

A Photo Guide to

Making Native American Puzzle Pouches



by Heather Athebyne • www.athebyne.com

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Tools and Materials

Required tools:

- Everyday scissors for cutting out the paper pattern
- Sharp scissors for cutting out the leather pieces
- Round awl, usually called a "scratch awl" if you're getting it from a leather supplier
- Utility knife with a fresh blade
- Ruler or other straight edge
- Needle fine enough to pass through your seed beads
- Heavier needle large enough for a full strand of sinew or several strands of your beading thread
- 1/8" (3mm) hole punch
- Ballpoint pen
- Piece of heavy scrap leather, thick cardboard, plastic cutting board, or other semi-soft protective surface

Optional tools:

- A sharp narrow chisel, up to about 3/8" (10mm) wide

Materials:

- 10/0 or 11/0 seed beads in your choice of colors
- Splittable artificial sinew (recommended) or other thread fine enough to pass doubled through your seed beads
- Glue or nail polish, preferably fast drying, to hold one knot of sinew or thread
- And of course, leather...

How to choose leather

All existing pouches which I know of are made of deerskin. Brain tanned deerskin is the traditional material, but there are other tannages available. Deerskin is very soft, supple, and lightweight, which is perfect for these pouches. Lambskin has these qualities, too, and is often easier to find and less expensive.

You can use any leather, whether or not it's deerskin, as long as it has the following characteristics:

- Soft and supple
- 3 to 4 oz (3/64" to 1/16", or 1.2 to 1.6 mm) in thickness

Leather which is too thick or stiff will not let the pouch flaps fold properly; they will tend to stick out at a 90 degree angle. Leather which is too thin might not be strong enough to hold up to use.

How to choose seed beads

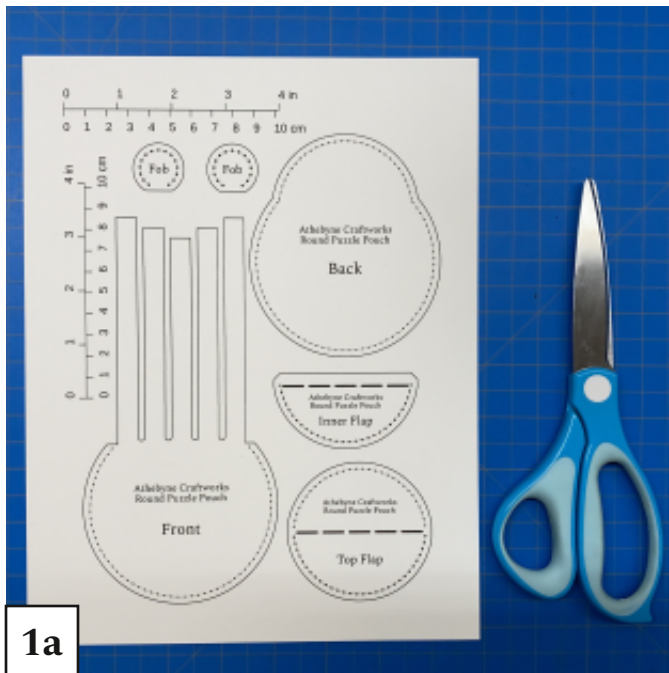
You don't need expensive Delicas for this. The size variation of less expensive beads lends an authentic historical look.

Not all "11/0" beads are the same size! An 11/0 from a Czech manufacturer is probably much smaller than an 11/0 from an economy manufacturer. I use Preciosa sizing in this book.

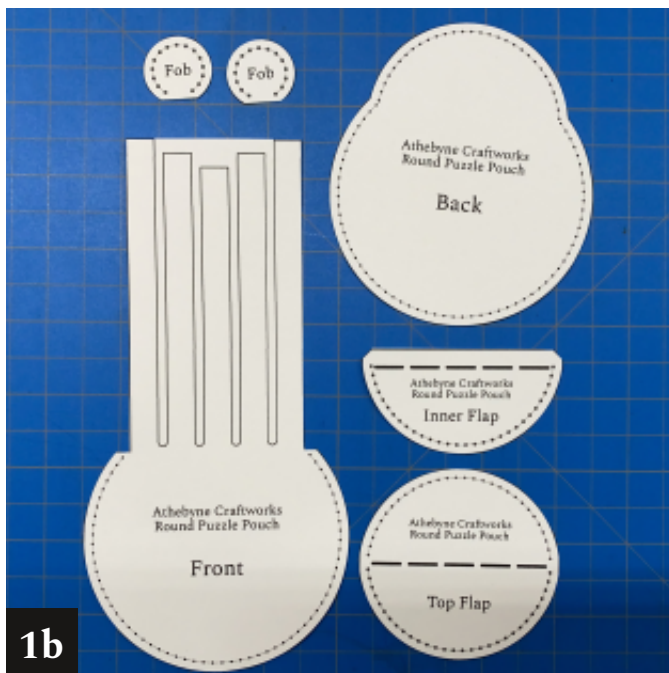
Preparing Pattern Pieces

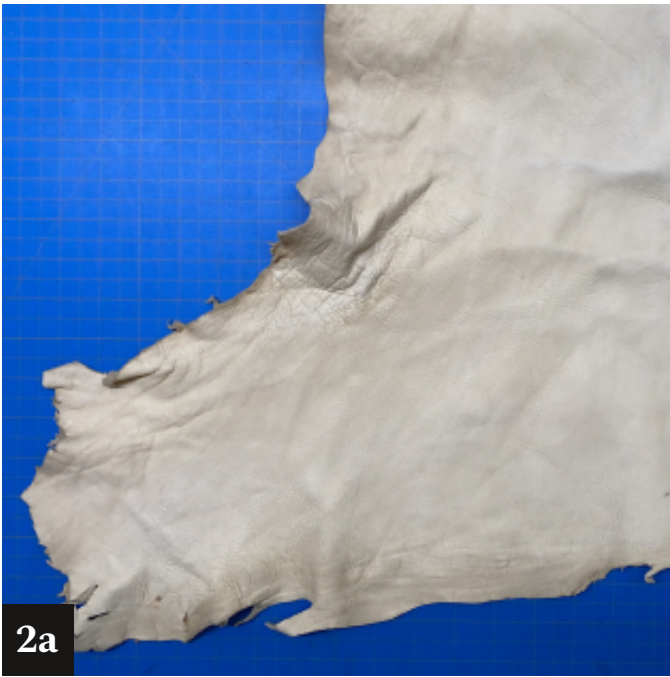
The full-size patterns in this book are approximately the size of existing antique pouches. You can scale them up or down as you'd like, as long as you choose a correspondingly heavier or lighter leather, and adjust the stitch spacing to be proportional to the new size of your pouch.

Print the pattern on cardstock or other heavy paper, if you can. It's a little bit easier to trace that way.

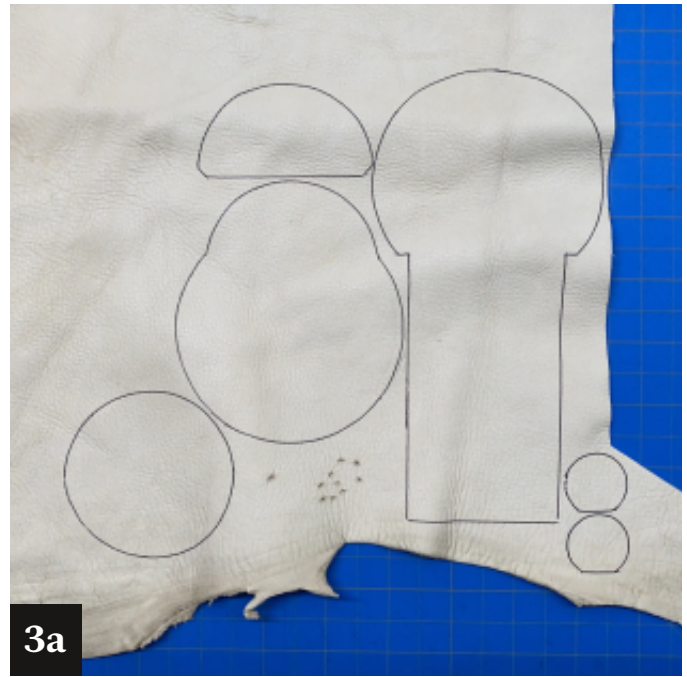


1 Carefully cut out the pattern pieces on the solid black line. Don't cut out the thongs of the Front piece, unless you want a very fiddly tracing experience! It's easier to trace the uncut thongs and separate them after the Front piece has been cut from the hide.

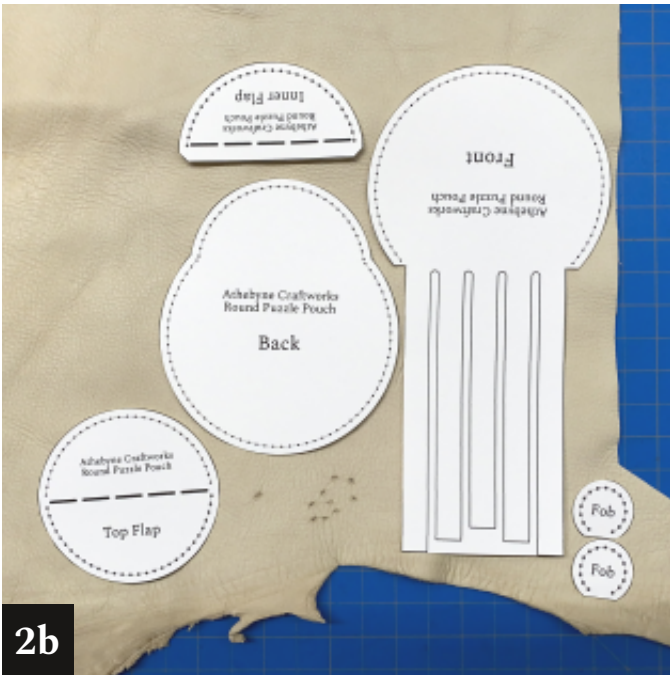




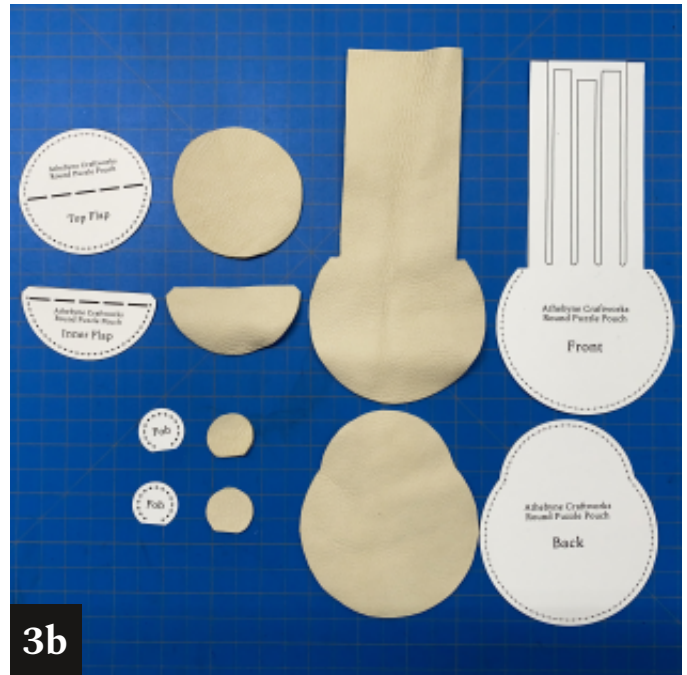
2a



3a



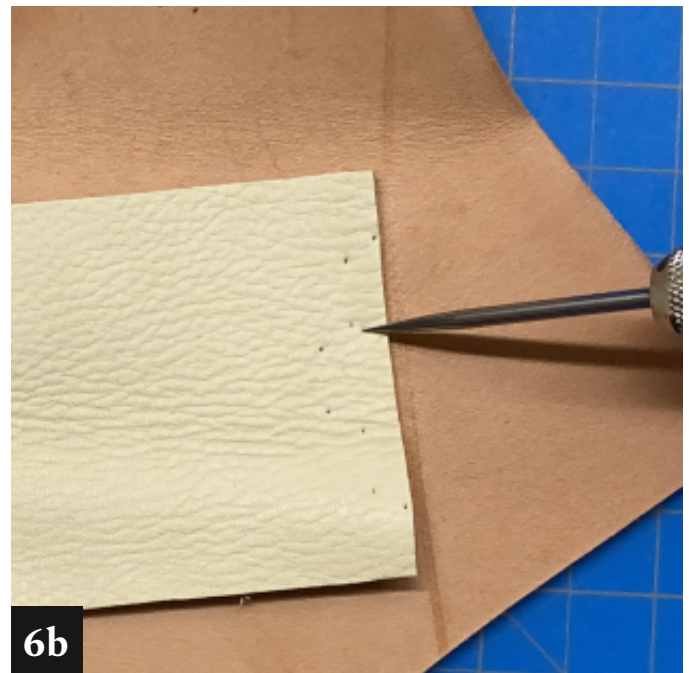
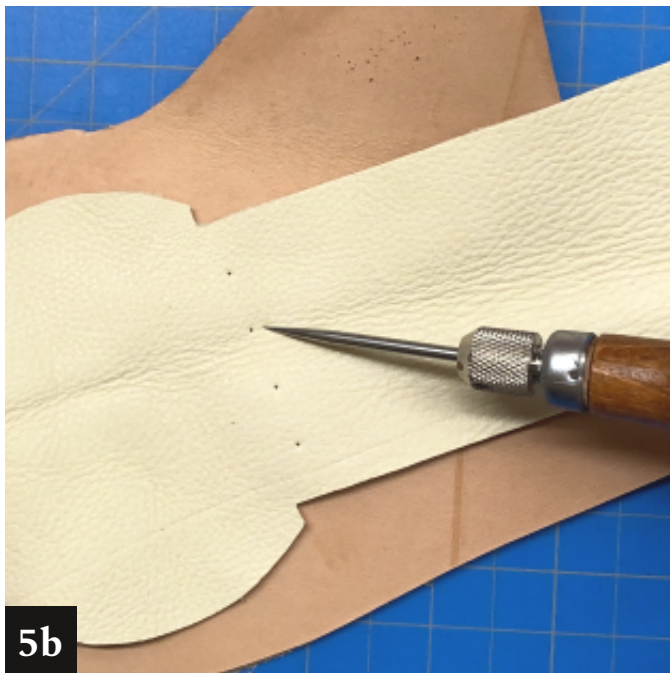
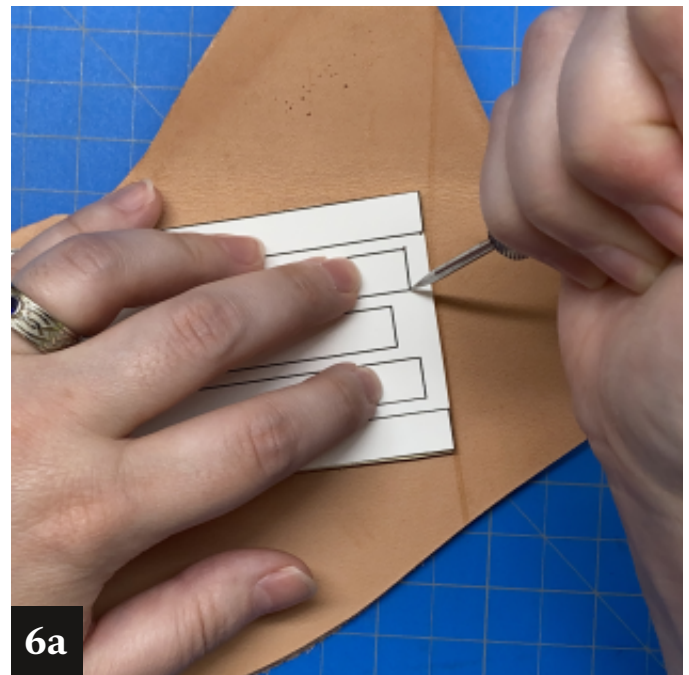
2b



3b

2 Place your pattern pieces on the hide in preparation for tracing. The Top Flap and lower half of the Front are the most prominent pieces of the pouch, so carefully choose where you put those. The Inner Flap and top of the Back will rarely be seen, so those can be put on a less attractive part of the hide if needed. The thongs on the Front will also hide some

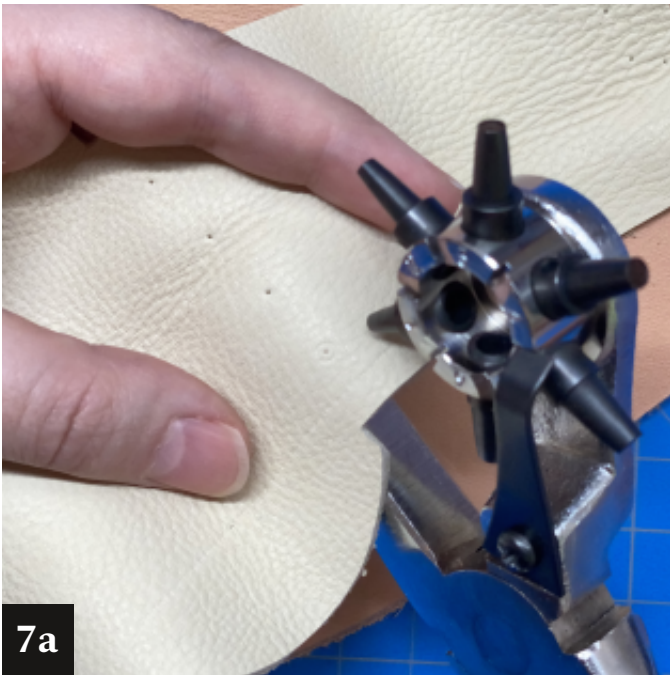
3 Trace around the pattern pieces with a ballpoint pen, which won't bleed like a marker would. With sharp scissors, cut out the pieces inside the ink line. Any ink left on your cut-out pieces will show in your finished project. Remember, don't cut the thongs on the Front piece just yet.



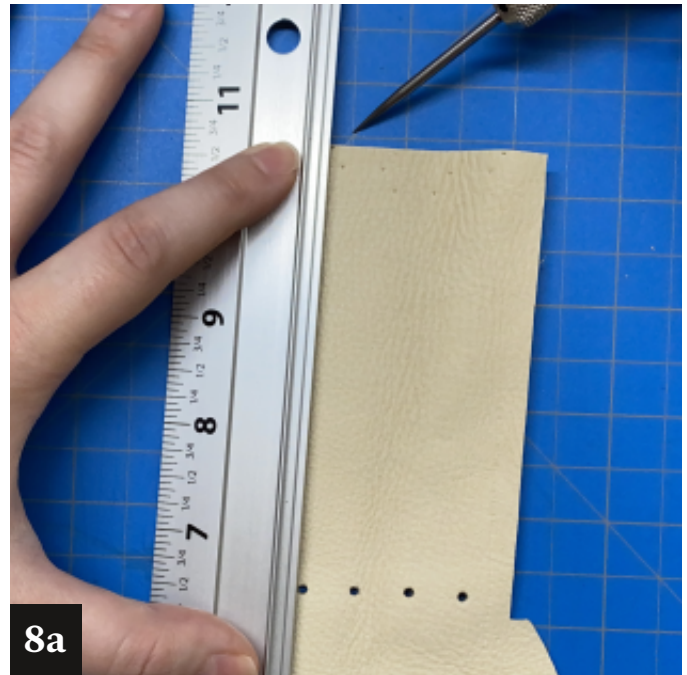
4 Next, mark the front for cutting the thongs. Gather your Front pattern and Front piece, your awl, and a scrap of thick leather to protect your work surface.

5 Lay the Front piece on your scrap and the Front pattern on top of the Front piece. Use your awl to mark holes at the base of the thong slits.

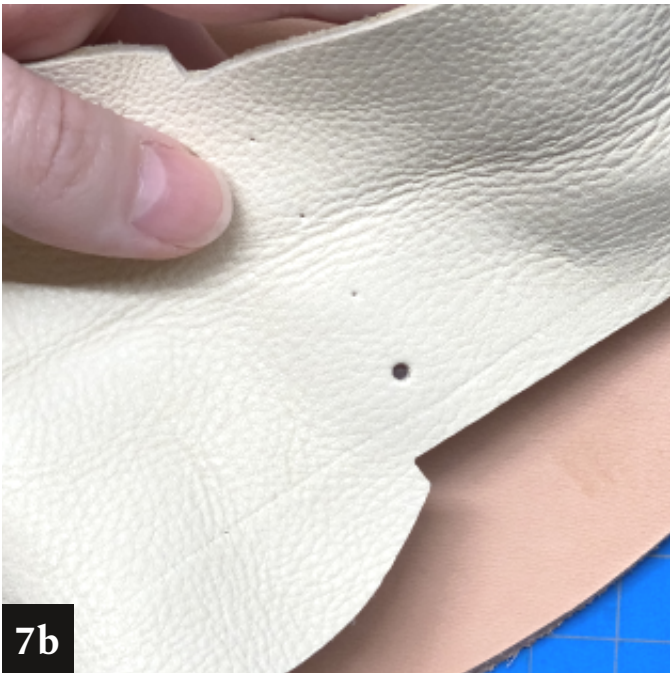
6 Use your awl to mark holes at the top corners of the thongs.



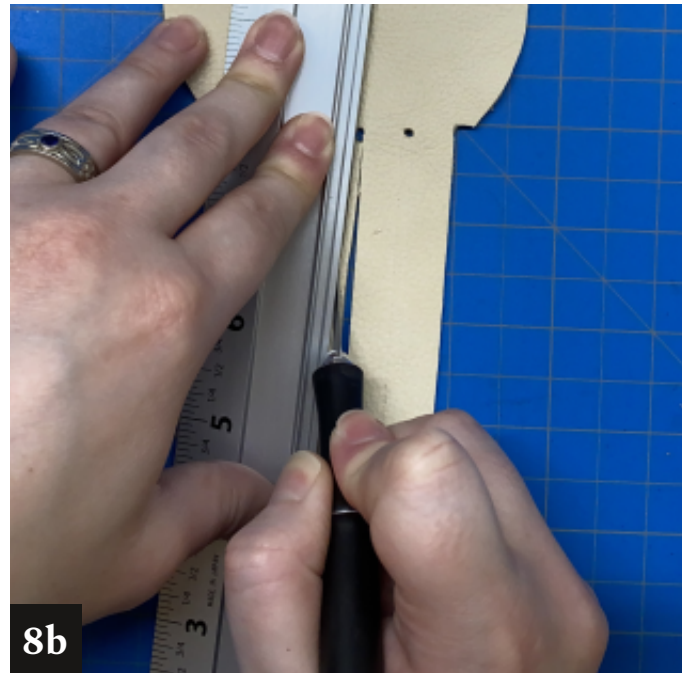
7a



8a



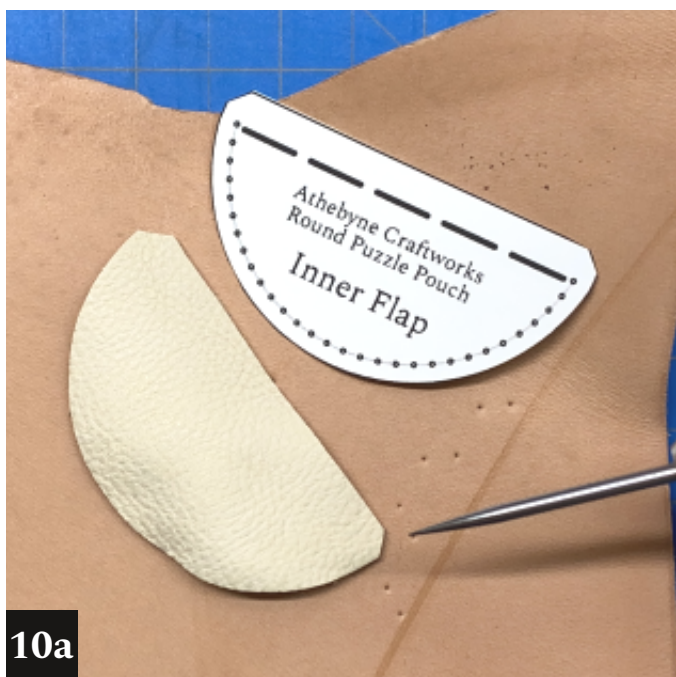
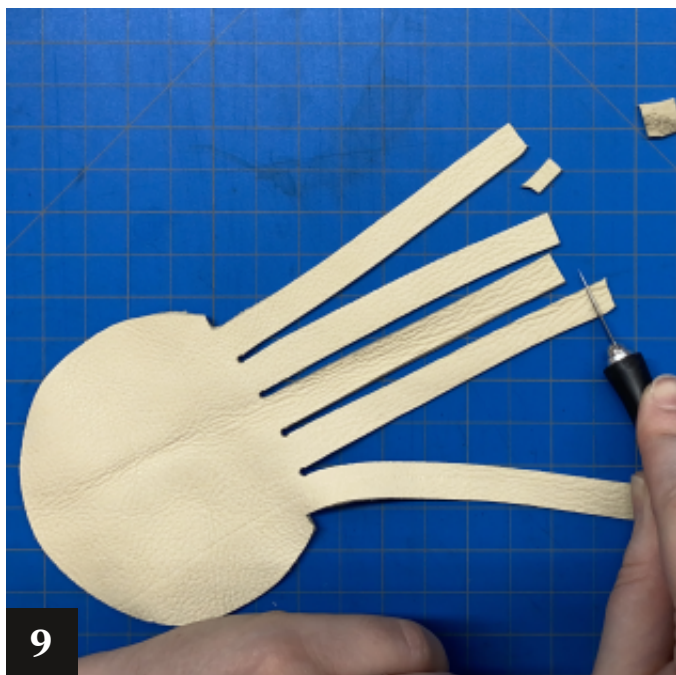
7b



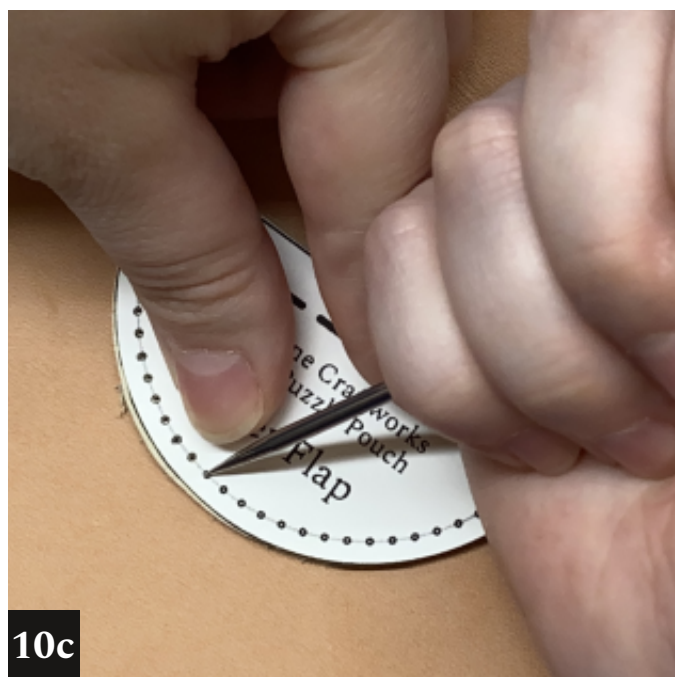
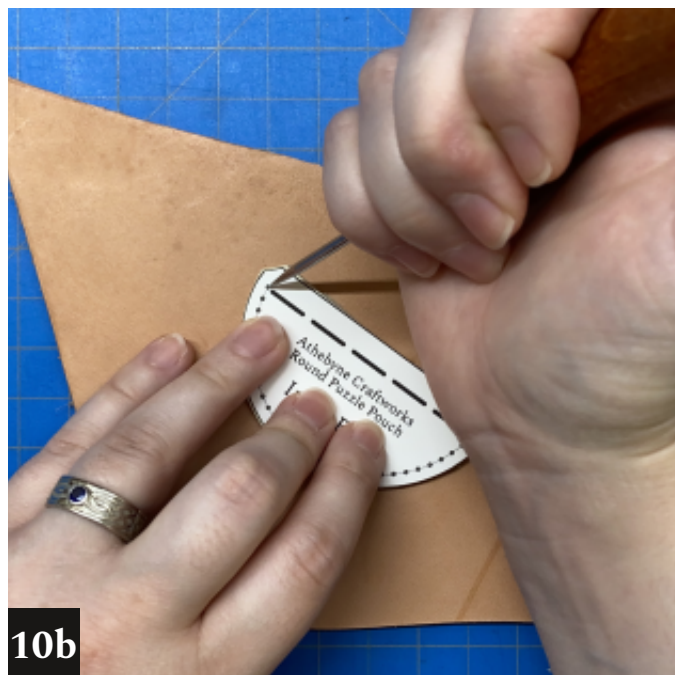
8b

7 Use your hole punch to punch 1/8" holes at the bottoms of all four thong slits, where you just marked with the awl.

8 See that some of the marks you made at the top of the Front piece are 1/8" apart, and that those marks line up with the outer edges of the holes you just punched. Place your ruler along one of those lines and use a knife to cut out 1/8" strips between the 3/8" thongs. Cut from the center out as it is easier to recover from a cutting mistake that way.



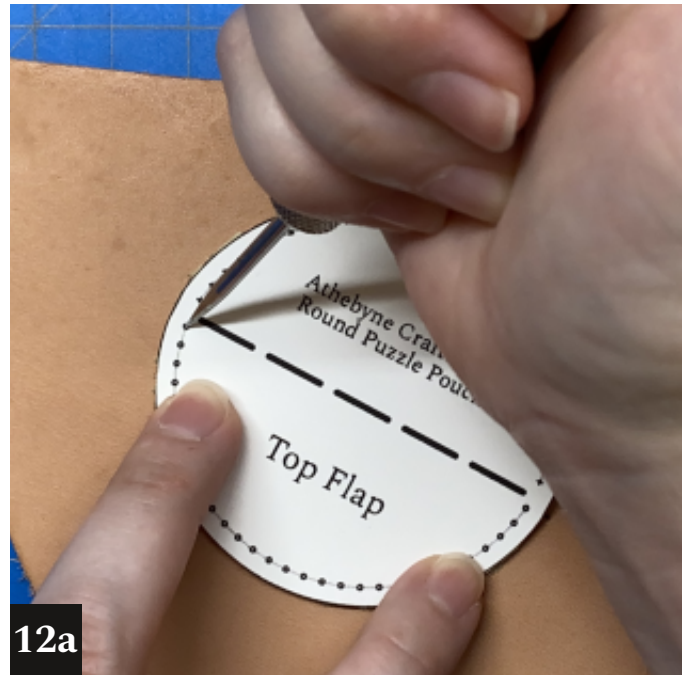
9 Trim the thongs according to the lengths on the Front pattern. You're now finished cutting out the pieces, and ready to punch stitching holes.



10 Lay the Inner Flap pattern over the Inner Flap piece and use your awl to firmly punch through the Inner Flap piece at each stitching hole. These holes do not need to be very big, but they do need to go all the way through the Inner Flap. Do not use a stitching awl or a diamond punch for this, as the holes they make are too big and will weaken this soft leather.



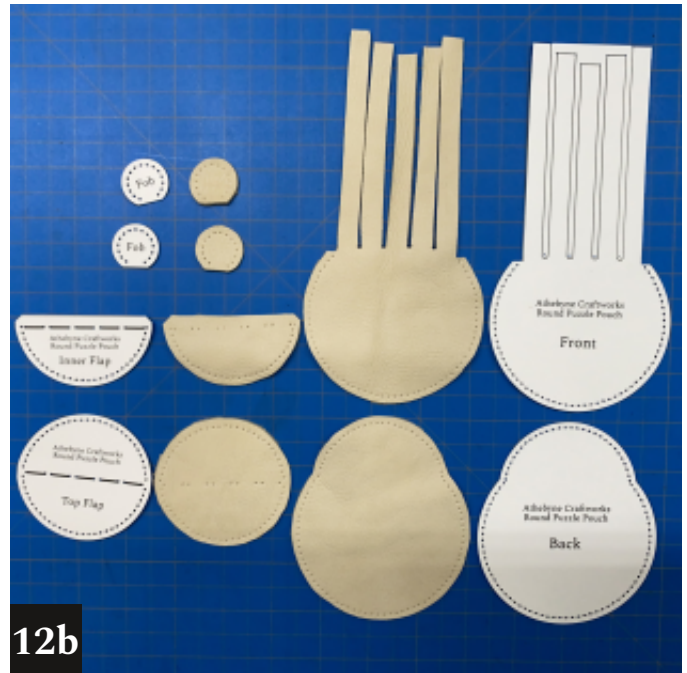
11a



12a



11b



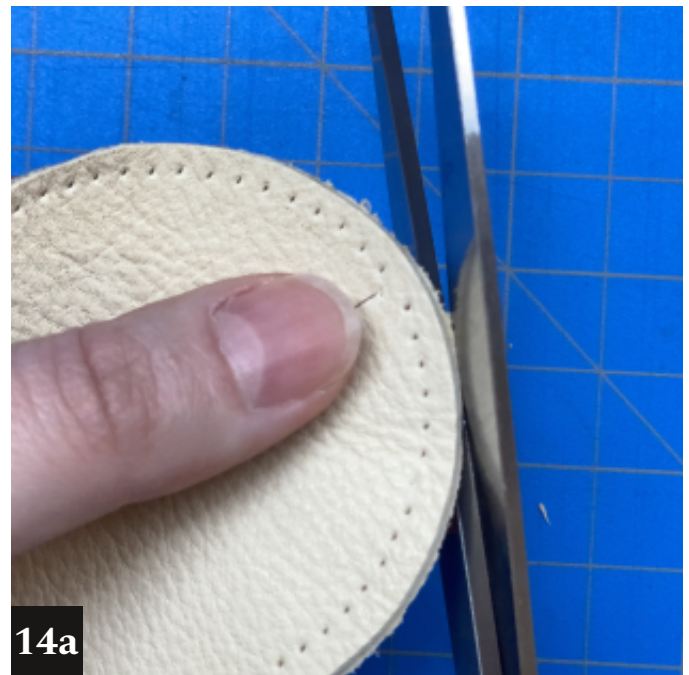
12b

11 Punch holes at each end of each thick black line. These holes mark where you will cut the slits for the thongs.

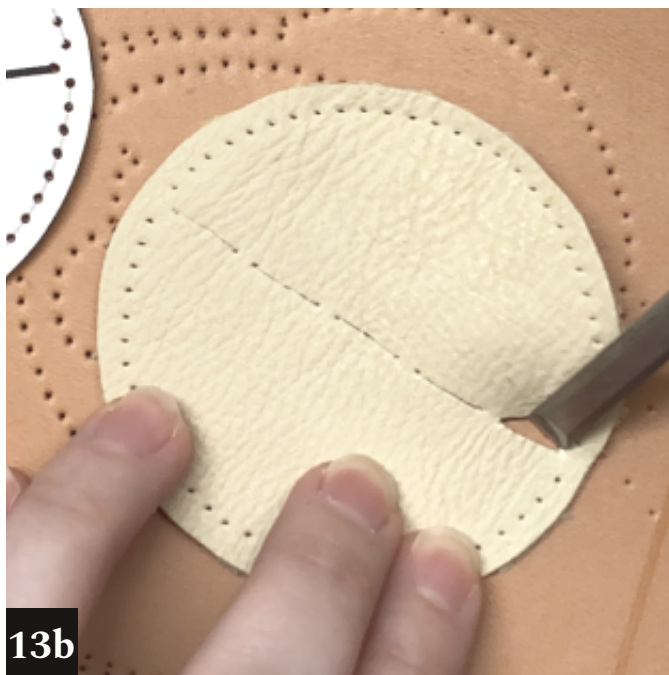
12 Do the same with the Top Flap and all other pieces. Continue in this manner, punching all marked stitching holes.



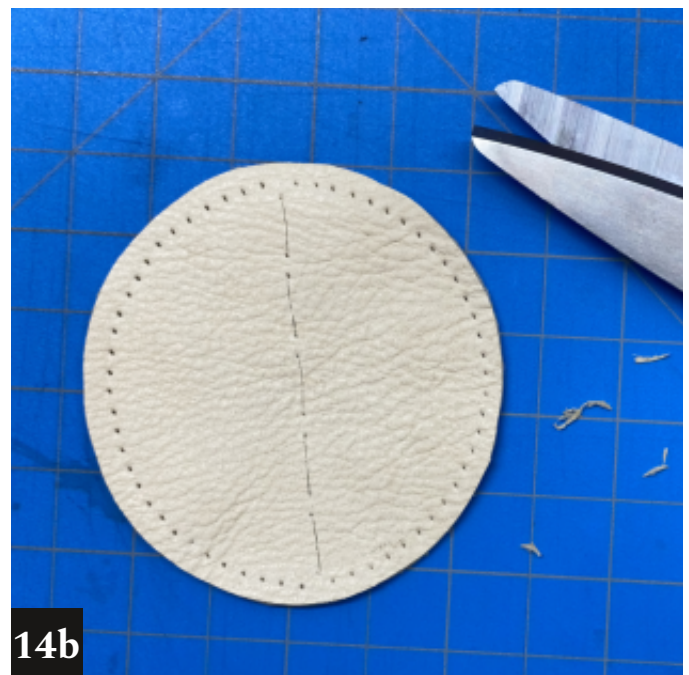
13a



14a



13b

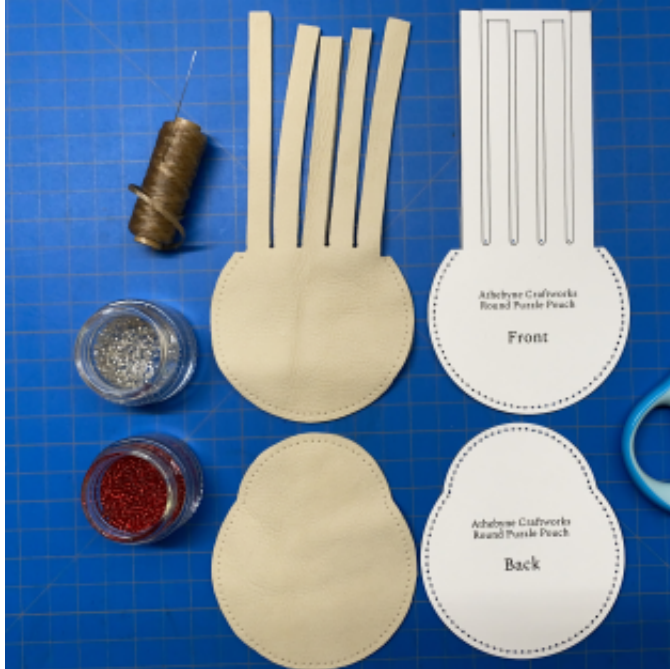


14b

13 Cut the slits in the Inner Flap and Top Flap between the holes you just marked, along the thick black lines on the pattern pieces. You can use a knife for this, but I prefer a sharp chisel to avoid overcutting.

14 You may wish to clean up the edges of your cut-out pieces. Use your sharp scissors to trim bits of the fuzzy flesh side which may be sticking out, without trimming any of the smooth grain side. You can, of course, skip this step if it doesn't fit the look you're trying to achieve.

Stitching and Beading

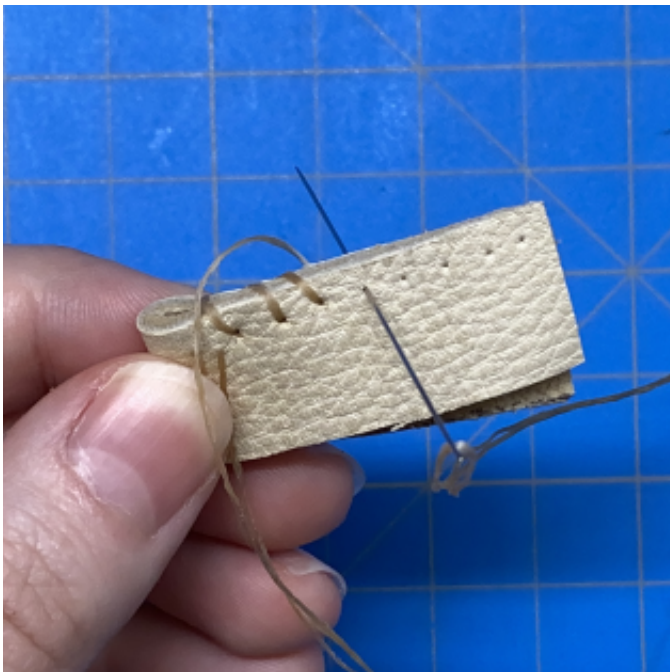


15 Gather your materials: size 10/0 or 11/0 seed beads in two colors of your choice, beading thread or artificial sinew, and a needle which can easily pass through most of your seed beads.

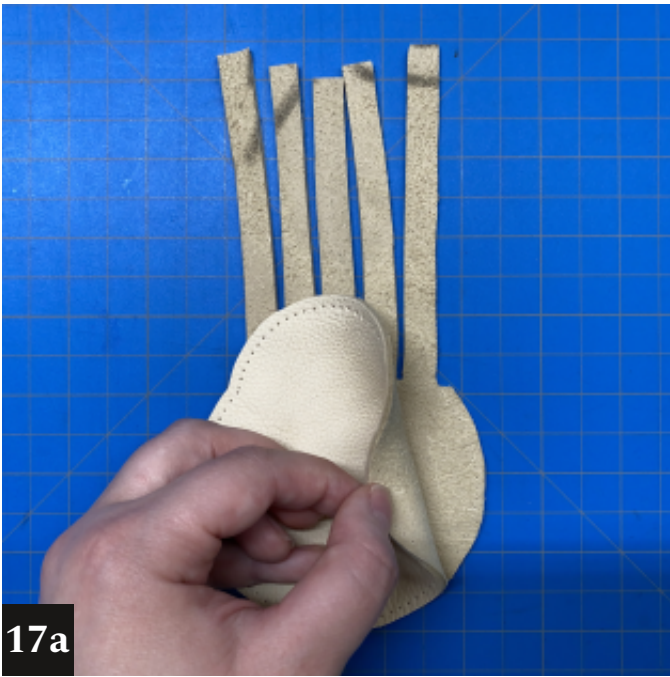
If you are beading the front and back surfaces of your bag, now is the time to do it. Finish all surface decoration before continuing. The edges will be beaded as you stitch the bag together.

Cut a piece of sinew or thread about 36" (92 cm) long. If you have sinew, split the strand lengthwise into thirds. This doesn't have to be exact, but try to get all strands to approximately the same thickness. Use your needle or awl to pierce the strand for stitching.

Thread your beading needle with one of the split strands.



16 Optional: If you prefer not to bead your bag edges, you can work an overcast stitch instead of the beading pattern by always inserting your needle through the same side of the bag as you sew. This will wrap the edges as neatly as beading and produce a fine finish.



17a



18a



17b



18b

17 Lay the Front piece right side down, and put the Back piece right side up on top of it. Using the Back pattern piece, find Hole 1 on the Back (left side).

18 Pass your needle through Hole 1 on the Front, then Hole 1 on the Back, with wrong sides together.



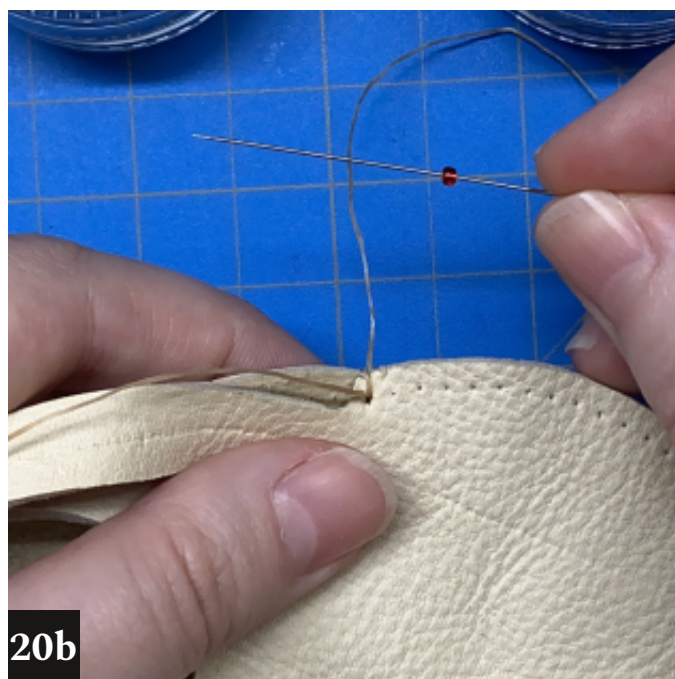
19a



20a



19b



20b

19 Turn your work so that the Front is facing up toward you, as shown.

Pull the needle through, leaving a thread tail of about 5". Holding the tail tight, pass the needle through the same hole in the same direction...

20 ...and pull snug.

Pick up a bead of Color A with your needle.



21a



22a



21b



22b

21 Slide the bead down the thread to the leather.

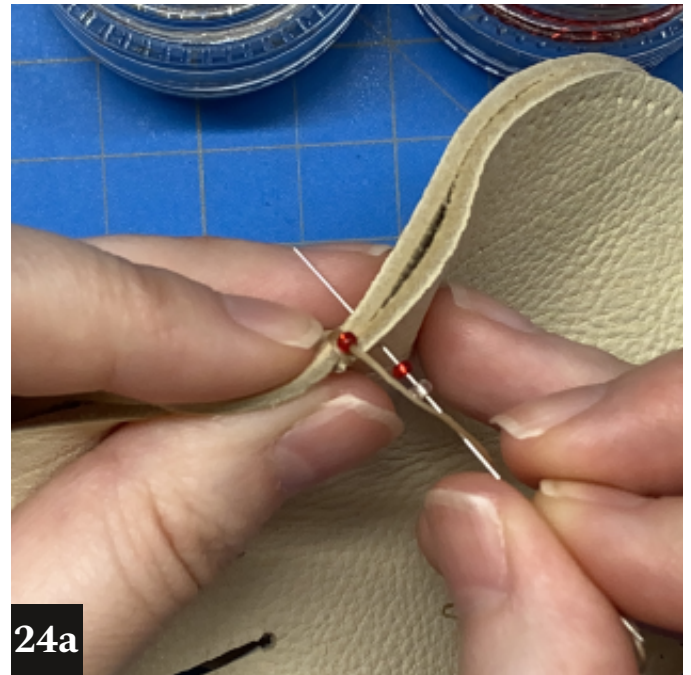
Pass your needle through Hole 1 again...

22 ...and pull snug, keeping the bead on top of the leather as shown.

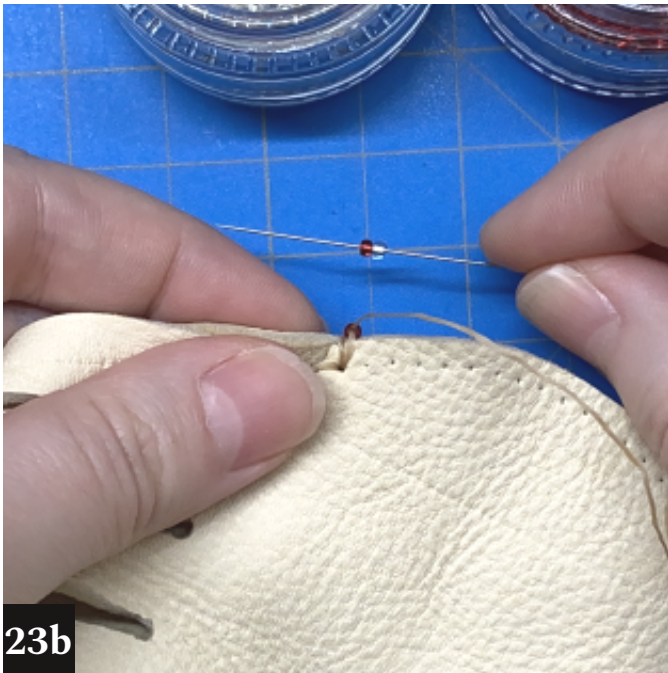
Pass your needle through the bead from back to front...



23a



24a



23b

23 ...and pull snug.

Pick up two more beads, first one of Color B and then another of Color A.



24b

24 Pass the needle through the next stitching holes in Front and Back. Leave a little bit of slack in the loop; don't pull snug yet.



25a



26a



25b



26b

25 Pass your needle through the Color A bead from right to left.

26 Pull snug. This begins the zipper edge.

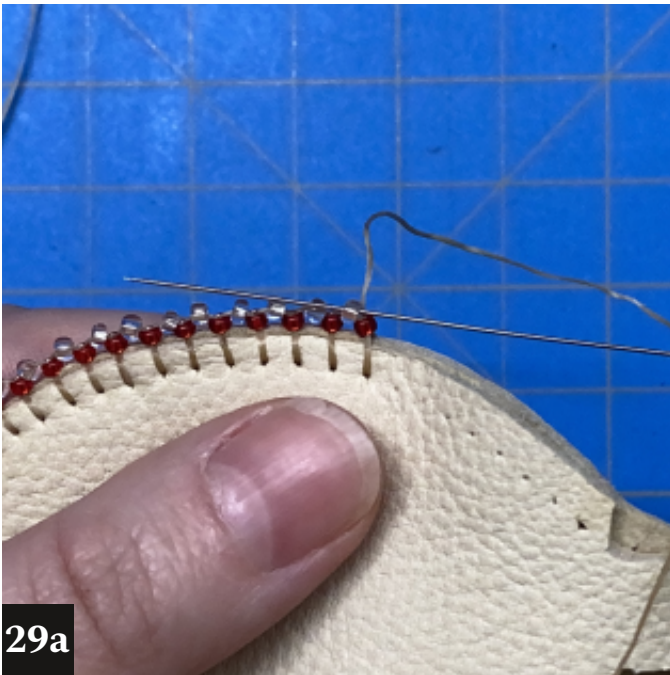
To continue the zipper edge, add another Color B bead and a Color A bead.



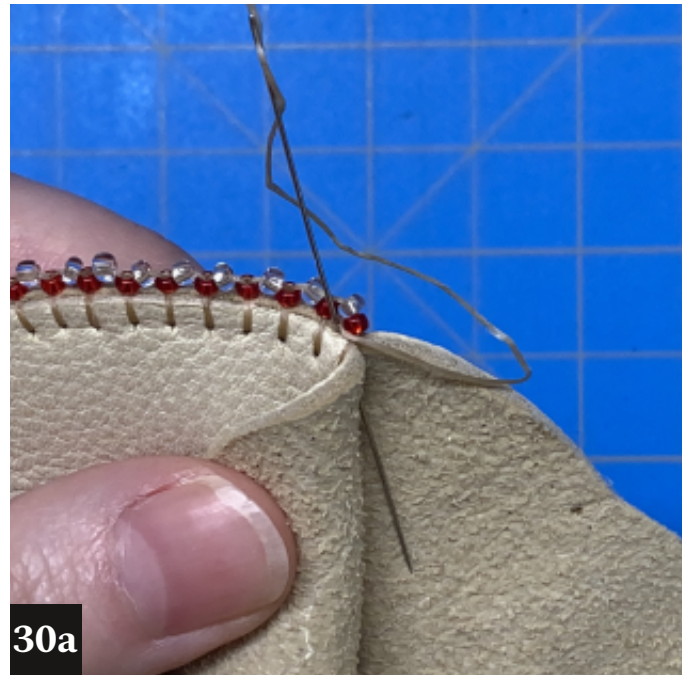
27 Pass your needle through the next stitching holes, pass through the Color A bead from right to left...

28 ...and pull snug.

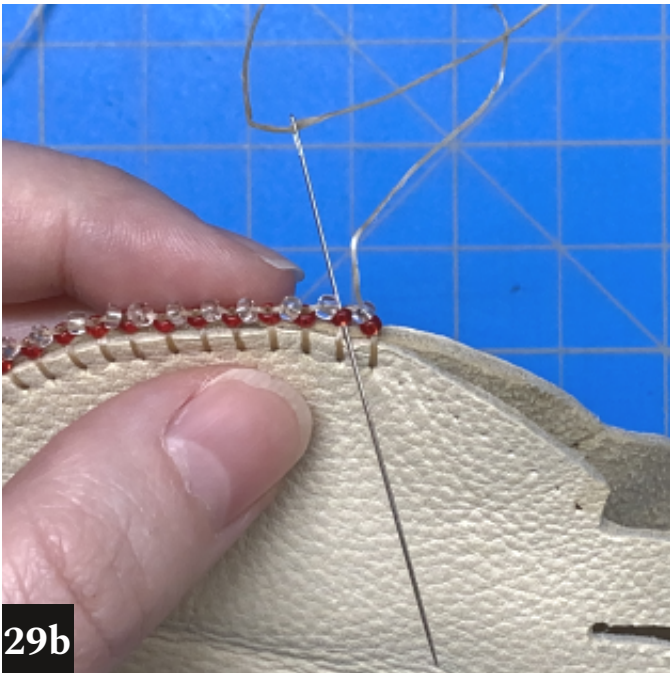
Repeat in this manner until you have about 6 inches (15 cm) of thread left.



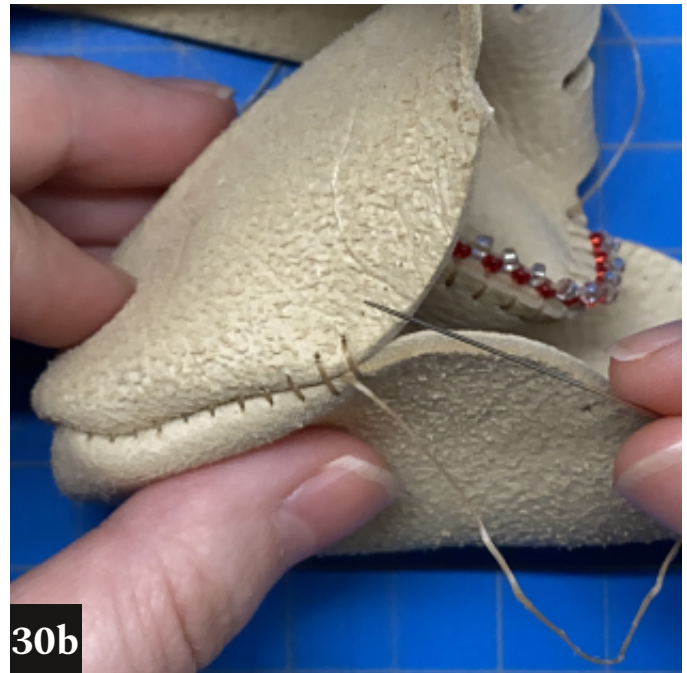
29a



30a



29b

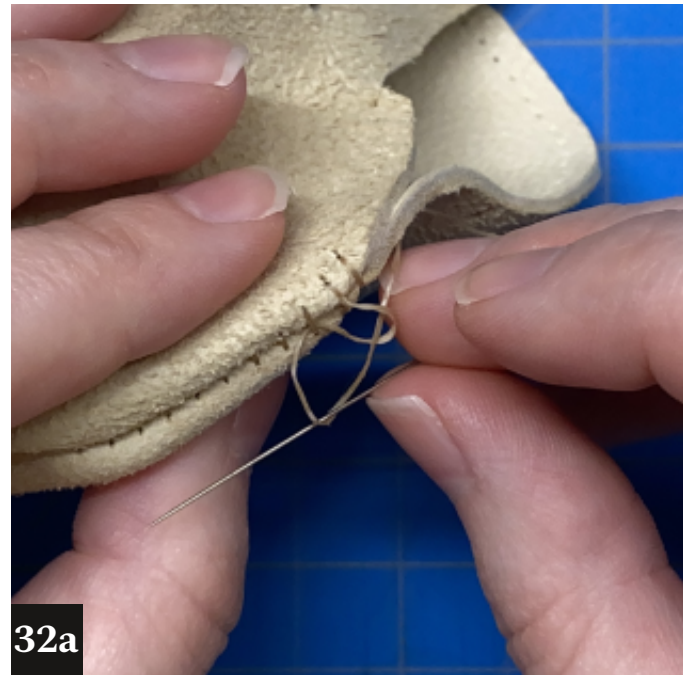
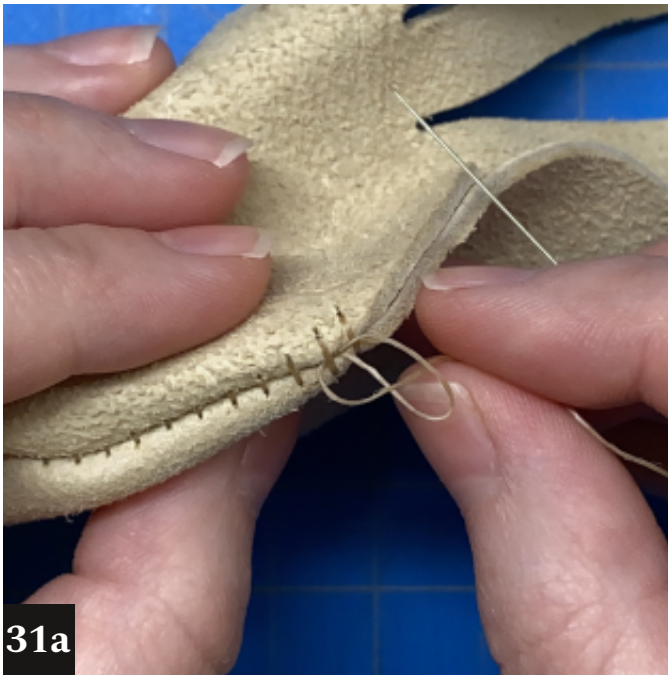


30b

29 To end your current thread and tie on a new one, pass your needle back through the last Color B and Color A beads.

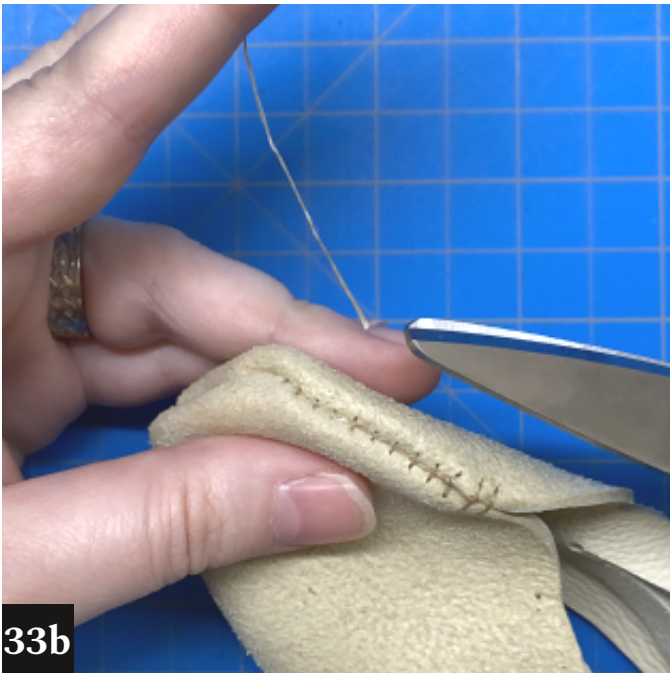
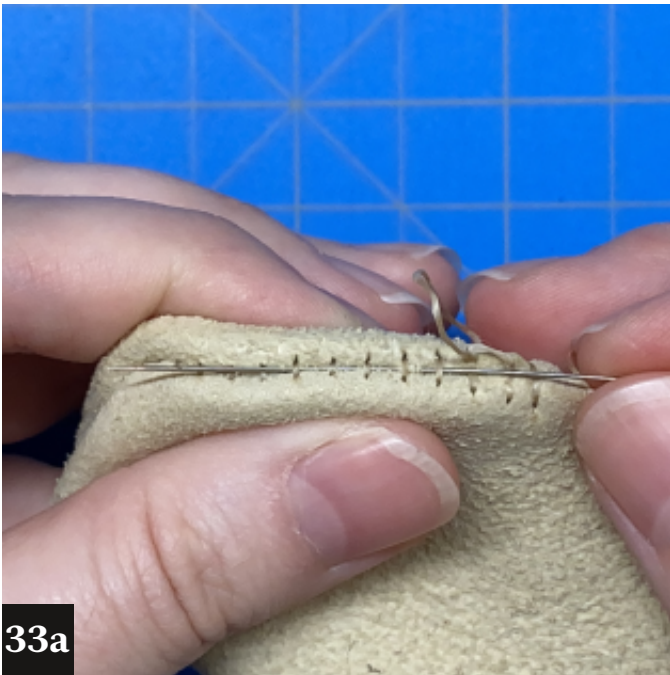
30 Insert your needle between the leather pieces, under the Color A bead you just passed through, and pull snug.

Turn your bag inside out.



31 Loop and knot your thread around the next stitch left of where your needle passed through.

32 Move left to the next stitch, and loop and knot again.



33 Slide your needle under the next 7 or 8 stitches, and pull through. Trim the thread close to the bag.

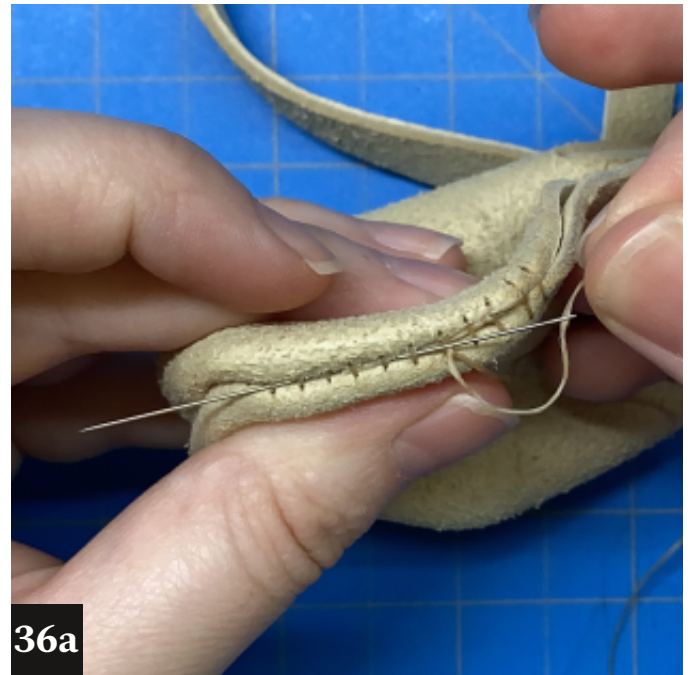
Repeat these steps now to fasten off the thread from the beginning of the edging.

34 Thread your needle with another length of thread or split sinew. Insert it under the 5th stitch from the end.

Pull through, leaving a tail of 3 or 4 inches.



35a



36a



35b



36b

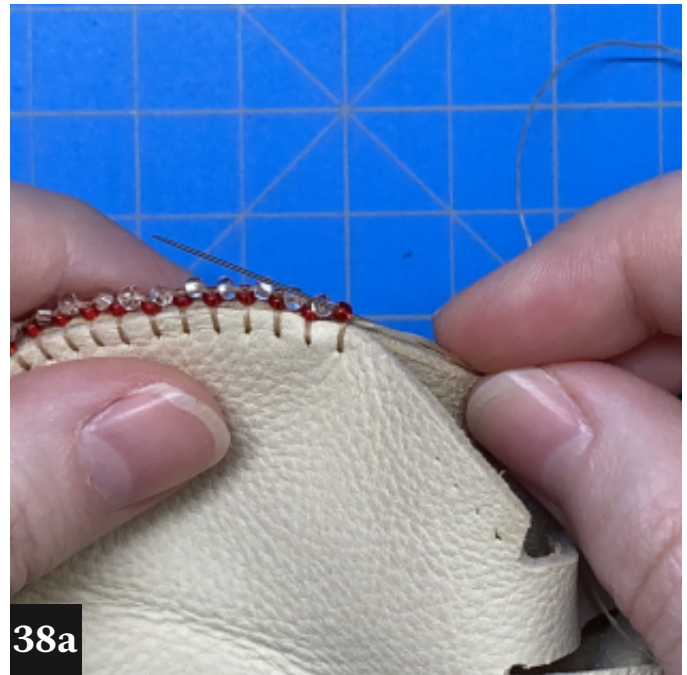
35 Tie a square knot around the stitch.

Take another larger needle and pass it unthreaded through about 8 stitches toward the beginning of the edging.

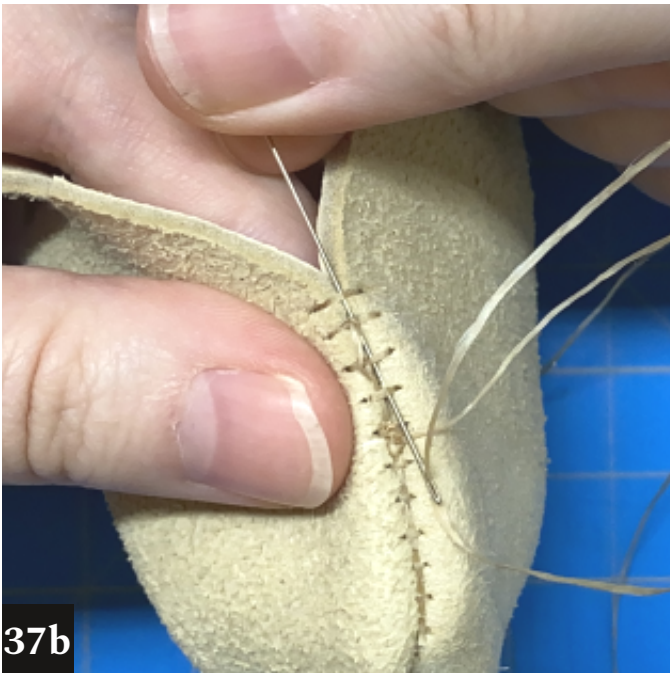
36 Thread the needle with the short tail. Pull through and trim close to the bag.



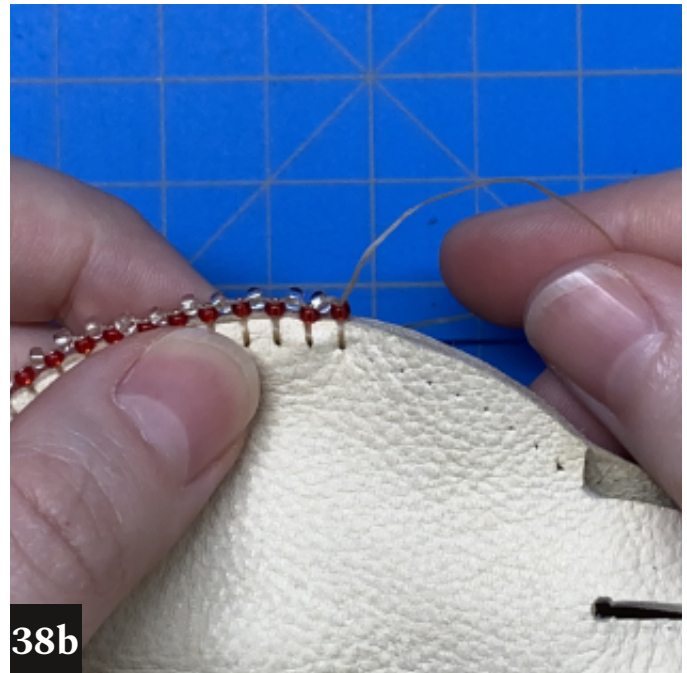
37a



38a



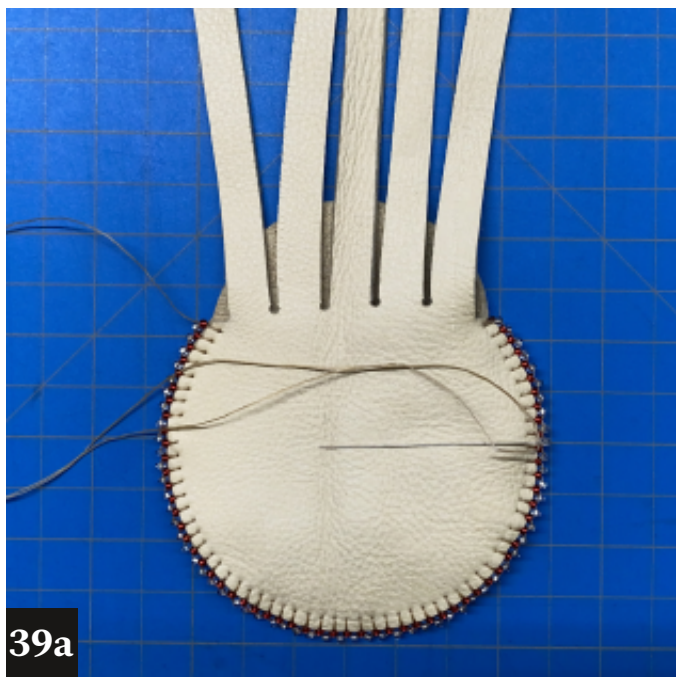
37b



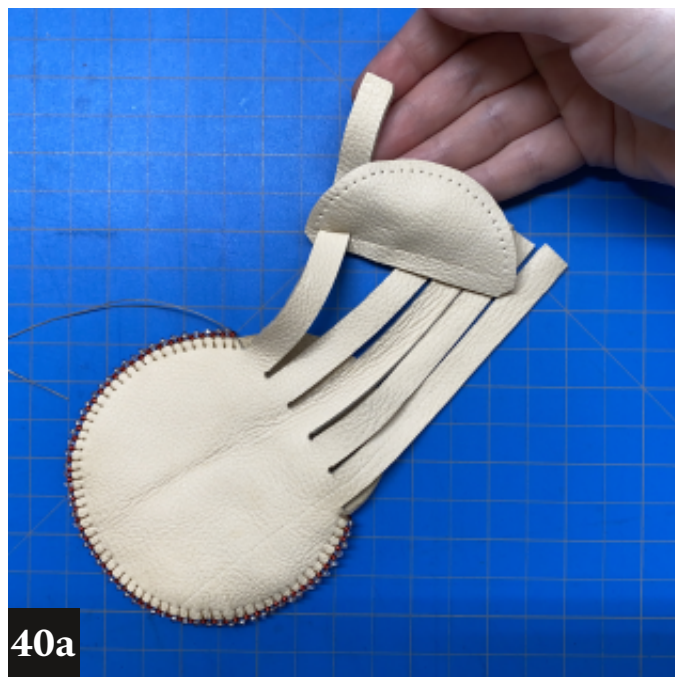
38b

37 Take your main beading needle and run it in the other direction, back to where you left off. Pull through.

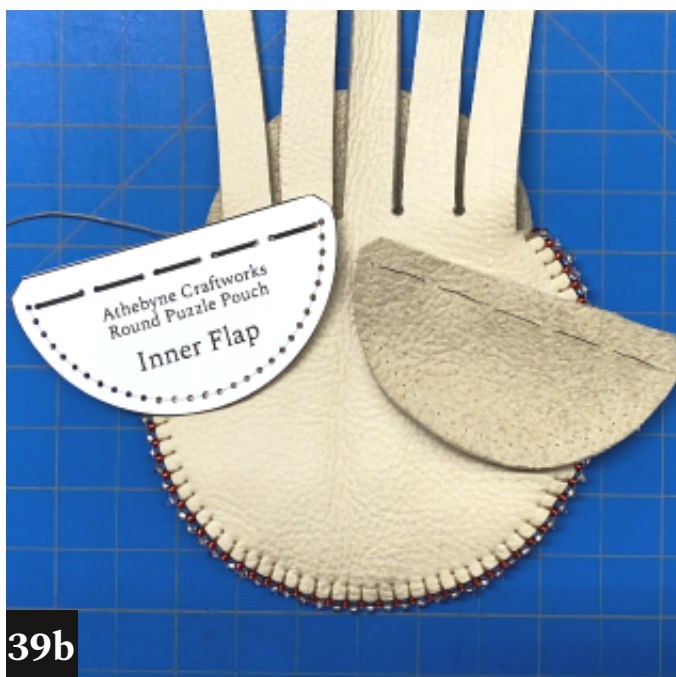
38 Pass your needle through the last Color A bead from bottom to top. Pull snug, and continue working the zipper edging.



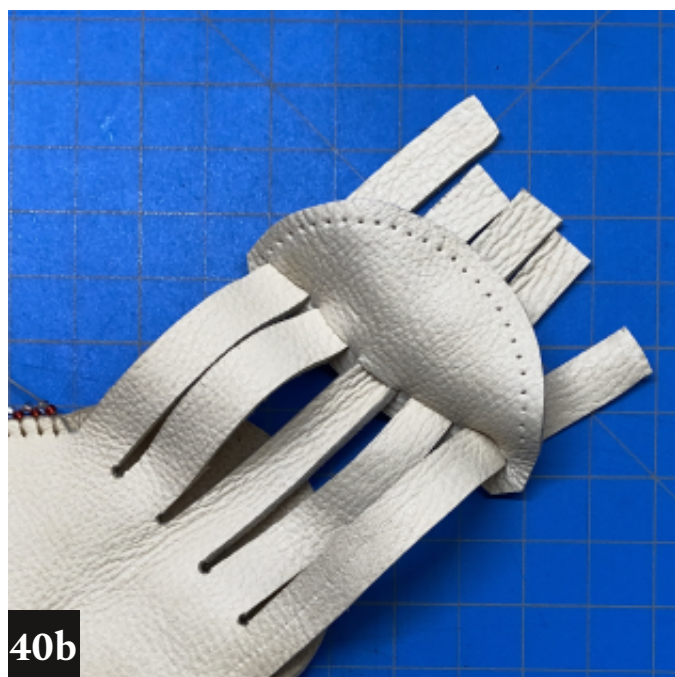
39a



40a



39b

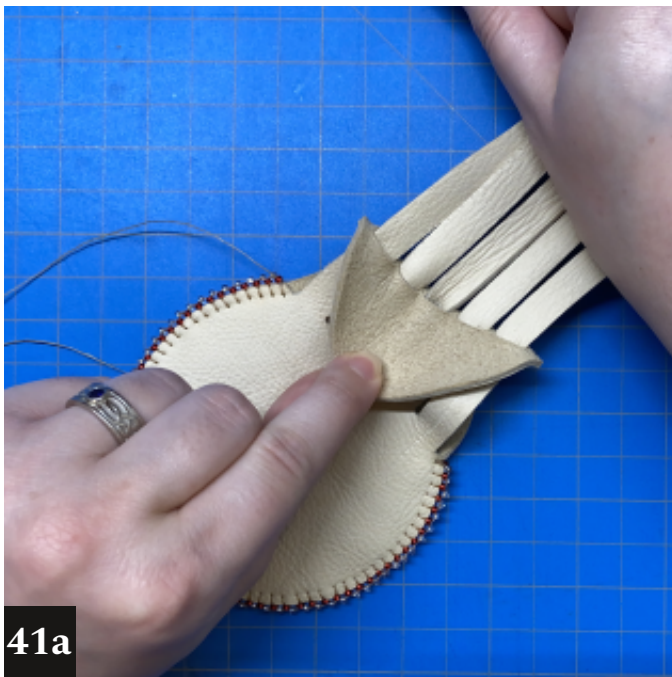


40b

39 Work the edging until you have stitched all Front piece holes. Set your needle aside, but do not fasten off or cut the thread yet.

It's time to attach the flaps. Start with the Inner Flap.

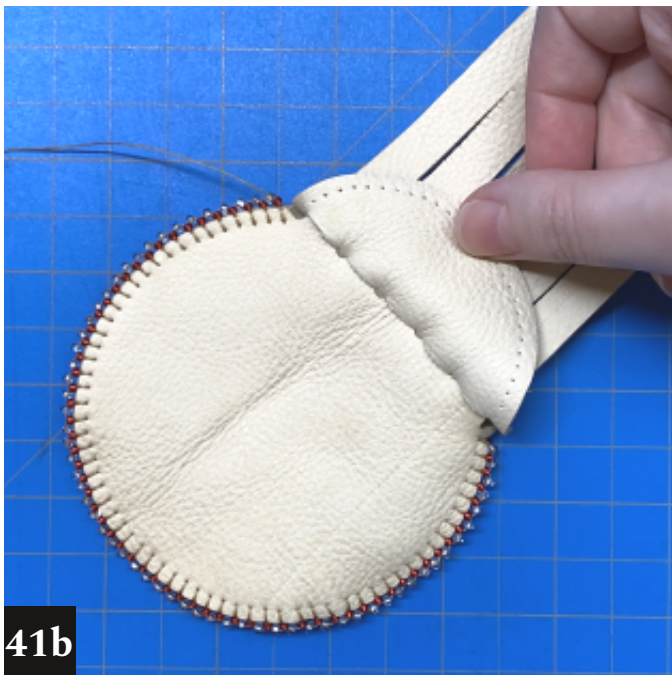
40 Slide each Front thong through each Inner Flap slit with the right side of the Inner Flap up as shown.



41a



42a



41b

41 Pull the Inner Flap down snug against the bottom of the thongs.



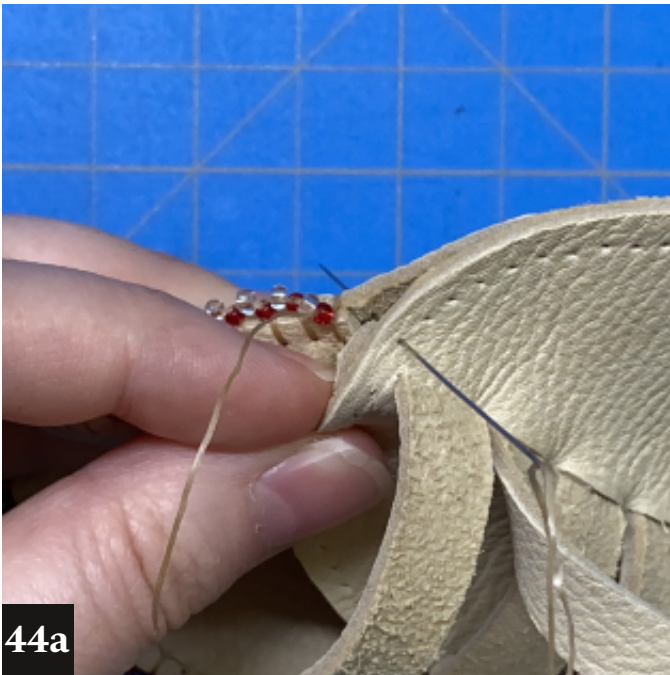
42b

42 Take the Top Flap and thread the thongs through the slits as shown, from wrong side to right side. Pull down snug over the Inner Flap.

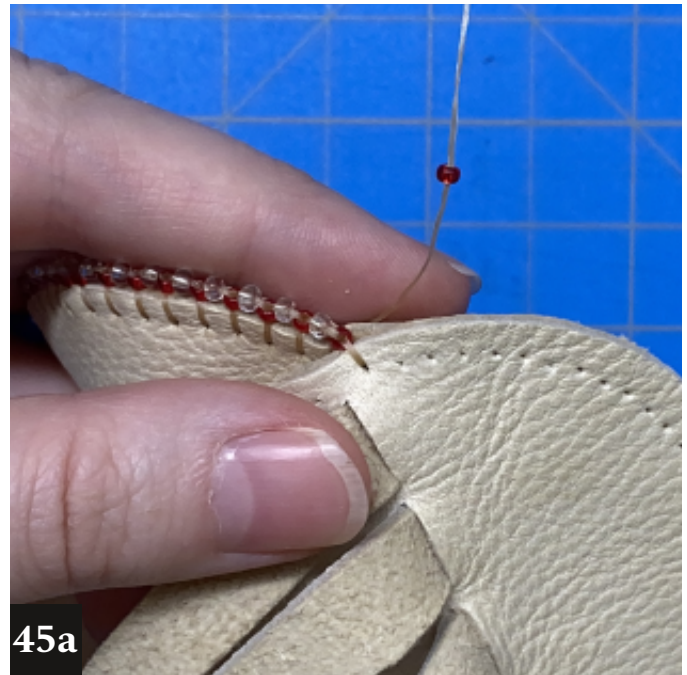


43 Check the front and back of your pouch to make sure the flaps look like this.





44a



45a



44b

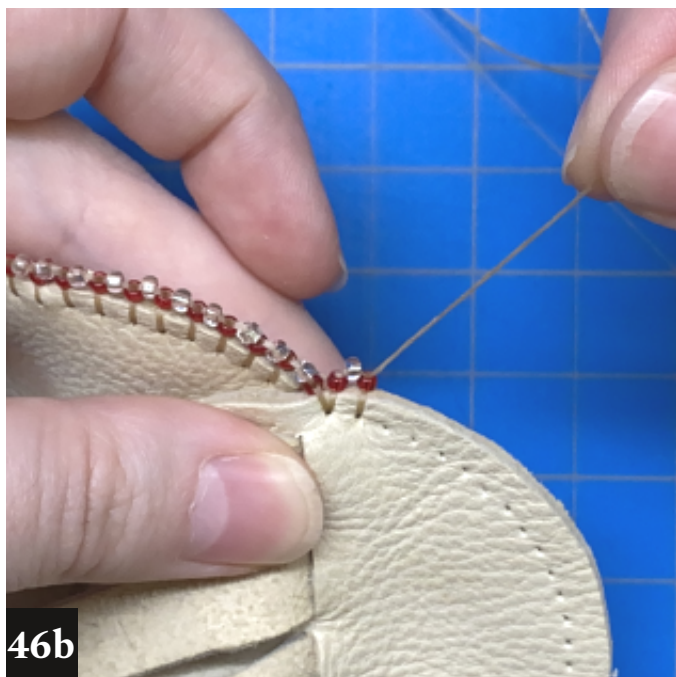


45b

44 To continue beading around the flap edge, insert your needle through Hole 2 on the top flap, and then Hole 2 on the Back. Pull snug.

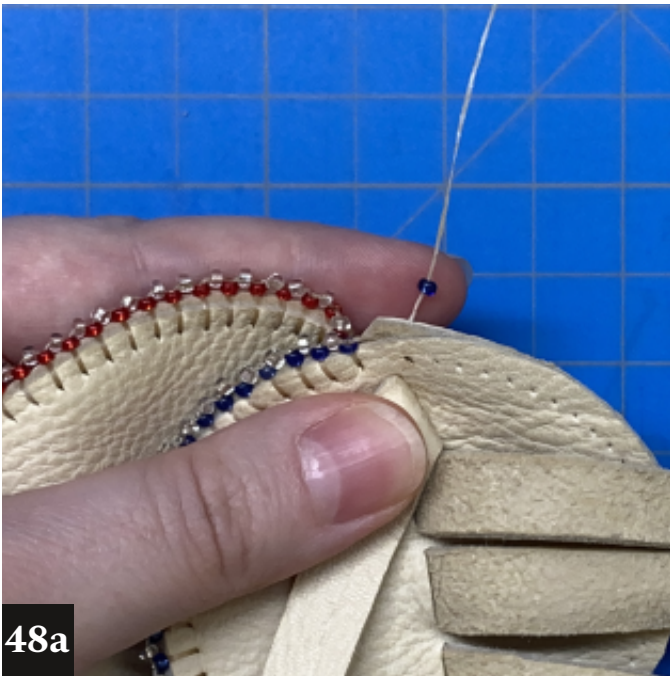
If you are beading your flaps with a different color, this is the time to change colors.

45 Pick up a Color A bead. Pass your needle through the same Hole 2 in the Top Flap and Back again, leaving a little loop.

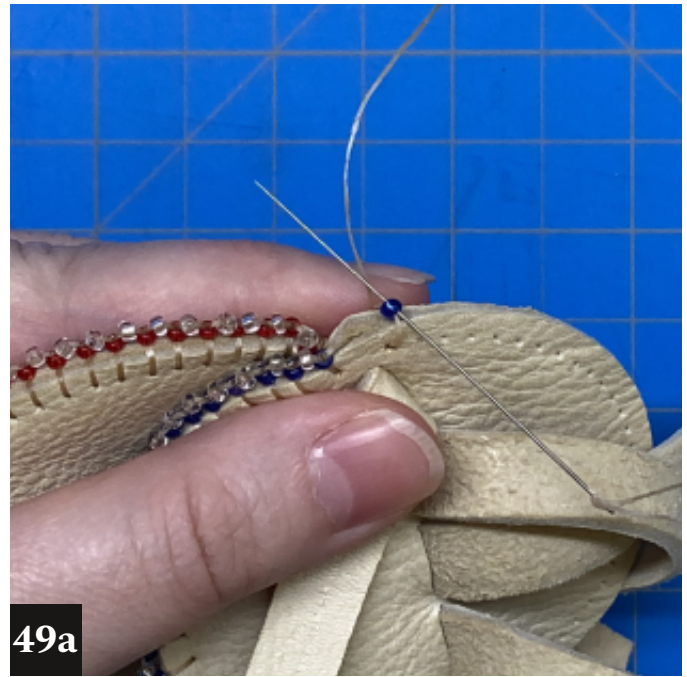


46 As you've been doing, pass your needle from right to left through this bead. Continue working the zipper edging all the way around to the other side of the bag.

47 When you have run out of Back holes, pass your needle through Hole 3 in the Inner Flap from wrong side to right side as shown. Pull snug.



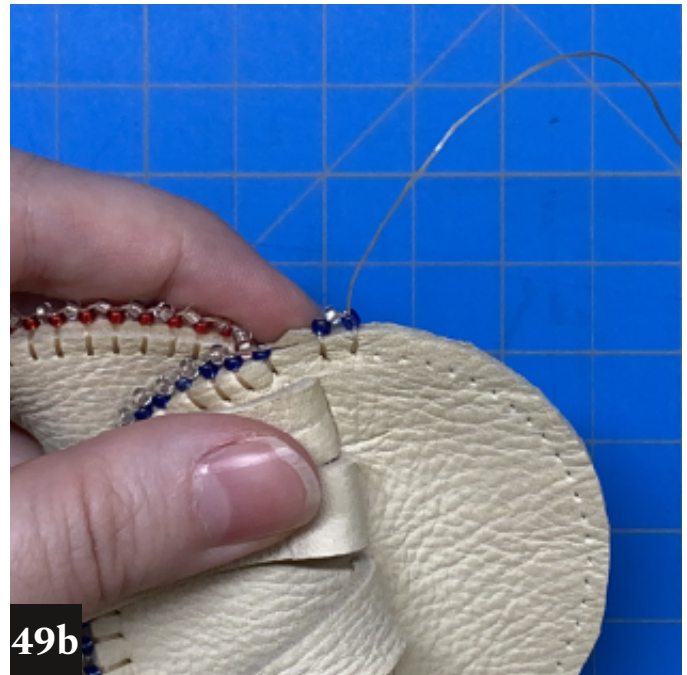
48a



49a



48b



49b

48 Pick up a Color A bead and pass your needle through both Holes 3, from Top Flap to Inner Flap. Leave a small loop.

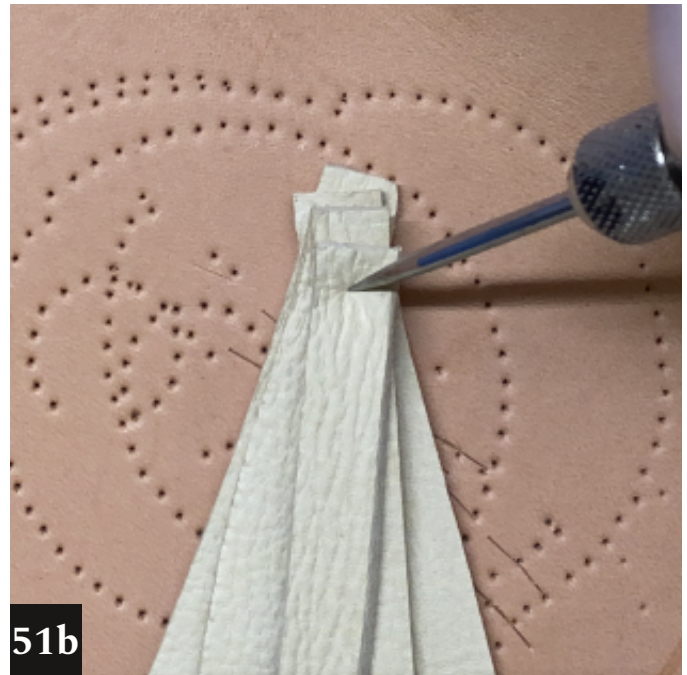
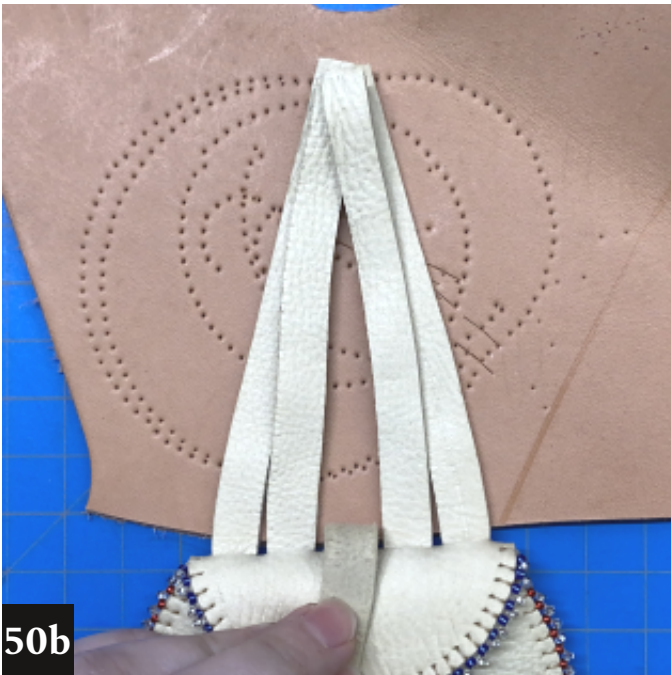
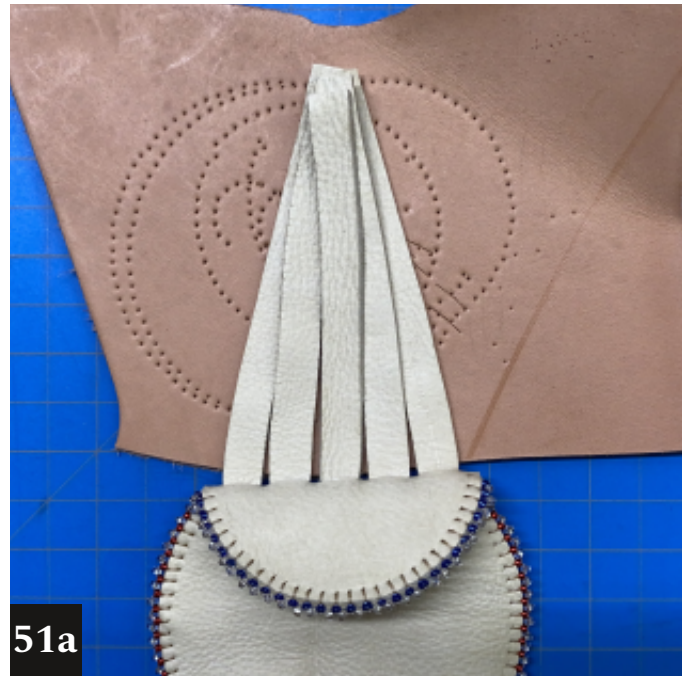
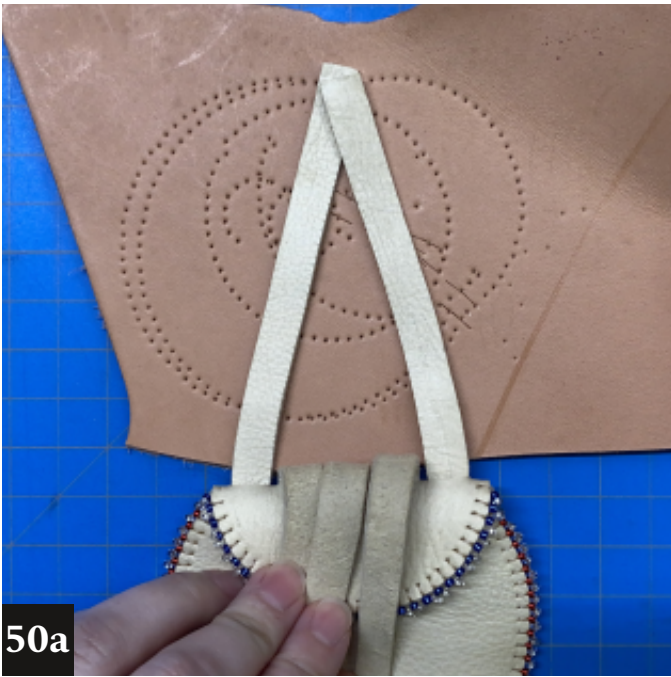
49 As before, pass your needle from right to left through the bead, and pull snug.

Continue beading around the rest of the flap. When finished, knot the thread to fasten off. Slide your needle and thread between the leather pieces under the stitches, pulling snug to hide the knot. Trim thread close to the bag.

Attaching the Fob

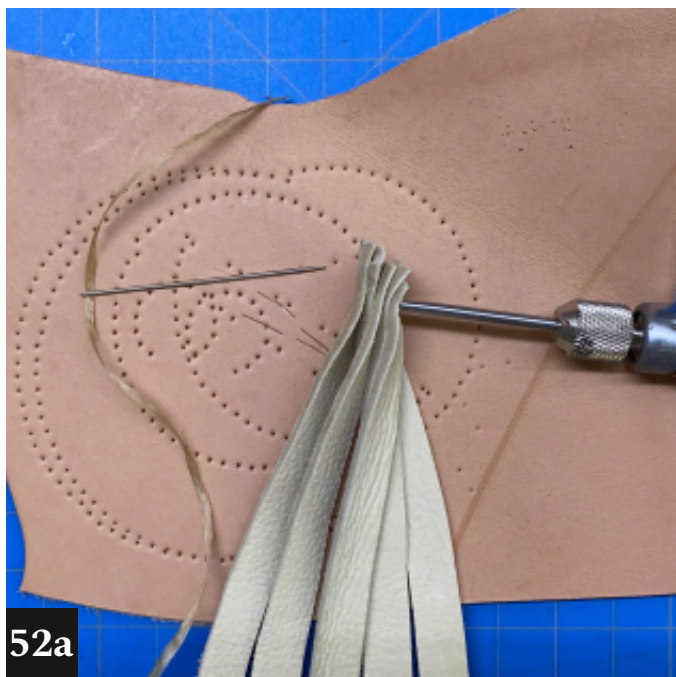


Take a moment to admire your work so far. Your pouch is coming together! The final step is to attach the fob, which will gather and hold the thongs.

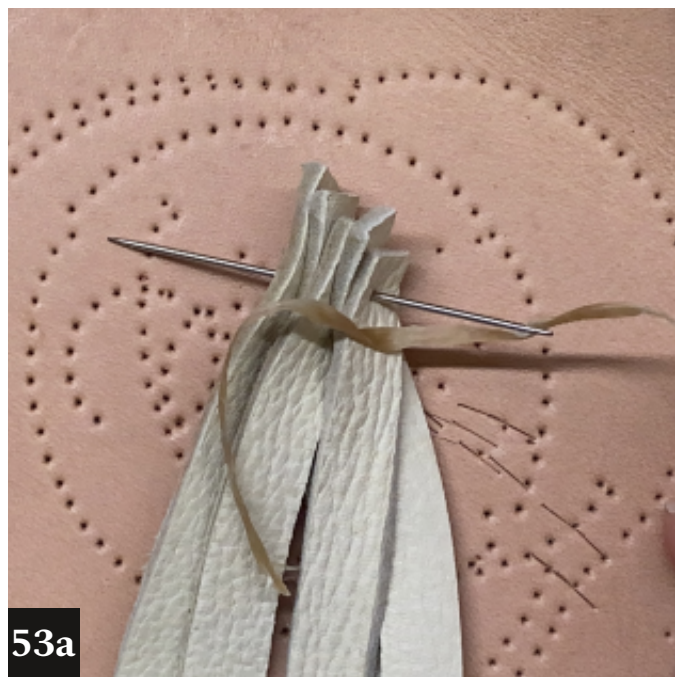


50

51



52a



53a



52b



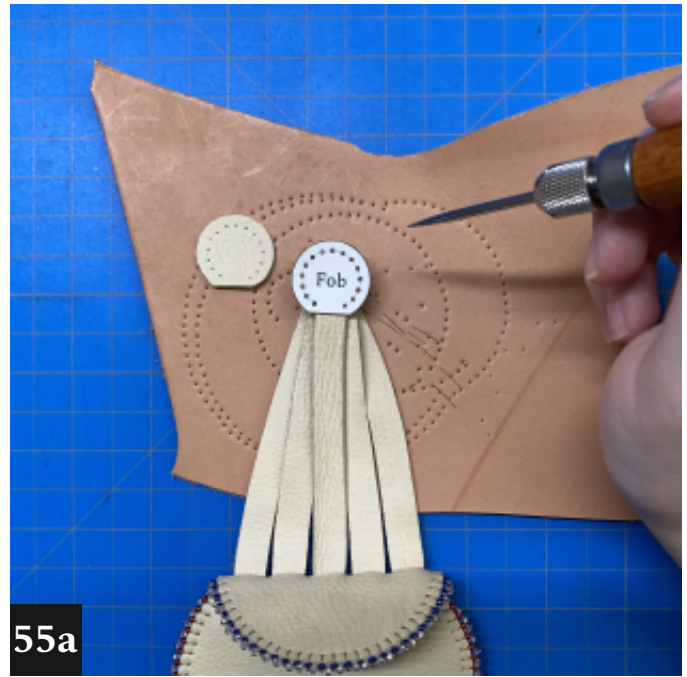
53b

52 Pierce through all 5 thongs with the awl. Thread a sturdy needle with a full width piece of sinew, or several strands of thread, about 5 inches (13 cm) long. Insert the needle into the holes the awl made.

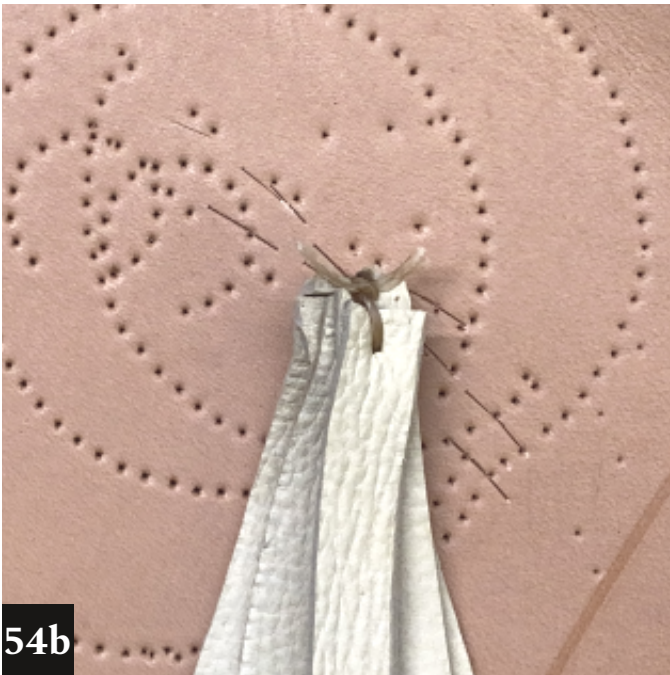
53 Draw the needle all the way through, leaving a tail on both sides. Tie a square knot over the top of the thongs.



54a



55a



54b

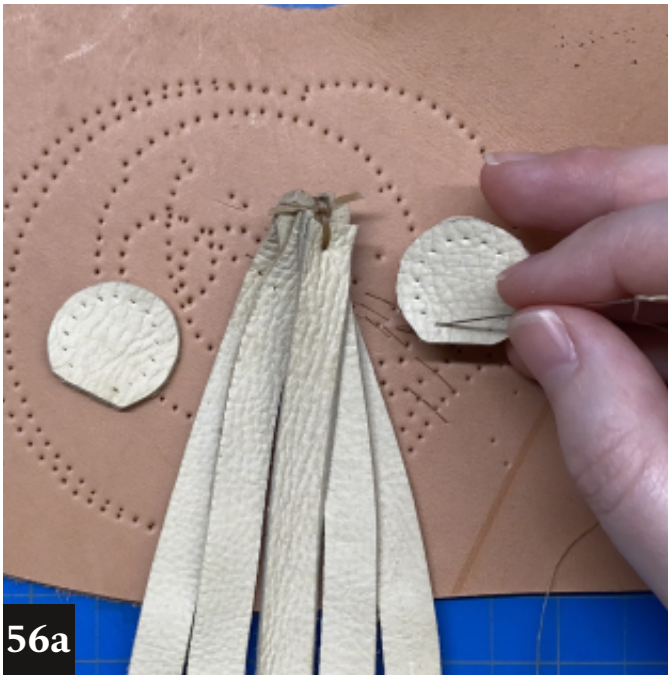


55b

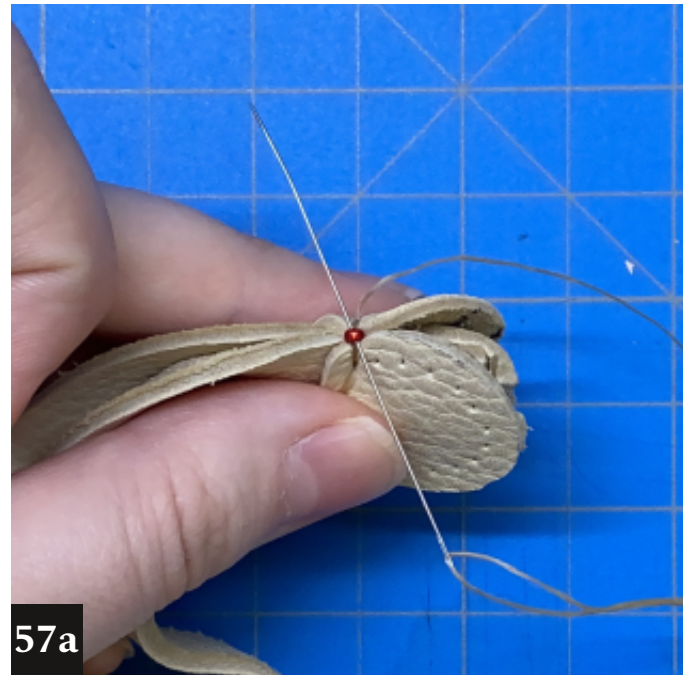
54 Put a small drop of glue or nail polish on the knot and let it dry. Trim the tails to about 1/4 inch (6 mm).

55 Lay your Fob pattern piece over the top of the thongs. The stitching line must not overlap the knot.

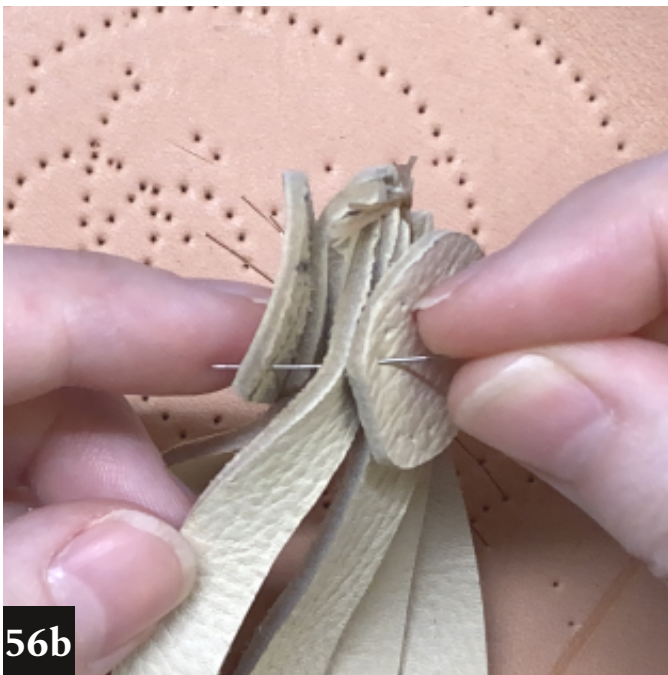
Use the awl to pierce holes in the thongs where the fob overlays them. There will be just 1 or 2 per side.



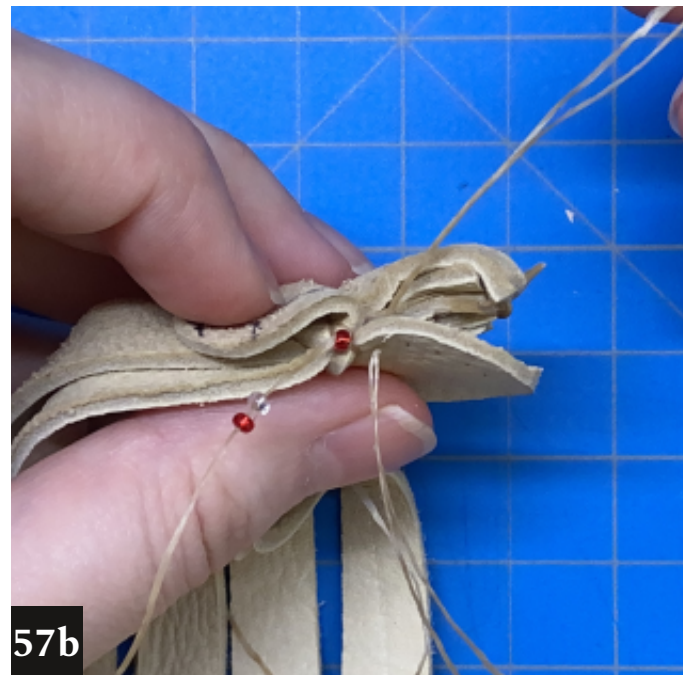
56a



57a



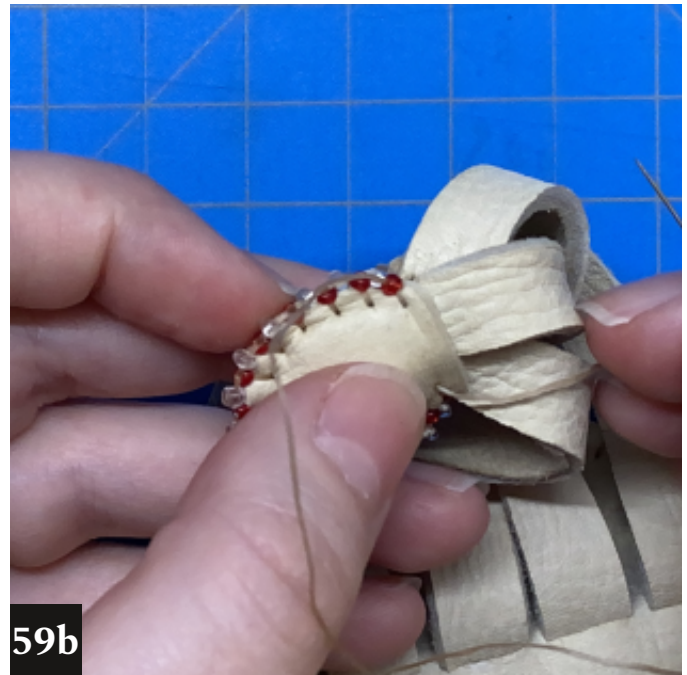
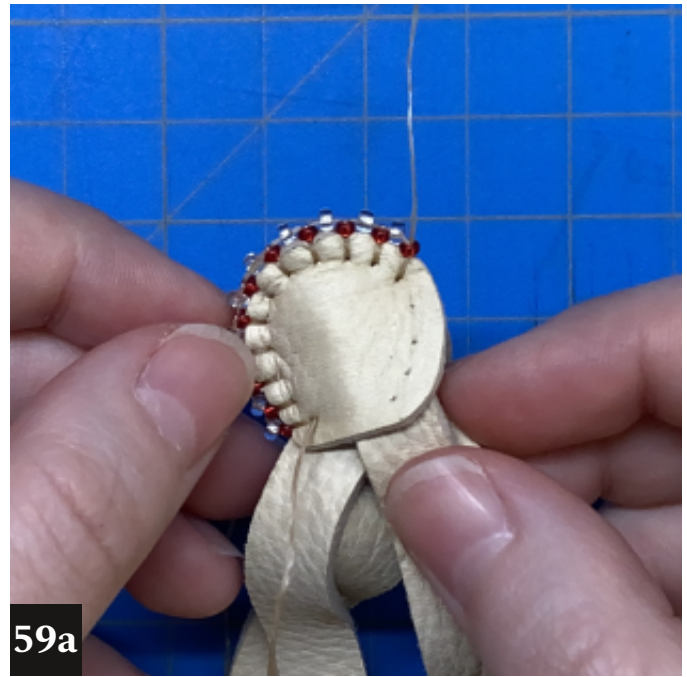
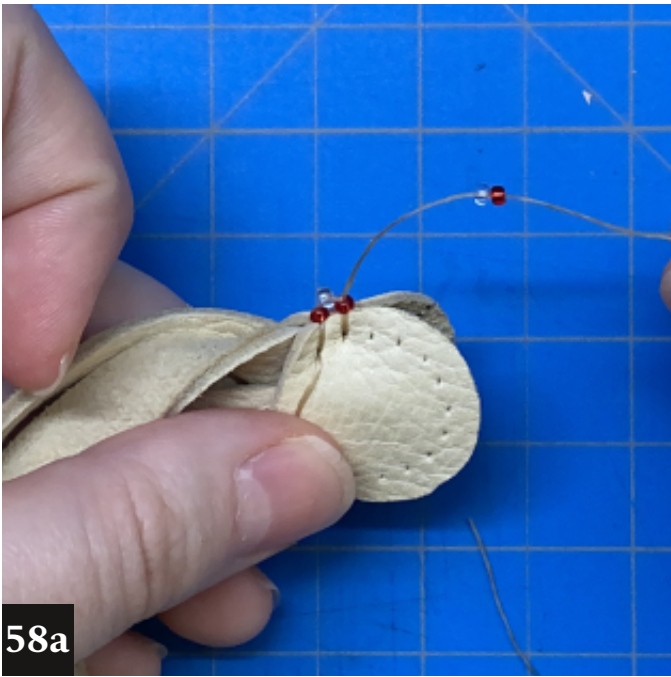
56b



57b

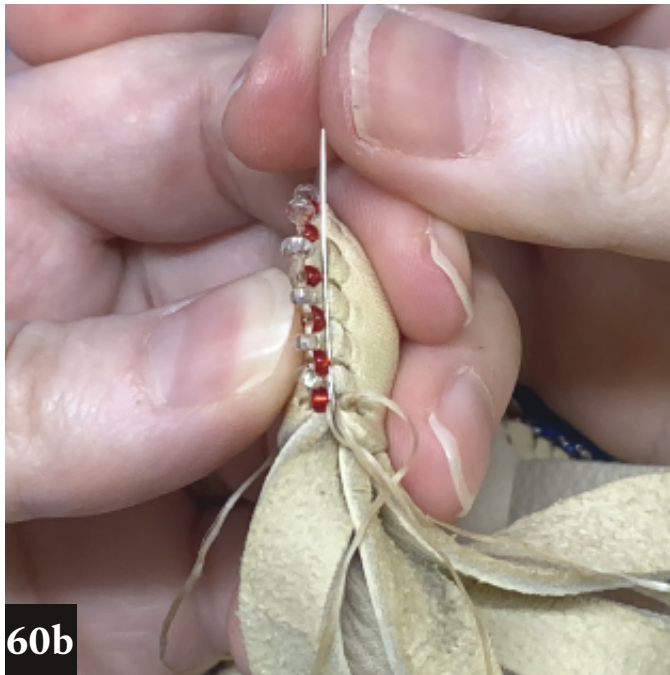
56

57



58

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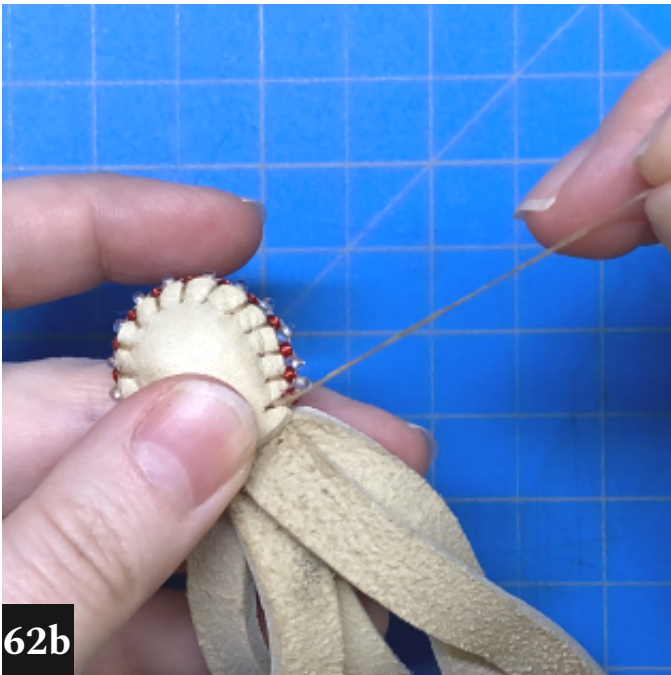


60

61



62a

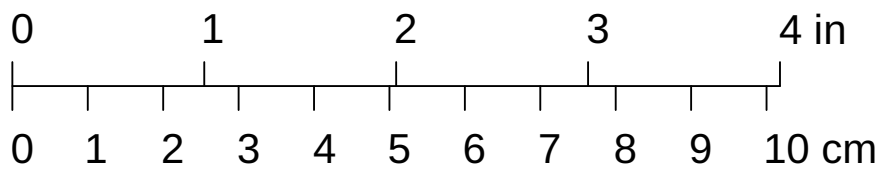


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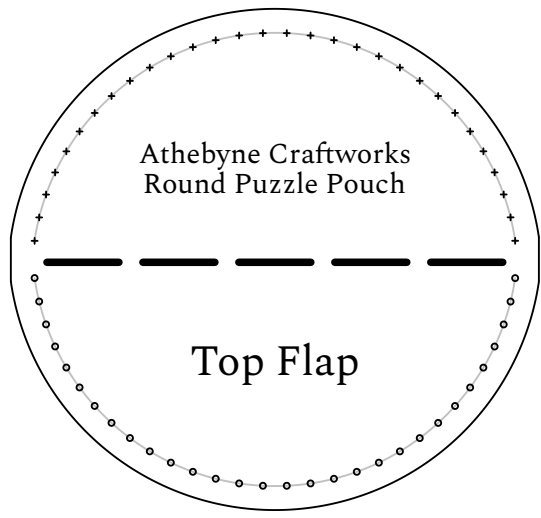
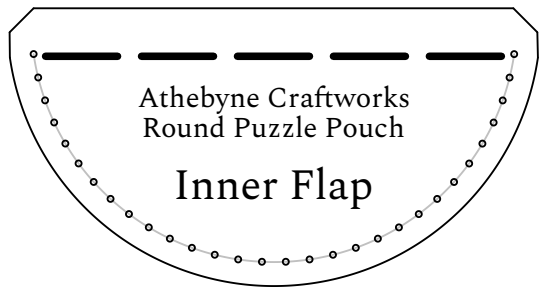
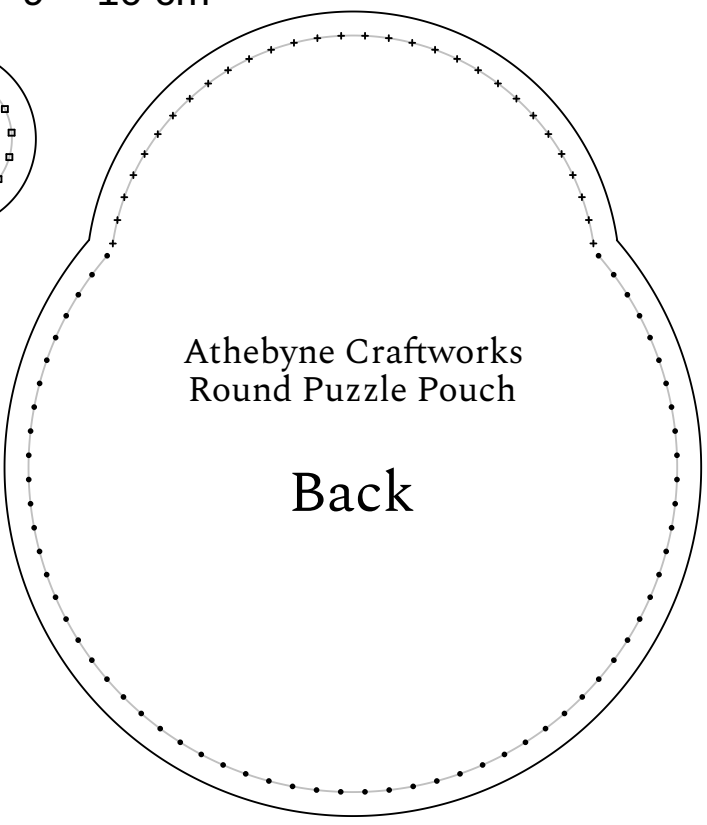
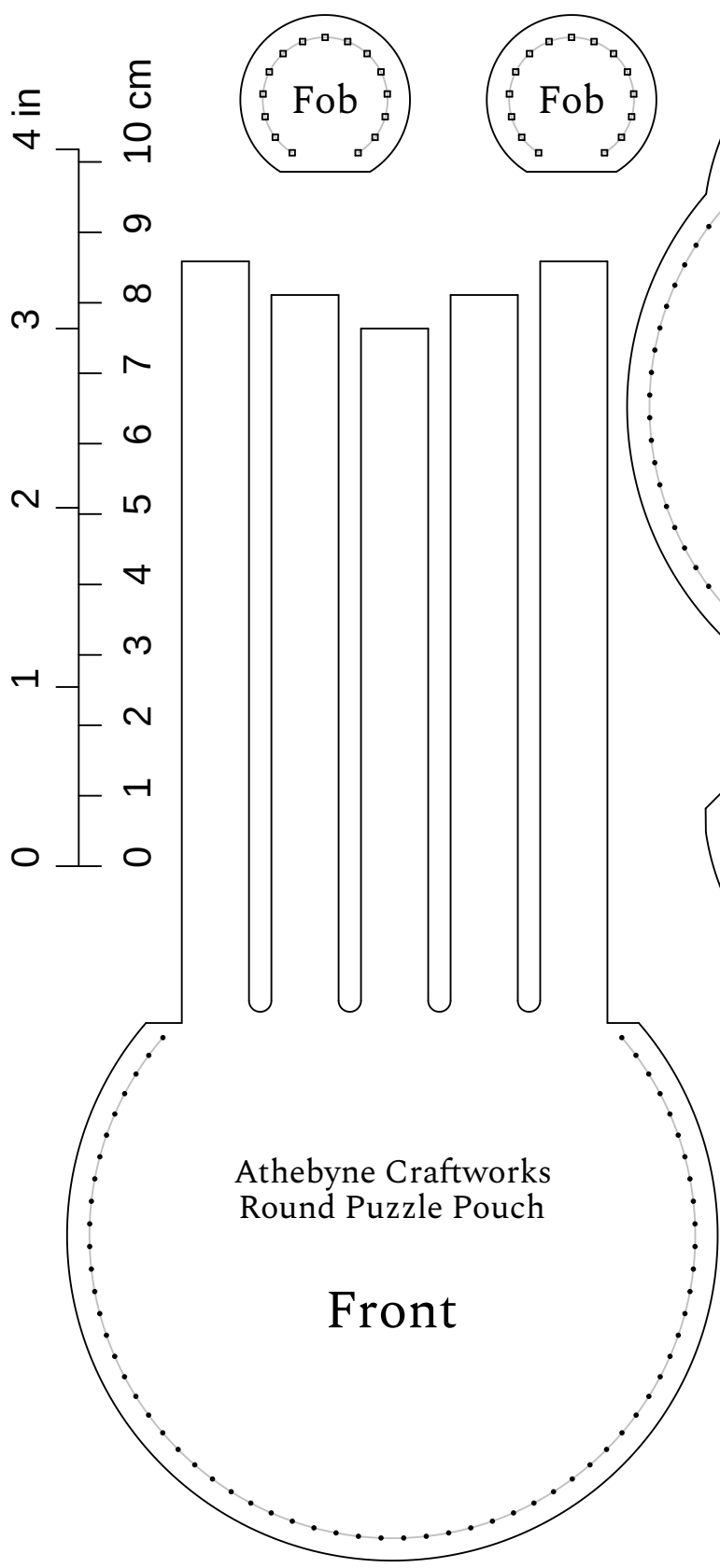
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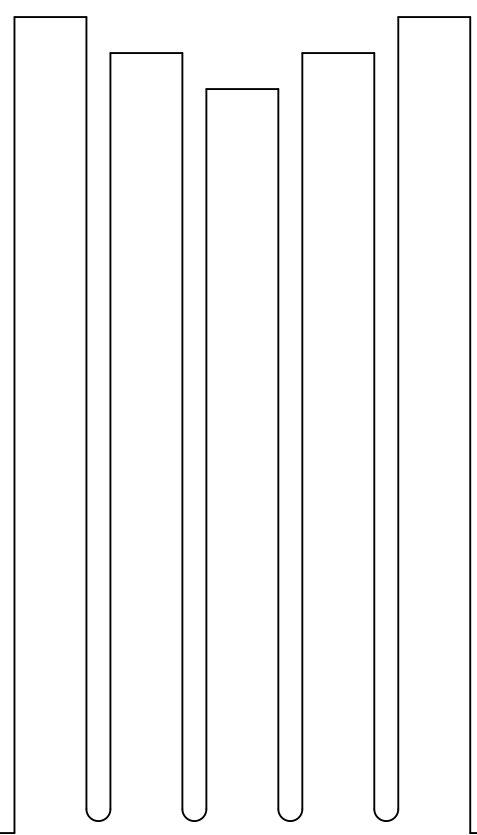
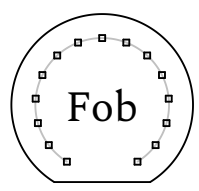
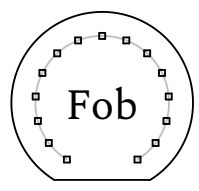
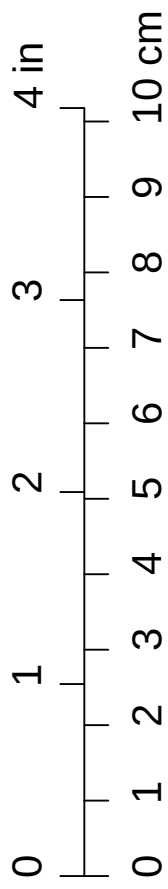
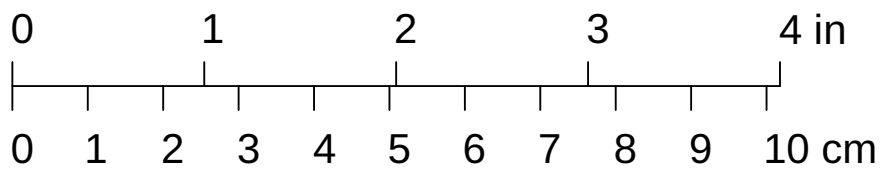


■ Congratulations! Your puzzle pouch is complete!



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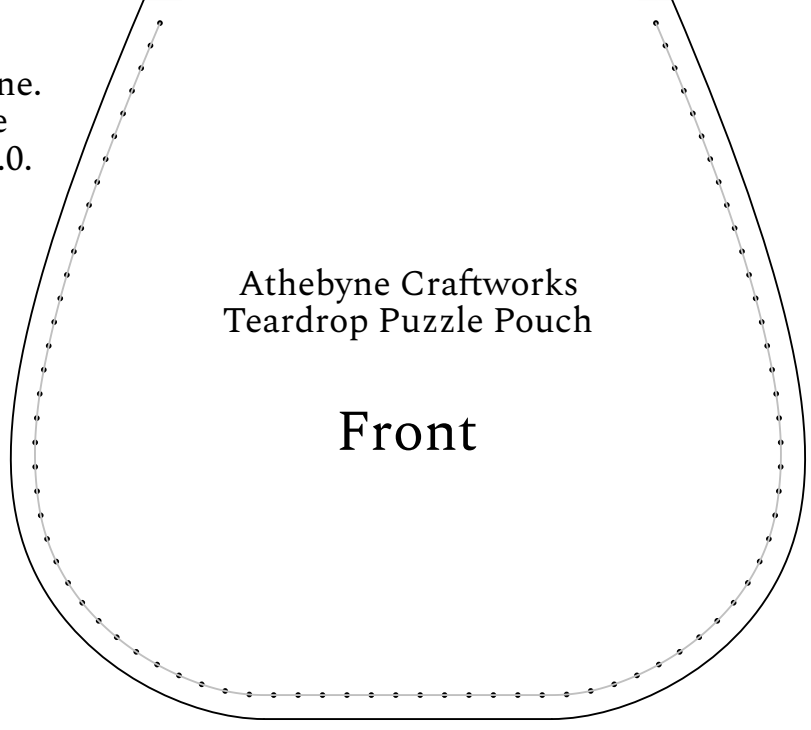


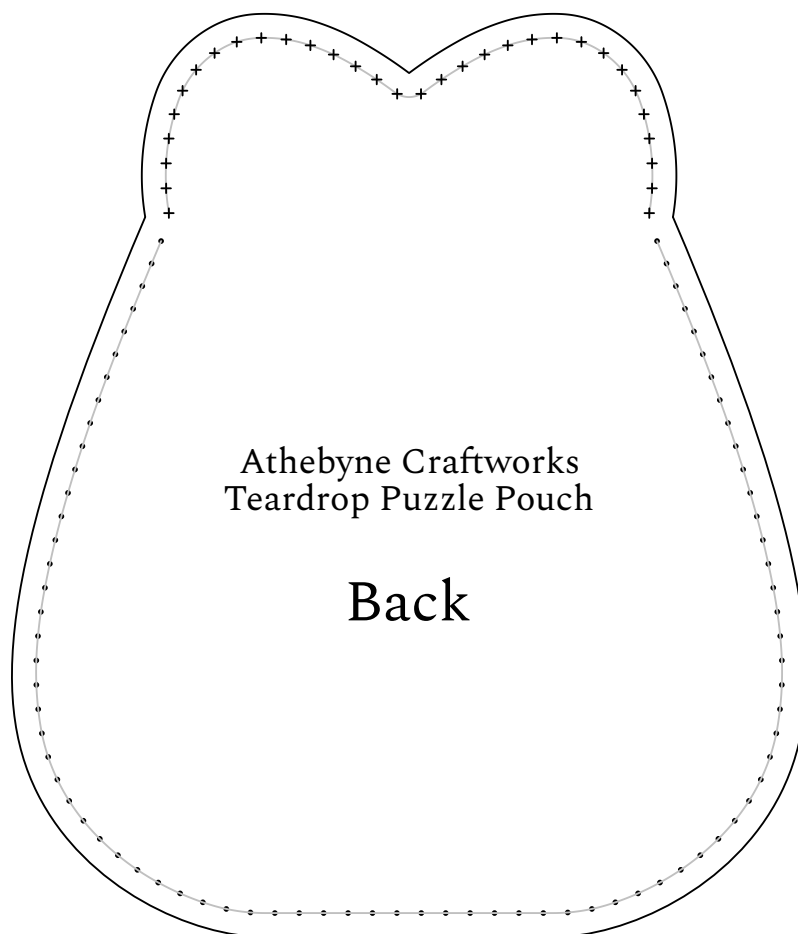
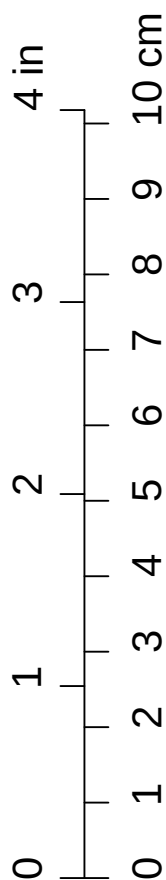
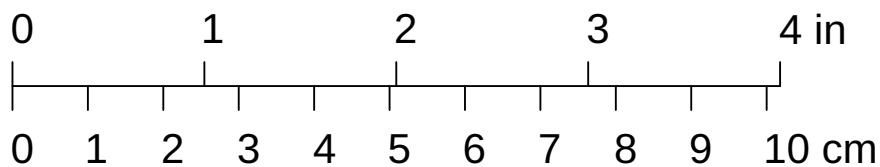


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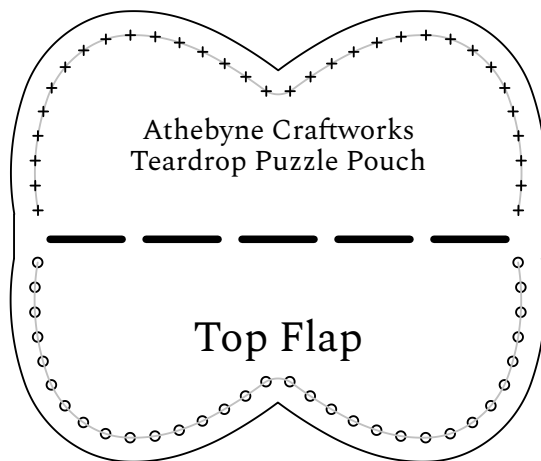
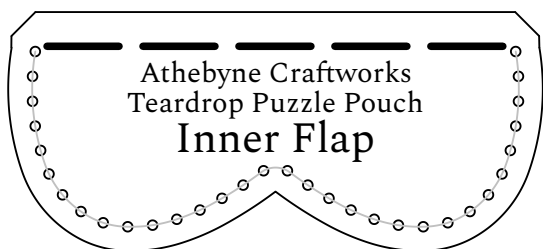
Athebyne Craftworks
Teardrop Puzzle Pouch

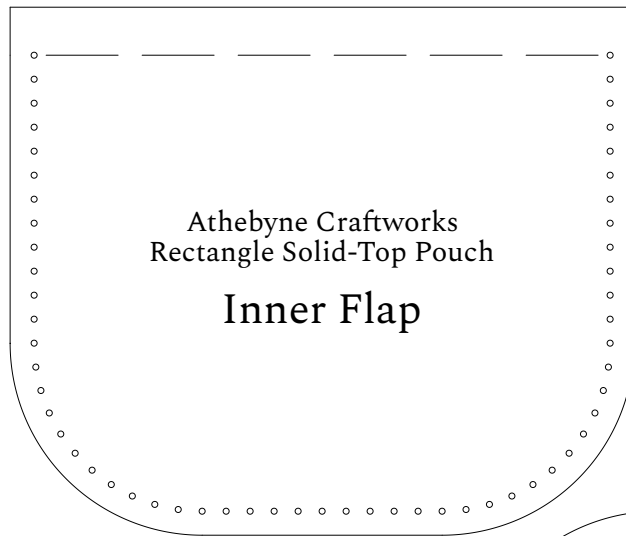
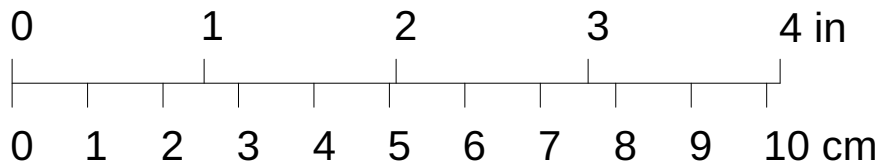
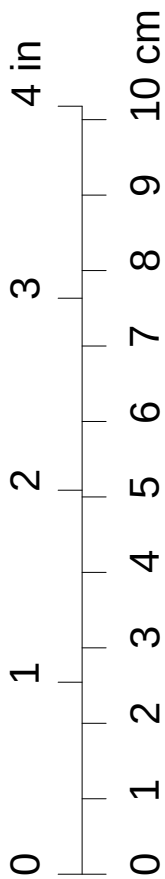
Front



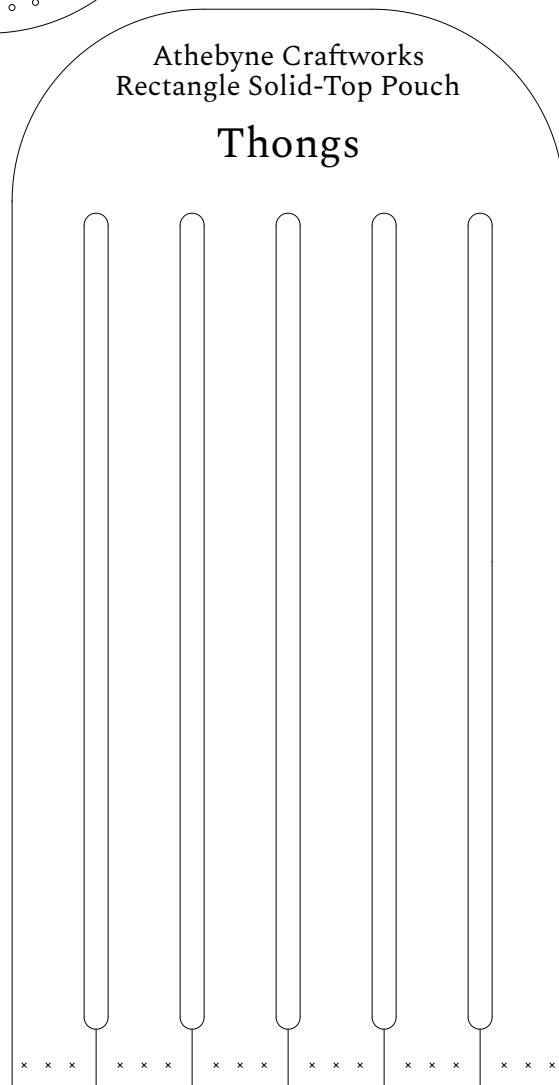
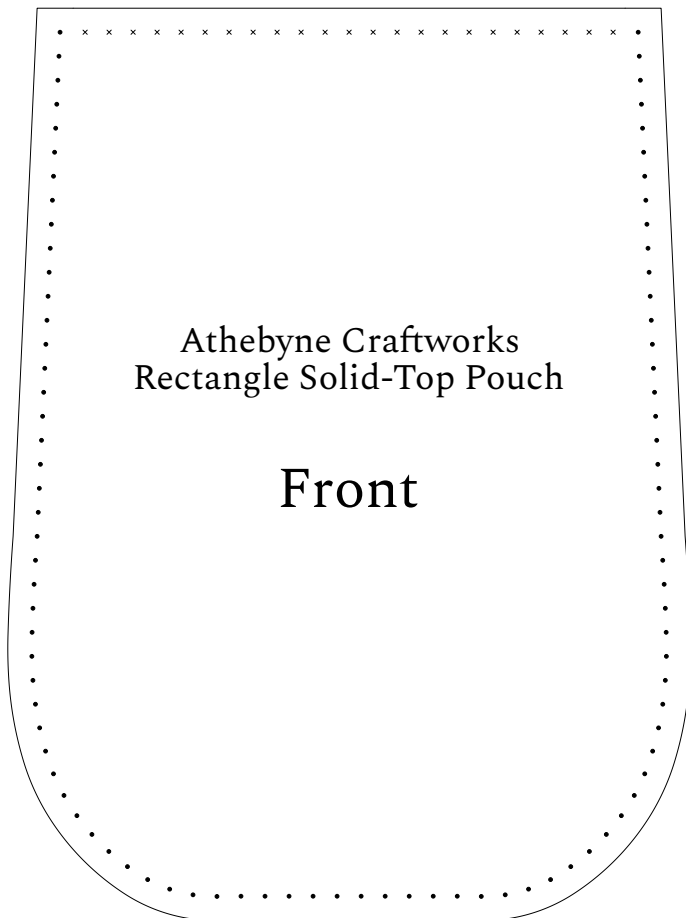


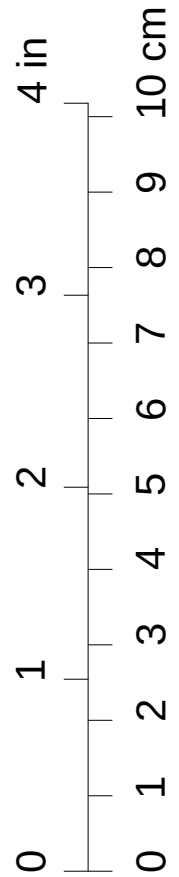
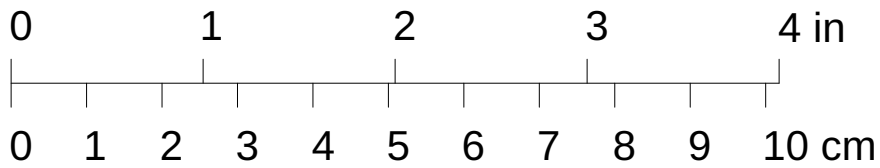
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