the whole row.

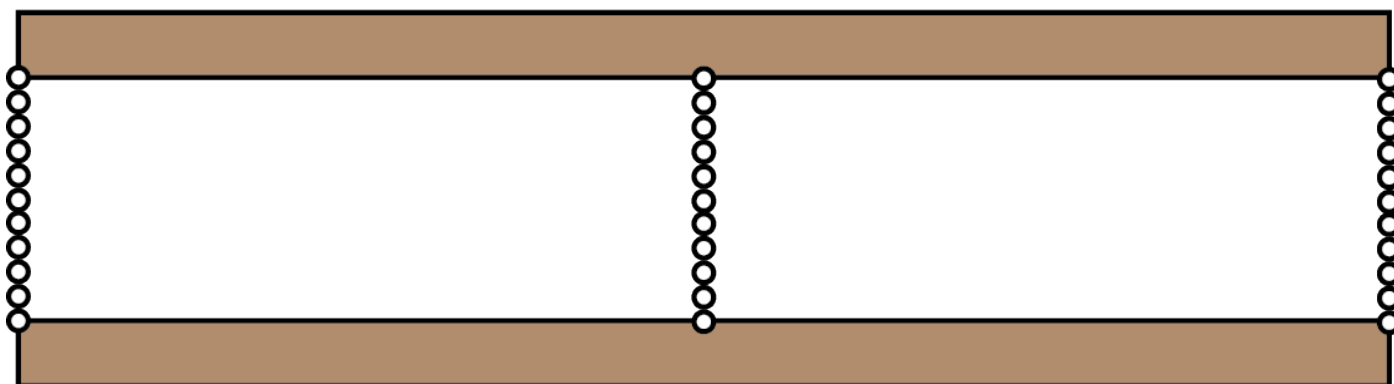




Row 3 of the train

4.3 Bead row 3 of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 55 strands in this row with a bead count of 11 beads long. Sew through the bottom of strip 2. Add 11 beads. Sew through the top of leather strip 3, tie off the strand, and burn the thread ends. Continue beading the whole row.

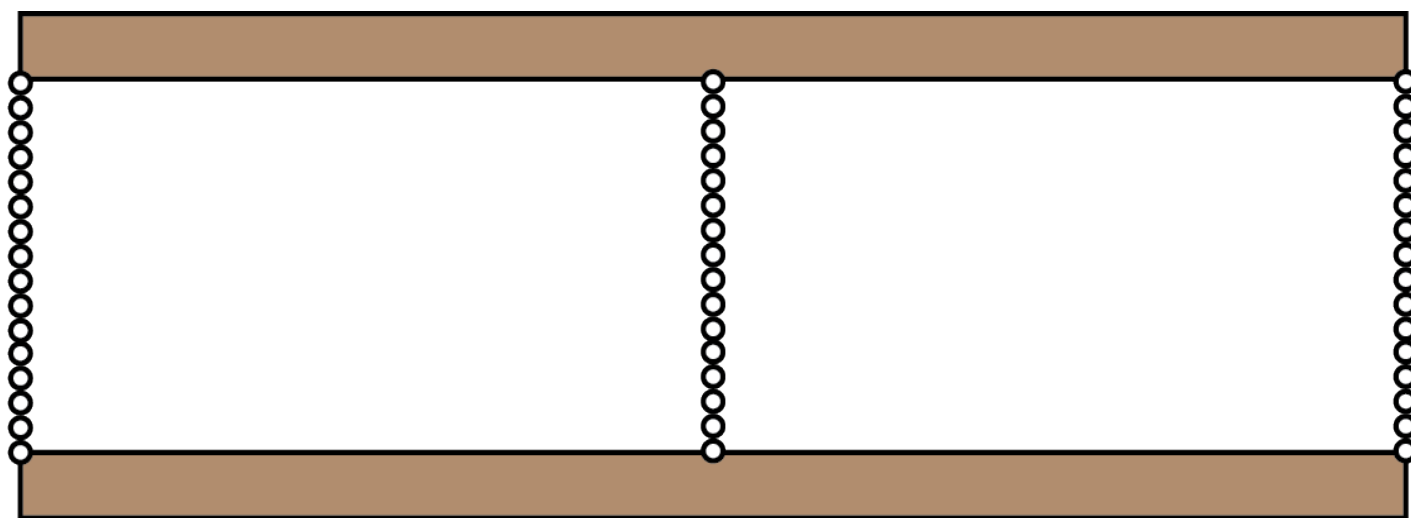




Row 4 of the train

4.4 Bead row 4 of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 55 strands in this row with a bead count of 11 beads long. Sew through the bottom of strip 3. Add 16 beads. Sew through the top of leather strip 4, tie off the strand, and burn the thread ends. Continue beading the whole row.

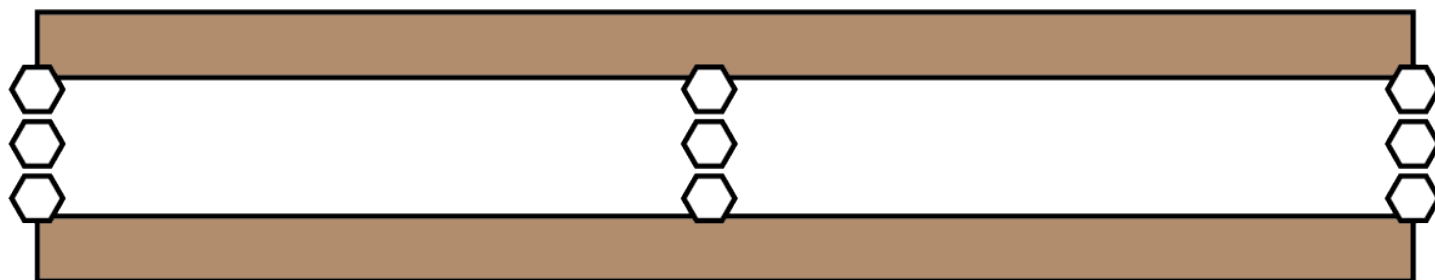




The start of row 5

4.5 Bead row 5 of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 43 strands in this row with a bead count of 3 beads long. Sew through the bottom of strip 4. Add 3 accent beads. Sew through the top of leather strip 5 (with 43 marks), tie off the strand, and burn the thread ends. Continue beading the whole row.





Row 6, train fringe

4.6 Bead row 6, the fringe at the end of the *pamyua*-train.

There are 55 strands in this row with a bead count of 24 beads long. Sew through the bottom of strip 5. Add 21 seed beads, 2 accent beads, and 1 more seed bead. Skipping over the last seed bead go back through the strand of beads and tie off like the fringe strands. Bead all 55 strands to finish the *nacaq*.

