

Overview of First Nations' Beading Techniques:  
Lane/Lazy, Loom, Overlay, and Gourd

Let's start with a brief history of beadwork among First Nations people. Simply put the First Nations had beads and were working with them prior to the Europeans coming. "Before contact with Europeans my ancestors used natural materials from their environments. They also would trade for different types of materials across the Americas, even to the Caribbean Islands. This gave them access to a wide variety of materials: shell, metals, semi-precious stones, bone, ivory, and feathers. (Lois Sherr Dubin, *North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment*) Beads, painstakingly made from bone and shell, had many uses, including breastplates and wampum. The arrival of explorers and traders from Europe changed the materials First Nations used (adapted to), as well as influenced traditional patterns. The Spanish, English, Dutch, and French offered glass beads as presents as well as inducements of religious conversion. First Nations quickly adopted the new material, incorporating glass beads into traditional patterns. Although the first traders offered the finest beads they could get, including amber, millifiori, and faceted chevron beads, soon First Nations began to ask for beads specific materials, colors, and shapes." (North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment) The common Czech beads that are on the market today were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which gave First Nations new colors and more uniformed sizes. "As glass beads spread across North America, each tribe used them to express their own patterns and traditions. Today, bead artist borrow beading techniques and patterns from each other. Many create new beadwork patterns based on tribal culture and traditions."

Lane/Lazy Stitch:

The following information came from, [library.thinkquest.org/3081/craft.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/3081/craft.htm). "Lane Stitch Beadwork is probably the most common form of beadwork seen on powwow regalia, because of its ease of application and its nice coverage. Good lane stitch has a nice "hump" appearance and is easily recognizable.. Lane stitch first appeared in the early 1800's as white traders traded the smaller "seed" beads with the Native Americans. The tribes began to apply these very small beads to many of their important articles, and the birth of lane stitch began. Lane stitch, unlike many of the other techniques, can be used on just about everything. It was used on horse saddles, mocs, dresses, well everything. It can be beaded on canvas or directly on leather itself."

The following bit of information came from, [matoska.com/siouxlazystitch.htm](http://matoska.com/siouxlazystitch.htm). "Lazy stitch beadwork is one of the simplest beadwork techniques. It is good for covering large areas in a relatively short period of time. Like all craft techniques, experience and skill determine the beauty of the finished result. While this stitch has traditionally been called "lazy", the beadworkers who use it are definitely not! Georg Barth, author of the excellent book *Native American Beadwork*, is attempting to change the name to "lane stitch" and we wholeheartedly agree. There are many books that discuss the technique, but one of the clearest articles we know of is, *Sioux Style Lazy Stitch Beadwork* by Steven Nimerfro."