Hearts of Our People
NATIVE WOMEN ARTISTS

This exhibition is a tribute to all Native women artists, families, and nations throughout all time and space. It is their minds, hearts, and hands that have birthed their worlds, and this exhibition, into being.

Hearts of Our People began with a question: Why do Native women make art? We chose to respond within three core themes: Legacy, Relationships, and Power. Legacy examines the ways in which Native women artists acknowledge their lineage, making works that simultaneously embody the experience of previous generations, address the present moment, and speak to the future. Relationships explores the concept that bonds exist beyond the human world to include animals, the “natural” world, the earth, and other entities the Western world does not often recognize as having volition and agency. Power encompasses works created for diplomacy and influence, to empower others, and for the empowerment of oneself.

You will see similarities across cultures and communities, but you will also see many differences. Native Americans are not one monolithic group, and each tribe, nation, or community has its own unique culture, history, and present. Perhaps most important, each Native artist, like artists the world over, brings her own life experience, skill, and individual style to her art.

The co-curators of this exhibition are Jill Ahlberg Yohe, associate curator of Native American art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia), and Teri Greeves, Kiowa artist and scholar. During each step of the curatorial process, they worked closely with the Exhibition Advisory Board. The board provided knowledge and insights from a wide range of Native nations and is composed of twenty Native women artists and Native-art scholars. The board first met in November 2015 at Mia for two days of open discussion that set the tone and clarified intentions for the exhibition. Since then, the board has worked collaboratively to develop the major themes of the exhibition and advise on object selection. Its members were also instrumental in determining the structure and content of the exhibition catalogue and related programming.

The Exhibition Advisory Board was an essential part of the curatorial process. Input from these advisers helped inform all curatorial decisions. Their collective voices will bring greater depth to our audiences’ understanding of this art.
Exhibition Advisory Board

heather ahtone, Choctaw/Chickasaw, senior curator, American Indian Cultural Center and Museum

D. Y. Begay, Navajo artist

Janet Berlo, professor of art history and visual and cultural studies, University of Rochester

Susan Billy, Pomo artist

Katie Bunn-Marcuse, director and managing editor, Bill Holm Center for the Study of Northwest Coast Art, Burke Museum

Christina Burke, curator, Native American and non-Western Art, Philbrook Museum of Art

Kelly Church, Ottawa/Pottawatomi artist and educator

Heid Erdrich, Ojibwe writer and curator

Anita Fields, Osage artist

Adriana Greci Green, curator and assistant professor, University of Virginia

Carla Hemlock, Mohawk artist

Graci Horne, Dakhóta, independent curator

Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi, Alutiiq art historian

America Meredith, Cherokee, artist and editor of First American Art Magazine

Nora Naranjo Morse, Santa Clara artist

Cherish Parrish, Ottawa/Pottawatomi artist and educator

Ruth Phillips, Canada research professor and professor of art history, Carleton University

Jolene Rickard, Tuscarora, artist and associate professor of art history and visual studies, Cornell University

Lisa Telford, Haida artist

Dyani White Hawk, Lakȟóta artist and curator

Special recognition goes to Dakota Hoska (Lakȟóta), Hearts of Our People research assistant, for her four years of invaluable research, curation, editing, programming, and support.
Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art. The exhibition has been made possible in part by a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor.

The presentation at the Renwick Gallery is organized in collaboration with the National Museum of the American Indian. Generous support has been provided by the James F. Dicke Family Endowment, Chris G. Harris, the Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason Foundation, Jacqueline B. Mars, the Provost of the Smithsonian, the Share Fund, the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative, and the WEM Foundation.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Legacy

Legacy provides for the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next and is intrinsic to the artistic process of Native women. Legacy offers intergenerational continuity. It encapsulates the past, present, and future. It interconnects aesthetics and knowledge systems—ways of understanding the mutual links between one’s existence and the world specific to each Native nation—transcending time and place. Native women’s work keeps alive important techniques, aesthetic principles, and social protocols; it is steeped in Native modes of thinking, acting, and being.

Because of legacy, artistic patterns and techniques can be faithfully re-created for all time. But legacy also allows artists to change, adapt, re-form, and reimagine art forms. Each artwork in this exhibition demonstrates the continuity and resilience of legacy.

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D. Y. Begay
Navajo, born 1953

Náhookǫşí Hai (Winter in the North) / Biboon Giiwedinong (It Is Winter in the North), 2018
Wool and natural dyes

The Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Jane and James Emison Endowment for Native American Art 2019.41

In February 2018, Navajo textile artist D. Y. Begay traveled to Grand Portage, Minnesota, from her home in the Southwest to create this work. Begay’s textiles are abstract paintings on wool, drawn from her
keen observations of specific landscapes, particularly within Diné Bikéyah, or Navajo land. In this instance, Begay spent days observing Lake Superior and its environs. Her attention to details, of waves crashing on rocks, the light behind trees, and the vast winter sky, helps convey the serenity of the place itself.

Maria Martinez  
San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1887–1980

Julian Martinez  
San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1884–1943

Storage Jar, ca. 1940  
Native clay

Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Gift of Clark Field, 1946.46.1

Famed potter Maria Martinez worked collaboratively with her husband, Julian Martinez, to reestablish this traditional Pueblo style of blackware pottery. Maria crafted the vessels, creating a beautiful sheen by burnishing her pots with a stone. Julian was responsible for painting the pots. As generous as she was gifted, Maria Martinez contributed to the success of her Pueblo community by teaching other people her techniques and sometimes even signing their pots so they could share in her wealth. Through Maria Martinez’s work, many new audiences were exposed to pottery as a fine art form—and to one of the first named Native women artists in art museums.

Members of this community have chosen not to translate this label into their language. We respect the decisions of each sovereign Native nation.

See more work by this artist upstairs in Connections.

America Meredith  
Cherokee, born 1972

Bambi Makes Some Extra Bucks Modeling at the Studio, 2002  
Acrylic on hardboard panel

Institution of American Indian Art

In this absurd scenario, a flat, illustrated deer becomes the model in a life-drawing class. While also a symbol in Peyote religion, here the blue deer references “Bambi” art, a style popularized by some Native artists. America Meredith pokes fun at instructor Dorothy Dunn, a white woman who holds an ambiguous place in Native art history. While she trained many young Native artists, she also deliberately refrained from teaching life drawing, perspective, or color theory, and only allowed students to work from memory, hoping to promote an “authentic” kind of Native art. In this painting, however, the three Native students ignore Dunn’s instructions and paint in their own styles.
Apache artist

**Female doll, ca. 1890–1910**  
Wood, glass beads, metal, thread, cloth, hide

Denver Museum of Nature & Science, AC.754

The quality of this exquisite doll makes it appear as if it were made yesterday, highlighting the skill of the master artist who made it. Native women make dolls for children’s play and to impart community knowledge, roles and responsibilities, etiquette, aesthetics, and values. This doll, adorned with beads, hide, metal cones, and various types of cloth, was most likely made for a female relative. The time poured into making such a doll is a tribute to the deep bonds of affection between the maker and recipient. Through this doll, an Apache girl could be taught an ethos for life.

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**Cherish Parrish**  
Ottawa/Pottawatomi, born 1989

**The Next Generation–Carriers of Culture, 2018**  
Black ash and sweetgrass

Courtesy of Cherish Parrish – Odawa & Pottawatomi – Gun Lake Band

For Cherish Parrish, weaving is “a generational gift that needs to be passed on and . . . nothing . . . speaks to that quite like pregnancy and motherhood.” In *The Next Generation–Carriers of Culture*, Parrish combines the ideas of passing on traditional practices with honoring the legacy of Indigenous women by weaving a basket into the shape of a pregnant woman in her third trimester. Created from spring wood and heartwood harvested from black ash trees, this piece was woven around a handmade mold and rimmed with sweetgrass. “Being a carrier of culture,” Parrish says, “that’s what you are as a Native woman.”

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**Daphne Odjig**  
Odawa/Pottawatomi, 1919–2016

**From Mother Earth Flows the River of Life, 1973**  
Acrylic on canvas

Canadian Museum of History, III-M-55

Daphne Odjig was once called “Picasso’s Grandmother” by fellow Canadian painter Norval Morrisseau. Odjig was one of the founding members of the “Indian Group of Seven” and the only female member. She helped establish the Woodlands style of painting, most noted for depicting the internal organs and energy lines of subjects. This work was inspired by an Anishinaabe female glyph found in Ontario, Canada, but Odjig transformed the simple linear creation into a swirling work of energy, possibly depicting the birth of our planet, the seas, and the land, with humans roaming throughout.
Nampeyo
Hopi/Tewa, 1859-1942

**Hopi polychrome jar**, ca. 1920
Clay, pigment

Courtesy Arizona State Museum, GP-6215
University of Arizona

Drawing inspiration from ancient designs found on pottery sherds around her Hopi home, renowned Hopi/Tewa artist Nampeyo transformed Hopi pottery history. At the beginning of the 20th century, Nampeyo was recognized by her community and the broader world as a master potter. She traveled across the United States demonstrating her skills and talent for many enthusiastic admirers. Each of her vessels is hand coiled, then fired in an outdoor pit, and then painted.

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Navajo artist

**Second phase chief blanket**, ca. 1880
Wool, pigments

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Elissa and Paul Cahn  2017.127.37

In the 1800s, *hanoolchaadi*, or chief blankets, became some of the most desired objects of commerce across the Plains, Great Basin, and Plateau regions and throughout the Southwest, and they remain some of the most valuable works of Native art today. Chief blankets received this name as they were often worn by high-ranking chiefs and their wives on the Plains, including in Lakhóta, Cheyenne, Ute, Shoshone, and Apsáalooke (Crow) communities. *Hanoolchaadi* embody hózhó, the principle idea of Navajo thought that encompasses ideas and practices of beauty, harmony, balance, grace, symmetry, balance, order, and health.

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Edmonia Lewis
Mississauga and African American, ca. 1844–1907

**The Old Arrow Maker**, modeled 1866, carved ca. 1872
Marble

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2008.15

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem *The Song of Hiawatha* inspired Edmonia Lewis to carve *The Old Arrow Maker*. Lewis, a neoclassical sculptor based in Rome, lent tension to the scene by sculpting both figures looking in the same direction, almost poised to rise. While their clothing and adornment are generalized, Lewis pays homage to Native American ancestry through hints—such as the Dakhóta bearclaw necklace and Anishinaabe deer-hide moccasins and vests.
Dyani White Hawk  
Sičháŋǧu Lakhóta (Brulé), born 1976

**Untitled (Quiet Strength I), 2016**  
Acrylic on canvas

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Nivin MacMillan  2016.74

Precious gold peeks through the intricately painted “quill” lines—each component representing a valuable resource for two very different cultures. Dyani White Hawk combines her love of Native abstraction, like that found in painted rawhide containers and objects decorated with porcupine quills, with her admiration of non-Native abstract art to create paintings that broaden the perception of Native art. *Untitled (Quiet Strength I)* is the first in a series in which White Hawk used quill lines to explore movement, repetition, and line in a white-on-white scheme, giving viewers a visual experience that offers opportunities for reflection and contemplation.

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Sonya Kelliher-Combs  
Iñupiaq/Athabaskan, born 1969

**Idiot Strings, The Things We Carry,** 2017  
Sheep and goat rawhide, wool yarn, steel wire, beeswax, nylon thread

Courtesy of the artist

This work is an exploration of belonging, identity, and secrecy. The oblong forms, made of gut and rawhide, dangle from strings, casting shadows as they sway. This work is from a series begun in 2005 titled Idiot Strings, in which Sonya Kelliher-Combs speaks to the painful loss of Alaskan Native community members to suicide. While the pouch-like shapes can represent the unhealthy “secrets” we all keep, they were also inspired by the artist’s interest in her ancestors’ connection to their environment—much of her work examines new ways of using materials like skin, fur, and membranes in contemporary installations.

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**Relationships**

The theme of relationships aligns with the indigenous concept of connectivity and reciprocity. Everything in the world—people, animals, plants, places, and living and nonliving elements—is interconnected. Vast webs connect Native people, the physical and metaphysical worlds, and time and space.

Relationships also involve collaboration among generations, genders, materials, and nations. In Native worldviews, all beings engage in acts of reciprocity in order to maintain balance. This reciprocity requires humans to take responsibility for these relationships, and part of this responsibility is protecting and providing for others. Creating works of art, in part, protects and provides for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of others.
Heid Erdrich
Ojibwe, Turtle Mountain, born 1963

**It Was Cloudy**, 2016
Video; running time 2:16 minutes
Animated by Jonathan Thunder; translated into Anishinaabemowin by Margaret Noodin

Collection of the artist

Heid Erdrich’s “poemeo,” as she calls the micro-films based on her poems, began with her fascination with electronic voices on the Weather Channel and her early attempts to learn Anishinaabemowin (the Ojibwe language). She recited the text of “It Was Cloudy” and ran it through a program that created a computer-generated voice. The poem depicts the tensions between Anishinaabemowin and English. For instance, there are many more words for clouds in Anishinaabemowin than there are in English, which is evident in the multiple dictionary pages featuring words for clouds the artist uses as the background in this animation.

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**Apsáalooke (Crow) artist**

**Dress**, ca. 1930
Cotton, bead, bone, skin, wool, colorant

Denver Art Museum Collection: The L. D. and Ruth Bax Collection, 1985.46

Elk-tooth dresses like this one are important symbols of prestige for Apsáalooke women. Because they can have as many as 500 elk teeth meticulously sewn into the bodice, and because the maker only uses the two canine teeth of the bull elk, a dress like this reflects not only a woman’s sewing skills, but, as importantly, her male family members’ hunting prowess. Today, few elk-tooth dresses are made entirely from real teeth—there are acceptable commercial substitutions—but the dress endures as an object of significance and cultural pride.

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**Síštȟuŋwaŋ Dakhóta artist**

**Tablecloth**, 1900–1910
Wool, glass beads, brass beads, cotton thread

Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution 12/814

By 1863 most Dakhóta were banished from their homeland and exiled to states bordering Minnesota. Yet Dakhóta women artists continued to create, often as a means of supporting their families as more non-Natives discovered the beauty of their art. This tablecloth’s design encompasses the delicate symmetry and floral motifs often found in pre-1863 Dakhóta work, yet the artist also chose to work with materials associated with Victorian households.
Louisa Keyser (“Dat so la lee”)
Washoe, 1829–1925

**Beacon Lights basket**, July 1, 1904–September 6, 1905
Willow, dyed bracken fern root, western redbud

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Gift of Eugene Victor Thaw Art Foundation, Thaw Collection of American Indian Art, T0751

In the early 1900s, Native peoples in the western United States had to quickly adapt to Euro-American settlement and a new economy. Basketry was a reliable source of income for women, and Louisa Keyser is one of the most celebrated basket makers of all time. She developed the *degikup* style that you see here: the basket’s opening circumference perfectly matches that of the bottom, allowing the artist to make a broadly curved shape while maintaining the basket’s balance. Some of Keyser’s baskets are so tightly woven, they can hold water.

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Elizabeth Hickox
Wiyot, 1872–1947

**Lidded container**, ca. 1924
Twining, porcupine quills


Elizabeth Hickox was a master basket maker. Her incredibly fine work is apparent in the 800 stitches per square inch that appear in her baskets. Hickox combined plant material, usually the dark five-fingered fern, with yellow porcupine quills (dyed with lichen) to create a strong color contrast and dynamic abstract designs. The lid’s tall knob handle is one of Hickox’s hallmarks and her own invention. Hickox sold her baskets to a dealer who marketed them to collectors, and, in turn, Hickox was able to provide a good income for her family, enjoy travel, and acquire the latest fashions of her day.

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Susie Santiago Billy
Pomo, 1884–1968

**Feathered Basket**, ca. 1952
Willow, sedge, clamshell beads, mallard, quail topknot, and meadowlark feathers

Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Gift of Clark Field, 1952.22.2

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Susan Billy
Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, born 1951

**Miniature Feather Basket**, 1976
Willow, sedge root, pheasant feathers

Courtesy of the artist
These two feathered baskets are from two generations of the same family: contemporary artist Susan Billy and her grandmother Susie Santiago Billy. For many Pomo women, baskets have often served as a kind of currency. They were marketable goods that helped sustain families and communities in the late 1800s and into the 1900s when Euro-Americans colonized present-day California. Susan Billy acknowledges that the mini baskets she makes are not utilitarian. She says, “As the baskets got smaller, people asked me what I put in them, and I realized what I put in them is intention.”

**Elsie Allen**  
Pomo, 1899–1990

**Miniature Beaded Basket**, 1980  
Sedge root and glass beads (white and navy blue)

Courtesy of Susan Billy

**Susan Billy**  
Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, born 1951

**Miniature Beaded Basket**, 2006  
Sedge root and glass beads (green, turquoise, and transparent rose)

Courtesy of the artist

One of these miniature baskets was made by contemporary artist Susan Billy, and the other was made by her great-aunt Elise Allen, who taught Billy to make baskets. Billy resisted learning the beaded-basket technique because she wanted to focus on more traditional forms. The beading technique has been used by Pomo basket makers since the early 1900s, but other methods have existed for hundreds to thousands of years. After Allen passed away, Billy was able to find and purchase this tiny beaded basket made by her great-aunt. Once it arrived home, Billy created the first beaded basket she ever made (the one here). Billy says, “These two baskets are our continued bond.”

**Pat Courtney Gold**  
Wasco, born 1939

**Sally Bag, “Honor the 1805 Wasco Weaver,”** 2003  
Hemp, cattail, raffia, dye, dogbane bark

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University Museum Purchase, 2003

Pat Courtney Gold grew up on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. This basket is her version of a Wasco basket collected by Lewis and Clark on their cross-country expedition from 1804 to 1806 (see illustration). Gold describes the diamond pattern as a fishing net; it highlights the importance of salmon fishing for Columbia River people who have lived in this place for more than 12,000 years. The faces
within are the faces of the Ancestors. That the pattern on this basket has no beginning or end reflects the Wasco concept of time as an unending circle.

Wasco-Wishram artist, *Root-gathering basket (sally bag)*, ca. 1800, fiber, hemp. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, PM 99-12-10/53160

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**Christine McHorse**  
Navajo, born 1948

**Robster Claw**, 2016  
Micaceous clay

Courtesy of Salon 94

*Robster Claw* turns and folds upon itself, fluid and rigid at once. Working with clay made “stretchy” by the reflective mineral mica, Christine McHorse sculpts with a medium that historically would have been used to make vessels for food preparation and storage. Here, unbound by practicality, she reimagines both material and form.

See more work by this artist upstairs in *Connections*.

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**Kay WalkingStick**  
Cherokee, born 1935

**Venere Alpina**, 1997  
Oil on canvas (left); steel mesh over acrylic, saponified wax, and plastic stones (right)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The David and Margaret Christenson Endowment for Art Acquisition 2018.46a,b

While traveling in Italy, Kay WalkingStick created *Venere Alpina* (Alpine Venus). Inspired by the Italian Alps, she painted mountains in warm browns, luscious greens, and soft pinks to create a mountainscape that mimics the folds and nuances of the female body. On the right, a rough and rust-colored “steel” panel suggests deterioration and the passage of time. In the center of this panel, WalkingStick created a slit to allow the viewer to see under the surface. The gems and rocks inside refer to the treasures that lie beneath the earth’s weathered and aged surface.

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**Ramona Sakiestewa**  
Hopi, born 1948

**Nebula 22 & 23** (diptych), 2009  
Tapestry, wool warp, dyed wool weft

Collection of Carl & Marilynn Thoma, 2009.021a–b
Ramona Sakiestewa’s sophisticated use of tapestry weaving, an enduring tradition of her Hopi community, was inspired by images from the Hubble Space Telescope. The result is a vibrant, textured, and seamless expression that depicts bursts of light, energy, growth, and nature, which materializes through her long-standing practice of layering shapes and colors.

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**Mi’kmaw artist**  
Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia

**Chair with quillwork panels**, ca. 1890  
Mahogany, birch bark, porcupine quill, spruce root, sweetgrass, metal, fiber, aniline dye

Nova Scotia Museum – Ethnology Collection, 1962.36.1

At one time, the Mi’kmaq (the plural of Mi’kmaw) and Europeans were partners in the fur trade, but once animals became scarce Mi’kmaw women began to innovate with new materials. Mi’kmaw women were especially adept at crafting both practical and decorative objects that appealed to Victorian taste. At first they crafted smaller items, like jewelry boxes, but soon the sizes of their products grew. Eventually, women began quilling furniture panels, like chair seats and backs, and sold them to cabinetmakers who created wooden frames. The expertly crafted mosaic quilled creations—originally designed as tourist souvenirs—became a hallmark of Mi’kmaw artwork and contributed greatly to the community’s survival.

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**Dorothy Grant**  
Haida, born 1955

**With Robert Davidson**  
Haida/Tlinglit, born 1946

**Hummingbird Copper Dress**, 1989  
Wool

Denver Art Museum Collection: Native Arts acquisition fund, 2010.490A-C

Working together, Dorothy Grant and Robert Davidson created these early Feastwear pieces—combining Grant’s design for the garment and Davidson’s form-line drawing. “Form line” is the name given to the shapes and patterns that are foundational to Northwest Coast art. It is found in carvings, blankets, and regalia. Grant and Davidson draw upon these forms to create contemporary couture. The brand name Feastwear references the potlaches, ceremonial community feasts, that are central to Haida culture and community.
Mary Sully (Susan Deloria)
Dakota, 1896–1963

Lawrence Tibbett, ca. 1938–45
Colored pencil on paper

Mary Sully (Susan Deloria) Dakota (1896–1963) Collection of Philip J. Deloria

In the early half of the 20th century, Mary Sully quietly began to revolutionize Native American art. She created triptychs that followed a similar pattern: The top panel includes a large central design filled with both figurative and abstract elements. The middle panel contains graphic, curving Art Nouveau-style designs in kaleidoscope fashion; the perspective is one of looking down from above. The bottom panel contains more abstraction and incorporates classic designs from Native communities. Read together, the panels make connections between figurative and abstract art found in Native American and Western art.

In Lawrence Tibbett, Sully presents a famous opera singer from the 1930s and ‘40s. The top panel depicts figures in a canyon setting, including circles that look like falling notes and perhaps a human figure. The middle panel is composed of uniformly lined Art Nouveau-style ovals that dance off the page. And the bottom panel references the lively and active geometrics found in Lakota star quilts and beadwork.

Nora Naranjo Morse
Santa Clara Pueblo, born 1953

Our Homes, Ourselves, 1999
Clay, paint

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Sara and David Lieberman  2000.76a–i

Nora Naranjo Morse has said, “Our Homes, Ourselves is a biographical articulation of the profound influence mud [and clay] and the act of creating a home had on me. Our Homes, Ourselves is the architecture of my people, the Santa Clara and Tewa Indians of northern New Mexico. For centuries we have built our own homes out of mud and clay indigenous to this area . . .” At the time of creating this work, Naranjo Morse was creating her own adobe home. “Building a house was challenging. However, working with mud reconnected me to the Pueblo building tradition that I come from.”

Members of this community have chosen not to translate this label into their language. We respect the decisions of each sovereign Native nation.
Mary Sully (Susan Deloria)
Dakȟóta, 1896–1963

**Easter in a Large City**, ca. 1938–45
Colored pencil on paper

Mary Sully (Susan Deloria) Dakota (1896–1963) Collection of Philip J. Deloria

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In *Easter in a Large City*, a bustling crowd of people with fine hats and clothes are packed into a small space. Vibrant colors take center stage in the middle panel, followed by an intricate bottom panel of thousands of dots (people) and three bands resembling the abstractions in Plains beadwork and rawhide painting.

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Marie Watt
Seneca Nation of Indians, born 1967

**Blanket Stories: Three Sisters, Four Pelts, Sky Woman, Cousin Rose, and All My Relations**, 2007
Wool blankets, satin binding, with salvaged industrial yellow cedar timber base

Seattle Art Museum, General Acquisition Fund, in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, 2007.41

This blanket column is filled with meaning for artist Marie Watt. It references architectural structures like ancient Greek columns and monumental Western sculpture. But it also harks back to the totem poles of the Northwest Coast area where Watt grew up and the giant conifer trees found there. Blankets are special articles for many Native communities and are often given to guests attending celebrations of important life events. Births, marriages, graduations, and naming ceremonies are all times when blankets may be given as gifts.

See more work by this artist upstairs in *Connections*.
Power

In Native worldviews, the ability to create life holds sacred power; women, therefore, are considered inherently powerful. The power held by Native women among their own people is spiritual, social, and political. It is contained in knowledge that is both shared and withheld. Native women artists, through their creations born of self-expression, hold power within and outside their nations.

Women’s personal power is expressed in the values of honor, grace, and balance. These values include the belief that to be honored is to honor others; respect must be given to the ones that came before and the ones that come after. In order to be truly human is to show generosity through gift giving and hospitality, to be grateful for all things, and to live in harmony with the world by striving for balance.

Jolene Rickard
Tuscarora, born 1956

With Anita Ferguson (top left, b. 1975), Janice Smith (top right, b. 1961), Mary Annette Clause (middle, b. 1958), Judy Judware (bottom left, b. 1944), Anita Greene (bottom right, b. 1961)

. . . the sky is darkening . . ., 2019
Triptych digital print and glass-beaded fabric birds

Courtesy of the artists, with special thanks to the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates for permission to document the passenger pigeon (Ectopistes migratorius), Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2018

Beadwork became a strategy for survival for the Tuscarora after their forced dispossession from North Carolina. This artwork includes beaded birds made by Tuscarora women. Artist Jolene Rickard says she juxtaposed them against a stark taxidermy image of the extinct passenger pigeon, which was hunted to extinction by 1902. “Before their disappearance, the sky would go dark from the vast flocks of pigeon overhead. The etched photograph of the taxidermy pigeon in combination with the Tuscarora beaded bird bridges the ecological and cultural space we live in now. We can’t bring the pigeon back, but we are continuing to celebrate their song, and subsequently our being, through beadwork.”

St. Lawrence Iroquoian artist
Lanark County, Ontario, Canada

Pot, 1450–1550
Clay

McCord Stewart Museum, Gift of Dr. Edward Van Cortlandt, ACC1337

This cooking pot is between 400 and 600 years old, but it represents technology that Native women have used for thousands of years. It features the delicate designs of its maker, who likely had a signature set of marks that distinguished her artistic designs from those of other women in her community. These designs and techniques would be passed down from mother to daughter. The individual designs are
believed to convey political alliances within and between communities, revealing the central role of women’s art in diplomacy, which continues in these nations today.

Andrea Carlson
Ojibwe, born 1979

Sunshine on a Cannibal, 2015
Oil, acrylic, ink, colored pencil, and graphite on paper

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Mr. and Mrs. Bernard M. Granum Fund 2017.29a–x

Artist Andrea Carlson describes the way one culture can identify others as “exotic” as a kind of “cultural cannibalism.” Western cultures often sensationalize other cultures in order to objectify and consume them, even as they attempt to erase them through assimilation. The dense, layered imagery in Sunshine on a Cannibal is drawn from particular Native American artworks, European paintings, and conceptual art and reclaims what westerners have historically sought to define and objectify. Carlson’s work challenges the concept of “other” and asks us to consider how cultures are consumed by one another.

Innu (Naskapi) artist

Hunting coat, ca. 1750
Caribou hide, pigment

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Robert J. Ulrich Works of Art Purchase Fund 2012.27

In the 1700s, in the far reaches of northern Labrador (present-day Canada), Innu (Naskapi) men dressed up in elegant, tailored coats like this one to communicate with caribou. The coats, made of creamy white caribou hide and elaborately decorated, pleased Papakassik, an Innu holy being, and mesmerized the animals. Drawn to the coat made especially for it, the caribou would give its life to the hunter, revealing the reciprocity, kinship, and respect between animals and human beings.

Hupa artist

Dance skirt, 1875
Deer hide, glass beads, abalone, maidenhair fern, bear grass, trade beads, cloth ties (added at later date)

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Gift of Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw, Thaw Collection of American Indian Art, T0137

The Hupa people call themselves “Natinixwe,” or “People of the Place Where the Trails Return.” Skirts like these are part of regalia worn for ceremonial dances. For Natinixwe, regalia becomes alive once danced for the first time, and the clothing begins a special journey as it is passed from one generation to the next. Those who make regalia do not own it; instead, they “hold” it, honor it, care for it, carry it forward, and make sure that it is where it needs to be for ceremonies.
Angel De Cora  
Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), 1871–1919

The Sick Child, 1899  
Black-and-white photographic print

*Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, February 1899

Angel De Cora was a trailblazing painter, illustrator, designer, and educator. Despite being taken from her school in Winnebago, Nebraska, at age 14 and sent to boarding school in Virginia, De Cora was able to resist cultural assimilation, adapt to her circumstances, and find a fulfilling career in art and music. She was an advocate for Native arts and crafts throughout her career. While it was unique for any Victorian-era woman to be so independent, De Cora remained a respected artist and speaker until her untimely death. This illustration is from one of two stories she wrote and illustrated for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1899.

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Tahdo Ahtone (Medicine Sage), pronounced Tah’ga-dah  
Kiowa, 1879-1961

Hide cradleboard, ca. 1890  
Hide, wood, glass beads, cloth, sinew

Denver Museum of Nature & Science, AC.3290

This Kiowa cradleboard is a gift created for a new human being. The beadwork is the voice of a Kiowa woman who, through her intentions and prayers, created it to honor new life. While three of the designs on the green background mirror each other, three abstractions on the blue side repeat but are subtly different. In her pattern, this artist incorporated symbols to teach the child about the Kiowa universe. The cradleboard is designed to carry a child upright, so he or she is a participant in the family’s daily activities. By watching and listening, the child could absorb Kiowa language and ways of being in the world.

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Apsáalooke (Crow) artist

Infant boy’s coat, ca. 1890  
Buckskin, cloth, glass beads, sinew

Denver Museum of Nature & Science, AC.6073

This exquisitely beaded coat was most assuredly made with a special young boy in mind, a work of art to adorn a child with love, care, affection, and protection and made with intentionality.
Central Yup’ik, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska artist

Parka, 1890–1910
Seal intestine, sinew, walrus fur, aniline dyes, animal hide, polar bear fur, thread

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Gift of Eugene Victor Thaw Art Foundation, Thaw Collection of American Indian Art, T0763

Seal-gut parkas are essential pieces of clothing used throughout the Arctic. The material is naturally waterproof and windproof, which is key for hunting in harsh climates. Artists make every piece as beautiful as it can be to honor the animals that gave their lives to clothe and feed a community and to show pride in their work and their care for their families.

Yvonne Walker Keshick (Falling Leaves Woman)
Anishinaabe/Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians of Michigan, born 1946

“To Our Sisters” basket, 1994
Birchbark, sweetgrass, porcupine quills

Courtesy of Michigan State University Museum, 7594.20

This quill box represents the four stages of life: a baby (snuggled tightly in a cradleboard) who becomes a girl, then a mother, and finally a grandmother. The circularity of the shape references life’s endless cycle. Yvonne Walker Keshick refers to her practice as “quill art,” asserting the aesthetic significance of this art form that has been made without interruption within the Waganakising Odawa community of Michigan for at least 200 years.

Nellie Two Bear Gates (Gathering of Clouds Woman)
Iȟàŋktȟuŋwaŋa Dakhóta, Standing Rock Reservation, 1854–?

Valise, 1880–1910
Beads, hide, metal, oilcloth, thread


Nellie Two Bear Gates suffered a torturous separation from her family when she was forcibly sent to boarding school in Missouri. When she returned to Standing Rock, she turned her back on what she was forced to learn at the boarding school and deeply reembraced her Dakhóta language and artistry. This valise pictures important aspects of Dakhóta culture. Two Bear Gates depicts either the marriage between two families or a woman’s coming-of-age ceremony along with the gift-giving traditions associated with such hallmark events. Either way, as her granddaughter, Susan Power, states, “... the stories she chose to tell, with glittering beads, were Dakhóta.”
Earth Woman, Mrs. Kipp  
Mandan, ca. 1810–1910

Moccasins, 1895  
Hide, quills, pigment, glass beads, textile

Yale Peabody Museum, ANT 001381

Earth Woman survived the deadly Mandan smallpox epidemic of the mid-1800s and went on to become a generous and respected medicine woman. Here, she used a two-quill diamond plaiting technique, resembling weaving, to cover these moccasin tops, or vamps. The curved square in the center probably represents a spider’s web, which was often seen as a protective military design for Lakhóta men and may commemorate the wearer’s injury and subsequent healing by an extraordinary spiritual source. Early anthropologist George Bird Grinnell (1849–1938), onetime owner of the moccasins, noted that the color of the quills indicated the wearer had been wounded on the right side.

Isabella Edenshaw  
Haida, ca. 1858–1926

With Charles Edenshaw  
Haida, ca. 1839–1920

Hat, ca. 1890  
Spruce root and bark, pigment

Diane and Kirby McDonald

The husband-and-wife partnership responsible for the making of this hat is representative of Haida values, which recognize the accomplishments of men and women. Isabella and Charles Edenshaw are recognized as master artists in their mediums. While Charles received international recognition for his carving and painting, Isabella created beautiful spruce-root hats and baskets that were recognized within her community. Her weaving serves as the foundation of this collaborative work.

Kelly Church  
Ottawa/Pottawatomi, born 1967

Sustaining Traditions–Digital Memories, 2018  
Black ash, sweetgrass, Rit dye, copper, vial EAB, flash drive with black ash teachings

 Courtesy of Kelly Church – Odawa & Pottawatomi – Gun Lake Band

The green in this basket represents the emerald ash borer. This beautiful insect has destroyed ash trees, essential to making ash baskets, throughout the Upper Midwest. Placed within this basket, which is shaped like a Fabergé egg (jeweled eggs made in the late 1800s and early 1900s), is a flash drive.
containing what Kelly Church describes as “all the teachings of the past, all of the things happening today, and all of the things we need to do in the future to sustain this tradition [basket weaving].”

**Christi Belcourt**  
Michif, born 1966

**The Wisdom of the Universe, 2014**  
Acrylic on canvas


This work features plants and animals that are listed in Canada as threatened, endangered, or extinct, like the dwarf lake iris, the Karner blue butterfly, and the cerulean warbler. Belcourt hopes that through her work we will remember the interconnected nature of existence on this planet. She encourages us to abandon unsustainable paths in favor of an abiding relationship with Mother Earth, stating, “This wondrous planet, so full of mystery, is a paradise. All I want to do is give everything I have, my energy, my love, my labor—all of it in gratitude for what we are given.”

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**Julie Buffalohead**  
Ponca, born 1972

**The Garden, 2017**  
Acrylic, ink, graphite, chalk pencil, collage on Lokta paper

Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Julie and Babe Davis Acquisition Fund, 2018

Julie Buffalohead’s painting references events that happened at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden in spring 2017, when an artwork titled *Scaffold* was erected there. The work featured a partial re-creation of the gallows used in the largest mass execution in U.S. history, in which 38 Dakhóta men were hanged in 1862. Native people and their many allies were horrified by the sculpture, and conversations between these groups and sculpture garden leadership led to *Scaffold’s* removal. In Buffalohead’s painting, Coyote carries a blue rooster (another sculpture in the sculpture garden) in its mouth, revealing the ignorance and vanity of the predominantly white art world and its incompatibility with Native peoples’ lived experiences.

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**Mary Anne Barkhouse**  
Nimpkish band of Kwakiutl First Nation (Kwakwāḵa’wakw), born 1961

**Sovereign, 2007**  
Bronze, velvet, beech

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Purchased 2001, 42951

Mary Anne Barkhouse creates installations that consider the impact of the West on Indigenous Canada. She sheds light on the complex legacy of the past as it impacts the present.
Reflecting upon moments of colonial, contemporary, and natural history, and inspired by the dynamic textures and colors of the landscape of this country, Sovereign depicts the strength and resilience of the indigenous. By combining the wild with the cultured opulent, the work invites thought about how evolution has carefully crafted species for their specific ecological niche, as well as the importance of the stability of “home” in all its incarnations.

—Mary Anne Barkhouse, November 2018

Rosalie Favell
Métis (Cree/English), born 1958

The Collector/The Artist in Her Museum, 2005
Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

Rosalie Favell “re-painted” an 1822 self-portrait by U.S. painter Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) titled The Artist in His Museum (see illustration). Favell inserts herself into the rendering, a Métis woman pulling back a curtain to display her collection, as did Peale. While Peale displays his collection of “exotic” discoveries he gathered through travel, Favell presents her collection of intimate family portraits, revealing the contrast between the two in terms of what they treasure. She also places herself in the powerful position of subject of the artwork and proud collector, roles once reserved for white men.


The artist has chosen to leave this label untranslated.

Lisa Telford
Haida, born 1957

PochaHaida, 2009
Cedar bark, cordage, cloth

Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Cat. no. 2014-50/1

Lisa Telford’s PochaHaida is a twist and commentary on the dress Pocahontas wears in the Disney movie of the same name. It is made of pounded red and yellow cedar bark that Telford gathered and processed herself. Customarily, cedar garments use sea otter fur; in this case, however, Telford opted for faux fur, for a “commercialized Haida woman.”

Pocahontas (Powhatan) is a historical figure who has been romanticized in popular culture. In the early 1600s she served as a translator, ambassador, and leader for her people as they encountered
and negotiated with European colonists. Telford’s work critiques the commercialization of images and stories of Native women and honors the power Pocahontas held in her community.

**Evelyn Vanderhoop**
Haida, Gawaa Git’ans Gitanee of Massett, British Columbia, born 1953

**Assisted by Carrie Anne Vanderhoop**
Haida, Gawaa Git’ans Gitanee of Massett, British Columbia, born 1977

**Qingi–Monarch of the Sea, Naaxiin Robe, 2015**
Thigh-spun merino wool, yellow cedar bark, sea otter fur

M. Elizabeth and Valentino J. Stella

Evelyn Vanderhoop viewed a historic *naaxiin* robe in a museum collection. It included depictions of Qingi, the Sea Being, as ruler of weather, waves, and access to sea resources, and she used it as inspiration. Vanderhoop states, “In replicating this ancient pattern . . . I wanted to release this bringer of wealth . . . giving it energy to dance again. Reading the stories and weaving . . . this amazing robe and design made me more aware of how important our ancestors felt the power and continued health of our seas were to our cultural wealth. The stories are ancient but so important to our time when Earth’s water is threatened.”

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**Yup’ik artist**

**Beaded headdress, before 1898**
Glass beads, thread, rawhide

Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 2-6796

A headdress like this one was historically worn by high-ranking women from the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta to southeast Alaska during celebrations and ceremonies. Each bead was a precious luxury, obtained through trade and gifting. On a more symbolic level, each bead could be considered a representation of sacredness; circular patterns are found regularly in Alutiiq and Yup’ik arts, and a circle can be considered a passageway to the spiritual world. According to contemporary headdress maker June Pardue (Alutiiq), “Our ancestors saw the holes in these beads as spiritual symbols and using them was a way of inviting good spirits to come.”

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**Keri Ataumbi**
Kiowa/Comanche, born 1971

**Jamie Okuma**
Luiseño/Shoshone-Bannock, born 1977

**Adornment: Iconic Perceptions, 2014**
Antique glass, 24-karat electroplated beads, buckskin, 18-karat yellow gold, sterling silver, wampum shell, freshwater pearls, rose and brilliant-cut diamonds and diamond beads, diamond briolettes
Keri Ataumbi and Jamie Okuma worked collaboratively to create an ensemble of wearable art in homage to Pocahontas, a major figure in American history. Drawing inspiration from 17th century engravings by Simon van de Passe and Thomas Sully’s classic 1852 painting, Okuma created beaded portraits on buckskin that were then adorned by Ataumbi’s use of precious metals and stones. Their work reimagines historical depictions of Pocahontas, paying tribute to an important Native American leader.

Left: Simon van de Passe (Dutch, 1595-1647), *Portrait of Pocahontas*, 1616, copper engraving
Right: Thomas Sully (American, 1783-1872), *Portrait of Pocahontas*, 1852, oil on canvas, Virginia Museum of History and Culture

Freda Diesing
Haida, 1925–2003

**Mask, Old Woman with Labret**, 1974
Alderwood, paint, hair, cedar bark, abalone, glass beads, moose hide, bone or plastic

Courtesy of the Royal BC Museum, RBCM15057

The matriarch depicted in this mask, adorned with abalone shells and a labret (lip piercing), embodies great power and respect. Hand carved, crisply painted, and adorned with abalone, Freda Diesing’s work reveals the power of women as artists and in Northwest Coast culture and belief systems. While anthropologists and art historians have historically identified Haida carving as a male activity, Diesing defied these expectations and brought a greater awareness to the fact that women have created carvings throughout the Northwest and across time.

Joan Hill
Muskogee Creek and Cherokee, born 1930

**Women’s Voices at the Council**, 1990
Acrylic on canvas

Gift of the artist on behalf of the Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women, 1990
Oklahoma State Art Collection, courtesy of the Oklahoma Arts Council

*Women’s Voices at the Council*, part of a series that Joan Hill began in 1971 during the Vietnam War (1965–75), depicts multiple generations of Native women and the power they hold to decide between war and peace. Hill focuses attention on essential elements of women’s regalia including turtle shell leggings, and she presents Muskogee/Cherokee cultural aesthetics, symbols, and meanings. She juxtaposes the white background, a Cherokee symbol of peace, with a red disk, possibly symbolizing a threat of war.
Roxanne Swentzell
Santa Clara Pueblo, born 1962

**Nap, 2003**
Santa Clara clay and glaze

Collection Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth Marguerite L. Gilmore Charitable Foundation Fund, D2013.23

Roxanne Swentzell describes her sculptures as a kind of three-dimensional journal, since they are always related to something going on in her life. *Nap* is from a time when she had young, active children, and she wanted them to nap so she could rest too. Swentzell’s ability to capture the fine nuances of expression began in her childhood. Because she says she had trouble finding her own voice, she sculpted small figures to communicate her feelings. Swentzell has said she sees the body language depicted in her art as a form of communication that can cross cultural barriers.

Members of this community have chosen not to translate this label into their language. We respect the decisions of each sovereign Native nation.

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Gahano, Caroline Parker Mt. Pleasant
Tonawanda Seneca, 1824–1892

**Skirt, 1849**
Dark blue wool woman’s skirt, trimmed with pink and blue silk ribbon and white, pink, blue, and green glass beads along hem and vertical edge; beaded “celestial tree” design in fabric corner

New York State Museum, Albany, E-36664

Born into a prominent Tonawanda Seneca family, Caroline Parker moved between Haudenosaunee and settler society throughout her life. Her artistry reflects both her Haudenosaunee education and her Western training in missionary schools. As the holder of the important title Jigonsaseh (the Peace Queen) and the wife of Tuscarora chief John Mount Pleasant, Parker participated in the struggle to protect Seneca lands against intense settler pressures. Her clothing designs blended settler and Haudenosaunee tastes and values.

Mia does not yet have a Native-language translation of this text.

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Mary Kawennatakie Adams
Akwesasne Mohawk, Wolf clan, 1917–1999

**Basket, 1985**
Sweetgrass

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr., and museum purchase made possible by Ralph Cross Johnson, 1986.65.67A–B
Kawennatakie, “A Voice Coming toward Us,” also known as Mary Adams, learned to make baskets from her mother and grandmother. Adams made baskets all her life, and in 1980 she was chosen to produce a basket for Pope John Paul II in honor of the beatification of Kateri Tekakwitha (Mohawk). The concept for the “Pope Basket” came to her in a dream. One hundred and fifty miniature baskets are woven onto the form of a large basket. In 1985 Adams made this work, inspired by the original basket for the pope, as a commission for the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

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**Marguerite Vincent Lawinonkié**  
Wendat (Huron), 1783–1865

**Moccasins, 1838/1847–54**  
Black dyed hide with moose-hair embroidery, cotton thread, silk lining, binding, and ribbon

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Gift of Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw, Thaw Collection of American Indian Art, T0038a,b

Marguerite Vincent Lawinonkié helped preserve the Wendat community by organizing the production of moose-hair embroidered moccasins and snowshoes for sale to Euro-Americans who settled in the area in the 1800s. Lawinonkié was an accomplished moccasin and bead artist, and she taught many other women in her community the art of embroidering with moose hair. By 1879, 60 of the 76 families in her town were employed in creating this intricate needlework. The moccasins here were in the collection of a British colonial administrator, the governor general of the province of Canada, demonstrating how prized her work was and continues to be.

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**Gahano, Caroline Parker Mt. Pleasant**  
Tonawanda Seneca, 1824–1892

**Child’s overdress, ca. 1840**  
Cotton, glass beads, silk, silver

Lewis Henry Morgan Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY, RMSC ACC. 70.89.60

Caroline Parker was renowned during her lifetime for her artistry in embroidery and clothing design and by generations of Haudenosaunee women to the present day. She wears this skirt and leggings in a famous 1848 photograph (see illustration) as part of an outfit commissioned for the New York State collection by Lewis Henry Morgan, an early anthropologist who worked with Parker and her family. Parker harmonizes Victorian floral designs with Haudenosaunee sacred symbolism in the beaded motifs. A border of domes represents the Skyworld, while the large central motif is believed to represent the Great Tree of Peace linking the earth and the heavens.

Daguerreotype of Caroline Parker, a Seneca woman from the Tonawanda Reservation in western New York, ca. 1850. Private collection, courtesy of the New York State Museum
Carla Hemlock  
Kanienkehá:ka, born 1961

Walking Through Time, 2017  
Hand-applied glass beads, wampum shells, and felt appliqués with metal clasps on felt, synthetic silk liner (coat)  
Hand-applied glass beads and felt appliqués with metal clasps on felt, cotton liner (purse)  
Hand-applied glass beads and felt appliqués on felt and wool, synthetic silk liner (hat)  

Collection of Carl & Marilynn Thoma, 2017.029a–c

This assemblage is a celebration of the strength and resilience of Haudenosaunee women across time and place. Carla Hemlock incorporates material inspired from the 1700s, including wool stroud cloth, glass beads, and wampum (beads of polished shells used to commemorate treaties and nation-to-nation accords). Fine decorative beadwork running along the sides of the coat’s opening is Hemlock’s reference to “the women of the past, present, and future who are linked together, those that will continue to walk in each other’s footsteps.”

Rebecca Belmore  
Anishinaabe, born 1960

Fringe, 2007  
Transparency in light box (one of an edition of three)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Donna and Cargill MacMillan Jr.  2010.56

Rebecca Belmore often uses the body to address violence and injustice against First Nations people, especially women, and the power of resiliency and survival. The female figure in Fringe assumes the same reclining pose as women in European art history, but she bears an ugly slash from shoulder to hip. The deep scar is special-effects makeup, and the thin rivulets of blood running from the gash are composed of small red beads. This detail evokes both Belmore’s heritage and the trauma inflicted on Indigenous peoples. Despite the graveness of the woman’s injury, Fringe is also about healing. The scar will never disappear, but it is stitched together with beads that symbolize Indigenous strength and survival.

Anita Fields  
Osage, born 1951

It’s in Our DNA, It’s Who We Are, 2018  
Wool, satin, silk, embroidery, beads, clay buttons, top hat, feathers

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Jane and James Emison Endowment for Native American Art 2019.42.1,2
Osage women began wearing U.S. military coats as wedding garments in the 1700s or earlier. The coats were diplomatic gifts to the Osage men from high-ranking U.S. government officials, but they were too small. So Osage men gave them to Osage women, who then embellished them with beadwork and embroidery. Later, the coats became a central part of a ceremony for the transfer of a sacred drum from one drum keeper to another and are still used that way today. Anita Fields’s coat acknowledges the garment’s long history by combining traditional textile techniques with symbolic designs, including embroidered DNA patterns, Osage orthography, and sun symbols on the surface of the coat. Family photos, historical documents, and images referencing Osage worldviews are digitally printed on the garment’s lining.

**Jaune Quick-to-See Smith**
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, born 1940

**Trade Canoe for the North Pole, 2017**
Acrylic, collage, oil crayon, charcoal on canvas

Courtesy of Oz Art, Bentonville, AR

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s work combines her deep understanding of historical issues with an ability to educate in a mischievous, poignant, and candid manner. This work mocks the predictable human reaction to climate change. Coyote, the trickster, is headed north with a cargo of palm trees and cacti, ready to profit from and spread chaos in the newly warming climate. His nonchalant shrug reminds us he just can’t help himself.

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**Jody Folwell and Diego Romero**
Santa Clara Pueblo, born 1942

**You Don’t Push Bush, ca. 2003**
Clay, paints

Courtesy of Jody Folwell and Diego Romero

Esteemed Pueblo artists Jody Folwell and Diego Romero collaborated on this vessel in response to their deep concern with the United States invading Iraq. Images of destruction and civilian casualties and the horrors of war prompted the artists to create a vessel that asks, “Who has the right to decide these choices of going to war and what are the lasting consequences of invading sovereign lands?”

Members of this community have chosen not to translate this label into their language. We respect the decisions of each sovereign Native nation.

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**Jamie Okuma**
Luiseño/Shoshone-Bannock, born 1977

**Adaptation II, 2012**
Shoes designed by Christian Louboutin, leather, glass beads, porcupine quills, sterling silver cones, brass sequins, chicken feathers, cloth, deer rawhide, buckskin
Detail and quality are the trademarks of this fine artist’s work. Jamie Okuma began her vocation making extravagant attire in which to attend powwows, but these efforts quickly turned into a successful career creating wearable art. These meticulously beaded and quilled Louboutin shoes are Okuma’s way of reimagining Native couture. Okuma had planned on working in the fashion industry, then became very successful as a beadworker. Now blending both worlds, she works in traditional forms and couture.

Mimbres artists

Sherds and bowl, ca. 1000
Ceramic

Courtesy of the Museum of Northern Arizona, NA3288.23; NA3288.107; NA3288.3

The majority of Mimbres pottery displayed in museums is unearthed from burial sites and taken from the deceased. Out of respect to all visitors, we choose not to display objects found in Native burials. These works are some of the few Mimbres ceramics that were found in domestic spaces. They were made around 900–1000 CE by the Mogollon people, ancestors of present-day Puebloan peoples. Notice the abstract designs executed in a three-dimensional form and the representations of people and animals in the sherds.

The woman or women who created this work may have descendants in more than one contemporary Native-language community. In an effort to be both respectful and accurate, we have left this label untranslated.

Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie
Taskigi, Bear clan / Diné, Tsinajinnie clan, born 1954

Boy with the Moon in His Heart, 2003

Hoke-tee (Young Woman Warrior), 2003
From the series Portraits against Amnesia
Platinum lambda prints

Courtesy of the artist

In her Portraits against Amnesia series, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie transformed 10 vintage studio portraits of Native Americans, some from her family archive and some she acquired. Tsinhnahjinnie seeks to reclaim and reimagine images of Native people that have been stereotyped and monetized by non-Native people for centuries. She describes her work as an act of “photographic sovereignty.” In these works, Tsinhnahjinnie places young Native children on the moon, asserting the presence of Native people in modernity and into the future.
Arapaho artist

**Rawhide envelope**, ca. 1900
Rawhide, pigment

Collection of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

This rawhide envelope was created and painted by an Arapaho woman. While men in Arapaho society and throughout the Plains are known for their figurative works, women painted, beaded, and quilled abstract designs. Women’s artistic language was that of abstraction, developed hundreds of years before abstraction appeared in the Western canon.

Seminole artists

**Woman’s patchwork cape, skirt, and stacking necklaces**, ca. 1920
Cotton, thread, rickrack (cape and skirt)
Glass beads, plastic, thread, wood, silver, cotton (necklaces)

Denver Museum of Nature & Science, AC.11508B; AC.11508A; AC.7966; AC.1070; AC.6464; AC.9818; AC.8233; AC.7982; AC.8311; AC.8369

Historically, Seminole women’s clothing included a very full floor-length skirt with a ruffle at the knee, a long-sleeved shirt, and a short cape also trimmed with a ruffle. These voluminous clothes took skilled seamstresses many hours to make by hand. As Euro-Americans pushed into Seminole lands in the mid-1800s, they introduced new tools (sewing machines) and materials (ribbon and zigzag rickrack) that Seminole women used to amply decorate clothing like the skirt and cape you see here from around 1920. Around this time, Seminole women started adding horizontal stripes to most men’s and women’s clothing. Intricate patchwork also came to be popular in women’s skirts in the 1920s, and this tradition continues today.

Seminole women of the 1920s and later were known for wearing many glass-bead necklaces layered and stacked on one another. They would conduct their physically taxing daily tasks all while wearing around 12 pounds of necklaces. Seminole women would collect beads and necklaces throughout their lives. These women often had their own income, independent of husbands or families, and were able to add to their collections with their own resources.

Members of this community have chosen not to translate this label into their language. We respect the decisions of each sovereign Native nation.

Nimi’ipuu (Nez Perce) artist

**Bag**, ca. 1900
Corn husk, yarn, rawhide, wool

Denver Art Museum Collection; Gift of Dr. Charles J. Norton, 1986.261
This large, flat bag was made as a storage container for food. Bags like this were especially useful for seasonal moves to river fishing camps, root-gathering fields, and winter villages. Women created these bags from the peeled, cured, and hand-spun fibers of dogbane (which naturally repels insects) or silkweed. They decorated them with geometric designs that were different on each side, using contrasting-color plant fibers such as corn husks. As Euro-American materials like wool yarn and chemical dyes came into the region, artists incorporated them into many bags.

**Plateau artist**

**Beaded bag**, ca. 1920
Glass beads, overlay stitch, commercial cloth, hide

Gift of the Estate of Elaine Horwitch, Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, 4817-1

The Plateau region covers several states and lies between the Cascade and Rocky mountains in western North America. The introduction of horses in the 1700s brought greater mobility and connections to neighboring tribes and those across the Rockies. These interactions, along with the introduction of glass beads from Euro-Americans, led to innovations. Bags like this were termed “friendship” bags, and they were often used as personal gifts between women. The man depicted here is Nimi’ipuu (Nez Perce), while the woman is Yakama.

**Heather Levi**
Southern Cheyenne/Kiowa, born 1971

**Pipe bag**, 2016
Hide and beads

Courtesy of the artist

Heather Levi created this pipe bag for her husband, George Curtis Levi. Cheyenne women artists have created pipe bags like these for hundreds of years, embellishing them with beadwork as gifts of love for family members. This contemporary work draws upon Cheyenne aesthetics and forms, which include bands of alternating colors of beaded designs. It was made with the utmost care out of respect for the artistic tradition and for its recipient.

**Shan Goshorn**
Cherokee, 1957–2018

**Elder Trees**, 2018
Arches watercolor paper splints printed with archival inks, acrylic paint, and copper foil

Lent by the family of the artist
Elder Trees are seven Cherokee single-weave baskets woven from reproductions of black-and-white photographs of majestic trees. The artist deliberately took the photos, which she subsequently hand painted, from a ground perspective to emphasize the enormity of these sacred beings. These “old ones” and the painted vast cosmos are symbolic of ancient wisdom. There are seven baskets in this set, a sacred number to the Cherokee representing seven directions—the four cardinal directions plus the Upper World, the Lower World, and the Center. This demonstrates a deeper interconnection with what is above, below, and here on this Earth and pays tribute to the following Kituwah (Cherokee) Prophecy printed on the interior splints:

Long ago our elders said the Creator put us here in these mountains that we call the Ancient Cherokee Place. All the things that would be for our benefit the Creator prepared for us. Medicine and food lived here. The Creator taught us what to do for us to thrive here on the earth and for us to consider all things that lived here sacred. We called what the Creator had taught us, the Laws. We believed in these Right Ways and we were well as long as we followed these laws. The children were strong and healthy. What was medicinally beneficial to them grew everywhere and so did food. The Creator wanted all things to live well together, the animals and things of the water and the flying creatures and people. As long as they followed the laws, they would live well and in peace said the creator. The elders also spoke of a time that would come if we stopped believing in our laws. Our people would become lost and the children would not know their own language. Diseases would come and they would not know how to find the medicines to heal them. They will have forgotten what the Creator taught them. It will be a bad time for the people they said. However, a time of strength will come. The children, or the young people will revive the strength of the Kituwah people will be alive again. We see this happening they said. We are living in those times now.

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Joyce Growing Thunder Fogarty
Dakhóta/Nakoda, born 1950

Juanita Growing Thunder Fogarty
Dakhóta/Nakoda, born 1969

Jessa Rae Growing Thunder
Dakhóta/Nakoda, born 1989

Give Away Horses (dress and accessories), 2006
Deer hide, glass beads, canvas, thread, leather, moose hide, German silver, porcupine quills, feathers, elk hide, brass bells, ribbon, silk ribbons, brass thimbles

Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution 26/5818-5821

The women of the Growing Thunder family embody the intergenerational continuity of their artistic tradition. Joyce (grandmother), Juanita (daughter), and Jessa Rae (granddaughter) Growing Thunder are three generations of highly accomplished, well-respected, and prolific bead and quill artists. Give Away Horses represents three generations of Dakhóta/Nakoda aesthetic sensibilities perfected in hide, glass
beads, and porcupine quills. This outfit is complete, each part intentionally created, revealing the living and vibrant gifts of legacy.

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**Maria Tallchief and Michael Maule in *The Firebird*, choreographed by George Balanchine**

ca. mid-20th century  
Film; running time 1:09 minutes

The George Balanchine Trust

Maria Tallchief (Ki He Kah Stah Tsa) (Osage, 1925–2013) was born in Fairfax, Oklahoma, on the Osage Reservation. She exemplified the Osage principle of *washkan*, a word meaning “do your best.” From her youth, Maria applied *washkan* in everything she did, and she and her sister Marjorie studied classical ballet from a young age. The first popularly known prima ballerina in the United States, Tallchief was the muse of choreographer George Balanchine and the star of the New York City Ballet in the late 1940s. *The Firebird* was choreographed especially for her. Her remarkable career brought a sense of pride and accomplishment to Osage people and to Native communities across the United States.

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**Iakonikohnrio Tonia Loran-Galban**

Mohawk, Bear clan Akwesasne, born 1965

**Otiianehshon Ronwatiatanhirats (The Women Raise Them Up) Women’s Nomination Belt**, 2018

Wampum shells, hide

Courtesy of Iakonikohnrio Tonia Loran-Galban, L2018.211

This is a precise re-creation of the “Woman’s Nomination Belt,” a document authorizing the clan mother to nominate and guide the male leaders of her clan and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. The original is still in use today, and it is one of the most important wampum belts in Haudenosaunee and U.S. history. Jigonhsaseh, the first clan mother, helped found the Haudenosaunee government and its oral constitution, the *Great Law*, or Kayanerehkowa, which is said to have inspired the framers of the U.S. Constitution. This version of the Women’s Nomination Belt was made by Haudenosaunee artist Tonia Loran-Galban, who was given the right to depict it.

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**Marianne Nicolson**

Kwakwaka’wakw, Dzawada’enuxw First Nations, born 1969

**Baxwana’tsi: The Container for Souls**, 2006

Glass, cedar, light fixtures

Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Purchased with funds donated by the Audain Foundation, VAG, 2007.4.1 a-c

*The Container for Souls* affirms Marianne Nicolson’s Dzawada’enuxw traditional culture and language while presenting a complex relationship between body and soul. The light box takes the form of a...
bentwood chest, a traditional Native Northwest Coast wooden container. It casts a shadow that invites the viewer to be both observer and observed, as one’s own body interrupts light and casts a shadow upon the wall. Nicolson says, “When I saw the captured heritage of our nations on the market and in the museums, it seemed to me that we too had become encased in glass.”

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**Literary Texts and Interpretive Materials**

**Sháá Áko Dahjiníleh**  
**Remember the Things They Told Us**

When you were born and took your first breath, different colors and different kinds of wind entered through your fingertips and the whorl on top of your head. Within us, as we breathe, are the light breezes that cool a summer afternoon, within us the tumbling winds that precede rain, within us sheets of hard-thundering rain, within us dust-filled layers of wind that sweep in from the mountains, within us gentle night flutters that lull us to sleep.

To see this, blow on your hand now.

Each sound we make evokes the power of these winds and we are, at once, gentle and powerful.

-- Luci Tapahonso (Diné, b. 1953)

“Sháá Áko Dahjiníleh (Remember the Things They Told Us)” (excerpt) by Luci Tapahonso, from *Sáanii Dahataat/The Women Are Singing*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1993

When enough elk teeth were on hand . . . Dream Woman made the gown; and it was something to behold . . . As usual, Dream Woman had dreamed an original design . . . A detail of the dreamed design on the gown was here skillfully repeated, making of the entire costume a charming harmony. And not only the tops but also the soles of the moccasins were covered with quillwork. This seemed extravagant and unnecessary, and Waterlily ventured to say so. “When I walk, I shall quickly break the quills and ruin the soles.” Her aunt Dream Woman replied, “But you will not walk.” Then she told the girl that child-beloved moccasins for the *hunka* were always decorated so, and that one did not walk to the ceremonial tipi; one was carried.

-- Anpetu Wastéwin/Ella Cara Deloria (Dakhóta, 1889-1971)

Ella Cara Deloria, from her novel *Waterlily*, written in the 1940s and published posthumously in 1988

**The Quill Worker**

She with the hair of midnight and the wondrous midnight eyes,
She with the deft brown fingers, she with the soft, slow smile,  
She with the voice of velvet and the thoughts that dream the while,--  
“Whence come the vague to-morrows? Where do the yesters fly?  
What is beyond the border of the prairie and the sky?  
Does the maid in the Land of Morning sit in the red sunshine,  
Broiding her buckskin mantle with the quills of the porcupine?”

-- Tekahionwake/E. Pauline Johnson (Mohawk, 1861-1913)

“The Quill Worker” (excerpt) by E. Pauline Johnson, from *Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson*, Musson Book Co., Toronto, 1912

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**Nindinendam**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nyaa nindinendam</th>
<th>Oh I am thinking</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mekawiyaanin</td>
<td>I am reminded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>Of my homeland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waasawekamig</td>
<td>A faraway place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>My homeland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nidaanisens e</td>
<td>My little daughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigwizisens e</td>
<td>My little son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishe naganagwaa</td>
<td>I leave them far behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waasawekamig</td>
<td>A faraway place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>My homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhiqwa gosha wiin</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beshowad e we</td>
<td>It is near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninzhike we ya</td>
<td>I am alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishe izhayaan</td>
<td>As I go</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>My homeland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>My homeland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ninzhike we ya</td>
<td>I am alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishe giweyaan</td>
<td>I am going home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyaa nigashkendam</td>
<td>Oh I am sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endanakiyyaan</td>
<td>My homeland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-- Baamewaagizhigokwe/Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe/Chippewa/Anishinaabe, 1800-1842)

--Sung by Margaret Noodin (b. 1965)

“Nindinendam (Thinking)” by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, 1839.

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**Extraction**

My grandmother says boarding school / is where people go to die, / as she teaches me to embroider and knit, / my hands fumble over the needles. / Grandmother, when did you first learn / how to sing the songs you carry? / Before I was born they tried to silence us, / pierced our tongues with needles then
taught / our then-girls-grandmothers how to sew / like machines. Even then, they saw our bodies / as land, full of resources / waiting to be extracted and exploited. / We stitch together phrases; my grandmother/ patiently teaches me words, “in Indian” as she says. / Mugua-vi means heart—I want to learn how to unbury this, / bury, sogho’mi I want words to un-drink the drugs we loved / into our veins because for some of us this was the only way / we knew how to keep breathing. I want to say / alcoholism is the symptom and not the disease. / Can we un-suicide, un-pipeline, / un-disappear our dear ones? There is no word / for undo but many ways to say return. / We never get to go back to before / our fathers began evaporating / and our mothers started flooding themselves / into unglobable rivers because their mothers / were taken long ago. And, we are still searching / dragging rivers red until we find every body / that ever went missing. / For as long as I can remember, we’ve been stolen: / from reservation to Industrial boarding schools / and today our girls, women, and two-spirit still go missing / and murdered. I could find no word for this. / But y’dakwi is to sink or disappear. Where is it we fall? / When did we first start vanishing? / We sewed new memories into old scars, a recorded pain / so precise like threading a needle one can barely see through. / Sometimes I want to set this world on fire, / carry the scent of smoke wherever I go / so (should I go missing) you’ll know how to find me. / Is this why our mothers grew up to be keepers of the fire? / And our fathers so guilty they shovel ash into their mouths? / This is where my tongue stumbles over its colonized self. / Grandmother, when it comes to letting go / my hands have always failed me, / but my mouth wants to tell the story / about the songs you still sing softly ‘áa-qáa / because one day when we’re gone, / the only thing left to fill the space / our bodies leave will be silence.

—Tanaya Winder (Southern Ute/Shoshone/Paiute, b. 1985)

“Extraction” by Tanaya Winder, from The Rumpus, National Poetry Month, Day 12, April 2018

Remember

Remember the sky that you were born under, know each of the star’s stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun’s birth at dawn, that is the strongest point of time. Remember sundown and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled to give you form and breath. You are evidence of her life, and her mother’s, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them, listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the origin of this universe.
Remember you are all people and all people
are you.
Remember you are this universe and this universe is you.
Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.
Remember language comes from this.
Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.

—Joy Harjo (Muscogee/Cherokee, b. 1951)

“Remember” by Joy Harjo, from She Had Some Horses, W. W. Norton, New York, 1983

We Hidatsa women had a kind of honor mark, for industry, something like the honor marks the men had for striking the enemy.
If a girl was a worker and tanned hundreds of hides her aunt might give her an honor mark. My aunt Sage gave me such, a maipsukaśa or woman’s belt. These were broad as a man’s suspender and worked in beads, sometimes blue, sometimes with a cross design. One could not purchase or make such a belt; it had to be given.
For working a quill-decorated tent, a bracelet was given; for making a quill-embroidered robe, a ring.
There were no other honor marks for industry, but these three.

--Buffalo Bird Woman (Hidatsa, 1839-1932)