# CRAFTING WITH AUNTIE AMBER

**Activity 1b**

## CULTURE 365 - GETTING CREATIVE SERIES
**Presented in partnership with Dream Brokers**

## Sewing a Medicine Bag With Auntie Amber

## WHAT WE ARE MAKING TODAY

Medicine bags are used by First Nations people to hold plant medicines such as sage or sweetgrass, or items of special significance such as a memento. Auntie Amber talks about the different beading techniques and explains how beads were traded for food or tools long ago.

The oldest beads were made out of glass more than 5,000 years ago but are now made out of plastic, wood, shells or stone. Auntie Amber shares how to make a medicine bag for your own special items, and shares teachings and stories from her nêhiyaw/nakoda background.

**Supplies Needed:**
Premade pattern (or blank paper), ruler (to make your own pattern), scissors, pencil, fabric 8"X3" rectangle, sewing needle, beading needle, thread, yarn/string/ribbon, size 11 seed beads, (any colour), and small plate.
**Optional:** small meaningful items to place in your completed medicine bag.

## STEP 1

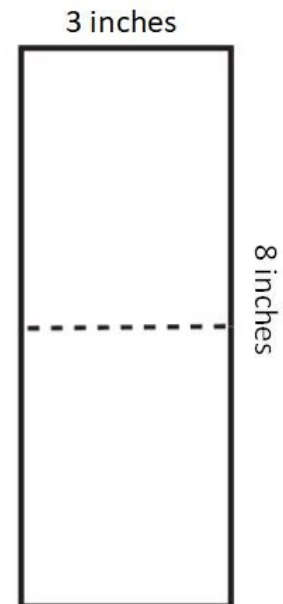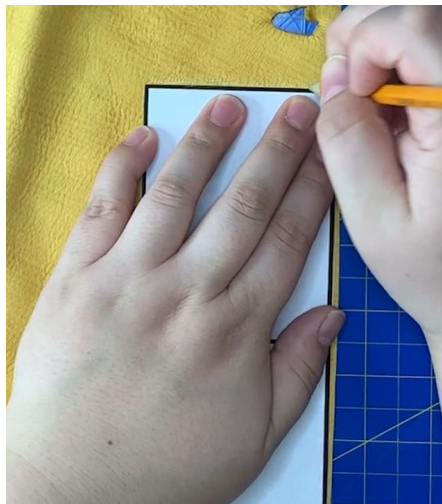Gather all your supplies and place them nearby so they're easy to grab.

You can use other fabric, but if you want to add beads, it should be think enough.

## STEP 2

If using the premade pattern, carefully cut it out around the solid outline.

If you are making your own, use a ruler to draw a rectangle that is 3 X 8 inches, and then carefully cut it out.

## STEP 3

Lay the pattern on the fabric. If your fabric has a design on it, be sure to put the pattern on the opposite side of the design. Trace the outline onto it with your pencil.

3 inches

8 inches

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## STEP 4

Carefully cut out the rectangle outline from the fabric with your scissors.

Fold it length-wise; with your pencil, make a couple of small dashes or dots on the fold – this will be the bottom of the bag.

## STEP 5

Choose a side to be the front of the bag – this is where your bead design will be – and make sure it's facing out towards you.

Fold the fabric rectangle so that the fold is at the bottom. Use your pencil to draw a simple design (ex. a flower, the first letter of your name, or any simple shape) on the front of your bag. Draw it close to the bottom because more room is needed at the top to close the bag.

## STEP 6

Carefully pour some beads onto your plate.

Thread your beading needle and knot the ends of the thread up to three times; trim the thread tail, if it's too long.
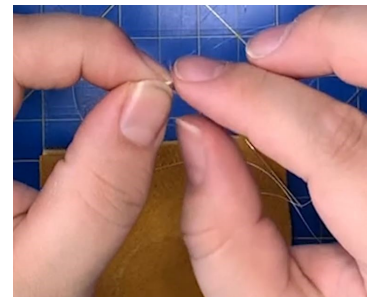
## STEP 7

Carefully poke the needle up through the fabric from the **back** side (the opposite side of where your bead design is drawn). You might have to try a couple of times to make sure it comes up on the outline of your design - use your finger to help guide your beading needle).
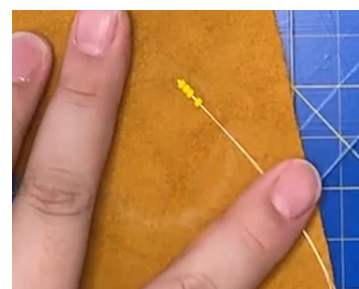
## STEP 8

When your first bead stitch is placed, grab up to 4 beads from the plate with the tip of the needle and slide them down onto the thread.
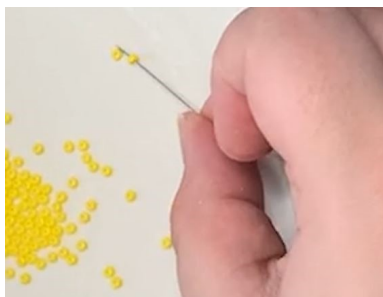
## STEP 9

Keep sliding the beads down the thread until they touch the fabric. Lay the beads neatly on top of your design, making sure they are all touching - use your thumb to carefully hold them in place.

## STEP 10

Take your needle and carefully poke it through the fabric where your thumb was holding the beads in place and pull the thread through to the other side. The needle should be on the back side of the fabric now and your beads should be on the front side.



## STEP 11

Find your 2$^{nd}$ last bead and, from the back of the fabric, gently poke the needle up so that it comes up between the 2$^{nd}$ last beads – this may take a couple tries – and gently pull the thread through.



## STEP 12

Then put your needle through the last two beads and gently pull the thread until it and the beads tighten – don't pull too tight or the beads may bunch.



## STEP 13

Repeat steps 11 to 15 until you have beaded the entire outline of your design. It might take less beads on your needle near the end to close the beaded outline.



## STEP 14

When your design is fully beaded, poke your needle up from the back to right in front of the last bead you added. Then push your needle through the hole of the very first bead in your pattern and push it through the fabric to the back and gently pull the thread taut.



## STEP 15

The final step is to bring the needle up through the last two beads of the design, push it through those beads AND through the first bead. Your thread and needle should be on the front of the fabric.
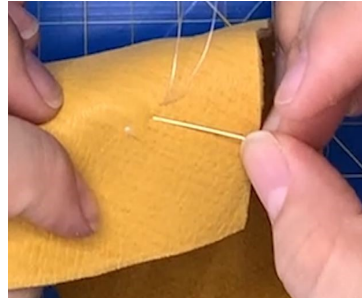
## STEP 16

Then, place the needle tip somewhere close to the beadwork and push it through the fabric so that it is on the back of the fabric.
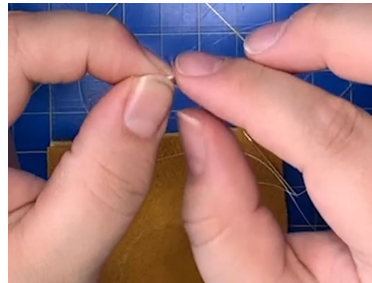
## STEP 17

Tie off your thread by knotting it as close as possible to the fabric. If the thread is too short, cut it as close to the needle as possible and then knot it a couple times; cut off the excess thread.

## STEP 18

Next, thread your sewing needle and double knot the end of the thread (if your fabric isn't too thick, you can use your beading needle to sew).

## STEP 19

Fold the bag in half where you marked the dots or dashes, making sure the beadwork faces inside (you will be sewing your bag inside out).

## STEP 20

Place the needle close to the corner of the fold (at the bottom) and gently poke it through both sides of the fabric and pull the thread through.
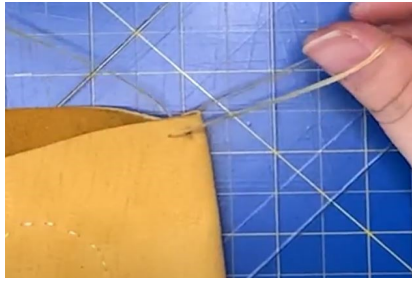
## STEP 20

Then find a spot near the left side of where the knotted end of the thread is (or the right side – it depends which side you're working on) and poke the needle right through both sides of the fabric again. Gently pull the thread, but don't pull it super tight.

## STEP 21

Instead, make a loose loop with the thread and move your needle around and through the loop.



## STEP 22

This is the first whip stitch – it should look like the photo.



## STEP 23

Repeat this same action until you are about one inch from the top of the bag and then stop. You need enough room to tie the bag closed.



## STEP 24

Put the needle tip through the last stitch hole, and gently pull the thread - leave a loose loop.



## STEP 25

Push the needle through this loop two times and then pull the thread tight to tie off the thread. Knot it one more time (using the tie off technique you learned earlier) to make sure it's secure and then cut the thread close to that knot.

Repeat this sewing technique on the other side of the bag, following Steps 18 – 25.



## STEP 26

When you are done sewing, gently grab the inside bottom of the bag with your fingers and flip it so that the beaded design is now on the outside.

## STEP 27

If the corners are still folded inside, take a pencil and push the eraser end of it in to the folded corners and very gently push the fabric out from the corners. Be careful not to rip the stitching.



## STEP 28

Take the yarn, thread or ribbon and measure a strip that is long enough to wrap around the top of your medicine bag a few times and cut it.



## STEP 29

Wrap it around the top of your bag a few times and knot it.



## NEXT STEPS

Sewing is a good skill to have - you can use it for all sorts of crafting activities.

Once you have completed your sewing projects, take photos of your completed work and send it to your Dream Broker. The artist would love to see your work, and SaskCulture would love to add it to a showcase of student expression.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Amber Bellegarde is a nêhiyaw/nakoda woman from the Little Black Bear First Nation in Treaty 4 territory, who lives in Saskatoon in Treaty 6 territory. She grew up on her First Nation surrounded by ceremony, and learning to design, bead, and sew thanks to her kōhkom (grandmother), mom, and older sister.
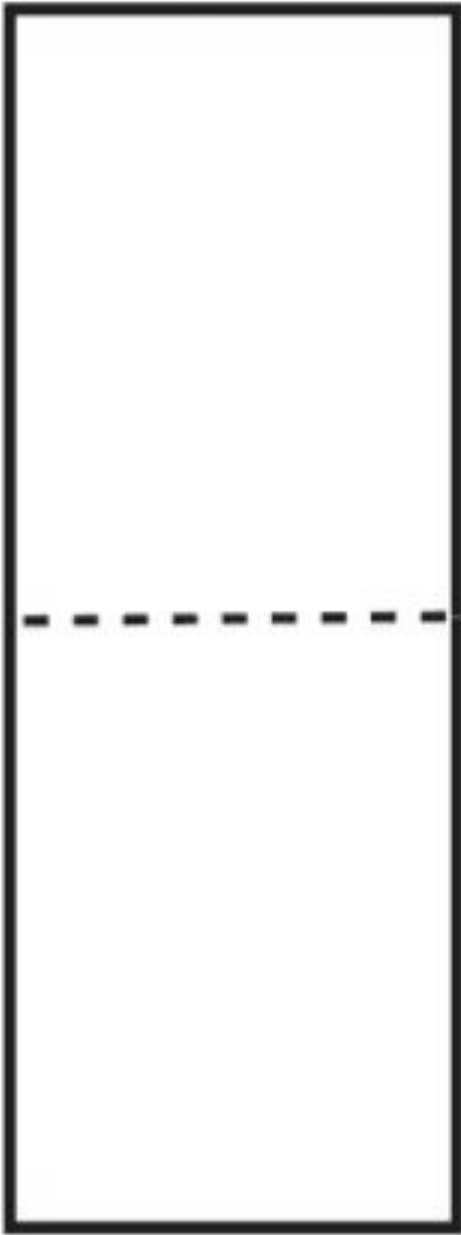
Amber takes enormous pride in being an Auntie as it is a very important role in Indigenous communities and families. She is passionate about sharing her culture and she incorporate personal stories in her creative projects that highlight themes of kinship and First Nations traditional knowledge.

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3 inches

8 inches