



TRADITIONAL DRUMS FOR ALL

First Peoples Development Inc.



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Background

This project “Traditional Drums for All” is an instructional video with an accompanying guide to use in assisting individuals in the making of a traditional hand drum. The video and guide were commissioned by First Peoples Development Inc. with a grant provided under the New Horizons for Seniors Program through Economic and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Production of the video was done by Decision Works in partnership with FPDI.

The project was designed to provide communities with an interactive tool to reach out to and engage seniors in discussions and activities during the pandemic. Although the target audience refers to community seniors, the instructional video and other teaching tools can be used in the schools and with other groups in First Nation communities.

This facilitator’s guide is meant to help in preparing for and assisting with the making of a hand drum. The guide provides a list of materials, equipment and supplies that will be required. The guide also follows the video to outline the steps for preparing the hides which needs to be done prior to the instructional session as well as taking you through all the steps to make a traditional hand drum.

The guide is to be used by the session facilitator in conjunction with the video to provide participants with background on the traditional hand drum and to help them make their own drum.

The video is organized in steps to make it easy to assist participants in making their drum. The guide follows the step sequencing in the video.

Objectives

The objectives in producing the video and this guide are to:

- *provide tools for use in teaching how to make a traditional hand drum;*
- *engage seniors and other member groups in the making of a hand drum;
and*
- *create a mechanism for groups in First Nation communities to share teachings and stories about the significance of the drum as well as discussing the community's culture and traditions.*

Facilitator's Responsibilities

The facilitator is responsible for preparing for and conducting the drum making session. Some advanced preparation will be required. It is recommended that the facilitator view the video and familiarize themselves with the steps prior to conducting a drum making session.

As the facilitator you may wish to make arrangements to have a community Knowledge Keeper (Elder) participate to share teachings and help facilitate discussions about the traditions of the community. You should also decide if additional helpers might be required to assist individuals or to operate the video equipment.

The following is a list of considerations that should be made to ensure the session is accommodating and enjoyable for all participants.

Room

- *selection of a room with ample space to allow for social distancing*
- *room should have unobstructed view for watching the video*
- *ensure that the room temperature can be controlled and does not get too hot or too cold*
- *make any special arrangements for accommodating disabilities*
- *access to electrical outlets*
- *access to a water supply*
- *lighting controls – if required for viewing of video*

Equipment

- *screen to show video*
- *computer to run video*
- *electrical extension cords*

- *projector to connect to computer – ensure it is in good working condition*

Material, supplies and tools

(see Appendix A for suggested places to purchase supplies)

- *hide for drums*
- *drum frames*
- *cardboard for creating templates*
- *measuring tape*
- *sharp scissors*
- *sharpie pen*
- *2 x 4 x 10 inch pieces of wood – enough for each participant to have one*
- *Mini punch*
- *Mallet*
- *Tubs for soaking hide*
- *Latex gloves (optional)*
- *Tobacco*

Participants

- *Schedule date for session;*
- *Invitation to participants (facilitator to decide how many can be accommodated – number should be limited as participants will likely require hands on assistance);*

Preparing for the Instructional Session

The video includes instructions that the facilitator can follow to complete the preparatory steps in the drum making process. When viewing the video with participants the facilitator should explain how the preparation of the hides was done for the session.

Step 1 – Tools and Materials

Tools required for the preparation work will include:

- *Hide*
- *Cardboard for template*
- *Measuring tape*
- *Sharpie*
- *Scissors*
- *Drum frames*
- *Tubs for soaking hide*

Steps 2 – Cutting the Rounds and Soaking the Hides

The evening before the scheduled date for the drum making session advance work will need to be done. This will include:

- *Creating a template for the rounds*
- *Cutting the rounds for the drum face*
- *Cutting the lacing*
- *Soaking the cut rounds and lacing*

Creating rounds for the drum face

1. *Create a template for cutting the hide – this is where the cardboard comes in*
2. *Using the drum frame draw the outline of the round on the hide. The template should be about 3.5 to 4 inches larger than the drum frame, so use a tape measure to mark off a larger circle - then cut out the template*
3. *Laying the hide flat look for the thickest part of the hide – the thickness of the hide affects the tone of the drum – thinner hides have a higher pitch – the smooth part of the hide will be the face of the drum*
4. *Using the template, draw the round on the hide then cut it*
5. *The rest of the hide will be cut to use as lacing for the drum. The lacing should be about 1½ to 2 inches. Try to make two long laces to attach the round to the drum frame - smaller pieces of the hide can be used for the lacing for the handle*
6. *Once you have the rounds and the lacing, soak both the rounds and the lacing to soften the hide making it pliable and easy to work with*
7. *The hide can be soaked overnight or for at least 8 hours*

You may want to enlist some help to complete the preparations.

Instructional Session

Welcome participants.

Opening prayer. This can be done by an Elder or a selected individual from the community. The nature of the prayer will be dictated by the community's practices.

Outline the purpose of the session – to learn how to make a traditional hand drum and to share knowledge about community traditions. Most importantly of all HAVE FUN!

Explain that the instructional video which they will be watching outlines the steps for making a hand drum and includes the whole process including the preparatory work that was done on the day before the session (cutting and soaking the drum face and lacing).



While watching Steps 1 and 2 you can explain how you prepared so participants could make a drum based on the instructions in Steps 3 through 5 of the video.

The video can be stopped or slowed down to assist participants to see and understand the steps.

If you have an Elder or Knowledge Keeper on hand you can invite them to talk about the significance of the drum in your community.

This can be done before the start of the instruction or can be done while individuals are working on their drums.

The video has Mark Hall, a Dakota Knowledge Keeper sharing what he was taught about the traditional drum.

If you do not have a Elder or Knowledge Keeper on hand you can provide some background about the traditional hand drum in addition to what is shared in the video.

As an example:

The drum plays a significant part in the traditions and teachings of First Nations' culture. There are many teachings related to the drum. Teachings are quite often specific to the culture and traditions of each of the First Nations but it is not uncommon to hear that the drum echoes the heartbeat of our mothers.

Drums are made from the skins of animals. Often times it will be deer, moose, buffalo or elk. The hide is stretched over a wooden frame – we will be doing this today. The size and thickness of the frame will vary – we are using a (what size?) frame.

The type of tree the frame is made of, the thickness of the hide and even the type of animal hide being used is what gives the drum its unique tone. Each drum has its own voice depending again on the animal and the tree the material comes from. Thinner hides usually give a drum a higher pitch. The hide we will be using is (elk, deer, moose?).

Ask participants to share their thoughts and knowledge about the traditional hand drum.

Tools and materials for the instructional part of the session will include:

- *2 x 4 x 10 inch pieces of wood – enough for each participant to have one*
- *Mini punch*
- *Mallet*
- *Drum frames*
- *Round for drum face*
- *Laces*
- *Latex gloves (optional)*

There should be enough tools, equipment and materials for each participant.

Step 3 – Selecting a Hide and Creating Eyelets

- 1. Invite participants to select their hide for the drum face from the tub. Latex gloves can be worn while making the drum*
- 2. Participants should shake off as much excess water as possible*
- 3. There are two sides to the hide – the smooth side will be the face of the drum. Place the hide on a flat surface with the smooth side down*
- 4. Place the 2 x 4 wood under the edge of the hide*
- 5. Using the mini punch and the mallet create eyelets along the outer edge of the hide – eyelets should be about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ an inch from the edge and spaced about an inch apart*
- 6. Participants can now get lacings from the tub – shake off excess water – select two longer pieces*
- 7. The lacings should be stretched - this is done by pulling the lacings - this makes them thinner and longer*

Set 4 – Assembling the Drum

With the eyelets completed and your lacing ready the assembly of the drum can begin.

- 1. Place your hide smooth side facing down on the table – the rough side will be the inside of the drum Place your drum frame on top of the hide making sure you center it as best you can*
- 2. Place your drum frame on top of the hide making sure you center it as best you can*
- 3. Weave the lacing into the eyelets all the way around using one of the long laces – when you get back to where you started tie off the lace. When weaving the laces allow some slack so there are loops created*
- 4. Take your second long lace and weave it in and out of the first set of lacings – working the second lace through the loops*

5. *Connect the two laces and tie a knot*
6. *Start pulling the lacing tight – the process will pull the drum face tight over the frame – you should try to get it as tight as possible – any excess lace you have when you’re done can be cut off*

Step 5 – Creating a Handle

1. *Using the smaller laces create a handle*
2. *Cut a small slit on the end of the lace you are going to use for the handle - now loop the other end of the lace through – the loop should connect to the lacing that is holding the hide in place on the frame*
3. *Bring the lace across – connect it to the other end of the lace on the frame - wrap the excess lace around bringing it back to the starting point*
4. *Repeat the process so you get four sections on the drum back*
5. *Wrap lacing around the center cross over point*
6. *Tie off excess lace – you now have a four direction cross over*

There are a few options for the back handle of the drum. You can do it representing the four directions or you can have eight to twelve cross overs creating a wheel. How you want to create your handle is your choice.



Now that you completed your drum it will need to dry for at least three days before you can use it. You will notice that the drum face and the lacings will become tighter as they dry.

You may wish to paint the face of the drum.

Whether you choose to paint your drum or prefer to leave it natural you will need to take care of your drum.

The traditional hand drum is meant to be used...it is not meant to be a wall hanging or a decoration.

You have invested your time to make your own drum so you should speak to it, work

with it, make it your own and consider learning songs with your drum.

In some First Nation it is a tradition to gift the first hand drum made to another individual.

If this is your first hand drum you may choose to gift it to someone. Whatever you decide enjoy your drum.

Step 6 - Drumsticks

The video includes is a discussion about the drum stick;



•How it was made

- Materials used*



- *How using different materials makes different sounds*

The session does not include the making of a drum stick. Drum sticks were pre-made for the participants in the video.

You may wish to purchase or have drum sticks made for the participants.

Concluding your Session

You may wish to provide time for further discussions about the traditional hand drum or have a general discussion about the traditions and cultures of your community. Ask participants if anyone wants to share their thoughts as the session concludes.

Thank all participants and wish them well in working with their drums.

If a closing prayer is part of the community norms, ask one of the participants to close off the session.

Appendix A

The following are suggestions for purchasing some of the materials, supplies and equipment that will be required for your drum making session.

Rawhide and drum frames

- *B'Esseeze Leather & Beads*

1562 Arlington Avenue

Winnipeg, Mb

Phone: 204-582-6962



- *Bill Worb Furs Inc.*

312 Ross Avenue

Winnipeg, Mb

Phone: 204-942-6600



Mini Punch Set



- *Michaels (Winnipeg)*

840 St. James Street

Phone 204-783-8541 or

2311 McPhillips Street

Phone: 204-808-0300

- *May also be available at Walmart*

Mallet



Available at any hardware store including any of the following stores:

- *Home Depot*
- *Rona*
- *Canadian Tire*



Drum Sticks – Available at:

Bill Worb Furs Inc.

312 Ross Avenue

Winnipeg, Mb

Phone: 204-942-6600

The Winnipeg Trading Post

1128 Main Street

Winnipeg, Mb

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