Yvonne Walker Keshick creates birchbark masterpieces realistically decorated with quills that depict natural images as well as cultural symbols of the Odawa tribe. Also a devoted teacher, she has developed resources and provided instruction to ensure this art form is passed down to others as it was to her.

Keshick was born in 1946 and is descended from a long line of Odawa/Ojibwa quillworkers. Keshick’s aunt, Anna Ode’imin, was reputedly one of the finest quillworkers at the turn of the 19th century. In 1969, Keshick began learning the art from teacher and artist, Susan Kiogima Shagonaby.

Keshick quickly mastered both the traditional cultural designs as well as the basic wildlife and floral designs for which her family was known and which are passed down from generation to generation. She then excelled in creating even more complex and realistic designs of flora and fauna as well as depictions of cultural symbols and stories. Her work is known for its technical craftsmanship—the quality of material used, the uniformity of sewing, and the accuracy of the forms and fits of boxes and covers. Keshick avoids using dyed quills in her work and instead creates shadowing affects using the natural colors of the quills. Keshick is also knowledgeable in the stories and traditions associated with quillwork and her culture, which she shares with her community and family.

Keshick has said, “I believe it is truly our responsibility to teach others all of the best things of our culture” and in that vein has passed along the tradition to her sons and daughter. She participated in Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program and has also written a manuscript that covers instructions on making quillwork and information on the cultural meanings related to quillwork.

Keshick played an active role in the successful efforts of her tribe’s federal recognition in the 1980s. In 1992, Michigan State University Museum honored her with a Michigan Heritage Award for her “mastery of her tradition, attention to authenticity, and commitment to sharing her cultural knowledge within her community.” Keshick’s quillwork is included in numerous museum collections, including the National Museum of the American Indian. She was a featured participant in the 2006 Smithsonian Folklife Festival’s Carriers of Culture Native Weaving Traditions program.

Source: Kate Fort, "Yvonne Keshick Awarded NEA National Heritage Fellowship for Quillwork", Turtle Talk, September 19, 2014
A collection of resources related to Native American art.

Resources in the Main Library

Books on the art of Native Americans can be found in both the MSU Fine Arts Library and the Main Library; many well-illustrated books can be found in the section on Native American history and culture. The following suggestions will help you search for items in the MSU Library Catalog. Suggested Subject Headings include:

- Indian Art North America
- Indian Artists North America
- Indians of North America Great Lakes region
- Indians of North America Great Lakes region art
- Indians of North America pottery (note: in place of "pottery", you can substitute the term for almost any media such as painting, basket making, embroidery, etc.)
- Beadwork Great Lakes region
- Indian featherwork North America
- Ojibwa Indians art

Sample Books

Arts & crafts of the Native American tribes / Michael [G.] Johnson & Bill Yenne. Buffalo, N.Y. : Firefly Books, 2011. 256pp. Oversize Collection (Basement, 1 Center) E98.A7 J646 2011: A general encyclopedia of historical Native American (US and Canada) craft arts, this book was written by Michael G. Johnson and Bill Yenne, authors experienced in collecting Native American objects. While it assembles a diverse archive of historical images of people across North America wearing or working in traditional crafts, the book focuses on photographs that give historical references, rather than showcasing the beauty and skill of fine craft. It is strongest on clothing, and provides some technical details, but is not designed as a technical reference for craft artists or costumers. Pictures of contemporary people making and wearing the types of work discussed are included, but the book’s text does not consider contemporary Native American craft arts or artists. This is wholly a historical encyclopedia. It does a good job of covering the continent, and offers maps of a variety of tribal groups in each region. Given the size of the book, it can only touch on art forms larger tribal groups are most known for. The text is written for adult readers by popular writers using academic style. The focus here is on textile arts: clothing, basketry, beadwork, ceremonial costume, blankets. Often each person in a historical photograph is identified by name. The authors understand that people dress differently for the weather or the occasion, and that dress and craft traditions changed over time. Influential historical figures in the adoption or evolution of a craft tradition are also identified by name. Tribes are named in their own languages. The authors have chosen historical photographs to show how people dressed every day or for particular events, and actual objects they used and made, rather than how they were dressed or posed by commercial photographers.

Encyclopedia of Native American Artists / Deborah Everett and Elayne Zorn. Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, c2008. 267pp. Fine Arts Art Reference (4 West) N6538.A4 E94 2008: Indigenous North Americans have continuously made important contributions to the field of art in the U.S. and Canada, yet have been severely under-recognized and under-represented. Native artists work in diverse media, some of which are considered art (sculpture, painting, photography), while others have been considered craft (works on cloth, basketry, ceramics). Some artists feel strongly about working from a position as a Native artist, while others prefer to produce art not connected to a particular cultural tradition. This volume examines the lives and works of approximately 70 Native American artists, demonstrating the range of media, themes, and experiences of Native artists, and their influences on and by western culture. Eight pages of color plates, and black and white images throughout, display the diversity of work by these artists.


MSU Museum Resources

**MSU Museum Resources: Native American Basketry.** The Association of Michigan Basketmakers (AMB) has created a growing collection of baskets and related documentation at the MSU Museum that is intended to preserve the heritage of basketmaking in Michigan. The collection consists of 56 baskets reflecting many styles and techniques and represents the work of the honorees chosen from nominations put forward to the AMB by its members.

**MSU Museum Native American Basketry.** The Michigan State University houses significant collections of Native American basketry. The largest and most important of the historical collections is the Frank M. Covert/R.E. Olds Native American Basket Collection which has been augmented by items acquired primarily through other donors.

**MSU Museum Native AmericanBasketry.** The Michigan State University houses extensive holdings of North American Indian cultural collections as well as selected examples of Native Hawaiian materials. The objects, ephemera, photographs, field notes, and other materials include items ranging from porcupine quillwork made by Michigan Heritage Awardees to a Native Hawaiian flag quilt made by artists on the Big Island to Southwest baskets collected at the turn of the 20th century to a small collection of art made by contemporary Great Lakes women artists. One of the largest and most important of the collections is the Frank M. Covert/R.E. Olds Native American Basket Collection that has been augmented by items acquired primarily through other donors.

**Carriers of Culture: Living Native Basket Traditions (contains the work of several Michigan basketmakers)**

**Frank M. Covert/R.E. Olds Basket Collection.** The largest and most significant of the MSU Museum’s American Indian basket collections contains 109 examples representing almost all the U.S. cultural areas and includes representatives of many patterns, designs, and techniques used by American Indian weavers. Portions of the collection are pictured in Otis Tufton Mason’s seminal publication American Indian Basketry (1904). These specimens, many of which have original residues from use, are among the most important in the field.

**Great Lakes Indian Dance Regalia Project.** Pow wows are important Native American social and cultural gatherings, of which music and dance are integral parts. Regalia, the apparel worn by dancers, includes headdresses, bustles, jewelry, sashes, dresses, shirts, leggings, shawls, and a variety of handheld items. Staff of the Nokomis American Indian Learning Center (Okemos, Michigan) and the Michigan State University Museum coordinated a project, funded by Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, to document the work of contemporary American Indian artists in the Great Lakes region whose artistry is closely tied to pow wows. Artists with whom oral history interviews were conducted included Tony Miron, Catherine Gibson, Jason George, Bedahbin Webkamigad, and Rochelle Shano Whitepigeon and their work included regalia associated with the Grass Dance, Fancy Shawl Dance, Men’s Traditional Dance, Women’s Traditional Dance, Fancy Dance, and Jingle Dance. Regalia items, photographs, audio-recorded interviews, and transcriptions of interviews are included in the collection.

**Great Lakes Native Quilting:** Great Lakes Native Quilting is the first exhibition devoted to North American Indian quilting in the Great Lakes region. Organized by curator of folk arts Marsha MacDowell, the exhibit grew out of work for the Michigan State University Museum’s previous major national research and exhibition project on Native quiltmaking in North America and Hawaii. This exhibit examines the historical introduction of quilting as well as the contemporary use and meaning of quilts made by Oneida, Ojibwe, and Mohawk quilters living in Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, and Ontario. It showcases the diversity of Native quiltmaking and pays tribute to the artists who continue to work in this expressive cultural medium. The sixteen quilts included in the exhibit are primarily drawn from the Michigan State University Museum collection with additional loans from other private and public collections. The exhibit also includes photographs of quilters and quilting activities, biographical sketches of contemporary quilters, explanatory text panels, and four contextual settings which visually demonstrate the uses of quilts in Great Lakes Native communities, both historically and today. A traveling exhibit maintained by the MSU Museum.

**Iroquois Beaded Souvenirs.** Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) beaded souvenirs feature both traditional Native techniques and innovative adaptations of Euroamerican forms and motifs. The Michigan State University Museum houses over thirty beaded souvenirs dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Such items were created and sold in the Northeastern United States and Canada, particularly around popular tourist destinations such as Niagara Falls. These beaded souvenirs provide valuable insights into cross-cultural dynamics among the Iroquois and EuroAmericans, and attest to the innovation and adaptability of Iroquois people in the utilization of their traditional skills to provide a source of income during times of social and economic hardship. This virtual exhibit showcases some of the pieces in the MSU Museum collections while providing background information on these beautiful items with a rich and complex history.

**MSU American Indian Heritage Pow Wow Portraits: Photographs by Douglas Elbinger:** This exhibition is the result of a collaborative effort to document contemporary traditional regalia. Professional photographer Douglas Elbinger donated his services to take portraits of dancers at the 1993 Michigan State University Museum's previous major national research and exhibition project on Native American Indian Heritage Pow Wow held during Michigan Festival in East Lansing, Michigan. A traveling exhibit maintained by the MSU Museum.

**North American Indian and Native Hawaiian Quilt Collection:** A collection maintained by Marsha MacDowell, MSU Museum.

**Sisters of the Great Lakes: Art of American Indian Women:** A virtual exhibit maintained by the MSU Museum. A print exhibition catalog is also available.

**To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions:** Of the many North American Indian expressive art forms, perhaps one of the least well known is quilting. This exhibition celebrates quilting within diverse communities and pays homage to the artists who have expressed their cultural heritage and creativity through this art. It examines how quilts and quilting—the ceremonies surrounding them, the society of the artists who make them, and the passing on of traditions through quilts—bind neighborhoods and families within and across generations. Quilting in Native communities was first learned through contact with Euro-Americans. Native peoples became adept at quilting and began to use quilts for purposes unique to their own cultures. Quilts have been used as bed and shelter coverings, infants’ swing cradles, weather insulation, and as soft places to sit on the ground. In some communities, quilts play important roles in tribal ceremonies, such as in the honoring of individuals and as fund-raisers. Native quilters get their design ideas from many sources. Some quilters use the design motifs of their specific tribe or clan or use patterns and colors reflecting close spiritual ties to the natural world....To Honor and Comfort is a small version of the larger, national touring exhibition of the same name, developed by the Michigan State University Museum and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. It is designed to meet the needs of smaller institutions which cannot accommodate the larger exhibition.
Sample Web Sites


Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian courtesy of the Northwestern University Digital Library Collections. Edward Sheriff Curtis published The North American Indian between 1907 and 1930 with the intent to record traditional Indian cultures. The work comprises twenty volumes of narrative text and photogravure images. Each volume is accompanied by a portfolio of large photogravure plates. The entire work is presented here, supported largely by funds from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

George Catlin and His Indian Gallery. The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum has this George Catlin exhibit up until the end of January, 2003. Catlin spent his life recording the customs and cultures of Native American tribes, and lobbying to protect their way of life. Courtesy of the University of Cincinnati Libraries Digital Collections.

George Catlin : The Printed Word. George Catlin (1796-1872) traveled the North American continent from 1830-1838 to chronicle the people, customs and traditions of Native American tribes. His life's ambition was to record the disappearing Native American culture in paint and print. Catlin's adventures resulted in over 600 portraits and scenes of rituals, hunting and daily life of over fifty North American tribes and several important printed works. This collection contains all images from the following Catlin titles: The Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians. Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio. Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of America. Adventures of the Ojibbeway and Ioway Indians in England, France, and Belgium; Being Notes of Eight Years Travels and Residence in Europe with His North American Indian Collection. Courtesy of the University of Cincinnati Libraries Digital Collections.

Infinite of Nations: Art and History in the Collections of the National Museum of the American Indian. Based in New York, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) "houses one of the world's great cultural resources, with collections representing the Native peoples of the Americas from their earliest history to the present day." Housed in the museum's George Gustav Heye Center, the Infinity of Nations exhibit presents several hundred works from the NMAI that are culturally, historically, and aesthetically important. The objects include a Dine (Navajo) first phase chief blanket and a pottery plate, complete with candleholders from the mission church at the ancestral A:shiwi (Zuni) village of Hawikku. On the exhibit's website, visitors can explore some of these items via a series of geographical headings on the right-hand side of the homepage. Each of these headings includes a brief profile of each broad group of Native American peoples (such as those in the Southwest), along with a grid of 27 images. Visitors can click on each image to learn more about the item, and taken as a whole, each heading offers a tantalizing bit of information on these different societies.

McKenney & Hall: History of the Indian Tribes of North America is a collection of 125 images of lithographic and chromolithographic plates. Thomas Loraine McKenney (1785-1859) served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1830. In that capacity he commissioned and collected portraits of Native Americans for his Gallery in the War Department. McKenney's goal was to publish a record of vanishing peoples: portraits, biographical sketches and a history of North American Indians. He accomplished this in the first issue of the History of the Indian Tribes of North America published in three volumes between 1838 and 1844. James Hall (1793-1868) provided the text. The images included in this collection are from a copy of the edition held in the Archives & Rare Books Library of the University of Cincinnati.

Native American Images Project from the American Philosophical Society. This Gallery highlights nearly 150 visually striking, historically significant, and representative images selected from the Library's extensive collections of pictures of or relating to Native Americans.

NativeTech: Native American Technology and Art is an Internet resource for indigenous ethno-technology focusing on the arts of Eastern Woodland Indian Peoples, providing historical & contemporary background with instructional how-to's & references.

The North American Indian Works is a collection of 364 images and 6 texts. Between 1929 and 1952 C. Szwedzicki, a publisher in Nice, France, produced six portfolios of North American Indian art. The publications were edited by American scholars Oscar Brousse Jacobson, Hartley Burr Alexander and Kenneth Milton Chapman. Many of the images were published as pochoir prints which are similar in appearance to silk screen prints. These works represent original works by 20th Century American Indian artists. A digital collection of the University of Cincinnati Libraries.

WWW Virtual Library - American Indians: Index of Native American Art Related Exhibits on the Internet.

Michigan Heritage Awards Program (includes several Native American artists)

Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (includes several Native American artists)
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