

RAVENSTAIL WEAVING

This headband activity sheet is based on a design by Kay Field Parker. Kay is a master weaver from Juneau, Alaska. She creates items based on ancient weaving techniques with dazzling traditional designs known as Ravenstail. Ravenstail weaving was done by Native women hundreds of years ago along America's Northwest Coast - from Oregon to Southeast Alaska - with yarn made of mountain goat wool. The striking, bold patterns are black and white lines and concentric angular shapes. Often the pattern is outlined with fine yellow lines or broad yellow borders. Ravenstail weaving is used to make ceremonial clothing known as regalia, including robes, dance aprons, leggings, tunics, and headdresses. Long fringe on the bottom border of a robe sways when the robe is danced. Deer hooves tied on the fringe rattle with movement. The regalia is often trimmed with luxurious fur from animals such as sea otter.



For nearly 200 years, Ravenstail was a lost art or possibly went out of favor as a newer weaving style known as Chilkat became popular. However, a weaver named Cheryl Samuel studied very old Ravenstail robes stored in museums around the world and started weaving in this unique style in the 1980s. Kay Field Parker is one of several weavers who has dedicated the last 25 years to learning and helping revive Ravenstail. Kay is also one of 11 weavers who helped make a robe for the Alaska State Museum - one of the first robes created since the revival. Kay's solo exhibition at the museum during the summer of 2013 is a testament to her extraordinary talent, commitment, and creativity. Kay has brilliantly adapted Ravenstail weaving to create pouches, purses, hats, cuffs, and collars. She also incorporates Chilkat style weaving and embellishes her work with rhinestones, beads, and silver cones.