

An illustration of a forest with several tall, thin trees and a path leading through them. The trees have green foliage and brown trunks. The ground is covered in brown leaves and dirt. The sky is a light blue color.

Native American Weapons

Fact Cards

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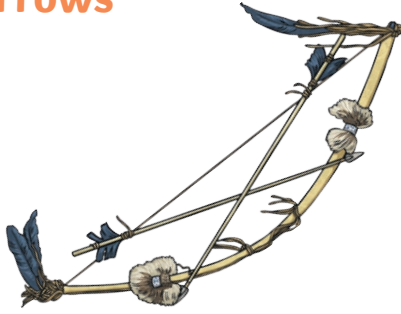
Native American Weapons Fact Cards

Types of Weapons

Native American weapons could be sorted into 5 categories:

- Cutting Weapons
- Striking Weapons
- Throwing Weapons
- Piercing Weapons
- Defensive Weapons

Bows and Arrows



What were they used for?

Bows and arrows were used for hunting. Skilled Native Americans could use a bow and arrow for fishing! They were also used as weapons during battles. Bows and Arrows were piercing weapons.

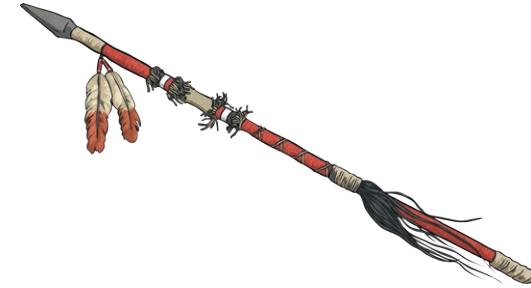
What were they made from?

The materials that bows and arrows were made from depended on where the different tribes lived and what materials they had access to. The arrow head was made from stone or bone that had been sharpened to a point. The bow itself would have been made from wood or animal bone. Over time, Native Americans got so skilled at making their bows that an arrow could pass through the entire body of a large animal.

How were they used?

As well as hunting animals on foot, Native Americans also used their bows and arrows while riding on horseback. They would begin to learn how to use them when they were children so that when they got to adulthood, they were accurate with their shots.

Spears



What were they used for?

Spears were used for fighting and for hunting.

What were they made from?

Spears were similar to arrows, but they were much longer and a slightly different shape. Like arrowheads, the spearheads were made from bone or stone, and the rest was made of wood.

How were they used?

Spears could be used with either one or both hands depending on its size. Some tribes used something called an atlas, which was a device that launched spears even further than they could be thrown by hand. Tribes living near oceans adapted spears into harpoons so that they would be able to hunt whales. A harpoon was an extra-heavy spear with a cord attached to it so that when the whale had been speared, it could be pulled in.

Tomahawks



What were they used for?

The tomahawk is a throwing weapon which started off as a tool for chopping and cutting. As time went on, they were used during battle as well.

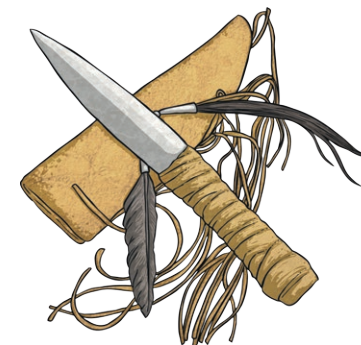
What were they made from?

At first, the head of the tomahawk was made from stone. Sometimes it was made from antlers. In the 1600s, this changed to iron, steel or other metals.

How were they used?

The tomahawk was used either as a hand-held weapon or as an object that was thrown.

Knives



What were they used for?

Knives were cutting weapons. They were used for everyday chores such as hunting and skinning animals. Knives were also used in battle.

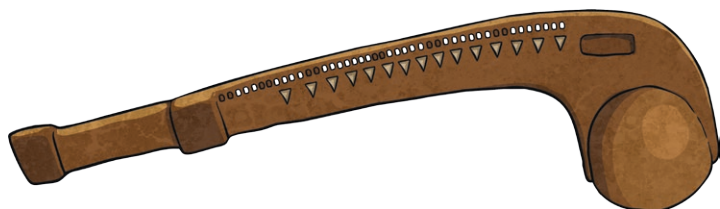
What were they made from?

Most knives were made from stone, bone or deer antlers. Just like the tomahawk, the blade was eventually made from steel. Knives were carried in something called a sheath, which was worn around the neck or attached to a belt. Inuit tribes made their knives from ivory, bone or copper. The special name for these knives was 'ulu'.

How were they used?

Knives were handheld and used as a cutting weapon. Some knives had special uses like the throwing knife or scalping knife.

War Club



What were they used for?

War clubs were striking weapons, although they did have their uses as everyday tools.

What were they made from?

At first, war clubs were basically large, heavy animal bones which were used to strike. Sometimes a war club was made from the jawbone of a large animal. Later, they were made from wood and specially designed to have handles, stone edges and stone heads to inflict damage. Some tribes carved entire war clubs out of solid stone.

How were they used?

In battle, they were used during close combat, although they could also be thrown.

Shields



What were they used for?

Shields were defensive weapons. They were designed to protect the user from arrows and other weapons which had been thrown. Native Americans did not wear a lot of protective clothing or equipment during battle, so the shield was very important.

What were they made from?

Native American shields were made from wood and animal hide. Shields were round, but were different sizes depending on the tribe. Shields were decorated with designs which showed power to frighten off enemies.

How were they used?

They were held and very rarely used in hand-to-hand battles. Instead, shields helped protect from weapons which had been thrown from a distance.