How Deer Hide Was Tanned
Hunting was a main part of Indian life. The deer was a very precious animal to the people. The hides were used for blankets and clothing. The bones were used for tools and needles for sewing. The Indians used every part of the deer and ate the meat which could feed a lot of people.

The men of the tribe who were chosen for hunters took the young boys to learn to hunt.
In camp the women prepared the meat for the winter. Most of the meat was dried or made into pemmican.
The deer hides were tanned to make warm clothes for the winter. The hides were first soaked in water for three or four days, or long enough so the hair would come off the hide easily. The hair was scraped off with a scraper. The other side was also scraped clean of all pieces of meat and fat.
The deer hide was then put into a container and soaked with the brains of the deer. It was soaked until it was soft. The deer hide was then taken out of the soaking solution and wrapped around a tree. The hide was wrung out as dry as it could be. This sometimes took half an hour, depending on the thickness of the hide. After it was unwound and wrung out dry, it was ready to be put on the tanning frame.
The hide was stretched and laced on a frame. It was poked gently with a blunt stick or deer antler to soften the hide. This was done very carefully in order not to poke a hole through the hide. The women poked it until it was dry. After it was dry, it was unlaced and taken off the frame.
The hide was then sewn up one side, leaving both ends open. The hide was hung over a low fire of coals. A certain kind of wood was burned to smoke the hide. It was smoked to the desired color. Finally the hide was ready to cut and sew into moccasins or shirts or a buckskin dress.
Booklets available in the Level IV sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the Planned Sequence of use in the Teacher’s Manual. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest are included in the Levels I, II and III sequences.

1. Warm Springs Animal Stories  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

2. Snail Women at Sq’aq’le  
The Suquamish Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation

3. Blue Jay – Star Child/Basket Woman  
Muckleshoot Tribe

4. Assiniboine Woman Making Grease  
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation

5. Coyote  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

6. How the Summer Season Came  
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap Reservation

7. Little Weasel’s Dream  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

8. Fort Hall Stories  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

9. The Bear Tepee  
Northern Cheyenne Tribe

10. Sioux Stories and Legends  
Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation

11. Kootenai Stories  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

12. Chief Mountain’s Medicine  
Gros Ventre Tribe from the Fort Belknap Reservation

13. Coyote the Trickster  
Burns Paiute Reservation

14. Running Free  
Shoalwater Bay

15. Salish Coyote Stories  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

16. Coyote and the Cowboys  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

17. Napi’s Journey  
Blackfeet Tribe

18. Warm Springs Stories  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

19. Tepee Making  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

20. Baskets and Canoes  
Skokomish Tribe

21. Warrior People  
Blackfeet Tribe