



Shooting the primitive bow and arrow

What I do

I interpret Native American culture to the public. Using short talks and demonstrations, I explain to people how Native Americans lived, survived, and thrived for thousands of years before the arrival of white settlers in North America. Artifacts I use are those I have made, or either been made or gifted to me by fellow interpreters.

Why I do it

As a youngster, I imagined how American Indians made bows and arrows out of sticks. I tried to bend sticks and shoot other sticks from them. Of course, they broke. When I was much older, I learned how the Indians made these things. This passion led me to learn about many other aspects of their culture. As I amassed knowledge about this, I decided to share it with other people.

Points of Interest

- ♦ **Artifacts I display**
Toys, baskets, bead loom, throwing sticks, atlatl, primitive bow and arrow, stone axe, cordage, clothing, war shield, lance, directional choker, drum, rattles, flutes.
- ♦ **Skills I demonstrate**
Beadwork, shooting the primitive bow and arrow, making cordage, music, dancing, storytelling.
- ♦ **Subjects I interpret**
Sign language, origins, history, geography, Ohio Indian trails, village life, hunting and gathering, warfare, arts and crafts.
- ♦ **Activities I conduct**
Participative sign language, flute, drum and rattle music, participative dancing.

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Tom Romito

Interpreter
of Native American Culture



The war shield with directional colors and power animals.

How I built my Native American interpretative practice

I believe that everyone who lives on the North American continent shares the heritage of the Native Americans. They left a legacy that they created over thousands of years, and it is ours to learn and enjoy.

In 1998, I learned how Native Americans created beautiful art with glass beads, both on a loom and directly on leather. In 2004, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, I learned how the Chippewa created many useful things from birch bark.

One year, I attended a pow-wow at Atwood Lake in Ohio and asked a Native American to explain an item she was selling. She explained that it was a directional choker. She said, "When you educate people about our culture, tell them about the four colors." These colors appear on many of my artifacts. *Continued...*



The Native American loom with a bead project in progress.

In 2004, I visited a craft show in Grand Haven, Michigan. I asked a Native American vendor to play something for me on a rather crude flute he was selling. He made it sing. I couldn't get a note out of it. I bought it and learned to play a little more. Eventually, I graduated to more challenging instruments and now incorporate my flute music in my practice.

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The ground on which we stand is sacred, the blood of ancestors.

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Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crow Indians, 1848-1932

In 2008, the Cleveland Metroparks asked me to construct a wickiup for the maple sugar festival that occurs every winter. I learned how to do this using black willow saplings for the frame and common reeds for mats to cover the structure. I had to rebuild the wickiup every year because it would lose its shape.

I've developed the art of telling Native American stories. As I travel around the country, I keep an eye out for Native American legends that I think people, especially, children, will enjoy. I involve my audiences in my interpretive practice with singing, dancing, sign language, discussion, and shooting my primitive bows and arrows.



Playing the Wooden Flute.

I have interpreted Native American Culture to

- ❖ Cleveland Metroparks
- ❖ Elementary schools
- ❖ Scout groups
- ❖ Community centers
- ❖ Child and adult day care centers throughout Ohio.
- ❖ Historical societies
- ❖ Women in the Outdoors

About me

- ❖ I am not Native American.
- ❖ I am retired from the U.S. Army Reserve and the Federal Service.
- ❖ I facilitate organizations that want to grow.