

# The Algonquin No-Face Doll



## Hook: Creative Play

Ask students to list toys that they've made or created from makeshift materials:

- forts and simple vehicles made from oversized boxes
- drum kits from cooking pots and wooden spoons
- sculptures and pies from mud and stones
- balls made from rubber bands or string
- costumes from bed sheets and old cloth

Ask them to describe the attraction in creating toys:

- creates something unique and personal
- requires critical thinking and creativity
- much of the enjoyment is in making the toy

Explain that today they are each going to make a unique toy, based on the Algonquin No-Face Doll.

## Classroom Activity: Making a No-Face Doll

### Backgrounder

"It was said by the Elders that the Algonquin people were of a nomadic nature and moved from place to place frequently and also split up into different groups going different ways and settling miles away from each other. This was due to the fact that they had to move where better hunting and fishing grounds were. This way of living was hard on the children. Toys in those days were limited; most were made out of wood or stone and left (behind) when they moved on, except for a doll. This doll was made of animal skin and always without a face. This was for three reasons. The first, Algonquin children had great respect for their Elders, so no face would ever be put on any play toy, especially the dolls in case it would resemble an Elder. The second and most important to the child was that when on their frequent moves the children became separated from their friends and playmates, so each day they would play with their doll and pretend it was a special friend they were playing with and they would put an imaginary face temporarily on the doll and then perhaps the next hour or day they could pretend to play with another of their friends that moved away. (Finally), it is said that the doll had no spirit until the one who owns it can give it an imaginary face and name while playing with it. This is one way the Great Spirit can be with each and every one of us always."

~ Mary Ann McPhie, Algonquin Elder

**Age range:** 7 to 9 years

**Time:** three 60-minute sessions

### Resources:

- class-set *Algonquin No-Face Doll Pattern* and *Kije-Manido (O Great Spirit)* song sheet
- doll-making materials
  - felt
  - unbleached medium-weight cotton or light-weight leather
  - yarn and cotton fabrics
  - stuffing
  - needles and thread for stitching
- materials for smudging ceremony
  - large shell, flat stone or dish to hold the medicine
  - sage, sweetgrass or incense
  - large feather to disperse the smoke
  - matches

### Learning Outcome:

Students will investigate Algonquin First Nations culture and lifestyle through the study and creation of a No-Face Doll.

*Anishinabe is the name chosen by the First Nation people; it means "the people" or "the good beings".*

*Algonquin is a name given the First Nation people by the French.*

*Anishinabe consists of three First Nations bands: Algonquin, Cree and Ojibwe. Each Nation shares a similar language base, with many differences (similar to how the English, French and Spanish share Latin as their base).*

1. In preparation for this lesson:
  - Ask students to bring in a ½ metre of medium-weight cotton or light-weight leather, fabric scraps, small bit of yarn.
  - Practice singing *Kije-Manido (O Great Spirit)*.
2. Using Backgrounder notes, introduce the class to the history of the Algonquin No-Face Doll. To view images of No-Face Dolls, go to [www.thealgonquinway.ca](http://www.thealgonquinway.ca) and search on NO-FACE DOLL.
3. Provide each student with a pattern. Ask them to carefully cut two pieces (front and back) from the material. Be careful to avoid waste.
4. The two pieces should be pinned front-to-front if the student intends to turn the seam in. If not, the pieces should be laid back-to-back.
5. Sew together the pieces, leaving a gap for stuffing. Stuff the doll and close the seam.
6. From scrap materials, create a simple garment and headdress. Yarn can be attached for hair.

### ***Discussion***

Discuss the reasons why these traditional toys were never given a face.

What was it like to make a toy?

Have you ever sewn anything before?

### ***Extension***

Have students write a paragraph describing their experiences in making their doll; they can share their reflections with the class if they wish.

Make No-Face Dolls and donate them to a woman's shelter.

## **Outdoor Activity: No-Face Doll Naming Ceremony**

1. In preparation for this activity:
  - Ask students to think of a name for their No-Face Doll, but keep it to themselves.
  - Practice singing the song: *Kije-Manido (O Great Spirit)*. Melody downloads are available at: [www.thealgonquinway.ca](http://www.thealgonquinway.ca); click on E-BOOKS and find *Algonquin Language Song Book*.
  - Cut the Cleansing Prayer into strips, and distribute to six students in the class.
  - Prepare smudging materials.
  - Using Backgrounder notes, introduce the class to the process and traditions of The Smudging Ceremony.
2. If weather permits, gather in a quiet shaded area of a playground or woodland, standing in a circle.
3. Ask students to remove all jewelry and tuck it into a pocket.
4. Ask class to read the Cleansing Prayer aloud, one line at a time.
5. Proceed around the circle, smudging participants one at a time.
6. Once everyone has been smudged – cleansed – sing the song: *Kije-Manido (O Great Spirit)*.
7. Ask students to sit in a circle and share the name of their No-Face Doll. Why did they pick this name?

## ***Discussion***

- Why do stuffed toys provide a sense of permanence and security?

## ***Extension***

Have students write a paragraph entitled “The Algonquin No-Face Doll.” In complete sentences, describe why the doll was a permanent toy for Algonquin children, and the three main reasons it was given no face.

Have students take on the persona of a small Anishnabe child of long ago. Explain:

“At this point in time, you and your family are about to join a group travelling south in search of wild game. Describe what preparation and packing you are helping with (taking down shelters, packing clothing, hunting implements, cooking implements, other tools), who is coming and who is not, and how you are feeling, what the journey was like last time. Talk about the importance of your No-Face Doll in this process.”

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## Cleansing Prayer



We cleanse our HEART to rid it of all resentments and ill-will and open it to compassion, gentleness and caring for others.

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We cleanse our MOUTH so that what we speak will be what we mean to say, truthful and honest and said in a positive and caring way.

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We cleanse our EYES so that we will see what we are meant to see: the Truth in the world around us, the beauty of our Mother the Earth and the gifts given to us by the Creator.

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We cleanse our EARS so that we will clearly receive the intended messages from others and understand the Spiritual Truths from the Creator, the Grandfathers, the Four Directions and the Four Kingdoms.

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We cleanse the small of our BACKS to release anger that may have gathered there, to allow positive energies to enter and to be healed.

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We cleanse our FEET so that we will seek to walk our True Path on this Earthwalk, walk closer to our families, friends, communities and Creator, and to easily flee our enemies.

# Kije-Manido (O Great Spirit)

Transcription by: L. Davis



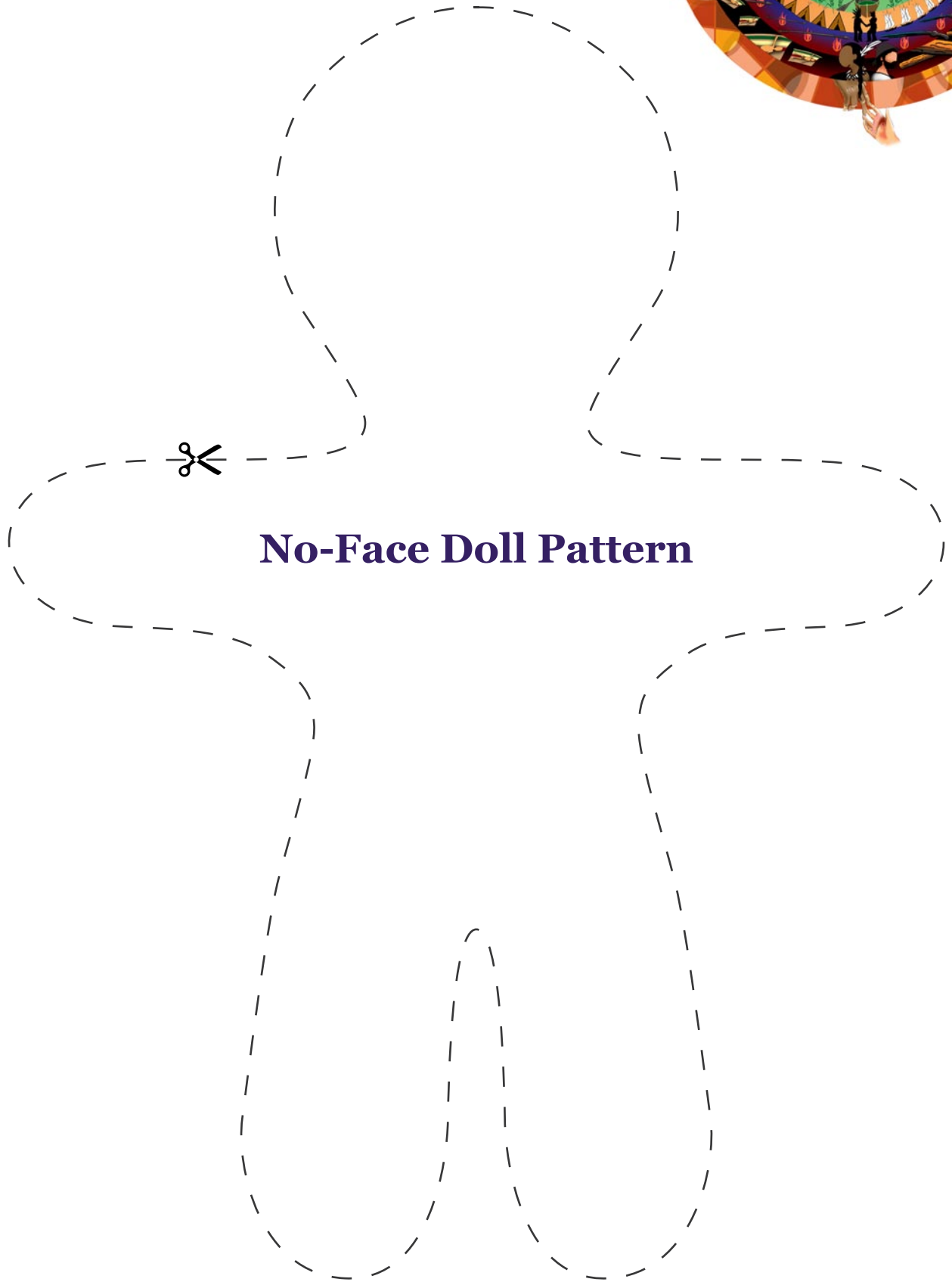
Flute

5 Ki - je - Man - i - do - A - ki No - din Ki - sis Ni - bi Ki - wi - ta -

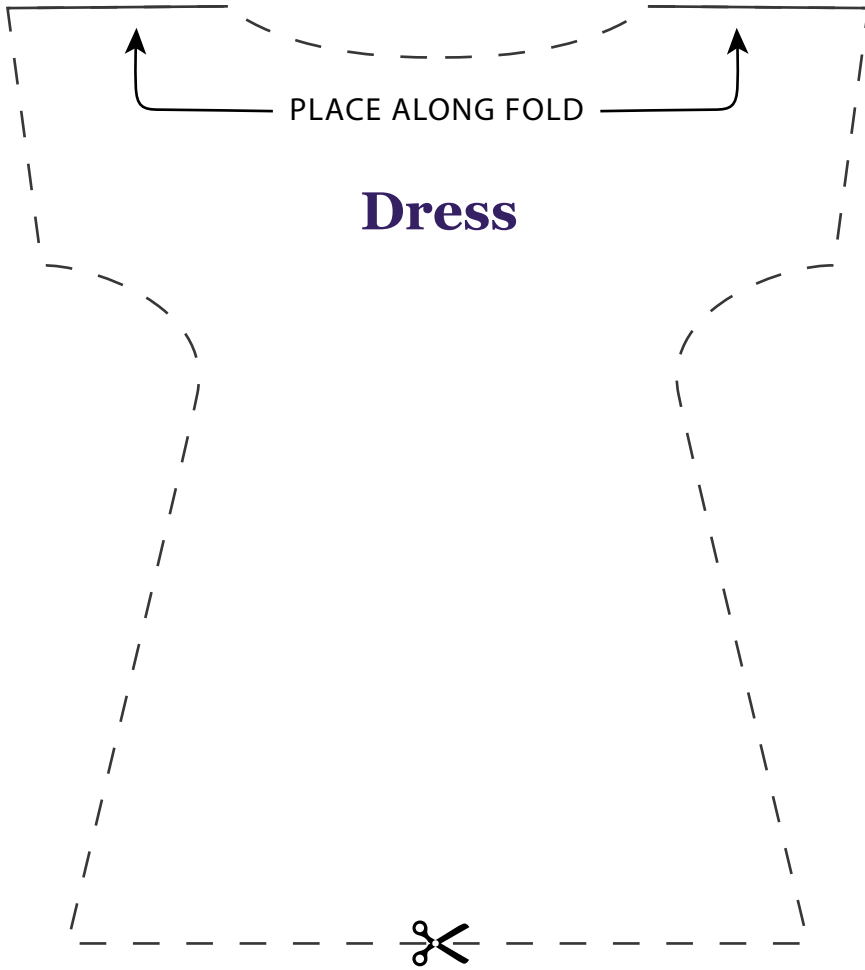
9 A - shid Ni, Pin - ji - na O' - Great Spi - rit - Earth, wind, sun and

sea. You're all a - round - us And in - side of me.

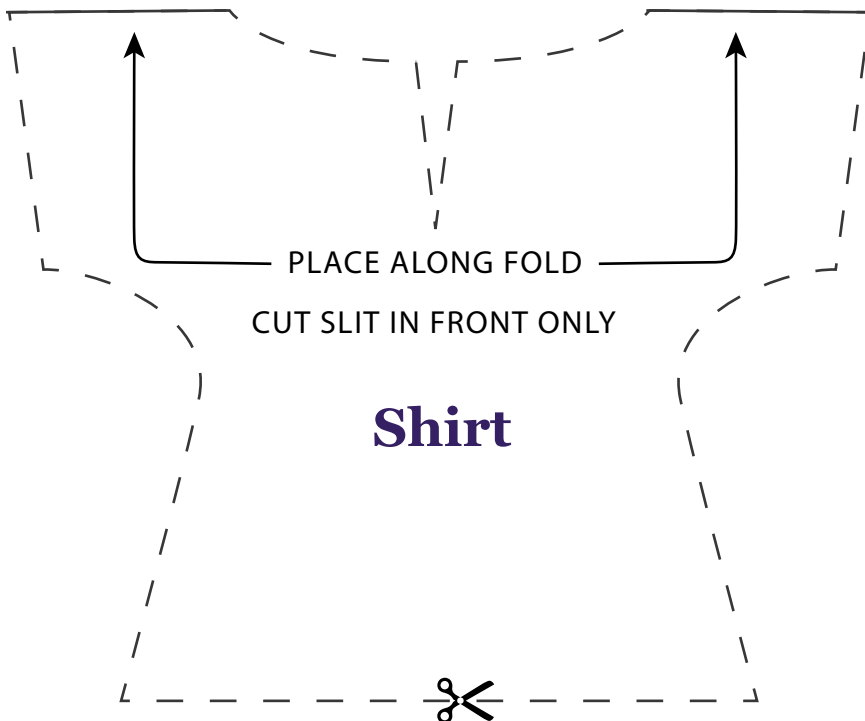
Sing 4 times through.



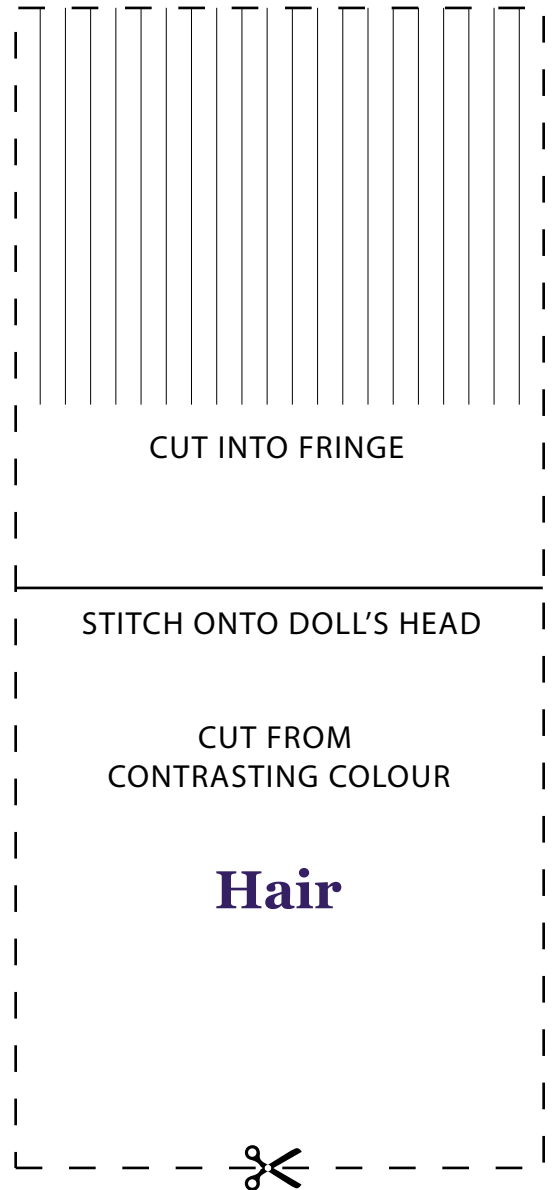
**No-Face Doll Pattern**



## Dress



## Shirt



CUT INTO FRINGE

STITCH ONTO DOLL'S HEAD

CUT FROM  
CONTRASTING COLOUR

## Hair