

Americas (Subarctic and Northeast Woodlands)

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Birchbark canoe (Displayed above case)

Built around 1880

Algonquin/Mi'kmaq, Eastern Woodlands

Built at Thunder Bay on the north shore of Lake Ontario, this canoe was made for Mr. Harry Burrows of Teignmouth. The maker's name was not recorded. A canoe was essential for travel in the woodlands region with its many lakes and rivers.

1 - Coat and leggings

Mid-19th century

Cree or Cree-Metis style, USA

This is a soft hide coat with dyed quill-weave panels at the shoulders and quill-wrapped thong tassels. The leggings are painted with narrow brown vertical stripes and have fringes of cut-outs and quill-wrapped thongs. Sinew stitching is used throughout.

2 - Moccasins

Made before 1920

Metis, Canada

Moccasins with Norway House style silk thread embroidery to vamp and collar. Collected by Edgar Dewdney a Devon man who, at the age of 23, left for Canada and later became Minister of the Interior and Superintendent of Indian Affairs. In 1893 he was promoted to Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

3 - Moccasins

Late 19th/early 20th century

Cree or Cree-Metis style, Canada

Collected at Hudson Bay, the Hudson's Bay Company was originally set up to trade in the northern regions of the American continent as early as 1670. This would have been the source of the silk floss and ribbon used to decorate the vamps.

4 - Pouch

Likely 19th century

Winnipeg Cree, Red River Settlement, Canada

This tinder pouch, or fire-bag, of soft hide still contains tinder. Floral designs in European glass beads decorate both sides. It was collected at Portage la Prairie, 65 miles west of Winnipeg.

5 - Pouch

Acquired between 1859 and 1916

Cree-style

A pouch made of hide with European glass bead flower and leaf design. The beads are strung with sinew and couched with cotton thread. A large multi-faceted green glass bead serves as a button (one is missing). Described by the donor as being a money bag.

6 - Octopus bag

Collected before 1847

James Bay Cree, Canada

So named because of the eight tabs, skin pouches were originally made to carry tobacco or personal medicine. This is made from the Gloucestershire red trade cloth and decorated with European-made glass beads and was used to carry shot.

7 - Ceremonial hooded cape

Donated in 1879

Anishinaabe (formerly Ojibwe), Kamchatka peninsula, eastern Russia

A man's ceremonial cape made of soft hide, decorated with glass beads and silk ribbons. The incurved 'ears' of the hood represent those of the lynx; the garment transfers the power of the lynx to the wearer.

8 - Dolls

Early 1900s

North America

Two dolls, both made of wood with dried apples for their heads. A label on the base of each doll reads: Skookum Indian Patented February 17 1914.

9 - Bark container (mokok)

Before 1859

Possibly Anishinaabe (formerly Ojibwe)

Made of birchbark with rim bindings of root or cherry bark. The design is made by scraping away the dark surface to expose the layer of light bark beneath.

10 - Pipe bowl

Late 18th/early 19th century

Winnipeg Cree, Red River Settlement, Canada

Pipe bowl of red stone called catlinite in the shape of a horse's head and neck with stylized mane. This was collected from the Winnipeg Cree of Manitoba. This was possibly made by the Sioux or Chippewa for trade in the late 1700s or early 1800s.

11 - Pipe bowl

Made before 1880

Chippewa, Coteau des Prairies, NE USA

Pipe bowl of catlinite, the junction of the bowl and stem sheathed in white metal, possibly silver. Collected at Coteau des Prairies, east of the Great Lakes region, between the Minnesota and Missouri Rivers.

12 - Pipe bowl

Collected before 1958
Winnipeg Cree, Canada

This is a pipe bowl of flecked black stone of a style made by the Chickamauga Cherokee.

13 - Shoulder bag

Late 19th/early 20th century
Possibly Tahltan, Canada

The bag consists of a cotton fabric with red felt facing and a backing of green coarse-weave wool cloth. The front is beaded and tasselled. The strap is made of cotton cloth and red trade cloth.

14 - Coat

Late 18th/early 19th century
Cree, northeast USA

Popular with fur company traders, this soft buckskin coat was originally edged with fur along with the collar and cuffs. It was a standard winter dress. After the early 1800s, floral designs replaced the geometric motifs common to these coats.

15 - Tobacco bag

19th century

Possibly Cree, Northern Plains, Alberta, Canada

A soft hide fire bag for carrying a pipe and tobacco with a floral design on one side in European glass beads. The bead edging is typical of Cree style, while the four tab tops are characteristic of Cheyenne pouches.

16 - Fire bag

19th century

Cree-Metis, USA

Also called a smoking bag, this soft hide fire bag has two pairs of tabs at the opening. It is decorated with a panel of beadwork and a thong fringe. Beads were an immensely popular trade item from around 1800 until 1870.

17 - Moccasins

Collected before 1873

Chippewa, Northeastern Woodlands

A pair of moccasins in a black stained hide, possibly from the upper Stikine River region. The cuffs are decorated with European glass beads, blue-green and pink ribbon, the toe and heel seams with porcupine quill.

18 - Glengarry cap

Mid-19th century

Iroquois, Eastern Woodlands

This cap of Scottish origin was made for the tourist trade. It reflects the fashion in the 1850s, introduced by Queen Victoria, for Glengarries as children's wear in Britain and the colonies. Its style is also very loosely based on traditional Iroquois head-gear.

19 - Pouch

Late 18th century

Huron-Wendat, Eastern Woodlands

A shot pouch of blackened buckskin with dyed using black walnut husks. This is decorated with dyed quill and moose hair embroidery with a fringe of tufts of dyed moose/ deer hair in metal cones.

20 - Moccasins

Collected before 1860

Iroquois-style, Eastern Woodlands

Pair of child's moccasins of soft caribou hide. The cuffs are decorated with appliquéd blue ribbon and edged with white seed beads. The upper is beaded over the vamp and cotton thread stitching can be found throughout.

21 - Moccasins

Before 1880

Huron-Wendat, Eastern Woodlands

Pair of child's moccasins of black dyed caribou hide. Native American girls were taught fine embroidery by nuns at the mission schools and the style of this pair suggests a mission school influence.

22 - Moccasins

Late 18th century-style

Huron-Wendat, Eastern Woodlands

Buckskin moccasins dyed with black walnut husks. Shallow ankle cuffs with green silk ribbon, quill decoration and fringe of dyed moose hair set into metal cones. The vamp is red trade cloth beaded in a leaf pattern.

23 - Tobacco pouch

Before 1860

Mi'kmaq, Eastern Woodlands

Made of caribou hide, the pouch has a fringe of hide, partly bound in dyed quill, followed by a row of white beads and a row of metal cones. It was collected at Onondago Hollow, New York State.

24 - Cradle board

Collected before 1880

Iroquois, northeast USA

The people of the Eastern Woodlands had a nomadic lifestyle, and infants needed to be protected from accidental injury when a family was mobile. The child was strapped to the rigid wooden cradle board, which was padded for comfort. The hoop shielded the child's head.

25 - Lacrosse stick

19th century

Eastern Woodlands

Lacrosse was played by many north-eastern groups. This stick was documented only as originating from North America. It is made of wood with closely woven thong netting. The ball would have been made from a single piece of hide with a thong drawstring.

26 - Bark container

Made about 1850

Huron-Wendat, northeast Canada

A container comprising of two layers of birch bark, made in two pieces, the lid and the body. This is embroidered with dyed moose hair, with a design on one side of pipe-smoking figures and long-tailed birds in trees. The other side has a pair of figures and one single figure.

27 - Bark container

Mid-19th century

Huron-Wendat, northeast Canada

This rare item is probably a card case consisting of a sliding lid and body. Both pieces are made of two layers of bark, and are embroidered with dyed moose hair in floral designs. The edges are covered with white moose hair oversewn with brown cotton thread.

28 - Bark container

Early 19th century

Mi'kmaq, northeast Canada

Collected before 1873, this small round birchbark box has an undyed porcupine quill floral design on the lid. The Mi'kmaq began to quill boxes soon after the European domination of the region and this enables us to date this item. Later Mi'kmaq work was more brightly coloured with more elaborate designs.

29 - Model canoe

Before 1860

Mi'kmaq, Gulf of St. Lawrence

A Mi'kmaq-styled birchbark canoe model. A two-layer hull construction is made with a birch strip edge-binding sewn into the body of the canoe. The seams are painted over with pitch. Both the bow and stern thwarts are held in place with string.

30 - Model canoe

Before 1860

Mi'kmaq, northeast Canada

Mi'kmaq-styled birchbark canoe model with dyed quill decoration. The edges are layered with white quill and bound with birch strips sewn onto the body of the canoe. Quill decoration is not documented on any full-sized Mi'kmaq canoes.

31 - Model canoe

Late 18th/early 19th century

Possibly Algonquian, northeast Canada

A model of a birchbark canoe. Note the stitching at the seams. Bark canoes were light and easy to carry over portages connecting the inland waterways of the northeast region.

32 - Snowshoes

19th century

Northeast Canada

By increasing the base area of the foot, walking on deep snow is made possible. Snowshoes were shaped according to cultural styles and function. The 'swallowtail', as depicted here, originates from the eastern Sub-arctic region and possibly made for sale to white Canadians.