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Well hey there and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, an educational podcast for music-loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm thrilled to have you with me today.

November is Native American Heritage month. It's a chance to celebrate the rich and varied cultures, traditions and contributions of Native people. With that in mind, we're taking a chance in today's episode to learn a bit about some of the musical instruments used by many Native American tribes. The song you're listening to now is a Lakota lullaby. The greatest instrument in Native American music is considered by many to be the voice.

Drums and rattles are among the most common instruments used in Native American music. Many indigenous stories and songs refer to the drum beat as earth's heartbeat. Plains peoples used drums to accompany games, personal songs or healing songs. Pueblo peoples used a cylindrical drum to accompany ceremonial dances. The drum often accompanies the human voice in indigenous music. Because drums and the voice are so interwoven, those who play the drums are often referred to as singers rather than drummers.

The drums range in size from large powwow drums, which are played by many people, to palm-sized water drums found among some indigenous people in the Northeast. All the elements of nature are used in the creation of drums. An animal skin is stretched across a hollowed log or wooden frame, combining animal and plant life. The construction also uses water and fire, resulting in an instrument that represents the circle of life. Drums are treated with great care and respect among Native Americans.

Rattles, another popular instrument in Native American tradition, help keep rhythm during dances and ceremonies. It is believed that the sound of the rattle can clear the mind. Although each tribe

creates rattles in different ways, depending on what resources are available to them, most rattles are symbolic of the three kingdoms and are made from elements in the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms.

Eastern Woodlands peoples called North America “Turtle Island”. Turtle rattles are made from the shell of turtles with objects such as turtle bones or cherry bits inside. These turtle rattles honor the turtle for its role in the creation of Turtle Island. Other rattles are made from gourds which are dried, prepared and decorated. Bones, deer hooves and pebbles are other materials used to create rattles. What you’re listening to now is a Native American church song accompanied by rattles.

The flute is another instrument of importance in Native American culture. It was used in the past for courtship, as playing the flute was a way in which a young man would communicate his love. The flute was also part of healing and meditative songs. Flutes were often made from wood or animal bone. Cedar wood was a favorite among many tribes because of its wonderful smell. Native American flutes are similar in construction to a recorder. Air is blown gently into one end, and the pitches change by covering and uncovering finger holes in the body of the flute.

.Whistles are another instrument often used in Native American music. Listen to this example of a whistle made from eagle bone. Eagle bone is the most common type of bone whistle, but indigenous people also use other types of animal bones as well as antlers or wood to craft whistles. Peoples of the Northwest Coast use a small wooden whistle to signal the presence of spirits. Many tribes use whistles during special ceremonies to bring out symbolism. For example, a whistle made of eagle bone might be played during a tribe’s Sun Dance to call forth the strength of the majestic bird.

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Head on over to my website to download a special listening calendar and hear more examples of historical and modern Native American music. You can find that listening calendar at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/6.

As you listen to diverse examples of Native American music, you'll hear some of the instruments we learned about in today's episode as well as many others. Native American culture -- just as every other culture -- is always changing.

Many thanks to Dr. Shane Doyle, the founder and consultant of Native Nexus and member of the Crow tribe, for his help and support surrounding this episode. Learn more about his important work at nativenexus.net -- and I'll link to their website in my show notes as well.

If you enjoyed learning about some of the important instruments in Native American music, be sure to rate and review the Busy Kids Love Music podcast as well as subscribe so that you don't miss our next brand new episode, airing in two weeks. Thanks for joining me today to learn about and celebrate Native American music. I'll see you in two weeks for more musical discoveries!