

by Loren Woerpel

ROACH STICK

Roach sticks, like the old one shown here, were developed to serve as a decorative way to hold a man's porky roach to the top of the head. It acted as a spear going through the hair braid that was pulled up through the center hole of the roach and the spreader. Today many traditional dancers, even without hair braids, will attach these decorative sticks into the tie string at the top of the spreader.

Originally the sticks were carved from natural twigs such as this willow piece. It's maker also used a porky quill wrapped medicine wheel as the hinge attaching the feather to the stick. These "braid spear" roach sticks have become interesting works of art. Our instructions here will show a basic way to make a roach stick. You can expand it from there.

Materials needed include; a 3/16 inch diameter hardwood dowel cut about 12 inches long, a decorative feather, one 8mm split ring, one metal French bead, two short pieces of buckskin thong, a buckskin leather piece about 1x2 inches, some tacky glue, simulated sinew, and colored embroidery floss. Also needed are seed beads, needle and thread. **(Photo A)** Tools include sandpaper and scissors.

Start by sanding the dowel end that is the spearing end. Stroke the dowel on the sandpaper until it is almost pointed, but not quite. **(Photo B)**

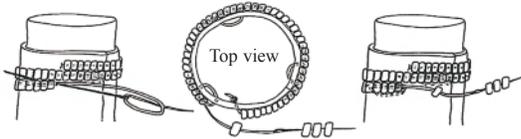
Work with the other end of the dowel to create the decorative hinge piece for the feather attachment. Cut one of the buckskin thong pieces to 2 inches in length. Thread it through the split ring. Double up the thong and insert the dowel end up tight to the split ring. Wrap this with a piece of simulated sinew and tightly tie a knot. **(Photo C)**

Taking the 1x2 inch piece of leather, cut 1/2 inch deep fringe on both ends of this rectangle piece. Smear tacky glue where you tied the thong to the dowel. **(Photo D)** Wrap the fringed leather piece around the dowel to cover the thong tied to the dowel. **(Photo E)** Let dry.

Trim the decorative feather creating at least a 1 inch clean quill end. Using a 4 inch piece of buckskin thong, carefully cut a 2 inch end in half, longways down the thong. This will be used to tie the feather into the split ring hinge. Thread the metal French bead onto the other side of the thong and glue the uncut end along the cleaned quill. **(Photo F)**

Wrap the glued thong and quill with embroidery floss and push the bead down the thong tightly to the quill end. **(Photo G)** The bead helps weigh the feather to give it a better dance in the wind.

The leather tube at the end of the dowel can be bead wrapped. **(Photo H)** String on about 10 beads. Double back through leather then thread through the last 2 or 3 beads. Continue with a pattern.



Tie feather to the split ring hinge. Tuck stick under the roach tie thong on top of the spreader or through your hair braid.

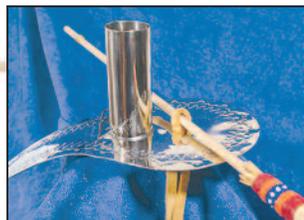


Photo I



Carved willow stick with wrap beading and quill-



Photo A

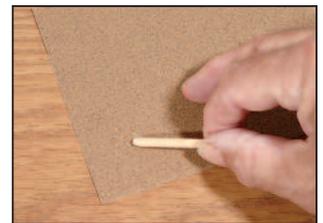


Photo B



Photo C



Photo D



Photo E

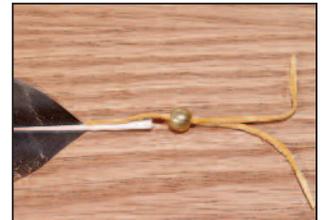


Photo F



Photo G



Photo H