

Ancient artwork made use of nature's bounty

BY PAM PHILLIPS
Times Correspondent

In the ancient world of Native Americans continuing through today, plants and animals play a necessary and vital role. Of course they play a very vital role for all people since we couldn't exist without them.

Beyond the daily need for plants and animals to provide food, medicine, clothing and shelter, indigenous people all over the world also used nature's materials in their art forms.

Museums detail beautiful collections of baskets, jewelry, decorated clothing, masks, sculptures, weapons and tools from ages gone by.

Although Native Americans today live in modern housing (not always an improvement over the styles of the past), and purchase ready-to-wear clothing, most of the art forms from the past have been passed down and the techniques preserved. Unlike many hunters today who hunt for excitement or trophies to mount, many Native

hunters rely on animals for their meat and also make use of all the animal, leaving nothing to waste. Hides are tanned and used for ceremonial regalia, drums, shields, tepee covers, hide paintings, flute carriers and masks.

Sinew (nature's thread) is made from the tendons of antelope, deer and elk allowing materials to be sewn or tied together. Bone is used for carvings, beads, rattles, buttons, awls and tools. Quills from the porcupine are dyed and sewn onto clothing, baskets and many other leather items. Bird feathers are highly prized, especially eagle and hawk. Wings may be used for fans while individual feathers are used for decoration, headdresses or ceremonial and healing purposes. The hooves from deer, antelope, buffalo and elk are rendered to make glue or used intact for dance rattles that can be handheld or tied around the ankles or knees.

Antlers from deer and elk are used to make spoons, handles for tools or knives, as a stand to hold pipes or flutes, buttons for clothing or to fasten covers on leather pouches. Antlers also are commonly used for fetish carvings or sculptures. In Alaska and the Northern Territories Inuit and Eskimo tribes use walrus hides for food, clothing, shelter and the tusks for beautiful ivory carvings. Walrus ivory also may be cut and polished for use in

