

Micaceous Clay Bowl–5th Grade and up

Created by Brant Palley of New Mexico Clay

Materials:

Mica Red Clay (2-3 lbs each)

Resources:

Metal Rib Kemper [S4](#) (scraping tool)

Clay Cutter Kemper [K35](#)

Puki (Bowl mold) (a Tewa Word)

Plastic spoon

1oz of water

Plastic baggies

Objectives:

1. Introduce students to the Northern New Mexico native tradition of *micaceous* clay cooking and serving *vessels*.
2. Students will make one bowl measuring 7.5-6”x3” using the techniques of coiling in a puki.
3. Students will learn about the history and reverence to the earth and its gifts as shown by the artists.
4. Students will use their hands to **make** something from a formless lump of clay.



Vocabulary: Mica, Micaceous, Puki, coil, polish, burnish, vessels.

Preparation:

1. Cut clay into orange-size balls and keep wrapped in plastic bags.
2. Puki may be any bowl shape, lined with a paper towel to keep the clay from sticking.
3. Fill SMALL containers with water, set out spoons and scraping tools.

Instruction:

1. Introduce students to mica pottery; and the idea that all over the world people cooked in clay pots. In North Africa they used pots called “Tagines” because they had no ovens. By doing this they could cook on a campfire and get oven like results (long slow moist cooking). The same goes for beans. Beans must cook slowly for at least two hours without scorching hence the Bean Pot. The mica in the clay acts to slow down the heat. The bowl is very important as a way to eat stew; you have to serve it in something!
2. Present the clay vocabulary to students and point out examples.
3. If students have not used clay before, provide them with instruction on how to roll out clay and form coils.
4. Start by forming a round disc to fit in the bottom of the puki (which is a mold to shape the bottom of the pot). The disc should be 3/4” thick and fill 2/3’s of the bottom of the puki.



Next take a lemon sized piece of clay and shape it into a ball, then squish it flat trying to keep the shape round with an even thickness. This goes into the bottom of the puki and will be the bottom of the bowl.

Next roll out a coil long enough to go around the disc (try to make it even with the same thickness as the disc). If the clay seems dry, put a small amount of water around the disc and attach the coil by pressing lightly. With your finger or thumb work your way around the coil smearing the coil and the disc together. Continue this process maybe 4-5 times until the bowl is um... bowl shaped, and about 3” tall.

5. Now comes the smoothing. Using the metal scraping tool on the outside first smooth out any sign of the coils. Then using the edge of the rib start to gently scrape the exterior to thin the walls and make them even. Afterwards do the interior, scraping away excess material thinning and shaping the bowl. Now is the time to even out the rim by marking a level line around the top and shaving away the irregularities. When the bowl is firm enough you can remove the puki. You may have a puki line which should be scraped away with the rib. Continue scraping until the pot is of even thickness and has no sign of the coils. If there are holes they can be filled in with a small amount of clay.

6. Polishing is accomplished by rubbing the clay with your finger or a plastic spoon, this takes time.

7. Traditionally we would further refine the shape by sanding with a piece of sandstone or sandpaper. However the only part of the clay that is toxic is the dry dust when inhaled. Also, the sanding scratches up the surface so we would have to go back and apply a finishing slip (4 coats). The slip would then be polished as above.

Firing: Fire to cone 010 a very low temperature of 1657 F. Any hotter and the shine will go dull.



* **Disclaimer:** This whole process as traditionally taught, requires many years of long apprenticeship where you would learn to dig the clay, make an offering of thanks, process the clay, and pursue perfection. Every motion of your fingers would be dictated by tradition. Here we are just scraping the surface, and just approximating the experience and results.

Closure: discuss function of what we have made, and what it would be like to live without metal utensils and pots and pans.

Assessment: Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students demonstrated a **strong** understanding of the dynamics of clay,

understood the forming process, and were engaged in the process.

2 points: Students demonstrated a **satisfactory** understanding of the dynamics of clay, understood the forming process.

1 point: Students demonstrated a **poor** understanding of the dynamics of clay, understood the forming process, or acted bored.

APS Elementary Visual Arts Standards Met:

Standard 1: Developing the Skills of Art – Understand and apply visual arts materials, techniques and processes.

Standard 2: Using the Language of Art – Identify and apply the elements and principles of visual art.

Standard 3: Creating Art – Explore the creative process by using a variety of genre, symbols, and ideas for artistic expression.

Standard 4: Living with Art – Investigate historical, cultural, and social contexts to understand the role of visual arts in everyday life.

Standard 6: Connecting Through Art – Make connections between visual arts and other disciplines (History).

Resources:

1. Ortega, Felipe www.felipeortega.com/

2. New Mexico Clay's website about mica clay www.MicaClay.com

3. All the works featured in this lesson plan were by Clarence Cruz. (Khuu Khaayay) from the Pueblo of San Juan/Ohkay Owingeh.

Optional: For more lesson plans ideas, visit <http://www.nmclay.com/lesson/>