

## Painting Flint & Feather Miniatures

By Bob Murch



The Huron (Wendat) and Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) , despite their bitter animosity towards each other, were both part of the larger Iroquoian cultural and linguistic group that also included the Erie, Neutrals, Wenrohronon and Tionontati . What we know of the appearance of these peoples prior to European influence is mostly derived from a few scanty reports by the first westerners, often Jesuit missionaries, who kept written records of their journeys among the native peoples. The other source of information pertaining to the appearance of these First Nations peoples can only be derived from archeology and speculation based on what we know of the environment in which they lived.

The peoples of the Great Lakes region of North America, as noted by the first Europeans to meet them, were tall and strongly built with white teeth and bronze complexions. Clothing and adornment varied considerably from individual to individual but for the most part the tribally specific difference appears to be minimal. Latter ceremonial garb became more codified among the Iroquois confederation in the form of a tribally specific hat style but in our pre-contact era this does not appear to be the case.

It is best to remember that when painting native warriors of this era, we don't want to use colors that would not have been available before the arrival of Europeans. In other words, keep to a fairly neutral palate of earth tones and greys with occasional flashes of naturally occurring colors such as red and yellow ocher.

The following is a breakdown of how I painted my Huron war party. I used a consistent palate for all of my warriors even though each one, as represented by the figures, was quite individually configured. By using a consistent colour scheme my resulting war party takes on a look distinctive from another opposing war party. They aren't wearing uniforms per-se but if I used a particular buff color for one warrior's breech clout I would use the same buff on the next warrior's leggings.

Iroquoian warriors went into battle mostly stripped to the waist and as such flesh tone is the first place to start. With all 12 warriors primed, based and mounted on pill bottle handles with double sided tape, I began applying a complete covering of P3 Gun Corps Brown. The entire figure is painted with this undercoat. It's suitable for buckskin, leather and the undertones of flesh.

Now for the skin itself: For bronze flesh tone I use P3 Khardic Flesh which has a nice reddish tint. After making sure all exposed flesh is nicely coated I then begin a series washes over the flesh, alternating between burnt umber and burnt sienna. I use Liquitex artist acrylics for this. They have a very fine solubility which makes for a smooth finish. Allow the various wash coats to thoroughly dry between coats. When I'm satisfied with the tonality of the washes I then return with the original flesh tone and pick out all of the high surfaces of the body. You can add a touch of white to the flesh tone at this stage to give a little highlight to the warrior's body.

Now comes the fun stage when you can apply tattoos should your particular warriors wear them. Tattooing was common among Iroquoian peoples and they used a bluish/black dye made from charcoal and bear fat. The designs were mostly linear but geometric patterns and some solid areas were also made use of. The designs were particular to each warrior so you are free to use your imagination here. Mix a little flesh tone into the tattoo paint so that the designs are a little faded and not too cartoonish looking.

Next up is the war paint. Again, each warrior was in individual so his designs were particular to him. I used black, yellow ocher and red for my war paint as these tones are found in nature fairly easily. You

might be able to argue for a green or dark blue but I suspect these were colors that didn't come into use until the Europeans supplied them. Here you can use your imagination as well but linear markings and hand prints would be most likely. Some warriors painted half of their body while leaving the other half bare. Others applied dense patterns or stripes.

Once you are finished with the flesh it is time to pick out the finer details and paint the leggings, breech clouts and moccasins. Leather clothing could be any number of tones ranging from light buff to brown to black staining made from grease and walnut shells. The leathers were often decorated with shell work, moose hair and porcupine quills. In other words, the decorative work could be in red or black or white. Again, I would avoid blues and greens, bright yellows or purples. Neutral tones will work best.

Hairstyles were often the most elaborate part of the warrior's identity. Moose hair roaches could be dyed red or ocher and feathers in innumerable configurations could be worn. Most Iroquoians shaved their heads leaving only a scalp lock around which the head dress was constructed though Huron warriors were often noted as leaving one side of their head unshaven while keeping the other half bare. Shell bead work was often braided into the scalp locks. The famous 'Mohican' hair style could actually be worn by any Iroquoian/Huron warrior and this could range from a minimal ridge of hair down the center of the head to an enormous and elaborate roach with quill and moose hair embellishments. Wicker work hats, decorated with feathers, could also be worn.

Warriors in the pre-contact days actually fought in bigger, denser groups than in the time when European firearms became common. In those days armor and shields were common and these were often constructed with wooden strips woven together with hide lashings. Leather covered wood would also be a likely configuration for armor and shields. Again, neutral colors would be best here though it is logical to assume that shields could be painted with designs in the colors already mentioned. Geometric patterns or symbolic animal pictures might have been good choices.

Again, with my own war band I would mix up a particular shade of leather color and then apply it in some manner to all of my warriors, working my way from right to left. If I moved onto a red paint for hair coloring, I would also try to use a touch of it on all the other warriors in order to maintain their consistent look. Working on the details in this way, with occasional further washes of burn umber or raw umber on the leather, was my final stage of painting.

Keeping to a similar color scheme will aid enormously in identifying you war party on the table top and hopefully, giving each warrior his own unique design within those parameters, will allow you to give your individual men a little personality of their own.

**Weapons:** Dark Grey Flint,  
Assorted Wood Tones  
Can be painted or  
decorated with shell

**Head Dress:** Should be the most  
Colorful area.  
Can be dyed Red or  
Yellow Ocher.  
Feathers can be  
varied and bright.



**Flesh:** Bronze or Heavy Tan

**Tattoos:** Blue/Black

**War Paint:** Yellow Ocher  
White, Red  
Black

**Armour & Shield:** Brown to  
Tan

**Leggings &  
Breech Clout:** Ranging from  
Brown, Grey  
Tan to Black.  
Shell & Quill  
Decoration:  
White, Red, Black

**Overall, most colors  
should be neutral &  
natural looking**