

# OSAGE CRADLEBOARDS



Osage cradleboards are made of wood and decorated with yarnwork, beadwork, cloth, paint, and other items. Bells attached to the bow gently tinkle, comforting the baby.



The Osage cradleboard shows cultural continuity. Modern Osage cradleboards are much like the cradleboard above, photographed about 100 years ago.

The Osages have made and used cradleboards (also called babyboards) for centuries. The cradleboard is a safe, secure place for a baby to sleep and rest. The baby is protected by the bow in front and padded board behind. A sash secures the baby on the board. A cloth draped over the bow protects the baby from sun, wind, and insects.



Doctors today recommend that parents “swaddle” babies, wrapping them tightly to calm them and help them sleep. Native Americans have done this with cradleboards for thousands of years.

Some Native American groups traditionally strapped the cradleboard to the mother’s back. The Osages did not do this. Rather, they carried the board in their arms in past times, just as they do today.

Osage Culture Traveling Trunk Project

