

Layer 4 (second layer from top)
Stratigraphy Card

Glass Beads

For thousands of years prior to European contact, Native American groups across North America made, and used, beads of shell, pearl, bone, teeth, copper, and stone (including turquoise and fossil crinoid stems).

Beginning in 1670, Europeans traded items such as horses, guns, alcohol, and glass beads for fur pelts. Europeans mostly traded glass beads, a material previously unknown to Native Americans. Indians sought glass beads as trade items because of their colors and ease of use. Glass beads quickly replaced Indian-made beads of natural materials and the traditional quills used in other decorative work. Beadwork reached a peak on the Plains around 1870. Glass beads essentially identical to these early styles are still in use today.



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