

Tikinagan or Cradleboard:

Babies, wrapped in their moss bags, were often carried on cradleboards. These boards are for easy carrying as well as being a socializing tool. The tikinagan, served as a means to transport babies and toddlers as well as protect them from wandering off. The baby can be set upright and observe the people and things around him/her. Tikinagans were made out of spruce, cedar or ash wood. A curved wood bracket was lashed to the top of the board. This board prevented the child from falling on his face if the board was knocked over and also served as a hanger for the mosquito netting used to protect the child from bugs and direct sunlight. In the Mackenzie River region it is the custom of Metis mothers to use a carrying strap to carry their babies. Babies were swaddled in bags filled with sphagnum moss, a material which is not only absorbent, but has disinfectant qualities, ideal as a diaper substitute.



This beaded moss bag and cradle board have been handed down in the Dorion family of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. It now belongs to Leah Dorion.



Baby Victor Lafferty in his moss bag, with mother Catherine Lafferty and her son Jim. (PA 40897)



Ojibwa Cradle Board circa 1825.
Toys and amulets were traditionally attached to the hoop, in this case bells.
British Museum AOA 2003.Am.19, 42



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute