

A large, teal-colored graphic element consisting of a series of nested, stepped rectangular shapes that form a border around the central text. The steps are of varying heights and widths, creating a jagged, industrial-looking frame.

CULTURALLY INTEGRATED FURNISHINGS

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN THESIS BY SKY IRONHORSE



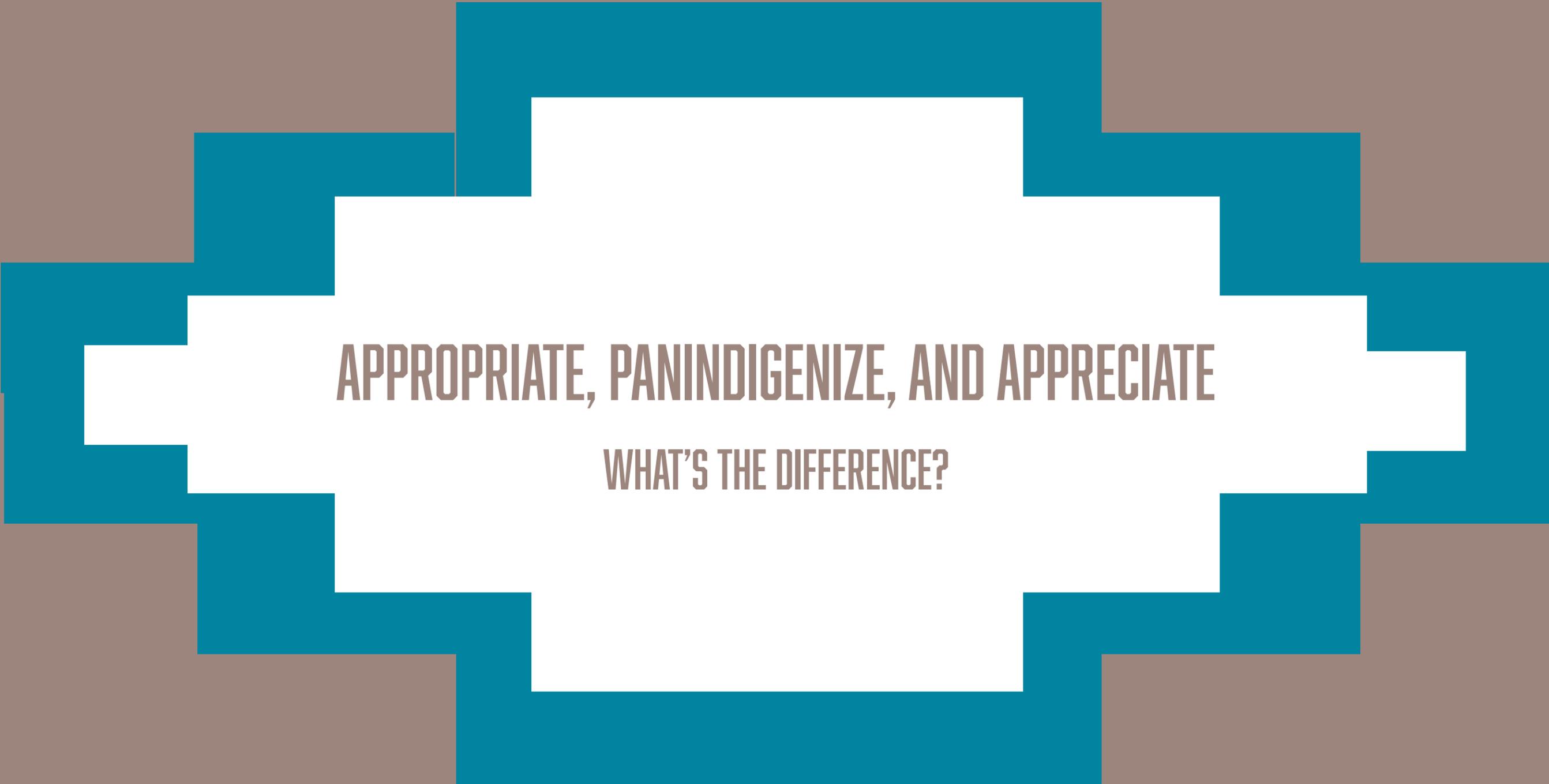
People indigenous to the United States have been dealt one of the hardest hands in society. From genocide to relocation to forced assimilation to broken treaties to classism to alcoholism and all the various forms of oppression in between; there has been a social war waged on indigenous people to wipe out their rich culture that has been around since before the creation of the United States when the ancestors freely roamed *kwaba sokobi paa*.

Native people today are split between wanting to educate non-Natives to keep the past from happening again and holding a bitterness to modern non-natives even though they weren't the ones killing the ancestors. Proper indigenous representation in society aids in dispelling the confusion between Natives and non-Natives.



Problem: The modern day is one where people are disconnected from the environment, people, and cultures that surround them. Products on the market that utilize Native culture as “inspiration” are often more appropriative than appreciative and give off a false sense of what indigenous cultures are which leads to misinformation and further rifts between Native and non-Native people.

Hypothesis: If traditional indigenous ways of thinking were applied to a product that people see everyday could help not only preserve Native culture in a modern age of disposability but could also aid in present day issues regarding sustainability and nomadicy by creating a conversation between Natives and non-Natives.

A decorative border made of teal-colored rectangular blocks arranged in a stepped, staircase-like pattern around the central text.

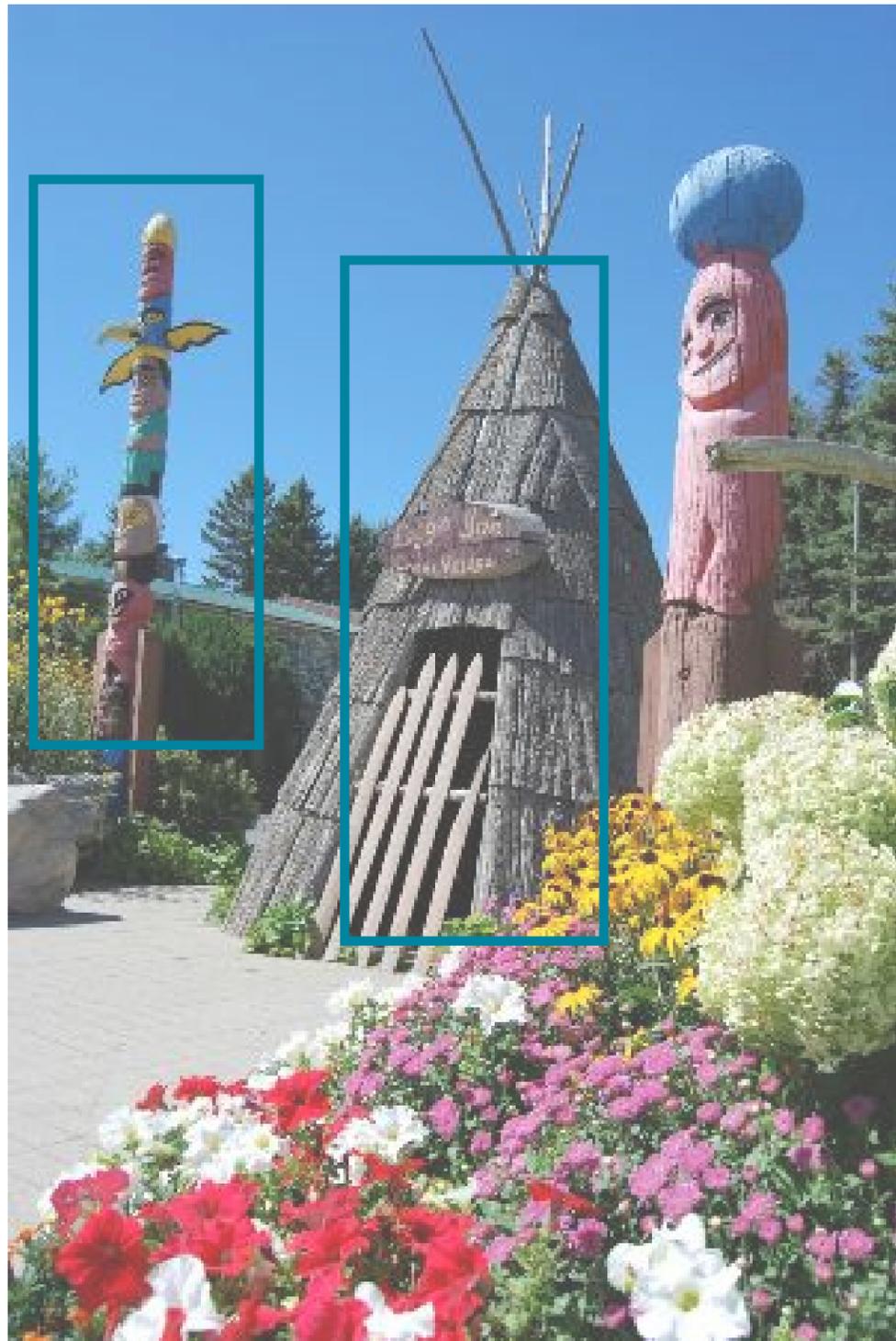
APPROPRIATE, PANINDIGENIZE, AND APPRECIATE
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



Pottery Barn

Definition: "Cultural appropriation, at times also phrased cultural misappropriation, is the adoption of elements of one culture by members of another culture. This can be controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures."

Long story short; appropriation is taking a marginalized/oppressed groups culture and claiming it as ones own. It trivializes oppression by masking over the significant meaning of the object, supports systematic violence towards said group by muting their voices, and makes outside people feel like they are doing good to tamper down the conversation of the past trauma between groups by making the appropriating side believe that the voices of the marginalized culture are invalid.



Legs Inn (Cross Village, Michigan)

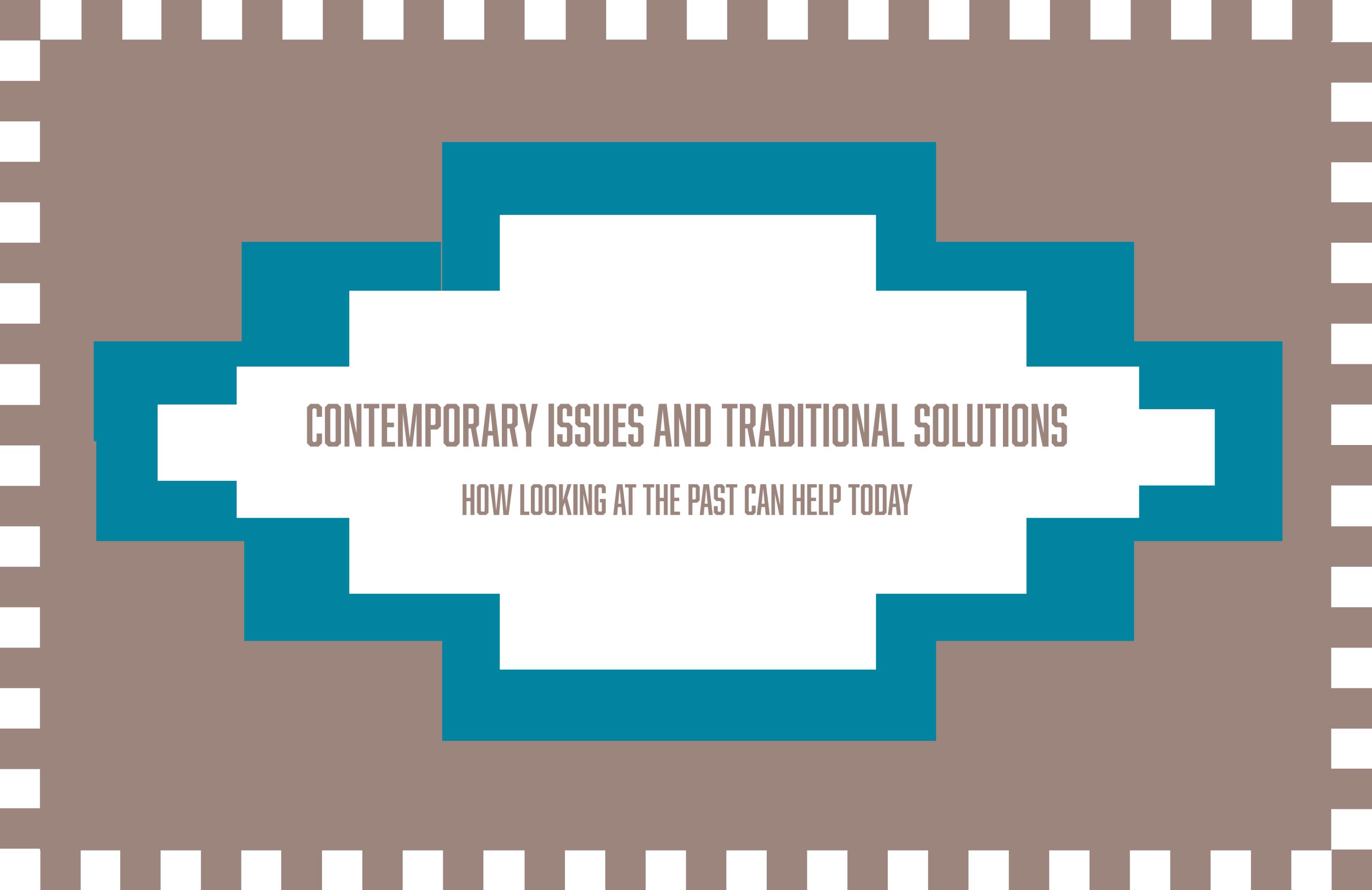
Pan-Indigenizing is taking multiple indigenous cultures and combining them and labeling them as "Navajo", "Aztec", "tribal", "boho", etc since they can't be labeled as "native american" due to the Indians Crafts Act 1990 reserving that label for goods made by native people. This is not to be confused with the political movement known as "Pan-Indianism" which is indigenous people rising against oppressors as a collective whole.



Nike KD 8 "N7" Collection
Designed By Bunky Echo-Hawk

Definition: "Cultural appreciation, or cultural sharing, is when someone seeks to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and connect with others cross-culturally.

Cultural appreciation is what you want to do. It is when you listen to the voices of the people within the culture you are interested in then take time and care to make sure you understand it. Appreciation is the trade of cultural knowledge, where appropriation is the stealing then stripping of a marginalized culture.



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND TRADITIONAL SOLUTIONS

HOW LOOKING AT THE PAST CAN HELP TODAY



- Was a type of lifestyle lived by plains Natives mostly to follow the migration of main food sources (like bison and pronghorn) as well as to not deplete the other resources in one spot
- The idea of continual moving is also a belief within traditional spirituality. Different areas are also needed for different ceremonies to occur
- The moving typically took place 6 to 8 times a year and consisted of dismantling everything and returning the area to what it once was before

- Millennials are making up 43% of all the people moving while only making up 24% of the general population age wise
- Millennials are moving on average once every three years
- With a rise in coastal fires and floods, more people have been moving to the interior of the United States than in previous years





- Seen as protectors of the Earth and feel a duty to leave as little of a mark as possible
- Most everything was used
- Parts that could not be were returned to the Mother from which they came (this taps into spiritual connectivity to the planet and how we are born of the Mother and return to her)
- Longevity and quality of craftsmanship are revered qualities which gives a person a higher place in society due to their usefulness of the whole

- Americans make up an about 5% of the global population but use up 25% of the world's available natural resources
- Recycling, composting, and reuse prevented 85 million tons of material away from ending up in landfills in 2010
- Society as a whole has shifted into one deemed a "throw away society" basically people over consume and put focus on the production of products with a short life span that can then be easily disposed of rather than repaired

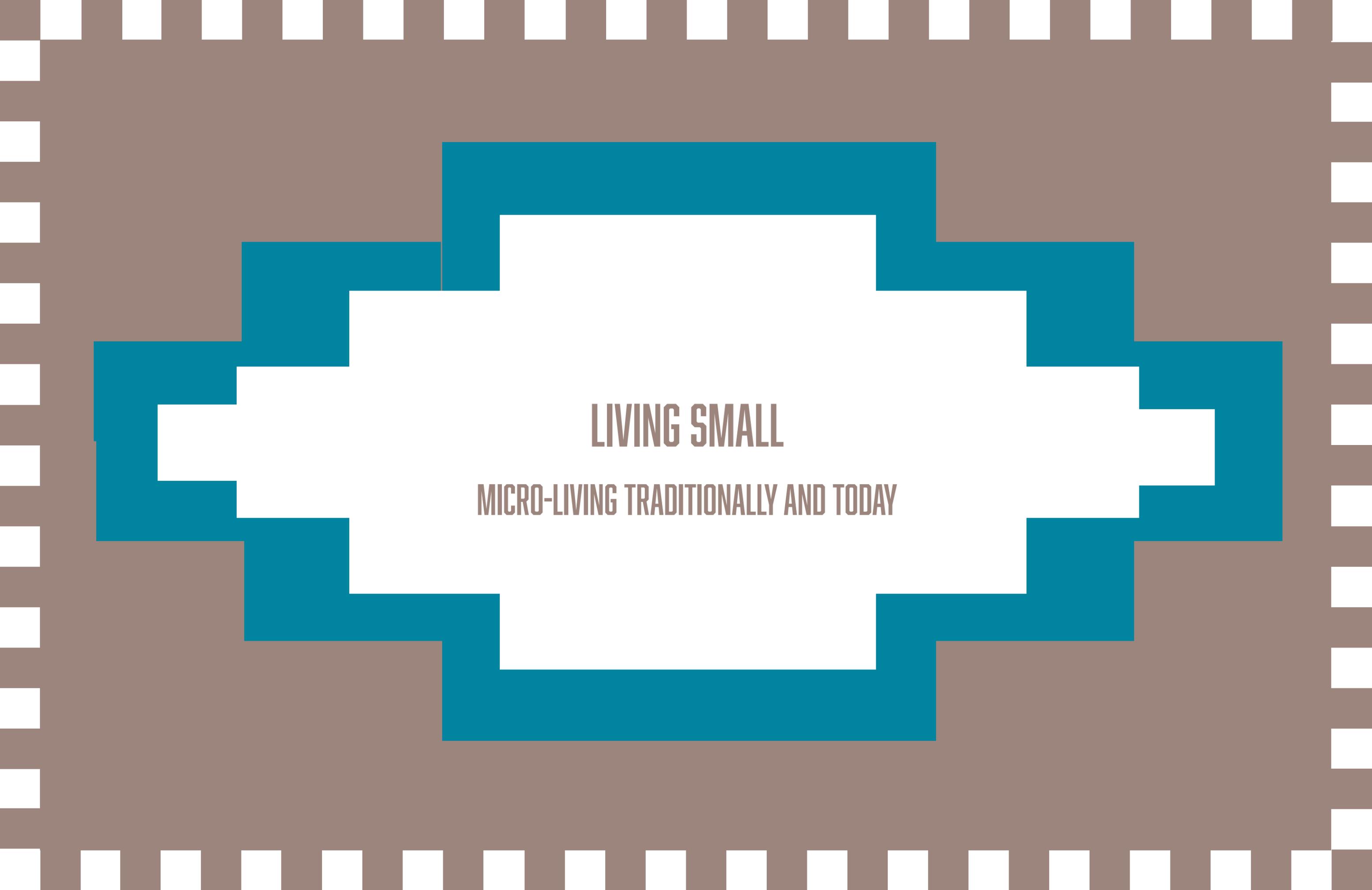




- "Keeper of many things but owner of none"
- Constant traveling didn't allow for many possessions
- Small living spaces made people find multiple uses for singular objects
- Ornamentation served purposes to tell a story or mark who made the object
- If you drop certain things, like feathers, it is not meant to be in your possession anymore and must be picked up by someone else
- Certain pieces contain parts of the soul

- In North America, about 82% of the total population(473.8 million people) live in condensed urban areas
- Spaces are decreasing 5% with each move
- With these smaller spaces, people have been avoiding over ornamentation to make spaces feel bigger
- Modularity has seen a rise in popularity along with the growing interest in open floorplan style living spaces

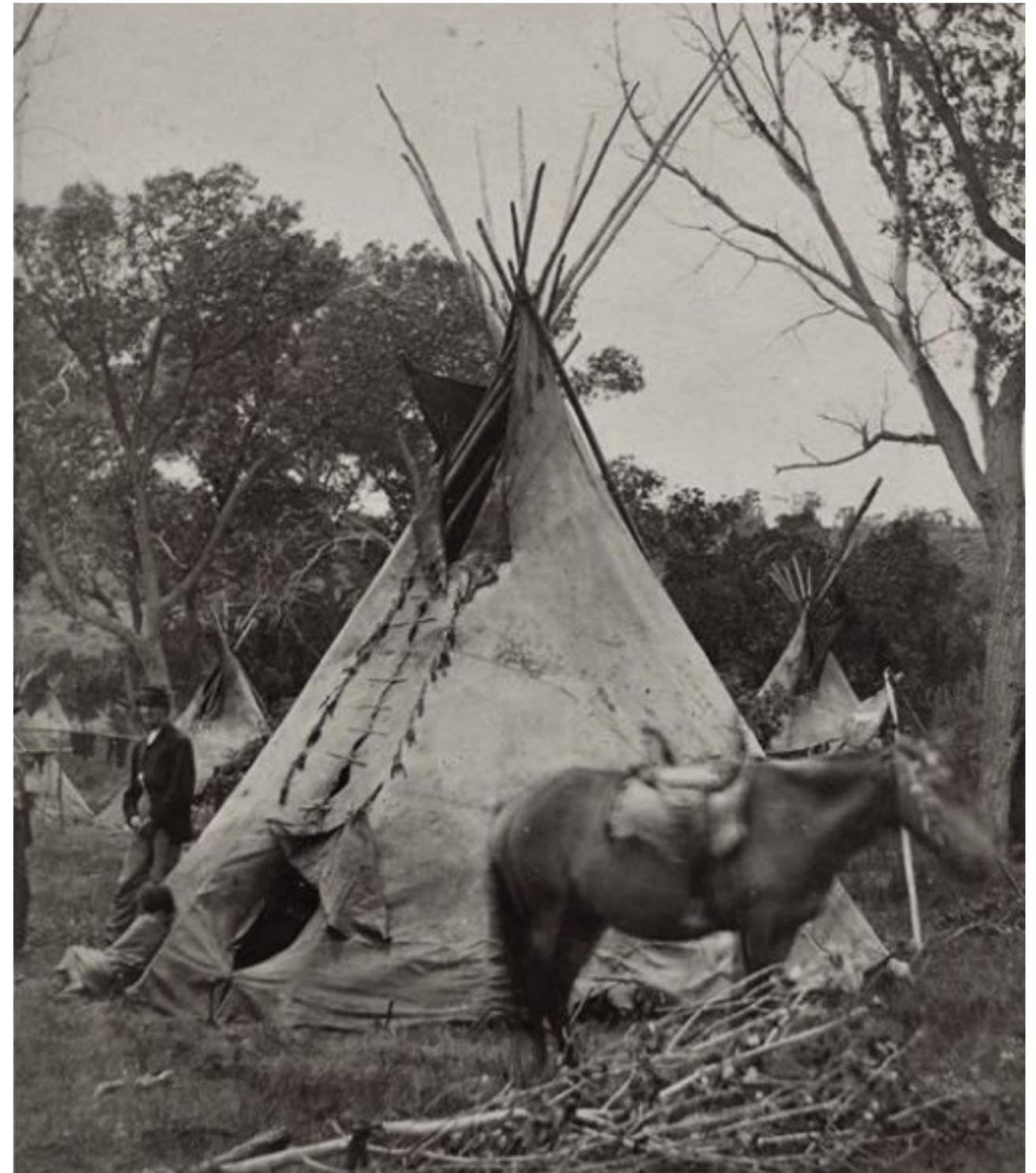




LIVING SMALL

MICRO-LIVING TRADITIONALLY AND TODAY

- Plains centric
- Designed for ease of movement but also to be structurally sound against tornadoes
- Made of 13 to 20 poles with 3 to 4 main poles that are tied off at the top and stretched hides(usually bison) sewn with sinew then coated in fat for water resistance and straw put on the ground for insulation
- Anywhere from 195 to 315 sq feet of living space
- Originally were about 12 to 15 feet high
- One big open room that is sectioned off by object placement and "screens" of stretched hide
- More often than not made and assembled by women
- Openings always face East
- Can accommodate up to 6 people



- Micro apartments are about 150 to 350 sq feet of living space with ceilings between 9 to 12 feet high
- Most have a sleeping area, living area, kitchen area, and bathroom but sometimes the kitchen and bathroom are communal in the building
- In 2007, Chinese designer Gary Chang made what is considered to be the "first" micro apartment with his piece entitled the Domestic Transformer. This 344 sq foot space can be about 24 different rooms depending on how it's arranged with the furniture solving multiple functions and breaking down into itself
- Studios are meant for 1 to 2 people typically since today people usually prefer around 915 sq feet of living space but it decreases by 5% each year as more people move into cities



- Square footage
- Ceiling height
- Open layout
- Division of floor space
- Individual quarters but also encourages a sense of community through shared space
- Objects within space often serve multiple functions



HOW ARE THEY SIMILAR?





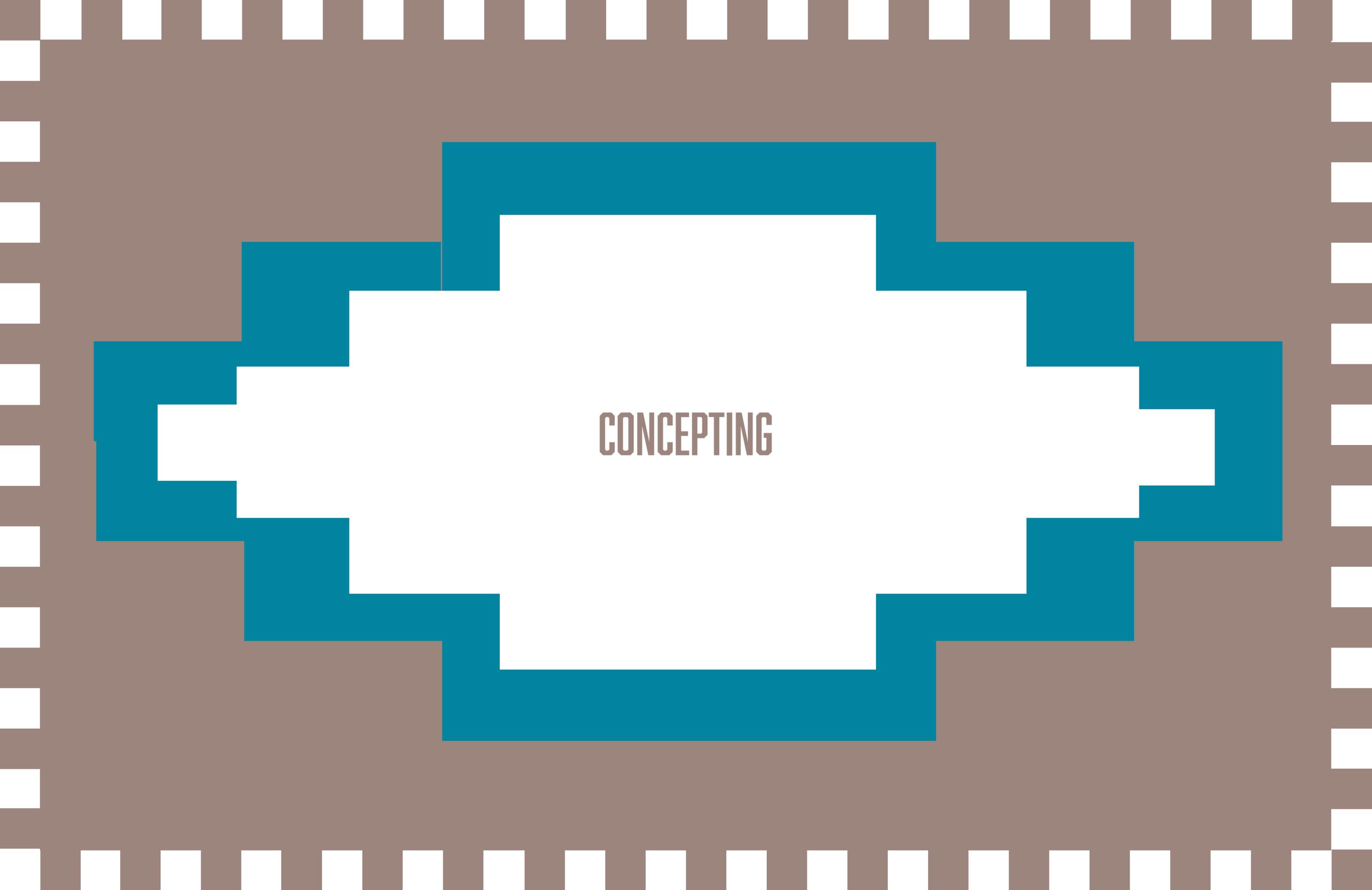
THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY

AN AGE OF DISPOSIBILITY

- In today's society, furniture that is "easy" in the sake of assembly and mobility is what's preferred
- Due to this, disposability has become a trend in furniture design because it's easier to throw away a particle board table in 3 years when the people move than it is to take a solid piece of furniture made of hardwood along for the journey
- Many pieces of furniture today are made with particle board and a paper laminate finish, these pieces have an average use life of 2 to 3 years or up to 5 if not used heavily
- When they are done being used or broken, they typically end up on a curb side then in a landfill since they are virtually unrepairable since the board is just sawdust and glue
- Hardwood furnishings however, generally last 10 to 15 years and up to 30 if not used heavily
- When they are done being used or broken, it is much easier to repair since they have a solid grain structure or can be resold

- Non-Native people want to know more about Native culture and are aware that they were taught poorly
- People are interested in having cultural furnishings but just don't want to be appropriative
- There's more opportunity with Native to Non-Native education wise than Native to Native
- Many indigenous values overlap with issues in today's society and if education on traditional Native customs was more accessible, people would make these connections faster
- Spaces are getting smaller due to people moving to bigger cities
- By using a form language that is already known and centered around function, it will make engaging in dialog about native culture far easier

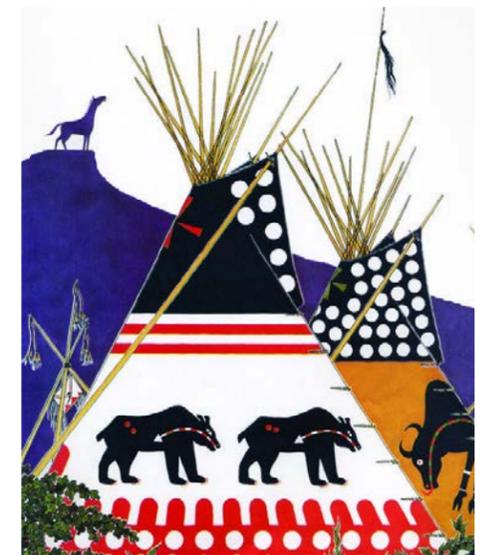




CONCEPTING

The Solutions Should:

- Allow Native people to feel more submerged in their culture in their home by including a reference to a traditional motif, material, or way of fabrication
- Create a dialog between Native to Non-Native through cultural sharing with simple forms
- Educate people on traditional native beliefs and how they are applicable to todays society
- Help fight off pan-indiginization
- Be sustainable by not including throw away material
- Take into consideration that living spaces are getting smaller
- Aesthetically fit together as a line



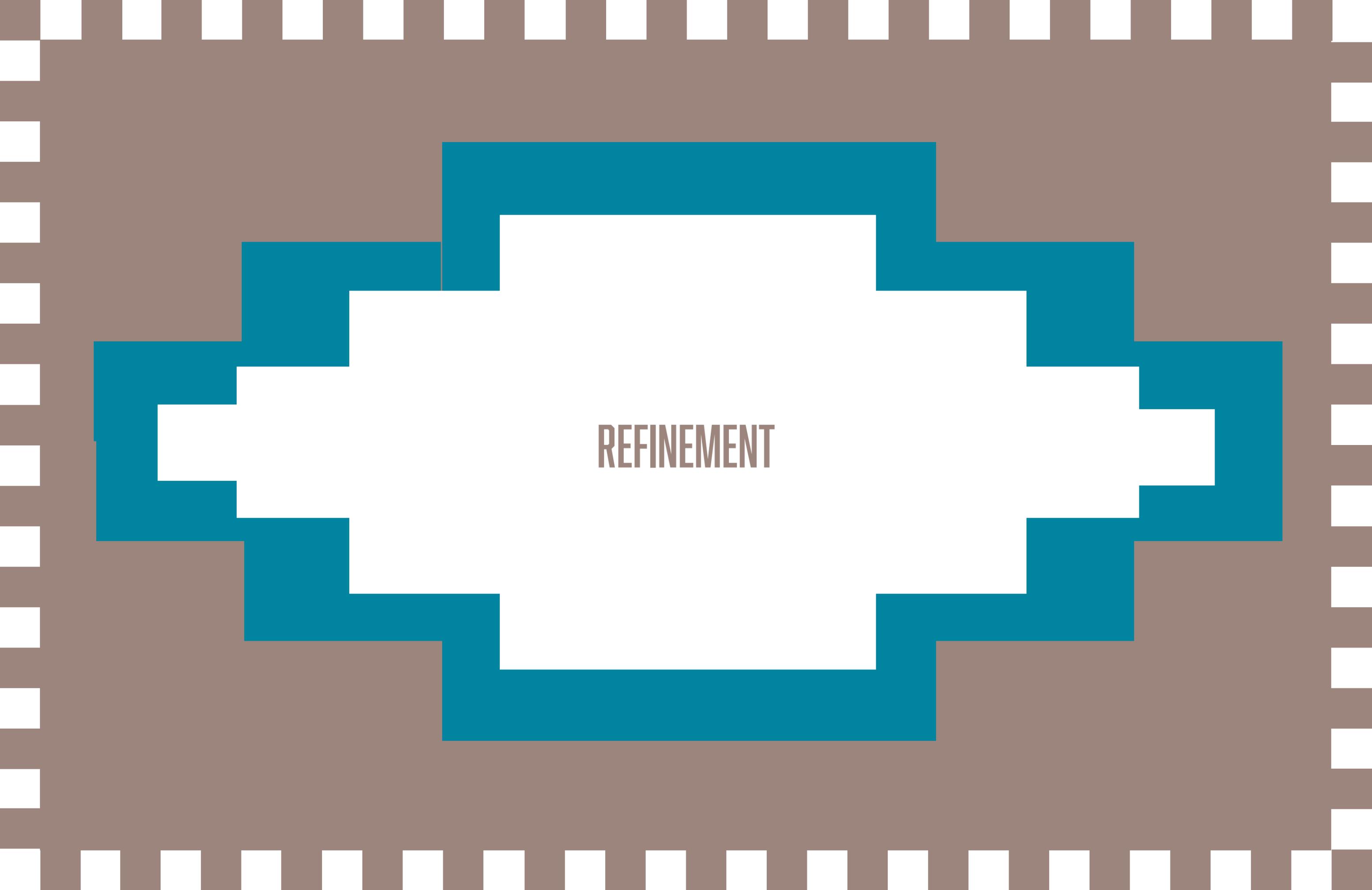
INSPIRATION MOOD BOARD





With this round of concepting, I flushed out the "obvious answers" and allowed myself to explore the more abstracted forms within indigenous cultural objects.

FIRST ROUND CONCEPTS

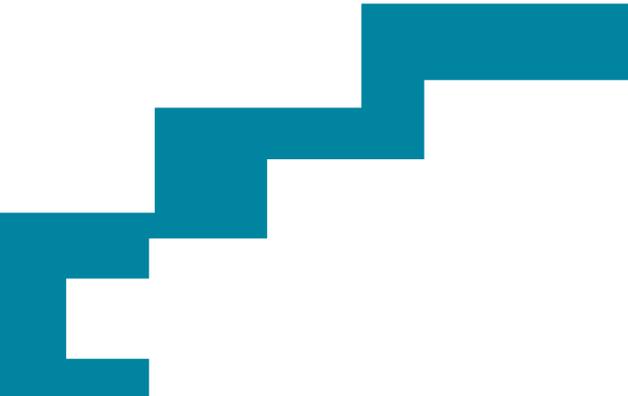


REFINEMENT



The chosen direction ended up being a series of three furnishings; a seat, a chair, and lighting. The table ended up being the main piece that the seat and lighting were further refined around.

SECOND ROUND CONCEPTS





The table and lamp already had a family look so i ended up doing one more round of refinement on the seat. This eliminated the use of metal completely and brought to light that there is a balance of organic and geometric forms within indigenous objects and that was my key to unity of the family.

FURTHER REFINEMENT OF THE CHAIR



Before COVID, I was able to make a full size model of the table and was in the process of doing the lamp and the chair which are still in the studio along with my series of 10th scale models I made during my refinement process. I took photos of the full scale table but did not have my in progress cardboard model photos so I ended up making a new cardboard one of the seat and table.



WEAVE

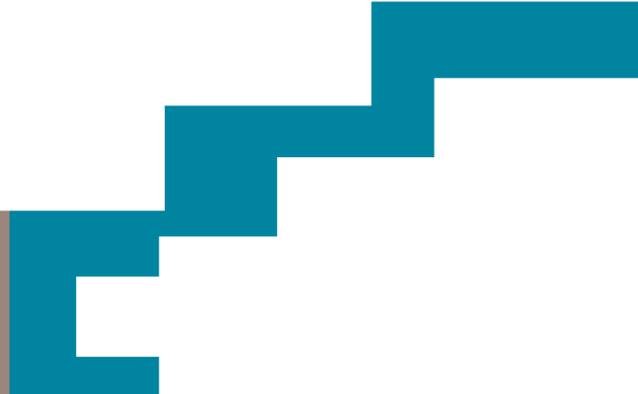
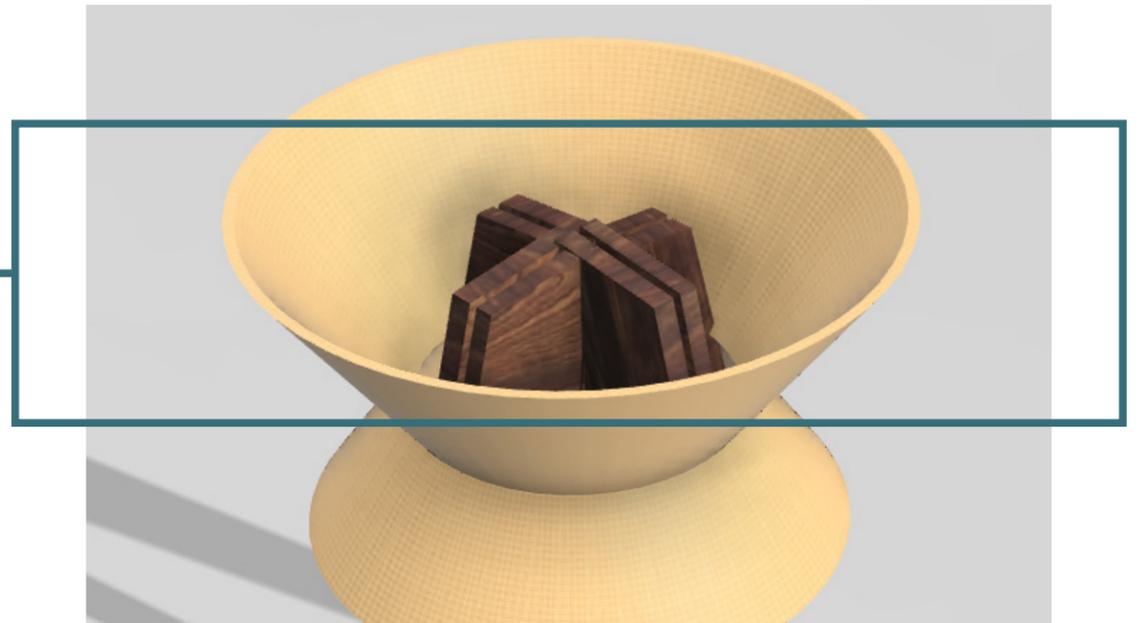
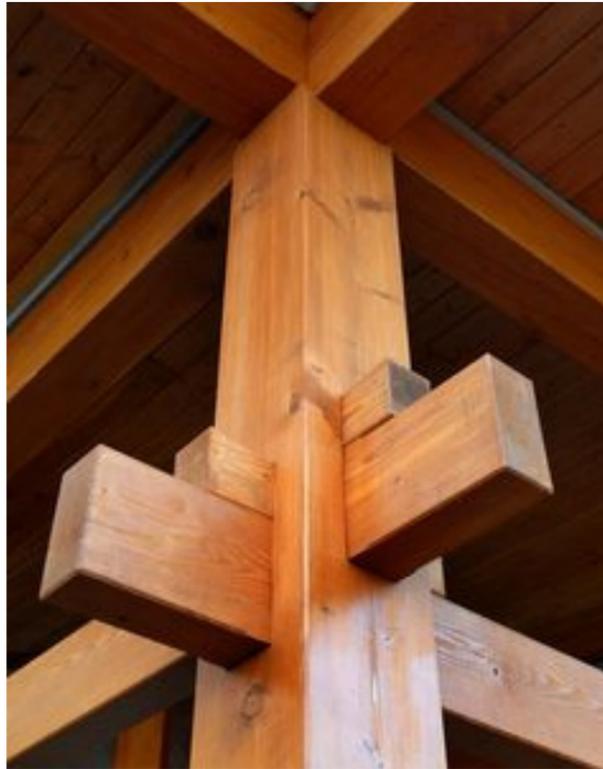
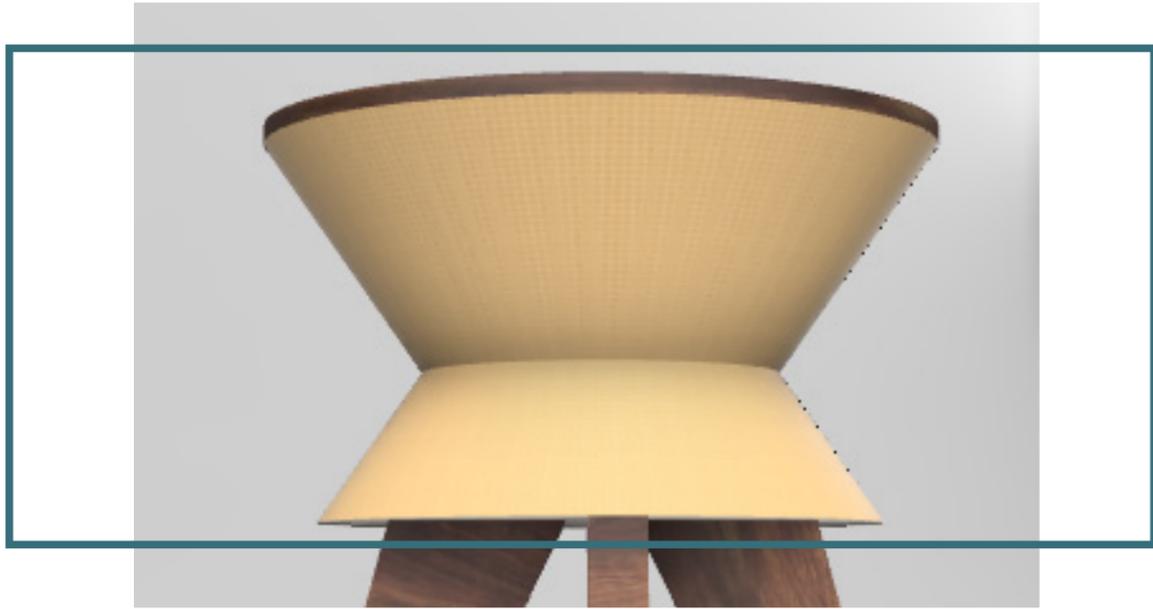
INTERTWINING CULTURES IN THE HOME

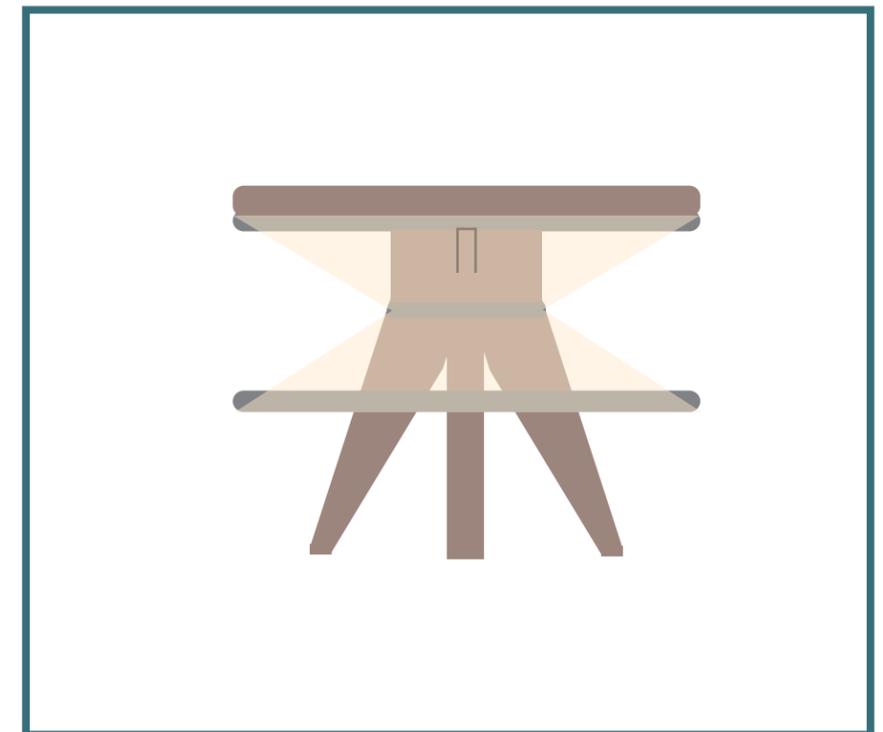
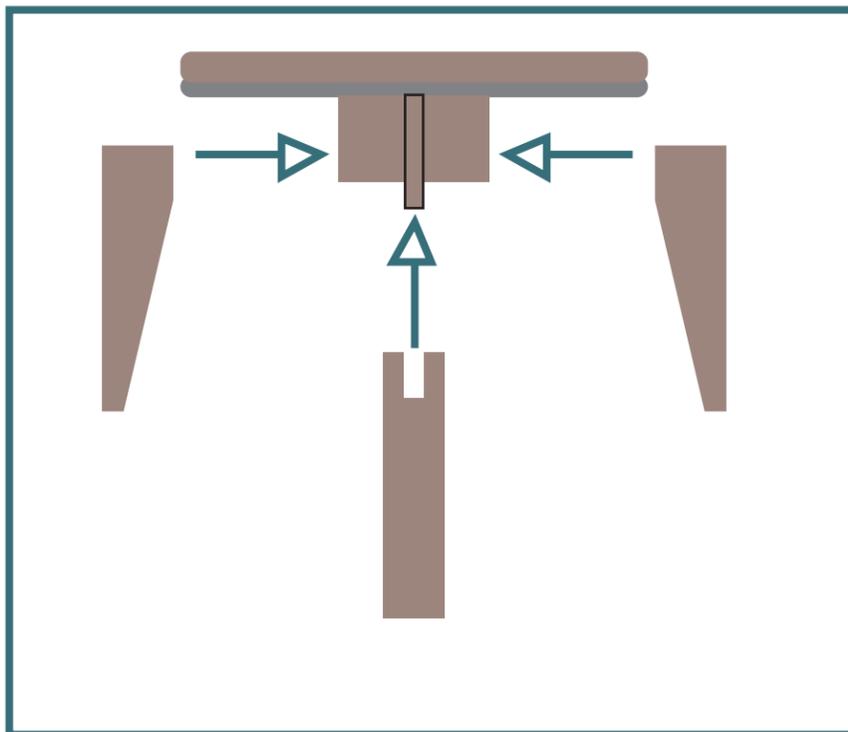
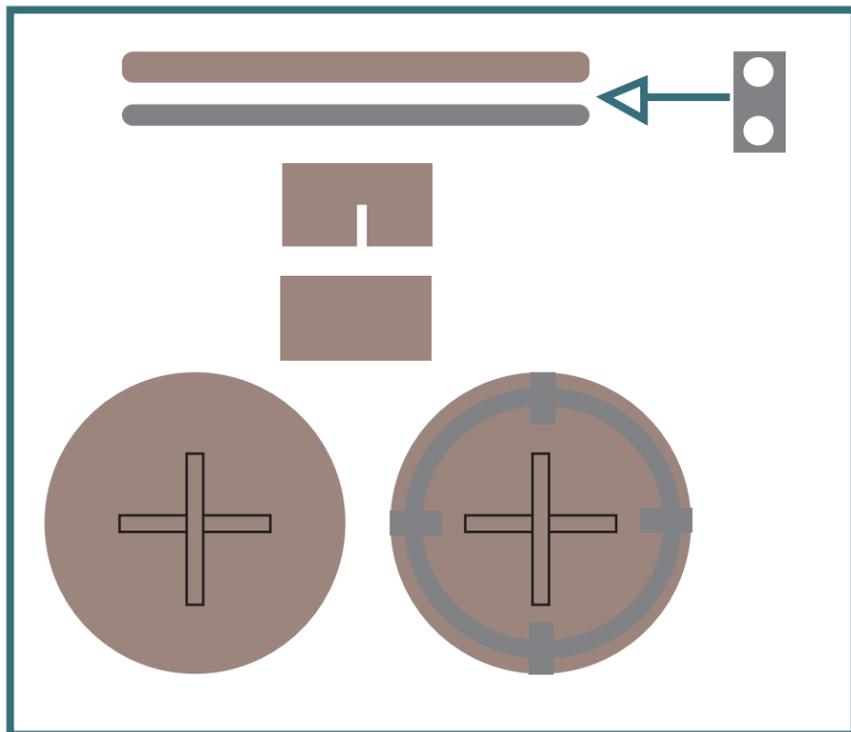
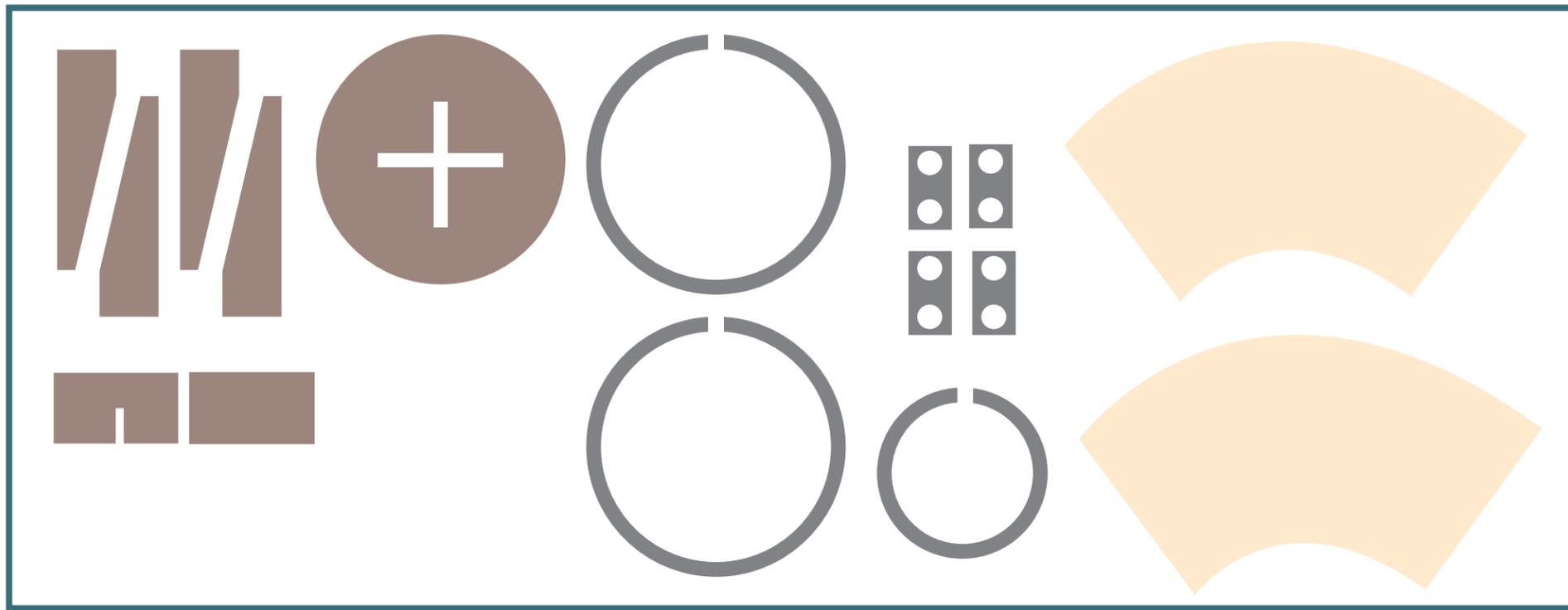


Weave is a brand of home furnishings that blend traditional indigenous ideals with region specific aesthetics and contemporary form language to make conversation pieces in ones home. The furnishings cater to the new age of nomadicy by using pressure fit pieces that make assembly and tear down simple. They are made of two materials, upcycled wood and cloth, for a minimalist appearance.



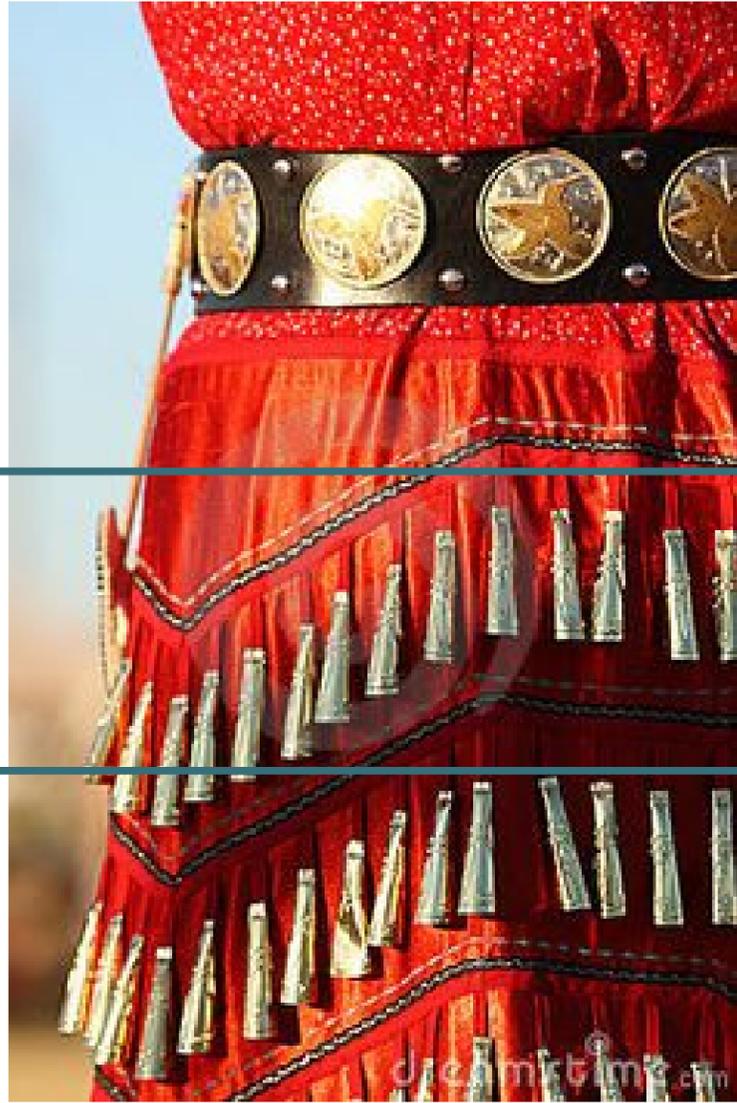
Named after the *numumuu tepwaku* word for "clothed table", the *Tuku Soona* table draws its form inspiration from the shape of the traditional kahni or home. The flared centered references the stretched hide while the 4 splayed legs reference lodge poles. The connection piece in the center and joinery of the legs is a simplified version of the joints used in *wagoya* style Japanese carpentry. The fabric use used to conceal the joinery to keep it from getting dislodged and becoming unstable.



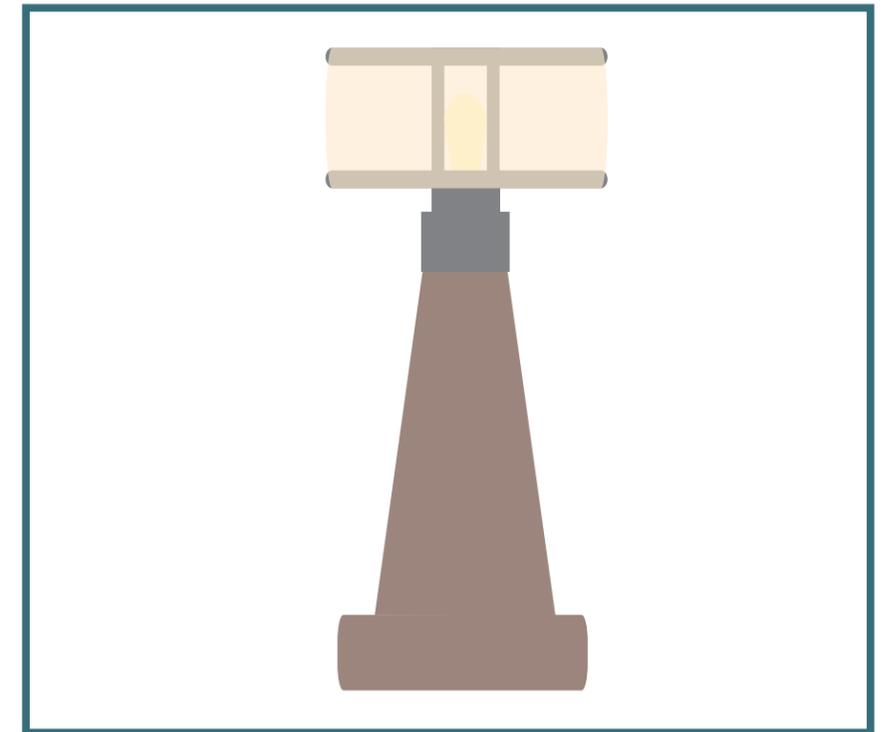
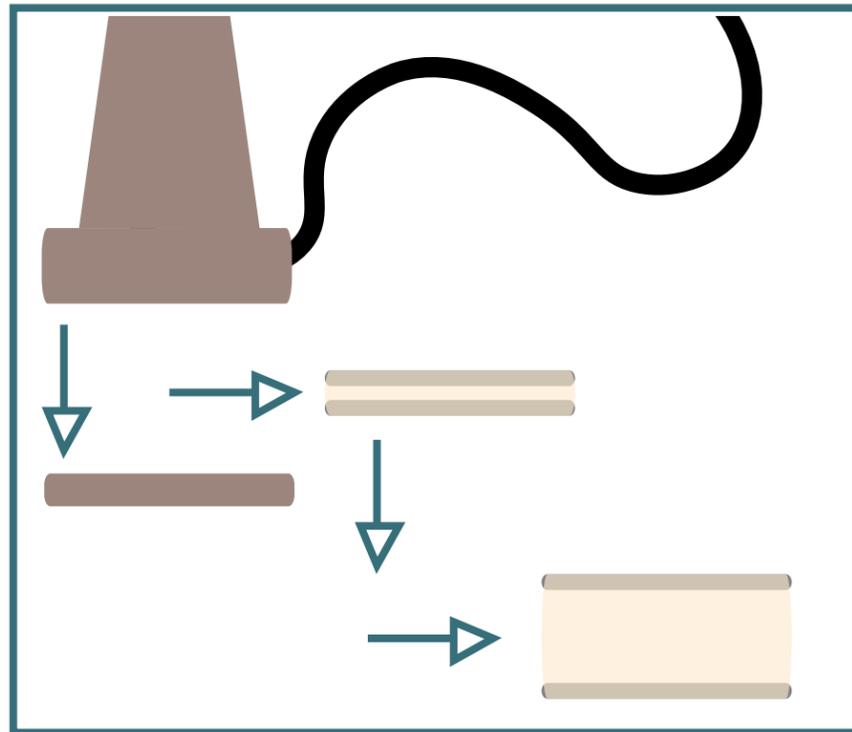
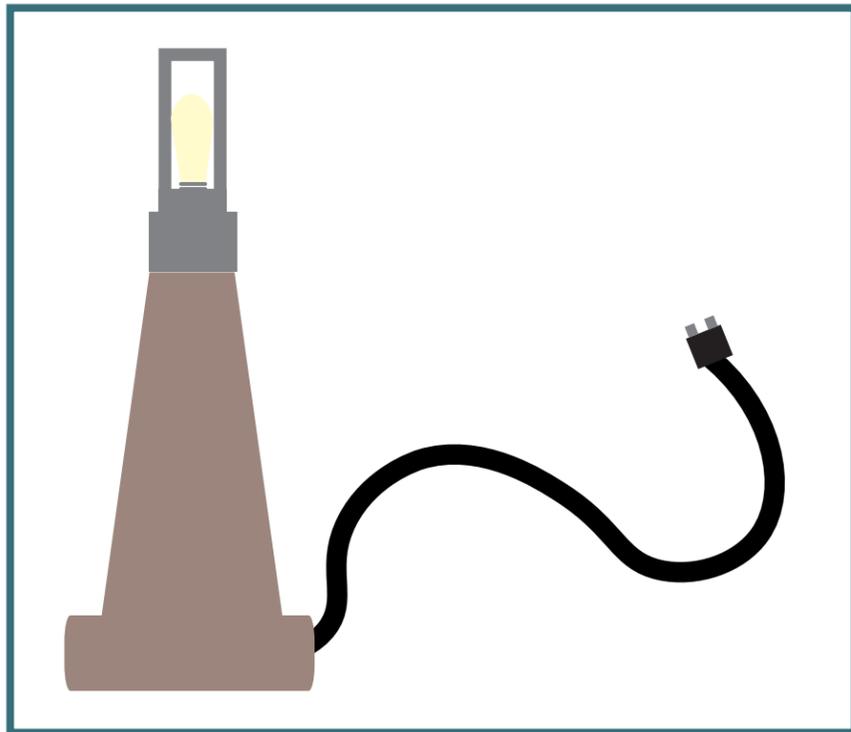
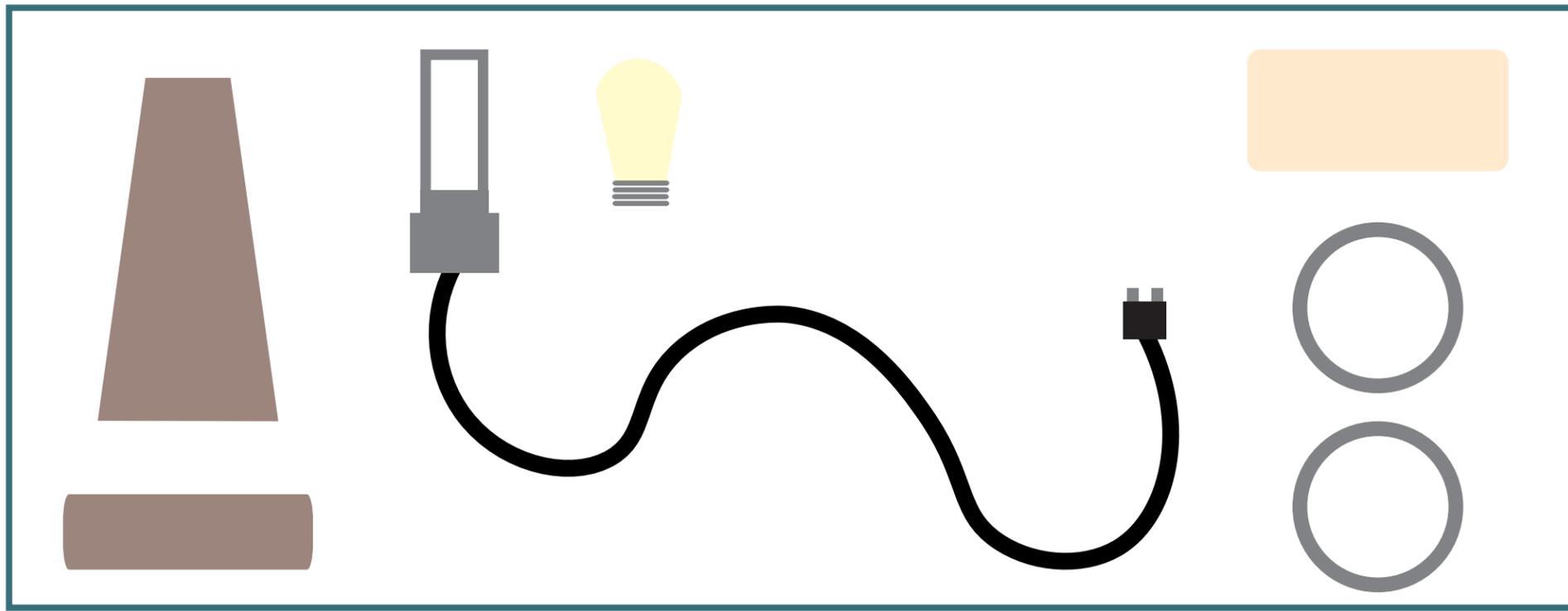




Named after the *numumuu tepwaku* word for "light", the *Kupita* lamp draws its form inspiration from the jingles on jingle dresses. The center body takes the soft taper of the jingle but was then made geometric with a juxtaposing cylindrical base. The base itself is hollow and the bottom comes off to store the compressible lamp shade for easy travel.

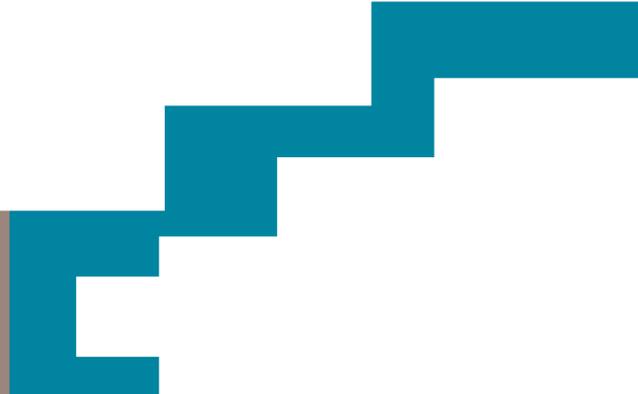
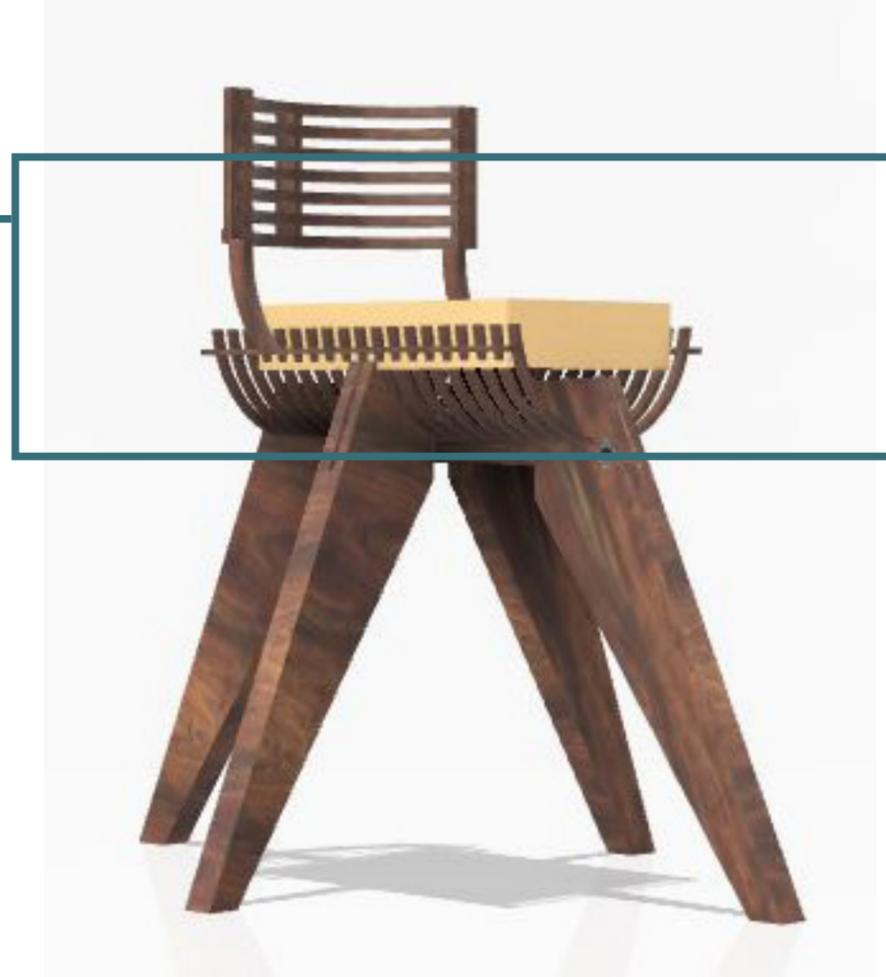
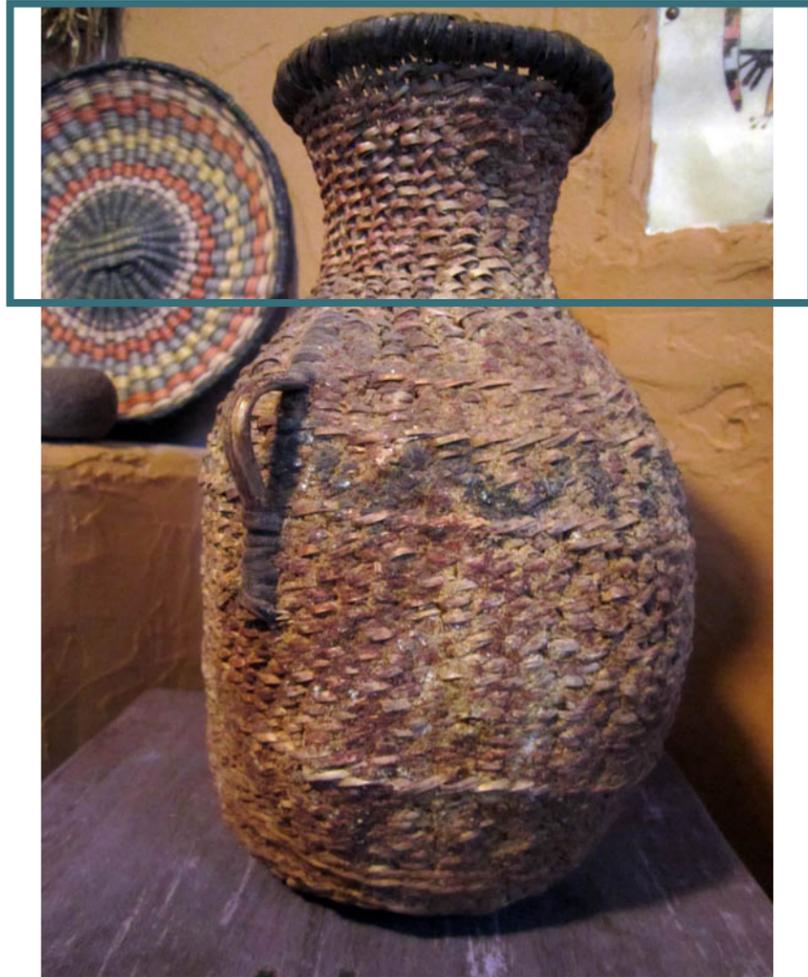


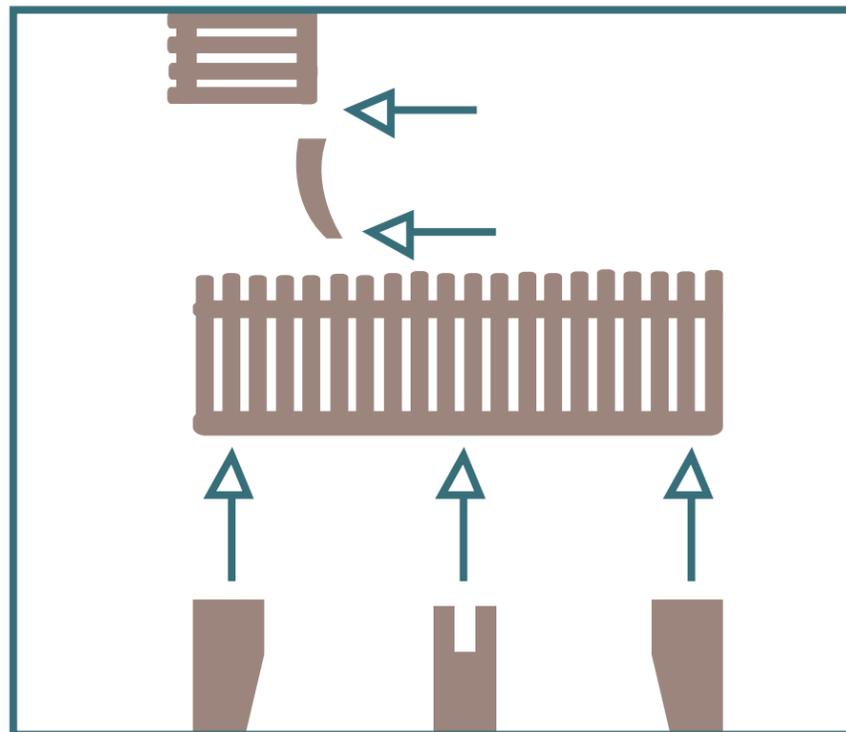
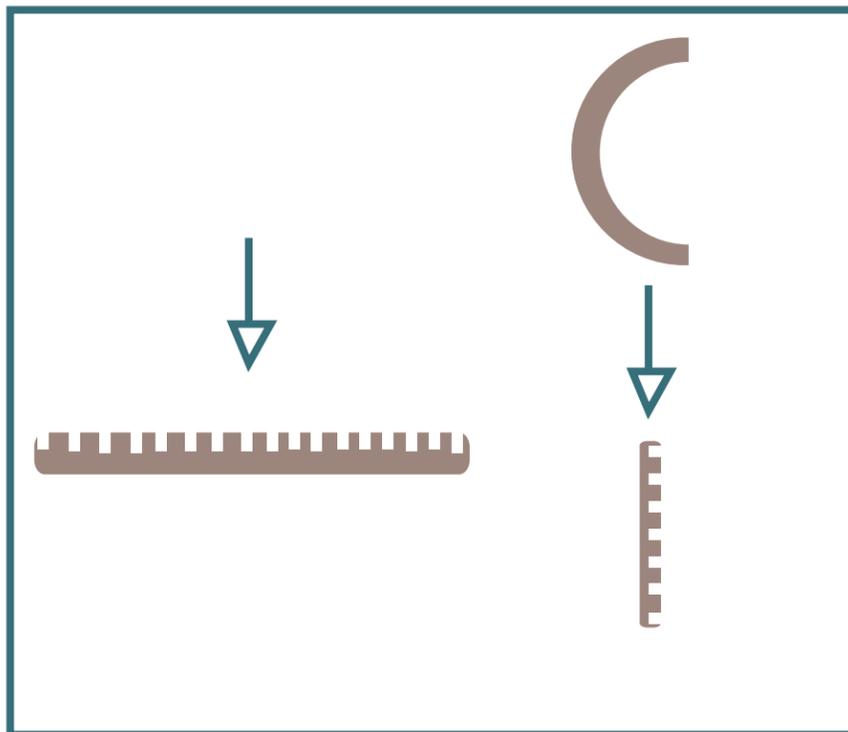
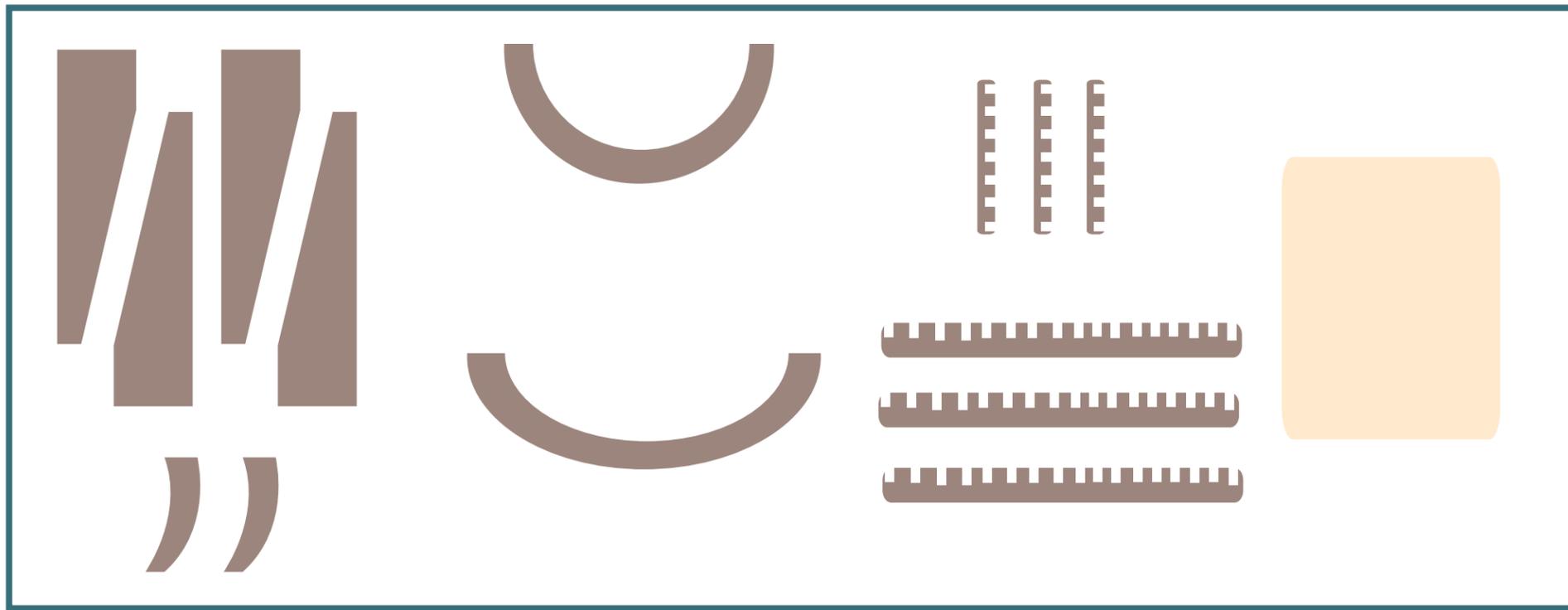
KUPITA LAMP INSPIRATION

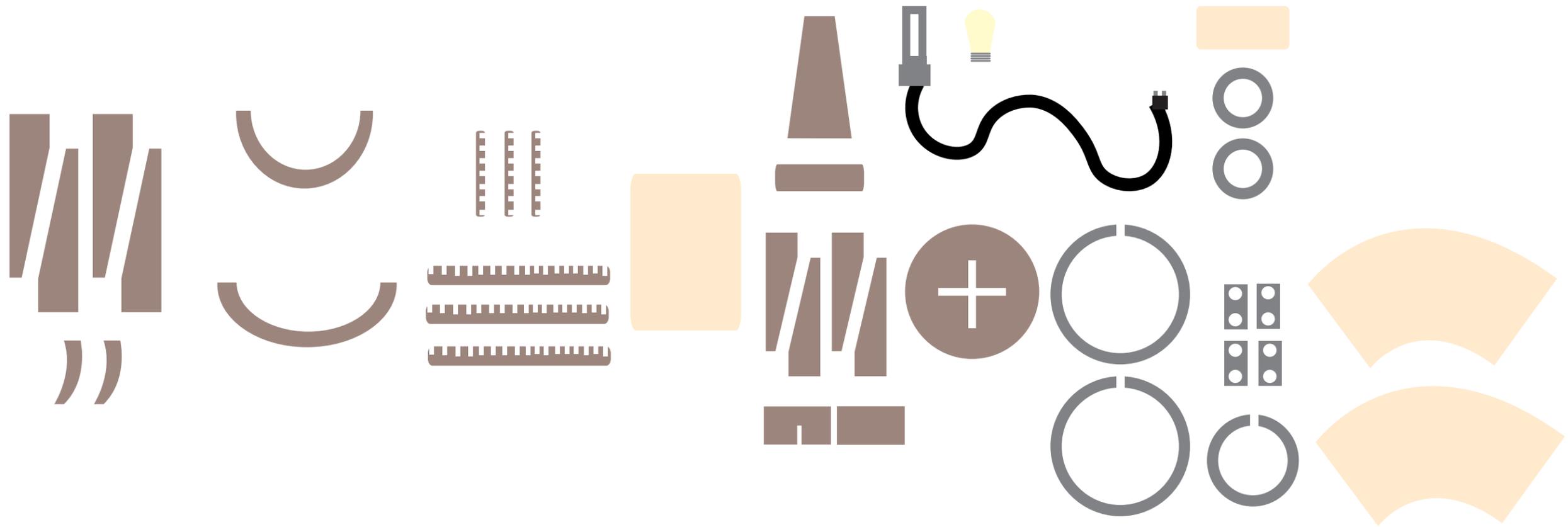




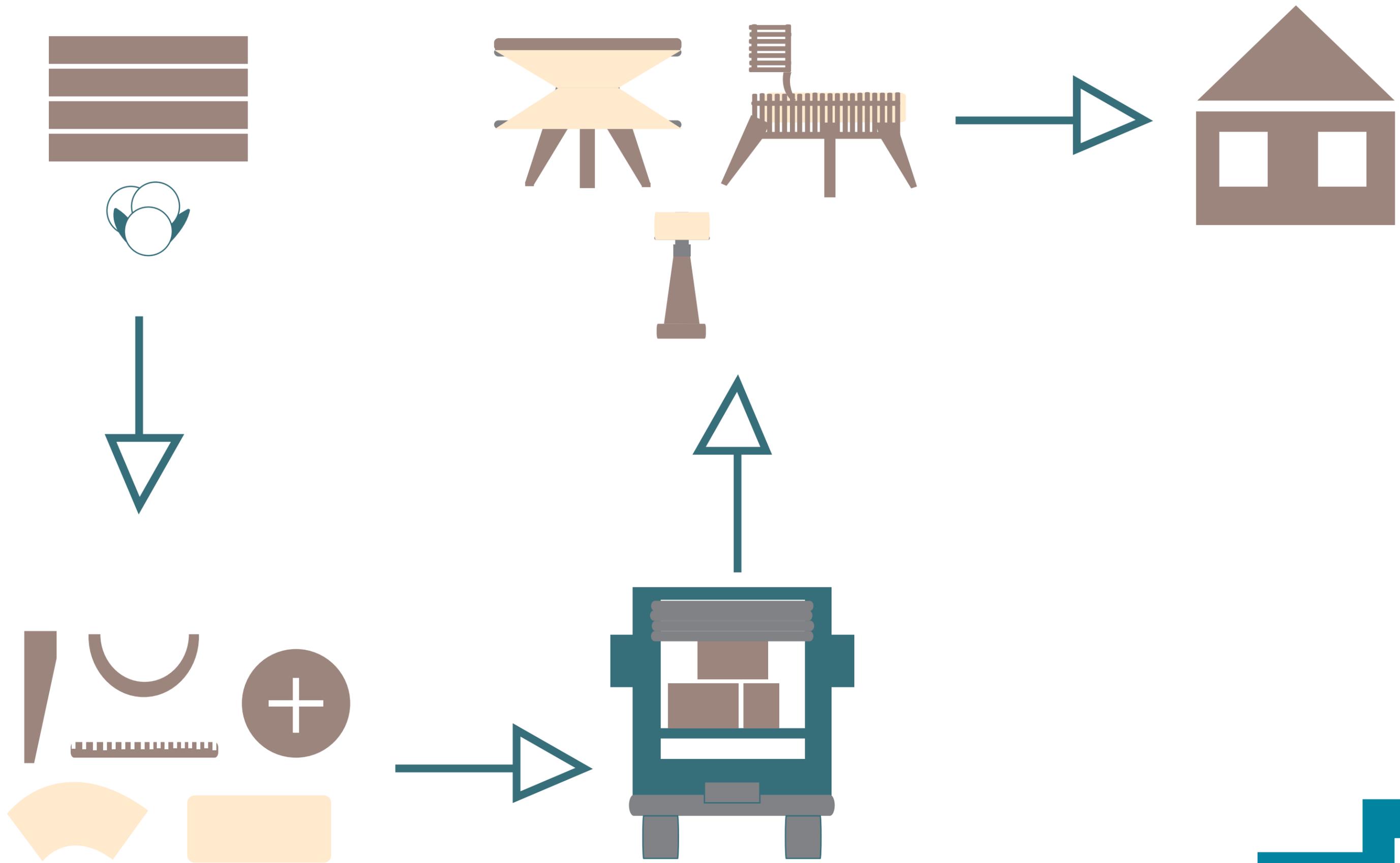
Named after the *numumuu tepwaku* word for "seat", the *Nakaru* chair draws its form inspiration from the shape of traditional water jugs. The slope of the backing to the seat is based on the opening to the holding chamber of the jug while the ribbed seat and back are based on the woven texture of the jugs as well as the ribbing techniques of South Korean wood worker Bae Se Hwa. The legs are interchangeable with those of the *Tuku Soona* table to make assembly after moving easy.







The pieces that make up Weave furnishings are all simplistic shapes that any person, or CNC, could cut in little time with little effort. By making each shape simple and repeated, it allows for quick production and for opportunities in the future to employ workers that may not necessarily know how to do the craft of wood working while still maintaining the quality. These simple shapes also allow for the consumer to put their furnishings together, and to take them apart, easily thus making the moving experience less cumbersome. Currently I plan on opening my own studio by next year to produce these furnishings and a few years down the road I would like to open manufacturing facilities on reservations.





- Weave's branding is based around the three ideals listed earlier of nomadicy, sustainability, and minimalism.
- When making the logo, heavy focus was placed onto the value of minimalism. The logo is two of the letter w "woven" together to make a diamond shape in the center. Each w is meant to represent Native and non- Natives and when they cross, they form a simplified medicine eye.
- The color palate is white, brown, and turquoise. This was chosen due to white being a symbol of the East, brown since all the pieces in the collection are to be made of solid wood, and the turquoise representing the actual stone that is seen as a healing stone.
- The shapes within the forms and the logo reference traditional textiles and pottery that have a balance of soft, natural shapes and hard geometric patterns.

- Weave will begin as an online only brand but a brick and mortar location could be interesting further on down the road
- 15% of each product sold going to an indigenous cause; currently I am looking into the Redhawk Native American Arts Council, Native American Rights Fund, and Women Empowering Women for Indigenous Nations. When I get more lines out, i would like each line to have proceeds that go to a different non-profit
- I would also like to develop the next lines with other indigenous artists/activists to open up more diverse discussions about indigenous issues with non-native people
- Word of mouth style marketing seems to be the best approach so I will make attempts to get into gallery settings to further spread awareness of my work
- Eventually I would like to fully give back to indigenous communities by offering studio assistant positions to indigenous people trying to get off of the reservations and opening up manufacturing facilities on reservations to bring money into the reservations thus allowing them their autonomy

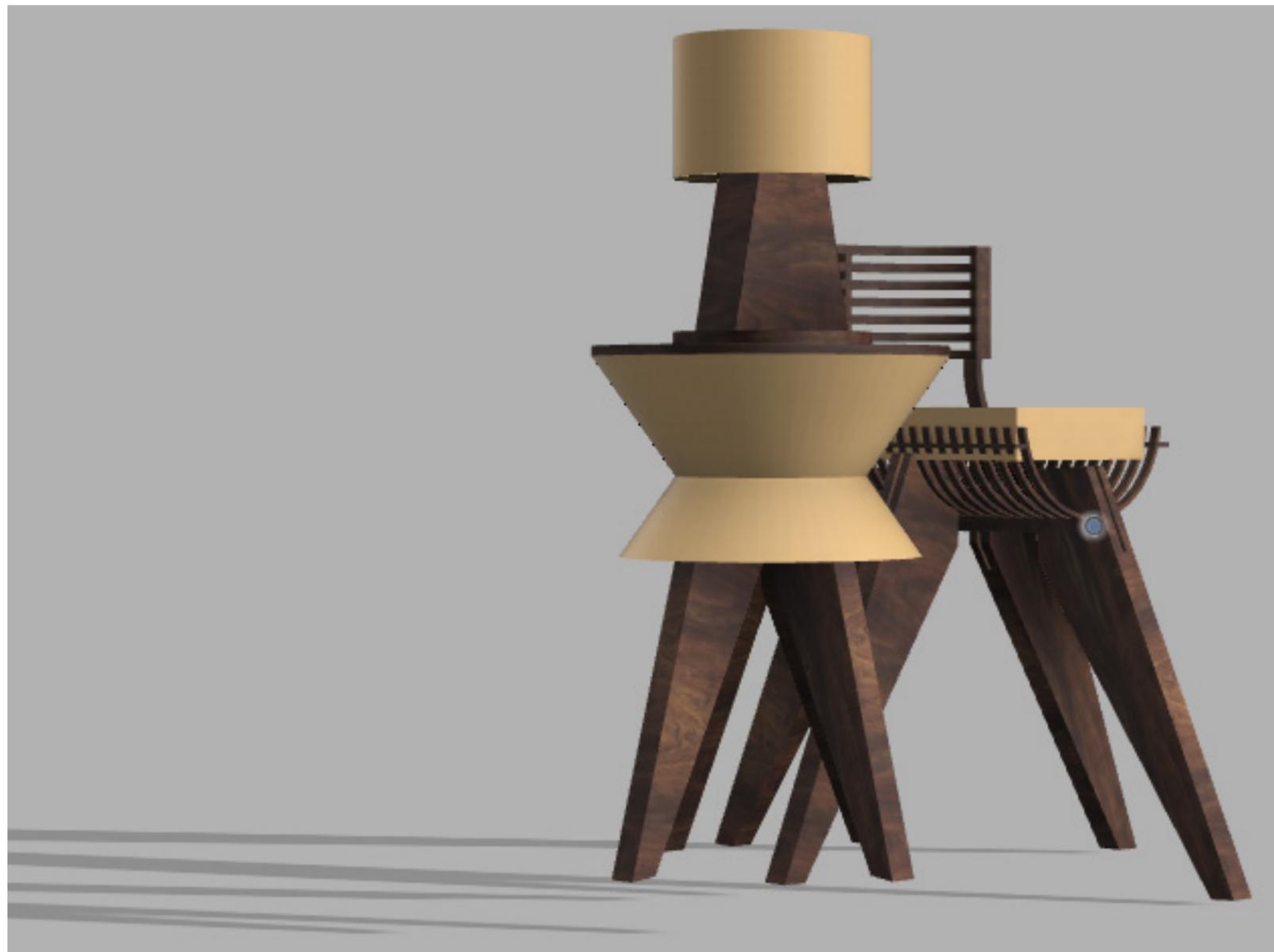


Retail for Weave is mainly online but once or twice a year a type of "nomadic shopping experience" would be beneficial as a way for potential customers to experience the furniture in person. This "nomadic shopping experience" would be a blend of a conventional pop up shop and the way pow wow vendors are set up. The Weave pavillion would be the main attraction but surrounding it would be booths for other indigenous designers and crafts people to come sell their products as well to make it more of an experience as well as another aspect of supporting the Native community. To push the sustainability aspect, I believe having the building made of discarded shipping containers would be a good move as well as a conversation point.



- Year 1: Complete Plains line, build online store, build brand recognition, and start on South West line
- Year 2: Make South West line go live, research next line (either island or eastern), get a studio
- Year 3: Prototype 3rd line and work on connections within the indigenous artist community
- Year 4: Make 3rd line go live, attend Gathering of the Nations, and get a studio assistant
- Year 5: Research 4th line, get featured in a gallery outside of Ohio, and reach out for collab work
- Year 6: Prototype 4th line and look into customization options for existing lines
- Year 7: Look into a larger studio and launch 4th line
- Year 8: Research 5th line and hire a few more studio assistants(looking at reservations)
- Year 9: Prototype 5th line and try to get into the "presentation" stratosphere
- Year 10: Launch 5th line and look into larger production facility on a reservation





Weave furnishings allow Native people to feel more submerged in their culture in their home by including a reference to a traditional ways of life while simultaneously creating a dialog between Native to Non-Native through cultural sharing. It also enforces traditional beliefs with the three basic values of nomadicy, sustainability, and minimalism. Based on those three beliefs, it makes for a better moving experience for the user.



URA (THANK YOU)

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

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My ancestors for persevering and passing down the traditional knowledge that I needed to make this whole thesis possible and even to make me possible.

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