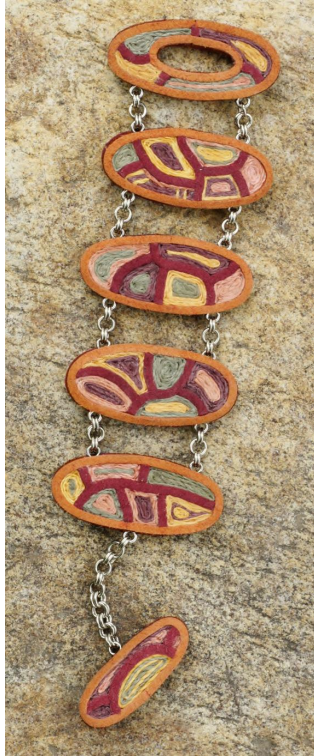




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# Honoring Spirit

Leather / Seed Beads



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If you have comments or suggestions about this project, please feel free to email me. I would love to hear from you.

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# *Honoring Spirit*

Huichol Indians, living in the mountain regions of north central Mexico, developed the methods used to make this reversible bracelet. Much of Huichol artwork was used in ceremonies and as offerings to the gods. For this reason The Huichol created their work with shapes and colors that hold deep, religious and symbolic significance. Traditionally, beeswax was the adhesive used to complete their meticulous patterns. Showcasing their beading technique, which dates to the late nineteenth century, was my inspiration for this bracelet.

I chose random shapes and patterns embellished with modern materials and adhesives. One side of the bracelet displays seed beads surrounded by leather cord. The reverse side incorporates the use of string, a material they began using around the mid twentieth century.

This project will take some time to complete. For me, it offered an opportunity to reflect on another place and time and to appreciate all the grandmothers, both past and present.



*Honoring Spirit*  
Leather & Hemp Cord

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Read through the entire tutorial before starting this project to allow time to consider how best to create your own design.

You may choose not to make the bracelet reversible, and use either the string or beads for your pattern. If a one sided bracelet is your choice, I would recommend you glue a piece of leather on the backside of the ovals instead of leather strips. This will create an equally beautiful piece. You could also fill some spaces with beads and some with thread, use other types of thread, or use beads closer in color for a more subtle design. So many options once again.

For the bracelet on the left, I used all the same color of beads. It is a cardboard tape roll with the inside covered with fur. Just a fun variation I wanted to share.

This is your project, so I encourage you to make it your own. Please send me any comments or suggestions for this tutorial. I would love to hear from you.

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# What You Will Need

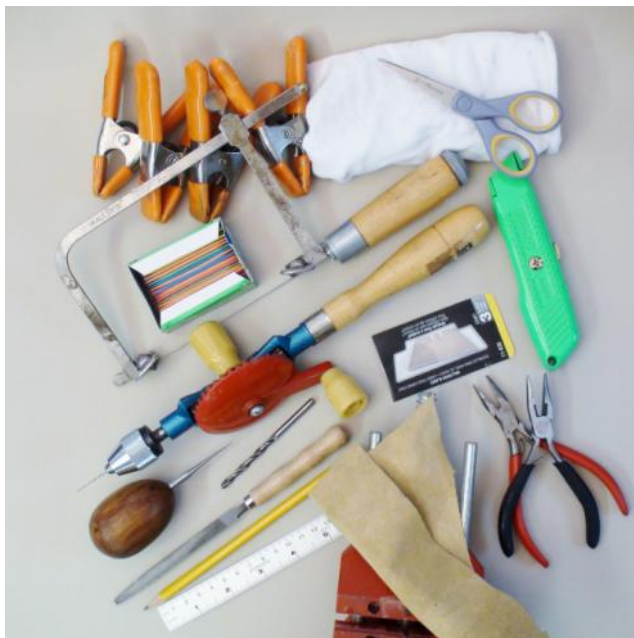


## Materials

- wooden oval shapes (various sizes)
- 18 gage nickel silver (4mm) jump rings (100 count)
- size 11 seed beads (various colors)
- small nickel plated screw eyes (3x12mm)
- 20 ft hemp cord
- 20 ft of suede cord

## Supplies

- silicone water protector (found in the shoe department)
- clear tacky glue
- wood glue



## Tools

- squeeze clamps
- soft cloth
- jewelers saw
- awl
- ruler
- vice
- half round wood file
- utility knife with blades
- hand drill with bits (size 62 and 1/16 inch)
- scissors
- toothpicks
- coarse saw blade
- leather cloth
- pencil
- old toothbrush

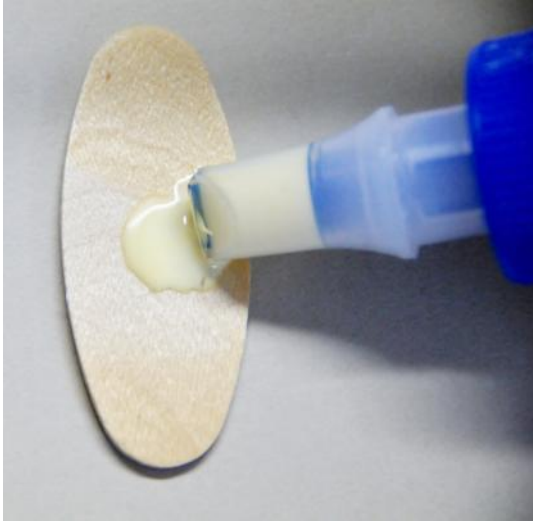
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# Oval Disc Preparation

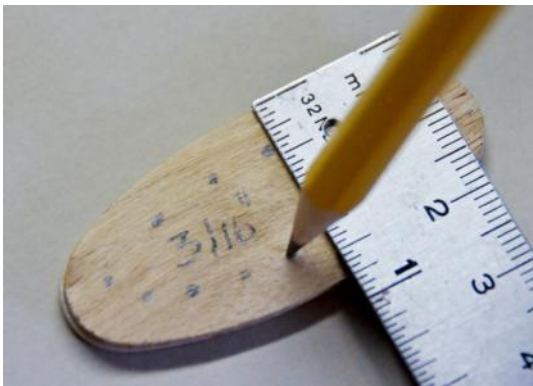


**1.** Apply wood glue to the surface of one large oval disc (disc size is approximately 2" x 7/8") and spread the glue evenly over the entire surface.

**Tip:** I found the oval wooden shapes too thin as a single layer. If you can find some shapes a bit thicker, no need to glue two together.



**2.** Select a second large disc and sandwich the two pieces together, making sure the borders match up evenly. Place a clamp on each end and allow to dry. Repeat this process five times with the large ovals. (Make six for a larger arm) Prepare one medium oval (size is approximately 1 5/8" x 9/16") in the same manner.



**3.** For the clasp, select one of the large prepared discs. Using a pencil and ruler, measure approximately 3/16" from the outer edge and place marks around the perimeter in approximately 1/4 inch intervals.



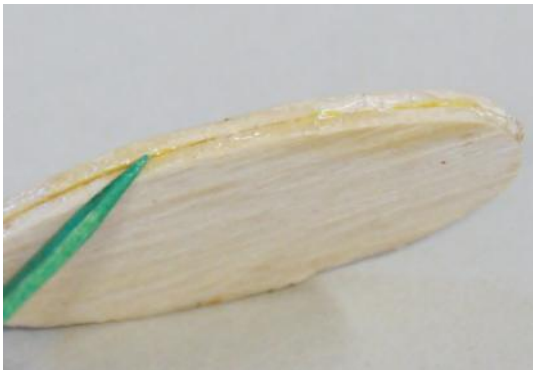
**4.** Connect the dots, making a smooth line approximately 3/16 inch from the perimeter. Then, use a 1/4 inch drill bit (or something similar) and drill a hole through the piece.



**5.** Use your jewelers saw, equipped with a course blade to remove the center of the disc.



**6.** A half round wood file works great to smooth the cut surface and remove any rough edges. If you don't have a file, coarse sandpaper will work just as well.



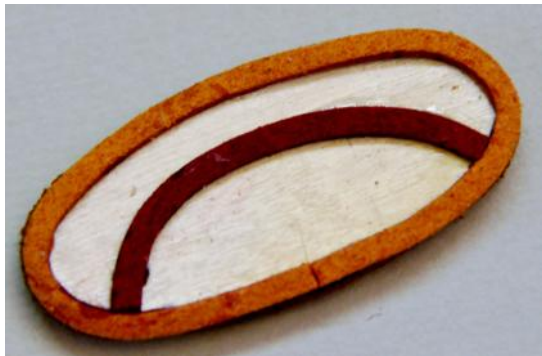
**7.** Apply clear, tacky glue to the outer border of a prepared disc. A toothpick works well for this.



**8.** Begin at just beyond the mid section of the disc and wrap a section of leather around the outer edge. Continue the wrap over the top of the first layer. Use your utility knife with a sharp blade to cut through the two layers of leather. Remove the excess and add a bit of glue on the seam.



**9.** Apply clear, tacky glue to the outer edge of one flat surface. Again, begin just beyond the mid section and lay the leather around the perimeter. Continue the wrap over the top of the first layer. Use your utility knife to cut through the two layers of leather. Remove the excess and add a bit of glue on the seam. Continue this process for the top, bottom, and sides of all the wood sections except the one with the open center.



**10.** Once the leather has been attached to the outer edge and perimeter, begin adding leather strips to the inside of the flat surfaces. This can be done in the same fashion, just make sure each leather strip fits snugly against the leather border.

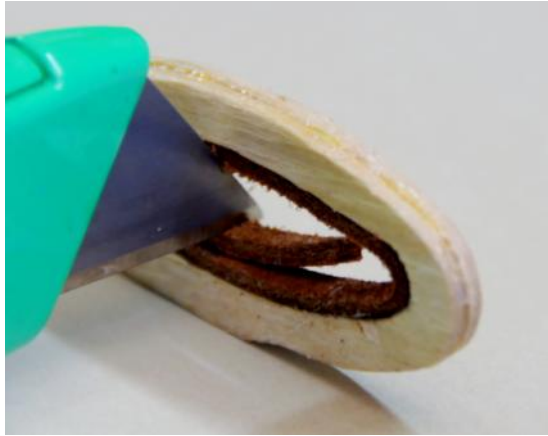
**Tip:** For a one sided piece, attach thin leather pieces to the backside.



**11.** Attach four or five sections of leather to the flat sides of each oval in a random fashion. Each piece will be designed a bit differently



**12.** For the clasp, test to make sure the small oval shape fits through the cutout. Place a piece of leather on the inner perimeter and then slide the smaller piece through the hole. If this works without effort, continue to step 13. If the piece does not slide through easily, file away a bit more wood from the inner edge. Retest and repeat until it slides through easily.



**13.** Apply clear, tacky glue to the inner border and attach a leather strip in the same fashion as was done for the outer border. Proceed, adding leather to the outer border, inner and outer perimeter, and finally add the smaller leather pieces to the flat surfaces..



**14.** Next, using your utility knife with a sharp blade, gently scrape off any excess glue from the leather strips. It is best to use a thumb protector of some sort to avoid cutting yourself. I used some alligator skin, but a leather thumb protector or pair of leather gloves will work equally as well. Be sure to remove all the glue from the flat surfaces and edges.



**15.** Once the glue has been removed, use an old toothbrush to clear away any remaining dust and debris.



**16.** To protect the leather from water and stains and also make it resistant to the glue used for filling the spaces, spray each piece with waterproof silicone sealer. Spray a generous coating over all of the surfaces as the spray will be absorbed into the leather. I would recommend two coats. This spray can be purchased in the shoe department of most stores.

Another option would be to use satin spray varnish. The leather will be stiff, which will make your bracelet slightly less comfortable to wear,



**17.** Now, you should have a total of six sections which look something like this on both sides.

## Drilling Connections

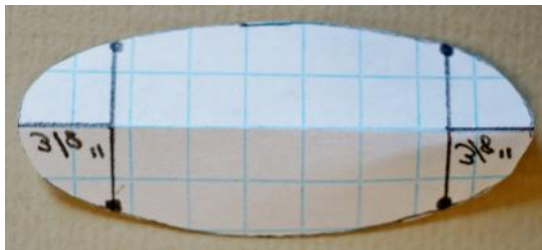


**1.** Using a pencil and paper, trace around the outer section of three large discs and one small disc and cut out the oval shapes to create your templates for drilling.

**2. (Four holes will be drilled in three large oval shapes using this template.)**

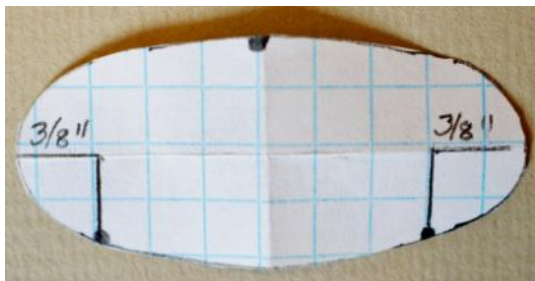
Fold the paper in half lengthwise and measure  $\frac{3}{8}$ " from the border on the center fold line.

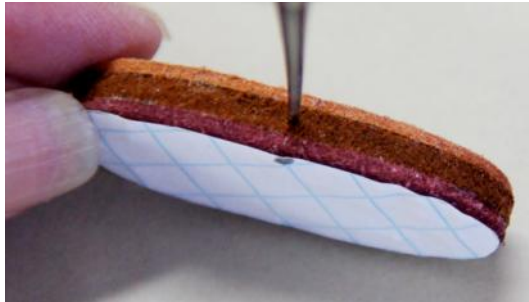
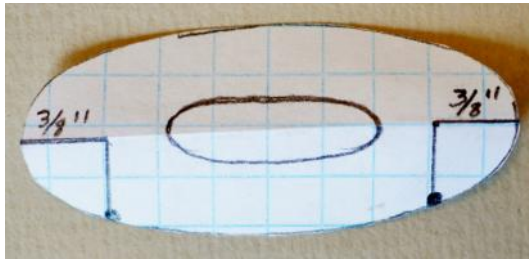
Draw a horizontal line at a 90 degree angle at the intersection and mark dots for drilling. Do this on both ends of the template, for both the top and bottom edge.



**3. (Three holes will be drilled in one large oval shape using this template.)**

Again, fold the paper in half lengthwise and measure  $\frac{3}{8}$ " from the border on the center fold line. Draw a line at a 90 degree angle at the intersection to the lower edge of the template. Do this on both ends of the template and mark two dots for drilling. Next, fold the paper in half in the other direction to find the center point and mark a dot at the upper border.





**4. (Two holes will be drilled in the large oval shape with the center removed using this template.)**

Once again, fold the paper in half lengthwise and measure  $\frac{3}{8}$ " from the border on the center fold line. Draw a horizontal line at a 90 degree angle at the intersection to the lower edge of the template. Do this on both ends of the template and mark two dots for drilling.

**5. (One hole will be drilled in the small oval shape.)** Fold your small oval template in half and mark the center point.

**6.** Either hold the template in place or use double stick tape to hold it. Then, using your awl, press into the leather and wood in the center of the leather strip perpendicular to the dots on your template.

**7.** Make sure you are inserting the awl at a 90 degree angle and proceed to puncture all 6 ovals using the prepared templates as outlined.

**8.** Use a size 62 (very small) drill bit and drill through the leather and wood on all six ovals at the points punctured with your awl.

I have found it works best to drill the holes before filling the leather strips. In case the drill bit does not go through correctly, you can easily remedy the problem (by re-drilling) without damaging the embellishments.

## Surface Treatment / Hemp Cord



**1.** To begin, fill one crevice, about 3/4 full, with clear tacky glue. Use a toothpick to spread the glue evenly throughout the section.



**2.** Place a single strand of hemp cord around the inner perimeter of the crevice. Push the string into the corners and up against the edge of the leather to create a tight seal.



**3.** Choose another color strand, or continue with the same color, and wrap the cord around and around, as you proceed to fill the inner area with cord. Add different colors as needed.



**4.** Make sure you have pushed the string into the corners of the space, up against the leather and that the entire area is snugly covered with string. You may notice a bit of stray glue at this point, but don't fret as the glue on the cord will not be noticeable when it has dried.

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**5.** Continue to fill each of the crevices with glue and then cord until you have completed all six oval discs. The glue dries pretty quickly, so you need to move along.

**Tip:** It is inevitable that you will spill some glue on the leather. If you try to remove the wet glue, it will get rubbed into the surface, making clean up much more difficult. Instead, allow the glue to dry for later removal.

## Surface Treatment / Seed Beads



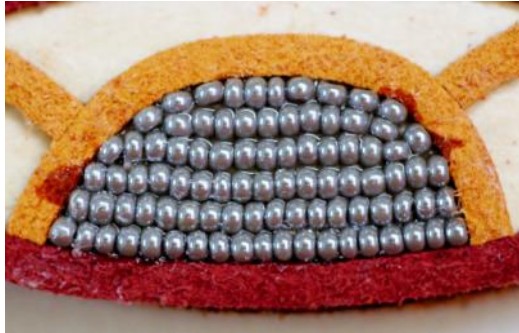
**1.** To embellish the reverse side of the oval discs, fill one crevice, about 3/4 full, with clear tacky glue and spread it evenly. Holding a strand of size 11 seed beads, lay the beads next to the leather and push them against the ledge with a toothpick. When the beads are in place, remove the thread.



**2.** Place another section of beads directly next to the first section and gently push them against the first row with your toothpick.



**3.** Continue this process until straight rows are no longer possible. It will now be necessary to arrange some of the beads sideways, which means they will need to be placed individually.



**4.** The key is to squeeze as many beads as possible into the area as you eliminate open spaces. Your piece will look much better when it is complete if you adjust the beads in such a way that if there is a small open space, it is evenly distributed among three or four adjacent beads.



**5.** Where there are narrow spaces, it seems to flow better if you start in the middle and work your way out from both sides, adjusting the beads as you go to fill the space as best you can.



**6.** With this shape, it was necessary to place the beads in a variety of directions to fill the space with the fewest number of gaps. It does not look quite as nice as the first section, but will look wonderful when the piece is finished. Proceed, filling the sections until you have finished filling all of the compartments in all six of your oval discs.

## Finishing Touches



**1.** Use your utility knife with a sharp blade to remove any large patches of glue from the leather. Scrape gently and firmly and it should come off easily.

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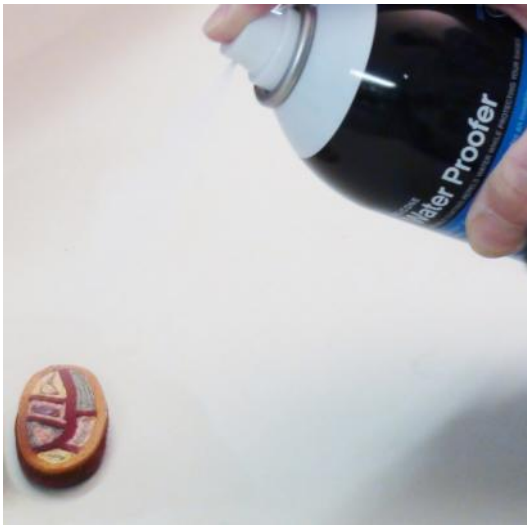
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**2.** To remove small bits of glue residue and to finish the clean up process, rub a soft moist cloth over all of the surface areas, (top, bottom, and sides). You may need to rub a bit more firmly in some areas to remove all of the excess glue.



**3.** Spray silicone water proofer on the side embellished with hemp rope. This will make the hemp waterproof and more durable. Do this on all six pieces. (If you used spray varnish initially, use it again for this step).



**4.** Attach the screw eyes in the predrilled holes. Begin by turning with your fingers to get it started and then use your chain nose pliers to tighten it down snugly.

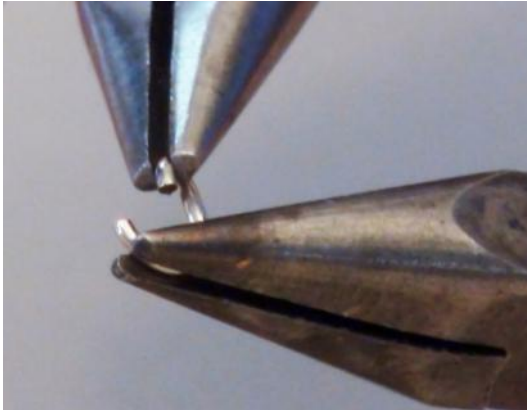


**5.** The screw eyes should be parallel to the flat, embellished surfaces and fit tight against the leather.

# Putting It All Together

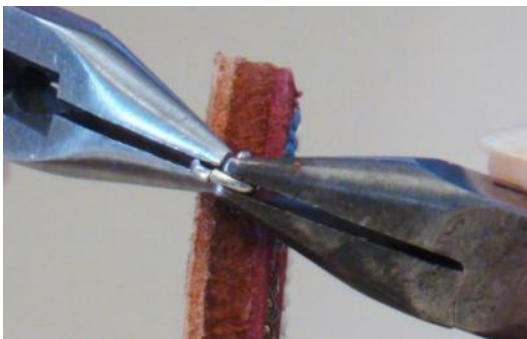


**6.** Now, you should have a total of six sections which look something like this. Lay the pieces out in the most pleasing order and connect them with jump rings.



**7.** Using pliers, grasp either side of a jump ring so the split part is in the center. Simultaneously move one hand away from you while you move the other hand toward you. your fingers if you

**Tip:** I prefer to use chain nose pliers, but flat nose or bent nose will work as well. Choose what you have available.



**8.** To close the jump ring, reverse the process.



**9.** Use two jump rings per link and connect the pieces together with a total of 3 links per join.



**10.** Add pairs of rings to the clasp until the chain fits your arm. 12 links will fit an average size arm.

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