

**Americas Training**

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**Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Dakota Hoska**

## **Booming Out, 2015**

**Carla Hemlock**

Cotton fabrics, glass beans, wampum

PROMISED GIFT OF LOREN LIPSON, MD L2015.221

### **The Quilt: Boomin' Out**

Artist: Carla Hemlock

Cotton Fabrics, Glass Beads and Wampum belts

Mohawks are part of the Iroquois confederacy of tribes; Also known as the **Haudenosaunee** (pronounced hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee). The other tribes included in the confederacy include the Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations. The Kahnawake Mohawk Territory (pronounced gahna'wa:ge) is a reserve of the traditionally Iroquoian-speaking Mohawk nation on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, Canada, across from Montreal.

Many Mohawk people from the Kahnawake community are renowned steel workers. They built some of the most iconic buildings found on the New York skyline today, including the World Trade Center, The Empire State Building, and Rockefeller Center; and today, the practice of "Skywalking" (also known as Ironworking) still continues, with men and women bravely standing thousands of feet in the air to complete a building's construction requirements. The title of this quilt refers to the great distances that the Mohawk people travel to build these skyscrapers.

The silhouettes on the quilt are made from photos taken as far back as the 1920s and into today of men working and balancing on the high steel. To us, these men are anonymous, but the artist knows and recognizes these people because she is familiar with them and their families, all living in her community.

The center of the quilt is adorned with glass beads and wampum; Wampum is a type of "bead" made from clam shells. They are very beautiful, especially the purple ones, but there is also white wampum. They were used by tribes to record treaties, for story telling or for ceremonial gifts. For a short time after colonization, they were even used for money. Before colonization, they were usually hand-made by women of the tribe. This was very difficult to do and required great skill. The wampum beads found in this quilt have also been handmade.

The glass beadwork is particular to the Haudenosaunee. The beads are stacked and layered so that they raise off of the surface. Our Whimsies are other examples of this kind of beadwork, which differs greatly from the beadwork of the plains tribes.

About the Artist: Carla focuses on textile arts, and is married to a man named Babe Hemlock, who is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation ironworker. Babe is a wood worker in his artistic practice, but both artists like to focus on the history of the Haudenosaunee and they like to attract attention to political issues, environmental issues and stereotyping. Carla often uses Iroquois symbols in her work, so it is easily recognizable to her people.

Label Text:

"The Mohawks from Kahnawake have used the phrase "Booming Out" as the men take to the road for the High Steel Trade. The men from my community of Kahnawake have become renowned for their high steel work throughout the US, especially in New York City. The silhouettes in the quilt are from photos—ranging from the 1920's to the present—of men working the high steel. They include men who worked on the World Trade Center, the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, and some of the most recent Sky Scrapers to grace NYC. The center of the quilt is adorned with glass beads and wampum. The Indian Head and the designs within the circle are representative of the Kanienkehaka, or People of the Flint - Mohawks. They may build the most modern buildings of our time, but they are still deeply rooted in who they are as Kanienkehaka. This quilt pays tribute to our men, and now many of our women who continue a long standing tradition of what we know to be ironworking." - [Carla Hemlock](#)