

## Pottery Design Replication

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**Age:** 5 and up

**Objectives:** Provides an introduction to artifact replication as a way of learning about past technology; introduces the terms “artifact” and “sherd”; introduces the idea that archaeologists study small pieces of objects used in the past, not just whole, unbroken artifacts.

**Materials:** Several examples of incised, stamped, or punctuated pottery designs; a clear-top display case; a replica pot; Etched and Incised Pottery handouts; brown clay (self-hardening or non-hardening clay); paper or waxed paper to protect the table; a variety of incising tools (chopsticks, bamboo skewers, shells, cordage) to replicate the designs on display; 6 small rolling pins or dowels to flatten pieces of clay; pre-moistened wipes for cleaning hands; zip-closure plastic sandwich bags; table; and 6 chairs

**Preparation:** Divide clay into lumps that measure about 1 inch in diameter. Place each portion in an individual zip-closure plastic bag.

Place examples of actual sherds in the shallow, clear-top display case, so they can be examined, but not handled. Display a whole replica pot, if possible. If pictures are used, place them close to the work areas.

Set up 6 work areas at the table. Each work area should have a chair, a piece of paper to protect the table from the clay, clay in plastic bags, a rolling pin or dowel, several simple tools to create designs in the clay, moistened wipes to clean hands after the activity, and the Etched and Incised Pottery handout.



**Number of volunteers:** 1 volunteer for every 2–3 children



**Procedure:** Volunteers hand out the Etched and Incised Pottery handout and explain that Indians made pottery for thousands of years before Europeans arrived in North America. The shapes and designs of the pots give archaeologists clues about when and where the pottery was made. Archaeologists study *artifacts*, like broken pieces of pottery, called *sherds*, to learn about the people who made them. They also experiment to reproduce the designs.

Participants observe the decorations on the sherds and the tools on the table. They flatten the clay and experiment with various tools to replicate the designs.

**What they take away:** If possible, allow each participant to take home the piece of decorated clay in the zip-closure bag. For very large events, clay may need to be re-used.

**Preservation message:** Pottery holds the record of the hand that touched it. Protect the record of the past.

## Etched and Incised Pottery Designs



### Information from Broken Bits and Pieces

American Indians made pottery for thousands of years before Europeans arrived in North America. The shapes and designs of the pots give archaeologists clues about when and where the pottery was made. Archaeologists study *artifacts*, like broken pieces of pottery, called *sherds*. By studying the sherds, archaeologists can learn about the types of clays people used, where they traveled to find clay, how they made and decorated the pots, how designs changed over time, and about the lives of the people who made them. Archaeologists experiment with natural clays and firing techniques and reproduce the designs to learn more about the people who made them.

Pottery holds the record of the hand that touched it. Protect the record of the past.

### Contact an Archaeologist

If you find an artifact, contact an archaeologist. You can find an archaeologist by performing a search on the Internet, or by looking under “archaeology” or “environmental consultants” in the Yellow Pages. Or contact your State Historic Preservation Office!