

Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists Audioguide Transcript

STOP 1 Introduction

Hello. I'm Jill Ahlberg Yohe, Associate Curator of Native American Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

[Speaking Lakota] Hello, my relatives. I greet all of you with a good heart. My name is Dakota Hoska. I'm a Research Assistant for this exhibition and Assistant Curator of Native American Art at the Denver Art Museum.

Jill: We, along with Teri Greeves, Kiowa artist and co-curator of the exhibition, welcome you to *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, presented by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

This exhibition is the result of the effort, knowledge, and experience of many people. In 2015, an international group of 21 Native women artists and scholars of Native art gathered at Mia to begin planning the exhibition. These advisors offered insights from a wide range of nations at every step in the curatorial process. Please be sure to read about these advisors in the introductory panel and learn about the exhibition process.

Dakota: The exhibition is organized around three key themes: Legacy, Power, and Relationships. Legacy encapsulates the past, present, and future of Native art, and highlights the knowledge and skill passed from one generation to the next.

Relationships highlights the Native concepts of connectivity that encapsulate the ideas of how all beings on the earth are interrelated and reliant upon each other.

Power manifests in Native women in social, spiritual, and political realms and their ability to create and nurture new life.

You'll find that many of the artworks in this exhibition embody two or three of these themes.

Jill: In this audioguide you will hear from Native women artists discussing their work in their own words. In two instances, living artists discuss historic work.

Thank you for visiting Mia and *Hearts of Our People*. Enjoy the exhibition.

Dakota: [Speaking Lakota] Thank you. We are all related.

STOP 2



Joyce Growing Thunder Fogarty, Dakota/Nakoda, born 1950

Juanita Growing Thunder Fogarty, Dakota/Nakoda, born 1969

Jessa Rae Growing Thunder, Dakota/Nakoda, born 1989

Give Away Horses (dress and accessories), 2006

We're three generations of traditional beadwork and quillwork artists. [Speaking Nakoda] Good day to all our relations. My name is Jessa Rae Growing Thunder. We come from the Fort Peck and Assiniboine Sioux tribes of Poplar Montana.

My name is Joyce Growing Thunder and my Indian name is _____, it means Two Buffalo Woman.

My name is Juanita Growing Thunder Fogarty, and I am a Assiniboine Sioux from Fort Peck Reservation in Montana.

Jessa Rae: My grandma right here, she's a legacy. She grew up in a beautiful time on the Reservation in Montana. She grew up with all her grandmas. And they were all bead-workers.

Joyce: My grandma Helen was a big inspiration to me. All of my grandmas. I used to have my beads laid out all the time, and they were raised around it...my kids.

Juanita: All of my brothers know how to bead and it's just automatic because we saw her doing it all the time, so we had the master going all the time.

Jessa Rae: In this family you're kind of born into it, because it's just part of the everyday life.

Juanita: Everyday, right?

Joyce: Yeah.

Juanita: If she's not beading, she gets grumpy. *laughter* you know.

Jessa Rae: We all do!

Juanita: She has to bead every day. She does. I mean it's just part of her. That's who she is.

Jessa Rae: I remember being six years old and I went to my friend's house. And I understood I was Native and my friend wasn't, but for the life of me, I couldn't figure out why my friend's mom wasn't beading. I remember going home and asking my mom, "Why do you guys do this every day?" And my mom explained, "You know these little things we do every day keep it alive. You know this is our responsibility."

Juanita: Every design that we interpret, use in our pieces and stuff, we understand what that means. Where it came from. And why we're putting it there. All of our pieces have stories. You don't just make something because you saw that and that was pretty. You understand what that was about and why we do that. And not every design can go on anything. But a lot of our pieces we make tell personal stories, or stories from our family.

Jessa Rae: And even the dress that was chosen for the show. I mean that dress tells a story. That dress tells our history.

Juanita: The Giveaway Horse Dress. So she was asked, and so she was thinking about what design she could put on this dress and she kept going back to her grandparents. And she kept going back to her roots. And she said one of the best memories she had was her grandpa getting a horse ready that he knew he was gonna take to that celebration.

Jessa Rae: Ben Gray Hawk.

Juanita: Ben Gray Hawk.

Jessa Rae: So he would take this horse and he'd tie that war bonnet on that horse, and he'd go down to the celebration. And he would honor. You know, he would honor one of the grandchildren, one of the nephews, one of the nieces. And he would say something about them. You know, he would talk about them in a good way. And this beautiful horse with a beautiful war bonnet on it. All the men would be gathered on the outside of the arbor. When he was ready, he would release that horse and that horse would take off running. Whoever could catch that horse on foot, could keep that horse. And that was how he honored his family.

We're taught to be selfless. You know, you always give things. Whatever you have, you give it. That's how you show your love, that's how you show your compassion for one another. That's how you respect and honor one another.

Joyce: I'm glad my kids are gonna carry it on. They know how to do it all now.
laughter Yeah.

STOP 3



Cara Romero, Chemehuevi, born 1977

Kaa, 2017

[Speaking Chemehuevi] My name is Cara Romero. I am a contemporary fine art photographer. I'm from the Chemehuevi Valley Indian reservation in the heart of the Mojave Desert. We're on the California side of the Colorado River.

So the title of the piece in this show is **Kaa**, and most of my photographs are named after the women that I photograph to give the woman agency. And I wanted to create a piece that personified clay woman. So I reached out to a clay artist, and that's Kaa Folwell. I'll never forget the time she came to the studio and I was

interviewing her about, you know, are you comfortable with this and do you like the concept?

And she said, "Cara, I would pose in a paper bag for you."

And the reason that that was important is because it meant that young women trusted me and native women trusted me, and the way that I'm photographing and what I'm doing with some of my editorial work in Indian country. Our women are exploited. They've been objectified, they've been stolen, and we have a big epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women. But there's also a way to do figurative art and to empower ourselves in a right way.

She's painted in clay from my reservation, and her hair is flipping back. And we were able to capture that motion at 1/8000 of a second. And that really lends itself to the emotion of the piece. That moment where the clay chemically changes is just that fast. And I think what's interesting about the design is it was just no contest, when we laid the geometric lightning design over the top and I thought that was really interesting because she actually uses that in her modern day pottery.

STOP 4



Dyani White Hawk, Sicangu Lakota (Brulé), 1976
Untitled (Quiet Strength I), 2016

This piece is really about honoring the legacy of female abstraction, both in Lakota art forms, but also in the history of painting.

[Speaking Lakota] My name is Dyani White Hawk Polk, I'm Sicangu Lakota. I'm a painter and mixed media artist.

It's an untitled work, but it's part of the Quiet Strength series, and it's the first in that series. I spend a lot of time looking at Lakota art forms, women's dresses, bags, moccasins, leggings, all sorts of things. I also spend a lot of time looking at the history of abstract painting, and for me there's a lot of similar qualities in both. The intersections that I'm most attracted to in both of those practices is what this piece is generally about.

The field of white as we see it, the foreground of the piece, is made up of thousands of similar brushstrokes across in horizontal lines. So it mimics simultaneously porcupine quill work and lane stitch or lazy stitch beadwork. And so that horizontal line and then the vertical lines that make up those horizontal lines are to pay tribute to both of those forms that are really specifically Lakota art forms.

The gold underneath that painting ... First of all, there's many layers of paint underneath the horizontal lines. All of those layers of paint and all of those colors that are behind that gold help that piece move and dance and shimmer in the way that it does.

STOP 5



Cherish Parrish, Odawa and Pottawatomi, born 1989
The Next Generation - Carriers of Culture, 2018

[Speaking Native Language] Cherish Parrish. Southwest Michigan.

My piece is called *Anishinabe Kwei* [The Next Generation - Carriers of Culture] and it's a basket in the shape of a pregnant woman. The inspiration for that came from just seeing an old sculpture on a wall. It was of a pregnant woman. I think it was maybe African of origin, and it got me thinking about the old Greek

sculptures. No matter how ambiguous they may seem, you can still tell that they were a person, because over the years the arms have fallen off or the legs or something, but you still have that shape of a human.

Not much has changed over the generations. We've made a few tweaks and stuff, but we still weave and harvest in very much the exact same ways as we always have. For us, our materials are still an ax, we've upgraded to a saw, just to make things a little faster and easier, and scissors. Instead of letting the wood grain dictate how our splint should be, we do have a little bit more control over that, and that is what made my piece possible, specifically.

I was taught to weave free form. I think all of our baskets have always been free form, but molds and the introduction of molds, my mind was blown about how much you can do. I think the biggest challenge for me was creating a mold that I would be able to weave around, but also pull back out of the basket and leave the basket intact. That took a few trial and error processes to really just learn how to rig up Saran wrap and tape over a mold and then stuff it with my favorite old clothes, and I won't be able to wear those again until I finish the basket. So there's nothing fancy behind the scenes.

I didn't time how long it took me to weave it, either. I just know that I made it through all 10 seasons of *Frasier* while I was weaving it, so that's how I tell people how long it took. With *Frasier*, I specifically put that on; it's a favorite comedy of mine. It keeps me positive and happy. I did have that mentality of going into a basket with a positive attitude. The idea that maybe whatever you're feeling or thinking, you're weaving into that piece. I really wanted it to be a piece that inspired and made people feel good, and I couldn't think of a better snarky show than that.

STOP 6



Shelley Niro , Bay of Quinte Mohawk, Six Nations Turtle clan, born 1954
Thinking Caps, 1999

I'm Shelly Niro, I'm from Bradford, Ontario. I grew up on the Six Nations Reserve. I'm Turtle Clan, Bay of Quinte Mohawk. And I'm an artist.

I was thinking about Native people and how they've had to use their own intellect to survive. Part of that intellect is also incorporating entertainment as a big part of culture. And it's not just 'cause it has to incorporate not just philosophy and religion, but there has to be a spark of stimulation there that people can respond to. It's like sitting around the fire at night and I think artwork does the same thing. It has to pull people together and they have to look at it, and if they don't understand it maybe they'll discuss it among themselves.

When I make my work, I don't want it to be a direct statement, like "This is what the work is about" because I think it should be like music. Sometimes you can listen to music, and maybe you don't understand it, but sometimes it's so beautiful that you don't care, you know. So with thinking caps, there's four stages in that work. There's, it starts with a young child, there's photographs in the work as well, so it's - hands. One is of a young girl, with her hands putting beads together. The next one is a teenager, also working on beadwork, and the next one is a middle-aged woman, and the next photograph is an elderly woman's hands.

There's words of text with the photographs, and it's English and it translates to Mohawk, and so the text is very simple, it says, "I'm born, I breathe, I see, I walk." It's kind of a lifespan of thought there. With the hats themselves, it starts out very simply. The teenage hat, it gets more involved, and the middle-aged hat is very strange. It's not symmetrical, everything is a little bit off a bit, and so it's like she's going through this period of thinking, and then the elder hat goes back to, a simple

design again. There's a mirror there, so it's put there so that you can look into the mirror and see yourself reflected in the mirror.

I get a lot of energy from looking at other people's work. It's amazing the effect art has on myself. I think that's what art-making is all about.

STOP 7



Susie Santiago Billy
Pomo, 1884–1968
Feathered Basket, c.
1952



Susan Billy
Hopland Band of
Pomo Indians, born
1951
**Miniature Feather
Basket**, 1976



Elsie Allen
Pomo, 1899–1990
**Miniature Beaded
Basket**, 1980

Susan Billy
Hopland Band of Pomo
Indians, born 1951
**Miniature Beaded
Basket**, 2006

In February of 1974, I knocked on Elsie's door, on my aunt's door, and I said, "You don't know me, but you're my great-aunt, and I'm Susan Billy, my father is Ignatius Billy." And she was kind of shocked but she invited me in. So that began my career with Elise, and I ended up apprenticing to her for 16 years.

In February of 1974, I was 23 years old and she was 74 years old. She had started weaving as a young girl but she had stopped when she got married and had children and was raising her family. She only began to weave again when she turned 60. She kind of said she was in a hurry because she felt she had a lot of work to do now, she had to catch up. So when I showed up, she was so excited and she said, "I want you to learn all the different techniques that I can teach you."

So she started with the simple single-rod coiling, then she taught me three-rod coiling, and we went through the different kinds of weaving that our tribe has. When we got through many of them, she said “I want you to try to make a feather basket now,” and I said “Did your mother make feather baskets?” And she said no, and I asked her how she learned to make feather baskets and she said, “Your grandmother, Susie Billy, she taught me how to make feather baskets. So really I have to pass that on to you, because that comes from your grandmother.” So I did make a feather basket, and that’s the one that’s in this show, that’s my first feather basket. And when I finished it – it took me three months – when I finished it, I had an auntie and uncle that lived next door, and I remember going over and going “look!” And my uncle looks at it and he goes, “How did you get your grandma’s basket?” I said, “It’s not my grandma’s basket, that’s my first feather basket.” He goes, “You know what, that’s in your blood. You keep it up.”

So as Elsie and I progressed through her teaching me the weaving, towards the end she said she wanted me to make a little beaded basket, but I felt that was more modern, and I told her that. I said, “But that’s kind of newer, and I’m more interested in keeping the older traditions alive.” And she kind of laughed at me and said “Susie, we’ve been making beaded baskets since the turn of the century, it’s not that new” (*Susan laughs*). And now it’s considered a traditional technique, but I just resisted, and not too long after that, she passed away. Years later, I had won the auction of Elsie’s little beaded basket, it’s navy blue and white beads. It’s about the size of a dime. I knew this was a message from the other side, and that it was time for me to make a beaded basket.

STOP 8



Edmonia Lewis, Mississauga and African American, c. 1844–1907
The Old Arrow Maker, modeled 1866, carved c. 1872

I'm America Meredith [Speaking Cherokee] I am Cherokee and Swedish. I am enrolled in the Cherokee Nation. I'm just so grateful that Edmonia Lewis is in this art show because she's the first Native woman to ever make it in the international art world. She was a success. But she was also the first African American woman to make it in the international art world. Her family was both Canadian and from New York. And she became orphaned- she and her brother. So she was raised by her aunts, and she was Ojibwe, so she grew up in that environment. And then her brother, he ended up becoming quite wealthy going west to Montana in the Gold Rush days. He was a barber. Her brother was able to help fund her – to send her to Oberlin College. She has this incredible academic, 19th century art education. And her passion was sculpture. She wanted to go to Italy. So this was completely her dream, her desire. And was able ultimately to fulfill her dream, and go to Italy.

She spoke Ojibwe, she didn't really ever quite become proficient in English, but she become completely fluent in Italian. And she maintained a studio. At the height of her career she hired nine assistants. Ulysses S. Grant, the President, when he went to Rome, he commissioned her to make a sculpture. So she really made a name for herself, being a Black, Native woman sculptor.

In the 1896 exhibition in Philadelphia, she created this massive, incredible piece of the death of Cleopatra. It didn't win, but it was like the talk of the show. So this

woman was really incredible and very well-known during her life-time. So she was incredibly savvy, incredibly successful in her own timeframe. And she was written about during her timeframe. And then what happens so much with women artists is even though they are successful in their timeframe, they don't fit the narrative, so they start getting erased. I think it's important to be keenly aware that many women artists were successful, but then being written into the art historical cannon is a completely different story.

STOP 9



Kelly Church, Odawa and Pottawatomi, born 1967
Sustaining Traditions-Digital Memories, 2018

Harvesting is the most important part of the whole relationship of what we have, of what we do. It's our connection to the earth. It's where the teaching starts. You have to know your environment. We have to be botanists, we have to know our woods. We have to be entomologists these days. We have to know about bugs. We have to recognize if the trees are in the first stage of the emerald ash borer.

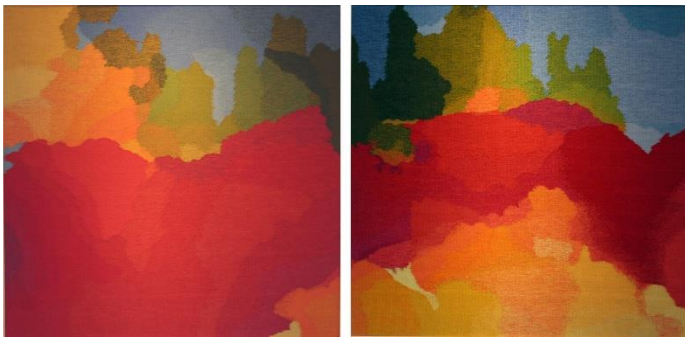
[Speaking Native Language] Kelly Church. Hopkins, Michigan.

My piece speaks about the past and the present together. The color of the Fabergé egg is a green, because we have this emerald ash borer that is killing all of the ash trees in the United States. And the emerald ash borer is this brilliant, beautiful green, but it's so destructive. And today, people love beauty. They love beautiful things. So I try to make something that's beautiful to draw them in and then when you open it up, you learn about a bug. It's not just about a beautiful basket, it's about everything that goes with it.

So when we do go into the woods, there might be 40 black ash trees, but only one to four black ash trees that are going to be suitable for baskets. So a basket tree is much different than just a black ash tree.

Our black ash teachings also teach us to work together because we cannot do this job alone. We need our men to help us carry trees. Our children are always watching, and so we have to set those examples for them of helping who needs help. So it's combining the old traditions of the past with the new technology of today, trying to teach in a way that we have always taught, but also teaching in a way that the children or the future people understand.

STOP 10



Ramona Sakiestewa, Hopi, born 1948
Nebula 22 & 23 (diptych), 2009

I'm Ramona Sakiestewa. I was born in Albuquerque at the Albuquerque Indian hospital when there was one. My family's from northern Arizona – from Aribi all the way to Moenkopi. I have always loved tactile things. I got a sewing machine when I was four. And so I made doll clothes, and I made clothes for myself by the second grade. But I like touching, and I like fabrics, and I like the tactile experience. Went about teaching myself to weave. Then I worked my way up to American Southwest Tapestry, which is distinctly different than European tapestry. It's finished on both sides. And I did that for close to 30 years. And all along I did print-making, and painting, and other things. Mostly to get maquettes and drawings that I could use for weaving.

All my work has generally been about divination. I'm always interested in time and space and how certain things intersect and come together at a certain moment in

time. Sort of abstractions of nature because that's been very influential in my life. And I have lots of little scraps of things that I collect. Tear things out of magazines that I like. I save scraps of stuff. I have a lot of dead plants and insects in boxes that I look at. And then, I'm very interested in deep space. The cosmos and stars. Because that's a scientific vocabulary that indigenous people in the Americas have had. Our cultures are based in really deep science. So when the Hubble space telescope went out into deep space and they sent back these beautiful sort of multi-layered photographs of nebulae, I decided that's what I wanted to do as kind of my final homage to weaving. And so the series, the Nebulae Series, was indeed that. So it was based entirely on my interpretation through watercolor of the Hubble space telescope.

It's very important to me to layer color. It's the kind of thing when you initially look at one of the weavings, you'll go, "Oh, that's pink." But really, it's three colors that are in every pick that goes across the weaving. You just don't see it right away, but there's a depth of color.

So in 2009, I decided to close my studio. I thought, I can't do better weaving than this. And I want to do something else which is print-making and these kind of visual constructions. So, that's my new foray into the world of art. Weaving had its moment. And then it had its end.

STOP 11



Jolene Rickard, Tuscarora, born 1956
. . . the sky is darkening . . ., 2018

[Speaking Tuscarora] My name is Jolene Rickard. My Tuscarora name is . I am from the Tuscarora Nation which is located in the settler state of the United States, in western New York. The Tuscarora are part of the Haudenosaunee, the sixth nation. I'm a turtle clan and for the Haudenosaunee the clan system is the key system.

At present I've been teaching at Cornell University. And Cornell is located within the homelands of the Cayuga Nation, and it's had a profound impact on my being. It's an extraordinary moment, because the Cayuga are resettling that territory after 200 years of forced removal. Remember that the United States was able to establish itself based on the dispossession of many indigenous peoples. But this particular land was specifically designated as a burnt-earth campaign, which would be recognized today as a genocidal strategy. And so they came through our territories in 1779, not only burnt all of the crops, but they also forcibly displaced large communities of Cayuga people. So, their return to the land right now is actually quite profound.

The piece is about deep reclamation of land by the Cayuga in conjunction with the complexity of the beaded bird. And I'm working it through both an abstract and then physical representations of the beaded bird. And so in the historic record, there's this moment where they talk about what the land was like at that period of time. And I was inspired by this image of thousands of birds darkening the sky. I've taken that as an opportunity to think through this relationship to place and using that in dialog with a ubiquitous symbol of Tuscarora beadwork which is this beaded bird. The beaded bird for Tuscarora is probably, you know, one of the most fanciful, yet at the same time meaningful pieces of beadwork. Tuscarora

beadwork, and beadwork of all of the Haudenosaunee actually has a direct relationship to our cosmological narratives. But you have to understand the cosmological narrative in order to see it in the beadwork. And so in my piece, I've collected older pieces, I've also been working with a new generation of beadworkers, and pulling together all of these different birds that will be a part of this piece. So the piece is a collaboration on that level. And so conceptually, I provide the frame, but they provide the artistic excellence in the birds they're making for my piece.

STOP 12



Roxanne Swentzell, Santa Clara Pueblo, born 1962
Nap, 2003

I'm Roxanne Swentzell. I'm from the Pueblo of Santa Clara in northern New Mexico. I started at an early age playing with clay because my mother was a potter, as well as her mother. And so it's kind of a generational event in our family to play with clay. But as a very young child, I was um...had a bad speech impediment, where I couldn't speak. And I found that if I created small figurines with clay, I was able to show an image that I could use to communicate to my mother. So, for instance, like when I started school, I was pretty miserable. And so I came home and I would coil a little figure of a girl crying on a school desk. And then I could give it to my mom, and then she'd know what was going on with me because I couldn't tell her in words. It is to me, my first language.

Well, sometimes I think of myself as a clay woman or mud woman. Because if I'm not building a house out of adobe and plastering it with mud, I'm out in the garden

digging in dirt trying to grow vegetables and whatnot. Or I'm in the studio making a sculpture or a pot out of clay. And it's all variations of the earth.

For Pueblo people, you know, that's our mother. The earth is our mother – very much so. So when you're interacting with her in whatever way, you're dealing with your mother. And so you treat her in a way that is your mother. You don't just take it and use it in whatever way you want. You're respectful, and grateful, and thoughtful. Careful in how you do that. So, clay, dirt, adobe – it's all very much a relationship with our mother, and I'm grateful that she's been very gracious to me in my life. Has held me up in every aspect of what I've chosen to do.

The piece in the exhibition is called *The Nap*. And it's actually an older piece. During the time in my life that I was a mother of young children, and of course, trying to give them a nap. And all my pieces have to do with something I'm going through in my life. So, if you lined them up in time-wise, it would be like a 3-D journal of my life. And this piece in particular is the feeling I was having of children crawling all over me. And I'm really the one needing a nap – more than the kids. I mean they need a nap, but I really want a nap.

And it's based on the whole storyteller way of making a piece, where you have these larger piece with very small figures. It's usually a larger mother/father figure with small people all around her. So in a way, she's a storyteller.

STOP 13



Carla Hemlock, Kanienkeháka, born 1961
Walking Through Time, 2017

[Speaking Kanienkeháka]. My name is , that's my given name, but my English name is Carla.

The ensemble I did is called **Walking Through Time**. I always had, in the back of my head, that I wanted to do an old style coat, hat, and purse. Years, I envisioned what this coat was going to look like, and I was never ready to attempt it.

I actually purchased that hat. I purchased it with the intent of putting it together with the coat. I had purchased that hat years, and years, and years ago. It sat in my workshop, sat where I could look at it every single day.

The way I work, I do not sketch. I never sketched anything. Even my quilts, I don't. I'll just start it and do it.

A lot people had said, "Gosh, where did you buy that coat and put the beadwork on it?" I said, "I didn't buy that coat. I made that coat. And I actually made that coat so I could wear it."

If this coat could have been worn say in the 1800s, it stood the test of time to what our women made back then, that I could still wear it today, and it's still as fashionable as what they made 150 to 200 years ago.

I wanted this coat really just to have a reflection of who our women were and still are. The beauty of that coat, I don't look at it as a beauty of that coat. I look at it as the beauty of our women.

STOP 14



Iakonikohnrio Tonia Loran-Galban, Mohawk, Bear clan Akwesasne, born 1965
Otiianehshon Ronwatiitanhirats (The Women Raise Them Up) Women's Nomination Belt, 2018

[Speaking Tuscarora] My name is Jolene Rickard. The Curatorial Advisors from the northeast felt it was important to have a wampum belt included in the exhibit as part of an understanding and to deepen the understanding of our relationship to the notion of a bead, and why beadwork is so significant. And it really comes from our deep relationship to wampum. And so wampum actually goes back to the Beginning Story, it is part of the Creation Story, it's part of the or the Great Law or in Tuscarora. It is the moment where the Peacemaker consoles Hiawatha for the loss of his daughters.

And so the actual materiality of wampum is today recognized as the quahog shell, but at that moment, it was a concept. The material could have been a sumac hollowed out, it could have been a bird bone, and then it finally transitioned to these shells.

Bringing a wampum belt into the exhibit was appropriate in that it's about relationship building, and that's really a huge role of – perhaps the primary role of – wampum, as a political signifier. And so the relationship of the role that women in the confederacy have to wampum is best demonstrated through the women's nomination belt, which is a reproduction. And so it stands in for or represents the women's nomination belt. And the women's nomination belt, which is currently held by the Senecas, is a significant symbol because it really demonstrates that in

the formation of leadership in the confederacy, it's actually women that have the authority to decide who the leaders are, because that's what that belt signifies.

I think it's important today to acknowledge that we struggle with this because of the impact of patriarchal practices that have found their way into our communities. We're working towards reclaiming the complete authority of our role as co-partners in Haudenosaunee leadership, and that's what this belt represents.

STOP 15



Mimbres artists

Sherds and bowl, c. 1000

My name is Tessie Naranjo. I'm from Santa Clara Pueblo. [Speaking Native Language]. I have a problem with the word "art" because there is no word in Tewa for art. What that means to me is that you use your hands when you felt like making something. And always in times past, you used your hands to make functional things: bowls for eating from, bowls for ceremonial use. It was all about function. Today the word "art" comes into the picture because of the time that we live in. And for me, I'm still in the mood, or in the mode, of thinking about creating things as functional. When I do pottery, I prefer micaceous clay because that's a functional clay. I will make bowls. I will try to make bean pots. I will make other things, but only for function.

I have a struggle with decorative artwork. I have an issue. I used to have an issue, I may still have an issue, with the idea even of a museum and what that stands for. If a museum is to be established, and is established, then I become joyful when I know that it is interacting with tribal communities in some way. So that there is a

relationship that is established. But just for decorative displays...I...I cannot go there. I cannot.

STOP 16



Lakota artist
Dress, c. 1900

[Speaking Lakota] Hello my relatives, I greet all of you with a good heart. My name is Dakota. I'm a Lakota woman. I'm enrolled in the Pine Ridge Reservation. Here at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, I serve as a research assistant. I will soon be moving to Denver, and there my title will be Assistant Curator of Native American Art at the Denver Art Museum.

So, you'll notice on one side it says Kinyáhinape Wiŋ and on the other side it says Waŋblítipi Wiŋ. And those are the names of two young Lakota girls. What we did discover through research is that we thought they were on the front of the dress, but they're actually on the back of the dress. And the reason being is that when Lakota women dance, they dance in a circle and their backs face out, so more people would be seeing these names of the girls. So, we know that one of the girls was Cora Plenty Eagles, and she died when she was about 18. And that the other girl's name was Katy Loafer Joe, and she died when she was about 16. We know whoever wore this dress was honoring those two girls and was connected to them in some way. But we don't know exactly how they were connected.

We do know that both of the fathers of the girls were living where the Battle of Little Big Horn took place, so probably fought in the Battle of Little Big Horn. What their roles were, we don't know. We know after that battle they moved to Standing Rock; it's a reservation that straddles North and South Dakota. Then we know both families moved to the Pine Ridge Reservation, which is located in the south western corner of South Dakota. We can't seem to find a familial, on the records, relationship between the fathers, between the mothers, or between the girls.

There's four horses, and each of these horses has this "JC" brand. So, whoever owned this JC brand at this time is probably the connecting point for these girls. But that gets also very complicated because people owned these brands at certain periods, and maybe they only owned them for like four years, and then they give them up. And they can own the same brand in multiple states. So, we really could not find the definitive connection to these girls. The other connection is on the dress there are these two staffs, and they are near the neck line and at the backside of the horses. So they could indicate horse racing, but also if girls go through a *hunká* ceremony, which is a particular type of adoption ceremony where people pledge to be family members, they also hold these staffs. Is the girl that is associated with the JC brand, a *hunká* sister of these two? They probably went to school together. That's one possibility.

If we could find who wore this dress, I think all of the pieces would come into place, but until now we haven't really discovered who wore this dress. The fact that we could not find the owners of this dress – it's a lesson in patience – but it's also a lesson that we as Lakota people are taught. You'll be given that information when the time is right. And so this dress is holding on to its secrets, and we are hoping that through this exhibition, maybe somebody will come forward or recognize this dress, or recognize these girls' names and be able to tell us this whole story. I am personally taking the philosophy that we will get to know the answer to this when the timing is right, and if we don't get to know, then maybe the timing isn't right yet.

STOP 17



Lisa Telford, Haida, born 1957
PochaHaida, 2009

But I call it my thread to sanity because when I'm angry or something's wrong, I pick up that basket because everything that's in my mind disappears. Everything that I'm thinking about is gone. I don't worry about my troubles, I don't worry about my aches and pains, it all becomes relaxed. I'm just melting into my work, enjoying my time, and I could do it all day long.

[Speaking Haida] In my family, because I come from a long line of weavers, form follows function. That simply means that if you see a basket with a fish eye on it that that was always a clam basket or you could recognize a seaweed gathering basket, it was always used for only gathering seaweed. Form follows function. That was what I was always taught to believe. When you do cedar clothing, it's always traditional. They didn't make form fitting clothing. It was meant to keep you warm.

I got a call from somebody who said I know you do cedar clothing and I'd like to have a contemporary piece and I said well, I'm very traditional, I don't know what that means. He had a couple suggestions and I kept shooting him down. I said let me think about it for a couple weeks and I'll call you back. And I had just bought a dress form and it was in the living room and I'm thinking why did I get that dress form? Then it dawned on me, I'll make a bustier, so that was my first piece.

My contemporary pieces were so well received, my mind just went insane. I started thinking of all these things, I started doing, you know, I could make a necktie out of cedar bark. I can make a bow tie. I can make this, I can make that. At

that point, my mind was anything was possible and I'd always have dreams about dresses and I had one more stuck in my head.

STOP 18



Anita Fields, Osage, born 1951
It's in Our DNA, It's Who We Are, 2018

My name is Anita Fields, and I'm from Oklahoma, and I'm a member of the Osage tribe. Also Muskogee Cree, my mother is Cree, my dad is Osage. I'm a member of the Sun Carrier Clan. And my Indian name is . I've been making art since I was a kid. Being taught how to sew at a very young age; I go back to fabric over and over and over. And want to utilize fabric and textile into my work. I thought I want to make a series of Osage Wedding Coats. An Osage Wedding Coat is based on a military style coat from the 1700s, or maybe a little bit earlier. And these coats were given to Osage men. We've had an interaction with the French for a very, very long time through trade. So that is one way I have heard that we obtained the coats. Another one is that when delegations of Osage people went to Washington, D.C. in negotiations with diplomacy, these coats were gifted to them - these military style coats.

So they brought these coats back to the Osage tribe, to the people. The men were very big, and so these coats were too small for them. So they handed them over to the women. And the women started using them, and embellishing them and kind

of going to an Osage aesthetic – started using them in a ceremony that is arranged marriages. The arranged marriages happened up until the early 50s. About the same time, these coats, because they didn't have that use any more, started making their way into our *elongika*, our ceremonial dance. And they started being used as a way to, what we call Paying for the Drum.

My whole thought with this was that this coat is very symbolic, and has evolved to this time period today. It holds within it this wonderful, unique history. It's such an important iconic thing that it's still being used today. And you know it evolves, because of materials that are available today. You see innovation! This is just a symbol that talks about our history, that is a link to the past, that talks about our present (but I know that because it's so important I can't imagine it ever going away) and that it's a link to the future.

So I had this idea with all that in mind that I wanted to make this coat that addressed our history, addressed who we are, talk about the things of today. So I wanted to make one that was very similar on the outside so that it would be very identifiable – this is a wedding coat. Then when you open it up it's like mixed media. Silk on the inside, but with a printing process, with images from historic photos, historic documents, ethnology reports, my great-grandfather's photograph, role number. Because this, this is our history. This is just talking about who we are, and how we arrived at this place and time, now. It's not just an article of clothing. I always feel that this is what my grandmother gave to me and this is what I want to be able to pass on also.

Jill Ahlberg Yohe: Thank you for visiting Mia and ***Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists***. We hope you enjoyed the exhibition and look forward to seeing you again soon.

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