

# S.W.A.P.S.

## What are S.W.A.P.S. ?

**S.W.A.P.S.** (Special Whachamacalits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere)

When they are exchanged between Scouts they are a **S.W.A.P.** (Shared With A Pal)

## Why Are They Important?

by Mary Ussery-White

“SWAPS” can trace their roots to the Native American custom of a Potlatch. What is a Potlatch? A ceremonial gathering or feast among certain Native American peoples of the Northwest Pacific coast at which the host distributes gifts requiring reciprocation. From the Chinook (Nootka patshatl), meaning “to give”.

According to Margo Mead of Oregon, the custom stems from the legend explaining why birds have colored feathers. As the story goes, two Indian girls plucked feathers of a magic bird and distributed the multi-colored plumage to the colorless birds living in the forest. From that time on, birds have had brightly colored feathers and those gifts were remembered at potlatch ceremonies.

Potlatches were social celebrations given by coastal tribes to celebrate important events such as the ascension of a new chief, rites of passage for girls and boys, birth, marriage and death. Members of the local tribes were invited for common potlatches, while elites invited guests from many tribes. Families were summoned to the potlatch by a messenger carrying a bundle of sticks representing the number of people to be invited. Depending upon the tribe, the potlatch took on many forms, but most lasted for several days and included singing, dancing, games, races, speeches and refreshments. The host and members of his family were costumed and enacted legends about their heritage. The gift giving came last of all, just before the guests departed. Since potlatch gifts were symbols of the families’ status in the village, they were often quite elaborate, often being carved boxes, canoes, dishes, jewelry, mats and baskets.

## The Idaho Connection to SWAPS

Holly Barton shared the following information about Potlatch with members of the WAGGGS-L email list:

“The whole Potlatch thing in GSUSA started with the 1965 Senior Roundup in Idaho. People wanted the traditional SWAPS to be something more meaningful and personal, and National encouraged those of us attending Roundup to come up with a few very special swaps that had taken some thought and energy to produce. They were to be more than ‘something with a pin’. I remember (because I still have and cherish) the first potlatch I received at Roundup. It was from a Belgian Guide, one of two girls hosted by the Thousand Islands Council. She had made a little booklet about her family and country, about Guiding, games, songs, historic towns in Belgium, and she had illustrated it with wonderful drawings, photographs, pressed flowers, etc. It was obviously something that she had taken pains with and that would tell the recipient something about herself. I’ve had lots of SWAPS from girls and adults over the years, but 34 years later, I still treasure Rika’s potlatch and the memory of marching down the Avenue of Flags at Roundup, chanting a cadence with her in Flemish. That’s what a potlatch is!”

## Girl Scout SWAPS

- ✓ A SWAP was a little remembrance that one Scout gives another.
- ✓ SWAPS are handmade, thus the girl is giving a part of herself to show friendship.
- ✓ Swaps are exchanged at National Conventions, Council events, Wider Ops, SU or neighborhood events, troop meetings and at day camps.
- ✓ SWAPS have a tag attached with the event name and date or the Troop number, Council name or State.
- ✓ In some countries SWAPS are called hat crafts.
- ✓ Swapping promotes friendship and encourages girls to talk to others.
- ✓ SWAPS are great mementos of a good time as well as a great way to share something about where we live and what we do.
- ✓ SWAPS traded can be placed in a SWAP bag, zipper baggie, shoe box, a friendship tie or pinned onto ribbon, any thing that can be easily carried.
- ✓ SWAPS are usually 1" to 2" in size.
- ✓ It is considered rude to refuse to swap with someone who asks. If you don't like the item you have been given or already have an identical SWAP, accept it politely and give them one of yours with a Girl Scout smile.
- ✓ Try to make your SWAPS something you would want to receive.
- ✓ ALWAYS say thank you!
- ✓ Try to have a few extra SWAPS on hand for those people who don't have any to give in return.
- ✓ Most SWAPS have a pin on them so they can be pinned to a hat or a shirt but they don't have to. SWAPS can be bracelets, necklaces, council patches, event patches, district/division/camp crests, or other small items.
- ✓ SWAPS can also be displayed on a banner, troop flag, or the kitchen curtain.
- ✓ SWAPS should be inexpensive, creative and fun.
- ✓ SWAPS should NOT contain edible food. Food items can attract bugs and critters when outdoors.

## S.W.A.P.S. Ideas

There is a huge resource of SWAPS ideas on the Internet. Listed below are some great websites to visit for ideas. If you are a young troop, you might ask older girls in your service unit to share their SWAPS from past events with your girls for ideas.

[www.Makingfriends.com](http://www.Makingfriends.com)

[www.gsswaps.net](http://www.gsswaps.net)

[http://parentingteens.about.com/od/girlscoutsandgirlguides/a/swaps\\_girlscout.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/od/girlscoutsandgirlguides/a/swaps_girlscout.htm)

<http://www.scoutingweb.com/scoutingweb/Program/CraftsSwaps.htm>

Swap ideas from past Jubilation events



