“Each year, the Public Lands Alliance Convention and Trade Show brings together nonprofit organizations, land management agencies and companies to learn, network and engage on public lands issues. America’s public lands have always had champions, and there is great value in those champions coming together to connect and act together.” (Public Lands Alliance)

TRNHA staff and board members had an opportunity to attend this year’s convention in Washington D.C. and connect with so many who love our public lands. While attending the convention we participated in several educational sessions which allowed us to learn more about customer service, building a strong board of directors, protecting our land, and partnering with our Public Land agency partners. We also networked with over 600 individuals who are passionate about protecting our lands, and had an opportunity to meet with several vendors to develop and purchase several new products for summer 2020.

However, it wasn’t all work as we had an opportunity to take in several Park Ranger led programs where we learned about our Nation’s history. An evening tour of D.C.’s Distinct Beauty: Memorials and Monuments was just what was needed to inspire us as we move into a new season. We can’t thank the Public Lands Alliance enough for offering this convention yearly helping us to build our skills and giving us an opportunity to meet with others in our field of work!
The decoration of hides, pots, bone tools and other objects has been a part of American Indian women’s work and leisure time for thousands of years. Many women decorated clothing, blankets, and moccasins with porcupine quills arranged in a design. The design often represented some object (such as bison or a bird) of importance to the woman or her tribe.

The earliest European traders came to North America with glass beads made in European factories to trade for furs. This trade spread across the continent throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Many beadworkers of the Great Plains tribes substituted colorful beads for porcupine quills in their decorative work. When American Indians signed treaties and established their lists of annuity goods that they were to receive in exchange for their land, beads were often listed as desirable annuity goods. Reservation traders kept supplies of beads in various sizes, styles, and colors that could be sold or traded to their Indian customers.

Once reservations were established, women produced more beadwork in more elaborate designs than ever before. They may have had more time for beadwork, since the tribes spent less time hunting, drying meat, and moving camp to find food sources. During the early reservation years, women also found that their beaded objects had value to non-Indian visitors to the reservations. Frontier army officers and their wives recognized the beauty of beaded leather objects. Linda Slaughter of Bismarck knew how important beadwork was for American Indian women. She wrote that "bead work and dressing and embroidering deerskins to be made into garments were the industries of the women . . . and much of their work had artistic merit."

Education of Indian children in day schools and boarding schools usually included developing craft skills. Boys learned welding, carpentry, and blacksmithing. Girls learned to sew, embroider, and knit. Some schools hired American Indian women to teach beading to the students. Students decorated belts, moccasins, and purses. Schools on the Fort Berthold reservation sent beaded pieces to exhibitions in eastern cities such as Boston. Girls learned to adapt traditional designs to European American interests.

Beadwork was an important economic skill that American Indian women learned from older women and passed on to their daughters and other young women. Before the reservation era, a skilled beadworker could sell her work to others in her village in exchange for meat or horses. During the reservation era, beading took on new significance as a source of cash income. Cash was necessary to purchase food, clothing, tools, and household objects. The cash income earned by beadworkers replaced traditional forms of economic activity such as hunting and gardening.

Today, both men and women apply beads to objects that are both artistic and practical. Beadwork is still an important skill. Skilled beadworkers sell decorated objects to visitors and offer beautifully decorated pieces as gifts. Beading is a tradition that has been adapted as circumstances changed for American Indians. Even though styles, tools, and even the beads have changed, beading is a way that modern American Indians connect with the traditions of their past.
Almost every reservation had a trader’s store. Traders also recognized the beauty of beaded designs. Traders knew that people living in fine homes in Chicago, New York, and other cities would pay well for these pieces. The traders often asked the beadworkers to change their designs a little to please the collectors.

The products of skilled beadworkers became even more important as more Americans chose to spend their vacations traveling in the United States. Automobiles took tourists to reservations and nearby cities where tourists became customers for American Indian women’s beadwork. Tourists purchased moccasins, toy-sized tipis, and dolls. They sometimes bought more elaborate pieces such as beaded shirts.

Taken directly from: https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iii-waves-development-1861-1920/lesson-2-making-living/topic-8-working-reservation/section-4-bead-work

Meet Elgelita Welch-Red Cloud - Beadworker

TRNHA is always on the lookout for Native American artist who are willing to sell us their crafts so we can offer it to you through our park stores. A couple years ago we were introduced to Elgelita Welch-Red Cloud and her beautiful beadwork.

Elgelita was born Navajo but moved around a lot as a child spending time with tribes throughout the country including the Great Plains. She began beading at the young age of 6 and has carried the passion throughout her life. She loves the beautiful bead colors and designing patterns. Over the years she has developed her own unique patterns which she hand draws out in a notebook before beginning the projects. Her steady hand and years of experience bring us many beautiful beaded items.

Keep your eyes out when visiting Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site and Theodore Roosevelt National Park this summer for some of her gorgeous jewelry.
Each month we offer our members a very special discount on their favorite items. This month we are offering...... Not a member yet? You can learn more and become a member at: http://trnha.org/membership.htm

Why you should be a Member of TRNHA!
Our members are passionate about our park partners and believe in helping us spread the word about the beauty that can be found in North Dakota. By joining Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association as a member you will be helping us:

- Support educational and interpretive programs
- Enhance the visitor centers in all our partner parks
- Publish trail guides, books, and multi-media products to educate our visitors.
- Host special events in our parks including Teddy Bear Picnics, Birdwalks, and photo contest
- Promote North Dakota’s public lands.
- Offer housing assistance for Volunteers and Interns.
- Provide support staff in visitor centers

All memberships are valid for one year. All members will receive: Membership card, e-newsletter (which includes member only coupons), 15% discount at all our stores, reciprocal discounts at other National Park stores, and are entitled to vote in TRNHA’s Board of Directors elections.

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March 2020—Member Only Discount

25% off Storewide!

(Not eligible for the 15% member discount)

Expires: March 31, 2020

Bring this coupon and your membership card to one of our stores or go online at www.shoptrnha.org and enter code “Mar2020” at checkout